

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

**2018–19 BUDGET ESTIMATES**



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE  
TAKEN AT PERTH  
WEDNESDAY, 20 JUNE 2018**

**SESSION FOUR  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES — DISABILITY SERVICES**

**Members**

**Hon Alanna Clohesy (Chair)  
Hon Tjorn Sibma (Deputy Chair)  
Hon Diane Evers  
Hon Aaron Stonehouse  
Hon Colin Tincknell**

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**Hearing commenced at 1.30 pm**

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON**

**Minister for Disability Services, examined:**

**Mr GRAHAME SEARLE**

**Director General, examined:**

**Ms HELEN NYS**

**Acting Assistant Director General, examined:**

**Mr LIAM CARRON**

**Chief Financial Officer, examined:**

**Mr MATTHEW RICHARDSON**

**Director, Finance and Business Support, examined:**

**Ms LOUISE HOLDING**

**Chief of Staff, Minister for Disability Services, examined:**

**The CHAIR:** Good afternoon, members. This is the 2018–19 estimates hearing with the Department of Communities; Disability Services. On behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I welcome you to today's hearings. Can the witnesses confirm that they have read, understood and signed a document headed "Information for Witnesses"?

**The WITNESSES:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** It is essential that all your testimony before the committee is complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge. The hearing is being recorded by Hansard and a transcript of your evidence will be provided to you. It is also being broadcast live on the Parliament's website. The hearing is being held in public, although there is discretion available to the committee to hear evidence in private. If for some reason you wish to make a confidential statement during today's proceedings, you should request that the evidence be taken in closed session before you answer the question. Agencies have an important role and duty in assisting the committee to scrutinise the budget papers. The committee values your assistance with this.

Minister, do you have a brief opening statement?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No, I do not.

**The CHAIR:** We will go straight to questions. We have roughly 12 minutes per member—a bit more for some. Hon Diane Evers.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** I just have one question on page 422, about note (b) on the middle of the page. The last line states —

... the NDIA will administer disability services in additional regions in Western Australia, the remaining target population for the State decreases.

My first question is: which regions are coming into this area? And also, I have travelled through the region a bit and disability services are not as available in the regions as they are in the city and that

does cause some concern. I am just wondering, if we are saying since this is going to be a federal issue, what will the state do to ensure that the regional areas are serviced properly?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Thank you, member, for the question. While this does technically say that the NDIA will administer disability services in additional regions in Western Australia, it is additional to the ones that they have been running the trial in. Of course, at the moment right across Western Australia, the Disability Services Commission provides a level of service. There is a rollout schedule over the next two years where additional people will move from the state run scheme into the federal scheme. I have not got the rollout schedule in front of me, but Ms Nys has it, so she can give you the detail, the dates et cetera.

**Ms NYS:** Thank you, minister. The rollout schedule is starting in July. There will be rollout to the inner wheatbelt area. By that I mean Moora, York, Narrogin and Northam will become eligible for the federal scheme. Northam has already been, but it will be expanded. Within the metropolitan area it is Fremantle, the South Perth area and Victoria Park that enter the national scheme from July. From October—I will focus on regional goaled areas—the goldfields will enter the scheme, as will Bunbury and the upper south west area. From July 2019, the scheme will rollout to further metropolitan areas, so the northern metropolitan area and from also the Albany and Gascoyne areas from July 2019.

**Hon DIANE EVERS:** So, in answer to the second part to that then, if it has been taken on by the federal government, how will the states ensure that this is delivered successfully or appropriately so that nobody falls through those cracks?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I guess the point to make, member, is that the state remains a partner in this process. We are not walking away from disability services in this state. What has happened across the country, particularly—I give the example of New South Wales—is they initially decided to hand over holus-bolus and say, “Okay, it is up to the NDIA now to rollout these services.” We remain an active partner, so when the full scheme happens we are to fund half the scheme. In terms of the oversight of the scheme nationally, that oversight is done by the Disability Reform Council that consists of the disability ministers and the Treasurers from across the country. We remain, kind of, overseeing the process, but the general day-to-day functioning of the scheme is run by the NDIA. At the moment, as the rollout happens, on a number of levels we have, I guess, input into that. At the moment my offices at the department continue to meet with the NDIA as the transition happens. I continue to meet with the NDIA; in fact, last week we had the first time the NDIA board has met out of New South Wales. They came across to Western Australia, they met here and met with our stakeholders over here. Western Australia having made the decision to enter the national scheme, they have a very keen interest, as I do, in making sure that the scheme runs and functions well. Most importantly, it keeps people with disability front and centre. They were over here last week meeting with our stakeholders. I continue to meet with those stakeholders; I meet with them every two to three weeks. We have done a whiteboard session where we have essentially looked at the potential risks from the rollout of the NDIS and we have put those on the white paper and now we are just working to mitigate those schemes. Some of those issues that have been raised have had particular concern to stakeholders in Western Australia, be they people with disability, families, carers or service providers, remains the pricing review, the pricing framework. There is some concern by NGOs over here that the price that is planned to be paid by the NDIA is less than has been paid previously. The NDIA have indicated that they will do a pricing study in Western Australia to take into consideration the prices that have been paid. They are going to undertake that over the next period of time to make sure that they are taking into consideration and learning from those stakeholders. That is one of those things.

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The other thing is the service provision in regional and remote Western Australia. Western Australia is unique, as you would appreciate. We are very different from every other state, and while we have communities in the north west of the state that are comparable—for example, the Kimberley and Pilbara—I would say, to far north Queensland or the Northern Territory, we are still very different and what works in those states in the east may not work here. They have agreed to undertake a pilot over in Western Australia as well to make sure that we are delivering services—quality services—to people in those communities in regional Western Australia. There is the framework, there is regional and remote and there is also people with highly complex needs. Another area that has been raised with me as minister over the past while is that we need to make sure that people with highly complex needs do continue to get quality service. You would have read, as I have, stories in the national broadsheets about this. There have been some teething problems with the rollout in other states; there are strong views by National Disability Services that people with high and complex needs, their issues have not been addressed properly or appropriately thus far in the rollout. We have again got agreement from the NDIA that we would have a trial or pilot in Western Australia to ensure that we continue to provide quality services to those people and that, in fact, those people do not go backwards in the level of service they get currently.

[1.40 pm]

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Minister, I am just seeking clarification about the effect of the voluntary targeted separation scheme, not so much on Communities as a whole but specifically in the disability services space. I refer you to the document you tabled last night, which I have subsequently tabled or given back to you at the last session so I am going off a digital version of that document. Nevertheless, minister, are you in a position to answer a couple of queries I have about how the number is comprised? Last night you reported that at 9 April this year, 215 staff at the Department of Communities have been, I suppose, discharged via this scheme and in the slightly more than two months that have elapsed since that period of time, a further 102 full-time equivalents have exited the department, taking the total to 317 as at 15 June. How many of those staff relate to the broad disabilities-related service lines in the budget?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** As you would imagine, I did not bring that sheet with me again now, but just for my advisers' information, in the Treasury estimates hearing last night, Treasury provided a list of VTSSs. The figures on the sheet were from 7 April, as I recall, from May and from, I think, 18 June.

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Until last week, so pretty current.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** That was the chart provided. I will ask the director general to comment in relation solely to the DSC element of Department of Communities what our contribution has been thus far.

**Mr SEARLE:** To date, the number of people from the Disability Services Commission who have chosen to take packages are 114, all of whom were in the metropolitan area.

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Are you able to give an indication of broadly what those positions were? I do not need the precise position by position, but broadly what functions did those personnel undertake?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I will ask Mr Searle to reply to that one.

**Mr SEARLE:** The vast majority of those positions were relatively junior levels, a lot of them in administrative roles. About 80 of them were level 3 and below, so in terms of the public sector structure, that is quite junior. There were some people in very specialist areas who have chosen to take packages. One of the challenges for the agency is getting the balance right as we downsize for

NDIA to move into the space, but we are confident that the savings we have made to date will not affect service delivery.

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Do you anticipate any further VTSS redundancies coming from the broad disability services lines with Communities over the estimates; and, if so, how many positions?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Yes, we do. Given that over the next two years we will have people with disability who are currently serviced by the Disability Services Commission transition across to services provided by the NDIA, there will be further reductions in staff numbers in the agency. In terms of the level of detail, it is still a moving feast essentially. We have not got a figure with us today. If the member requires information be provided by supplementary then we can do so.

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** If you do not mind, I would like that recorded as a supplementary question.

