

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

2019–20 BUDGET ESTIMATES



**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 19 JUNE 2019**

SESSION FIVE

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES —
CHILD PROTECTION; PREVENTION OF FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Members

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

Hearing commenced at 3.14 pm

Hon SUE ELLERY

Minister representing the Minister for Child Protection, examined:

Ms MICHELLE ANDREWS

Director General, examined:

Mr LIAM CARREN

Executive Director, Finance and Business Services, examined:

Mr BRAD JOLLY

Acting Assistant Director General, Commissioning and Sector Engagement, examined:

Mr MATTHEW RICHARDSON

Director, Management Accounting and Financial Analysis, examined:

Mrs RACHAEL GREEN

Assistant Director General, Service Delivery, Regional and Remote Communities, examined:

Mrs JACKIE TANG

Assistant Director General, Metropolitan Services, examined:

Ms HELEN NYS

Assistant Director General, Policy and Service Design, examined:

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations, I welcome you to today's hearing with the Department of Communities, specifically child protection and family and domestic violence. Have you read, understood and signed the document entitled "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. This hearing is being reported 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 answering the question. Agencies have an important role and duty in assisting the committee to scrutinise the budget papers and the committee values your assistance with this. Minister, do you have a brief opening statement of no more than two minutes?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not.

The CHAIR: We have allocated approximately nine minutes per member, assuming everyone wants to have a question. Some have a little bit more leeway—that would be Hon Nick Goiran. To start the questions, I call Hon Diane Evers.

Hon DIANE EVERS: Thank you, Chair. The first question is on the income statement on page 459; it relates to other expenses. I notice it is right through the budget—a lot of people are picking up on—that they are not having so much left in other expenses, but here we have more than 12 per cent of the total cost of services and it seems to be relatively high compared to the situation two years ago and the years in the future. I am wondering whether something in that other expenses should be detailed for last year and this year.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will give you the first answer, because it relates to outside this portfolio area, but if you need more, I will see what we can do. The increase mainly represents intergovernmental payments as an on payment of the commonwealth grants as a commonwealth contribution to the NDIS in WA. So that is a 45.3 per cent increase in “Estimated Actual” for 2018–19, and in 2018–19 “Budget” to 2018–19 “Estimated Actual”, it is a 48.6 per cent increase. I appreciate it might be a bit frustrating for members because this is the child protection and family domestic violence section, but the response that I have is that this is, in fact, related to payments arising out of the NDIS.

[3.20 pm]

Hon DIANE EVERS: I imagine my next question would be not so much related to this as well. It is more Department of Communities in general, but I thought you might be able to answer it or at least give that little time to it. This is on the spending changes table on page 444 of the *Budget Statements*. It is with regard to the voluntary targeted separation scheme. Again, I know it relates across the whole of communities, but there is a \$10 million reduction to that going out into the year 2022–23. Is there any reason why we are still looking at that the VTSS affecting the new figures in that part, which had never been budgeted before.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Honourable member, the committee requested DV and child protection. Your question applies the whole of the Department of Communities. I am not in a position to answer that question.

Hon DIANE EVERS: I can put it on notice then. Thanks.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I do not have a specific budget page for this issue, but I suppose it comes under preventing and responding to family and domestic violence. Page 451 outlines one of the objectives of the agency, if that gives you somewhere to start. In November last year during the annual report hearings for the Department of Communities, I raised the issue of support services for victims of domestic violence. I pointed out to you, minister, and to Mr Searle that all the public-facing information and services for victims of domestic violence are aimed towards women. Services aimed towards men are only there for perpetrators of domestic violence. There did not seem to be any services for male victims of domestic violence. As we know, they make up a very small cohort of those who are victims of domestic violence, but there may be same-sex couples where a man is a victim of domestic violence or heterosexual couples where a man is a victim of domestic violence. In any case, there was very little information directed towards them. At the time, Mr Searle gave me an undertaking to review that. I was just wondering the outcome of that. There is nothing in the budget specific to that. Having a look at the Department of Communities website now, it seems that there are still no services directed towards male victims of domestic violence, whether in a same-sex or heterosexual relationship.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thanks for the question. The honourable member is correct in that the overwhelming majority of victims of family and domestic violence are, in fact, women and children. However, the honourable member might recall that following the annual report hearings, an answer was provided to the member about the men’s helpline. That is certainly for male victims of family and domestic violence as well. You are right to identify announcements are being made about

services for perpetrators. I will just see whether I have anything further that one of the officers might be able to offer in respect of male victims.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I appreciate the answer that was provided on notice. I have that. My concern is that there is no forward-facing information for people. If someone is a victim and they go to the website, the impression they would get, I think, is that those services are only for perpetrators.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The advice that I have is that the officers thought it was on the website—namely, access to the men’s helpline, which is the forward-facing information—but we will check that, and I will make sure that we get a response to you. If it is not, I will suggest to the minister that that be done.

Hon AARON STONEHOUSE: I would appreciate that. Thank you.

[Supplementary Information No E1.]

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: My question relates to page 449, point 1, community services. What is the total number of unallocated cases attributed to child protection and family support responsibilities of the Department of Communities?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think your reference is wrong, because you are asking about community services. If you want unallocated child protection cases—is that what the member is after?—we can provide an answer to that.

The CHAIR: It certainly sounds like you want to know, at a point in time, how many child protection cases are currently unallocated.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We will see if we can find that. I will ask Ms Tang to provide you with the response to that.

Mrs Tang: Thank you, minister. Thank you, member, for the question. When you are asking about total unallocated cases, that is across the board. There are approximately 800 across the state. However, when you are talking specifically about children in care, there are 502 to date as of 6 May. Can I also say that the monitored list is very much around managing those cases that do not have a current cause of concern. I will leave the response there.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: I hope my reference is not wrong in this question, minister.

The CHAIR: I am pretty sure the minister will be capable of navigating.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: On page 451, point 5, does the Department of Communities currently have a target number or goal number for the number of unallocated cases in Western Australia? If you do, what is it? That seemed like a lot of numbers, so I was wondering whether there was a target.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Honourable member, we are going to get an answer. I just point out that sometimes this happens: if the questions are being drafted off an electronic version, the numbering can slip. I think that is probably what happened, but we certainly have an answer to your question.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: It has come from the electronic version.

The CHAIR: Thanks for picking that up, minister. It is not the first time that it has happened—across agencies. If you are working online, the page numbers can be different because of the way it is paginated online. It is not the first time that the committee has had to deal with that. For future reference, if you are working on questions, try to work off a hard copy. It is a layout issue.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The question was around a target, if you like—I am paraphrasing—or a preferred number in respect of allocated and unallocated cases. It is driven by an industrial agreement. The ratios are set out within that industrial agreement. There is a specific industrial relations order, and, as I understand it, it is 15 cases per caseworker.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Minister, if you look at the service summary on page 447, there is no mention of workers' compensation cases. I wonder whether it would be possible to receive an update from the department regarding workers' compensation liabilities in the year of 2018–19.

[3.30 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: Honourable member, I will see if I can get you that information for Child Protection and possibly DV, bearing in mind, the committee did not call me for the whole of Communities. I will see if we can get you some workers' comp information if that is possible.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: What I was looking for was the difference also between, let us say, the mental health cases and physical health cases.

Hon SUE ELLERY: There is some material that is provided in the annual report. I think, so we do not waste the time of the committee, if I take that on notice, as I understand it, I can ask for it in respect to Child Protection.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Yes, I would be happy with that.

Hon SUE ELLERY: What you are looking for is a breakdown of the nature of the cases?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Yes.

