

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

LC Tuesday 9 September 2014 - Estimates Committee B (Petrusma)

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Tuesday 9 September 2014

MEMBERS

Mrs Armitage
Mr Dean
Mr Finch
Mr Hall
Ms Rattray
Mrs Taylor (Chair)
Mr Valentine

IN ATTENDANCE

Department of Health and Human Services

Michael Pervan, Acting Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
Eleanor Patterson, Acting Chief Financial Officer
Ross Smith, General Manager, Shared Services
Mercia Bresnehan, Deputy Secretary, Disability, Housing and Community Services
Tony Kemp, Deputy Secretary, Children and Youth Services
Lisa Howes, Acting Manager, Executive, Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (supporting role)
Rod Fazackerley, Manager, Finance, Disability, Housing and Community Services
Jo White, Manager, Service and Sector Development
Ingrid Ganley, Director, Disability and Community Services
Peter White, Director, Housing Tasmania
Frances Hall, Manager, Corporate Services

Nick Evans, Director of Communities, Sport and Recreation, Tasmania.

The committee commenced at 2.30 p.m.

CHAIR (Mrs Taylor) - Welcome, minister. It is lovely to have you and congratulations on the portfolios. The first portfolio of yours we have is that of Minister for Women. We would like it if you would make an opening statement. Perhaps at some point you might also address your strategic plan and where your money is coming from because there is no budget line item. It was within DPAC as a specific line item under the previous government but you do not appear to have any money for this office. I am wondering what you are going to do.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mrs PETRUSMA - I have here with me Nick Evans, who is the Director of Communities, Sport and Recreation in Tasmania.

Thank you, Chair, I am honoured to be here today for my very first Budget Estimates as the Minister for Women. I am the first dedicated Minister for Women since 2006 and so I am wholeheartedly committed to working to improve the safety and wellbeing of all women and girls in Tasmania and to enable them to fully participate economically and socially within our community. As all members would be aware, sadly, family violence and sexual assault are still primarily perpetrated against women, women are still paid less than men, and women are under-represented in leadership roles. To address all these issues, this Government has established a dedicated portfolio for Women.

The Minister for Women is currently under output group 6.1 but in the 2014-15 budget papers there is no specific output under output group 6 that specifically identifies women. However, as the minister reporting on these matters I have already spoken with the Treasurer who will remedy this for the 2015-16 budget papers and will include the women's portfolio as a separately identifiable output under output 6 for the next Budget.

Key outputs for women delivered by the Department of Premier and Cabinet include both policy and program outputs. In summary the highlights are: policy work around addressing family violence. The extent of family violence and sexual assault across Australia continues to be a challenge for government at the national and state level. Significant work has been undertaken in respect of the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children with the launch of a second action plan by the Prime Minister in June this year. Work is now progressing on the second implementation plan for Tasmania.

Work has also been undertaken towards establishment of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety – ANROWS - which was launched in May 2014. ANROWS is an independent, not-for-profit company, jointly funded by the Commonwealth and the state and territory governments. It has been given a critically important leadership role and tasked with delivering research evidence that drives policy and practice leading to a reduction in the levels of violence against women and their children, and \$35 100 per annum is put into that organisation.

The division and my office are working collaboratively to promote White Ribbon, Australia's national male-led campaign to end men's violence against women, and the importance of White Ribbon is that it makes women's safety a man's issue too.

In regard to advancing outcomes for women and girls, progress has been made on implementation of a number of strategies under the 2013-18 Tasmanian Women's Plan including gender equity mainstreaming policy. The aim of gender mainstreaming is to incorporate gender awareness into the development of policies and programs. To take account of how a proposed policy may impact differently on men and women and how this might be addressed.

On 23 September I will be launching the Women and Girls Report, a biannual publication by which we can track the progress towards gender equality across a number of outcome areas. The report shows there are significant differences for men and women in key areas such as education, employment, economic security and health and wellbeing. I consider it important to track progress in key areas on a regularly basis, to highlight areas where attention may be required in advancing towards gender equality.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Developing and recognising women's leadership is another key priority. It is also one of the six priority areas of the Tasmanian Women's Plan. I acknowledge that increasing women's representation on Tasmanian Government Boards has continued to be a challenge, one which is confronted successive governments. For this reason, I have requested a review of the current Women on Boards strategy to see if there is more that can be done and I would be pleased to outline potential strategies under consideration.

Women are also significantly underrepresented within the Australian Honours system especially amongst the higher award categories. As incoming minister, I am continuing the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women and nominations for the 2015 honour roll will close on 26 September 2014, so I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you all to nominate a worthy woman who has made a significant contribution in their community.

The 2014-15 Budget highlights for women - providing an additional \$80 000 over four years to Tasmanian women in agriculture to enable it to continue to deliver the vital link between rural women and government and ensuring issues affecting rural women, their families and communities, are responded to through effective policy and program delivery.

Providing Netball Tasmania with \$800 000 over four years to develop, promote and administer netball and provide pathways for elite athletes -

CHAIR - That's from Premier and Cabinet, both of them?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, both of those are from Premier and Cabinet. I do have some but these are some for women, specifically.

CHAIR - The Premier mentioned that one yesterday.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Providing \$800 000 over four years to Bravehearts to deliver a child safety program in primary schools. This program supports the objectives of the Tasmania's Primary Prevention Strategy to reduce violence against women and children which does come under myself but the funding is under the Department of Education.

There is also an extra \$124 000 for Sexual Assault Support Services and the Country Women's Association will be provided with \$27 000 to upgrade their kitchen.

The scope of the portfolio - while the Department of Premier and Cabinet, through Community Support and Recreation Tasmania, leads a number of policies and programs that relate to women's agencies, such as State Growth, Education, Health and Human Services and Justice, administer programs and services both targeted at women, or of specific benefit to women. Any questions that pertain to those different portfolios will need to be directed towards the relevant ministers.

In closing, this is the first time since 2006 that government has chosen to appoint a Minister for Women. The establishment of this portfolio reinforces the importance that the Government places on women. I am honoured to be appointed to this position and I hope that during the next four years I can make a real difference in improving the lives of women and girls. I can give you further information into output 6.1 that is specific to my program.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms RATTRAY - I am particularly interested in how women's organisations can apply for support. How do they do that through the minister's office? That would be useful for me to understand.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The program expenditure that currently comes under my portfolio is \$16 285 for the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women and the Tasmanian Women's Council is \$1 000 which is reimbursement of travel, catering and occasional room hire. International Women's Day, \$6 500, through event sponsorship. That's for Hobart, Launceston and the North West. For the International Women's Day Art Competition, there's prize sponsorship of \$1 000. The total on women specific programs, non-staffing costs, is \$24 785, but for the salaries for the 4.2 FTEs that's under my portfolio - that is \$462 538.

CHAIR - You have 4 FTEs in this portfolio.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The program is 4.2 FTEs.

CHAIR - Why is there not a line item?

Mrs PETRUSMA - There will be next year.

CHAIR - At the moment that 4.2 FTEs is absorbed into DHHS, is it?

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right, because there has not been a minister for women since 2006.

CHAIR - Into DPAC?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, it is under DPAC. At the moment, the funding is \$487 323 for the Women's portfolio.

Ms RATTRAY - How do organisations access those 4.2 FTEs? Do they ring your office directly, minister?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The Women's principal liaison officer is the person who regularly meets with key stakeholder organisations in the portfolio for Women to progress actions especially in regard to the Tasmanian Women's Plan. This position maintains a dedicated women's email distribution list and a dedicated phone number and email address so members of the public and the women's service sector have a key contact point in the portfolio.

The principal liaison officer also convenes the Tasmanian Women's Council, which is the principle forum for consultation and advising the Government on women's issues in Tasmania. It also supports the Government in delivering activities and initiatives for women, including implementation and monitoring of the Tasmanian's Women's Plan.

Ms RATTRAY - They would just ring your parliamentary office and be directed to that person?

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right. I have an advisor specifically for women.

CHAIR - Whose name is?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mrs PETRUSMA - Laura Eaton. They ring my office and ask for the women's advisor who then liaises with the relevant person or organisation.

CHAIR - Are you intending to do something to publicise this fact, now that you have this portfolio - that you have staff who might be available to address women's issues?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Since I have been in the position, I have done a number of things. I have written to every single women's group or organisation that we can think of in the state to let them know that there is now a dedicated Minister for Women. I have started meeting with all those organisations. Also, there is the Tasmanian Women's Council, which has been around since 1990 and has played a valuable role in shaping the Government's priorities for women. The council also provides a forum for the women's sector to communicate directly with the Government.

CHAIR - And it is based in?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Hobart.

Mr EVANS - The council meets four times a year and meetings are shared across the state, but the secretariat support is based in Hobart.

Ms RATTRAY - Are they safe at the moment in their capacity as the Tasmanian Women's Council, given that there have been a number of board and council -

Mrs PETRUSMA - They are 100 per cent safe.

Ms RATTRAY - The Tasmanian Community Fund thought that, too.

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, the council is 100 per cent safe. In fact, we recently put a new member up for it.

There is also the Tasmanian Women's Register which is a database of women who have registered through the DPAC website. The register currently has 456 members. Women who are interested in going on boards can register. When vacancies occur on Government boards, agencies are required to seek appropriate nominations from the register and undertake strategies to recruit women to fill the vacancies. We have just taken a review of this strategy - it was first developed between 2011 and 2013 but it had expired. We are doing a new draft of the Women on Board strategy, which has now gone back to the Tasmanian Women's Council for their approval. We are very keen to get more women on boards. The number has dropped slightly, and we want to improve that. You will notice in the Budget papers that we are trying to get it up to 40 per cent.

We are also looking to engage women with the establishment of a closed group in the business orientated social media site LinkedIn. This is to try to promote board vacancies and attract membership from women who are interested in being considered for board membership. We are also trying to get women from non-traditional areas such as engineering, forestry, mining, architecture, building and construction and agriculture involved. We are also looking at working with the Australian Institute of Company Directors to promote leadership and networking opportunities and events for women who would like to be appointed to the boards.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

[2.45 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY - There will probably be fewer opportunities not only for women but also for men with the reduction of boards. It is going to be difficult to fulfil women's aspirations for board placements when we have a list of 30 boards that have been disbanded. Do you see that as an issue, minister?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The Premier is very determined we will increase the number of women on boards. Since we came into government he has asked me to review that and try to increase it internally. I have already taken to Cabinet a strategic document and a cabinet document to remind my fellow ministers that it is a requirement they consider the Women's Register for appointees to boards. The target is 34 per cent and we are trying to increase it to 40 per cent. The Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet recently wrote to a number of external organisations outside of government who are required under legislation to nominate members to boards to encourage them to also nominate women from their membership. In Cabinet now they have to fill in a certification form with a cabinet briefing to say they have consulted the Women's Register before appointing a board. They must explain the actions taken to identify women for any board and the reasons more women are not being nominated for appointment to the board. This is government boards so ministers now have to fill in a form as to reasons why a woman was not selected for the board.

Mr VALENTINE - How do they get onto the register? It may not be automatic if they don't have the skills, et cetera.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Anyone can register their skills because it is done by a key word search. If you are looking for someone with engineering skills, you go to the Women's Register and type in 'engineering'.

Mr EVANS - We have an extensive mailing list of women's organisations, whether it be the Country Women's Association or a women's shelter, and they are regularly reminded that the register exists and to use it and publicise it amongst people who are members of the organisation and the clients they might see. We make an effort to get people to register.

Ms RATTRAY - There are going to be some men missing out fairly shortly on board positions.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It still has to be merit-based. Westpac recently put out a report that has shown there is unconscious gender bias still alive and well; it is about overcoming that and making sure people are aware that there is a Tasmanian Women's Register so that it is consulted before appointments are made.

Mr FINCH - It is interesting to see there the allocation to sport. Is it only to netball?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, that was through Communities, Sport and Recreation, it was \$800 000 to netball. Basketball Tasmania received \$2 500; Boxing Tasmania received \$10 000 to increase female participation in boxing; Cricket Tasmania received \$30 000 to increase female participation in school and club-based competitions; Surfing Tasmania received \$3 670 to deliver a female surf camp; Touch Football Tasmania received \$5 900 to increase women's participation on the north-west coast; Yachting Tasmania received \$5 000 to increase female participation through inclusion of gender-specific events in the southern series. Netball Tasmania also received another \$50 000 to increase female participation outcomes, and Women's Sport and Recreation of

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Tasmania received \$10 000 to deliver leadership and media training for women in the sport and recreation sector.

In addition, AFL Tasmania has been provided with funding to develop and implement a range of strategies to increase female participation pathways, which is \$15 625. The Football Federation Tasmania has also been provided with \$50 000 towards female elite development. We are looking at developing an exciting initiative with the Football Federation for women in sport.

As we know family violence is increasing throughout the state. About one in three women in this state will be a victim of family violence.

CHAIR - Is it increasing?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, it is increasing.

Mr FINCH - Or reported more.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, it is reported more, but it is increasing. My portfolio is about primary prevention. Other aspects are with the Attorney-General, for example, the Safe at Home legislation, but for me it is all about promoting primary prevention, which is why we have the White Ribbon Campaign and also this initiative.

One action we are keen to progress as part of the primary prevention strategy to reduce violence against women and children is the development of a targeted statewide social marketing campaign to try to address men's social norms and behaviour, including those related to family violence and sexual violence.

As we know, sport is a strong element of the Australian culture and is considered a common language and leveller across all socio-cultural groups. It has the capacity to unite families, nations and communities and bring people together in social groups and is well recognised as a powerful agent of social change. However, many of us would be aware of a number of high profile instances of inappropriate behaviour in sport. These include a number of sex scandals and high profile athletes being charged with assault.

The awareness of such examples of bad behaviour is driven by the level of media attention that high profile sports people attract when they act inappropriately. However, it is an issue affecting sport at all levels. Adding to these issues, the 2009 national community attitudes survey indicated that of the 10 000 respondents, 13 per cent of people still agree that women often say 'no' when they mean 'yes', and roughly 16 per cent agree that a woman is partly responsible if she is raped when drunk or drug-affected. Also fewer people in 2009 believed that slapping and pushing your partner to cause harm or fear is a very serious form of violence than in the previous survey. To overcome these incidents and attitudes, sport settings provide a vehicle to educate key sporting organisations and individuals about the role they play in leading and modelling appropriate values and behaviours in our community.

In Tasmania, statistics indicate that men participate in sport more than women. For example, in the 15 to 17 years age group, 69.2 per cent of men compared to women at 31.7 per cent participate in sport; in the 18 to 24 years age group, 52 per cent of men participate in sport compared to women only 40 per cent. We believe this presents an ideal opportunity for the Government to focus on a social marketing campaign targeting young men in a sporting setting.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

To meet this goal, I am proud to announce that discussions with Football Federation Tasmania will commence with the objective of developing a family violence, multi-faceted social marketing campaign across the soccer community. We believe that Football Federation Tasmania is an excellent sporting setting to start this work as in 2013 it experienced significant growth of up to 14 000 registered players, 85 per cent of whom were juniors.

As we know, soccer is a sport that is popular with many diverse communities in Tasmania and is played statewide. Football Federation Tasmania is also keen to increase women's participation in sport and is committed to building an organisational culture that is welcoming, inclusive and safe for women.

The prevalence of family violence and sexual assault is evident in the Tasmanian community at all socio-economic levels and must be reduced, so we are very excited about the potential of this initiative and congratulate Football Federation Tasmania for its commitment to supporting women and girls in Tasmania.

It is an exciting initiative because, as we know, across the state a lot of young males do look up to sporting heroes, so if we can target soccer where I know my sons play on a Saturday, saying violence against women is not okay, this will be a powerful message to send across the state.

CHAIR - Did you get the answer to your question?

Mr FINCH - I do not think I asked one. I was making the observation that it was good you are targeting sport in respect of a way to set role models and to promote women in sport. I was thinking more about the Tornados, the basketball, and the Chargers down here. The huge success of the women's Chargers team and they are going to be fantastic role models. We have up north the Tornados. I see you gave \$2 500 to Basketball Tasmania. Was that specifically for the promotion of women in basketball or has that been targeted in any way?

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is to deliver a program for female participants with disability. It is one of their five inclusive KPIs.

Mr FINCH - Okay. Just highlighting the work of the basketball teams, the Chargers and the Tornados.

CHAIR - They are largely privately funded. Corporate sponsorship.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is mostly corporate sponsorship. I know I go to a fundraising breakfast for them about every year.

Mr FINCH - With volunteers who run those. I am on the board of the Tornados, so I will declare an interest, and it is hard going.