*[Supplementary Information No D1.]*

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Minister, how did the government's decision to subscribe to the NDIS affect decision-making when it came to relinquishing these roles? My question, I suppose, is that of the positions that have been released by VTSS, was the decision made to effectively sack those people made completely—was it separated from —

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Member, I might just pick you up there. Nobody has been sacked. This is a voluntary targeted separation scheme.

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** I can tell you that if we did it, it would be called a sacking.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** If you use the word "sacking", that —

**Hon TJORN SIBMA:** Services are no longer required

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** — potentially involves some sort of disciplinary process et cetera and somebody has done something wrong. I make the point that people have done nothing wrong in this case. Government has a policy of a voluntary targeted severance scheme. In relation to those who have gone so far, I do not think our decision to sign up to the national scheme in December affected the types of people who left. I will ask the director general to provide some further information.

**Mr SEARLE:** A far bigger effect has been the effect of the machinery-of-government changes. A number of these positions are corporate services types—finance, HR, those sorts of roles. A small number of policy people were involved in NDIS as distinct from NDIA so a lot of these savings have happened more through the MOG changes rather than the NDIA changes.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** I refer to page 420, service 13 in the service summary table. Other than the NDIS, what else explains the \$211 million budget estimated decrease from 2017–18 estimated actual of \$302 million?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** That is a good question. I will ask the director general if he can provide an answer to that one.

**Mr SEARLE:** Those savings are almost all the result of the bilateral agreement that has been entered into in the NDIA.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** The whole lot?

**Mr SEARLE:** Yes.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** Does the transition to NDIS fully explain the 2019–20 forward estimate of \$109 million as well?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Yes.

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**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** Still on the same page, 420, service 16 in the service summary table relates to community participation for people with disability. I note that this peaked in 2017–18 at \$285 million with a budget estimate of \$215 million. By 2021–22, this is down by \$47 million. Are these decreases over the three forward estimates attributed to the full transition to the NDIS?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Yes.

[1.50 pm]

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** I refer to page 436, which refers to the development of 1 290 lots for social housing. How many of those lots will be developed for regional WA and in what locations? My follow-up question to that is: what proportion of those lots would be developed for disability inclusion purposes?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Member, it is a very good question. Unfortunately, this is a question for the Minister for Housing and so I cannot give you an answer today.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** It is not covered by disability housing?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No, disability housing is provided for by the Department of Housing.

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** That has happened to me twice this week.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Apologies. Those questions should be asked of the Minister for Housing.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Minister, as you know, I went through a number of things in my second reading reply and you listened intently and I am pleased about that. As I said at the time, the comments I made were not meant to be political statements. They were meant to try to highlight numerous issues that have been raised with me throughout the sector. As I am sure you have been, I have been inundated by a number of concerns. I am not exaggerating—absolutely inundated by people with a disability.

**The CHAIR:** Member, could I get you to lean left?

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I could not possibly lean left!

**The CHAIR:** I understand that, but I would also like you to talk into the microphone.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** What I would like to happen here today and perhaps be the stem of it, or the start of it, is we can perhaps clarify some issues and satisfy the concerns that exist in the sector at the moment. I am sure we will not get anywhere close to satisfying everyone, but at the moment there are a number of issues. First of all, with that in mind, in terms of the financing and the funding of the NDIS in Australia, it will harbour quite a significant saving for the Western Australian government by going to the national scheme, as I understand it. Can you identify exactly how much that saving will be to the Western Australian government?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** The figure is approximately \$1.3 billion of expense avoided, is the terminology Treasury uses. Part of that is had Western Australia stayed the course that the previous government had decided on, WA would have had to establish a new agency, like the National Disability Insurance Agency. So the plan was to establish a new agency in Western Australia to run the scheme. It was not going to be done by the Disability Services Commission as we knew it. That is part of the cost. So, it would have been the establishment of the new agency and the running of the new agency. Another significant cost was the new IT system that was proposed. Even had we run our own scheme in Western Australia, our IT system would have had to be able to talk to the federal IT system, so there was a significant cost associated with that too.

These are Treasury's figures. I am not sure I fully agree with the figures. These are kind of notional figures that Treasury talks about as avoided costs. Because the rollout is happening over a period of

time, what we have seen with the rollout of the NDIA scheme across the country, they have not been getting the people into the scheme on target. This is not going to satisfy you, but the figures are kind of a moving feast. There are a number of variables in play. The rollout will happen. What we have seen, though, is that people have not been coming in as quickly into the scheme as they wanted. So, that figure that Treasury uses, I am not sure we will get anywhere near that at the end of the day.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am not being bloody-minded about this, but I am assuming that that was a consideration of the government in terms of going to the national model?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Certainly everything was considered, member, but, I guess, the main consideration for the decision was the conversations I had in the first four months as minister when I actually went around and spoke to everyone with an interest in the scheme. I spoke to people with disability, families, carers, service providers big and small, trade unions, the CCI, regional service providers, metropolitan ones, service providers who provide assistance to people with highly complex needs. I spoke to all of those people and I have to say the overarching or overwhelming view of people with disability in particular was that they wanted to be part of the national scheme. They wanted to be part of the scheme. They wanted to have portability. They wanted to know that they were not going to miss out. What I am told and what I have seen as minister is that there is a bit more innovation in the national model, the scheme run by the NDIA. That is not to say it is perfect. I have said in this place before we can be proud of the Disability Services Commission in this state and the work they have done over a period of time. I am the first person to admit that we certainly can. The people who dreamt up the idea, the families who did that over 30 years ago, should be congratulated.

Since the NDIS has happened nationally, we have seen Western Australia get leapfrogged in some respects. But, certainly, the strongly held view by people with disability is they wanted to be part of a national scheme. As you know and I know and Hon Alison Xamon knows, not everyone is of the same opinion. Some of the bigger service providers who provide assistance or care for people with disability, particularly with complex needs, their strongly held view is Western Australia should go it alone. My job as minister now, now that we are in the national scheme, is to make sure it works. That is why I am meeting with those service providers regularly to tease out the issues that they are concerned about and to make sure that not only the NDIA is aware of them but are listening to them.

Last week when the NDIA board came over here—Dr Helen Nugent, AO, the chair of the board and the senior management and the other board members—there was a great opportunity over a couple of days for them to sit down, to listen to stakeholders, listen to people with disability, listen to those service providers and NDIS. We are starting to see some action from that. They are the first people to admit that Western Australia has led the charge. Martin Laverty, one of the board members, who runs the RFDS nationally, in a past life told his staff in the disability space, “You can go anywhere in the world to learn about the best system”, and he sent four staff to Western Australia. There are board members who recognise the value that we have had in our system over a very long time. My job now is to make sure that all of the good things from our scheme in the past are actually picked up on and addressed and included as part of the national model.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is good, because we can teach the national model, I can tell you.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I totally agree.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I appreciate your comments with regard to that, because we are trying to eradicate the fears. We are talking about one of the most marginalised groups in the community and we do not want to create fear; we want to dissipate that fear. With regard to the funding, I like

what I have just heard. Having said that, with that \$1.3 billion, I assume—if you have to look at the budget papers on page 428 on planning and coordination for people with disability, then residential services for people with disability, community living support for people with disability, independent living support for people with disability, therapy and specialised care for people with disability, community participation for people with disability, and then finally advocacy access and inclusion for people with disability, I assume the distinction between the actual amount and the budgeted amount caters for that change in the funding; is that correct? On the assumption that that is correct, can you perhaps give the sector comfort that the quality of service delivery is not going to be diminished as a result of that change in funding formula?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I guess I will just make the point that the variances between 2017–18 and 2018–19 do reflect the redirection of state funding to the NDIA and in some cases —

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is what I am saying.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** That is essentially what has happened. Where we are not providing a service in the future we will obviously hand over to the federal government. In terms of giving a guarantee to the sector, my guarantee is to be open, transparent, to work very closely with them, to make sure that where there are concerns and where there is a risk of the quality of service dropping, I will work with them closely to make sure we are on the NDIA's back or the federal minister's back or the NDIA board's chair's back to ensure that that does not happen.

The NDIS was never about taking services away from people; it was about expanding the level of service to people with disability in this state and around the country. It was supposed to bring extra people in. Obviously from year to year, people's plans can fluctuate. People with disability went through a process under the DSC and they go through a process under the NDIA where their plans will be evaluated every year. There will be changes for some people from time to time; for others, there will not be. But the scheme was never about the wholesale reduction of services and reduction of quality of service to people, so my job is to make sure that the quality does not lower or, where there is a risk of people getting a lesser service, we mitigate it and we fix it and we ensure that what was intended by the scheme initially is actually what is put into practice.