[*Supplementary Information No E2.*]

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Once again, I have my next question down as referring to page 452 and point 2 as per the budget book. Given the increased complexity of children requiring support, what financial resources are being allocated to reduce the number of unallocated cases in WA?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Ms Tang to answer that.

Mrs Tang: For the coming year, in 2019–20, Child Protection has an increased budget of \$22 million. Of that, is a large number of positions, which a decision has been made on where to allocate those. Part of the decision of how to allocate that increased demand funding is directly related to our monitored list. That is put into the formula, so it will address some of those districts that have higher numbers.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: My last question is on the efficiency indicators on page 452. In past years, the average amount spent on exceptionally complex needs care arrangements have been relatedly on par with those spent on residential-based care arrangements. This does not continue into the 2019–20 budget. Why is the average amount spent on exceptionally complex needs care arrangements more than \$220 a day less than the average spent on the residential-based arrangements?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The average cost per day of an exceptionally complex needs care arrangement decreased as a result of an increase in the number of placements being offered by some existing service providers. The actual methodology to get the efficiency figure is that you divide the expenditure for the exceptionally complex needs care by the number placements days. If you increase the number of placements being offered, which is a good thing, then your efficiency number goes up and the dollars go down accordingly.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Minister, I refer to page 460 and the table "Details of Controlled Grants and Subsidies". I have a few questions relating to the Child Protection lines there. The first line is "Out

of Home Care, Foster Care and Family Support Grants". Are they three different classes of grants or are they umbrella terms for a series of other sub-grants?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The answer is yes. They are three separate grants. There is case support costs, children's and living care subsidies, and high-needs placement programs. It is three separate components.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Would it be possible by way of supplementary to seek how those three different grants are separately funded across the estimates?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, we can take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No E3.]

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Minister, could I ask whether grandcarers support payments are included in that "Out of Home Care, Foster Care and Family Support Grants" line?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Further down the page, honourable member, you will see under "Community Services" there is "Grandcarers Support Grants". If there is something specific you want to ask about that, I probably could —

Hon TJORN SIBMA: How many grandcarers or registered grandcarers are there that the department is aware of in Western Australia?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will start by saying that there are some grandcarers who are grandcarers by way of an order of the court and then there are many more who are grandcarers by virtue of an informal arrangement. You would appreciate, I am sure, that for some grandparents even though in some senses the protections for them might be greater if there was a court order, the notion of taking your child to court to get custody of their child is something that many grandparents just find a step too far to be able to take. I can tell you that in terms of numbers, in the past four years, the program use and uptake has almost doubled. It has gone from 692 to 1 261 registered grandparents. I want to get to the definition of a "registered grandparent" so we know exactly what we are talking about. I will ask Ms Nys to provide the answer.

Ms Nys: It means purely that they have registered with the grandparents support scheme.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Sorry, they have with whom?

Ms Nys: It is with the grandparents support scheme. They have made themselves known to the agency that provides that and that is what we mean by registered.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: It is self-disclosed to the department, essentially. There was something like 1 200?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Correct.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Of that 1 200, some are court ordered and others are informal. Do you have that information?

Ms Nys: In terms of that number for registered grandcarers, that is actually grandcarers who have not had the children placed with them by the department so they are not by court order. Possibly, it might be through a Family Court order but not through Child Protection proceedings.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: That cohort that we are talking about, what sorts of support grants do they avail themselves of from the Department of Communities? I know you have a grandcarers support grant, but \$1 million over 1 200 people might not stretch very far. Can I get a sense of what other support schemes they might be entitled to utilise?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Ms Nys to answer that.

Ms Nys: The grandcarers support scheme provides grandparents with an annual payment for each grandchild in their care that is aged 18 years and under. They are provided by the department. It is an annual grant of \$400 per grandchild. That is my understanding.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: Thank you. Does the department have any way of comparing that entitlement with someone who is an unrelated foster carer? What I am trying to get a sense of is if there is an even playing field here between people who take responsibility for providing care to a child irrespective of their circumstances.

Hon SUE ELLERY: There is certainly a gap. There is unquestionably a gap. If the child is in the care of the department under an order of the court, the range of entitlements paid by the department are significantly higher. I am not sure if I can give you the split now, but that is certainly the case. That, in a way, is why it is so heartbreaking for those grandparents who do not want to go through the process of going to court, because they would be financially provided with greater assistance, but they do not want to take those steps.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I completely understand that, minister, and grandcarers have told me the same thing individually. Nevertheless, would it be possible to get a table of comparative entitlements along the lines that we have just discussed in the last few minutes, and take that as a supplementary question?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We might be able to give you a bit more information now, and we might be able to talk to you about the other ranges of support that can be offered. Mr Jolly can provide you with more information, and if that does not meet what you are looking for, we will take the rest on notice.

[3.40 pm]

Hon TJORN SIBMA: I can submit it, yes.

Mr Jolly: Thank you, minister, and thanks to the honourable member. The minister has already touched on the grant payments that are available through the grandcarers support scheme. That is \$400 for the first child and \$250 for each subsequent child. The department also provides funding of just shy of \$600 000 in addition to those grants, which is paid to Wanslea on an annualised basis. About \$210 000 of that relates to the administration of the scheme itself. There is a further \$260 000 applied towards the grandcarer service, which includes a telephone information line and group activities for grandcarers. There is also a further \$125 000 allocated for the grandcarers assistance program, which includes respite, counselling, training and the like for grandcarers.

Hon TJORN SIBMA: That is useful, but I might keep open the option of asking for that supplementary information about the comparison of entitlements between a non-court ordered grandparent carer, and others as ordered by the court, or engaged in other foster relationships.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We are happy to take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No E4.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, do you have at your disposal a copy of the questions and answers prior to the hearings?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, I think I do.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Could I just ask you to turn to question and answer 13.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I might just ask you to give me a minute, because I just have to find where it is in my file. I thought it was in here. The question that you are referring to is, "I refer to page 444 ..." Is that the one?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That is the one. If I could ask you to have a look at 13(b), where I ask the question —

Of those children who were charged or convicted of a sexual offence as a result of Operation Fledermaus:

(i) how many are the Department currently engaged with in some way;

You will see, in the second paragraph, that the response comes back from the minister, and I quote —

Communities is unable to provide a figure in this context, to do so would risk identifying individual cases.

If I could ask you then to turn to the next question, which is question (ii), where I ask how many of those attend school. You will see in the second paragraph, that the minister then says —

As at 30 May 2019, this is reported as two.

Why is it okay for Communities that two of the children attend school, but Communities cannot possibly tell us how many they are engaged with in some way, because it might risk identifying individual cases?

Silence is the new form of filibuster.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Honourable member, I am not able to get an answer that is clear to me, so I am going to take your question on notice.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I am happy with that, minister, but I just want to make sure that we are both on the same page. Would you agree with me that the current state of affairs with the answer is not acceptable and needs clarification?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, I would not agree with you about that. I think you are entitled to an answer. It is just not clear to me right now. I am not the responsible minister, so I want to make sure you get an accurate answer, and that is why I will take it on notice.

[Supplementary Information No E5.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, can I get you to turn to the answer to question 16? There you will see that I asked about how many reportable offenders under the age of 18 the department is currently engaged with. You will also see their that the response was —

Communities does not record young people as ‘reportable offenders’. If children display harmful sexual behaviours, this is recorded in individual client files and is not collated at a State-wide level.

If the department does not know how many children in the care of the CEO are reportable offenders, how does the CEO ensure compliance with reporting obligations?