Mr VALENTINE - How did you arrive at the programs you are going to promote? Did you get research from various places?

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is a very good question. A lot of the programs have been set up over many years and when we came into government we looked at the programs that existed. For example, the Tasmanian Women's Plan - a lot of consultation went into developing that plan. We

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

need to continue the work of this and promote it more. Until I came to this role I had no idea that we had a Tasmanian Women's Plan. I did not know we had a Tasmanian Women's Register. I did not know we had a Primary Prevention Strategy for Family Violence. I did not know about the Women's Awards, there was lots. Because there has not been a minister since 2006, it is important to start raising these issues, especially as there have been a few reports from, for example, Oxfam and Westpac lately saying that the gender pay gap is getting bigger, and there is gender bias creeping back in. It is about raising issues again and trying to freshen it up and get things going.

Mr VALENTINE - One area that seems, by all reports, to involve a lot of women is gambling, and probably to excess, if I can put it that way. Is there any attempt to try to address that area?

Mrs PETRUSMA - We can talk about gambling under my next portfolio of Community Services if you like.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay. I would be interested in your comments as far as women are concerned in that regard.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I have a huge brief on gambling, but as you know 50 per cent of all profits have to be spent on gambling support programs, so I am sure there are some for women. I know at the moment it is young men - we do a lot of research on gambling support programs and the research that has been completed by the university recently has shown that it is young men who are -

Mr VALENTINE - More particularly than women?

Mrs PETRUSMA - More than women and they are going online. The amount coming in from electronic gaming machines is decreasing quite a lot, but they are going to other forms. Next week we are starting a new gambling advertising program that is aimed more at young men and online gaming to try to decrease that sort of activity.

Mr VALENTINE - You were saying there is an increase in violence against women. If that is the case it may well be that there are more women finding their way to court and I am interested in whether the Women's Legal Service gets onto the radar. As you are probably aware, the Federal Government has reduced funding to some of those groups. Has there been any consideration to assisting them because of the work they do in assisting women by either giving advice that they should not go to court or giving advice that they should go to court?

[3.00 p.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA - In regard to the Hobart Women's Legal Service, it comes under the Attorney-General's area and I know she has been working on it. Because 90 per cent of the service is funded by the Commonwealth, I know the Attorney-General has been writing to Senator Brandis a lot to try to get increased funding. I saw the Hobart Women's Legal Service recently but the Attorney-General has too. It is about trying to get the Federal Government to increase their funding and not to cut their funding. The Attorney-General is very much onto the case. It would best if you ask the question of her.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you for that.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr DEAN - Minister, your statement of increased violence and family assault and so on contradicts what police are saying. The police statistics show that violence toward women in the home is dropping off. I quoted those figures in this place only a couple of weeks ago when I talked about the police report. They contradict the police figures. I want to know why there is that difference. It was only about 40 per cent of violence against women in the home was reported. There is a huge unreported part in this.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The figure for 2012-13 was 3 860 incidents while in 2013-14 it was 4 071 incidents of family violence.

Mr DEAN - How are you interpreting that? The police figures are now in two categories. One relates to family arguments, and the other one relates to violence against women.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Number of incidents in 2012-13 was 2 248, where 'incident' is defined in section 7 of the Family Violence Act as assault, including sexual assault, threats, coercion, intimidation, verbal abuse, abduction, stalking, attempting or threatening to commit any of the above, economic abuse, emotional abuse, or intimidation and contravening an external family violence order, an interim family violence order, or a police family violence order. An argument is a dispute between two persons in a family relationship where family violence as defined in section 7 of the Family Violence Act, has not and is not likely to be committed, was 1 691 in 2013-14 but 1 612 in 2012-13.

Mr DEAN - Where do those figures come from compared with where the police figures come from? Since 2008 there has been, according to the police statistics and figures, a downturn in the number of domestic assaults and violence against women.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It says here that the figures have been obtained from Tasmania Police's Corporate Performance Report.

Mr DEAN - I would be interested to have a closer look at that document.

Mrs PETRUSMA - In the last 12 months it has gone up. The highest point was back in 2006-07 but they did not distinguish between incidents or arguments then and that was 5 012.

Mr DEAN - It changed in 2008. I will need to check. Is that document available?

CHAIR - Ivan is asking whether that document is confidential. Could you supply a copy of it to us? That is obviously a question on notice.

Mr EVANS - I think the basic point is, whilst the figures have increased over the last 12 months as a rule, from 2008 onwards they are trending down, but the most recent 12-month period have gone up.

Mr DEAN - The most recent 12 months - what was that?

Mr EVANS - 2013-14.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Which is 4 071, and 2012-13 was 3 860.

Mr DEAN - The police annual report is not out yet for this year, is it?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

I will go into another area - the sexual assaults against women. There is an horrific number of those occurring. Are you concerned about the fact that according to the latest Anglicare report done in relation to this, I think it said 61 per cent of sexual assaults on women are not reported to police. Is that a concern to you, minister?

Mrs PETRUSMA - I know Laurel House CEO, Mark Dean, said there had been a 48 per cent increase in the number of sexual assault victims reporting in Tasmania, so that is increasing due to better access to forensic examination services. For example at the North-West Regional Hospital there is now a sexual assault medical service. There is a sexual assault forensic examination service at the Launceston General Hospital which has made it easier to report. Ms Little, from Sexual Assault Support Services, has said there has been a jump in reporting because there is a growing awareness of what constitutes sexual crime. Statistics have shown the reporting figures are increasing in Tasmania.

Mr DEAN - I need to look at the document but there is 61 per cent I think, and that was a fairly current document so I might need to talk to you about that and show it to you.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes.

Mr FINCH - Minister, I spoke in Westminster about Women as Agents of Change. I want to establish my credentials here. We had a forum there and I was able to promote a website called Women Tasmania. It was a revelation to the 300 delegates to see the information and the support that came through that website. While we have been talking, I thought I would check that website to see what is going on but that has all gone. Are you aware of that? Can you tell me about the process that has taken place to put the replacements there?

Mrs PETRUSMA - I cannot comment on when the website went but we are looking at getting a Facebook page up and running, as well as a closed LinkedIn page.

Mr EVANS - Women Tasmania ceased to exist in about 2011 and its functions were taken up by Community Development Division within DPAC which also took up the Multicultural Tasmania Seniors Bureau, the Disability Bureau, the Office of Children and Youth Affairs. The government at the time thought some of those offices had become very small, like two people, and it made sense to combine those roles and functions.

Women Tasmania at that time would have had a standalone website as you have described, Mr Finch. If you go to the DPAC website and Community Sport and Recreation Tasmania and you follow the right links you will find all that information is still there, albeit perhaps a little harder to find if you just type in Women Tasmania.

Ms RATTRAY - You will not get it.

Mr FINCH - You get a response. Some that you do not want to hear about here. If you are promoting better communication, better understanding, and better knowledge of services that might be a place where people can have instant access rather than, as you say Mr Evans, needing to search for the information. Even if it is under the banner of Women Tasmania, there is easy access to the knowledge.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mrs PETRUSMA - We are looking at getting our Facebook page up and the closed LinkedIn forum as well. The website at the moment will be through DPAC. Facebook is really where people are looking.

CHAIR - Not all women do that. Not all women look at Facebook. It is one way, but a website is another way.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Maybe it has to be a front page that takes them to the DPAC page.

Mr VALENTINE - I do not understand why there is not a line item for this year. I know you said there was not a Minister for Women before but surely, in constructing the Budget, they would know there was a Minister for Women and give it a line item. Can you explain why that is the case? I cannot understand why.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Apparently that happened under the previous government, too, when they brought in Veterans Affairs portfolios, Aboriginal Affairs, the Minister for Hospitality and also Community, Sport and Recreation. There has been a lot of shuffling around of portfolios. It is being addressed for next year, now that we have realigned everything. At the early stage, when the Budget was being put together, it was just a bit too soon. Next year it will be there.

Ms RATTRAY - It shows that ministers have no input into the compiling of the Budget, which is a bit sad.

CHAIR - That is probably a bit harsh. Defend yourself.

Mrs PETRUSMA - There has been a lot of change over the last few months - a lot of re-alignment.

Ms RATTRAY - It is not the first time and it will not be the last.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It happened under the previous government as well and next year it will be addressed.

Mr FINCH - Minister, you are serious about it, and that is the main thing.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Believe me it will be there next year.

CHAIR - Thank you very much for that, minister. We will get you to change hats and go on to your next portfolio as the Minister for Human Services.

DIVISION 4

(Department of Health and Human Services)

CHAIR - Minister, please give an overview or introductory statement to your portfolio. In particular you might like to address the budget savings and strategically why they have been made where they are being made. Please introduce your people at the table for *Hansard*.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Thank you, Chair. Beside me I have Mr Michael Pervan, Acting Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services; I also have Ms Mercia Bresnehan, Deputy

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Secretary, Disability, Housing and Community Services, as well as Mr Tony Kemp, Deputy Secretary, Children and Youth Services.

Once again, it is a real pleasure to be in my first Budget Estimates as Minister for Human Services and a lot has certainly happened since this committee last met. In my view, Human Services is one of the most important portfolios of government because it is about how we take care at the state level of Tasmania's most vulnerable people while at the same time creating the conditions for everyone to take the next step in their journey. I am pleased that this Budget not only delivers on our election commitments to Human Services but lays strong foundations for the future.

The budget breakdown for Human Services is: Community Services, \$21 million; Disability Services, \$214 million; Housing Services, \$261 million; and Human Services System Management, \$2.8 million, making a total of \$498.9 million. The Children's Services output is \$114.4 million, which includes the Office of the Commissioner for Children. As well, the Housing Capital Investment Program is \$4.3 million and \$477 000 under the Housing Fund, making a total of \$618.1 million for Human Services for 2014-15. I want to say upfront that this funding does include a one-off accrual transaction of \$132 million in 2014-15 for the transfer of property under Better Housing Futures and that is why there is a dramatic difference between this year's and next year's Budget.

I would like to speak now about some of the highlights from the Budget as it is important to spell out how we are delivering on our election commitments. We are delivering on our election commitment of \$250 000 for an affordable housing strategy to develop a strategy for a housing framework over the next decade. We have also committed a total of \$43.9 million for the Housing Tasmania Capital Program in 2014-15, which will allow Housing Tasmania to deliver 287 new dwellings and seven residential lots. It will directly contribute \$35.9 million into the building and construction sector and create 269 direct jobs for Tasmanians. This funding also includes \$511 000 to purchase an appropriate location for a youth supported accommodation facility on the north-west coast which has been recognised for quite a few years as being a missing gap.

In this Budget, community sector organisations are also recognised for the important work they do in delivering services for vulnerable Tasmanians. Additional funding has been provided of \$9 million to the community sector over four years to support increasing costs and capacity-building. Further assistance for the implementation of the equal remuneration order is also being provided with an extra \$24.2 million included in 2017-18. In total, the Government has committed \$82.5 million to funding the first six years of the ERO. Base grant funding is also continuing with indexation of 2.25 per cent being applied, which equals an extra \$5.3 million for indexation in 2014-15.

One of the fundamental changes occurring in Tasmania at the moment, of course, is the NDIS. Additional funding of \$2 million has been allocated to the NDIS in 2014-15 as well as an additional \$39.6 million in 2017-18. Once fully implemented, the Government will provide an additional \$55.2 million to people with a disability bringing total funding in 2019-20 to \$232 million. On top of this, we are also providing an extra \$2 million, because about 83 per cent of Tasmanians are outside of the NDIS cohort, to provide around an extra 12 000 additional hours of support. We are also providing \$250 000 to the National Disability Services because we recognise that we need more people to be working in the NDIS. We need to develop a job ready workforce.

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We have also provided \$1 million over four years to kick start a long term strategy to provide best practice autism care in Tasmania.

Alongside all this we are also joining up the human services. For a long time people in this state, and advocacy services clients, have been calling for a joined up human services support system, because there have been too many gaps. This will be a major project over the next three to four years.

There is also an extra \$250 000 for TasCOSS to assist us in this work. Also Neighbourhood Houses, which I am sure you all have in your electorates - we are providing an extra \$50 000, \$25 000 this year and \$25 000 next year, to help them in their great work. There will also be capital investment funding of \$4 million to be spent on the upgrading and refurbishment of Neighbourhood Houses.

There is an extra \$100 000 for the 15-20 food co-ops in Neighbourhood Houses and \$500 over four years for the Family Support Centre in Sheffield, which will be similar to a Neighbourhood House but it will be run by Glenhaven.

There is \$450 000 to continue the elder abuse strategy over the next three years, plus we have identified an extra \$250 000 for 2014-15, which gives \$700 000 to protect vulnerable elderly Tasmanians over the next three years.

Sexual assault support services will also receive an additional \$124 000 on top of the current \$2.47 million, which is budgeted for 2014-15.

In regard to children, we are investing an extra \$300 000 into short term preventative support care to help keep families together, and to decrease the need for child protection services becoming formally engaged. We are also investing \$360 000 over three years into a pre-placement process.

Across government there is also an extra \$5.3 million being invested into youth justice programs. In my portfolio it will be the Save the Children - Supporting Young People on Bail program and a post-detention transition program.

Any questions on that?

CHAIR - Thank you. We will have lots of questions. It is a big portfolio.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is a very rewarding portfolio.

CHAIR - In terms of money, it is a big portfolio. I note that your funding for this year is about \$34 million less, all up, when you include human services systems - output groups 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Mrs PETRUSMA - At the moment it is \$498.9 million for human services. Then you add in \$114.4 million for children's services.

CHAIR - It is a lot of money.

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Mrs PETRUSMA - It is a lot of money, yes.

CHAIR - But you have a significant cut from last year's Budget. It is less than last years?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No.

CHAIR - If you look at Table 4.12 which is revenue from appropriation. I am looking at page 4.35.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is what I was trying to work out - what page.

CHAIR - The first person who is going to ask you a question about this output group 4, 4.1 Human Services system management is Mr Valentine.

Output group 4

Human Services system management

4.1 Human services system management -

Mr VALENTINE - I thought I would give the minister the opportunity to explain what the human services system management is. I note a \$3.216 million decrease in the Budget. Quite a significant decrease, when we are talking about an overall Budget of \$5.8 million.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Sorry, which figure are we on.

Mr VALENTINE - We are looking at 4.1, Human services system management. I am asking exactly what that covers and why there has been a \$3.216 million reduction in the Budget. It talks about overheads being reallocated, but that is a heck of a lot of overheads to be reallocated. Perhaps you can explain what that is about and why there is a reallocation?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Last year the previous minister indicated - that was the first year the Human Services system management was put in place - that it would need to be readdressed during the year and reallocated. I will invite Eleanor Patterson, Acting Chief Financial Officer, to explain it. The cost allocation has been allocated to other outputs, so it has been reallocated. The money is still there but it has been allocated to where it needs to go.

CHAIR - For clarification, minister, we are looking at revenue from appropriation. I think the figures you were quoting earlier was output expenses.

Ms PATTERSON - The question around Human Services system management and what it is now - it has a number of functions. It is predominantly the provision of corporate services, policy, planning, regulation, funding, monitoring - those types of services. As to Human Services, it would comprise the deputy secretary of this area and the associated costs of that person. There are a couple of main reasons there has been a significant reduction. We undertook a review of our overhead methodology, and that is looking at our shared services and corporate areas. This has resulted in a reallocation of overheads across all the system management outputs, so not just the Human Services but Health and children services system outputs. We have a reduction of those costs against the Human Services system management output of about \$3.8 million. We have also looked at accruals and we have adjusted the accruals to more accurately reflect the outputs against which the accrual relate. For example, last year there may

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have been some housing depreciation against this output and when we reviewed how we allocated the accruals we realised there are no buildings so it should not be against this output. We have also updated the accruals across all the areas according to the 30 June 2013 result.

Mr VALENTINE - If you are putting Housing out to almost the private sector, are they not looking after the depreciation of the stock they are managing, or does the stock still belong to the department and they are only managing that stock -

Ms PATTERSON - They are.

Mr VALENTINE - and the depreciation is still your issue?

Ms PATTERSON - That is a different issue in terms of what is in this output. Once the stock is transferred - and that is a management transfer, not title transfer - it no longer is reflected in our financial statements or budget. They are reflected as a contingent asset but they do not reflect any depreciation in the stock that was transferred.

Mr VALENTINE - I understand we are starting to get into the Housing area, and I appreciate that.

