

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 24 June 2025

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Chair:

Hon. A. Piccolo

Members:

Hon. J.A.W. Gardner

Mr D.K.B. Basham

Ms N.P. Clancy

Ms J.M. Stinson

Mr T.J. Whetstone

Ms D.J. Wortley

The committee met at 09:00

Estimates Vote

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, \$352,792,000

ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, \$1,167,059,000

Minister:

Hon. N.F. Cook, Minister for Human Services, Minister for Seniors and Ageing Well.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms S. Pitcher, Chief Executive, Department of Human Services.

Mr N. Ashley, Chief Financial Officer, Finance, Digital and Customer Support, Department of Human Services.

Ms R. Ambler, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Human Services.

Ms K. Hawkins, Executive Director, Child and Family Support, Department of Human Services.

Mr J. Young, Executive Director, Ageing, Disability Policy and Safeguarding, Department of Human Services.

Mr A. Hazelbane, Acting Executive Director, Community and Aboriginal Partnerships, Department of Human Services.

Ms S. Nicholas, Acting Executive Director, Workforce Development and Integrity, Department of Human Services.

Ms B. Marsden, Director, Office of the Chief Executive and Governance, Department of Human Services.

Ms T. Mai, Senior Authorising Officer, Restrictive Practices Unit, Ageing, Disability Policy and Safeguarding, Department of Human Services.

The CHAIR: Welcome to today's hearing for Estimates Committee A. I respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of this country

throughout Australia and their connection to land and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to elders both past and present.

The estimates committees are a relatively informal procedure and, as such, there is no need to stand to ask or answer questions. I understand that the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition have agreed an approximate time for the consideration of the proposed payments, which will facilitate a change in departmental advisers. Is that correct?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

The CHAIR: Changes to committee membership will be notified as they occur. Members should ensure the Chair is provided with a completed request to be discharged form. If the minister undertakes to supply information at a later date, it must be submitted to the Clerk Assistant via the Answer to Questions mailbox no later than Friday 5 September 2025.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements, should they wish to do so, for up to 10 minutes each. There is a flexible approach to giving the call for asking questions. A member who is not on the committee may ask a question at the discretion of the Chair.

All questions are to be directed to the minister, not the minister's advisers. The minister may refer questions to advisers for a response. Questions must be based on lines of expenditure in the budget papers and must be identifiable or referenced. Members unable to complete their questions during the proceedings may submit them as questions on notice for inclusion in the assembly *Notice Paper*.

I remind members that the rules of debate in the house apply in committee. Consistent with the rules of the house, photography by members from the chamber floor is not permitted while the committee is sitting. Ministers and members may not table documents before the committee; however, documents can be supplied to the Chair for distribution.

The incorporation of material in *Hansard* is permitted on the same basis as applies in the house; that is, it is purely statistical and limited to one page in length. The committee's examinations will be broadcast in the same manner as sittings of the house, through the IPTV system within Parliament House and online via the parliament's website. I have not received the ratings as yet; normally we beat the B team. I will now proceed to open the following lines for examination: the Department of Human Services. Minister, the floor is yours for a statement or to introduce your advisers.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Thank you very much and good morning to everybody. I am joined today on my direct left by Sandy Pitcher, our Chief Executive, and my direct right, Ruth Ambler, the Deputy Chief Executive. On my far left, here on the front bench, is Nick Ashley, who is the Chief Financial Officer and also the custodian of Finance, Digital and Customer Support. To his rear and my rear left I have Belinda Marsden, Director, Office of the Chief Executive and Governance. Next to her is Katherine Hawkins, who is the Executive Director of Child and Family Support.

Behind Belinda, we have Sally Nicholas, Acting Executive Director of Workforce Development and Integrity, and next to her we have Arrin Hazelbane, Acting Executive Director, Community and Aboriginal Partnerships. To the rear of Arrin, we have Joe Young—actually, no, they have swapped seats. Joe Young is to the rear of Sally, and he is the Executive Director of Ageing, Disability Policy and Safeguarding. We have Trinh Mai, who is our Senior Authorising Officer in the Restrictive Practices Unit, housed within the ageing, disability policy and safeguarding area.

I will make an opening statement and, to let members know, I have no intention of making other statements throughout the morning. I acknowledge we are having this hearing on Kurna land, and say ngai nari krtanya marni ngadlu tampinthe ngadlu kurna yartangka inparrinthe and acknowledge elders past and present and young leaders in the community.

I love this department and its work because of all the people and the places that we reach. After the reshuffle last year, when the seniors and ageing portfolio was added in, I started to say we are in the business of helping people from cradle to grave. It all starts with early intervention services and the youth portfolio before we even get into disability, food security, social inclusion and the

cost-of-living support, which affects people of all ages. This then culminates in seniors and ageing well, as well as supporting funeral costs for people in need at end of life.

Cost of living is a huge area for us to focus on in these times and, while all areas are equally important, I think that one that many people are very interested in and rely upon is cost-of-living support. The past year has been significant in this regard, with last year's budget committing an extra \$115 million for concessions over the forward estimates, which added to the hundreds of millions of dollars extra we have committed since the 2022 election. This work, much of which has arisen from the 2023 review of our concession system, has delivered broadly for tens of thousands of households at a time, while also addressing targeted issues.

Thanks to these reforms, more than 77,000 households, the vast majority of which are renters, have had their Cost of Living Concession permanently doubled after getting paid half the rate as homeowners for years. We have doubled the emergency electricity payment from \$400 to \$800 and also updated eligibility restrictions to help people facing the prospect of not having power. More people can now also get help with glasses. People who live in different types of shared accommodation, like rooming houses or an older parent whose full-time employed child moves back in, can now get household concessions when they could not before.

We continue to work with the commonwealth so concession households get federally funded energy bill relief on top of state government energy concessions. Last year, we provided around \$8.7 million for financial wellbeing and food security, which are critical complements to concession systems. Our community grants continue to show what small amounts of public funding can do when they are combined with volunteers and community spirit. Grants SA helped 139 projects with \$2.64 million over the past year. A lot of these grants help not-for-profit, or non-profit for-purpose organisations and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations as well as social enterprises.

Over 50 per cent of these grants were allocated to projects supporting regional or remote communities. Our community centres, Community Connections Program and Community Passenger Network all address different forms of isolation and disadvantage across the state. In 2024-25, \$4.36 million funded direct services targeting disadvantaged, marginalised and at-risk youth, including the Youth Support and Development Program, the Service to Aboriginal Youth program and funding for youth peak bodies.

Our efforts to address gambling harm continued, with new campaigns noting the long-term problem may stay but be the same. We need to find new ways to engage people and influence their behaviours. The homelessness department, or areas of responsibility, was MoGed across to our department. I want to express my deep thanks to the public servants and our partners and the NGO sector who work in homelessness. Over the coming year, we will be undertaking a review of the systems established under the former government's reform so we can ensure that they are the best arrangements for future years.

I will take this opportunity to pay my respects to Rohan Feegrade. He was the person in charge of Lutheran Care and, ultimately, our Toward Home Alliance, and he passed away on the weekend. He was a young man with three children, one of whom he had since the diagnosis that he received, and he became well enough to travel with his family over Christmas last year. He leaves behind Jules and three young kids and a sector that is grieving, so I pay my respects.

The Safety and Wellbeing Taskforce, with a focus on Aboriginal people moving between remote, regional and metropolitan areas, continues to play a significant role in our community. In the past year, we have formalised the \$12 million partnership focusing on community safety and wellbeing in Port Augusta, which is a huge step up from the \$150,000 committed at the 2022 election. More important than the dollar value, this new partnership is also showing us a new path on community-led decision-making as it relies on local knowledge, languages and cultures, which also fosters a sense of ownership of the community.

Our early intervention services are incredibly close to my heart and I am pleased to advise that DHS is developing a pilot self-referral pathway for Aboriginal families to improve earlier access to family preservation and support services. This was a recommendation of the Holding on to Our Future report released by the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, and DHS is leading the implementation of this recommendation for the government.

In disability services, DHS continues to deliver to hundreds of people with disability under both state and NDIS funding arrangements while we continue to work with the non-government providers to lobby for a fair and sustainable NDIS. We are leading across government work on inclusion and responding to multiple reviews and reports to make our community a better place for everybody, particularly for people with disability.

The Office for Ageing Well is a welcome addition to Human Services returning to its previous home. It works across an incredibly large area, from policy and grants to the Seniors Card, regulation of retirement villages and, importantly, the Adult Safeguarding Unit. The office is undertaking work to develop the next chapter of the state's plan for ageing well, while bedding down regulations arising from the passage of amendments to the Retirement Villages Act earlier this year, affecting more than 500 villages and around 25,000 residents.

I will close my opening remarks with a nod to our volunteers. We had annual Volunteers Week last month, and I was so humbled by the people who give their time, their love and their money, or whatever they can. George Costanza said in *Seinfeld*, all those years ago, 'We live in a society, people.' Volunteers remind me of that every day. We are not alone. We do better together, and I am very proud of the very small role I can play and the huge role my department plays in supporting and recognising the 900,000-odd people who volunteer and the billion dollars worth of work they contributed. With that, I am happy to take questions.