Hon SUE ELLERY: It might be a definitional thing, which is around the expression “reportable offenders”, which is, as I am being advised, a police description. Communities does not record young people as being reportable offenders. As the answer says, if the child displays harmful sexual behaviours, that is recorded in individual client files and is not collated at a statewide level.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I am referring now to the Community Protection Western Australia website, and on that website is a list of frequently asked questions. One of those questions is, “Who is a Reportable Offender?” The department in response to that frequently asked question says, and I quote —

These persons are automatically required by law to register with and report their personal details to the Commissioner of Police. It is an offence for a reportable offender to fail to comply with these reporting obligations and this offence is punishable by imprisonment.

I again ask: if the department does not know how many children in the care of the CEO are reportable offenders, how does the CEO ensure compliance with reporting obligations?

[3.50 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will see if we can provide you with some of the information that you seek. I note the reference that the member read out referred to the Commissioner of Police being reportable to the Commissioner of Police, which is consistent with what I said before, but I will ask one of the officers to provide an answer in the first instance and we will see how we go.

Mrs Green: The reportable offenders need to report through, and WAPOL and the Department of Justice actually manage the reporting requirements. I am not clear on whether in actual fact it is that reportable offenders are over 16 or over 18. If it was a young person in the care of the department, that would be managed at a case management level, actually, as part of caring and supporting for that young person. We would look to support them actually reporting and it would be kept on an individual case record.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Further to that, would the CEO, who is the person who is responsible for that child, be informed of that information that is held at a case-officer level?

Mrs Green: Yes, it would be a case-officer level, if indeed it was for children under the age of 18.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Would the CEO be informed of that information given that the CEO is responsible for the child in care?

Mrs Green: If it was a child in care, yes, we would be aware of the reporting arrangements.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Therefore, how many children in the care of the CEO have such obligations?

Mrs Green: Because all information around young people in care is kept at an individual level via their case management, we do not actually aggregate that as a central number. We would have to go through each case and identify whether they had any reportable requirements and, indeed, if the registrable offender is under the age of 18.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Perhaps it would assist if I rephrased the question: does the CEO currently know how many reportable offenders are in her care?

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I can perhaps give you part of the answer: the obligation to report is not a collated report at one point in time. The obligation to report is an obligation to report. You have already been advised that the department does not collate the information, but the CEO does meet, in this case, her obligations in respect to reporting. The information is not collated. It is not in one report.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: There is, minister, an obligation by a reportable offender, as identified by the Community Protection WA website, to continue to comply with reporting obligations, and that to fail to do so might result in imprisonment. That is an obligation on the child—we are talking about a child here. The CEO is responsible for that child. I would have thought that the CEO would want to know how many children in her care have that reporting obligation.

Hon SUE ELLERY: You may well hold that view. The advice that is provided to me is that the agency does not collect it—hold it—in one spot. It is held on individual files. The CEO meets her obligations to report. The obligation to report is not a single, “at-one-point-in-time, report every child in your care who meets that criteria”.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: But the CEO does not know how many there are?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not know how else to say it is not held in one collated spot, so it is held on the individual cases. The CEO meets her obligation to report. She does not do it in one annualised all-in-one spot, go and do a spot check, and tell me how many at this point—that is not how the report is provided.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: No. She does not do it at all, because she does not know.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I refute the proposition that the CEO is not meeting her obligations.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I did not say that. I said: does the CEO know how many children in her care have these reporting obligations? It is clear that the CEO does not know the answer to that question; and, if that is incorrect, I ask the government to provide the number.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If it is incorrect, I will provide the number. But the advice that is provided to me is that because the reporting obligation does not require the CEO to do it in one report, that information is not collated in that way. That does not mean that the CEO is not meeting her obligations at all.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, what is the number of children in the care of the CEO who has failed to meet their reporting obligations?

Hon SUE ELLERY: So, you have just asked the same question in another way and I do not know how to answer it in any other way than I have already answered. The CEO meets her obligations. The information that you are seeking is not provided in one collated form.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Further questions—in terms of the budget, on page 447 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, you will see there on the line item “Child Protection Assessments and Investigations” that the budget for 2018 was just over \$86 million, and the budget for 2019–20 has reduced by nearly \$2 million. Why has there been a cut in the funding for child protection assessments and investigations?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Which numbers on that table are you actually referring to?

Hon NICK GOIRAN: You will see line item 5, “Child Protection Assessments and Investigations”, and you will see the difference in the figure for 2018–19 and 2019–20—you will see a massive reduction.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Overall, the allocation for child protection increases every year. The honourable member would be aware it is a demand-driven model, so it is a mathematical formula. You will note there is a note on page 451 that explains that the 2018–19 budget value included income from the regional reform fund. This income has been re-profiled and recorded against service 1 for the 2018–19 estimated actual and the 2019–20 budget target, but the actual allocation for child protection has increased and the allocations are done according to the demand model, which is a mathematical formula.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Is it correct, minister, that there is less money available for child protection assessments and investigations in this coming financial year compared with last financial year?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, that is not correct.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: So \$84 million is not less than \$86 million?

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is a different question.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That is the amount of money that has been appropriated for child protection assessments and investigations in accordance with page 447. It is not my budget papers; it is the government's.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will get the officer to give you an explanation, which will be resaying exactly what I have just said to you but perhaps you will find that more comforting.

Mr Carren: Thank you, member, for the question. I will try to elaborate a bit further. The figure of \$86 million that was in the 2018–19 year included an item that related to the regional reform fund. That was a finite item and that item no longer exists in the subsequent years. The services provided in relation to child protection are classified against a number of services, and to look at the total investment by the state in child protection services, it is important to look at all those lines together. The member will note that the other services do increase each year by significant amounts and that represents that demand funding.

[4.00 pm]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: To be clear then, the amount that is provided and appropriated for child protection assessments and investigations this coming financial year is less than the amount for the current financial year.

Mr Carren: The financial sum is less. The services do not decrease—the amount of effort provided by the state.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: We provide the same services for \$2 million less?

Mr Carren: There is a particular item that relates to the regional reform fund. That item does not exist in the 2019–20 year.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 447 and the service summary table—so the same one that we have just been on—and particularly point 3, “Earlier Intervention and Family Support Services”. I note that this funding has increased from last year, but then it is decreasing into the forward estimates. Can I please have an explanation as to why it is decreasing and which services or programs are potentially going to be receiving less funding? It is going into an increase and then it is decreasing into the forward estimates.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am going to have to take that on notice.

[*Supplementary Information No E6.*]

Hon ALISON XAMON: Obviously, I am seeking an explanation as to why it is anticipated to go down in the future in forward estimates, and which programs or services are likely to not receive funding as a result.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will certainly take the question on notice, though I note there is an assumption that that is what will happen, and I do not know that that is the case. But I will take that as part of the question on notice.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Again, on the same page 447 and the service summary table, I refer to point 4, “Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence”. I note that this funding also decreases into the forward estimates and the same question arises: why the decrease and which services or programs will potentially receive less funding? If I need to take that on notice as well, then so be it.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think this is around capital. It is because the increase in 2019–20 is, if you like, exceptional because it is additional funding for the election commitment for two family and domestic violence one-stop hubs, which was \$3.82 million, and two additional women’s refuges, which was \$1.12 million. The increase is because of that and then—as I think I am being told; someone correct me if I am wrong—it plateaus out to its normal levels.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I confirm that it is anticipated then that effectively the operational component of that budget line item will continue on?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Correct.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is there any funding in this same budget line item allocated to provide more male perpetrator programs? I recognise that a second breathing space program has just been opened and that is welcomed, but I would like to know whether there are any others, either residential or not, that have been planned?