Mrs PETRUSMA - This was indicated last year because it was the first year of the Human Services system management. It was indicated at Budget Estimates last year that it would change. It is a refining process. Originally it was set up because of the THOs and now it has been reallocated and this is close to what it should have been last year.

[3.30 p.m.]

CHAIR - Any further questions on 4.1?

Ms RATTRAY - Minister, your Government has pretty much accepted the previous direction that the previous government has taken? Just steady as you go, other than those reallocations to overheads.

Mrs PETRUSMA - In regard to that output, a lot of work went into making sure that the output does reflect what should have been in it so it has now been reallocated to where it had to go so there has been a lot of work at making sure it reflects what it should have last year.

Ms RATTRAY - But your Government is fairly confident that the previous path that the previous government was on, is where you need to be as well, in this overarching area.

Mrs PETRUSMA - If you look at the delivery of Human Services, we started off a major reform. We are looking at joining up human services delivery. When we were an opposition I would have clients who would come and see me and they had many different case workers. For example, mum might have had a case worker because she had a disability. There might have been a case worker because the family was homeless. The kids might have been involved in child protection or youth justice. There might have been mental health and drug and alcohol and they would have a case worker for each one of those different areas but they never had one primary case worker so we are doing a lot of work at joining up human services to make sure that a family has one point of contact because I had some families who were having up to 22 different appointments a week.

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Ms RATTRAY - Did we not already have Health in human services or did I lose a few years? I think we have already had Health and Human Services in the past together.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Our core service is to make sure we look after vulnerable people so that part of Human Services portfolio does not change but what we have done is made a lot of further commitments. The previous government, for example, had ceased the funding to the elder abuse strategy so we have made a commitment to increase that strategy. There was no extra funding if you had a disability and you were below 15 years, or if you were over 24 years, so we put an extra couple of million dollars into that. We put extra money into our neighbourhood houses. The community sector were saying to us that they needed more funding because cost of business pressures were increasing their costs so we put an extra \$9 million into them.

Ms RATTRAY - The programs that were in place were the core? The core functions have been supported, just that extra funding?

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right. We are looking at joining those up because in the past it was program based funding and we are now moving to outcomes based funding to make sure that we get outcomes and not just a tick off that they attended the program.

CHAIR - Will that lead to Budget savings? One would think that it would be more efficient?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, we are not looking at it as a Budget saving, we are looking at trying to do more.

CHAIR - I did not mean you would look at it as a Budget saving but will it be a Budget saving? If you have one person as the lead contact that must be more efficient than having to see 22 different people.

Mrs PETRUSMA - At the moment, demand exceeds supply, so it is about trying to do more with the same bucket of funds because at the moment we have waiting lists for just about every program, whether it is disability, sexual assault, or families affairs. This is about trying to do more with the available pool of funds.

CHAIR - You are expecting it to be more effective?

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right because if you are a family and your family is involved in all of those areas, if you have to tell your story to the youth justice worker and then to the child protection worker, to the Housing, to the drug and alcohol. You are telling your same story each and every time and what we are seeing with gateway services and Housing Connect, is that they tell their story only once instead of many, many times to different providers. It is like going to a GP, you tell your story once. You do not have to keep on telling that GP the same story unless you see lots of GPs but it is about minimising that, so the client stays engaged more, because it is about engaging clients.

CHAIR - That is interesting, particularly since you have used the issue of gateway for community housing because I have a little experience of that and a gateway then chooses where you go if you are homeless rather than -

Mrs PETRUSMA - Housing Connect is where people go for housing,

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CHAIR - Still it is a gateway service?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, it is a one-stop shop.

CHAIR - So, you are relying on one person or one agency to decide what is the most appropriate thing for you, rather than specialists in their own field?

Mrs PETRUSMA - They have lots of tiers, so if you go there they will do an assessment and they will -

CHAIR - I know how it works, yes.

Mrs PETRUSMA - try to get you into permanent accommodation. It is a great service. The feedback from the clients has been that it is a fantastic service. The advantage is they have a local service - a local front door - they can go to. They can call one number in the state, and get immediate assistance if they need it.

CHAIR - Is it 24/7?

Mrs PETRUSMA - There is an after hours number.

Output group 5 Human services

5.1 Community services -

Mrs ARMITAGE - Thank you, minister, for the leaflet because it was very informative and it certainly provided a lot more scope.

Ms RATTRAY - Very smart initiative.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Starting off with neighbourhood houses, I notice there are 34, and 33 are funded. Who funds the 34th?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The Department of Defence.

CHAIR - It is at Dowsing Point.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, that is right.

Mrs ARMITAGE - We consider that 34 are enough in the state and we do not need any more neighbourhood houses - is there a need for more? Have you had any requests?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The Tasmanian Association of Community Houses (TACH) is the peak body, and the 34 neighbourhood houses are in high need, vulnerable areas. We believe it is better to resource them better, and that is why we have given them an extra \$1.7 million over the next two years, as well as extra funding for the food co-ops. There is also \$300 000 under Health - the Mental Health Peer Support workers - because they see a lot of clients with mental health issues.

Mrs ARMITAGE - This is all run through the neighbourhood houses?

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Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right. That is on top of the \$4.6 million they get. We want to resource the 34 we currently have in those most vulnerable communities.

Mrs ARMITAGE - With the social inclusion program that is going to be implemented, do we know how it is going to be implemented and will we have somebody monitoring the facilitation of the program?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Social inclusion program?

Mrs ARMITAGE - Yes, it is noted here that additional funding of \$25 000 for two years will further assist each house to provide social inclusion and facilitate links to other vital services?

Mrs PETRUSMA - They can initially use that \$25 000 to do what they think they need to do in their own community better. For some of them, it might be to put in computers, for example. It might be to run a specific program. The need, for example, on the west coast might be different to the need in Ravenswood. It is to undertake projects that will lead to more social inclusion in their own communities, so it is up to them to determine what the clients need, and where they will spend it.

Mrs ARMITAGE - And you will monitor where that money goes?

Mrs PETRUSMA - We will be looking at where it goes, but there is no shortage of programs they want to fund with this money.

CHAIR - But they are required to acquit?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, that is a definite requirement. That have to acquit to something.

Mrs ARMITAGE - I have some questions on other areas. Does anyone have any more questions on neighbour houses?

Ms RATTRAY - If they already have successful social inclusion programs in place, can they use the funds for other purposes - or do they have to be for social inclusion? There are always issues with maintenance and adding space or refitting space.

Mrs PETRUSMA - In that fact sheet, you can see there is \$4.6 million for normal funding, but there is \$4 million to be spent on a capital investment program this year.

Ms RATTRAY - That will not go far over 34 places.

Mrs PETRUSMA - About \$2 million has already been spent on quite a few of them. Last year \$1.74 million of the \$6 million was spent on the first phase of capital works at 13 neighbourhood houses, which totalled \$1.1 million in expenditure as well as minor and remedial works which was \$336 million at 23 neighbourhood houses. Some of the neighbourhood houses are a lot newer than others, for example Clarendon Vale, which is a brand-new neighbourhood house. It depends on the age of the neighbourhood house. Planning for proposed capital works at nine neighbourhood houses has well progressed. A number of neighbourhood houses are ready for tendering in September 2014.

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Ms RATTRAY - Can we get a list of those?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The proposed capital works are for the neighbourhood houses at Bridgewater, Deloraine, Dorset, Goodwood, Pittwater, Risdon Vale, St Helens, West Moonah and the Women's Aboriginal Karadi Corporation.

CHAIR - Minister, would be you be able to provide that list for us? We will take that as a question on notice.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes.

CHAIR - Members are obviously interested in seeing that in their own area.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Preliminary planning for the final round of works is progressing and will be finalised in September 2014. This final round of works will comprise further extensions, upgrades and refurbishment.

Ms RATTRAY - Where do the Men's Sheds fit in your portfolio?

Mrs PETRUSMA - They are not in my portfolio, they are under DPAC.

Ms RATTRAY - Under DPAC.

Ms RATTRAY - I just thought there might be some crossover, because it's community.

CHAIR - They are often attached to community houses.

Ms RATTRAY - They are often part of a community house structure - no point re-inventing the wheel in a small community.

CHAIR - Where has the community cars program gone?

Mrs PETRUSMA - That would be DPAC, I am not sure of that. It's not under Human Services.

CHAIR - They are often managed and housed at community houses.

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, it is not under Human Services.

CHAIR - It sounds a bit like there is disaggregation while you were telling us a while ago that you are putting all the services together.

Ms RATTRAY - Can we find out where they belong? Thank you.

CHAIR - Community cars is a matter for concern for me because the previous government progressively rolled out and gave community cars mostly to be housed at and be operated by community houses. But I never saw any ongoing funding for maintenance or replacement, so it would be interesting to know -

Mrs PETRUSMA - Mr Pervan has told me community cars is under DPAC.

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Mr VALENTINE - It's under Community Development, is it?

Ms RATTRAY - Well, it never got a guernsey yesterday.

CHAIR - No, it wasn't mentioned yesterday. Can Mr Pervan elucidate?

Mrs PETRUSMA - I can probably explain.

CHAIR - Perhaps we could ask you if we can have that on notice as well, I know it's the Premier's area but I'm sure you can pass that on to him.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The previous minister was the Minister for Human Services as well as Community Development. I do not have Community Development because Child and Youth Services came into my portfolio instead. As part of a joined-up Human Services system, we brought Children and Youth Services in but Community Development stayed with DPAC. Community Development has always been under DPAC, so it has stayed where it is currently.

CHAIR - Talking about community houses, it is just that they are hub where lots of -

Ms RATTRAY - That is where the bookings are made, that's where the drivers are sourced.

CHAIR - Maybe community houses should be within DPAC, with Community Services rather than with Housing.

Mr VALENTINE - There is a little bit of concern there, I suppose Community Development has existed in DPAC for how many years? Probably only seven years or six years.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, probably seven or eight years.

Mr VALENTINE - I am just thinking, it could be an argument for it to come back in. It worries me that you have the Social Inclusion Plan which was developed and is under the Premier, and yet a lot of the programs that aim at the disadvantaged are under your portfolio. How do you get that communication between what is happening in the Department of Premier and Cabinet and under your portfolio to make sure that you are addressing social inclusion holistically? We did quiz the Premier on social inclusion; the board for that has been disbanded and is coming to DPAC for administration and there is no commissioner, but there is still a commitment to the plan, or so we are told. It is a concern. Have you given that any consideration, and how you are going forward with that?

Mrs PETRUSMA - You hit the nail on the head when you said it has to be holistic. Community development needs to be across government. The danger with everything under Human Services is that it is seen as Human Services' responsibility instead of across agencies. Some areas need to be in the Department of Premier and Cabinet so they have a whole-of-government focus. For example, we put an extra \$5.3 million into our youth justice programs but some were given to the Department of Education, some were given to Justice and some to State Growth, because we needed to be across government to tackle the issue. If everyone sees youth justice as Human Services' responsibility, we are never going to have a whole-of-government and whole-of-community way of tackling the issues. Some of these

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programs have to stay in DPAC, because if everything ended up in Human Services there would be no responsibility for other agencies to help address these issues.

Ms RATTRAY - Could that not contribute to it being a fragmented process?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Part of the joined-up Human Services support system we are talking about is to scope what should be in Human Services, and what should be out, and what should be part of this joined-up Human Services. Things may change over time. Part of the scoping project we are doing behind this is to see what needs to be part of the joining up, so we can do what is needed to help the most vulnerable Tasmanians.

CHAIR - It is just as you said, getting all the services together for a person. It is the same with Neighbourhood Houses.

MS RATTRAY - Cars and everything there, too.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The cars are separate to the Neighbourhood Houses because the houses are the hub of the community. It is where the vulnerable people go. If DPAC has a grants program to give out cars, that is separate to ongoing recurrent funding.

CHAIR - I would have thought in your capacity with community houses, you would want to know if they were getting other money for Men's Shed, or cars, et cetera from other sources. It makes us harder for us to scrutinise when there are a few different departments.

MS RATTRAY - It is all over the shop.

Mrs ARMITAGE - It is also the convenience of having community cars located at the community houses for those people who need a ride to hospital or wherever.

CHAIR - Can they use this \$25 000 you are giving them to replace a car?

Mrs PETRUSMA - If it was the biggest need for that community, in terms of social inclusion, yes they could.

CHAIR - So that definitely overlaps.

Mrs ARMITAGE - You mentioned you were putting extra money into an elder abuse prevention strategy and that it was going to be outcome-based funding. How is that extra money going to be spent so it becomes outcome based?

Mrs PETRUSMA - We wanted to have ongoing funding - because it had ceased under the previous Government - because the helpline is going. The helpline has received 244 calls -

Mrs ARMITAGE - There is \$700 000?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, \$700 000. There were 244 calls to the helpline in 2013-14 about elder abuse, which represented a 26 per cent increase in cases over the last two years. It demonstrated that elder abuse is still a big issue in the Tasmanian community and that is why we wanted to continue the funding for the elder abuse strategy.

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Mrs ARMITAGE - So where is it going? I assume it is not all going to the helpline.

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, it goes to the helpline, and it goes to advertising and peer awareness. Some money goes to COTA for peer awareness.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Can you give me a breakdown of the \$700 000 - for helpline, peer education and advertising? I still do not necessarily see that as outcome based.

Mrs PETRUSMA - So many people are calling the helpline when we have the advertising. It is about raising awareness that elder abuse is against the person's human rights. I do not know if you have seen the Elder Abuse is Not Okay advertising on TV. It is a powerful message and it is one we will be continuing to place adverts around over the coming years. Last year \$80 000 was spent on advertising under the Elder Abuse campaign.

Mrs ARMITAGE - This is probably a question on notice. A breakdown where the \$700 000 is going to prevent elder abuse.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The \$700 000 is over three years. This year it is \$395 321. So the \$250 000 is \$30 585 for salary for the senior program officer for the Elder Abuse Prevention.

CHAIR - That is not a full-time officer?

Mr VALENTINE - It must be part-time.

Mrs PETRUSMA - \$80 911 to the Elder Abuse is Not Okay community awareness campaign. We are also doing a review of the Elder Abuse Strategy this year which is \$13 825.

Ms RATTRAY - Who is doing that?

CHAIR - External consultant?

Ms RATTRAY - Not able to be done within the department?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The strategy evaluation is also on assessing their media campaign because they do not have the capacity within the department to assess how the media campaign is going.

CHAIR - It will be a survey?

Ms BRESNEHAN - I am not sure at the moment. We have not developed it yet but trying to assess a broad public media awareness campaign - we do not have those skills and expertise so we will purchase that to help us.

CHAIR - You will use an external survey company?

Ms BRESNEHAN - I am not sure how they would do it.

CHAIR - I am getting nods from behind you.

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Mrs PETRUSMA - Also \$120 000 to extend funding for the health line, run through Advocacy Tasmania, to continue to operate in 2015-16.

The other \$150 000 will be going to COTA (Council on the Aging) to help the You're Worth It program as well as extra funding for elder abuse television advertisements and helpline. So that funding would be looked at as to where,

Mrs ARMITAGE - What is the You're Worth It program?

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is a peer support program through COTA. It is a peer education program that raises awareness of older Tasmanians on how to protect themselves from elder abuse.

CHAIR - So that is \$150 000?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, that \$150 000 will be spent between COTA, as well as the Elder Abuse awareness campaign, as well as additional funding for the health line.

Mrs ARMITAGE - That is over those three years.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, \$150 000 for the next three years.

Ms RATTRAY - The program by COTA, is that something they will go round to aged care facilities, or residential care facilities, and speak to people directly. I cannot imagine that many elderly people would get a lot out of a TV advertisement if they feel they are being bullied.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I attended one of COTA's You're Worth It education programs that they ran at the Kingston Library a couple of years ago where they provided information and support in regard to elder abuse, but also on financial elder abuse, and a few different parameters. The people who were there were probably aged between 50 and 60 who had elder parents. There were some in their 70s. It was a broad audience who were just there to find out more information about what elder abuse is and for them to go out and then educate others. I came from working in the aged-care industry so I was very interested to see what was happening. It is just to get the message out there that elder abuse is not okay. It is a lot of information and support.

Ms RATTRAY - It is fine to have it at a library but there are a lot of elderly people who might be in that vulnerable situation but they probably live in residential facilities or have very limited access to transport. I am thinking of outside of the major CBD areas. That is why I am wondering how this message is going to get to them. I noticed there is an official launch party, a Day on the Green but it is at the Convention Centre in Davey Street, South Hobart. That is not going to target too many of the people I represent. How do you get it out to the wider masses?