Mr WHETSTONE: That is the first time I have heard *Seinfeld* at estimates. Welcome back Sandy Ruth in a different capacity, but it is what it is. I refer to key agency outputs in Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 112. The key agency outputs lists that the agency will:

Advance the inclusion of people with a disability and support the operation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in South Australia, including the provision of disability services under the scheme.

In last year's estimates, minister, you said:

...upcoming responses to the NDIS review and the disability royal commission will give me great opportunity to consider how we work in a cooperative way with the commonwealth on advocacy...

Given the budget again does not contain funding for independent advocacy, how does the South Australian government intend to fulfil its responsibility to fund independent disability advocacy in the financial year 2025-26 and into forward estimates?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I am just checking to see if there is anything extra for me to add other than the things that I know in terms of the ongoing work that we do. Obviously, individual advocacy does bring significant benefit to people living with disability. It helps them to hold and use their voice in strong ways to the community and to service providers in how they need the world around them to be constructed and, indeed, the personal supports that they require. The recommendations really do call for national consistency in terms of how we prioritise the delivery of a range of advocacy and support services for people with disability, because no matter where you live you should be entitled to equity of access.

We have continued to fund a service through Uniting Communities. They have delivered hundreds and hundreds of support services to add to the suite of other advocacy services that are funded by the federal government within the space. We are investing in the Community Visitor Scheme, the Adult Safeguarding Unit and a range of equity and targeted programs under our Disability Inclusion Act. All of these together provide for a safeguarding ecosystem framework that we can continue to develop and build on. Across all of the portfolios we are investing millions of dollars into the safeguarding of our community and, with that, people with disability will continue to be the best beneficiaries.

As part of the national Disability Reform Ministerial Council, we are communicating regularly and taking the lead on safeguarding in that space, and will continue to do so. We have invested more money into the Community Visitor Scheme through our budget process and also through the time spent working with our chief community visitor to ensure that we have a robust framework that can keep building and providing supports for people. You would know, I am sure, that there is a bill in front of the house for us to make that a more efficient scheme.

Mr WHETSTONE: The disability royal commission cited the Productivity Commission's 2017 cost study report which supported a fifty-fifty split in the responsibility to fund independent disability advocacy between the commonwealth and the states and territories. Do you and your government agree that it has a responsibility to fund independent disability advocacy in equal partnership with the commonwealth?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I am not going to spend all day doing it, but it is an opportune moment just to point out that the previous Liberal government did not support that. They did not support that.

Mr WHETSTONE: That is not in the budget papers.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I am sure there will be many things you raise, so if you want to play 'only in the budget papers' I will play it. But I just want to point out that absolutely we are coming forward to a point where we are working—

Mr WHETSTONE: What budget line is that?

The CHAIR: Member for Chaffey, you referred to a Productivity Commission report and I allowed that. Since you have asked a question and opened the door, you will allow the minister to respond in the way she feels fit, uninterrupted. Minister, continue please.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Thank you very much. But, yes, it is prudent to point that out. Over the last three years we, along with the commonwealth government, have taken a really determined and consistent approach to communication, having had—I have lost count—12 or so Disability Reform Ministerial Council meetings where we continue to work with them. But, as pointed out, we have funded individual advocacy over the past three years with Uniting Communities and that continues to happen. We are currently continuing to review that relationship and the priorities, because the landscape changes constantly in terms of what people do need advocacy with.

In terms of the last three years, Uniting Communities has provided advice or representation in 1,026 individual matters, including administrative appeals tribunals, access to the NDIS and a range of reviews and changing circumstances. There were nearly 900 services provided to regional and remote communities. Also, as I have stated, we continue to fund and support the Community Visitor Scheme and the Adult Safeguarding Unit. They all provide individual advocacy and support for clients within the disability community.

Mr WHETSTONE: Given the role of government in the disability service provision, does the government agree that, to avoid any actual or perceived conflicts of interest and ensure that the highest level of trust in advocacy service is available to the state, the response to the DRC recommendation should be to adequately fund advocacy services that are independent of government and service providers?

The CHAIR: Can I have the reference to the budget line please?

Mr WHETSTONE: Certainly. Key agency outputs, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 112.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Just to clarify, you are talking about having funding advocacy separate to any provider who may have an interest in the NDIS?

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: As to the Uniting Communities advocacy service, funded by the Liberal Party, or the Liberal government under the previous regime, we have been watching to make sure that they have been able to maintain an independent view and function with people with disability. We are happy that they are actually doing that, in fact, irrespective of them being connected to the provision of disability services. There are a number of independent providers and advocacy services which are not disability service providers, but it is actually the role of the commonwealth to provide advocacy services for NDIS clients, which they do.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, will the government's response to the royal commission's recommendation be to fund advocacy services that are independent of government?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It would not be right for me to anticipate who would be funded under what arrangement of a review process that is currently underway.

Mr WHETSTONE: But if they are independent of government and not providing service delivery. What I am trying to get from you is advocacy services that are not involved in service provision to government.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There are a few things there—and I am not trying to be difficult—but if the commonwealth are funding those particular services and they go through their probity, procurement and governance questions and are satisfied with the level of response on all of those questions and procure advocacy services via that method, it would not be right for me to comment on services that I do not fund, but I would be supportive of those robust processes.

As I said, we fund Uniting Communities for some statewide advocacy. That service has now been delivered for 4½ years. We—I—have definitely been watching to make sure that there is capacity for people and large trusted providers, such as the Uniting Communities, who run the Law Centre, for example, as a separate entity completely to the NDIS, to make sure that they are able to maintain those, if you want to call them, separations. Their centre is absolutely accredited through the Australian Community Legal Centres association and we are happy with the service that they have been providing, but that does not mean that we should not now turn our minds to how the ecosystem is restructured, or structured, or supported through the review process.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, in last year's estimates regarding advocacy funding provided to Uniting Communities, you said that the original three-year contract ended in December 2023 and that, 'We have continued that for a while.'

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is the minister able to advise whether the contract is still continuing and, if so, how much funding was provided in the last financial year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think I have already at least in part responded to that. They have continued through this year. We provided an additional \$110,000, including GST, per quarter for that service. As I said, this is forming part of our work where we are aiming to deliver on recommendations from the disability royal commission alongside the NDIS review. Certainly, in terms of what they have been able to provide this year, we are really pleased with their outputs.

But as I said, a good government makes sure that the services going into the future as systems change are looked at, worked with and reviewed. We have great partnerships with our non-government sector, and we will continue to build those partnerships. I cannot say yea or nay as to whether the funding will be the same or more or whether there will be other parties introduced to the system, but we are currently working on that, and we are very pleased with the work that is happening.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, can you then advise how many clients were assisted by the service?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think I have sort of said that. I have the numbers for this year. Over the period of time, there have been 1,026 individual matters supported. That is the total to this year since 2022, I think. Nearly half of those are Administrative Appeals Tribunal representations, for which, as we know, it is very important to have someone sitting in your tent who knows the language. I think I have already gone through the access requests and other internal review supports for you, if you check back in *Hansard*. Again, as I said before, there were over 800, nearly 900, episodes to regional and remote—sorry, I stand corrected: there were 772 metropolitan, 76 regional and three remote. That corrects the numbers I gave you just before.

Mr WHETSTONE: On the same budget paper reference point, the 2025-26 budget reflects machinery of government changes, with the transfer of approximately \$75 million in homelessness service funding from the South Australian Housing Trust to the Department of Human Services, effective 1 July 2024. Would you outline what benefits the government expects from integrating homelessness services into the Department of Human Services?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: In short, the Department of Human Services is a service delivery agency that focuses on people at the heart and the centre of all the work it does. We prove that in the work that we do through early intervention, children's services, youth services, children in

custody, disability—I think I might have said that already. There is massive work that we do around supporting the cost of living and alleviating situations of poverty. We are bringing the homelessness services into that provider model. It was something that we knew as a government would be really, really important.

Also, we know that Aboriginal people are disproportionately on the wrong side of measures. The Closing the Gap work that we are doing and the principles around that, all the wellbeing and safety task force work, all of that together combined provides this incredibly strong system of 'people at the centre' focus, which the homelessness services absolutely sit really beautifully with. We expect to see better focus, decisions and coordination of effort through having people at the centre of all this policy work.

Mr WHETSTONE: The budget papers show us that \$75 million has been transferred from homelessness funding and is now applied within DHS. Have you put any additional resources or allocated any staffing to that transition?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We took a small number of staff across from the Housing Trust with us. We have recruited a director of the unit, who has significant experience working in complex case management work, and that person is now heading up the integrated effort through the department. We continue to provide that ongoing additional money supporting crisis work in the community through a range of non-government providers that were otherwise left out in the cold under the restructure of homelessness services, and we will now—

Mr WHETSTONE: Code Blue.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Irony—good job. I think the providers now are working with our director and their staff to ensure that we can help to review and provide that system moving forward. So there has already been millions of extra dollars put into homelessness services over the last three years and, of course, we continue to take responsibility for ensuring that we can provide what we can.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to the same reference point, page 113, under existing projects: last year the department committed to providing free universal keys to accessible toilets and changing stations to all Companion Card holders. Is that program still ongoing?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: You are asking particularly about the key provision, are you not?