Hon SUE ELLERY: For male perpetrators?

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes—for male perpetrators specifically; and, if so, where?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am advised that there is a possibility. There is some commonwealth funding that might be available around a pilot on men's behaviour change, so that is a possibility.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I confirm, minister, if that would be non-residential?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can tell you that that is correct.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Is there any suggestion of where that might occur, whether it be in the metropolitan area or regionally based, and also the potential time frame should the commonwealth funding become available?

Hon SUE ELLERY: In terms of the location—the Kimberley. In terms of the timing, I do not have that information. I can take it on notice.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I would like to take that on notice, please.

[Supplementary Information No E7.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: On the same line item, please, and I suspect I may have to take this on notice unless the information happens to be there: how many calls to the men's domestic violence help line were made in 2018–19—so the last year—and how many of those went unanswered?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We will need to take it on notice, and obviously it would be to this point in time because the 2018–19 financial year has not finished yet.

Hon ALISON XAMON: That makes perfect sense.

[Supplementary Information No E8.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: Along the same line, can I please have the same data for the same time frame for the women's domestic violence help line?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am happy to take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information No E9.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I now refer to page 450 and early intervention and family support services. I note (a), which indicates there were 12 515 earlier intervention and family support cases in 2017–18 and 12 109 estimated actual cases for this year. Can the minister please explain, given that the number of children being taken into care is increasing, why there were fewer earlier intervention and family support services cases this year than last year and why was the number of cases lower than the budget target?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can you repeat the question please? I have the reference and I have the numbers that the member is looking at. Were you asking for an explanation of those numbers?

Hon ALISON XAMON: The concern I have is that I do not understand why the number of early interventions has reduced when the number of children going into care has actually increased. Can I please have an explanation for those figures?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am going to see whether I can give you that answer because I think it might be a mathematical function.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I hope so—otherwise it looks pretty grim.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The efficiency methodology is measured by the department's expenditure on these services and divided by the number of clients who received a service, either by the department directly or by organisations that are funded by the department. Expenditure and client counts include family support cases based on the allocation of caseworker time through the labour time allocation survey—secondary family support to prevent children and young people from being in care; Aboriginal in-home support service; family support network; lead agency; intensive family support services; and Target 120. That is in respect of the increased average cost. I will ask Ms Tang to provide you with an answer.

[4.10 pm]

Mrs Tang: Thank you, minister. Some of the issues around intensive family support that you were talking about refer mainly to staffing who do that work, but it is also outsourced as well. The work is still being done and it avoids young people coming into care. One important initiative that was introduced two years ago was in relation to the central intake, where all notifications for the metropolitan area come in through the central intake, and there are also similar thresholds out in the community. That effectively does not bring families or children into the system, it defers right at the beginning, so notifications about concern can be deferred to not-for-profit agencies that can provide that support at a softer level, rather than feeling that you need to bring people into care. It is not that there is necessarily any less service provision; it is just under different banner.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Are the figures for those initial referrals being kept by the department?

Mrs Tang: They are reported in the annual report each year, yes. There are the number of notification that coming in and then it drills down.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Unless you have the information here, can I request on notice the numbers of the referrals that correspond with the numbers that are presented here, because I think it provides a more holistic picture of how many people are actually seeking support and potentially being referred for that early intervention.

Mrs Tang: Can I just add to that, the calls that come in to the central intake are not necessarily intake-ed, so we can give you the number of calls, but they are notifications.

Hon SUE ELLERY: "Not necessarily intaken"!

Hon ALISON XAMON: Sorry, I missed that, minister.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will get Ms Tang to finish. I was being flippant about the language that was being used!

Mrs Tang: Notifications come in and we may either take that case in to have a further assessment or we may refer on. The figures you see, the number, are the actual case intakes where we are looking at service provision and having a connection to. If it is just a call saying, "We have a concern", we might say, "Well, that may be better dealt with by that service", providing that warm referral, as we call it.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I understand that. I do not have the problem with the policy intent of trying to ensure a softer, warm referral for those lower level matters, but are the figures of the number of people who are potentially being referred to the services, which would also give an indication of the early-level need, being kept by the department?

Mrs Tang: I believe it is.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Thank you. I assume the information may not be available here; in which case, can I please take those figures on notice for the same comparable period?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We can take that on notice.

[Supplementary Information E10.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to the fifth point on page 445 regarding Target 120. How many young people are currently engaged at each of the sites where Target 120 is currently operating and which sites are planned for 2019–20?

Hon SUE ELLERY: As at April, five families in each of the Armadale and Bunbury sites, meaning 10 young people and their 13 siblings, were participating in the initiative.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Which sites are planned for 2019–20?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We have not announced the new sites, but we will soon.

Hon ALISON XAMON: When do you anticipate you will announce that?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not the minister, so I can tell you that I am advised that it will be soon.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Are you able to advise how many sites are going to be announced?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think I can say three.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Three new sites. I look forward to the media release that advises what the sites are going to be.

Hon PETER COLLIER: I have a couple of questions about general expense and general appropriation. I draw your attention to comments from the minister in the other place on Thursday, 23 May, when she stated —

Another example is that the community said it wanted a residential healing facility near Roebourne. A co-design process is being co-funded with the state government and also Woodside and Rio Tinto through a company called j-HUB Indigenous Co-Design, which is working with the community to see what a residential healing facility just out of town would look like. That is taking a bit of time to do, but it is great to see some of the resource companies coming on.

Can I ask whether there is any agreement at this stage or a memorandum of understanding with the state government, Woodside and Rio Tinto regarding the work being done by j-Hub Indigenous Co-Design in respect to a residential healing facility near Roebourne?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The hub is being jointly funded by Woodside, Rio and the state and commonwealth governments. I am not sure that I can tell you who is contributing what amount.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Do you have the amount of the state government contribution at this stage?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I can take that on notice.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Is there a formal agreement? Is there a memorandum of understanding or anything between companies and the state government?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will need to take that on notice as well.

[*Supplementary Information E11.*]

Hon PETER COLLIER: My next question is also about some comments from the minister in the other place made on Thursday, 23 May, when she stated —

We fund a peak body called Stopping Family Violence, which is a body in Western Australia that looks at programs for men perpetrating domestic violence. It looks at best practice in that work, making sure that good evidence-based programs are available for organisations that want to do that work in Western Australia. We try to put the framework in place so that when we are able to fund services, or there are services that already do that work, they have proper guidelines to do it effectively. A challenge across the country, frankly, is to not only work with perpetrators and have good practice in that work, but also take the time to work with Aboriginal communities ...

Based on those comments, how much money did the peak body Stopping Family Violence receive in the 2018–19 financial year and how much will be allocated to Stopping Family Violence in the 2019–20 budget?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am advised \$390 000 and \$390 000 in each of the out years as well.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Has the peak body Stopping Family Violence evaluated the work of the Aboriginal Males Healing Centre that is being renovated in Newman at this stage?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not sure whether we can give you an answer to that. I am happy to take it on notice though.

Hon PETER COLLIER: If they have, can we have their findings as well, if possible?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will undertake to ask the minister that, but I do not guarantee it.

Hon PETER COLLIER: But if that could be part of the question.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not know whether she has considered it yet.

Hon PETER COLLIER: If yes, could she table it?

The CHAIR: If it is available, the minister will indicate that it is.