Mrs PETRUSMA - I have brought to the table Ms Ingrid Ganley, who is the Director of Disability and Community Services, and she will talk further on the program.

Ms GANLEY - The COTA program uses the peer-educator network model. The program works with older Tasmanians to develop their skills to work with community groups across the state. This year they have extended their reach from just out of the southern part of Tasmania to the north and north-west part of the state and they access a range of community groups. But the

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peer-educator program is about getting those peers, people who want to work with other older people, and particularly focusing on financial abuse.

Ms RATTRAY - We have the south of the state covered. We have the area around Launceston covered and we have the north-west covered - are we talking about Burnie and Devonport? What about the places outside of the major population areas where types of abuse of elderly people could happen and go under the radar a bit?

Ms GANLEY - I am not sure in terms of COTA's spread. We will have to ask COTA where they have run all their programs in the last year.

Ms RATTRAY - Wouldn't that be part of their funding obligation, to say where they are holding these things?

Ms GANLEY - Yes.

CHAIR - How much are they getting?

Ms RATTRAY - \$150 000.

Ms GANLEY - This year, 2013-14, they received \$20 000 to continue the peer-educator network and extend it. The election commitment is to extend that further. They went into a bit of a maintenance model to keep it going for the last 12 months.

Ms RATTRAY - Out of that peer education, there is only \$20 000, minister, is that right?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No. For this year, 2014-15, it is an election of \$100 000 to COTA to roll it out further.

Ms RATTRAY - In this financial year, in this budget allocation?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes.

Ms RATTRAY - What measures have you in place to be able to assess whether that money is being rolled out into areas not just in the CBDs of the three major regional areas?

Mrs PETRUSMA - For the three areas, there is \$150 000. We are working with COTA. We are looking at the helpline and there is also the awareness-raising. When the Budget is passed, they will be sitting down and we will be working with them to determine what is the best need because there was no funding for elder abuse under the previous government. It stopped on 30 June. Based on what was happening with the helpline, we knew elder abuse was a real issue across this state. We are putting extra funding into it. We have allocated \$700 000 over the next four years. We believe it is an important issue and could not have put no dollars against it whatsoever. We are doing a review of the elder abuse strategy and that will help determine what we do with the funding.

CHAIR - Did it stop on 30 June this year or 30 June last year?

Mrs PETRUSMA - 30 June this year. Under the previous government there was no allocation for further funding.

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CHAIR - In forward Estimates because it was in their last budget.

[4.00 p.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA - If you recall the last budget estimates, the previous minister did say that there was no funding across the forward Estimates for the Elder Abuse Strategy.

Ms RATTRAY - But they still received money last year and there would still be strategies that would be able to have -

Mrs PETRUSMA - It has become a whole-of-government issue. The previous government had said there was not going to be any forward funding across the Estimates.

CHAIR - Specifically.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Specifically.

Ms RATTRAY - But there would still be some data about what programs have been rolled out and where it was until 30 June.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right and I can give the figures that were spent in the previous year.

Ms RATTRAY - Tabling is fine, minister, and we can have a look at that.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I can give you the helpline statistics which is interesting reading if you would like me to read it out.

CHAIR - The way you were talking beforehand I thought it must have been that the helpline had not continued but it obviously did continue last year and you have now continued it rather than let it die.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Do you have figures for the helpline as well?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, for 2013-14 there were 244 reports of elder abuse cases to the helpline with 73 per cent of all those calls being in relation to older women, with 48 per cent of the calls being in relation to persons aged above 80. Seven per cent of calls were from concerned family members; 31 per cent of calls were from older Tasmanians experiencing abuse; 41 per cent of all calls indicated they found out about the helpline via television commercials which is the reason why we want to continue the advertising campaign. The percentage of different types of abuse is 65 per cent in regard to financial or material; 82 per cent psychological or emotional abuse; 23 per cent physical abuse; 15 per cent social abuse; 10 per cent neglect; and 1 per cent sexual abuse.

From those calls 62 referrals were made; 26 per cent to Advocacy Tasmania, 28 per cent to community social workers. There were only five clients who received protective information; 39 per cent was to legal services; 33 per cent to police and 24 per cent when to Guardianship and Administration orders.

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CHAIR - The number of calls the year before?

Mrs PETRUSMA - There were 194 so the numbers accessing the helpline is increasing. This year 46 per cent of people found out through the television commercials and in 2013-14 it was 49 per cent so the advertising is crucial to raise awareness about the helpline so people know where to get help.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Do you do radio as well as television?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes.

CHAIR - You said at the beginning it was outcome based, and that always leaves you open to tell us how you are going to know the outcome. What outcomes are you looking for apart from the fact people will stop abusing their elders or you get to hear about it. Is that what you want to know? Do you want an increase in notification? What is the outcome you are looking for and how will you know when you are there? What are your KPIs?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The number one outcome is that we need to keep on raising awareness that elder abuse is a breach of an older person's human rights because there are people out there -

CHAIR - We want the elder abuse to stop.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I know but the trouble is it is hidden behind close doors. We know about 5 per cent of all older Tasmanians will experience some type of elder abuse. The statistics are quite high. The trouble is when I went to the COTA peer support program the people there did not realise what was going on behind closed doors. In my previous occupation I worked for the Department of Health and Ageing in the office of aged care quality compliance. I investigated cases of elder abuse. I could tell you some horrific stories of cases I had to deal with and that was why I was determined that this government would continue the elder abuse strategy because I looked after too many people who had experienced horrific times.

CHAIR - I do not doubt that for a minute but that is why Ms Rattray's question is valid because the ones in the public eye you have a chance of knowing about, but the people who live out of town and elderly people who are more remote -

Ms RATTRAY - And the people who go to those particular seminars are probably never going to abuse elderly people. They are good people who want to do something. How do you target the people who aren't doing the right thing?

Mrs PETRUSMA - I have the 2013 annual report of the statewide elder abuse prevention advisory committee that I would be happy to table today. It contains a lot of further information about why we want to continue on with the strategy and the importance of it. It gives us a benchmark to work from and hopefully we can see a reduction in this crime in the future.

If we do not continue awareness raising activities, it will remain one of society's worst crimes behind closed doors. I am determined that we need to keep on raising awareness.

Ms RATTRAY - I am fully supportive of the program, but I am interested in how you are going to get it outside of the major population areas.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mrs PETRUSMA - The advertising is key. That is why we need to continue to raise awareness in the media, and get the message out there. Most people call the helpline as a result of the advertising. The advertising is crucial, because a lot of seniors are at home during the day.

Mrs ARMITAGE - And the referral for people who are out of the main areas. Obviously, there are places that refer on - places that people can go outside the major cities.

CHAIR - If we had statistics on where they were referred to, we could presume those people had taken action.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Twenty eight per cent were referred to community social workers in all areas across the state. They could also be referred to legal services, to police, to the Guardianship Administration Board or to Advocacy Tasmania. So, across the state they are referred to other services.

Mrs ARMITAGE - I have a question on sexual assault support services. You mentioned forensic doctors earlier. While we possibly have forensic doctors for the rape and sexual assault support services during the day, do we have any after hours?

Mrs PETRUSMA - There are after hours doctors. There is a sexual assault medical service at the North West Regional Hospital and the sexual assault forensic examination service at the Launceston General Hospital.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Is it after hours though? In the past it has been during daytime hours, but I can recall that a couple of years there was someone in Hobart after hours, but not in the north.

Mr PERVAN - You are correct. There was an after hours medical service. But a lot of effort has been put in over the last year to train nurses to undertake the forensic examination. So while there is some after hours cover by on-call medical practitioners, there is the fail safe of having special nurses who are trained to undertake the work. That model has been very successful to date. It has been carefully monitored but we are hoping to ensure that service is available for women and men who are sexually assaulted and require a forensic service after hours and on weekends.

Mrs ARMITAGE - That is in all parts of the state now?

MR PERVAN - In all parts of the state now.

Ms RATTRAY - So, all parts is north, north-west and south?

Mr PERVAN - Yes.

MS RATTRAY - That is not all parts.

Mrs ARMITAGE - All major parts.

CHAIR - The hospitals. We are talking about the hospitals.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mrs ARMITAGE - The major hospitals.

Mr PERVAN - Where there are health services that a patient would attend, yes.

Mrs ARMITAGE - One last question on community health and that is about gambling. It always surprises me that they often have ATMs near the gambling machines in clubs. I often wonder whether that -

CHAIR - They have to be a certain distance away now.

Mrs ARMITAGE - They are still within the same premises and I do not know whether it is a question or whether it is a comment if there is anything you can comment on, or whether we can legislate. For someone not to have to leave premises to access more money must be an issue when it comes to gambling as it contributes to being able to get more money out. I know that they might be a distance from them but not a huge distance. I can think of several venues where they might be less than 30 metres away so they can access more money without having to physically leave the premises. That must contribute to the gambling because for a lot of people, if they were to leave, they might not go back.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I agree it is definitely a concern. My portfolio only looks after the gambling support programs to try to raise awareness about gambling.

Mrs ARMITAGE - I realise that but we should all work together, but it must contribute to the gambling.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes.

CHAIR - Yes, but you can't not have ATMs because there are many people who frequent those venues who don't gamble.

Mrs ARMITAGE - I realise that but it just seems to be something with gambling in particular.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The real issue, as I said before, is actually young men going online to gamble.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Do you have any statistics for that?

Mr VALENTINE - That is what I would like to see as well, some of the statistics.

Ms RATTRAY - Maybe they could take a pay pause then, if they have the money to gamble.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I just have that the University of Tasmania showed that sports betting is the fastest growing form of gambling and that the demographic of sports betting is younger men with full-time employment, higher socioeconomic status, better education and access to the internet. They are the key at-risk group. It actually doesn't have the statistics but the majority of young men participating in sports betting do so within their means. What they are saying is, it is not usually through financial losses that it has been manifested but it is through health, anxiety or relationship breakdowns as a result of gambling that it is being manifested.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr VALENTINE - That is interesting. I always thought it was older women at poker machines and things like that and it is interesting that you bring that out.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I can indicate that 0.7 per cent of Tasmanian adults are rated as problem gamblers but this is from the 2011 Social and Economic Impact Study into Gambling in Tasmania. Then there are 1.8 per cent who are moderate-risk gamblers; 5.3 per cent low-risk gamblers; 57.4 per cent non-problem gamblers and 34.8 per cent of the state are non-gamblers.

CHAIR - With respect, minister, the definition of a problem gambler is very narrow. Certainly in my community and many other communities we have people on low incomes or on benefits who would not be classed as problem gamblers because of the amount; they don't actually gamble all their money or they don't gamble a lot of money but if they take \$100 of gambling money out of their benefits, that has a significant impact on their families so I class that as problem gambling although technically it is not problem gambling. Those figures are esoteric.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The good thing is that the 2014 social and economic impact study of gambling is due to be delivered in early 2015. This study will provide updated data and identify trends around gambling prevalence rates, problem gambling, gambling participation and gambling expenditure, and it will provide an evidence base for future decisions around service delivery and community education.

CHAIR - It will be very interesting to see what your Government does about problem gambling; certainly the previous government didn't so a statistics will be good.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Is the problem rising in the state?

Mrs PETRUSMA - That will be shown in this 2014 new study that is being done.

Mrs ARMITAGE - It will be here next year.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes. As I said, at the moment the studies are showing that it is young men who are actually well-educated and financially independent in the increasing group. It is shifting because with electronic gaming machines the revenue is declining. Back in 2010-11, the total player losses on electronic gaming machines was \$215 698 564 but in 2013-14 it is \$189 967 690 - \$190 million.

[4.15 p.m.]

CHAIR - There is a hole in your Budget.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is decreasing.

CHAIR - You do not get money from online gambling do you?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, we do not. The calls for the gambler's helpline are increasing. Last year it was 885 total calls, this year it is 1 039 calls received by the Gambling Helpline Tasmania, including 246 calls involving a gambling presentation or concern.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Where would they be referred to?

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Mrs PETRUSMA - They go to the Ready To Change, a phone based counselling program, and financial counselling services.

Mr VALENTINE - I have been told that a problem gambler in Tasmania spends on average about \$30 000 a year.

CHAIR - That is a problem gambler. We are only talking about 0.7 per cent.

Mr VALENTINE - That is right. Given, that is quite a significant amount of money for those who have a problem with it, do you think that the current level of funding available for Tasmanian Specialist Problem Gambling Support Services is sufficient? Perhaps you might tell us exactly how much they get? Is it sufficient to cover the problem?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Under the Gambling Control Act, the percentage of the gross profits of electronic gaming machines are directed into the community support levy; 50 per cent goes for the provision of research; 25 per cent for the benefit of charitable organisations; and 25 per cent for the benefit of sport and recreation clubs. This year's Budget there is \$671 000 going into direct gambler's help services; \$240 000 into community education; \$349 607 into CSL grants; \$455 000 into gambling support program operations; and \$1.5 million into the neighbourhood houses, making a total of \$3.216 million.

CHAIR - Is that where you get your money for community houses from?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, that is in a different program.

Mr VALENTINE - Same figure.

Mrs PETRUSMA - We are giving neighbourhood houses \$1.7 million on top of their \$4.6 million. Neighbourhood houses are getting \$4.6 million base funding, they are getting an extra \$1.7 million on top of that plus an extra \$300 000 for mental health support, as well as an extra \$100 000 for food co-op.

CHAIR - And another \$1.5 million from the gambling support levy.

Ms GANLEY - The \$1.5 million is part of the \$4.6 million base funding.

Ms RATTRAY - It is not the Government that is giving it to them.

Ms GANLEY - The base funding that already exists for neighbourhood houses includes funding from the gambling support program and on top of that we have the election commitment which is new additional funding.

CHAIR - Your base funding -

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is an historic program. How long has neighbourhood houses being coming out of the gambling support program?

Ms GANLEY - About two years.

CHAIR - That is not what you read out, though, what the gambling support levy was for?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mrs PETRUSMA - I believe it is in the neighbourhood houses that programs are run.

Ms BRESNEHAN - There used to be two community grant programs, small grants and then a large place-based grants program. The large place-based program were not very successful. They often did not have the community capacity and the infrastructure to support people and it was falling back onto neighbourhood houses. They being place-based and local, a decision was made by the previous government to fund the neighbourhood houses directly from that large place-based grant, rather than offer it up as grants. That was a decision of the previous government and it has been that way for two or three years.

CHAIR - But you are giving that as base funding now. It is not funding for programs it is base funding for those houses.

Ms BRESNEHAN - It has been rolled into the base.

CHAIR - That does not sound like what you said it was meant to be for. I am not suggesting that the previous government was any better, I am just saying that you told us what it was for and that doesn't, to me -

Ms BRESNEHAN - It is based largely on the fact that it is locally community-based and that those neighbourhood houses are in low socioeconomic areas, typically where there is a higher prevalence of gambling. That was the logic.

CHAIR - Absolutely, I understand all that. We had a big discussion yesterday with the Premier about the Tasmanian Community Fund, for instance, and our fear was, if this were to be administered by the department that, in the end, how do we know that it isn't going to morph into exactly this kind of thing, which is almost a direct example of that.

Ms RATTRAY - That is terrific on *Hansard*, Madam Chair.

Mr VALENTINE - I have one short question followed by a long one. I note the transfer of the old, what used to be called, heating allowance many years ago from Aurora into Finance General. Is that because of the attempt to sell off the Aurora book? Why has it gone into Finance General?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The heating allowance still stays in the department of Human Services. The heating allowance was separate to that Aurora funding. It is about \$460 000 and it is still paid out twice a year, \$28 each time to around 6 600 Tasmanians.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay, so it is a different amount for a different purpose.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right.

Mr VALENTINE - What is the amount that you are dealing with here, the Aurora link?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The Aurora concession payment was transferred out by the previous government to Finance General.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr VALENTINE - Okay, that is a concession payment to people with a Healthcare Card or something.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, to their power bill but that was transferred out before we came into Government. The heating allowance is still continuing.

Mr VALENTINE - My final question is probably a little more involved and that is to do with staff cuts. Every government department needs to pay attention to reducing its staff to make up this possible 700 positions - where is the fat? Where is the capacity to make any reductions when you look at the amount of work to service the community now? What do you see as the main areas that you can trim and gain efficiencies from? I am interested in that, given now I am drawing on my own experience from within the very department and knowing how \$100 000 million of cuts across Health and Human Services - I thought it was cutting to the bone then - how are you going to achieve this?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The 700 proposed cuts are a global savings target but it is right across government. What the final figure is in Health and Human Services has not been determined yet. It is a measure of dollars, not of people. Mr Pervan as the Acting Secretary is the one who is responsible for that so I will get him to talk a bit further on it.