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes, if the program is still ongoing.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr WHETSTONE: It is?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes. I cannot quite get you a number for it, but the simple answer is yes.

Mr WHETSTONE: How many keys were provided in the 2024-25 year, and can you tell me what the equation is for the cost per key?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will take that on notice. That will be something that I am very happy to provide.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you. How many toilets or facilities in South Australia currently require a key to access, and is that number expected to increase in the coming year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will take it on notice for you.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you. In 2024-25 it was estimated that the total demand for keys would be approximately 10,000 people. Has current demand for keys stayed in line with the department's estimate?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will take that on notice.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to the investing expenditure summary, same reference point: the 2025-26 department investment program totals \$3.9 million, including \$3 million for electronic security upgrades in the Kurlana Tapa Youth Justice Centre and minor projects such as sustainment

and equipment purchases. How is DHS prioritising its \$3.9 million investment program into the 2025-26 year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Couching it with a prioritising headline is probably not how I would do it. It is work that has been budgeted and we are undertaking it. They are being done by separate areas. The electronic security replacement was vital. It backs up the human rights and dignity issues when you have children in custody around being able to provide non-invasive screening of young people. The management of that program is underway, and then there is the DHS equipment program.

This is really important, particularly to provide equipment to palliative care clients, clients who are under the continuity of a service disability framework, and some of the other things that are provided are wigs for people who need them for chemotherapy and other medical conditions, and orthotics.

Mr WHETSTONE: Those initiatives that you talk about, they are currently funded?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr WHETSTONE: Do you foresee any anticipated programs that are currently not funded that will be needed in the upcoming forward estimates?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Member, I could come up with a big list of things that we could talk about today. As you anticipate changes in the future for government services, we could discuss those, but I do not have anything that is particularly able to be discussed or that I can anticipate at the moment in terms of anything that needs to go onto that list immediately.

Mr WHETSTONE: The Treasurer might be listening. You should name some of them.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I hope he is. Hello, Mr Treasurer. I am sure he has much bigger things on today.

Mr WHETSTONE: I am sure he has.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Thanks for popping that question out there. I will put my mind to it again.

Mr WHETSTONE: Moving on to highlights, page 114, the same reference point, DHS supported the rollout of 500 new community sector workers and launched the Don't Become That Man program for early intervention for men at risk of using violence. What impact has the recruitment of 500 new workers had on frontline domestic violence services, particularly in regional areas?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I understand your desire for an answer to this one and I am keen for it myself, but this is under Minister Hildyard.

Mr WHETSTONE: I beg your pardon?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: This sits under Minister Hildyard, her responsibilities.

Mr WHETSTONE: She did not want to answer any questions the other day.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I am sorry.

Mr WHETSTONE: Have there been any outcomes that have been achieved through this program? Is there any evaluation process on the success of that program that you can talk about?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No. The answer is not no to the outcomes, the answer is no, that I cannot talk.

Mr WHETSTONE: Referring to page 122, the same reference point, one of the 2024-25 highlights was:

Worked with the Commonwealth Government and local councils for additional Changing Places facilities through the Tranche One of the new Accessible Australia initiative.

What is the status of the existing work, including locations of the facilities delivered, funded, planned or under consideration or negotiation?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: In the last year we completed a couple of Changing Places facilities. I am sure the member will be really keen to know that we were able to deliver a Changing Places facility in Glenthorne National Park. The previous opposition leader, the member for that area, had originally, as the Minister for Environment, as I understand it, put in place a plan for said Changing Places facility and withdrew that within their budget packet. Since coming into government, we were able to work with the federal government to provide that split funding, and Glenthorne National Park now has an excellent facility.

Recently, in the last year or so, I visited a facility at the Burnside pool. I think this year as well there is one up in the Hills at the Fabrik Arts + Heritage Centre with the Hills council. That opened late last year. There is a new framework for the delivery on these accessible places and that is called the Commonwealth Accessible Australia initiative.

As I understand it, there are three LGAs: Mount Barker, Loxton Waikerie—the member will be interested, and if you would like to talk later about that, I am very happy to as well—and the City of Tea Tree Gully. All have the criteria for tranche 1 identified as having been met, as well as a partnership with the Department for Environment and Water at the Belair National Park. I think it is fair to say the provision of these places in areas of high use is really important and also areas that enhance access. It is great.

Mr WHETSTONE: So what is the process that will have to be undertaken to continue the work of these programs?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That is a pretty good question actually. I think that the community needs to be aware that the program is available, and that is down to all of us to share that information and discuss that with organisations that have an interest in that area. The commonwealth now will provide up to 100 per cent of the funding towards the eligible bill cost or purchase cost of the proposed amenities for inclusive beaches, inclusive national parks and portable Changing Places facilities. So all of these things are designed to enhance the liveability and the visitability of places and, in that, absolutely improve quality of outcome of life. There is 50 per cent of funding from the commonwealth now—that is another increase—towards the inclusive play spaces and also for fixed Changing Places facilities which is more like the type we talked about before.

The LGA and other organisations' applications are managed by state government authorities and then through the federal Federation Funding Agreement they are tied together and funded through applications. So I am very happy to have people make inquiries about their opportunities and we can refer them to the right piece of information. But when you get funded, you have to commence the build within 12 months, so people who apply should be aware that they need to be, if you want to use the term, 'shovel-ready' or whatever or get started ready within the first 12 months.

Mr WHETSTONE: So that is one of the challenges: they have to be shovel-ready within 12 months of the program.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are there any other challenges or any other issues that hamper the maximising of the outcomes within this program?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I guess it is fair to say my experience talking to local authorities and other organisations is some of them have waited to see how the program is evolving. I think the change to the Accessible Australia initiative is acknowledgement of feedback that has been provided to the federal government so that it has broadened the scope of their investments into accessible spaces. I think there are always the general workforce and labour challenges that we face, particularly in regional areas.

Yes, getting the matching funding from the local authorities has been a bit of a challenge too. Some local authorities have the will but do not have the funding packet because they are a small council or they have significant challenges from other environmental things like the floods that have been causing lots of expenditure. But with this now a change to the commonwealth government providing up to 50 per cent, that takes off some of that burden because previously it was a third, a third, a third. Yes, it was a third, a third, a third before and now the commonwealth are putting up that

50 per cent in those fixed structures and then it is a much bigger investment even in the other ones, the beaches and the portable Changing Places that I talked about before.

Mr WHETSTONE: What is the state's contribution?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Previously we were a third, a third, a third, and that was on the completed projects that we have had. I will just see if there is a mandated volume for you.

Mr WHETSTONE: You were saying the commonwealth is now tipping in 50 per cent.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, correct. We have \$300,000 per annum across forward estimates budgeted to assist with Changing Places initiatives at this stage. So we do have some budgeted money in place.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you, minister. Moving on to homelessness, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 125: DHS is finalising a systemwide review of homelessness services and will implement a new homelessness outcomes framework in 2025-26. What is the current status of the homelessness system review?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have signed the continuance for the final two years of the funding bucket for the three two by two parcels of homelessness alliances funding. Specialist homelessness services are funded outside that as well. It is a different contract arrangement, but it is also millions of dollars funding different services that make up the well in excess of \$100-odd million of homelessness services.

The objective of the review is to make sure we are meeting the targets and the needs of the community who need us the most. We are going to look at the commissioning and the models for the services to ensure agile responsive services that are outcome focused, culturally appropriate, culturally informed and integrated across South Australia. It is going to be conducted independently, so it will not be DHS staff doing the review. That is important. We will go out to competitive tender for someone to deliver that, and we will make sure that we consult with the Aboriginal Voice and also ensure that we are getting in the cycle early with young people to ensure that they have ways and means to seek support and access housing as soon as possible.

We expect the review to start soon, but we need to have well in place the information about how the structure—if it needs to be changed—will change, early enough so that we can do a smooth transition where all the providers are informed and communicated with, because when the alliances were not in place there was four to six weeks' notice of closure of many services. It is not going to happen like that. That was a problem that happened in 2020 or 2021. Anyway, I think the alliances started in 2021. My learned friends are pointing out to me in stereo that it is an August 2025 commencement, so a couple of months away, and we need that review finished by the middle of next year.

Mr WHETSTONE: Will that review be made public?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think there will be plenty of public commentary but, as a minister previously of the Crown, you will understand that if something requires the deliberation of cabinet, that will be something that we will take into account. But I have every intention of making sure the communications are open and transparent, and the recommendations are open and transparent but do no harm to commercial-in-confidence opportunities and cabinet.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are there any changes expected from the implementation of the Homelessness Outcomes Framework, and will the results of that review influence the commissioning of the funding models that obviously you are going to roll out in 12 months?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is fair to say I was pretty stunned coming to government that there was no outcomes framework in place, but we have worked really hard and it has been complex to get that in place. The framework has been refined and integrated since coming into DHS, and it also feeds into and communicates across the broader work of the department. It absolutely elevates the Closing the Gap principles and outcomes across the framework which is, as I said before, really important. I think that it also will ensure that we have stronger, more productive partnerships with the sector that is delivering this—the alliance partners. They were involved in the development of the

outcomes framework, and we want to make sure we capture the outcomes of the service providers, the feelings of the community and the impact-based partnerships that are in place.