[*Supplementary Information E12.*]

Hon PETER COLLIER: I am just picking up on something that Hon Nick Goiran said with regard to child protection assessment processes. He drilled down this a little bit with regard to the \$86 million to \$84 million. You referred to \$2 million to the regional reform fund, which was finite. Why was that finite?

[4.20 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is re-profiled into service 1—so, shifted into service 1.

Hon PETER COLLIER: The funding will continue in the regional reform unit with that \$2 million just re-profiled into another area; is that right?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, it continues.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That is fine. I just want to make sure of that, because the regional reform fund is saying that it is ongoing. So, I just want to make sure we are not —

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is what I just said.

Hon PETER COLLIER: Yes, I know, but I just wanted clarification.

Hon SUE ELLERY: What I might do, if it is helpful, because the regional reform fund is managed by Minister Tinley and I am not representing him here today—I have given you what information I

can—but if it is helpful, if there is more information you are seeking about the regional reform fund, I could undertake to ask Minister Tinley to provide you with that information. I would not necessarily take it on notice, because I am not representing him here, but I could give you a personal undertaking that I will ask him to provide you with more information.

Hon PETER COLLIER: That one is of particular note to me. I have to say, Minister Tinley has been very forthcoming in providing me with briefings with regard to the reform unit, which I really appreciate. That is fine by me.

The CHAIR: The minister will address the member behind the Chair in relation to that matter.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Minister, on page 447, I just want to ask you a question about the care arrangements and support services for children in the CEO's care. That is service 6. Obviously, this has been a matter that has been quite concerning in recent times, and in particular given the media reports around children being in detention due to a lack of appropriate care. What sort of plans can you advise me that the minister has to ensure that that is not going to continue into the future?

Hon SUE ELLERY: If I can walk you through this, you will recall that in the immediate period following the media attention, the minister undertook to do a review of those particular services that were reported on, and that review is happening now. So, she does not have the report of that with her. But if I can make some general comments about the circumstances, not everything in that media report was accurate. For example, I am advised that a check of the court proceedings indicated that there was no reference, for example, to Banksia Hill, even though that was reported. I will give you a hypothetical example to demonstrate how these kinds of things work and what may or may not have happened in those circumstances. I am talking about a hypothetical example.

Let us say there is a 11-year-old child in Port Hedland in a residential group home facility who has been acting out violently towards herself and others. The police are called. The view of the Department for Child Protection is that the child probably needs to come back to the residential facility. It is the view of the police, for example, that the staff and other children in that facility might not necessarily be safe. The child has a long history of trauma and there are efforts being made to find extended family who might be able to provide care. In looking at what options might be available in this hypothetical situation to keep that child safe, if what they were looking to do was to transition that child, if it was possible, into the care of that extended family, then the way that that might be done is the child might stay for a weekend. There might be supervised visitors. That would be a kind of transition period, basically. That would be hard to do if the child had been, for example, taken to Banksia Hill or, for example, taken into the secure care facility—the Kath French centre. I want to explain a little bit about the Kath French centre as well, because there was some conjecture that that may have been a better placement for that child—in this hypothetical situation that I am talking about.

Eligibility for the Kath French centre is based on two things. The two things must be present. The child is a risk to themselves and others, and there is no other suitable placement. In the case of my hypothetical 11-year-old girl in Port Hedland, if there is an alternative placement that is possible with the extended family, you would not want to move that little girl to Kath French, which is down here in the hills of Perth, and then try to arrange a transition to extended family who live in a town 50 kays out of Port Hedland. They are the kinds of judgements that are being made when determining the best placement in a difficult situation. That is the kind of thinking that goes into it. The Kath French centre is not meant to be an alternative placement for someone in the justice system. However, a child in the justice system is not precluded from going there, but the two criteria that need to be met are the two that I outlined, and that is a judgement of the CEO, not the courts. So, it is a very difficult set of circumstances that child protection workers, frankly, face every single

day in trying to juggle all those circumstances. In respect of the particular case that was reported in the media about Karratha, the minister has asked for a specific review of that, and that is being undertaken.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Do you know when that review will be complete?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I understand she will get a report in the next couple of weeks, but the report needs to include everything it needs to include, so if it takes a little bit longer, it might take a little bit longer.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Will she table that report in Parliament?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not sure that she would. I am not sure she would actually be able to given it is a child and from a reasonably small community. I will undertake to ask her that, but I am not sure that perhaps even if she wanted to she could.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Even if she is not able to do that—I understand that—some other form of communication around a report on the review would be helpful.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes. I will certainly pass that on to her.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Thank you. Also on page 444, the Kimberley family violence service has just over \$1 million in funding allocated to it in the 2019–20 financial year, but nothing after that. Can you give me some indication of why that is?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Funding has been provided for 2019–20 to continue the Kimberley family violence service while a final evaluation is completed, which will inform future spending decisions.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: There is going to be a review undertaken —

Hon SUE ELLERY: An evaluation.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: — to ensure that future delivery of that service is going to be relevant to the Kimberley.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not know that I can use those words. I can tell you that while a final evaluation is completed, the funding will be continued to inform future spending decisions. Now, I would imagine that that would incorporate the relevance of the program to the geographic area. Let me see whether I can give you any more information. I am advised that the development of the 10-year strategy to reduce family and domestic violence, which the minister has already announced—it is anticipated that the service will fit within that, and that the design and procurement of future services will be informed by a number of strategies, including the 10-year one. So, in fact, I probably said that the wrong way around.

In considering the evaluation, one of the things that is going to happen is that services are going to be considered as to moving towards collaborative, place-based approaches with integrated delivery of services, the development of the 10-year strategy, the Kimberley family violence regional plan and the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children. So, all of those things will be taken into account.

[4.30 pm]

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: To allay any fears in the Kimberley that there will not be any funding for those services, is this purely a review to reintegrate other services that will address the issues up there or to provide support?

Hon SUE ELLERY: And to allay any fears, I am also advised that the service agreement is being extended while the family and domestic violence strategy is being finalised.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Okay. Good. Thank you. Minister, I am going to ask a question that in the disability section of Community Services I did attempt to ask, but it was suggested that I might be able to ask that question here, so —

Hon SUE ELLERY: If it is about Communities, then I am sorry but I cannot. The committee asked for child protection and family and domestic violence—so if it is connected to those two, I can. If it is broader within the scope of the Department of Communities, that is not who the committee requested.

The CHAIR: We encourage the member to ask the question and if it is unable to be provided because it is around Aboriginal housing—so it may actually be the housing component—but let us see if we can.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Yes. I will ask it, and if you cannot, I will put on notice. It is page 444, again, and it is the Aboriginal Community Connectors, formerly the Aboriginal Community Patrols. Formerly, the patrol was assisting to reduce family and domestic violence. Can you outline what the Aboriginal Community Connectors will be and what towns they will be in and outline their responsibilities, if that is possible?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think I can. This is the program that was formerly the Aboriginal community patrols. There is \$6.5 million in funding to continue the Aboriginal community patrols program under the revised service delivery model that is renamed the Aboriginal community connectors program. This will assist 11 non-government organisations, nine of which are Aboriginal community controlled and staffed by Aboriginal people. There will be an evaluation undertaken in 2019–20 to inform future funding requirements. They will look at service delivery options, and —

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: So, minister, because there is no funding in the forward estimates for that, so this is a review, again, of the Aboriginal community patrols to reintegrate into something else. Is that what —

Hon SUE ELLERY: There is an evaluation to be undertaken that will inform future funding requirements as part of the framework. I think that is all I am able to advise. If there was more information that you sought, I could take it on notice.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: I just wondered why there was only one financial year of funding.

