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31/7/19

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

The Committee asked:

1) With respect to the governance of special purpose accounts (SPAs) in your agency:

a) are separate financial ledgers maintained for your SPAs;

Answer:

Disability Services Commission: Not applicable, the Disability Services Commission does not have Special Purpose Accounts.

Housing Authority: Yes

Department of Communities: Yes

b) has any activity in the SPA been for general purposes;

Answer:

Disability Services Commission: Not applicable

Housing Authority: No

Department of Communities: No

c) is access to the general ledger and payment system restricted? If so, what level of authorised officer or person can access that system; and

Answer:

Disability Services Commission: Not applicable

Housing Authority: Yes, user access is based on position requirements. An approval process for requests for system access is in place. Only staff working in roles that involve the use of these funds are able to authorise payments, including segregation to ensure approval is granted by a separate officer. Transactions are processed within the control framework.

Department of Communities: Yes, user access is based on position requirements. A register of Incurring and Certifying officers is maintained. An approval process for requests for system access is in place, including segregation to ensure approval is granted by a separate officer. Transactions are processed within the control framework.

d) how frequently are your SPAs reconciled?

Answer:

Disability Services Commission: Not applicable

Housing Authority: Quarterly

Department of Communities: Quarterly

NAME

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

The Committee asked:

- 2) We refer to your answer to Committee question prior to hearing no. 2 and page 464 of Budget Paper No. 2, Municipal and Essential Services Account, and ask:

- a) how were remote Aboriginal communities able to access these funds;

Answer:

This account is a repository for funds provided by the Commonwealth Government for the delivery (in part) of Municipal and Essential Services to remote Aboriginal communities. Drawdowns from this account are added to State Government funding required to deliver these services. As such, Aboriginal communities do not access the funds directly.

- b) have all communities benefited from these funds;

Answer:

No.

- c) if no to b) which communities did not receive any funds and why;

Answer:

The list of Aboriginal communities that receive funding for Municipal and Essential Services appears in the Housing Authority Annual Report, which for 2018-19 will be finalised, audited and tabled as per the Annual Report process.

- d) in 2018-19, which communities received those funds and for what purpose;

Answer:

The list of Aboriginal communities that receive funding for Municipal and Essential Services appears in the Housing Authority Annual Report, which for 2018-19 will be finalised, audited and tabled as per the Annual Report process.

In terms of the purpose of the funding, this includes the provision of maintenance services for water, waste water, electricity and rubbish collection services.



- e) do you still expect the balance to be nil at 30 June 2019;

Answer:

It is anticipated that the remaining funds in the Municipal and Essential Services Account, representing the contributions by the Commonwealth Government, will be substantially drawn down in 2018-19. The final balance at 30 June 2019 cannot be confirmed at this point as the accounts have not as yet been finalised, audited and signed off by the Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Communities and audited. This will appear in the Housing Authority's 2018-19 audited Annual Report, which will be tabled in Parliament.

- f) if yes to e) what is the spending profile between 9 May 2019 and 30 June 2019; and

Answer:

The spending profile for 9 May 2019 to 30 June 2019 cannot be provided at this point, as the accounts for 2018-19 are not as yet finalised.

- g) if no to e) why not and what are the new balance estimates?

Answer:

The spending profile and balances will be available and provided to the Committee once the audited accounts have been finalised, audited and signed off by the Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Communities, this is expected to occur in September 2019.

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

The Committee asked:

- 3) We refer to your answer to Committee question prior to hearing no. 2, Children and Young People in Chief Executive Officer's Care Private Cash Account, and ask:

- a) what are the sources of funds;

Answer:

Private moneys received by the child or by the Director General on behalf of the child usually by way of inheritance from a deceased parent, relative or close associate.

- b) are those funds invested;

Answer:

Yes, in an interest bearing bank account.

- c) if yes to b) are those investment earnings returned to children and young people;

Answer:

Yes

- d) if yes to b) what is the rate of return for the activity period; and

Answer:

Quarter ending 30 June 2018:	2.118 per cent
Quarter ending 30 September 2018:	2.152 per cent
Quarter ending 31 December 2018:	2.157 per cent
Quarter ending 31 March 2019:	2.165 per cent
Quarter ending 30 June 2019:	Not yet received

- e) if yes to b) do you maintain a separate interest bearing account for those earnings?