Mr PERVAN - If I may pick up on a couple of the words that you used, you asked, 'Where is the fat?' and where are we going to cut. I would argue that knowing a lot of those people I would not regard any of them as fat that is there to be cut.

CHAIR - I think that is his point.

Mr PERVAN - I am agreeing with him - I am getting there. They are all working very hard and they are all working on work which is valuable and needed. Over the last 10 years or so though the department has grown and there has been a growth in a lot of similar functions across the department. In particular, we are looking as a first priority at areas that you would call your normal corporate services functions - finance, HR, IT. They are both centrally located and there are various business units across the department which have very similar functions. As we move to try to establish a department that efficiently supports front line services, our first priority is to go through all those corporate functions to see if there is any way we can reconfigure them to come up with a more efficient support model and identify savings. They might be savings of staff, and they might savings in outsourced functions in IT, or in licensing, or in all sorts of issues. It is about going through the corporate functions as a first priority to look at the most efficient business model we can come up with to support front line service delivery, and to see what efficiencies we can generate.

Mr VALENTINE - You mentioned ICT, something close to my heart - wouldn't there be a benefit in providing more resources to that area in order to increase efficiencies in administration? Is that something you are looking at?

Mr PERVAN - That is one of the things we were looking at, as well as making sure we get the right balance by having the people who are needed right at the front line. It might be someone who is dedicated to a particular system. There are systems in housing and in children's services, which are dedicated to those functions, and they will need front line support so that child protection workers and people in housing can deliver what they need to deliver. Similarly, there will be people who are working across both the central function and specialist areas who could be

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

better co-located. Once you get that critical mass you are better able to design a work unit to meet the demand.

Mr VALENTINE - So, cutting particular services is not on the agenda in the first instance. You are doing an analysis of support services?

Mr PERVAN - Absolutely.

Mr VALENTINE - And then, as a last resort, perhaps cutting a service.

Mr PERVAN - My directions from both ministers are very clear. If it's a function that has a direct or ongoing relationship with a client, they are quarantined from consideration. We are looking at functions within the department that support those people, and enable them to do their work.

Mr VALENTINE - Thanks.

CHAIR - Are there further questions on Community Services, or are we right for a cup of tea?

Mr DEAN - I am interested in what the minister said about the equivalent - it's not people, it's dollars. This is the same as the previous government that wanted to get rid of 500. They made it clear it was either 500 or the equivalent in money, so other savings had to be made throughout the department. The message is not really getting through - we are being told 700 bodies will go. I just want that clear.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is a saving target.

Mr DEAN - Equivalent to 700 people going?

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is 700 full-time equivalent. At the end of the day it is a saving target. The acting secretary has been given a savings target of \$18.9 million across both Health and Human Services, and he is now putting a lot of time and effort into developing plans.

Mr DEAN - So, body-wise, it might only be 500 to go, or 400 to go.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Across all of government. Yes, it's a savings target.

Mr DEAN - On gambling, are there any figures on online gambling - as to where the increase in online gambling is? Is it on sport for instance - that's being promoted in a big way?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Online sports betting is the main area.

Mr DEAN - And horse races? If its young people, it might be sport.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes. The trouble with online gambling is that a lot of these websites are overseas. Qualitative research shows that younger men are doing more online gambling. Unlike electronic gaming machines, lotteries, keno, and casino table games, where we can count and get the data, online gambling is hard to quantify.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr DEAN - You are relying on worldwide figures, not Australian figures?

Ms GANLEY - As part of our work in gambling support programs we undertake research. We have engaged the University of Tasmania to undertake research into this area of online sports betting in particular. It is that information they have pulled together that has allowed us to look at our community awareness campaign and look at a targeted campaign around online sports betting. That research paper is with us but we still need to put it through the system and do the checks before it becomes a public document.

Mr DEAN - That is on Tasmanian figures? That is the increase and so we will know from that whether it is on sport, horses, Keno or whatever else they might gamble on.

Ms GANLEY - The paper's focus pointed at sports betting as the area of concern, which is where the focus of their research was.

Mr VALENTINE - The issue of knowledge bases and managing corporate knowledge as people go out the door, making sure they do not go out with that knowledge, that that is captured. I know Health and Human Services have implemented the Confluence software package, which is implemented in ICT but also in other areas of the department, where they capture knowledge. Is that going to be promulgated through Human Services as a department? I do not know whether the officers here are totally aware of it, but it is a very effective way of capturing knowledge.

Mr PERVAN - I am very aware of it but largely through my substantive job. It has been there for a while and one of the challenges we had was following the implementation of national health reform and in the period immediately prior to that. There was a lot of change within the department and it may be that some areas of the department are not aware it is there.

Similarly, there is other capacity and capability we have right across the Health and Human Services system that we are not optimising right now, and that is something we are looking at doing instead of the more public service approach of 'We've got a great idea, let's go looking for a new packing or a new product'. Let us have a look at the suite of what we own to make sure we can capture some of that information. There are things being done in Housing, Disability, Children's Services and Health in Tasmania. Despite our small size, we punch above our weight. We are doing things which are at the same level of sophistication, if not more so, than elsewhere in Australia, so it is good we capture that, particularly at a time when we are going into a review of the department to strengthen its role as a systems manager and not just a deliverer of services.

Mr VALENTINE - That is where I see the problem with possible staff cuts in the future. If people walk out the door you lose that corporate knowledge. You then start to make the mistakes because people did not realise it was done before and it does not work and the amount of money you have saved by getting rid of those positions is miniscule compared to the problem you have as a result of the mistakes that are made. I was interested to know whether there is a strategy there to capture that knowledge.

Mr PERVAN - It is something we are considering in the review of the department because there is a need to turn this into a knowledge-based department.

The committee suspended from 4.34 p.m. to 4.47 p.m.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

CHAIR - Minister, welcome back.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Chair, because at the start of the session we talked about how there might have been a \$34 million decrease, I would like to put on the record a few corrections.

As per the revenue from appropriation table 4.12 on page 4.35 of the budget papers, the total funding for Human Services in 2013-14 included an amount of \$37.288 million which relates to the Aurora Energy Community Services Activity Agreement payment which was transferred from the Department of Health and Human Services to Finance General effective from 1 January 2014. In comparing the level of funding for Human Services this amount must be reduced from the total Human Services allocation reflecting this movement. There has effectively been an increase from \$34.266 million in 2013-14 adjusted for the Aurora Energy CSA to \$34.590 million in 2014-15, which is an increase of \$3.240 million on a recurrent basis. So the budget has increased.

CHAIR - Thank you for clarifying that, minister.

Ms RATTRAY - Before we get there can I ask about the autism continuum of care program? I am interested in what the minister expects to be delivered by the project and where the relevant activities will be based. Just a brief overview, minister, not a lengthy one.

Mrs PETRUSMA - As you are probably aware, the autism spectrum disorder has increased dramatically and is growing at a faster rate than any other disability. I know that over the last four years I have had many parents come to me and say that they felt frustrated and that there was a lack of services. That is why we are going to invest \$1 million into a long-term strategy for improved autism care. In 2014-15, \$200 000 is being provided, then \$250 000 is allocated in 2015-16 and 2016-17, with \$300 000 being allocated in the 2017-18 financial year.

The first thing we have done is to set up a panel on the autism continuum of care which has had its first meeting and then several subsequent meetings have taken place. The Autism Advisory Panel will be developing a strategy which will include recommendations for early testing options for autism as well as the best means for delivering education and practical help for parents. It will also include professional development for health and education workers and assess the viability of clinics that test for and treat co-morbidities of autism. It is also investigating the introduction of Rethink Autism and the current engaging of a Rethink Autism representative to attend the most recent Autism Advisory Panel via a video link. We are looking at having a trial of this program in Tasmania.

It is a program that is based on applied behaviour analysis. It is individually tailored for the person who has autism. It could be delivered in the home, in child care centres, in schools, anywhere that the child goes. It is user-friendly for teachers, parents, teacher assistants, so that ensures the treatment and care for the child. This program could help put Tasmania at the forefront of autism support nationally.

Ms RATTRAY - It is going to be rolled out through schools?

Mrs PETRUSMA - We are looking probably at this stage of doing a trial at a couple of different sites to see how it goes and then if it goes well, we will take it further.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

We also want to look at a statewide continuous care from birth to adulthood for a person with autism, to provide a road map from birth to adulthood. We would be looking at early diagnosis, assessment and support in the pre-education stage as well as research, professional development, support for parents and additional help in schools. At the same time, there is also an independent review on education for students with disabilities that is running alongside it.

Ms RATTRAY - Is the advisory board a volunteer board?

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is a volunteer board. We are also looking at the establishment through the Department of Education at an autism-specific satellite school attached to a school to help children with autism to learn and reach their full potential while being still included in a mainstream school environment. It is a first for Tasmania and it is something under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It is the second highest disability that has been recorded in Tasmania and we know that with autism if we can get early intervention happening a lot earlier in the child's life the outcome is a lot better for the child. It is primarily aimed at early intervention.

Ms RATTRAY - I have opened an autism conference in the past so I am completely aware of how necessary it is.

5.2 Disability services -

Mr FINCH - Minister, the National Disability Insurance Scheme is starting to have results and you say that the implementation of the NDIS in 2013-14 has begun to address the issue of an increase in demand. Can you enlighten us as to what stage the NDIS is in Tasmania? Where are we going?

Mrs PETRUSMA - At the moment it is the 15 to 24 year age cohort that is involved in the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The priority group for the first year of the trial, which was the year just gone, where students with a disability leaving the school at the end of 2013, young people with disability on a current needs register, as well as young people with a disability in receipt of an individual support package or a community access allocation, and young people with a disability who are leaving state care or child protection, and young people in receipt of mental health services. In the first year of the trial, 786 young people have benefited from becoming participants in this scheme which was within 1 per cent of our target of 792 participants in the first year and of that cohort 833 participants were eligible for the scheme, 21 people were deemed ineligible and 99 per cent of school leavers, people in receipt of state-funded community access services, flexible respite services, and individual support packages, were transitioned into the NDIS within the first year of the trial.

At this stage, 64 per cent are male and 36 per cent are female. Fewer indigenous people have entered the scheme in the Tasmanian trial than was expected and the primary disability recorded by the National Disability Insurance Agency indicated a high proportion of intellectual disability, then autism related disorders and then cerebral palsy. The main support needs for participants in Tasmania was social participation, which is 496, and support with independence, which is 454. I am glad to say Tasmania has the highest rate of satisfaction with the NDIS - 90 per cent of people have rated satisfaction as very good and 10 per cent as good. We are way higher than any other state.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr FINCH - Can we talk about the future of the NDIS? These are good indications from the cohort we are working with. As this develops and we move to the full blown NDIS for all people with disabilities, how do you see the future?

Mrs PETRUSMA - I can give you their proposed figures for the roll-out. The first cohort up to July 2016 was 1 000 people. We have done the first 792. This year it is 114. In 2015-16 it is 63 to make up the first 1 000. In 2016-17 it is proposed there will be 2 076. In 2017-18 there will be 5 765 participants and in 2018-19 altogether there will be 10 587. By 1 July 2019, it is expected that around 10 693 clients will be on the NDIS.

Mr FINCH - And better placed as far as their lives are concerned.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Better placed with more support. The great thing about the NDIS is that it gives more support to more people in this state and the feedback has been fantastic. It has been very well received.

Mr FINCH - Minister, I know you are new to your portfolio but have you had a chance to get out on the ground and talk to people? I hear the 90 per cent satisfaction rate, which is good. But have you been able to talk to people and see the benefits and the good results?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The good thing about being a shadow minister was I had a lot to do with families over the last four years. That is why the NDIS had tripartite support, because we all acknowledged it was a great program. I have talked to quite a few families in this state. Everyone wants to be a part of the NDIS but people know that it is rolling out in 2019. The good thing is it is coming around quicker every year that goes by. But, we acknowledge that some people have to wait until 2019. We put an extra \$2 million into providing individual support packages and money for equipment in the forward Estimates because 83 per cent of Tasmanians are still outside of that 15 to 24 age cohort. We acknowledge there was need for extra funding to help those Tasmanians, until the full rollout is finished.

Mr FINCH - We do not want to go over some of the figures from the past that were pretty awful, particularly in the north of the state where we had so many applicants putting in for support and a only handful of people being supported. Hopefully that will change.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The extra \$2 million provides an extra 12 000 hours of support. Need is still greater than supply but we are doing what we can to get more money out to Tasmanians who are unable to get on to the NDIS at this stage.

CHAIR - What percentage of NDIS payments does the state have to provide?

Mrs PETRUSMA - In the Budget paper it talks about the financial commitment. For the next three years of the trial - in 2013-14, we put in \$8.2 million; in 2014-15 we are putting in \$19.1 million; and for 2015-16 we are putting in \$22.1 million. And we are still currently funding hundreds of millions of dollars of other disability services. That is extra dollars we are funding.

CHAIR - It is not until 2018-19 that the 90 per cent kicks in. We are looking at 10 per cent of people here. It is \$22 million in the year after next for 10 per cent of the people.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It increases each year and there is a dramatic uplift in the last couple of years. That is a lot of extra dollars.

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CHAIR - Yes, a lot of dollars.

Mrs PETRUSMA - So, \$232 million in 2019-20 is what we will be working towards.

Ms RATTRAY - How much of that will be Commonwealth funded?

CHAIR - That is our contribution.

[5.00 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY - How is this state going to rally that sort of money, at the expense of what?

Mrs PETRUSMA - I can say at the moment we will be doing nearly a couple of hundred million anyway, so July 2019 our total contribution will be \$232 million that goes to the Federal Government and then they put in their percentage and that will continue on to the NDIS, but it will all be under the National Disability Insurance Agency from that date.

Ms RATTRAY - You do not see any problem, and I know it is a fair way out, in meeting this state's obligation for that vital scheme? I am not saying that it is not worthy and needed and all of those things, but you do not see any issue with this state meeting its obligation?

Mrs PETRUSMA - At this stage we are still already funding \$178 million for Disability Services. It could be classed as extra dollars we need to find on top of other commitments, like the ERA, Equal Remuneration Audit, plus Gonski and everything else. This Government is 100 per cent committed to the full roll out of the NDIS. Also, we have an agreement with the Commonwealth that this is our share. We know that it is the funding that is across the forward Estimates.

CHAIR - Will we not have to spend any money on Disability Services after that when NDIS is fully rolled out? I cannot believe that.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I think it is just Advocacy Services that we will have to provide from that point.

CHAIR - Everyone with disabilities will be covered under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. That is great.

Mr FINCH - I want to commend the work of New Horizons in the north of the state and for our area, and what a great beacon it is in respect of that initiative that was started in the north. It is the only sporting club for people with disabilities in Australia. It specifically targets sporting involvement for people and the range of activities is quite fantastic. I wanted to alert you to that because if you are not aware of their program I am sure you would be mightily impressed. They have over 300 members and they do a great job for our northern community.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Thank you for that. I appreciate you letting me know about that.

Ms RATTRAY - It is well supported by a number of members of parliament. They are fully aware of what they do. One question before we leave Disability Services. I want to take you, minister, to the performance information table 4.6 on page 4.21 of budget paper 2 volume 1. The supported accommodation waiting list. I want to get clarification around the numbers. For

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2013-14 it says that there are 111 people on the waiting list and then the target for next year is 111. Does that mean that next year there could possibly be no-one on the waiting list, or are you expecting to still have 111?

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is a target.

Ms RATTRAY - Do you want to fill 111 places so there is no-one on the waiting list?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The threshold is always based on the previous year's waiting list. I think it is what has happened in previous years that whatever it has been on June of that year has always been the target for the next year. I might ask Ms Ganley to talk further on this measure?

Ms GANLEY - Our target is always to reduce the waiting list, so in terms of a performance measure we put for the following year that we do not see the waiting list increase, so our target is to keep the waiting list down.

Ms RATTRAY - Don't we want to see it reduced?

Ms GANLEY - We want to see it reduced, but in terms of our -

Ms RATTRAY - Why don't we target reducing it then?

Ms GANLEY - performance measure because of the way our data is collected we put that it will stay the same and then we measure against that by providing the actuals in the next year's budget paper.

CHAIR - Does it go down year-on-year?

Ms GANLEY - It tends to fluctuate. It will go down during the year and then it will go back up because it is always a point in time measure.

Ms RATTRAY - The 111 who are on there now will probably still be 111, but they might be 111 different Tasmanians, not the same Tasmanians on the waiting list?