Mr WHETSTONE: On the same reference point, nearly 20,000 people are expected to access specialist homelessness services in 2025-26, with only 39 per cent of those supported in 2023-24 no longer homeless after receiving support. Given the high and growing demand for homelessness support services, how is the government ensuring service capacity keeps pace, particularly for vulnerable groups such as young Aboriginal people and particularly those in the regions?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I am not going to repeat all the things that I have said previously, but I absolutely have committed that young people, Aboriginal people, people who are on any side of a measure who have challenges making decisions and getting information, are absolutely front and centre in terms of the decisions we make in the future around homelessness and the funding of those services. We anticipate that in this financial year, once the numbers are crunched, there will be about 18,500 people who have received support from specialist services, give or take a few, depending on the next report that comes in, given that we are still in June.

There is just a small drop in the number of people receiving support, from 19,722, so about 1,000 by the looks of it, from last year. We think there is a change in client acuity. There are low private rental vacancy rates, and also the way the sector functions is affecting all of those things. We want to make sure that we, during the review, look at how these numbers are presenting and make sure nobody is left without support. I think those issues that I mentioned before result in longer periods of support for people sometimes because, as you know, rental accommodation is at a premium. It is hard to find and it is expensive. So people are needing help for longer.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, do you consider the 39 per cent post support housing rate adequate? Your target is 40 per cent, but do you think that is adequate?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: My understanding is that it has been a relatively stable rate for some time and, again, it acknowledges the challenges of the complexity of the clients that we are talking about. I talk to and listen to and read about the many challenging experiences of people in and around the housing system. I am absolutely cognisant of the types of people who are facing the biggest challenges and the biggest barriers to securing long-term housing. My connection with the homelessness providers, the specialist providers, tells me that if they at all could lift that rate with a magic pudding they would do it.

I know that you are connected well in your community and would be well aware of the types of people who find it really challenging to go to a service first up, let alone stay engaged with the service. Every time I talk about an escalation of severe weather responses and have the opportunity to say it to people, I say, 'Please, keep referring the person who's having a challenge to a service. Please, if you are having challenges, use this as an opportunity to connect with services when there are services available.' Whether it is the first time or the 30th time that someone presents, that might be the time that they actually get the long-term support that they need in a way that is required.

A really important point from my CE: also, we say that the earlier you sense that you are at risk or you have somebody you know is at risk of falling into or entering homelessness, the better, because if you seek that help early and are currently housed and at risk, you are more likely to get an outcome. While we are talking about that 40 per cent, if people seek assistance when they are at risk of homelessness the outcome is very different. There is an 82 per cent chance of people maintaining their housing and support. So, go early, or go often, as the case may be.

Mr WHETSTONE: That is your magic pudding, is it?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: If we want to refer to it as that—but I think that is the solution that is the best at this point. When you are dealing with people who have significant and multiple complex issues and challenges, they need to keep re-presenting or we need to keep reaching out. But, if that person is able to, I would self-identify as at risk of homelessness before actually entering homelessness. They are much more likely to achieve the supports that they need.

Mr WHETSTONE: Moving on to domestic, family and sexual violence in Budget Paper 5, page 46, the budget allocates \$3.5 million over two years to support a whole-of-government response

to the Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, with \$2 million to continue and expand northern and southern prevention and recovery hubs. Can you provide details of how the \$3.5 million allocation is to be used to prepare and respond to the royal commission's recommendations?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, it is Katrine Hildyard's; it is Minister Hildyard's responsibility.

Mr WHETSTONE: As I said, she did not answer any questions the other day, so I am having trouble getting answers out of that one.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Am I answering questions for you?

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes, you are. Minister, moving back to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 111, DHS's overall program expenditure remains relatively stable at \$363 million in 2025-26. Changes to administered items, including the transfer of NDIS contributions, significantly impact how spending appears in the budget papers. DHS also maintains a workforce of 1,800 FTEs across the board. Can you provide a breakdown of total DHS staffing by program area in 2025-26?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I can. Do you want me to read it out or do you want to get it on notice?

Mr WHETSTONE: Take it on notice if you wish.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We can take it on notice if you would like an area breakdown, otherwise I can spend a lot of time reading stuff.

Mr WHETSTONE: No. Are there any changes to staffing levels anticipated over the forward estimates in response to the shifts in service demand for the program responsibilities?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There are a couple of things. We have an increase in FTEs. We certainly have a 45.3 FTE increase from the Office for Ageing Well mob. Welcome aboard everyone in that team who are doing an excellent job. That came from the Department for Health and Wellbeing. We also had 12½ FTEs for homelessness services come in from the South Australian Housing Trust and, again, welcome to that excellent team of people doing wonderful work. That is probably about it. There is no increase across the forwards. There are unanticipated things that happen that we respond to; we have a pretty agile department.

Mr WHETSTONE: Given the significant value of administered items, how will you ensure transparency and that accountability to those funds that are applied?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The administered items did you say?

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will hand to Nick to explain the financial accounting responsibility of administered items?

Mr ASHLEY: The main transparency of administered items, as I say, they are in the budget papers but also you get to see the final numbers in the financial statements, which are usually released towards the latter end of the year. Internally, with our responsibility, we monitor, we review, we forecast and we report on the expenditure within the administered items. Obviously, the largest single item is now the NDIS payments, which is the commonwealth payment we make for our contribution to the NDIS scheme.

As you noted, that was previously within controlled but it was moved to administered this year, or from 2025-26, which probably really reflects the quite unique nature of the payment. There are not many payments that we make to the commonwealth; it is probably the only one, and it is certainly one that we as a department do not have any control over because the amount set is as per the bilateral agreement between the state and the commonwealth. That is a very large single payment. We pay in four instalments, but the actual invoicing and the values are reviewed by ourselves and by Treasury before we make any payments, so that in itself has quite a lot of controls around it.

The other major spend within administered items—probably the next biggest one—is concessions, which again has quite a lot of scrutiny, quite a lot of reporting and internal reporting.

Again, we certainly provide a high level of analysis in the financial statements to year end so you can see the individual elements that make up the concessions.

The CHAIR: The allotted time having expired for this examination, I declare the examination of the Department of Human Services complete. I open the examination of Disability Services.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms S. Pitcher, Chief Executive, Department for Human Services.

Mr N. Ashley, Chief Financial Officer, Finance, Digital and Customer Support, Department of Human Services.

Ms D. Dawson, Interim Chief Operating Officer, Disability Services, Disability and Specialised Services, Department of Human Services.

Mr J. Young, Executive Director, Ageing, Disability Policy and Safeguarding, Department of Human Services.

Ms K. Delguste, Executive Director, Disability and Specialised Services, Department of Human Services.

Ms G. Hummel, Director, Disability Policy and Reform, Ageing, Disability Policy and Safeguarding, Department of Human Services.

Ms B. Marsden, Director, Office of the Chief Executive and Governance, Department of Human Services.

Ms T. Mai, Senior Authorising Officer, Restrictive Practices Unit, Ageing, Disability Policy and Safeguarding, Department of Human Services.

The CHAIR: Minister, do you have any new advisers that you wish to have?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I bring Joe Young forward to the front bench as executive director. I have described his title before. I also invite Kirsty Delguste, Executive Director, Disability and Specialised Services, to take the place of Katherine Hawkins. We continue to have Trinh Mai at the rear there as Senior Authorising Officer, and we have brought on board two excellent people: Dianna Dawson, who is the Interim Chief Operating Officer of Disability Services, Disability and Specialised Services; and Gaby Hummel, Director, Disability Policy and Reform, Ageing, Disability Policy and Safeguarding. I thank the previous advisers for their support.

The CHAIR: Do you wish to make any statements?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Straight into it.

The CHAIR: Straight into it, okay.

Mr WHETSTONE: I go to disability access and inclusion in Budget Paper 5, page 46. The budget commits \$933,000 annually from 2025-26 for the work relating to NDIS reform and the disability royal commission response. How will this funding be allocated across staffing, direct initiatives and community engagement?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: This is just a continuation of the staff in the department to continue that work to support the delivery of the recommendations.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are additional resources anticipated for future budgets to implement the progress of the recommendations?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Again, I cannot anticipate specifically without having the review on those recommendations completed. I also just point out that many of the recommendations are a shared responsibility across government with other departments, and you would be aware of that. Minister Boyer has done some work already around education and then Minister Hildyard has work to do, and others. So there is a range of cross-government responsibilities in response to the royal commission and delivery on that.

Mr WHETSTONE: The Treasurer could be listening.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Hello?

Mr WHETSTONE: The budget refers to continuing national partnerships work associated with the NDIS. Does any of the funding relate to formal agreements with the commonwealth or is it solely for states' capability?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is fair to say there is partnership work across state and federal. Currently, as you would be aware, we have a one-year deal on health and disability, and across the disability and health ministerial councils and the First Ministers' meetings there is work happening around how this will look going forward.