Answer:

Yes, a separate interest bearing bank account is maintained.



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

The Committee asked:

- 4) Where do your SPAs sit on your statement of financial position?

Answer:

Disability Services Commission: Not applicable, the Disability Services Commission does not have any Special Purpose Accounts (SPAs).

Housing Authority: SPAs form part of "Restricted Cash and Cash Equivalents" under "Current Assets" on the Statement of Financial Position and further information is at Note 21 and 53 to the Financial Statements.

Department of Communities: SPAs form part of "Restricted Cash and Cash Equivalents" under "Current Assets" on the Statement of Financial Position and further information is at Note 19 and 43 to the Financial Statements.

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Nick Goiran MLC asked:

- 2) I refer to the Service Summary table on page 447 in Budget Paper No. 2, Volume 2, and I ask:
- a) In relation to the line item "Care Arrangements and Support Services for Children in the CEO's Care", why was the 2018-19 Estimated Actual less than the Actual spending in 2017-18, considering that an increase had been budgeted?

Answer:

The \$1.241 million movement (decrease) in expenditure from the 2017-18 Actual to the 2018-19 Estimated Actual is mainly due to a change in the way that costs associated with Regional Reform Funding (Essential and Municipal Services Upgrade Program and Regional Services Reform Unit) have been allocated. For the 2017-18 actual, these costs were allocated across all services. In the new outcome based management reporting structure (i.e. for the 2018-19 estimated actual and 2019-20 budget target), the costs have been aligned to Service 1 (Community Services).

The Care arrangements and support services for children in the Chief Executive Officer's (CEO's) care Service provides information on the costs of providing care to children requiring out-of-home care services and support services, as well as child advocacy and support, legal, leaving care and reunification services.



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Nick Goiran MLC asked:

3) I refer to the Child Protection Assessments and Investigations table on page 451 in Budget Paper No. 2, Volume 2, and I ask:

- a) What has caused the estimated actual number of cases to increase to 19,471 in contrast to the budgeted number of 18,000;

Answer:

During 2018-19, the Department of Communities experienced an increase in contacts that involve concerns for children that require further investigation. This increase is primarily due to the complexity and interrelated nature of mental health, drug and alcohol misuse and family and domestic violence that contributes to or causes the harm being investigated.

- b) What were the roles of the 11 extra FTE brought on in 2018-19; and

Answer:

The roles of the additional 11 FTE brought on in 2018-19 are focussed on addressing the increased demand in the number of child protection cases, including officers to assess, intake and manage child protection related matters.

- c) What are the roles planned for the additional 4 FTE in the 2019-20 budget?

Answer:

The roles of the additional four FTE to be brought on in 2019-20 focus on addressing the increased demand in the number of child protection cases. This includes officers to assess, intake and manage child protection related matters.



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Nick Goiran MLC asked:

- 4) I refer to the Care Arrangements and Support Services for Children in the CEO's Care on page 452 in Budget Paper No. 2, Volume 2, and I ask:
- a) What were the roles of the 49 addition FTE employed during 2018-19; and
 - b) What are the roles planned for the additional 52 FTE being budgeted for in 2019-20?

Answer:

- a – b) The roles of the additional 49 FTE employed in 2018-19 and the additional 52 FTE employed in 2019-20 are primarily focussed on addressing the growth in the number of children coming into care and requiring out-of-home care services. This consists of officers to assess, plan and review the child's needs and care arrangement related matters.

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Nick Goiran MLC asked:

- 5) I refer to the answer to Question No.24 Prior to Hearing, in which it was stated that of the children who entered care within 12 months of completing early intervention and family support services in 2018-19, 229 children had family and domestic violence recorded as a significant issue contributing to the child entering care, and 76 children had both homelessness and family and domestic violence recorded as significant issues contributing to the child entering care, and I ask:
- a) What proportion of the 76 children, who had homelessness listed as a significant issue, could have avoided coming into care had housing been provided; and
 - b) What protocols, guidelines, procedures or similar are in place to ensure that families with children at risk of coming into care are given housing priority?

Answer:

a) – b)

As the Member is aware, the reasons why children are brought into care are extremely complex and rarely attributable to one 'simple' solution such as providing a house.

The creation of the Department of Communities (Communities) has provided a unique opportunity for the former agencies to provide a better, more coordinated and holistic service to some of the most vulnerable members of the Western Australian community.