Ms GANLEY - That is right.

Ms RATTRAY - I understand, but I am not terribly excited about it; I am not excited about having the same target, minister, and I hope you are not either.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The good thing about the NDIS is -

Ms RATTRAY - They will be off?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Not for a quite a few years but it is the future.

5.3 Housing services -

Mr DEAN - Your office in Launceston, minister, is a very efficient office. Rick Fulton is a very good person and very efficient in every way. Mind you, I don't always get what I want for my constituents but he is very efficient.

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First of all, there is a significant budget decrease here of \$12.5 million. In the notes it says that cut is to more accurately reflect the overheads. It concerns me when you use those words, 'to more accurately reflect the overheads', can you explain that more to us, minister?

Mrs PETRUSMA - I believe it does reflect the transfer stopping the Better Housing Futures.

Mr DEAN - It doesn't say that.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I introduce Mr Peter White, the Director of Housing Tasmania.

Mr WHITE - The question was about the reduction of the expenditure for this financial year?

Mr DEAN - Yes, the \$12.5 million.

Mr WHITE - Which is linked to the transfer of stock under the Better Housing Futures program.

Mr DEAN - If it had said that, it would have been easier; it just says 'more accurately reflect the overheads'.

My next question, minister, relates to the Better Housing Futures program. I notice that we are in stage 2 now and I think we have 1 049 public houses or properties in Centacare Evolve Housing. I think as a part of that program there will be 3 400 public housing properties statewide in stage 2. When does stage 2 finish and for how long is it in place? Is this a permanent arrangement, there is no sunset clause, no trial period - can you explain that to me?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Stage 2 has finished.

Stage 1 was Mission Australia, which came on board in March 2013 but under stage 2 there is Centacare Evolve Housing, which came on in May 2014, then Housing Choices on 2 June and then Community Housing Limited on 14 July. Stage 2 is now completed with the transfer of stock to Community Housing Limited.

Mr DEAN - There is another stage, I take it?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, that is it. The 3 900 houses have now been transferred over.

Mr DEAN - Are they all the houses you have?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No.

Mr DEAN - Where are the rest going?

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is staying under Housing Tasmania. Under the national agreement 35 per cent of all housing stock had to be transferred over to community housing organisations. We are the only state to have achieved that by the July deadline; no other state in Australia has achieved that target or has reached that deadline. We are the first state in Australia to have achieved that target.

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Mr DEAN - So in each area there is a percentage of the houses, for instance in Launceston, my area, I have the greatest number of Housing Tasmania homes in my electorate by far, so it is an area I deal with a lot. Is it split around all of the housing areas such as Ravenswood and Rocherlea, is a percentage of each area taken out and transferred across into the Better Homes program? Is that the way it is operated?

Mrs PETRUSMA - In your area, Community Housing Limited has taken over 1 191 properties in the northern suburbs of Ravenswood, Waverley, Rocherlea, Mayfield and Mowbray. Housing Choices of Tasmania on the north-west coast has taken over 1 175 properties in Somerset, Shorewell Park, Acton, West Ulverstone, East Devonport and Latrobe. Centacare Evolve Housing in the south have taken on 1 049 properties in Bridgewater, Gagebrook and Herdsmans Cove. Mission Australia has taken on 500 properties in Clarendon Vale and Rokeby. It is about taking on those suburbs and then bringing about community renewal. It is about them establishing - if we take Community Housing Limited, for example, they are about trying to get renewal in Ravenswood so they are building up good relationships with the Neighbourhood House and everything in the area to try to bring about change.

Mr DEAN - With the transfer of those properties, everything transfers except the title? The title remains with Housing Tasmania?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The management transfers, not the title.

Mr DEAN - They become responsible for everything. They are responsible for reletting the homes, the maintenance programs, and all the other things that go with it.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right.

Mr DEAN - Is there a financial benefit to Housing Tasmania as a result of this program?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The benefit of Better Housing Futures and the community housing organisations is that they can get the Commonwealth rental assistance (CRA). The Commonwealth rental assistance allows them to get about \$54 million extra income than Housing Tasmania could have.

Mr DEAN - So, you own them but you would get \$54 million less than what -

Mrs PETRUSMA - We can't access Commonwealth rental assistance while community housing organisations can.

Mr DEAN - But, financially, is it more rewarding for Housing Tasmania?

Mrs PETRUSMA - There is an extra \$54 million that can go into maintenance, into new housing, urban renewal et cetera, over and above what we have.

Mr DEAN - They can put that into the homes.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right. People can sign a lease with a community housing organisation, then apply and get Commonwealth rental assistance, which goes to the community organisation.

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Mr DEAN - Will people who have been lucky enough to transfer across to the Better Housing Futures program get better service and maintenance and upkeep than Housing Tasmania can deliver to the clients it still retains?

Mrs PETRUSMA - If you are in those areas there are increased dollars, but Housing Tasmania will still be doing maintenance programs on their housing stock. Those locations were given out because they were areas of high need. Because they can access the extra Commonwealth rental assistance, it can go into redeveloping those properties.

Mr DEAN - So will those people get a better service than the clients Housing Tasmania retains? That is the question, yes or no?

Mr WHITE - I am happy to take that on, minister, if you like.

Mr DEAN - That is the question being asked of me.

Mr WHITE - That is quite okay. With Better Housing Futures, we have a 10-year residential management agreement with each provider. They are required to invest, on average, \$3 000 per property per annum into the stock. Additionally, over the 10-year period of the agreement they must, on average, invest a further \$9 000 per home in what we would call upgrading/deferred maintenance.

There is more investment in the maintenance of the stock than Housing Tasmania is truthfully putting in, on a per property basis, for the reason the minister mentioned - the Commonwealth rental assistance that comes into the Better Housing Futures areas over that 10-year period. Our initial estimates were \$54 million additional revenue and that is based on the tenants paying the same rental to those organisations that they were previously paying, out of their own pocket, to Housing Tasmania.

So, a tenant paying \$120 a week to us last week might now pay \$170 a week, which would reflect \$120 plus \$50 CRA, to the community organisation. That means the organisations achieve greater rental revenue, than if the tenant was a tenant of Housing Tasmania.

CHAIR - The rent has gone up to the people doing the -

Mr WHITE - No, Commonwealth rental assistance is a payment made to the tenants. They pay more rent but out of their own pocket they still pay \$120, which is exactly what they were paying to Housing Tasmania. So the \$50 comes to the tenant and goes through to the community housing organisation.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The tenant is paying the same amount of money as they did under Housing Tasmania.

CHAIR - So the Commonwealth is paying the extra amount?

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is subsidising that amount.

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Mr DEAN - Will that remain the same? Will there be any changes to that system. Can the \$120 all of a sudden become \$130 or \$140? Does Housing Tasmania control the amount that will come out of the pocket of each resident?

Mr WHITE - The requirements are that the housing providers provide and manage on the same policies and terms as Housing Tasmania. If Housing Tasmania's rental structures stays the same, at approximately 25 per cent of income, those tenants will continue to pay the 25 per cent of income. They can access the Commonwealth rent assistance and that passes straight through to the housing provider. There is a requirement on the agreement that they must do that and for new tenants coming in it is 25 per cent of assessable income as well.

Mr DEAN - Is there also a requirement of the new group to ensure the maintenance and all the issues raised by their clients will be concluded in a reasonable time? Do they have performance criteria they must meet?

Mr WHITE - Yes, we do. We have requirements around turnaround times in the same way as Housing Tasmania and other landlords are required to do. They are required to meet the obligations under the Residential Tenancy Act for the turnaround times for emergency repairs versus day-to-day and normal repairs that can occur in a property at any time.

Mr DEAN - What about the removal of difficult tenants in properties they are managing? If a tenant, for instance, starts to renege on their payments or if they damage a property, do they control that as well or does that come back to Housing Tasmania to control?

Mr WHITE - They control the process in accordance with our policies. For example, if a tenant has damaged the property, they may be able to evict that tenant in accordance with our normal policies and the Residential Tenancy Act. They do not need our approval to do that; they have control over the assets for this 10-year period.

Mr DEAN - Is it fair to say Housing Tasmania has no real control in the managing of that property in the future?

Mr WHITE - We have agreements they must abide by. They must abide by tenancy management responsibilities, investment into maintenance, and a range of other things.

Mr DEAN - If the property is burnt down or destroyed, what is the position? Are they required to have the home replaced within their costs or does that come back to you?

Mr WHITE - That is in the contract. One of the options that can occur, if a home burns down, is they can purchase the property from the director. Typically, the home would have been demolished if it is a loss and the organisation can purchase the block of land from the Director of Housing and then could sell the land or redevelop it into either social or affordable housing.

Mr DEAN - Do they have the right to sell off any housing, as Housing Tasmania does from time to time? Are they able to enter into those contracts?

Mr WHITE - Of the existing homes, they will put to us homes they would like to look at disposing of. For example, a tenant may be interested in buying the home, alternatively they may have a home that might need a lot of money spent on it to upgrade - they would refer that to Housing Tasmania. We make the decision on whether that property would be sold or retained.

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Housing Tasmania then has responsibility to sell that property. What we do under the agreements with Better Housing Futures is, if we sell a property and, for argument sake it has a net sale price of \$150 000, we share that revenue with that organisation on a 50/50 basis. We share the net revenues of any sales that occur in a Ravenswood or Rocherlea area with that organisation.

Mr DEAN - I think the legislation went through and was signed off about clients living in these homes, where their financial status changes and they reach a certain level and they are then asked to leave that property. Will that still relate back to these properties managed -

Mrs PETRUSMA - Are you talking about rent setting, not rates?

Mr DEAN - No. We passed legislation, I think, last year or the year before. We passed legislation that if tenants receive a certain quantum in income, they are subject to being moved out of a Housing Tasmania home.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That legislation is proclaimed on 1 October 2014 and it does not start for another year.

Mr DEAN - I guess you have looked at where that will sit. Will they be able to make those decisions, the housing group involved, the Anglicare group, will they be able to make that decision when they meet a required financial position?

Mr WHITE - Under the legislation, as that is social housing under the definition of the act, and is owned by the director, those people could be moved on. There is no compulsion under that legislation but given the areas we have under Better Housing Futures, the Rocherleas and Bridgewater of the world, they are not the sort of areas that we would necessarily move on people if they were over those limits because I would suggest they are not good role models in the community. Given they are usually on higher incomes, they can be encouraged to buy the home but it is not the sort of approach that we would adopt in those areas typically but the power is definitely there.

Mr DEAN - If there is a complaint in relation to the group, under the Better Housing Futures program, that people are not getting the right service, do they have the right to come back to Housing Tasmania with that complaint? Who is the arbiter to determine their position, minister?

Mrs PETRUSMA - A lot of them have either gone to Housing Tasmania or they have come to my office,

Mr DEAN - Or mine.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Or your office, or all of the offices, and then we have been able to talk to the community housing organisation to discuss the issue further.

Mr DEAN - So Housing Tasmania does have a role to play in that instance?

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is talking to the organisation to determine because often the tenant may give a different version, it can quite often differ. I have had a few come to us but we have managed resolve the issues.

Chair, Ms Patterson, would like to talk on the funding.

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Ms PATTERSON - I will respond in relation to the decrease in funding between housing services between 2012-13 and 2014-15 and the comment around the overheads. There has been a review of overheads across all of the areas and as part of this we looked at an allocation of shared services whereby about \$7.5 million had been allocated to Housing. Housing already currently pay a contribution for these services so we have reduced that all the way down to zero, so that is predominantly the reason for the movement.

CHAIR - Not disposal of stock.

Ms PATTERSON - No, is it nothing to do with stock at and I guess that the balance is just an allocation of the \$18 million savings.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Looking at the expenditure, the employee benefits. With the Better Housing Futures program I noticed that the employee benefits have gone down \$10.4 million or 5.13 per cent. Have the employees gone across? It says here that, employee expenses decrease by \$10.4 million which reflects the anticipated impact of budget saving strategies.

Ms RATTRAY - There was a bit of a problem with the budget papers, there were some missing.

Mrs ARMITAGE - On the \$10.4 million, the employee expenses decreased by \$10.4 million or 5.1[?] and the note says employer benefits primarily reflects inclusion of budget saving strategies partially offset by additional funding of election commitments. Can you tell me how many employees the \$10.4 million is and where they have gone - have they gone across? Where have they gone and how many of them are there?

Ms PATTERSON - There has been a reduction against salaries and wages of around \$10 million. Some of that relates to a salaries and wages accrual, which is an accounting concept around leave, liabilities and the actual accrual at the end of the financial year. That accounts for approximately \$2 million of that reduction. There has also been an allocation against salaries and wages which again reflects the savings strategies, and based on a percentage of the allocation of salaries and wages in the department, we have just allocated a percentage to employee benefits. Another component would have been allocated against supplies and consumables, and other expenses. We have, at a high level, allocated the savings strategies across the board because there has not been any -

Mrs ARMITAGE - There is no movement in people?

Ms PATTERSON - No, not at this stage.

CHAIR - Is this part of the 700 people or the equivalent amount?

Ms PATTERSON - Yes. This is an allocation for budget purposes without having done the work yet to identify the savings.

Ms RATTRAY - Are we going to see fewer staff because there are fewer houses to manage?

Mrs ARMITAGE - Have many people gone across or are going across to the private sector?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mrs PETRUSMA - Some staff have gone to Better Housing Futures, but Better Housing Futures actually leads to an extra 50 jobs across the state. Some have gone and I have seen a couple have already gone, through natural attrition, to better Housing Futures.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Otherwise, if all those houses had gone across, what are those people doing who worked there? When you say 'a couple', I would like to see more than a couple if all the houses have gone across.

Mr WHITE - Seven staff from Housing Tasmania have gone over to work with organisations under Better Housing Futures. That was a voluntary action from them; they applied for jobs with those organisations, et cetera. We have yet to finalise the new staffing structure we will have in Housing Tasmania. As the minister alluded to, there are 50 new FTEs created through Better Housing Futures and the four organisations. At the moment we have around 15 FTEs. We had quite a number of people on fixed-term agreements that haven't been renewed, which was part of our planning.

Over this financial year and the next financial year we will be moving to a new structure, largely through natural attrition, with staff moving on, et cetera. We have not yet finalised our staffing reductions as a result of the Better Housing Futures program.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Did you say it was 50 FTEs or just 50 - ?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Fifty new FTEs have been created through Better Housing Futures.

Ms ARMITAGE - It seems a little unbalanced if we say we have 15 and 7, and they have taken on 50 to do the same job.

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, they have created 50 positions.

Mr VALENTINE - It just goes to show how good housing service employers are.

Mrs PETRUSMA - They have a lot more local offices and everything else. It also reflects the fact that they get an extra \$54 million to provide more services.

Mrs ARMITAGE - It certainly is nothing against the staff, I just wondered who was going across and who was doing the work there.

Ms RATTRAY - Under the previous explanation around the \$10.4 million and the \$2 million for accrual and employee expenses, the Parliament will not see a supplementary appropriation bill into the future to deal with this shortfall, will it, minister? Sometimes in the Parliament we get what is called a supplementary appropriation bill where there are departments that need additional funds that have not been allocated. You will understand that better than I will. We will not see a supplementary appropriation for any part of these funds next year or in this financial year?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No.

Ms PATTERSON - The department is committed to meeting our budget and we will be doing everything we can -

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Ms RATTRAY - And so is the prison service and so is -

CHAIR - We have heard this before, but, no, this time it is true.

Ms PATTERSON - We will be meeting our budget.

Ms RATTRAY - While we have the finance guru at the table, may I ask the minister - if everyone is sitting down - about our longstanding debt with the Commonwealth. Minister, have you approached the new Commonwealth Minister for Housing, who handles these areas, if Tasmania can be a special case and have our debt removed?

Mrs PETRUSMA - I have contacted the minister, Mr Andrews, and written a letter.

Ms RATTRAY - How did you go?

Mrs PETRUSMA - I have not received a 'no', so it is still a positive. I will be seeing him again in October, which gives me another opportunity to raise it.

Ms RATTRAY - Can you put the debt and the interest on the public record once again because I know Ms Bresnahan wants to hear it. I ask every year and I am still amazed and disappointed that we have not been able to get it erased?

Mrs PETRUSMA - At the end of 2013-14, the balance of the debt was \$195 693 370.

Ms RATTRAY - The member for Launceston had not heard that before, but I think she is okay.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The good thing is that at the end of this year it will go down to \$188 364 917.