[2.00 pm]

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I hope so because, as I said in my contribution to the second reading, I have been around this game for a long time and I find in service delivery, it is all good and well—I am not having a go at you; I am just saying—the feds say it with good intent but more often than not the service delivery, quite frankly, is diminished in a lot of instances and we cannot do that with people with a disability. I really hope, as this is happening, that what we have identified here in these budget papers in terms of the fact that it is going to be captured by the federal funding by the bilateral agreement, so be it, but that that service delivery is not diminished. That is the one fear that does exist out there. Yes, it is all good and well; in theory, the NDIS is a wonderful national policy for people with a disability, but in reality, if we handball it over to the feds, it is up to you and those who come after you to make sure that it is implemented with at least the same calibre of service quality that they are currently experiencing.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I do not disagree, member. I know that we are on the same page in relation to this. I am a hands-on minister and I do not propose to handball anything. In relation to just the figures, I might ask the director general to comment on the changing nature of the figures.

**Mr SEARLE:** If I can refer the member to page 420 of the *Budget Statements* and the service summary for the department, there are the range of reductions that have happened in items 11 to 17 of the services, as you rightly identified. They have reduced significantly, as you rightly noted. At



point 22 on the service summary is “Contribution to the NDIS”. There is a balancing item there that is effectively the funds we are transferring to the commonwealth to deliver the scheme. So there is no reduction in state government —

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I did not say a reduction.

**Mr SEARLE:** Sorry —

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am talking about the service delivery. I know there is not a reduction. I understand that it is part of the bilateral agreement.

Can you please tell me, minister, with regard to the NDIS, what is the definition of a “complex disability”?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Member, I do not have that information in my folders but I will hand over to Ms Nys. I do not have the technical definition in front of me but I can tell you what I see as something being complex. I will ask Ms Nys to provide a response because she is living and breathing the NDIS at the moment more than anybody else and is very close to it.

**Ms NYS:** I can advise the member that, yes, I have been part of cross-government and cross-sector discussions and workshops with the NDIA and one of them was around meeting the needs of people with complex needs. In that workshop, they did explain their calculation and their definition, so to speak. Their actuarial model is based on the assumption that about 70 per cent of the population that they engage with will have what they call “average typical needs” and then 20 per cent of them will be people who they consider to have “complex needs”. They would have higher costs, more than one functional disability—functional impact across a number of areas—and are likely to be engaged with the mainstream service system quite significantly as well as the disability service system. They are people who have complex health needs or possibly educational needs. There is a further 10 per cent, which they call “very complex” and those people are people who they would see themselves as having responsibility to fund specialist support coordination for. They recognise that those people need funded supports through their plan in order to help them interface with the system and get their needs met. They are people who might have justice needs, be at risk of homelessness or have complex mental health needs. I certainly was assured by the fact that the commonwealth has put quite a lot of thought into this area.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** It has, has it, acknowledged that?

**Ms NYS:** It has.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Is there flexibility in the funding model to deal specifically with those people with complex needs?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Yes, there is, but is there enough flexibility? I think that is the question that we will have to keep an eye on as the scheme rolls out.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Yes, you will.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** That is certainly the view that has been put by some of the bigger service providers who assist people—who care for people—in this space. I agree with Helen; I think the NDIA are saying the right stuff but the proof will be in the pudding as it rolls out. It will be our job to make sure that there is capacity to ensure that those people have the services that they need. The NDIA do say there is capacity to move and as these issues arise, we will fix them, but it is certainly something that I am conscious of and keep an eye on.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** You are right, because that is the one group in particular that has some concerns. Of course, we have to be able to comfort those people with complex needs that, in fact, they are not going to have diminished service delivery. That is one of the biggest issues. I have a

very quick question: what about people who live in the regions or rural areas of the state? Living in rural aspects of Western Australia is a lot different from what they are in rural Victoria.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Again, member, I agree—you as a former Kalgoorlie boy and me who represents the Mining and Pastoral Region in this place. I am very conscious of the particular needs of people in regional Western Australia, particularly remote Western Australia. My view is that people in those communities should have access to quality services as those in the city or the metropolitan area have. One of the issues in relation to the NDIA's pricing thus far is that they have not recognised our remoteness in Western Australia. Remote here is very different from remote in Melbourne, Tasmania or Launceston, which is a suburb of Melbourne.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is right; it is so different.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** We have had conversations with the NDIA board before and I raised this issue with Minister Tehan at the last Disability Reform Council. As a result of our conversations last week, a particular body of work will be undertaken to ensure that service delivery in those regional and remote communities is what it should be and can be paid for. It is very different in those communities, as you would be aware, and other members would be aware. Sometimes we are dealing with tiny cohorts of one or two people who are hundreds of kilometres away from anywhere else. It is not always feasible to say, "We'll pay you \$45 an hour; go and provide this service" when, in fact, there might be four hours of travel involved. Anyway, I am pleased that particularly as a result of last week's conversations, they have agreed to do a body of work to make sure that those people are serviced appropriately and get quality care.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is my point. There is something in the water between here and Canberra. It does not matter what persuasion holds the treasury bench over there; they are the same. If we are signing up to a national model, which we have done here, that cohort of people are feeling underpaid and threatened. They are concerned. I would love to be able to think we can rely on the feds to open up their chequebook but, quite frankly, their history of the last 120 years is not flash.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Except on Metronet in the last few weeks, but that is a different point. Member, I agree. At the moment, they treat Kalgoorlie essentially as a metropolitan area. That is ludicrous. I recognise that.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** So I am not a country boy!

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I know! Talking to senior staff last week —

**Hon COLIN TINCKNELL:** That is like calling Canberra a suburb of Sydney.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Well, it kind of is; Canberra is very close to Sydney, but Kalgoorlie is nowhere near the metropolitan area. The senior staff recognised that last week and they proffered that information and said, "We recognise there is work to be done in Western Australia, particularly related to regional and remote communities" and how they pay for the service and how we make sure people in those communities can access quality services still.

[2.10 pm]

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** I refer to significant issues impacting the agency on page 416 and specifically the third dot point, which is about the sector transition fund. I note that the \$20.3 million sector transition fund has been set up to safeguard the sustainability of the sector. Is the government considering a transition fund to improve communication engagement and support for people with disability as they transition to the new system?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** There are a couple of things I will say there. Yes, I am very pleased that there is some money in the budget for a transition fund. It is something that I, as minister, pushed

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for strongly because I think if we are going to cross to a new scheme, we have to make sure that the service providers in operation in this scheme are armed and equipped to be able to take on the challenges ahead. It is also very pleasing to be able to announce that my federal colleague, the assistant minister for social services, Jane Prentice, today announced \$5.2 million in grants that have been awarded to organisations statewide to help build stronger more inclusive communities for people with disability. This is not only about people accessing NDIS, but also those in the community who will not access and IAS. These are information, linkages and capacity grants. They are awarded across four priority areas and they focus on improving links for people with disability to relevant mainstream community services, increasing knowledge and capacity within mainstream services, connecting people with disability and their communities, and supporting people with disability to engage and navigate the NDIS. The types of groups that were funded as part of the round today include Consumers of Mental Health WA, Consumer Vision, EDGE Employment Solutions, Wheatbelt Health Network, the Independent Living Centre of Western Australia, Intelife, People with Disabilities WA, Fremantle Multicultural Centre, South West Autism Network, the WA Foundation for Deaf Children, the Autism Association of Western Australia, Sussex Street Community Law Centre, People With Disabilities WA again for a second project, Richmond Wellbeing, Uniting Care West, Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre, WA Disabled Sports Association and Down Syndrome WA. Developmental Disability WA got three lots of funding around addressing the barriers to accessing mainstream services for professional development for mainstream schools and to do some e-learning work. We also funded Peel Volunteer Resource Centre, Leadership Western Australia, Mental Illness Fellowship WA, Inclusion Solutions Limited, Carers Association of WA, Far North Community Services, 30 Foot Drop and, again, Down Syndrome WA. A significant number of organisations today will benefit as a result of that \$5.2 million announcement to help grow capacity in the sector, but also deal with the challenges faced in the sector with the oncoming NDIS. That is on top of the transition money, so it is separate to the transition money.