Hon SUE ELLERY: It is because there is an ongoing evaluation, and that evaluation will inform future budget bids, for example.

The CHAIR: Member, just to clarify, there is no further information?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No.

The CHAIR: Okay.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I make this point: There is a recommendation in the Kimberley coronial inquest that there be recurrent or long-term funding for these patrols.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Yes, but that is not reflective in the budget.

Hon SUE ELLERY: And the government is working with Aboriginal leadership about how we respond to each of the recommendations out of that.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Okay. So that is what that \$6.5 million is?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes.

Hon JACQUI BOYDELL: Again, on the page 444, under “Significant Issues Impacting the Agency” point 2, where it is talking about the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the last line of that describes —

... helping develop a model for a Reportable Conduct Scheme; and modifying the interface between the Working with Children Check system with the National Reference system.

Can you explain to me what that means: modifying the interface between working with children?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I would love to. I will get Ms Nys to explain that in better detail than I am able to, but there is a difference between the recommendation out of the royal commission into reportable conduct, which is not necessarily about convictions, and a working with children check, which does incorporate convictions as part of what it checks. I will ask Ms Nys to provide a better explanation.

The CHAIR: Minister, I think there might be a—Ms Nys might be trying to draw —

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am advised Mr Jolly is the better officer—not the better officer; better-placed to provide the answer.

Mr Jolly: Thank you, minister, for the compliment and the referral. Thanks to the member for the question. The reference to the interface between the working with children check system and the national reference scheme actually comes out one of the 36 recommendations that was specifically targeted towards improving the working with children check system across the nation. One of those recommendations went to the sharing of working-with-children data across jurisdictions and across states and territories. It is a national working group level. Because there are different systems and different legislation in place in each of the states and territories and in one state there is presently no legislation in place, it was resolved, in the first instance at least, to focus on a national database, or a national reference system, of negative notices or people who are prohibited from engaging in child-related work. So, that is the national reference system that is being referred to, and work is well underway from a Western Australian perspective. In fact, WA’s working with children check system should be in a position to be able to contribute that information to the national scheme from July this year.

Hon PIERRE YANG: Minister, I refer you to page 447 of budget paper No 2, volume 2. It is on the table in the first half of the page, service line 4, “Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence”. I would like to ask: what is the government doing to reduce incidents of family and domestic violence and look after families and individuals experiencing family and domestic violence?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Yes, I can, I think. There is a comprehensive package of reforms that has already been announced. That includes nearly \$1.8 million towards culturally appropriate intervention and support services for victims; \$1 million over four years in respect to respectful relationships education; \$11.7 million from 2020–21 to 2022–23 to deliver the one-stop hubs as a way of simplifying access to support services; \$9.3 million to establish the two new women’s refuges; \$3.5 million to establish a second Communicare Breathing Space, which is a perpetrator-intervention service; \$1 million over four years to Allambee Counselling Inc for women and children in the Peel region; and further additional investment in respect to prevention and response initiatives will be informed by the 10-year strategy for reducing family and domestic violence. I think consultation on that has just completed. Is that correct?

[4.40 pm]

Ms Nys: Yes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: That strategy will be finalised in financial year 2019–20. Also, the department is developing a dedicated approach to Aboriginal family safety that recognises the particular elements that influence family violence in Aboriginal families and ensuring integrated responses as well. To that end, Communities is working with the departments of education, health, local government, and justice, and WA police, to better integrate responses. It is developing a framework for information sharing and risk assessment for relevant government agencies as well.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: All my questions are to do with—right away from the housing side of things—special-purpose accounts. This account has been established to fund essential and municipal services for remote Aboriginal communities. I have a couple of questions around that.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Can I stop you, honourable member? I am sorry to do this, but I think that is the housing portfolio within Communities.

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: All I am asking is: how do they access the account?

The CHAIR: If I can interpret some of that, this is a generic question about special-purpose accounts and how they are operated, in particular the way in which the department accesses the special-purpose account. It is a generic question in relation to the overall financial management of the department. Is that correct?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: Thank you, Chair.

Hon SUE ELLERY: We will see what we can do. Liam.

Mr Carren: Do you mind repeating the question?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: It is to do with Aboriginal communities. How do they access the account and which particular communities would benefit from those essential services?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Honourable member, we are going to take it as the Chair explained as a generic question about special-purpose accounts. I cannot give you an answer about Aboriginal housing as they are not represented here today. The committee did not call them as part of this element. We can give you some information generally about how special-purpose accounts are accessed.

Mr Carren: I just wanted clarification of the question. Thank you for the question, member. In general terms, government special-purpose accounts are covered by section 16 of the Financial Management Act. There are a whole lot of requirements that appear within that act. The Department of Communities, for example, has three special-purpose accounts. I refer you to our annual report, page 133. We list our special-purpose accounts against the Department of Communities. There is an opening balance, receipts, payments and a closing balance. Those amounts are audited by the Office of the Auditor General as part of the annual audit process and they validate to make sure that the transactions are consistent with the requirements of the special-purpose account. Each special-purpose account has a statement which describes the scope and the funds that may be used against the scope, and the Office of the Auditor General makes sure that that occurs. Decisions are made, largely, by the Treasurer, about when a portion of money is deemed to be appropriate to be kept in a special-purpose account. It varies depending on the circumstances, but it is generally when it is in the public interest that that money is kept with a ring-fence around it.

In terms of your question as to how those funds are accessed, agencies control the special-purpose accounts. That cash sometimes sits in a separate bank account. Sometimes it sits within the main bank account of an agency. If those funds were decided to be provided to an external party, as in an Aboriginal community, that would occur in the same way that any other invoice or expense would be paid. There would be a tax invoice submitted. There would be some sort of agreement. It would

follow a procurement process or, if applicable, a grant process. There is a whole lot of governance around that. It is an account that sits within the framework of the department's procedures and policies, so it has to have all the same set of checks and balances occur. Someone cannot just access a special-purpose account without going through the department, without going through all those requirements that I just mentioned. Does that answer your question? Does that help?

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: It does. It is related to this. I note that during the sustainable health review, on page 53, there were comments about environmental aspects towards premature mortality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and the amount of hospitalisations in the Kimberley region for environmental reasons. It was quite a substantial amount. It came to \$17 million—the cost of hospitalisations in the Kimberley because of environmental reasons. It pinpoints Aboriginal people. I am just wondering: is there going to be any additional money in the special-purpose accounts to react to that sort of thing? We have had a sustainable health review. I am just wondering: is that where that money would be well spent, or is there going to be money spent from that special-purpose account toward something like that? It is quite a substantial finding. I am just wondering: where else will we get the money to pay for that?

The CHAIR: Minister, if I could add just a little bit more detail behind that question, it is actually about the municipal and essential services special-purpose account. Given that there has been comment across the government, including through the sustainable health review, about the importance of prevention and that this municipal services program would feed into or assist in prevention and enhance living standards, why has there been a decrease in the municipal and essential services special-purpose account?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not in a position to provide you with an answer to that. I can certainly make the comment that it is the case that in many remote communities, the provision of essential services has a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of children. The department of child protection would see that. But in respect to the specifics, I will ask the director general to make some comments.