We are co-funder and co-governor of the NDIS and of course have a responsibility to make sure that is a fit-for-purpose system within the bigger ecosystem of our community, addressing accessibility and access matters for people with disability. So there are shared responsibilities with the commonwealth and there are shared responsibilities across departments, and we continue to deliver on that work.

Mr WHETSTONE: It tells me that the program is resourced with five FTEs. Can you give me an understanding of these positions and whether they are new FTEs or whether they are existing staff?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, they are existing.

Mr WHETSTONE: What KPIs has the department put in place to track the implementation of the royal commission's recommendations?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have an agreed set of reporting mechanisms with the commonwealth.

Mr WHETSTONE: So will the parliament be provided with reports or updates on the implementation of the recommendations?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, and I can break that down a little bit for you if you like. It will not take very long. There are 222 recommendations, four were accepted in full; there are 87 in-principle which continue to have work undertaken; there are 36 subject to further consideration, in terms of how that will look; there are two that were noted; and, in addition, there are 93 recommendations that are the responsibility of other governments. We accepted in principle the key recommendations on housing, restrictive practices reform, safeguarding and better inclusion in mainstream services, and you have been involved in the work that we have done around the Disability Inclusion Act and the state plan—thank you.

The ones that we have listed as 'subject to further consideration', are particularly identified as such because they are sensitive to other arrangements on national work and we have to scope them. There is no consensus on some of them. Amongst the actual royal commissioners themselves there were some varying views. I think being a local member, effective as you are, you would know that people contact us with varying views and not everybody in the community is going to agree with all the recommendations of the royal commission. So there is some really deep work being led through the department on that and the existing and ongoing staff have an absolutely incredible area of expertise and skill in doing that and bringing it together.

There is public reporting. So we, as a Disability Ministerial Council, agreed to a reporting and monitoring framework. We did that a year and a half ago, or thereabouts, to support transparent updates on this important work and the progress. That reporting has commenced from this year as per recommendation 12.2—and they will be made public as well.

Mr WHETSTONE: Of the 222 recommendations, you said that some are 'under consideration'. What is code for 'not accepted'? Obviously 'under consideration' is something that—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, I explained that in my previous answer.

Mr WHETSTONE: I understand.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Because these are the ones that are dependent on other factors that we might not have control over. So there will need to be some deep work. This does not mean that they are not accepted. It just means that they are subject to a cooperative piece of work that might take some time to work out.

Mr WHETSTONE: That would primarily be funding related?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, not necessarily. Again, as I explained, there are varying degrees of opinion in relation to some of those recommendations and not all of the recommendations that are made by the royal commission are suitable or acceptable for particular people in the community. We are trying to make sure that those people who have significant and complex needs and thoughts and ideas that might be affected, in maybe what would be perceived as a negative way to them, are taken into account.

Mr WHETSTONE: Will any of the funding flow to external stakeholders or advocacy organisations or will it all stay in-house?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I would be shocked if there was not a procurement of an external organisation to deliver on a recommendation—in fact, I am sure there already has been. We, and all types of government, have for a long time acknowledged and considered it beneficial to partner with external agencies to deliver areas of their expertise, or improve the value-add by a non-government or a charitable organisation to be able to deliver on items that disproportionately affect the most marginalised people in our community, who, because of a failure to be able to do that, would be in a worse position. Minister Boyer has led some of that work already around partnerships in Catholic and independent schools as well, so that is most certainly outside of government.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to the same reference point at page 111. The disability program in the 2024-25 budget was originally \$19.2 million, yet there was an overspend of 2½ times. Can you explain why that is so blown out; up to \$50.2 million was the actual?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Let me get to some notes so I can give you a good summary of that. The reform process that we have taken the lead on in terms of disability and transition to the NDIS in full has been challenging. We have had to really do a lot of work to ensure that the disability service provides the best quality service delivery in an environment where there is huge demand and pressure on workforce and on costs in general.

We have had to do a great deal of work to provide confidence to a service that spent the four years between 2018 and 2022 concerned that it was not going to be continued, that there was not going to be a state service under the previous government and that it had to fight for survival. That sense has been quashed. We have been deeply investing in culture, skills and capability within that service, but it is absolutely fair to say that there are significant cost pressures to delivering that in the model of the NDIS. Like all non-government providers in the system, we are absolutely facing pressures when it comes to providing supported living services in a quality, safe and dignified way.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, you talk about cost pressures. Can you give me an example?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Food.

Mr WHETSTONE: The budget has blown out by 2½ times. I think surely there has to be an explanation of what is a typical significant cost pressure that has been put on that budget line to have it blow out by 2½ times—just an example?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: People who live in our service are receiving NDIS funding, which averages \$60,000 less than the state average plan of people who are not in the state service, so being serviced outside. That is due to the initial assessment process that was done at transition. We are in a process of reviewing all those systems so that our plans properly reflect the plans of other equal or similar people across the state. While the cost of purchasing items to provide support and all the other pressures that we all face in terms of the cost of living are obvious, this underlying income for a person is also inequitable.

So we have a balance of two things here that we are working on. As a state government provider, we pay payroll tax and our WorkCover levy is higher, and that is not in the NDIS price scheduling. There are pressure points delivering as a state provider as opposed to a charitable

service that receives all of those commensurate discounts. So I think it is prudent to say that it is about the money in, it is about the money out and it is about the environment we are working in. Also, it is not a cost blowout. The cost is the same across the years, we just have not been able to get the plans to meet the need of the service.

Mr WHETSTONE: The 2025-26 budget for disability dropped significantly lower than the 2023-24 actual and last year's estimated result, which coincides with the funding shift to NDIS. Can you clarify if there are any supports that will no longer be offered by DHS?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is nothing that we have changed.

Mr WHETSTONE: Nothing will change?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No. There is nothing that we have changed. The only changes I can see that might impact on service provision would be because of the recommendations of the disability royal commission or the NDIS review in terms of how the structural reform goes on, and we will be very transparent about those things as well.

Mr WHETSTONE: Do you think the reduced funding in the budget will mean fewer people will receive support?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Sorry?

Mr WHETSTONE: Will fewer people receive the levels of support that they currently do?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Everybody we have responsibility for caring for and supporting will absolutely continue to receive the care and support that they need. We deliver it in line with plans if it is safe to do so; if the plans are not as high as they should be, we do have a responsibility to check that people are receiving the services that they require under those plans, so we do that. We have got a small reduction in the number of clients as well, so there is that variance of economy of scale when you do have a large system and you drop numbers, but we do not have a huge drop. It is a small change, and in fact we picked up a few since the beginning of the year.

Mr WHETSTONE: How will the NDIS shift affect current clients who receive disability support through DHS?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That is already done. There is no effect.

Mr WHETSTONE: How many DHS staff roles will be affected by this change?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: By which change?

Mr WHETSTONE: The shift from NDIS to DHS.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It has already happened.

Mr WHETSTONE: Have there been any—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, the other way: the shift was from state disability funding to NDIS funding. This year is the first full year that we have been under full NDIS funding.

Mr WHETSTONE: Does that mean that the budget that has been set will be exceeded again this coming year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I cannot anticipate what is going to happen. It depends on the plans: plans come with the client, money comes with the plan.

Mr WHETSTONE: I understand.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is dependent on the plan. Again, I just reflect a little bit: I am presuming you are asking predominantly about the people living in our service, people getting SIL under the NDIS, not other people outside of that.

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes. Now that almost \$900 million in public funding will bypass DHS and go directly to NDIA, will South Australia have any level of oversight of those funds?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are you able to give me an understanding?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is an administered amount calculated on an actuarial function of the number of people compared to other states. It is money in, money out. It has been for some time, except during the transition there was a chunk that was able to be recalibrated because of the in-kind function. That has now finished.

We still have oversight in terms of the money that is being contributed and this happens as a function of intergovernmental agreements and my participation, as you can imagine, as an active member of the DRMC, which is the ministers' council—now being presided over by a partnership of Minister McAllister and Minister Butler. On that, I quickly thank Minister Shorten and Minister Rishworth for their incredible work in a really challenging time over the previous three years.

Mr WHETSTONE: Moving to agency outputs, same reference point: the agency notes its role in supporting the operation of the NDIS with the \$880 million transition of payments to the NDIA. How much of the \$34.9 million in remaining disability funds is focused on supporting those who fall outside of the formal NDIS eligibility?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is a portion of people who do not live on NDIS who are subject to supported funding under—we have a separate program for people who do not qualify for the NDIS that we announced, I think, two summers ago, to provide like supports as if they were in the NDIS. That program is underway. We also have the disability equipment services that we fund.

Outside of that as well, which is not in this particular bracket, the Exceptional Needs Unit is a really extraordinary division of our department that can be called upon to provide urgent and necessary support and, for want of a better word, case management to help get accommodation and services in place for people who are having severe difficulties being supported in the community.

The other thing to point out in this budget line is it is also the disability policy and inclusion that we are delivering on, not just actual disability services. There is lifetime support, function and also disability support for older people as well. It is quite a big bucket. I would be delighted to sit down and provide a bit more information later, if you would like, so just reach out.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you. The agency notes its commission's grants, funding and service agreements. How many individual grant or service agreements in DHS are administered under the disability program for 2025-26?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think the answer is very few, but DHS does have a number. Disability specific is very few. If you are really interested in an absolute, I am sure we can provide that, but the answer is: a very small amount.