In terms of the transition money, we are now going through a process. The department is working with community organisations and other stakeholders to work out how we might spend that money. That work is being done. Obviously, the transition funding comes in from 1 July, so we have proposed to collaborate amongst the sector to strengthen that collaboration and work out how we might best spend this money to ensure that everybody is ready for the NDIS and everybody can get the best out of it. I am not sure whether I have answered your question for that.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** I would like to drill down into a little bit more detail about both of those pots of money if that is okay. I will come back to the issue of the transition fund, but I want to ask a little bit more about the \$5.2 million worth of grants. Can I get some clarity around the time frame of those grants? Are those grants for the next financial year only or how long are those grants anticipated to go for for all of those organisations or are different organisations getting some of those moneys usually for different periods of time?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Thanks, member, good question. Essentially, the information, linkages and capacity grants have been a mainstay of the NDIS for the past couple of years. We had a grant round announced in March this year, which I think was the first round, so we have been able to identify an extra pocket of money, but this the \$5.2 million to fund organisations that missed out on the first round—what we saw as value in the submissions that were provided for the first round. There was not enough money as it was oversubscribed, so extra money has been fund to find agencies that missed out just below the line to give them funding. The money is for one year; it is only ever one year. The amounts range. Some organisations got \$300 000 and some got \$99 000; it depended on their application for the ILC process.

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**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Madam Chair, can I please ask that I receive supplementary information with the breakdown of how much money has been allocated to each of the organisations that the minister mentioned earlier?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I am advised that this is done through Tenders WA process. I have a list and I was not sure whether I could provide it. I am advised that I can table it and the committee can make a decision to release it. The information I will give you is the four priority areas under a ILC, the organisation name, the project title and a bit of the planned activities, the geographical coverage of the organisation and also the funding amount. Hopefully that is helpful.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** That is helpful.

**The CHAIR:** Can I just talk about that document? The committee will have to meet after this hearing to assign a status to that document. Until that time that document remains private. If the committee decides to make it public and put on the internet, it will.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I ask additional questions the minister about that money? When you were describing the nature of those grants, it sounded as though the purpose of them was to provide independent advocacy for individuals trying to navigate their way through the system. Is that what it is or is there any scope for systemic advocacy within any of those organisations as part of that grant funding?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I will get Ms Nys to explain the ILC program in a second, but you are correct in saying that there is no money for systemic advocacy per se in that round of funding. However, there is a separate piece of work that the department is undertaking for me in relation to systemic advocacy. No surprises, I am a proponent of funding systemic advocacy.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** As am I.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** The forward estimates reflect the previous government's decision to reduce state support for advocacy and leave it essentially for the federal government. I do not think the levels of funding that have been provided by the federal government will adequately safeguard the interest of people with disability, particularly through this heightened period of transition. I have asked my department to do a piece of work on systemic advocacy. There is a consultant appointed. The department have undertaken a review and I am told that I will have the review results back next month. As a result of that, depending on what that says, I have to take action to make sure that we provide systemic advocacy funding as a state government. I see advocacy and systemic advocacy as being like the canary in the coal mine. We want somebody there having an overview of what is going on and feeding it back to me as minister so I can make sure that either my department and/or the NDIA and/or the federal minister can address the issues as quickly as possible. I have always said in terms of the NDIS that were always going to have challenges with it, we have to be as nimble as possible to address those challenges, so where those challenges come to the fore we have to be quick to act to fix the problem so it does not affect other people. I just think systemic advocacy is an opportunity to have that overview to get quick action and fix problems as they arise. Short answer: there is not money for systemic advocacy in that; it is happening separately. In terms what ILC is, I might ask Ms Nys just to describe the process very briefly.

[2.20 pm]

**Ms NYS:** Thank you, minister. ILC is information linkages and capacity building. It is one of the funding tiers of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The intent of the scheme is really to provide the infrastructure and supports to communities, as well as individuals, so that people with disability are supported to access the community in a range of settings and to engage in the activities that they want. It is also so that communities are given advice, support and capacity to make

themselves accessible to people with a disability. I do not just mean physical access; it is actually around providing information and advice on how to include people with disability, how to engage with them and how to get information out to them. Under the WA NDIS scheme, the state had responsibility for administering ILC grants, which were funded jointly by both the commonwealth and the state. The round that the minister referred to that was issued in March this year was the last of the WA NDIS processes, in that the WA government ran the scheme and also administered the funding. It was agreed with the commonwealth that the state would do that because the state already had the plans in play to do that. The additional funding has been because the commonwealth advised us that they had further funds available and that they wished the state to take responsibility for administering them because, again, we had the processes in place. They do contain the element of advocacy, including systemic advocacy, because many of the programs that are funded are about ensuring that people with disability are skilled and enabled to advocate for themselves. There are a number of peer-to-peer support programs, for example, that will be funded through the new ILC grants. A key part of their function is around group and individual self-advocacy. I think, actually, it is one of the key functions of this funding through ILC.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I will just add to that to supplement what Ms Nys said. The commonwealth came to us and said that they had some money that they wanted to spend. We said, "Let's spend it on ILC." So the state found a contribution as well. This \$5.2 million, I have to say, is as a result of the two governments putting in money together. The process is as Ms Nys explained.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** The issue of the peer support network was mentioned. That was one of the questions I had, because it has grown over the last few years. Is the government considering funding administrative support for peer support as a mechanism for further engaging people with disability?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I did not read the whole list out, but one of the organisations that did get funding was the Valued Lives foundation. They got \$402 000 for Peer Connect WA, which is essentially working with those Peer Connect groups and those peer-to-peer Facebook and community groups across the states. The funding will go to Valued Lives as essentially kind of the peak, and then the money will trickle down to each of the individual peer-to-peer networks. I have had the great pleasure over the past few months of meeting some of these networks. I see real value in those peer-to-peer networks. The people I have met have been families in particular, loved ones, carers and people with disability. The information and the sharing of information that they provide to one another, but also feedback back to the state, I think is invaluable. It has been on my list to make sure that we do get funding for these groups. That has been my view. Separately, through this process—it was not by me, but done through the Tenders WA process—it has evaluated it independently, and \$402 000 will go to the Valued Lives foundation to enable those peer-to-peer groups to function.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** On the same line item I was referring to on page 420—line item 17—I just have some questions about the national disability strategy. There have been concerns expressed to me from people within the disability sector that the implementation of the NDIS is detracting from the focus to ensure that we have an accessible and inclusive community more generally for people with disability. What allocation of funds has been made to implement the national disability strategy within WA for 2018–19 and also across the forward estimates?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I might ask Ms Nys to reply to that. I do not think there is a particular line item in relation to funding for the national disability strategy. I make the point, though, that at the last Disability Reform Council meeting, the ministers agreed to bring forward the next national disability strategy, so consultation will start on that later this year. We are due a review of the state disability strategy. It is my intention to try to have the conversations in tandem with the national

disability strategy. I make that point because I know you will be interested in that. I might ask Ms Nys if she has anything else to add.

**Ms NYS:** I do not have a great deal more to add. As the minister said, there is not a specific funding stream for the national disability strategy. In a sense, the activity of the Disability Services Commission in this space has been a coordinating function across other government departments and other sectors to ensure that disability was a focus and that other organisations were aware of their responsibilities in this space. As the minister has indicated, there is work going on at the moment in relation to the review and what they refer to as the reinvigoration of the national disability strategy. That work will go on in parallel as we map out the ongoing responsibility for disability services in this state.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I have just one thing to add to that. In relation to our state disability strategy, our Disability Services Commission board and my Ministerial Advisory Council on Disability will collaborate to lead our state process —

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Are you referring to the state review process?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Yes, the review of our state disability strategy. We will make sure that they are plugged in to any conversations about the national review and the national strategy reinvigoration.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** It sounds as though it has sort of been put on a little bit of a slow burn at this point while that review is being undertaken. That has been some of the concern that has been relayed back to me from the sector—to make sure that it does not fall off the agenda. Bearing in mind that we are obviously dealing with a major reform at the moment in the form of the NDIS—that is understood—we do not want to lose sight of some of this core activity as well. My additional question in relation to this, bearing in mind that I heard there is no specific line item, is: how many FTE would approximately be allocated towards trying to progress the existing strategy? I am not sure if you can even quantify that.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I do not think we can provide information in terms of distinct numbers of people who are working on the national strategy. There would be elements of the national strategy worked on by members of staff as part of their ongoing duties. They do not work per se on the national strategy, but their day-to-day jobs at the Disability Services Commission would involve working on issues that line up with the strategy or are a part of the national strategy. There is no kind of line of sight over the national strategy. In fact, I do not think there has been any real ownership by the state of the national strategy, really. It is there, it has happened, it is important and we work in with it, but it has been of the nation as opposed to of the state. We obviously have line of sight over our state strategy. We had a conversation at the Disability Reform Council recently, where the decision was made to bring forward the work on the next strategy. I certainly have a level of confidence that we will be a big part of the new strategy going forward. It seems to be the intention of both the federal minister, Dan Tehan, but also the assistant minister, Jane Prentice, that we all have buy-in and that this is truly a national document that we can all be proud of and we can all participate in, and we can all have confidence in rolling it out.