The State Government has provided the mandate for increased information sharing and improved working relationships to ensure that each and every decision that is made about a child, family or person requiring assistance is consistent and focussed on the best outcomes for them.

When an adult has parental responsibilities for children, particular attention is given to supporting a successful tenancy including the provision of additional supports where appropriate. Terminating a tenancy is a measure of last resort and tenants are given every opportunity to rectify issues impacting on their tenancy, prior to Communities seeking termination. Children's welfare, wellbeing and safety are paramount and thoroughly considered prior to any eviction action progressing.

Communities provides a number of support services that provide earlier intervention and family support which can work hand in hand to address ongoing tenancy issues such as property standards, disruptive behaviour and financial counselling. The Aboriginal In-home Support Service, delivered by Wungening Moort, provides in-home support to Aboriginal



families with a focus on safety issues, parenting skills, issues that negatively impact children and the development of culturally safe support networks.

The Priority Housing Need Policy takes into consideration clients' personal safety, wellbeing, medical and homelessness circumstances. As part of this, Communities has developed a Priority Assessment Framework, which specifically identifies 'children at risk' as a priority housing assistance criterion.

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Nick Goiran MLC asked:

- 6) I refer to page no. 444 of Budget Paper No. 2, Volume 2, where refers to the incoming Annual Plan which sets out how the Department will achieve its priorities, one of which is Aboriginal wellbeing, and I ask:

- a) What has been the 2018-19 actual spend to improve ACCO capacity:

Answer:

The 2018-19 actual spend was \$205,408.

- i) How was this allocated; and

Answer:

This was allocated to staffing costs within the Department of Communities (Communities) to commence developing Communities' Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations Strategy, including collaboration with key co-design partners and identifying capacity-building opportunities.

- ii) What was the break down and purpose of each allocation;

Answer:

See (i) above.

- b) What is the 2019-20 budget to improve ACCO capacity:

Answer:

The 2019-20 budget is \$851,347.

- i) How was this allocated; and

Answer:

This will be allocated towards staffing costs within Communities plus an allocation for capacity-building opportunities identified through work referred to in the response to 6(a)(i) above.



ii) What was the break down and purpose of each allocation;

Answer:

Communities' staffing costs: \$395,347

Project costs: \$56,000, and

Capacity-building grants: \$400,000.

c) How does the Department of Communities intend to allocate the \$400,000 funding they received from the Department of Finance to improve ACCO capacity, in May 2019;

Answer:

The \$400,000 will be used to help further develop the business and partnership development, tendering and compliance skills of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in Western Australia.

To support this work, Communities has established a project working group, comprised of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations from across Western Australia as well as other government and non-government stakeholders. The group will make recommendations to Communities on how to allocate the \$400,000 to achieve the best outcomes.

d) What progress has the Department of Communities made with the "Signs of Safety Reloaded Project", to integrate Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making into the Department's Frameworks, instead of solely relying on the Signs of Safety Practice Framework; and

Answer:

The Signs of Safety Reloaded Project is exploring the Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making model with the purpose of identifying how this aligns with the Signs of Safety framework and Communities' existing processes, such as care planning. The Signs of Safety framework provides the space for all families, including Aboriginal families, to engage and participate in a meaningful way, about decisions that affect their children.

e) What is being done to address the continued over-representation of Aboriginal children in care, given that the introduction of the Department of Communities Out of Home Care Reform to address the over-representation of Aboriginal Children in Care, has seen a rise in Aboriginal children in care in 2016 from 52%, to 55% in 2019?

Answer:

In 2018, the McGowan Government allocated \$97 million over five years for the Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy (the Strategy) to increase intensive family support services, expand services into regional areas and enhance Family Support Network services to provide intensive case management to vulnerable families and reduce the need for children to enter care.

The three services under the Strategy are as follows:

1. The Aboriginal In-home Support Service - Communities has funded Wungening Moort (Healing Families), a consortium of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, to deliver the Aboriginal In-Home Support Service which provides intensive in-home practical



support for up to 240 high risk Aboriginal families per annum in the Perth metropolitan area.