Mr WHETSTONE: How does that compare with the past two years, given the large expenditure changes?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is consistent.

Mr WHETSTONE: Moving on to highlights at page 122, what funding and staff resources have been allocated to launching the plan and what is the proposed process and timeline for this to occur?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Inclusive SA, under the previous three years, again legislated under the Disability Inclusion Act. We did the review, we have had the legislation, and we put in place some new targets. The plan aligns with a whole range of other disability-focused and access-focused pieces of work such as Australia's Disability Strategy, the Autism Strategy, the NDIS review and the NDIS royal commission; all of those things work together. I think the nub of your question is to try to find out some sort of timeline of expected delivery on some of those outcomes.

Obviously, we work with local authorities and government departments on receiving their targeted plans. It is expected that those are reported annually to us, which we table in parliament. We are available for those 100 state authorities, 32 government agencies and 68 local councils to provide support, assistance and advice. I remember those questions in the debate section of the amendment bill.

The state plan better reflects the shifting nature of community priorities now. Those new target groups that we added, particularly for people with intellectual disability, we know are really important. It sits alongside the targeted action plan process as well, which is also an agile space. Yes, and we have recently had some of this work out for consultation. In the middle of this year, which is very close, we are going to launch the new iteration of the plan.

Mr WHETSTONE: Have there been any implications resulting from the delayed timing of the new plan for agency and local government disability access or inclusion plans? How have they been communicated to affected entities, particularly the community?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I cannot recall any sort of negative. In fact, going around, I have had a couple of council mayors say to me they are actually pleased that it has been a slow process because they want to get it right. I do not recall. I am sure the department will madly look for any. The new plan, as it comes out, has been widely consulted on and the LGA has been involved in that as well. We have aligned the timing with the new regs and the changes, so it should all slot in together hopefully.

Mr WHETSTONE: I do not know whether I missed it, but regarding the new supported residential facilities legislation, did you tell me what the timeline for implementing that legislation and all regulations will be?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I do not think we have talked about that yet.

Mr WHETSTONE: Can we?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Do you want to? Alright. What do you want to know?

Mr WHETSTONE: Well, what is the timeline for implementing that legislation?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Right, so, in summary, for supported residential facilities the review is long overdue. They house some of the most vulnerable members of the community who, because of their circumstances, need ongoing and varied supports to live a connected and dignified life. We know, not just through this but through the NDIS review, there have been particular people who take advantage of said people and we want to make sure that we do our best as a government to stop that from happening.

I personally have visited quite a number of supported residential facilities, talked to, hosted round tables, worked with our excellent staff to seek feedback on and look at the best possible working model for legislation in its new form to support residential facilities, all the time playing a very cautious and controlled pathway to ensure that people living in these situations are not adversely affected by any changes. Front of mind has been a historical underinvestment in this type of supported or social housing mix, and we know that the injection of money into the budgets over consecutive years for social housing will have a flow-on effect in terms of our ability to either relocate or support the accommodation of people to have a better ecosystem such as the NDIS and all the other frameworks, who potentially do not now, who require to live in that type of accommodation.

In saying that, we are working closely with participants, owners and operators, and with the community and local government, to ensure that we get the best outcome. That is why it has been very slow and measured to make sure we do not put people at risk in an environment where there is limited housing outcome availability outside of where people already are.

Mr WHETSTONE: How many additional Changing Places facilities were established in 2024-25? How many more sites will be funded this year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Can I refer the member to the answer that we gave in the previous section, or do you want me to go over it again?

Mr WHETSTONE: No, I do not want you to go over it again. I just want—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We got the two completed in the last year: Glenthorne and Fabrik, the arts centre, up in the Hills. We have the new arrangement with the Accessible Australia project and there are about four eligible partnerships that have been agreed upon in that. There are three for Changing Places. This is the one where you had the good news because there was Loxton

Waikerie, Mount Barker and the City of Tea Tree Gully, and the Department for Environment and Water. So there are four: three LGAs and one department partnership.

Mr WHETSTONE: What I want to know is whether there are any more sites to be funded this year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: They are the three that have been identified, and the money has not gone out the door for them yet. It is going out the door soon. Also, what I am hearing as well is there are private organisations that are now turning their mind to actually delivering on providing a Changing Places option within their buildings. I am trying to think of an example. We are waiting for commonwealth advice, too, on the full rollout.

If you go to Adelaide Airport, just before where you would normally come out, there is a whole range of toilets and really great facilities—there are Changing Places in there that we had nothing to do with. Also, there is a great doggy-do mat and room, where you can take your doggo and it can do its business on what looks like grass. That suite was an independent authority doing the work.

There are other places we have not funded. We did not fund Adelaide Oval. With the excellent work of Minister Bourke and the Office for Autism in partnership, there is a quiet space and also a Changing Places facility there. Just for the member's information, we are talking about the government ones, but there are independent ones that are popping up—and bring that on.

Mr WHETSTONE: And that is self-funded? Is it in partnership with government or is it a private initiative?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I could not comment on a commonwealth or local government separate contribution, but that is outside of the initiative that is funded. There was tripartite funding, an equal split, first up and now there are these other arrangements. As I said earlier, the federal government is paying 100 per cent for some and 50 per cent for others, and what have you. We are waiting on the commonwealth for future rounds. That will happen, as they have announced, and there is the expansion of the Accessible Australia program, as I said before. It now is not just Changing Places—there are beaches, parks and playgrounds and a whole range of things.

Mr WHETSTONE: How much was spent in 2024-25 on reforming DHS disability services to align with the NDIS and other funding programs?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think it has all been part of the departmental work as a piece. Is there any particular one person allocated to just have one job? People cross over into a range of other inclusion, disability reform, royal commission work. There are restructuring priorities within disability services. There is a whole range of system change work that goes on, and if I could point to a particular person and say 'this is your one job' I could help, but the whole ecosystem is so interconnected. We just know the types and the numbers of people needed to deliver across a range of those programs, so it is very difficult.

Mr WHETSTONE: I understand that, but how much money has been spent on reforming? You are talking about people doing other things, new things, but there must be an expenditure to align DHS with the NDIS funding programs.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will give the CEO an opportunity to shine.

Ms PITCHER: Thank you for the question. The way that we have been operating over the past number of years has been a gradual transition to operating under the NDIS arrangements. We call it 'in kind', which is probably not a very good descriptive word for what has been the South Australian government being an NDIS provider for all of the clients who are in our service. That has actually been a number of years. The only change this year has been the way the funding arrangements are done between the commonwealth and the state, as opposed to any change in service that our clients have received. The change for our clients has hopefully been minimal and not noticed because it has actually been about the funding arrangements rather than what is provided to clients.

The things that we have done is the continuous improvement. We keep building new rostering systems, we work with our clients on feedback on what works best for them, and we obviously operate under the NDIS framework, which has meant that, at different times, we have had

to change from a state-based regulation to the national regulation. Certainly, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission is now the body that we report to. That has not represented a cost for us. That has just represented a change in arrangements.

Mr WHETSTONE: What budget has been allocated in 2025-26 to deliver the 10 SA actions under the Targeted Action Plan?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is not a specific budget. It is a proportion of the total budget. To do that in isolation would not be communicating with the rest of the ecosystem that delivers accessibility and inclusion in South Australia. In fact, it is not just within our department. To deliver these action plans, we are working with other departments across the system to deliver those. These are good questions, but the answers are not as simple as it might seem, and I am not trying to be funny. The budget is there for our staff, who are participating in that cross-system approach to delivery on access and inclusion.

Mr WHETSTONE: So there is no actual dollar value on how you are going to implement the 10 recommendations into the Targeted Action Plan?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is no specific budget within our budget that I can point to that shows you the breakdown of the staff delivering on those, just to say we are delivering on those, and that will be part of the full budget of staff who work under the direction, here in DHS, to join together with other people doing the same work in similar ways in other departments; so there is a combination delivery.

Mr WHETSTONE: Under targets, same reference point, one of the targets is to continue to reform DHS disability services by reviewing business processes and introducing systems to ensure they can operate more effectively under the NDIS and other funding programs. Can you detail the progress so far in terms of national negotiations and South Australia's preparation and planning?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will try to give you something concise. We are continuing this year to implement those changes and system and redesign processes, which will improve the quality of life and experience for our clients within disability, with a knock-on effect obviously for the broader community as well and the knowledge and skills that we share. But this is about clients receiving disability and aged-care services and also accessing assistive technology and equipment broadly.

We have been implementing year one of a financial sustainability plan initiative to try to reduce the net costs of disability services in the long term and also to be recertified as an NDIS provider, because we also have to achieve that, as does the private or non-profit sector. We are committed to providing the NDIS supported services to people with disability. Also, we have been and will continue to, as needed, accept service delivery for individuals who are not accepted by other services because of perceived inadequate NDIS budgets, under-resourcing or lack of ability to resource or commit services to clients, or indeed the commensurate level of skill required to look after complex individuals.