I take what you are saying on board in terms of the level of frustration amongst some of the people in the sector at the moment. You quite rightly said that essentially the NDIS is a transformative policy. There is lots happening in this space at the moment and I have to be conscious that we do not lose sight of the national strategy, but I actually do not think we will. I think this exercise to update the strategy is probably a good one that we will participate fully in.

[2.30 pm]

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**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** I know that my colleagues on my right have been drilling down into the NDIS and some of the arrangements, but I wonder whether we could take a step back and look at 1 July, which is the key date we have all been working towards. I wanted to ask you some perhaps more general questions about what is happening in relation to the dot points that we find on page 416 under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency”. Could you talk about the progress of the transfer? How many people will transfer on 1 July and what are the staging posts after that for the full transfer? How many local coordinators will we have on 1 July and what is the plan for those over the next six to 12 months? Can you just address those more general issues for me?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Thanks, Madam Chair, and thank you, member. I will start off and at least give you a first go and then I might ask Ms Nys to add to it on behalf of the director general.

So, 1 July is fast approaching; it is days away. About 8 700 people are already in the WA NDIS who will transfer across to the national scheme. That will happen—in fact, it is happening in the north east metro area, where there have been hundreds, but it will essentially happen properly from 1 July to the end of this year. The Department of Communities is working extremely closely with the NDIA on this transition. We have established a transition team at the department whose sole task is to make sure this transition happens on time and as seamlessly as possible, because that is a challenge. When we are moving from one system—bearing in mind the plan should essentially be the same—I want to make sure that the transition is as seamless as possible, and, if at all possible, people with disability do not realise that the level of service they are getting is now being given by another agency essentially. That is happening.

As part of the process as well, we have seconded 21 local coordinators across to the NDIA. That started from April this year. You would be aware, as other members are in here, given the amount of conversation we have had about local coordinators and the valuable job that they do, they use their specialised knowledge of the Western Australian disability system to make sure that there is a strong and locally informed start to the transition. My advice tells me that as of 15 June, which is the latest information I have, the Department of Communities had collected personal consent to move to the NDIS from 3 948 WA NDIS participants, which is nearly half the number due to move to the national scheme by 31 December 2018. There are 21 local coordinators on loan and we are also in the process of existing staff from the Department of Communities choosing to transfer across to the NDIA to enable them to have a good workforce at the NDIA. People are only a good workforce when people have years of experience in the delivery of services to people with disability. So, there are 21 on loan and there are 200 going across. I am hopeful as the rollout happens, in fact, that the NDIA will also decide to take on more of the staff that we currently have in this space.

There is a wealth of knowledge, as members in this place would know, amongst those local coordinators, because they have helped navigate not only the disability system, but they have helped navigate government over the past many years. They have linked people in with mental health services, with housing issues, with a range of education and with a range of issues. I think and certainly I keep impressing upon the NDIA chair and the board and the CEO that there is a lot more knowledge in Western Australia than they had elsewhere and they could actually take on more of those people in Western Australia to help them with the rollout and the ongoing delivery of the scheme in WA. Hopefully, I have given you what you wanted.

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** Yes. The next area I want to shift attention to is the disability sector itself. What help is the state government giving in relation to the dot point on page 416 to support disability sector organisations? Is there specific assistance that is going to the sector?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I guess the biggest thing, which obviously does not have a monetary value, is more frequent access to me. So, more regular conversations with those service providers in NDIS

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every couple of weeks to make sure that I am alive to the issues that they are facing and so that I can feed those issues into the transition team, but also into the chair of the board and the NDIA. I think that is most valuable, because, as I said, if we are going to make this work, we need to be nimble and we need to know what the problems are and fix them. Separate to that, obviously, in the budget papers there is \$20.3 million for sector transition. That is essentially to help those agencies prepare for the work of the NDIA systems, to make sure that the quality systems are maintained—again, particularly for those people with highly complex needs—and also to make sure that we are collaborating. Essentially, to give them the tools and equipment to be able to move across.

Part of this funding as well—and the spread has not been worked out—is that I am also conscious of ensuring that it is not a race to the bottom if we go to the national scheme. If there are service providers now who are paying above award wages, I want us to be working with them to ensure that they can continue to do that. Some of the sector transition staff will work with those service providers and interested parties to make sure that we are alive to that, because the last thing I want in the disability space is zero-hour contracts or people—no disrespect—who are backpackers and here on their holidays for a good time, but who do not make a career of disability. With the rollout of the NDIS over the next few years, NDIS figures say that there is an extra 10 000 workers needed in this space. I want to make sure that we are paying them appropriately—paying them well, in fact, not appropriately. Bearing in mind that the award rates are not significant now, but there are a number of service providers who pay above award rates, and I want to recognise that and make sure that those service providers do not need to drop their pay levels and drop their pay rates. I want to see workers in this space who can afford to work in this space. I want to see workers in this space who can actually live—they can get housing loans and car loans and whatever. Part of the sector transition fund and work will be to address those issues as well.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Minister, Mr Searle and your officers, it is nice to see you. I was looking at a number of places in the budget papers, whether it be page 420 and your service summary for the Department of Communities or a number of other locations. The thing that strikes me—this is what I am going to ask you to help me with—is the impossibility of comparing this apple with the oranges that have gone before it. We used to have a Disability Services Commission, which was a standalone authority created by law, which still exists—the law, of course—with a standalone budget. Now, it has been subsumed into this mega authority and then at the same time we have the NDIA phenomenon, which, of course, does a number of things. It takes in, on a sliding, graduated scale the state government's investment in this important area; introduces very substantial, as I understand it, commonwealth funding on a graduated basis into the same area of activity; and at the same time introduces some areas of responsibility that are really commonwealth initiatives that expand the client base and areas of responsibility beyond that which we have formally seen.

There is probably more to it than that, but that is enough. I think you understand where I am coming from. My question is: with all of that in mind, is there some sort of consolidated spreadsheet or analysis that helps us try to make sense of all of that? Because I do not know if this sector is a growing or shrinking, or if we are doing more in this area or less in that area. I am seeing some helpful nods opposite and I appreciate that because I think you get what I am saying.

[2.40 pm]

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** We do.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I am hoping that you have wrestled with this and maybe you have an answer for me.

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**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Let me try to give you an answer, member. Thank you for that question. I recognise your long-held interest in this area as a former minister with responsibility for the area. You are correct in pointing out that since 1 July last year, what was the DSC is now part of the new Department of Communities. In terms of the budget, we are sharing services with what was Housing, Communities and Child Protection. There are still specific line items that relate solely to child protection, but there are also line items that—we have one administration with HR et cetera now. It is difficult; it is apples and oranges, and not apples at the same time. In saying that, I might see if Mr Searle wants to give a more expansive answer in relation to the general issues that you have raised. There is no spreadsheet, but let us see what answer we can get and we can talk again.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** All will be revealed!

**Mr SEARLE:** The reality is we have quite deliberately tried to structure the current set of budget papers so that they reflect ministerial responsibilities. We have not produced a combined set of papers for the Department of Communities where we have merged everything together. We have tried to keep them, particularly around service delivery, as separate as we can. You are absolutely right, member. There is this movement of funding from us directly providing services to funding the commonwealth to provide the services. Over the forward estimates, the state's effort remains almost identical. There are some minor fluctuations, but they are minor. On top of the numbers in these budget papers is, of course, the money the commonwealth is tipping in. You are right; they are making a significant contribution that they have not made in the past. The overall expense on matters related to services to people with disabilities has significantly increased in the state of the period of the forward estimates. Maybe it is something that we can think about in terms of the budget papers for next year—putting that commonwealth expenditure in there as well so you get a better picture. But in terms of the state, we have tried to make it as clear as possible that the individual services are still reflected in the budget papers.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** If I can just add to that as well, member—historically we have had about 26 000 DSC clients in the state. What we are seeing over the next few years is a move to 39 000 clients; that is by 2020. There is substantially more being invested in the disability portfolio than there has been previously.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Thanks for comprehending where I am coming from.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Your frustration—yes.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I accept the director general's answer in that he says that these budget papers here are meant to reflect what is happening now and in the out years, and that is quite proper. It is just that in trying to weigh it up, it is rather difficult. People with a concern in this sector—Hon Peter Collier has given a reflection that with massive change people get very uneasy. I guess what we are all after is a reassurance that people are not falling through the gaps when we see numbers expressed in a way that we cannot reconcile with what we are familiar with.

Pressing on, if I may, I will try to make this a minimal preamble. One of the things that —

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Member, is there a page in here that you are referring to?