Ms RATTRAY - And the interest is?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The interest is \$8 709 690 and the principal payment is \$7 328 453.

Ms RATTRAY - And the year it will be extinguished, if we cannot convince the Commonwealth minister?

Mrs PETRUSMA - In July 2042. If we are still here we can have a celebration.

Laughter.

Ms RATTRAY - It is a serious issue. It is a noose around a neck and it continues to be.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is for all state and territories except Victoria.

Ms RATTRAY - No, not all of them.

CHAIR - Do you know what the situation is in the other states and the territories?

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Mrs PETRUSMA - All states and territories have an outstanding debt except Victoria. South Australia managed to get some debt relief but they still have \$270 million left.

CHAIR - Why has Victoria not got -

Mrs PETRUSMA - The Kennett Government paid it off a long time ago.

Ms RATTRAY - And built a big shed.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is a problem for all states, apart from Victoria.

CHAIR - You have a supplementary, Mr Valentine, to a previous question - whatever that was - before the debt.

Mr VALENTINE - The 50 extra FTEs that are out there now in the non-government sector looking after the houses - what extra services are they providing? We only had 7 FTEs managing it and now there are going to be 50 extra new jobs -

CHAIR - You were not listening. The minister told you all the things they were going to do.

Mr VALENTINE - I was not listening in that case. I was too busy conjuring up questions, obviously.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I can repeat it - the basic fact is they have an extra \$54 million to do more -

Mr VALENTINE - From the Commonwealth?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Their Commonwealth rental assistance.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, from the rental assistance and that is why the extra -

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right, to spend in their communities, so they will be doing more money on maintenance, and stock renewal. There will be community engagement - there is a lot of work.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay, I have woken up now, thank you very much.

CHAIR - Tania was next. Tania, did you get to ask the question you were in line to ask?

Ms RATTRAY - That was back in disability service. The member for Rosevears asked it beautifully, thank you.

Mr FINCH - I hope you have not given an answer already to the question I am about to ask. First, thank you, minister, for giving us an opportunity to put forward enquiries about Housing Tasmania. It helps us to be more efficient in dealing with people's housing problems, which can close in on them and they need answers straight away. To come through the office can take a little bit of time.

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Mrs PETRUSMA - That is why we wanted to put that in process because otherwise if it comes in to us it can take a couple of weeks for a response. We believe if you can get straight to the coal face it is going to make it a lot easier for you.

Mr FINCH - I am sure for the member for Windermere, who has so many inquiries, it makes his work much easier.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The good thing is it helps you with your own constituents. You get a quicker response.

Mr FINCH - My question was about the Australian Government rent assistance. I am wondering about the private rental support scheme and how that works because I have noticed on one of the tables that there is a slight decline in households assisted through the private rental support scheme. Just about 4 100 down to about 4 000 in a couple of years. I am wondering what the reason is for that slight decline in households and how the scheme works. Table 4.6 on page 4.21.

Ms BRESNEHAN - The private rental support scheme is funded by the department and is delivered through our new service called Housing Connect. Prior to that it was delivered through other community sector organisations. It is essentially a subsidy to help people get into the private rental market. It pays for bond and rent assistance in the set-up period.

Mr FINCH - On an ongoing basis.

Ms BRESNEHAN - No, one-off. At the moment we have the Rental Bond Board so the bonds are held by the Bond Board. The one-off assistance is one-off expenditure and we lose that but we recycle the bond for the next person coming through. The figures that appear in the performance table, around 4 100. It is high volume. Sometimes it depends on what is happening in the market. We had a target of 4 100 last year. It always sits around 4 000, 4 100. We have gone for 4 000 as a target thinking that is what the money will be able to deliver this year.

Mr FINCH - Those bonds - what are we dealing with at this juncture. Are you giving that support because bonds are very high in the private rental market?

Ms BRESNEHAN - Low income and high rental costs and high bonds. It is a combination of people on low income needing a bit of assistance to be able to set themselves up in the private rental market. If we can give someone \$200 or \$300 to set themselves up and they can sustain something in private rental, that is a much cheaper option than us having to build something for a couple of hundred thousand dollars. So you would rather spend \$200 as a one-off assistance to get someone into private rental than having to spend a whole lot of money on capital and have them in a life of public housing.

Mr FINCH - Are people who find themselves in that situation of renting aware of this private rental support?

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is when they go to Housing Connect they are made aware of the program. Housing Connect is like a one stop shop. People go there, they have an assessment of their needs and that is when they can access this funding.

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While we are talking about the private rental support service, an issue that I had come across in Opposition was that we had some kids being removed for homelessness, so under the National Partnership Agreement on homelessness we put forward, and the Federal Government accepted, a pilot program where \$300 000 will be used to help 100 families who are at risk of homelessness to get them into rentals so that we do not have to put, especially the children, at risk of having to come into child protection. We are looking at different models of what we can do with funding to get people into their own homes so the private rental support service is one. The tenancy private rental model is another program. We are trying to look at what we can do to decrease homeless families in the state.

Mrs ARMITAGE - I have some questions regarding homes that are being built and it is on your sheet here.

The program will deliver 205 affordable homes and I wondered what an affordable home is, how big it is, in squares, and what the cost is. I noticed Cape Barren Island had two new homes constructed for \$815 000 which, to me, seems an awful lot of money, considering the research I am doing here. In January 2014, a new six-star home in Victoria cost \$195 000 excluding land. Is the price of the houses we are having built because it is on Cape Barren Island, or what would the normal price of a house be that we would have built somewhere else?

Mrs PETRUSMA - You are exactly right. The cost of building a house on Cape Barren Island is a lot more expensive.

Mrs ARMITAGE - It is double?

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is also because they have to be better weather-proofed. There are a lot of elements that come into why it is more costly. It is to get the materials to the island.

Mrs ARMITAGE - It is not because it is a government contract?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No. It is not because of the government contract or because they are getting a six-bedroom luxury house. It is because there are weather extremes on Cape Barren Island that have to be taken into consideration. I believe it is fencing and the whole works. Mr White will probably be able to explain a bit further as to why the cost -

Mrs ARMITAGE - What is the size of the house in squares?

Mr WHITE - At Cape Barren specifically or in general?

Mrs ARMITAGE - The general size of the house. There are \$400 000 houses here because I know in Western Australia they are building house and land packages for \$450 000 with four bedrooms and two bathrooms.

Mr WHITE - Yes, they would be. Remote area is the issue here and on Cape Barren Island the homes include photovoltaic panels, solar hot water, and robust construction because of the climate. You are talking about brick and all those costs to bring everything over, having a workforce coming over as well and having to live on the island for the best part of five months while they build the home. Those homes were tendered, so they were available for everyone. When you compare that to other remote indigenous programs around Australia, we are getting very good value for money on those ones.

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Our other costs of typical homes tend to vary, depending on the nature of the property. For example, the construction costs of Trinity Hill, the youth facility that is under construction at the moment, the construction contract on that - and this is only the construction component, not the full project costs - was around \$8.7 million. That is for 48 units in total. The average cost there is approximately \$190 000 per unit. They are typically one-bedroom style units for a youth market.

A lot of the units that are built over this financial year we are in, when it talks about the 287, the vast majority of those are two-bedroom units. They would all be at least six-star energy efficient. A number of those units and nearly all of them will be to universal design standards. In Housing Tasmania's capital program alone we have 23 units that are being built to adaptable standards for persons either elderly or living with a disability.

Mrs ARMITAGE - What is the cost of your six-star two-bedroom unit?

Mr WHITE - You are looking around construction cost of anything from approximately \$190 000 up to about \$230 000.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Is that excluding land?

Mr WHITE - That would exclude land, and that excludes design costs, project or contract management and the like.

Mrs ARMITAGE - How big would they be? Looking here, in Victoria a six-star home, 250 square metres, \$195 000.

Mr WHITE - Those homes we are talking about would be typically 90 square metres to 100 square metres.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Half the size?

Mr WHITE - A bit over half that size.

Mrs ARMITAGE - They would cost \$30 000 to \$40 000 more?

Mr WHITE - It is very difficult to compare markets in different regions. You are talking about a Tasmanian market where the gross number of homes in any year is around 2 500. We have a home building industry dominated by smaller home builders. If you go to Victoria, they will have builders there who would be doing 1 000 to 1 500 homes out of the company themselves each year. They have massive scale; they have very competitive markets -

Mrs ARMITAGE - We are a cheaper area though, compared with Western Australia and I know it is \$450 000 for a four-bedroom, two-bathroom house and land package. It would seem rather expensive.

Mr WHITE - The Auditor-General, 12 months or so ago, had a review of some of our projects and basically his conclusion was that we were getting good value for money in the Tasmanian market place. With universal design and achieving those standards with wider doorways, et cetera, it does come at a higher cost. Our pricing includes all the landscaping. I

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

would suggest that price will not, for a start. We are always looking at ways to try to keep our costs of construction down.

[5.45 p.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA - All our work is tendered. I received an email today that said we were going to be delivering 366 units of accommodation during 2014-15 not just 287 because there has been an increase in NRAS - because the university has now started a project at Burnie. There are going to be even more units of housing delivered over the next year, which is even better.

CHAIR - It is 5.45 p.m. and we are not onto Children Services yet, so if you could keep it really focused that would be good, Mr Dean.

Mr DEAN - With the category 1 and 2 lists - and I think there might still be a category 3 list - I notice you said in the paper there was a slight reduction. We have had 'slight reductions' for the last 25 years that I can remember. I was wondering what the slight reduction is. Could we have a list of the areas again?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The wait list by category of need and areas at 30 June 2014 - Category 1 exceptional needs in the south is 112; the north 107; and the north-west 55, which is a total of 274. Category 2 is 423 in the south; 286 in the north; and 226 in the north-west making a total of 935. Category 3 in the south is 393; in the north is 136; and in the north-west is 117, which is a total of 646. Category 4 is 167 in the south; 64 in the north; and 414 in the north-west making a total of - that is not right. It says here 372. We will have to add that total up - that one is definitely wrong. I can't give you a grand total.

Ms RATTRAY - Could we have it tabled, Chair?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, we might get it tabled as a question on notice.

Mr PERVAN - I think it is 141, not 414.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is 141, sorry, so the north-west is 141, which makes a total of 372.

Mr DEAN - Why do you have categories 3 and 4? How do people ever get to be in category 1? I assume category 1 are the first to get into a house.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right. It is based on need. Now that we have Better Housing Futures, a lot of the category 3 and 4 clients go to the community housing organisations. There are other opportunities for them to get accommodation through the Better Housing Futures options.

Mr DEAN - Just a quick question on arson - it has always been a problem with Housing Tasmania homes. How are we going there, is that improving at all?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, it has decreased. If we look at 2013-14 - I will compare it to 2012-13. The total arson cost in 2012-13 was \$3.119 million and there were 81 incidents; and in 2013-14 there have been 49 incidents and the value has been \$2.225 million, so there has been quite a substantial reduction in incidents and in dollars.

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Ms RATTRAY - Minister, have we had any convictions for arson related to Housing Tasmania homes?

Mr WHITE - We have had two since 2009-10.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is under the reward program, isn't it?

Mr WHITE - That is under the Crime Stoppers program, two convictions.

Ms RATTRAY - Perhaps a good deterrent.

CHAIR - Are there any further questions on Housing services?

Output group 6

Children's services system management

6.1 Children services system management -

CHAIR - Output group 6 which is Children's services system management 6.1. I am presuming that the slight reduction in that is again allocation of overheads being moved but it is a whole less than changes to human services system management.

Mrs PETRUSMA - They are saying crash analysis is being applied to human services system.

CHAIR - We are just getting to 6.1. Output group 7, which is children's services and Rob I think you have the lead in this.

Output group 7

Children's services system management

6.1 Children services

Mr VALENTINE - Line items have gone up slightly for next year, presumably that is normal indexing and then the differences from 2013-14 to 2014-15 and on you go, except for some reason it's gone down in 2017-18. Perhaps you might be able to explain why that is in the forward Estimates. It has gone from 16 403 to -

Mrs PETRUSMA - The main reason why it goes down in 2017-18 is also because our election commitments at this stage includes the increased \$1.8 million for Youth Justice, it includes our extra \$300 000 for prevention programs and has an extra \$360 000 per pre-placement process so that primarily reflects debt. The election commitments were for the next three years so that is primarily the reason why.

CHAIR - You would find it difficult if you have committed this for three years then.

Mrs PETRUSMA - They were three year election commitments at the time.

Mr VALENTINE - I have had various bits of correspondence with regard to a particular case, which I won't share here. I might share off-line with you because of privacy issue. The

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

question is how timely are we in responding to people who are identifying a significant risk, in terms of getting back to them and verifying or otherwise that risk.

The case I am talking about is about 12 months ago and it was obviously not during your time and they notified a particular risk in respect of a particular child and it just wasn't addressed. They didn't have anyone come back to them. It was a member of the family, an uncle in this case, that had raised the concerns. They had not had any response and they then raised it to your office and they still haven't received a response.

They received a response to say 'yes, we are on to it', but they haven't had anyone coming back to them and giving them details. I am wondering what happens. Somehow some of this is falling through the gaps and I am wondering what might be in place to improve that sort of performance. It seems ridiculous, you would have to agree. Nearly a year when someone notifies and not getting a significant response apart from a holding back.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I would definitely appreciate following up with you, out of session but every single notification to Child Protection is assessed and it's then whether it reaches a statutory threshold as to whether it's then investigated. So as I don't know the particulars of the case, I don't know whether it did reach the statutory threshold for investigation or not. But I can assure you that every single notification is assessed by the department. I did introduce Mr Kemp at the table earlier but I might get Mr Kemp to further talk to that.

Mr KEMP - Thank you, minister. We are disappointed to hear that people are still waiting. We receive over 12 000 notifications a year. It is not efficient for us in every single notification to revert directly back to an individual because the circumstances may not allow us to do that, it may not be appropriate to do that and sometimes we may well know them and therefore it is part of ongoing correspondence with them anyway.

As the minister correctly said, every single notification we receive is assessed. The way in which we look at that is clearly delineated about whether it meets statutory intervention or not. There is a misunderstanding sometimes, because somebody is concerned about it, that the statutory services would necessary respond. That is not always the case.

Mr VALENTINE - I can understand that might not be the case.

Mr KEMP - What we have to do is measure our responses according to serious and significant harm and, as the minister has already said a few times today, sometimes there is a big demand which far outstretches supply so we have to ensure that the children who most urgently need us get the service they require. I would be very happy to follow up with the minister.

Mr VALENTINE - I will follow it up with you. In this particular case, there was a pretty significant negative outcome with the same individuals. I think it would have been assessed as pretty high but I will take it offline. I am interested to know whether there is anything in process to try to improve the response times so that people at least get an understanding that their concerns are being taken seriously. It is stressful, if you can put yourself in the place of somebody who believes that they have witnessed or are witnessing a significant risk to a child, and a disabled child at that, and that it might result in an adverse outcome for that child and they are simply not hearing back, or they have heard back that 'we are onto it' but they don't hear back anything more than that. It can be significant.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr KEMP - I would like to reply to that. Certainly we hear stories where sometimes we are not getting as responsive as we should be and I think we will have to accept that that sometimes happens. More importantly, we are making every effort when we get a notification and we put it through to communicate with the people who are making those concerns known to us. I hear what you are saying, it is very distressing sometimes for somebody to have a concern and then to let us know and not hear back. We would certainly wish to improve that.

Mr VALENTINE - I will share the detail with you after the session.

Mr DEAN - How many notifications did you say you have each year?

Mr KEMP - Twelve thousand.

Mr DEAN - Twelve thousand notifications annually, roughly. I thought that was what you said.

Mr KEMP - Yes. That is not 12 000 children.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Further to that. Sometimes it might be - I have examples here: 'Parents at home with their daughter, a small argument took place as a result of a female not wanting to watch something on TV.' That was made as an allegation to Child Protection.

'Mother came home from work. Father had been looking after the children. Mother realised she had to leave again to host a party plan selling function. Father was upset the mother had to go again and an argument ensued.'

A lot of the notifications actually don't reach statutory intervention. They are the sorts of things that have been notified.

Mr DEAN - What are the main notifications then to the department?

Mrs PETRUSMA - In 2013-14 physical abuse was 144, sexual abuse was 58, emotional abuse was 335, neglect was 286 and others not stated was 24. They were all the ones that were substantiated, which is 847.

Mr DEAN - How many of those would have been placed into care or into a home or what have you?