2. Intensive Family Support Services - These services provide intensive in-home practical support across 17 service sites State-wide to families who are most at risk of child protection intervention, require support for reunification, or to improve family wellbeing and keep their children safe at home. There are a variety of service providers who each partner with an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation and Aboriginal family referrals are prioritised.
3. Family Support Networks - Family Support Networks provide a coordination role to vulnerable children and families who find it difficult to navigate the service system. Family Support Networks comprise two service streams which operate in the Perth metropolitan area; Assessment and Coordination, and Intensive Case Management. Intensive Case Management is used to support families who are most vulnerable to their children coming into care. There are three lead service providers, who each partner with an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation. Aboriginal family referrals are prioritised in both service streams.



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Nick Goiran MLC asked:

- 7) I refer to the Minister's response to the Estimates Hearing in the Legislative Assembly, in which the Minister explained the difference between grandparents who are formal carers and those who are informal carers, and the Minister's reference to informal grandcarers as "there are other grandcarers throughout the state whose grandchildren are not able to be cared for by their own family but who may not meet the threshold of harm prescribed under the act", and I ask:

- a) If the informal placement breaks down due to the grandparent's health or finances being unable to keep up with the demands of child care, and if the comparatively small amount of support that they can access as informal carers has proved insufficient, what then happens to the child;

Answer:

The Department of Communities (Communities) will assess and consider the child's safety and wellbeing, the grandparent's capacity to care for the child and, where appropriate, the capacity of other family members to care for the child. The assessment may or may not result in the child entering the care of the Chief Executive Officer. If the plan is for a child to remain living with their grandparents, Communities will provide information and referral to appropriate supports and services. The types of supports and services would be dependent on the grandparent's needs.

If another family member is available and able to care for the child, they may choose to apply to the Family Court for a parenting order. The Family Court and Communities can exchange relevant information with respect to a Family Court application where appropriate and necessary.

- b) How many children come into care annually from failed informal care with their grandparents;

Answer:

Communities is unable to provide data as this is not captured in a format that enables extraction from its client information system, Assist. To do so would require reviewing individual case files.

- c) Can informal grandcarers access earlier intervention and family support services; and

Answer:

Communities funds Intensive Family Support Services, Family Support Networks and the Aboriginal In-Home Support Service as key elements of its Building Safe and Strong Families: Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy. These services provide intensive case management and support to families who are at risk of their children entering out-of-home care. The aim is to divert families from the child protection system and reduce the number of children entering out-of-home care.



Communities can refer informal grandcarers (grandfamilies) to these services where appropriate.

Depending on the circumstances, Communities may refer informal grandcarers to a range of other departmental services and community sector providers such as the Grandcare Program and counselling services.

- d) If no to (c), is this issue being considered in the Review in progress of the Grandcarer Support Program?

Answer:

Not applicable.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'NOMBL'.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Nick Goiran MLC asked:

8) I refer to the answer to Question 8 asked prior to hearings, and I ask:

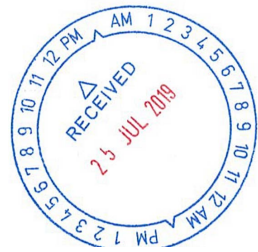
- a) Of the combined \$843,660 which includes both the Women's and Men's Domestic Violence Helplines, how much of that budgeted allocation is for Women's Domestic Violence helplines; and
- b) How much of that budgeted allocation is for Men's Domestic Violence Helplines?

Answer:

The allocation is a combined allocation and is not split between the two helplines.



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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Department of Communities

Hon Nick Goiran MLC asked:

- 1) I refer to the answer to Question No.16 Prior to Hearing which advised the Committee that in 2018-19 the Mandatory Reporting Service received 3,579 reports, and that 1,296 of these resulted in an initial inquiry, and I ask:

- a) How many mandatory reports related to victims where the perpetrator was extra-familial;

Answer:

The Department of Communities (Communities) is unable to provide data as this is not captured in a format that enables extraction from its client information system, Assist. To do so would require reviewing individual case files.

- b) How many of these led to an initial inquiry; and

Answer:

Not applicable, refer to (a).

- c) Why did only around one third of the 3579 reports result in an initial inquiry into the safety and wellbeing of the victim?

Answer:

One third of the 3579 reports resulted in initial inquiry following an assessment by the Mandatory Reporting Service (the Service). The Service assesses the information received to determine if there are concerns for the child and the parent's protectiveness. The Service uses an interaction tool in this assessment process to determine if any further information is needed, and whether Communities has an ongoing role with the child to investigate concerns for their safety and wellbeing.

NMG