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** No, I am hoping that you might be able to point to me, but I think you cannot.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** You ask your question. It is only that if you were referring to a page, it helps us with our notes. But you ask your question.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I am not sure which service summary it would be under.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Do not feel the need to pick somewhere. It was only if you were referring to somewhere, I would use it to find my notes. Otherwise, just ask your question and we will provide an answer.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I will bumble through and you can pick up the pieces.

One of the reasons other states wanted the commonwealth to come up with a national scheme is because they did not have anything like Western Australia had. It is as simple as that. Some of those states had given up trying. One of the things that was always pointed to at an interstate level was our local area coordinator system. I am going to ask, for the sake of relating this to this year's budget, if you could advise how that is reflected in this year's budget and what the future is of the LAC system. Just to briefly let you know where I am coming from with this, those commentators from interstate were right and all the feedback from DSC clients and their families tells us it was right—that the local area coordinator system was valued very highly and was very useful. If there are any views to the contrary, we will hear those. What concerns a number of people, including me, is that the LAC system is being taken over by something else—some bastardised version of LAC called something else and run from Geelong that thinks, as we have just heard, that Kalgoorlie is part of the metropolitan area. I am wondering if you can tell me where in the budget the LACs are, if they are in there, and how they are enhanced or, at least, have not gone backwards.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** There are a few things in there, member.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** There are.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** We will untease them as we progress. I agree with you; we were a lot further advanced in this state than anywhere else in this country in terms of our service provision to people with disability and the fact that we had the Disability Services Commission. You are right—some states could not wait to get out of the disability space. I recognise that. We, long ago, moved away from those horrible institutions that until recently existed in some of those eastern states. We have people living independently. We have people living in supported living options. That just did not exist nationally. I make those points. In terms of a line item in the budget, there is no line item that you can hone down to and say this is the LAC funding line. Those LAC positions do appear in the numbers, but I will get Mr Searle to give the staff numbers generally. I am not sure if he can drill down, but let us see how far he can drill down.

In terms of the national scheme and what is happening, as I said earlier, there has been a recognition of the quality of the LACs or LCs in this state. We have agreement from the NDIA for a participant pathway program that provides, at least for regional Western Australia, that they have LCs in the system. The LCs will not be lost. The reasoning—it is their reasoning, not mine—is that they recognise that in regional Western Australia in particular there are thin markets. Again, that is their wording, not mine. It is difficult to get people on the ground doing the things that LCs have done if they are not LCs doing the work on behalf of the NDIA.

There will be LCs or LACs in regional Western Australia; that rollout will start very soon. Separately, we continue to have our LCs in the agency and have for the next few years. In fact, Mr Searle can elaborate, but it is his intention to actually copy what LCs have done for the disability space over the last few years and actually across the whole range of the services provided by the new Department of Communities—child protection, housing, communities, disability services—have people who are LACs providing that service across the whole department.

I might ask the director general to elaborate further on that, but also, in terms of that, just to clarify whether in fact I was right in saying that there is no specific line item in the budget. If you can point to further details for the member, that would be good.

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[2.50 pm]

**Mr SEARLE:** There are about 400 local area coordinators currently employed across the state; 21 have already been seconded to the NDIA. We think up to 200 will transfer across to the NDIA. They are covered in service 11, in the service summary. Planning and coordination is what picks up the role of the local area coordinators.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Of course, service 11—answered!

**Mr SEARLE:** There you go; you knew it all along!

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Is it just uniquely them, or is it other people too?

**Mr SEARLE:** No, there are other things in there as well, but it is fundamentally them.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Who is going to be looking after them? Are they going to be your troops or someone else's troops in the eastern states?

**Mr SEARLE:** The 200 who are going across to the NDIA will actually report to the state manager for the NDIA who will be based in Midland. The NDIA, last week, their board talked very strongly about their intent to regionalise their management structure and empower management out of Midland to make decisions. The chair and board members were also very, very complimentary of the local area coordination system and how it worked and how it was best practice. It is my desire across the whole of the agency to go to a people–place–home model, where we have local decision-making across all regions of the state, and roles that are very, very, very similar to local area coordinator roles become fundamental with that. Having local people who know the services that are available, the people in their region and their family circumstances to approve decision-making, rather than having it made at a distance, will improve the quality of government administration in Western Australia.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Member, if I can just add to it, back to the LACs, the NDIS model directly replicates the LAC model and actually refers to those people as local coordinators. Regional Western Australia, I alluded to, they are going to do that work in-house, so that the local coordinators will be done in-house. In the metropolitan area —

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Whose house?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** In the NDIA's house. The NDIA will do that.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** They are not our people, in future?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No. The NDIA do use the terminology "local coordinators". In regional WA, that will be done in-house, that service. In the metropolitan area, it is their intention to get non-government providers to effectively be the local coordinators and do that role on behalf of them. They will split the planning and local coordination role in the metro area. But I just wanted to place that on the record too. It is not bastardised and they do not call it something else; they call it local coordination.

**The CHAIR:** Despite my flavour for informality, we might just choose a couple of different words in relation to some of what is happening. Thank you.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Madam Chair, apologies if I used any words that were unparliamentary.

**The CHAIR:** I think you might have followed former honourable members.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I would not use unparliamentary terms.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, member. We are going to move on to Hon Peter Collier. Just be careful of your language.

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**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I have got a few questions and I will put some on notice. Just a couple of things with regard to some of issues that have been raised, I will go through a few, if you would not mind, and just keep it relatively short. Firstly, autism is creating again a lot of angst out there. Can you please give me some clarification with regard to the status of autism with the NDIS?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Autism is in the NDIS and any changes to eligibility criteria for people with autism will require agreement by all states and territories under the DRC. I know *The Australian* in particular has been running stories about that and have caused a great deal of concern around the community. Further to that, though, I might throw across to Helen in terms of historically how we have brought people with autism into the space. I know, say, for example in South Australia, they brought all children between seven and 14 into the system immediately without doing any kind of assessment or proper assessment. Historically, in Western Australia, we have done assessment. I might just talk to Helen quickly about that.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Can I just clarify something before you make comment? I agree; if that is the case, "*The Aus*" needs to pull its head in because it is causing enormous distress out there, but some clarification would be helpful. When I was Minister for Education, the number of students that were diagnosed as autistic or with autism increased by 114 per cent since 2011. That does not necessarily mean there has been a 114 per cent increase in the number of students with autism, it just meant that the diagnosis has become much more sophisticated. Having said that, where that child might be on a spectrum would be widely diverse. I think some clarification between where the funding kicks in would be also helpful.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I am happy to get Ms Nys to make a comment on that. I just want to state from the outset, the state is committed to ensuring that people with autism remain part of the NDIS. It is my view, and the view of my state colleagues, that no decision can be made unilaterally by the federal government, or the NDIA in fact, to exclude people with autism from the NDIS and any such decision would need to go to the Disability Reform Council. In terms of the people on the spectrum, the assessment process and what we have done historically in Western Australia, which hopefully will give some confidence to people with autism in this state that actually we have got the kind of role/goal model in terms of it is difficult to get in, in Western Australia, and so those people should not be at risk of losing out. I will ask Helen to make some comments in that space, please.

**Ms NYS:** I think to provide a bit more detail, as you may be aware, member, in relation to autism, the actual diagnostic model does refer to people having levels of autism. There is level 1, 2 and 3, with level 3 being people who need substantial support in really all areas of life and level 1, people who clearly have autism but perhaps are less function-impacted by it and need fewer supports. Level 2 need medium-level supports. The legislation around eligibility for autism is very clear that for anyone to be eligible for the NDIS, it needs to be about the functional impact of the disability on their life, so that it is not that any one condition gets you in; a diagnosis of autism in itself does not make somebody eligible, it is about how autism impacts on the individual. That is the way that Western Australia has always determined eligibility to access disability agency supports. It was about how the disability, in this case autism, impacted on somebody in their day-to-day life. There have always been people in Western Australia who had a diagnosis of autism who did not necessarily access formal supports through the Disability Services Commission. I think it is fair to say that the National Disability Insurance Agency in their rollout—which as we all know was speeded up, and they have had to struggle to deliver the scheme within the time scales that were required. They did, in their early set-up, decide, as a means of, I guess, speeding up the assessment process, and also it is a means of providing advice to their staff, there was a general assumption that people who had a diagnosis of level 2 and level 3 would be automatically entered into the National Disability Insurance Scheme. So, they had what they called "list A" and "list B". List A were automatically entered and

level 2 and level 3 autism were classified under list A. The information which *The Australian* referred to a few weeks ago was that the agency was now saying that they would actually look at the functional impact on people, rather than necessarily just which classification they had. That is actually the national agency moving to a system which is much more aligned with the Western Australian system. As the minister indicated, I think, people who are receiving formal disability supports through the WA system could be quite confident that they would be likely to continue those supports through the National Disability Insurance Agency, because the same functional impact test would be applied.