While we do that, we are reforming our disability services model to make sure the services are quality and sustainable, bearing in mind all those challenges that we have talked about previously in terms of the value of plans and the cost-of-living pressures, which affect our people in supported accommodation as well as the community. I hope that is as fulsome as you are wanting.

Mr WHETSTONE: To a certain extent. What is the expected timeframe for the implementation of the foundational supports here in South Australia, and what funding is available in the budget to fund these new measures that are required?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: This is an ongoing piece of work in collaboration with the government, and we talked about also the health agreement that is in place. It is fair to say that we are still at that negotiation phase. We have started to turn our mind to what some foundational supports might look like and listen to the community, who are providing us much unsolicited advice in regard to how they would like to see things happen. All of that is being listened to and catalogued, and we will be able to use that when we do get to a point of providing that rollout and delivery.

We support the recommendations around the use of foundational supports as an intervention to divert people away from complex plan needs, either in the short or long term. We are committed

to following through on the recommendations of the NDIS review that recommended that commonwealth and territory governments jointly fund and design that ecosystem of disability supports outside of the NDIS, which will be known as foundational supports.

They are intended to be in addition to but connected with other existing mainstream and NDIS disability supports. As I said before, nothing is in isolation; it is about connecting it. The cabinet meeting before Christmas in 2023, so a year and a half ago, was where governments agreed to jointly design and commission the foundational supports and fund them fifty-fifty as a split. We have been negotiating—the royal government we, led by the Premier—the national health and disability reforms with the commonwealth since those discussions, and there was a year's agreement put in place.

We will continue to work alongside the NDIS on rule changes, reforms and needs and changes in the ecosystem to work out how best to deliver those supports in the long term. We will work with the commonwealth to do that and, while that is happening, we will continue to listen to and support people with disability and advocate for them. If they feel like there are any changes happening that do not work for them, we stand ready to provide advocacy and support.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, how much state funding has been allocated in 2025-26 to deliver the accessible infrastructure in public places? Is there a number?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Can I clarify, are you asking about DHS funding to deliver that or full broad government funding?

Mr WHETSTONE: There must be state funding that has to be allocated to the national disability reform, so how much state funding has been allocated in 2025-26 to deliver the accessible infrastructure in public places?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I absolutely understand what you are saying, but I cannot speak for other departments. Minister Koutsantonis takes responsibility for a range of things, so does Minister Boyer, so does the Treasurer and a range of others. Obviously we have our specific targets in housing, as you know. When we came into government we signed up to that silver standard agreement in terms of accessible housing build, and all of our public and social housings are being built to at least that standard.

There is money from a whole range: think of the sensory footpath markings and in public transport the accessible buses, trains and train stations. I went to the tram stop on King William Street a couple of years ago that had been built and upgraded. To deliver accessible infrastructure across government, I would be absolutely guessing and I am not going to.

Mr WHETSTONE: Do you have a number from the Department of Human Services as to what their contribution is?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We do not fund infrastructure; ours is the Changing Places obligation.

The CHAIR: The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of Disability Services complete. Further examination of the proposed payments for the Department of Human Services and Administered Items for the Department of Human Services will continue after the break. We will see everybody after the break. Just for the record, there are 115 people watching Estimates Committee A and 50 watching Estimates Committee B.

Sitting suspended from 10:46 to 11:00.

Membership:

Mr Fulbrook substituted for Ms Stinson.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms S. Pitcher, Chief Executive, Department of Human Services.

Mr N. Ashley, Chief Financial Officer, Finance, Digital and Customer Support, Department of Human Services.

Ms R. Ambler, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Human Services.

Mr A. Hazelbane, Acting Executive Director, Community and Aboriginal Partnerships, Department of Human Services.

Ms M. Fernandez, Director, Youth Justice and Inclusion Support, Community and Aboriginal Partnerships, Department of Human Services.

Ms B. Marsden, Director, Office of the Chief Executive and Governance, Department of Human Services.

Ms M. Smith, Director, Inclusion Policy and Reform, Department of Human Services.

The CHAIR: I reopen the payments for Youth Services. The minister appearing is the Minister for Human Services. Does the minister have any advisers she wishes to introduce?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Thank you very much and welcome back people who were here this morning; and to others, welcome.

We have advanced Melanie Fernandez, our Director of Youth, Justice and Inclusion Support, Community and Aboriginal Partnerships to the front bench. Behind me I still have Belinda Marsden and Ruth Ambler to my rear. Mandy Smith has joined us and is behind Belinda. Mandy is the Director of Inclusion Policy and Reform, and we continue to have the presence of Arrin Hazelbane, who is the Acting Executive Director of Community and Aboriginal Partnerships. I am happy to take questions.

The CHAIR: The member for Chaffey, the floor is yours.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 121. The explanation of 'significant movements' outlines expenditure of \$0.6 million last financial year for the extension of youth home detention services. How was the money spent and how many additional home detention places did you provide for?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I can give the member some information about electronic monitoring. The conditions under which people are monitored vary from person to person as to their scope of movement. As at last week, there were 142 children and young people who were subject to electronic monitoring this financial year, and that is compared to 149 subject to electronic monitoring in 2023-24. As at 16 June there were 369 mandates issued requiring electronic monitoring in this financial year, compared to 366. It is very stable. But in terms of where young people and children are allowed to go and attend with the presence of electronic monitoring, that is on an individual basis.

Mr WHETSTONE: How many youth offenders were on home detention last financial year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The terminology is not something we use. As I explained just before, there are those 369 mandates. They are orders. In terms of the scope of those orders, there are so many varied permutations of the conditions, and there would be association parameters regarding who they can and cannot associate with. There would be opportunities and curfews—opportunities to continue engagement in sport, continue engagement in public and community activity, continue engagement in school and family and social structure—but that would vary and depend upon the individual. 'Home detention' is not terminology we use: we talk about electronic monitoring mandates.

Mr WHETSTONE: Can you give me an indication whether home detention—I know that is not terminology you use, but obviously home detention is the situation.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Can I ask you where you are getting that from?

The CHAIR: The budget line we are referring to.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: From the expenditure—yes, I have you. That is the electronic monitoring program of \$0.6 million. Apologies; yes, that would be the answer.

Mr WHETSTONE: Youth offenders who are in detention, whether it is electronically monitored or just home detention: have those numbers increased or decreased from 2023-24, and by how much?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think I just answered that. The difference was about seven, but the total for this year is not up yet for children who are subject to orders. We do not have that final financial year. Let me have a look: 142 were subject to electronic monitoring. So 142 were electronically monitored up to 16 June, compared with 149, so it is quite stable. As well as the mandates, there were about three differential—

Mr WHETSTONE: How many breaches were recorded last financial year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We will take that on notice.

Mr WHETSTONE: What percentage of youth offenders on home detention is monitored electronically?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There are a significant amount of children who offend who are not subject to monitoring. My understanding is that about 72 per cent of children are subject to community orders as an alternate. I will get the right number for you. I will take it on notice.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are there any further plans to extend the home detention scheme for young offenders?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There are no plans in place at this point.

Mr WHETSTONE: There is a significant decrease in expenses for 2025-26. Have any youth service programs been cut?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No.

Mr WHETSTONE: There is a decrease of nearly 75 per cent in grants and subsidies. Why is that the case?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The increase is linked to the corporate overheads. The allocation of the grants, etc., is stable.

Mr WHETSTONE: I refer to the same reference point, performance indicators: the number of youth justice clients who had one or more supervised orders issued in 2024-25 was significantly above the projected amount by about 100 clients. Why is that so high?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The numbers are a matter for the courts and how the courts are managing and dealing with the young people and children who pass through that system, so I cannot advise the member as to the reasons why the numbers have changed.

Mr WHETSTONE: The number of youth justice clients who have one or more supervised or community-based orders issued is anticipated to increase this financial year. What is underpinning that projection?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Are you referring to supervised orders? Is that what you are referring to?

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Again, it is how the courts are managing or choosing to deal with young people and children who come to their attention. That is a matter for them.

Mr WHETSTONE: On that basis, youth crime is predicted to increase this financial year. Are you saying it is the inconsistencies of the courts, or is it a larger offending base?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: As I am advised, the numbers are disproportionately affected by a number of young people who are breaching those orders as well, and that is due to a number of things—a lack of understanding of the order, a lack of capacity for safe and supportive family to be involved in reinforcing those orders with young people—but we know that those numbers have certainly increased.

Mr WHETSTONE: The number of youth justice clients who had one or more admissions to a secure youth justice centre was also well above the estimated result from last financial year and is anticipated to increase again this year. Does this mean youth recidivism is on the rise in South Australia?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There have only been small increases each year. It is a formula that is calculated based on the past numbers, so there is just an anticipated number that we will add to, given the population and the types of offending and the nature.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, how many members of youth street gangs are currently in the custody of youth justice?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I do not have data or information that I can share in relation to children who are in custody.

Mr WHETSTONE: How many youth offenders breached bail more than 50 times last financial year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That is a matter for the courts. That is not data we have.