Mr KEMP - Out of the 12 000 last year, we had just over 200 receptions of children coming into care. It is a very small percentage of the numbers notified to us that are actually received into care. Sometimes there are obviously sibling groups - there could be one notification regarding six children. It is a much smaller number than the total number of notifications we receive in a given year.

[6.00 p.m.]

Mr DEAN - How many staff are there in your area to manage and handle these cases?

Mr KEMP - We have just over 200 staff in Child Protection.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mrs ARMITAGE - Children's Services, is that just Child Protection Services? What else does it cover, because it is quite a substantial budget?

Mrs PETRUSMA - It includes family violence counselling services, adoption and parenting planning, youth justice, and child health and parenting services.

Mrs ARMITAGE - How many adoptions would there have been last year?

Mrs PETRUSMA - In 2013-14 there were nine overseas adoptions and three local adoptions.

Mr FINCH - Minister, how do the child and family centres fit in here?

Mrs PETRUSMA - They are under Education.

Mr FINCH - The Tasmanian Early Years Foundation, which I know is in DPAC -

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is Education as well. The Minister for Education is the minister responsible for the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation.

Mr FINCH - I am concerned if that is abolished, as is suggested, how will we fill the gap?

Mrs PETRUSMA - The Minister for Education has the administrative orders for the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation.

Mr FINCH - What is the future of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre? It is a 51-bed facility with a huge number of staff. How many of those beds are full at the moment?

Mrs PETRUSMA - I think there are about nine today. It is great news that the residents are decreasing but I want to put on the record there will always be a need for Ashley. We are putting a lot of dollars, \$5.3 million extra, into community youth justice programs because we want to divert young people from the detention system. The \$5.3 million is going into a raft of programs to prevent young people going into the youth justice system in the first place.

Mr FINCH - Has Ashley lived beyond its useful life? Because of the work you are doing in other areas, does Ashley no longer have the role to fill that it may have had in the past?

Mrs PETRUSMA - We will still always need a facility like Ashley to provide the service it provides. The deputy secretary is doing a lot of work on a youth justice continuum of care where we can plan our youth justice system for the next 10 years. We will always need a detention facility, we cannot get away from that, but it is about trying to prevent young people from getting into the youth justice system in the first place.

CHAIR - Ask for the cost.

Mr FINCH - Yes, Chair. The cost for the nine youths you have there, what is the impact on your budget?

Mr KEMP - For this year our cost is \$8.793 million.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms RATTRAY - That is nearly \$1 million a person if we have only nine in there at any given time.

Mr KEMP - What it has is an increased capacity. There are nine at the moment.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The numbers fluctuate.

Ms RATTRAY - I understand that.

Mr FINCH - How many staff would be involved at Ashley now?

Mrs PETRUSMA - I think there is about 78.

Mr KEMP - Indeed.

CHAIR – Seventy-eight staff for nine young people.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It is 24 hours a day. It includes staff doing a number of functions.

CHAIR - It is a very expensive way to look after nine young people.

Mr FINCH - Minister, now that you have given me those figures it resonates even more strongly with me that has Ashley outlived its purpose? Would you need a smaller facility to do the work that Ashley covers at the moment?

Mrs PETRUSMA - We will always need a secure detention facility. Back in May we announced that we were doing a review of Ashley services to make sure we can align the staff with the residents. We are undertaking a review and Mr Pervan will talk further about the review of Ashley.

Mr KEMP - To address your substantive question, has it outgrown its use and purpose. Ashley is a very old facility. It started life many years ago as a 51-bed facility so it is a core and cluster idea where they have lots of outbuildings with a central repository.

Today's youth justice services detention facility would not look anything like that. It would be much more contained and much more fit for purpose. It has adapted and adopted over the years to the changing circumstances of young people who need detention and in this state we have an act that says that magistrates can detain a young person for criminal offences and therefore we must have a resource to do that.

Ashley is coming to the end of its fit for purposefulness life as a structure. If we were to build it again it would not look like it does today. They have done a lot of work up there to make it as effective and efficient as they can, given the landscape that it is on and given the environment that it is about. From that point of view, to pick up the second half of that conversation, which is where to from here which was the continuing conversation that the minister raised. All opportunities to look at how best Tasmania can meet its detention arrangements will be considered and nothing is on or off the table at this moment in terms of the future of Ashley, but we require a facility in Tasmania for whether that be 10 children or 15 children who routinely require this type of service.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr FINCH - When is the review likely to be completed?

Mr KEMP - There are two parts to the review and we need to separate them out. The first one was a review that the minister convened in regard to the staffing ratio versus resident population. That has been an ongoing conversation for a number of years in terms of the numbers of young people who are resident in Ashley versus the high number of staff. I think it is very important for the record that we are very clear that to run a residential centre, and that is my own background so I know what it costs to run a centre, particularly at the high end of the service, then you need a disproportionate number of adults to children.

What the minister called for was a review as to whether with 9, 10, 12 or 15 young people is the staffing ratio correct. That part of the review has been completed and it clearly identified that we needed to realign the number of staff because the numbers of children were remaining low. This was not a temporary dip. This was a constant downward trajectory which is good news. Very good news from our point of view. That was the very small review convened by the minister and we have conducted that and concluded.

The longer term review which is what is called the continuum of youth justice which is to try and built up our alternative arrangements to detention. We tend to have a view that detention is a building but you can detain youth offenders in a number of ways. It does not physically have to be at a lock-down facility which is always going to be the most expensive part of your budget. The plan around that, which the minister has approved at a conceptual level, is to say let us move forward this way. We have an amount of money and we have to work within that amount of money that we have. We know that our community youth justice programs are very successful. I think it is a credit to Ashley as a facility, which is many years old, that it continues to provide an extraordinary service to the young people who are resident there.

Ms RATTRAY - Minister, is the staff-to-client ratio what the review said? Is 74 the number? Is that the right number?

Mr KEMP - We are still finalising the total. We identified there are a number of structures that say we have to have a certain ratio of children to adults in the facility. Because it is never locked, it is nine today and it could be 15 tomorrow if there was a big rush, so we have to make sure that we have flexibility on the outside to expand and contract the staffing ratio. We are not at that point yet where we believe that we have arrived at a final number that is lower than what it was but it shouldn't be anywhere near as high as it was.

Ms RATTRAY - Minister, is the staffing number right?

Mrs PETRUSMA - We are still doing further work around it.

Ms RATTRAY - But you just said the review had been completed.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right, but because the numbers have varied quite a lot - there could be six tomorrow or there could be 15 -

Ms RATTRAY - Are they right for nine?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, but they could go down tomorrow so we need that flexibility with staffing, too. It is a bit hard for us to arrive at in some cases.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms RATTRAY - So we have some hanging around waiting for something to do.

Mr KEMP - There is no-one sitting around waiting in Ashley in looking after children who are the most vulnerable children in the state. I need to say that is simply not -

Ms RATTRAY - There are 78 on a roster system, then, or doing some role?

Mr KEMP - Yes, I think we also need to be clear that we have care-giving staff and we have support staff. The support staff, because you have to have management, you have to have administration, you have to have catering - this is a 24-hour live-in environment, not a place that people come and go from. They have to have security and they have to arrangements for work, health and safety which far exceed the sort of ordinary residential facility. I believe that we will be able to arrive at a situation where the numbers of staff that were there when the minister commenced the review will be significantly reduced to the point where we can be satisfied that the staffing ratio is comparable to the number of residents that we have in the facility.

Ms RATTRAY - When are we going to have the answer to that question, minister?

Mr PERVAN - I think we will have a much better answer to that question in about 12 months' time because, as the minister flagged, it is not just Ashley that we are reviewing but the entire youth justice continuum of care. We can single out Ashley and it is obviously a bit of standout with its history and the amount of money it currently requires, but until such time as we have worked out what we are going to do with youth justice as an entire process, not just one of the bits that fits in, we will not be able to land on a specific number because the role of the detention facility might change depending on how much we invest in the community and so on.

At the moment we know that Ashley is not right, but we have not sorted out the rest of the process. Until we have done that, we really will not know for another few months.

Ms RATTRAY - Minister, in a very tight budget situation we have effectively probably too many staff at a facility for at least another 12 months.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Natural attrition occurs as well. We really need to balance up community youth justice and Ashley and everything else. It is work that should have been done a long time ago, to be quite honest. It should have been reviewed years ago because there has been a 50 per cent reduction in residents, but only a low percentage reduction in staff. That is why coming into government I asked for the review. This should have happened -

Ms RATTRAY - I think that is a yes, minister.

Mrs PETRUSMA - We are looking at it and it is -

CHAIR - As a supplementary question, though, this House did a committee review some years ago. It must have been about six or something years ago because it was just before my time, but it did a committee inquiry which was significant. Have you seen that? There were a number of recommendations in that. It was certainly about Ashley. They went to New Zealand and Adelaide, a number of places and it was a significant report. I am not sure that the recommendations of that report were ever acted upon. Have you seen that report?

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

[6.15 p.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes. Mr Kemp has done a further review of all the youth justice material. We know the rates are declining quite rapidly, so it is about what is happening now. Since that report came out a youth justice magistrate has been appointed, and other different programs are happening, so there have been quite a few changes.

CHAIR - It might have said that Ashley was outdated then. Six or seven years ago.

Mrs PETRUSMA - The deputy secretary is putting together a new continuum of care for the next 10 years, but we are not yet at a stage where we can announce that forward vision.

Mr FINCH - While we talk about a reduction in staff at Ashley, people have built careers there and a lot of the community depends on those jobs for the wellbeing of their families. That is the other pressure that will come on you, as minister, in making those decisions.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Are the offenders younger than they were before?

Mr KEMP - We have had children as young as 11 in Ashley. Ultimately the courts make the decision as to whether a child is detained, and we like to present alternatives to a secure detention facility to the court, but sometimes a young person is so utterly out of control they need to be supported and held safely.

Mrs ARMITAGE - What is the youngest age you would take? Would it be 10?

Mr KEMP - I understand 11 is the youngest age. I can take that on notice, as to what the age was of the youngest child ever in Ashley.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Are you seeing a lot more younger children than 15 or 16-year olds? Are children offending younger and coming to Ashley?

Mr KEMP - I am not aware that there is statistical evidence of younger age groups increasing in number. Young people are offending younger but they are being put into community programs. Those community programs have a greater success rate in keeping children in the community and keeping children at home. It is the last resort, when everything else has failed, that Ashley is used.

Mrs ARMITAGE - Are they from specific areas? I know in the past the north used to feature more significantly than other areas. Is that still the case?

Mr KEMP - We have a fair spread right across the state. Geographically the south would have more children simply because of the critical mass of young people we have here, but proportionately there are no outliers that I am aware of.

Mrs ARMITAGE - I note the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre previously ran its own imprisonment program that enabled youth to participate in cultural, educational and rehabilitation programs on Aboriginal-owned land rather than being locked up in cells. They were saying that since the establishment of that program the rate of repeat offenders had been considerably reduced. Do they still have that program?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Yes, that program is on Clarke Island.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms RATTRAY - I do not think they have had anyone over there for a while. It is fairly isolated.

CHAIR - Ivan had a couple of questions about the children and young person's consultative councils that used to exist.

Ms RATTRAY - We have already talked about that, three times.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That was not through the Commissioner for Children?

CHAIR - It says under section 81 and schedule 2 of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 that 'a children and young persons consultative council must be established'. It was. In 2012, more than 220 children and young people from 10 schools took part in the consultative council. It has been highlighted here because Mowbray Heights is in the member for Windermere's electorate.

Mr KEMP - The Office of the Commissioner for Children is responsible for those forums. They will be reinstated and redeveloped as part of the strengthening of the authority of the new commissioner. I can report, though, that there are other forums such as the Youth Advisory Group, which is run by Create, and there is a burgeoning environment of advocacy forum with children, so it is all part of that conversation.

CHAIR - My last question is about the Commissioner for Children, which is still vacant?

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, it is not.

CHAIR - Who is the new Commissioner for Children?

Mrs PETRUSMA - Mr Mark Morrissey, and it was announced on Saturday. It was in the paper on Sunday.

CHAIR - I knew that it was imminent last week, but I did not realise it was as imminent as last Saturday.

Mrs PETRUSMA - It was in all the newspapers and the TV.

CHAIR - We were busy getting ready for Estimates all weekend.

Mrs PETRUSMA - I can give you details on Mr Morrissey. He is a person who you could say would tick every box that you would want for a Commissioner for Children. He is currently the Executive Director of the Child and Adolescent Community Health and Mental Health Services for Western Australia Health.

He has extensive experience at the senior executive level for the delivery and adolescent health and community services. He has had a strong career as well as leadership roles across acute community based health, welfare and social sector agencies, including policy and service delivery expertise. He also has responsibility for Child and Youth policy across WA Health. He was also in Child Protection in the policy division in Western Australia where he helped set up a program, which was for physical and sexual assault of young people, which was nominated for a

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Premier's award, and he has worked in New South Wales, and in Tasmania as the Director of Family Service programs back in 1997 to 1999.

CHAIR - Lovely, so when does he start?

Mrs PETRUSMA - About the 20 October, around then.

CHAIR - He has a whole bunch of stuff to do as soon he gets here.

Mrs PETRUSMA - Very much so. We are very much looking forward to having him. He has fantastic experience and it is very exciting that we have someone of his calibre. As Maria Harries, who was the Chair of the Advocacy and Children In Tasmania Committee said, Western Australia's loss is Tassie's gain, so she recommended him highly.

Ms RATTRAY - Trouble is we get them for a short time and then we lose them.

Mrs PETRUSMA - He is going to be here for five years. A five-year term.

CHAIR - Does he have a family and is his family moving with him because that has been part of the difficulty that we have had with interstaters coming, they commute.

Mrs PETRUSMA - We are not able to ask about family, but he is here for a five-year term.

CHAIR - He is contracted for a five-year term.

Mr FINCH - Will Mr Morrissey have some extra advocacy powers under your regime?

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right. He will also get his own stand alone act. If you can remember under the Advocacy and Children in Tasmania Committee, they made 15 recommendations. That was the report that came out last year. Under those 15 recommendations the new Commissioner for Children will get their own stand alone act. We believed that it was important that the Commissioner for Children was no longer just part of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act because that gave the impression they were only there for vulnerable children. We believe that they are there for all Tasmanian children. Part of the recommendations of that committee was also to strengthen advocacy, especially systemic advocacy, to strengthen relationships with other statutory roles and it was also to do a vast range of things. All 15 recommendations have been accepted by Cabinet and he will come to a very much strengthened role in Tasmania. Very exciting. He will not be a toothless tiger.

Mr FINCH - Good.

Grants and subsidies -

Mr FINCH - The food cooperatives reference, there is an allocation for the next financial year of \$100 000. How will that be spent?

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is in your neighbourhood house. That is 15 to 20 food cooperatives that will be going through the state. The reason it has been allocated next year is so that we can identify where they need to go for the remainder of this year and next year we can

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

start up those food co-ops. They are to be between the neighbourhood houses and local food producers to get the food co-ops going in different areas of the state.

Mr FINCH - Thank you, I will go to the next page. Just here you have \$37 288 000 for the last financial year, then nothing. Explain that to me.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is the Aurora concessions payment that is now being transferred to Finance General.

Mr FINCH - Thank you, that is good. Also, \$250 000 for the affordable housing strategy for this financial year and then blanks for the forward Estimates - same thing?

Mrs PETRUSMA - That was a one-off. Tasmania didn't have an affordable housing strategy. This is a strategy to look at increasing the availability of affordable housing across the state. It is a strategy that is going to look at community housing providers, the private sector, crisis accommodation, public housing - the whole works. It is going to map out the gaps and come up with a strategy for the next 10 years for Tasmania as to how we can increase supplying with all stakeholders. It is a very exciting project and there is a vast range of things it is looking at.

Ms RATTRAY - Chair, there is a report if the minister would like to have a look at it called the Affordable Housing Report that was done by the Legislative Council about six years ago. It is certainly a good reference point to start.

Mrs PETRUSMA - They are looking at all that data. I don't have my folder otherwise I would tell you the vast range of things that are being considered in it.

Ms RATTRAY - I am saying it is a good reference point to start.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right, it is a point.

Ms RATTRAY - You won't have to reinvent the wheel if you use that report.

Mrs PETRUSMA - That is right.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister, a bit of a marathon.

Mrs PETRUSMA - No, thank you very much. I appreciate everyone's help and everyone's time.

Mr VALENTINE - Thanks for giving us the answers.

CHAIR - Yes, indeed. We will be sending you a letter about the questions on notice.

The committee adjourned at 6.27 p.m.