Ms Andrews: Thank you for the question. You will probably be familiar with the launch of the Our Priorities program earlier this year by the Premier. That has very much framed the areas of focus for government agencies, some of which speak directly to the issues that you are raising, particularly the Aboriginal wellbeing outcome area that we are focused on and also "A bright future", which is about looking at younger kids. There is particular work that we are already doing. I am working very closely with the head of education, Lisa Rodgers, and the head of health. The three of us are overseeing the "bright futures" outcome area and we are particularly looking at some of the more vulnerable and extremely vulnerable communities around Western Australia and starting to think differently about how we share data and analyse that data and what that starts to tell us about what the risk factors are and, more importantly, or as importantly, what the early interventions need to be. You can imagine, when you start looking at those target groups—groups that are already being identified as extremely vulnerable through things such as the AEDC, which the minister will be very familiar with, using the data that is coming through that to really drill in and understand what are the flags that go up and what are the interventions that are successful, sharing the data across with those cohorts where Communities touches those kids, Health touches those kids and Education touches those kids. We are really starting to do some things differently and working collaboratively across agencies in a way that we have not done before. We think that it is through this process that we are going to start actually making a significant difference for those kids in the early stage of their life.

[4.50 pm]

Hon COLIN TINCKNELL: That is really good to hear. I remember my first ever meeting when I came into this house was with the Indigenous affairs minister. It is good to see that collaboration happening.

Ms Andrews: That is what has flowed through Our Priorities.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, if I could ask you to turn to page 450 of budget paper No 2, volume 2, you will see there is a table at the bottom of the page entitled “Earlier Intervention and Family Support Services”. In that table, there is a line item, which I would describe as the fourth line item, entitled “Employees (Full-Time Equivalents)”. Could you or one of the witnesses explain why staff numbers have reduced by 34 FTEs since 2017–18?

Hon SUE ELLERY: The decrease in FTEs is mainly due to the reduction of 24 FTEs associated with the cessation of the royalties for regions-funded responsible parenting services, which has been replaced by the early intervention family support services strategy. I will see if I can get some more information to tell us where those FTEs went. I can get Ms Tang to provide you with some additional information.

Mrs Tang: Thank you, minister, and thank you, member, for the question. Responsible Parenting, as I understand it, was funded through royalties for regions and that came to an end. Therefore, the districts for child protection were in the process of restructuring to streamline and to make the structure across the state more consistent. Aligned with that, was last year we awarded contracts to the amount of \$110 million, which related to earlier intervention programs. We had the restructuring as well as additional services across the state, some more congested within the metropolitan community, to be able to address that earlier intervention focus. Responsible Parenting, the parenting support, basically through that earlier intervention, has picked those services up. Whilst the positions might have gone, the service has actually increased over the last two years and certainly not reduced.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Those 34 FTEs that are no longer there, am I hearing you right, that they are explained in part by the re-profiling into service 1 and, secondly, by the provision of \$110 million to somebody else to provide that work.

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am advised that is correct.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: How many people provide work for the \$110 million contract?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Ms Tang can provide you with an answer to that.

Mrs Tang: I do not have the figures for what actually accounts the FTE for each of the organisations of which we contract. I am not sure of the detail that you would like me to go through for each service, but I can provide you with the referral numbers as of 1 May and the number of referrals and the number of children supported for each of those areas for each of those work contracts. But I do not know the extent of the detail you would like me to go through.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I am just interested in the FTEs, but it sounds like you do not have that available. Could that be put on notice?

Mrs Tang: We contract a service, which then provides it based on the outcome of that service provision. That is their service model. We do not report on FTE; we report on the outcomes and the services that they are undertaking.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: So the number of FTE by the service providers is unknown?

Mrs Tang: I believe so. There may be commercial-in-confidence if that is their service model.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: It might be known; we are just not sure.

Hon SUE ELLERY: If you want that information, I am happy to see if we can get it for you. It is just that we might not be able to get it for you.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: That is fine.

[Supplementary Information No E13.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Minister, in that table, as has been identified, there are 34 less FTE and part of the explanation was it was due to the re-profiling to service 1. If I could ask you to turn back to page 449, which is, of course, this famous service 1, you will see there that the number of employees, FTE, has also decreased. How do we explain that if the re-profiling was into service 1?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will get Ms Tang to provide you with an explanation for that.

Mrs Tang: To the extent that I can explain it because it preceded my involvement in the department, my understanding is that it was funded through royalties for regions. That particular funding was time-limited and therefore stopped. Therefore, the FTEs stopped. Therefore, it was not re-profiled to the other areas because the money stopped flowing in and the additional funding came in in relation to the earlier intervention programs.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I had understood that earlier it had been explained that money that would appear to be cut from service 3 was not actually a cut; it has been re-profiled into service 1. Has it been re-profiled into service 1?

Mrs Tang: I can only respond in terms of that the royalties regions funding has ceased. When we are talking about the different fund —

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think I am going to take that on notice because I do not understand the answers that I have been given either. I am going to take that on notice so that we can make sure the numbers add up.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Thank you, minister.

[Supplementary Information No E14.]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Back to this issue of early intervention. Is the government able to advise what is the maximum and what is the minimum length of time that an earlier intervention and family support case could be open?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Ms Tang can give you some explanation of that. Although, I am not sure we would ever be able to give you an absolutely finite answer because it would depend a range of factors. I will ask Ms Tang to explain that to you.

Mrs Tang: In relation to earlier intervention services, we can talk about both departmental provision of that service as well as the contracting services. Earlier intervention is the earlier intervention for a child to come into care. The extent to which we need to work with families to avoid children coming into care, as far as departmental staff, if that takes two months, if it takes 12 months—there is no limit to that diversion and deferment away from that statutory intervention in that family. In relation to, for example, the Aboriginal in-home support, which is a contract with Wungening Moort, that service is provided to families for up to a period of 12 months. It is intensive supervision for those families. Now, that does not mean we necessarily step back; we work alongside Wungening Moort. It may be about that earlier intervention or it may be reunification of children back into their family home. There is no finite term in the sense that provision of service is determined on the level of risk and the need that is required. It is that earlier is not that it just proceeds; it is actually that prevention of coming into care.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: So, would the minimum period of time be one day, and the maximum period 18 years?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I do not know that you could put it as starkly as that. I think that is quite a simplistic description of it. If there is more information available, I will see if we can provide it to you, but I am not sure that your description of between one day and 18 years is particularly meaningful.

[5.00 pm]

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Is there a list of criteria that would need to be satisfied for a case to be allocated to earlier intervention and family support, in contrast to a child entering the CEO's care?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not sure that you would find that there is a list. These things will always be done on a risk-assessment basis. I might get Ms Tang to add to that, but it is essentially a judgement made every day by child protection workers about the extent to which—I wish that child protection was black and white, and you just go through the checklist, and that tells you that this is right and that is wrong. There is not.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Yes, I understand. Minister, I agree with you, but what guides that judgement process? Is there a set of documents, or a policy or guideline?

Hon SUE ELLERY: There is a whole range of things, some of which have been provided to you already—the practice guidelines, for example—but I might get Ms Tang —

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I am sorry; you say that I have been provided with practice guidelines previously. On what date was that provided to me?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Honourable member, I recall, and maybe I am wrong, that I have tabled documents for you. Maybe I am wrong, and I am happy to stand corrected, but I will get Ms Tang to provide you with a bit more information.

Mrs Tang: Thank you, minister, and thank you member for the question. I, too, wish it was as simple as having a criteria. It is based on risk. It is based on discussion, through the case practice manuals, about the threshold for central intake. We have a particular threshold of questions. However, those questions do not stand alone; they work alongside professional judgement. We have a lot of positions within the department for that very fact—that it is professional discretion as to how we work with the family. It depends on the risk that is posed to the young people who are under consideration, the willingness, ability and capacity of families to work with us and with the children to ensure that children are safe, and also the other agencies. At any one point, we might be looking at a family of children or young people, and that changes over a period of time, depending on the case management of that, and whatever is presenting. There is no black-and-white straight-out criteria, and I am not sure I would stay in this position if there was.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: In regards to the department's ACCO strategy to 2022, how is it intended to increase opportunities for ACCOs to develop contracted child protection and early intervention and family support services to their communities? What work has been done with Yorganop, as the only ACCO providing foster care in WA?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I will ask Ms Nys to provide you with some information.