[3.00 pm]

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Just a couple of other things. First of all, those people over 65 years of age currently under funding who will not be eligible under the NDIS under the criteria: what provision has been made for these people in particular, which again is causing quite a considerable amount of anxiety?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** It is causing a level of angst, I have to say, and it has been raised with me a few times. Helen will get into it better, because I will ramble on, noting the time. I will ask Helen, if she does not mind addressing that one—just the range of work that has been undertaken in relation to that cohort.

**Ms NYS:** In relation to people over 65 who are currently supported by the state disability system, there is absolute commitment to continue that support, so those people will continue to access disability-related supports and they will continue to be provided with supports by the National Disability Insurance Agency. Parallel to the bilateral agreement which was signed, there was also an agreement that was signed in relation to funding by the aged-care system, and there will be a point at which those individuals move to be funded by the aged-care system, but that is really a funding issue, not necessarily about where their supports are delivered. So there is not any intent that those people will be forced to enter the aged-care system; it is about a financial agreement between the state and the commonwealth about who actually pays for the service. People can continue to live in their disability accommodation if they are people in group homes. It is just that where that would be paid for would be really for the state and the commonwealth to work out. So the commitment is absolutely to continue supports for those people beyond 65 if they are current users of the service system.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Madam Chair, if I could just add to that. It is fair to say that the level of equality of communications material that has been coming out around the NDIS has not been optimal. One of the things that I have raised, and continue to raise, with the NDIA is that they need to get out there and have the conversation with people and dispel these myths. Member, I hear the same. I have the same people approach me as obviously approach you and share their frustration and their fears. The answers are there. There has been some good work done; there is a commitment to people not missing out. But I do not think we have actually communicated that properly, so I keep pushing the NDIA to do that. It is my job to try and keep them on track to make sure they do it.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** With regard to the change to the structure—the formative structure in the Department of Communities et cetera—Hon Tjorn Sibma brought this up with regard to the staffing or the redundancies. Mr Searle, I think you mentioned some junior officers who had been made redundant. Can we have a list of the number of people that have been offered redundancies? You will need to take it on notice.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** If you are just asking for a list of the number, we have given the number of people earlier today.

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**Hon PETER COLLIER:** What about the title of the people that accepted, not the number?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No, we have not given that.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** You should be able to do that, should you not?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** We cannot give people's names.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I do not want the names; I just want the title.

**Mr SEARLE:** We can readily give it by level.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is all I want—the level.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** We will give it to you by level. We have it here.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** I am not being sinister; I just want to find out what levels.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** What might have happened is that we might have made a person redundant and the position has been transferred.

**Mr SEARLE:** There has been a little bit of that.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I think it is better to have the levels. I can read those out. The figures that Mr Searle has given were current at 21 May. There continues to be movement on a daily basis. Essentially the headcount was 114 staff—former DSC staff—and 114 of those positions were in the Perth metropolitan area. Level 1, there were 14 staff; level 2, there were 53 staff; level 3, 13 staff; level 4, 11 staff; level 5, six staff; level 6; eight staff; level 7, seven staff; and level 8, two.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Okay. That is the total, which is good. Were any consultants used with regard to coming to a final decision for the NDIS from the department?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Were any offices closed as a result of the changes to the structure?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No offices have closed as a result of the changing of the structure.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Any offices closed, period?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** There has been movement. The office that was in Margaret River—because we did not have enough space, because we are still growing in some areas, so even though we are going across a national scheme, we are growing—those staff have been moved to Busselton, purely because of space issues. Certainly, there have been no office closures as a result of the NDIA.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Can I just clarify that, because that is the one that I have been asked about? The Margaret River office has been closed. Those officers have been transferred to Busselton. Did you say that Busselton is going in an acting capacity?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No, added to, so those four staff that were just dealing with that area —

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Added to; okay. So there has not been a reduction in staff.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** What about the Busselton office; is that secure?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Yes, absolutely.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** That is not closing, definitively?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No. We have no plans to close other offices now, but what is happening naturally as a result of the amalgamation of the departments is that we are trying to put the workforce together. Say at the moment, Port Hedland, for example, we have a big Department of Housing office—what was housing. We have a big and new child protection office, and we have

a small disability office kind of on the outskirts of town. The plan is to consolidate. That may see the handful of people that are just disability by themselves at the moment in Port Hedland move across into a building with the Department of Communities staff, but obviously child protection or housing staff. So we are not closing offices. Communities are not going to miss out I think is the point I want to make.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** No, it was just Busselton I was particularly concerned about. I have a number of issues that have been raised with me with regard to the funding. I will put some of these on notice, but if I could have a couple of quick responses to these.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Member, if you do have line items, give them to us, because it is easier for us to find the notes.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** No. This is purely in a generic sense.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Sure; ask away.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Wage assumption: first of all, the NDIA assumes that the disability support worker will be employed at a level of 2.3 under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award. It has been put to me that that assumption is too low. Do you have a response to that?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Certainly. I have been told the same thing. You are correct in saying that that level 2.3 is what the NDIA use. I might ask Helen to elaborate.

**Ms NYS:** Unfortunately, minister, I do not know that I can elaborate a great deal. Like you, my understanding is that that is the level that they assume support workers would be paid at, but then the hourly rate is variable depending on the activity, so evenings and weekends would be paid at different rates.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** So it is kind of not comparable, apples to apples. There is a bit of apples and oranges again.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Another one is that the hourly rate for individual support has not been addressed nor adjusted and there is no recommendation to do so. Is that correct?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Certainly, that was one of the issues that was raised last week when the NDIA board was over, and they have agreed to doing a piece of work in Western Australia, so it is an extension of that independent pricing review that we have spoken about in this place previously and we have been critical of in that we were not confident that anyone in Western Australia was spoken to as part of that review. In fact, I have found out since that that service provider in Kalgoorlie was, so at least one person was. Anyway, they have agreed to extend that independent pricing review particularly to deal with therapy services. I have also secured the same extension to accommodation providers for people with complex needs. Up until now, they had not moved, but as a result of last week's conversations, they are going to do a further piece of work in both those areas.

[3.10 pm]

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** There are a number more. It does appear that what I am hearing, you are hearing as well, which is good. There is no key definition of "complex disability", which we have been through, and therefore there is the risk that the categories to access the additional 10 per cent will be high. We have been through that so I am comfortable with that response. I will do one more. Cancellations are a bit of an issue here in Western Australia. They will be charged at 90 per cent of the rate as an incentivised approach to get providers and participants to work together to minimise cancellations. Providers have little control over the reasons for cancellations by

participants, which is true—they have no control over it; it is so fluid. Do you have a response to that?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Because this is NDIS or NDIA operational business, none of my advisers would feel confident in answering that properly.

**Hon PETER COLLIER:** Just note that it is there and that is one that has been raised with me. It is another one for when you meet with them again.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I will. What I will do is actually ask the question and do some digging into it, but at this stage none of us feel confident in giving you a fulsome answer.

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** I refer you, minister, to page 418 and the eleventh service—so the first one under your portfolio, “Planning and Coordination for People with Disability”. It just occurred to me reflecting on the comments you have made in the last couple of hours about the transition to the NDIS, with the additional workforce that is required there is presumably some work that needs to be done to ensure that workers are trained. There is talk about a skills shortage; it is very much on the tip on everybody’s tongue in Western Australia in all sorts of sectors, but we do not often think of it in relation to disabilities services. Have you been able to do anything particular in terms of the transition to ensure that we do not suffer a skills shortage in Western Australia?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** My file says that in terms of that note, it says that this page has been intentionally blank, so I thank my advisers for reminding me of the actual work that is going on.

As I mentioned earlier on, the National Disability Services industry plan anticipates that we will need up to 9 000 new workers in Western Australia to respond to the increase in demand role as a result of the rollout of the NDIS. It is something that weighs heavily on my mind and, as I said earlier on, I do not want this to be an industry of backpackers—again, no disrespect to backpackers. I have been working closely with my colleague the Minister for Education and Training on this issue, as well as with the sector and the work that is happening and being led by the NDIS. There have been two pieces of work undertaken by the minister for education. She joined me and co-hosted a roundtable a few months ago with representatives of the disability sector—service providers in the room, people with disability but also representatives from the training sector—to see if we could identify and map out what is needed and where we think it might be needed so we can be confident that there will not be a skills shortage going forward. There has been work and that work continues between those respective agencies, Minister Ellery as minister for workforce development and the Department of Communities—those meetings have happened. It was a very good, positive conversation and probably was overdue, in fact. That work has started and so while the rollout is happening over the next few years, we are looking at ways to be ahead of the curve and to make sure that we are training people with disability and ensuring that there are workers out there who can do this quality work that we value and want in this space. Separately, Minister Ellery has also advised me that the State Training Board has led a piece of work which specifically focuses on identifying and mapping out the skills requirements in the personal care, the disability care, the aged care and the health space so while it is not just solely the disability space, it is allied workers. The State Training Board is leading that work. The minister anticipates that work in a report to her later in the year. We are meeting together as ministers. My agencies have conversations with other appropriate agencies and we are working closely with NDS, who are the leaders in this space and who undertook that industry plan, just to see how we can make sure that we have a decent quality workforce as the rollout happens.

**Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT:** It is good to be proactive on these things.

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**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Hon Peter Collier has picked up on some of the lines of questions I had, but I still have some more. I refer to the service summary on page 420. I note that there is no specific line item reference for the disability justice centre. Is it possible to get a breakdown of the funding allocated to the centre for the 2018–19 year and also across the forward estimates?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** My advice is that the funding is \$4.5 million indexed.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** How does that compare with the previous year?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I think the indexation is the difference.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** So it is merely indexed from the previous year to this year and in the forward estimates?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** That is the whole service, that is not the centre. There has been no change.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Of course, it has been grossly underutilised to date largely because of the legislative framework that exists around it, which I am hoping is going to get addressed. Does that mean that there is no anticipation that we are going to be increasing usage of the centre if there no increase in the moneys that might be available?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No, it is my understanding there is actually capacity in there for the 10 people that it could take at the moment. We will not need extra funding if we have more residents in the centre. It is not that there is latent capacity in a sense, because we are providing other services; we are providing an outreach service at the moment. I think it is provided by the staff who would ordinarily be in the centre servicing the residents of the centre. There will not be a requirement to have extra funding if we have full capacity.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** In terms of the breakdown of the \$4.5 million, are any of those moneys being allocated to implement any of the recommendations that arose out of the review of the disability justice centre?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I might ask Mr Richardson to reply to that one.

**Mr RICHARDSON:** I can confirm that the \$4.5 million is for the operation of the disability justice service. Most of that is the centre. The government is still considering the recommendations of the review, as I understand, but should any changes be required through capital upgrades for security or changes to the staffing profile, those will be funded from a different cost setting within the budget. So there is a minor repairs and upgrades budget that could be used for that if necessary. There is also the movement of staff between different services. We do not anticipate any requirement for any funding for the agency, but there could be an allocation of new funding of the service if necessary.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Is it possible to get a breakdown of how that \$4.5 million has been allocated across that service?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Yes, we can provide that. We do not have that information but by way of supplementary—absolutely.

*[Supplementary Information No D2.]*

[3.20 pm]

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** I would like to ask another line of questions. I refer to page 416 and the spending changes line item “Reconfiguration of the Spinal Cord Injury Service”. It is towards the top of the page. Obviously, we have \$1 186 000 that was spent on the reconfiguration in 2017–18 and a further \$3 553 000 is budgeted for 2018–19 and there is nothing in the forward estimates. Could the minister please provide a breakdown of those funds?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I can certainly give it a go and I might ask one of my advisers to supplement what I say. Additional recurrent funding of \$4.3 million over the two years commencing from 2017–18 to 2018–19 for the Department for Communities—Disability Services is to provide transition support care packages for existing Quadriplegic Centre clients to transition to community housing and to prevent further admissions to the centre prior to its closure.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** What operational funding is allocated to the spinal injuries service in 2018–19 and across the forward estimates?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** You will have to ask the Minister for Health in relation to the operational funding. We do not fund the operation of the centre, but we certainly provide funding to individuals and obviously we have this money now to help transition people out.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** I had a couple of other questions that I suspected might be for the Minister for Health as well. I am going to just put it out there anyway just to see. It was in relation to the funding of the quad centre. Can I confirm whether any of that comes within the same budget or is that all to be directed to the Minister for Health?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** All Health is my advice.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Of course, I had a whole line of questions around HACC services as well, but, of course, I need to also direct them to the Minister for Health. I suppose this is the interesting overlap between the delivery of services in disability and health.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Myself and the Minister for Health are working extremely closely on mental health but also HACC. There is an obvious interface between our two portfolios, so we have been meeting. I think we are meeting every fortnight now to make sure that we are on the same page and that for people with mental illness or mental health issues, but also for people who are accessing HACC now or could potentially access HACC in the future, that we know how those issues interface with the NDIS that I am responsible for. So, yes, ask your questions to Minister Cook, but rest assured that we are, as colleagues, dealing with these issues together to make sure that people do not fall through the cracks or are not missing out on services.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** I am curious to know, now that you have raised the issue of mental health, are you referring to psychosocial disability in particular?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I am, yes.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Are you talking about it in terms of the transition to the NDIS?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** In the context of the NDIS.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** I just wanted to be clear.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Sorry; I should have made it clear.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** It is all mental health, so it is not inaccurate.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No, it is purely in relation to the NDIS.

**Hon ALISON XAMON:** Chair, I might leave my questions there for now because I had a range of questions that would be best directed to the Minister for Health.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Minister, on page 416, halfway down the table at the top of the page, under "National Disability Insurance Scheme" there are three line entries. The middle one is "Sector Support". I think that the amount of \$20.3 million referred to in your media statement of today that you referred to some little while ago, concerns a top-up to the existing round of the information, linkages and capacity building grants. That is in addition to the \$20.3 million set aside in the state budget for a section transition fund. Is this \$5.2 million you have announced today further to this

line item, so the budget is out by 25 per cent, or has what has been announced today something different?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** Thank you, member, for the question. No, in fact, that amount announced today is a different amount.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** So it is for different things. It is not that the budget is 25 per cent short?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** No, it is a different amount.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** As a Western Australian, I am glad to hear that. As an opposition member, I am slightly disappointed.

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** What we can both agree on is that that \$5.2 million that was announced today will provide significant benefit to the disability sector in this state. I will not go back through the list of those organisations that will receive funding, suffice to say they are very valuable organisations that are doing great work in this space. I have given the list to the committee and the committee will make a decision at later stage about that, but you will see the list for yourself and you will recognise that the contribution that these people are making to the system and the sector in this state will make a big difference to people's lives.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** While we are on a roll, Mr Searle earlier referred to his vision for a new type of LAC service, which reflects the broader ambit of the new Department of Communities' responsibilities, so taking into account considerations for client families like their housing arrangements and so on, quite apart and in addition to any disability concerns that have traditionally been the LAC's role. Is any of that reflected in this year's budget in embryo? Have we made some concrete steps down that path?

**Hon STEPHEN DAWSON:** I am not sure if Mr Searle wants to answer that given it was a conversation—my understanding is it is not reflected in the budget, but it is starting to be reflected in practice. However, let me ask Mr Searle if he can provide a more fulsome response to the member.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** My reason for asking, if there was any fear that I was trespassing perhaps on another minister's province, because you have got about five of them you have to report to, you unfortunate person, I understood that the basis of it was the disabilities connection. If there is some more information you can tell us, that would be great.

**Mr SEARLE:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, minister. One of the things that has become really obvious from my work with the regional services reform unit is the disjointed manner of government response to individual families in crisis. We deal with their children differently to how we deal with their housing and how we deal with a range of other challenges they have. What we are trying to do is integrate that and we think the model of local area coordination facilities that so we have one person dealing with a family. That one-to-one relationship the local area coordinators develop we think is a very strong model going forward. We are in the process of rolling it out across regional WA and, as of 1 July, which is not very far away, in the Kimberley we will be one department with one shopfront. So it is very much starting to roll out literally as we are speaking. The department up there has been working together for a number of months about what that means and how we live it out on the ground. It is very much a work in progress but we hope within 18 months to have rolled it out across all of regional Australia.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** I will watch for that with interest.

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**The CHAIR:** Thanks, member. That brings us to an end for this hearing. Committee members, just before we finish, can you make sure that we meet immediately after I finish this in the President's hall.

On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. The committee will forward a transcript of evidence, which includes questions you have taken on notice highlighted on the transcript within seven days of the hearing. Members, if you have any unasked questions, please submit them on the electronic lodgement system on the POWAnet site by five o'clock on Wednesday, 27 June. Responses to these questions and any questions taken on notice are due back to the committee by 12 noon on Friday, 13 July. Should you be unable to meet this due date, please let the committee know in writing as soon as possible before the due date, and the advice is to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met.

Once again, thank you all for your attendance today.

**Hearing concluded at 3.30 pm**

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