Ms Nys: The department recognises that the best practice in relation to supporting Aboriginal families and Aboriginal children and, indeed, to retain Aboriginal children within their families, which we all recognise would be the best outcome for them, is that we need to invest in Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, whose services are best delivered by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people. That is the clear strategic intent of the department. We are working with a whole range of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations through the ACCO strategy, and they all

provide a range of services. In relation to Yorganop, which, as you quite rightly identified, is the only ACCO that is currently providing out-of-home care supports for the department, they are one of a range of organisations that that we are currently working with through a reform process in the out-of-home care space. One of the intents of one of that reform process is to work through our contracting arrangements with organisations—Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal—and how they will actually seek to develop business models that increase control and delivery of services by Aboriginal-controlled organisations, one of which is Yorganop.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I understand you are working with Yorganop as part of the out-of-home care reform project.

Hon SUE ELLERY: That is correct.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Could you provide us with a list of the dates the department has met with Yorganop as part of that work that you have described—just in the last financial year?

Hon SUE ELLERY: We certainly would not have that information available here. I am happy to take it on notice, and the director general might like to make some comments about that piece of work.

Ms Andrews: In the last three months, we have put a deliberate and more accelerated effort into the strategic intent that Helen was talking about, and really where your question goes to, and we have made some changes around the process we have been working through around out-of-home care. We have brought all of the existing service providers, but importantly, other Aboriginal organisations to the table. Quite importantly, I think, we have changed the discussion from being, some months ago, one around financial models, to actually starting to talk much more about better outcomes for the Aboriginal kids. As you are aware, and it is in the budget papers, more than 50 per cent of the kids who are in care are Aboriginal children. We have set up a sector reference group that has both existing and potential organisations and other Aboriginal voices at the table, all working very constructively, and chaired by Professor Maria Harries, to inform myself and the project board that is overseeing this process so that we can start building in genuine reform in that process and, importantly, doing it in a way that is supported by the Aboriginal organisations as a way of recognising that they want to work through a process that sees them building their own capacity and capability in this space, rather than taking too big a step into it, when they are not yet mature enough as organisations.

Over the last few months we have changed the way in which we are approaching that out-of-home care reform project in a constructive way, and a much more collaborative way. We have also brought to the table central government agencies to support us in that process—importantly, the Aboriginal policy unit that now exists in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Treasury, helping us with the analytics sitting around this process, and the Department of Finance, which is helping us with the procurement reform program that they have been on for some time, but also they are particularly focused on and funding ACCO capability building.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Chair, could we have a number allocated for the provision of the supplementary information, which is the dates on which the department has met with Yorganop on the work that was described in the past financial year.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The director general just wants to provide a bit more information before I tick off on the final version of what you are asking.

Ms Andrews: In the interests of being complete in my answer—thank you, minister—I have mentioned Professor Maria Harries, who was appointed to chair this process as an independent chair. I asked WACOSS to assist with that process. A significant and important signal around this is that the Aboriginal people around the table had approached Maria and myself to jointly chair that

process—to nominate someone—and they have just in the last couple of weeks confirmed an Aboriginal chair to jointly chair with Maria. I think it speaks to their confidence in the process that we have established, and Dawn Bessarab—am I pronouncing her name correctly?—is the Aboriginal woman who has been selected by the Aboriginal people themselves to be the joint chair in that process.

[5.10 pm]

Hon SUE ELLERY: To be clear about what the honourable member is seeking in respect of the ACCO strategy, it is the meetings that Yorganop has been involved in with the department in respect of the ACCO strategy.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: Yes, in the financial year in which we are currently, which will be due to finish in the next fortnight.

Hon SUE ELLERY: The 2018–19 year.

[Supplementary Information No E15.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to page 445, point 5, regarding children in out-of-home care. There is a reference to a legislative framework supporting best child outcomes. I was hoping to have an explanation of what is meant by that and whether that is indicating that the government is intending to progress legislative reform, which was recommended by the review of the Children and Community Services Act.

Hon SUE ELLERY: It would be helpful to me —

Hon ALISON XAMON: Page 445, point 5 —

... and a legislative framework supporting best child outcomes.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Thank you. Let us see if I can drive this myself. You were looking for progress on any legislative changes.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I was wanting to know what it meant and, specifically, wanting to know whether that means that any of the recommendations of the review of the Children and Community Services Act are going to be progressed.

Hon SUE ELLERY: In respect of any legislative changes arising from the review, that is before government now, so I cannot tell you any more about that. In respect of your second question —

Hon ALISON XAMON: Whether it is specifically about the recommendations from the review of the Children and Community Services Act.

Hon SUE ELLERY: Those matters are progressing through government as well. The non-legislative ones are being progressed by the department. There may well be some of those that have budget implications that need to be taken into account. Those discussions and that work is being done now.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Do you have a time frame, minister, of when it is hoped that is going to be finalised or when we are going to have further clarity on that?

Hon SUE ELLERY: No, I do not have a time line.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I am going to move on to another question because I am aware there is limited time. I refer to page 443, “Spending Changes”, “New Initiatives”, first line item, “Commonwealth Redress Scheme”. Can I ask: is the funding that has been made available for organisations to support care leavers during the redress process?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I am not trying to be difficult, and I am conscious of the time. The question was what component of that money —

Hon ALISON XAMON: Yes, is being used to assist care leavers through the redress process. Part of it is also wanting to know why it is almost halving in the forward estimates, and also which organisations potentially are being funded to provide support?

Hon SUE ELLERY: I think the best thing I can do is give you an undertaking that I will take it on notice. I am not sure that this is the area that is responsible for making that decision. I do not know, but I will take it on notice. If we are able to provide you with an answer, we will.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I add a further question to that to be put on notice too, please?

The CHAIR: If the minister agrees.

Hon ALISON XAMON: That is, whether there is also any intention to provide support or funding for Redress WA survivors who are excluded from the National Redress Scheme?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Sure. I can take that on notice.

Hon ALISON XAMON: Thank you.

[Supplementary Information No E16.]

Hon ALISON XAMON: Can I get in one small one quickly?

The CHAIR: Very small; very quick.

Hon ALISON XAMON: I refer to the table on page 444 and to the line item above “Other”, “Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance Program”. I may have to take this on notice, Chair, I recognise. I just want to ask how that program is structured and who is delivering it? I also want to know how many young people were supported and why its funding has been discontinued?

Hon SUE ELLERY: Sorry, I cannot take that on notice. You are asking the wrong minister; that is in the housing portfolio.

The CHAIR: That concludes this hearing. On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. The committee will forward the transcript of evidence, which includes questions you have taken on notice highlighted on the transcript, within seven days of the hearing. If members have any unasked questions, please submit them via the electronic lodgement system by Friday, 28 June. Responses to these questions and any questions taken on notice today are due by 5.00 pm, Friday, 26 July. Should you be unable to meet this deadline, please advise the committee in writing as soon as possible before the due date. The advice is to include specific reasons as to why the due date cannot be met. Once again, I thank you for your attendance today.

Members, we adjourn. The next hearing is with the Department of Education at 9.00 am tomorrow.

Hearing concluded at 5.16 pm