Mr WHETSTONE: How many youth offenders breached bail more than 100 times last year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We do not have that data. That is the same as the previous question. We do not keep that data on children at all. That is a matter for the courts.

Mr WHETSTONE: So you do not have any record?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is a portion of young people and children with bail breaches that we would have some records on. We can take that question on notice and provide you with any information that we do have. But again, as I said, it is sensitive in terms of the children.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, how much is being spent on rehabilitation programs for youth offenders in the 2025-26 budget and is it more or less than the previous financial year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: In terms of delivery of program support, the budget is the same as it was last year. We do not have individual breakdowns on all of those programs, but also this is not just isolated to the work of the Department of Human Services. There is work that happens through Child Protection, Health, the Attorney-General's, and Education in terms of providing supports and wraparound services for children and families who come into contact with the justice system.

Obviously we certainly have funded community youth justice programs that we do in partnership and some of them are delivered by DHS. We have early intervention and family services and we have the Exceptional Needs Unit. We have a range of programs that deliver supports and we have community targeted programs targeting vulnerable cohorts. The Minister for Multicultural Affairs has a bucket of money that is doing great work in terms of her communities.

Rehabilitation is a big word and not always one that is used in relation to children. I would be talking about child-centred trauma and trauma-informed practice, a whole range of restorative practice programs that we use that are connected to all of those other programs that we have talked about and, in fact, some of them that we talked about in the other session.

Mr WHETSTONE: Under highlights, one of the 2024-25 highlights was the Youth Justice Practice Framework. When will that framework be published?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: This will happen within weeks in the first part, and then it is an evolving piece of work with ongoing updates and changes to interventions that we use as a consequence of the advice that we are given and the work that is done with children in our system.

There have been recommendations considered to align the work to the approaches that we use and the service delivery that is in place. What we want to make sure we do is ensure that there is consistent messaging to staff and ensure there is a common understanding of the purposes of the work and the practice principles that understand the services delivered to children in custody and also in the community who become subject to the need for these interventions for whatever reason.

This practice framework has been deeply discussed and collaborated with partnerships and staff in terms of how we do that, how we deliver it and what that will look like. The program and the framework always reflect the contemporary practice and this is an ever-moving piece of work in our community as society changes.

Mr WHETSTONE: Who was consulted around the framework?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There were independent bodies, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, the guardian, the Training Centre Visitor, the staff who work in the sector, educators, Health, children and young people, the Courts Administration Authority, and SAPOL. That is a pretty good shopping list of people who were consulted. There has been a big piece of work happening with this.

Mr WHETSTONE: Referring to the same reference point, one of the 2025-26 targets is to implement and embed a new case management model to strengthen assessment and case planning within the youth justice system. When will the model be finalised and implemented?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is going to be a year's long piece of work and that is starting to be delivered this year.

Mr WHETSTONE: So why is a new case management model needed? Are there deficiencies in the current case management model?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There are always changes in the community, changes in the cohort, changes in the nature and typology of the young people and children who come in contact with justice; families change, education systems change, the way society functions changes. It needs to be agile. We need to do better for young people to ensure that as much as we possibly can we prevent the recidivism and the habit of reoffending. We need to ensure that children and young people who are subject sometimes to making choices which are not going to see them thrive or succeed in life are given the best possible opportunity to change their chances and change their trajectory so that we as a society and community do better for all young people in the future. This is an agile piece of work and we will continue to invest in change as change is needed, and this is one example of that.

Mr WHETSTONE: Another target is to finalise and launch an enhanced support model of care at the Kurlana Tapa Youth Justice Centre. Can you provide an update on the new support model for that youth justice centre?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Thanks for your interest in regard to this. This is a really important piece of work that seeks to invest in children and young people and assist to divert them away from the justice system to a more successful outcome. The piece of work is trauma informed. It takes into account the range of complexities with young people and children such as disability, health challenges and varying levels of education and capability, but also the ecosystem around the child. So it takes into account all of these things.

We have over the last few years been delivering on a capital works piece at Kurlana Tapa, which will play a huge role in terms of providing safer, more appropriate accommodation for children and young people who find themselves in a custodial setting, who need environments that help them to decompress and get the support they need behaviourally and emotionally. That unit is opening very soon and we are building the individualised trauma-informed evidence-based clinical staff to wrap around and provide supports for young people and children in that environment. It is something that the department is very proud of.

Mr WHETSTONE: How will the success for these reforms be measured, and are they expected to reduce reoffending?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Measuring outcome of generations in terms of their behaviours and offending patterns often are judged many years later in life, so there will be pieces of work that will be undertaken. If I can connect this in some little way to the work of the early intervention program with children and families, the Early Intervention Research Directorate has been partnering with academics and data analysts for a number of years now to look at snapshot points in time of community members, children and young people, and where they were and where they have gone

and link that with the evolution of trauma-informed, evidence-based practice to make sure that we are providing the best possible opportunity for the outcomes of young people and children who will no longer be at the attention of a custodial setting and have the opportunity to make better choices in life.

There will be objective measures in place. We already have objective measures in place. We look at incident reports. We look at the link to disability supports. Often when children come to Kurlana Tapa it is their first opportunity for a full health assessment: dental, immunisation and a range of other medical inputs that will absolutely directly affect life outcome when you look at healthcare needs. So the connections are important. There is a really skilled team of practitioners who are involved in doing those rapid assessments on young people and children when they come to the centre. Getting children assessed and these supports delivered is absolutely vital, and this all forms part of that care model.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, what is the data telling you with youth reoffending? If a youth is put into detention or monitored and then reoffends, what is the data?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: According to our data, there is absolutely a reduction in the numbers of children involved in crime. We know that in the period between 2009 and 2020, we have seen a significantly smaller number of children who are generating those mandates, and the number of young people under supervision orders has decreased in time. The public narrative around gangs and youth crime is difficult, because it is a perception point, and people are really scared when they see behaviours like this that are challenging.

In terms of this data analysis that is going on, it has shown a downward trend over time, and we are tapping into the knowledge around delivery on programs and environments that have worked in order to do this. It has been under successive regimes—governments and people. In the year 2023-24, for example, so that is the last complete year of data that we have got, it shows that South Australia had the second lowest rate per 10,000 children aged 10 to 17 under custodial supervision in the nation. South Australia's rate was 1.7 per 10,000, which ranks only behind Victoria at 0.8. As much as I would like to celebrate Victoria, their rate does not include young people held under police custody.

Mr WHETSTONE: What is the number minister?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The number?

Mr WHETSTONE: What is the data showing—the reoffenders coming in? You have given us an overall gauging to Victoria, but what is the number? What is the data on reoffenders coming back into either surveillance or into detention?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: To measure recidivism there is just no consistent measure, and one incident does not compare to the incident before. To compare a child of the age of 13, for example, with that same child at the age of 16 is different, and all of the things that happen within that. We do not have a recidivist measure that is consistent enough to apply to provide sound and safe data. We use the evidence before us and treat each child on its merits when a child comes to the centre or comes to an assessment process for support. That will vary depending on the point of time in that young person's life.

We know that we have got supervised young people numbers down, and unsupervised young people and children's numbers are up, so there are different ways as well of addressing those behaviours, those challenges, that they are subject to in terms of a justice challenge.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, can you give me a number of reoffenders in the current budget?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No.

Mr WHETSTONE: You can't or you won't?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I just said I can't, no.

Mr WHETSTONE: Do you not have that information?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: You said, 'Do you know?' I cannot give you that number.

Mr WHETSTONE: Do you have that information though?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We do not have that information that I am aware of and, as I have just explained, there is no consistent way to evaluate that or assess that. You might ask the courts if there is a way that they look at offenders or offending, and how that is measured, but we do not have a measure of that. Each child is assessed when they come in, using the conditions with which they present. There are most definitely children who come to the centre a number of times, but to couch them as offending in the same way or reoffending in the same way, I do not have that information, and that is not using the evidence-based practice way of attending to a child's needs.

Mr WHETSTONE: How many reoffenders did you have this year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I do not have that number.

Mr WHETSTONE: Really?

The CHAIR: That will be the last question and answer.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: For the number of young people coming into custody and under supervision, we have the numbers. In Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 121, we have activity indicators, and in the estimated result we have the number of youth justice clients. There are 550 children who have had one or more supervision orders issued. We have 440 children who have had one or more community-based orders. We have 395 children who have had one or more admissions to a secure youth justice centre. I cannot tell you that is the number reoffending. I cannot tell you why they are re-presenting. I cannot tell you the story of the child in trauma who is re-presenting at Kurlana Tapa. I cannot tell you what their story is that leads to that.

Mr WHETSTONE: You clearly do not want to tell me.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, that is not true.

Mr WHETSTONE: Omnibus.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That is not true. I ask you to withdraw that comment.

The CHAIR: The member for Chaffey, the minister, has taken exception to you.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I ask you to withdraw that comment politely.

Mr WHETSTONE: No.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I draw that to the attention of the Chair.

The CHAIR: You will not withdraw the comment?

Mr WHETSTONE: I am not withdrawing it.

The CHAIR: Okay. In that case, if you are refusing my direction, it will be disorderly and I will have to suspend the session. Is that what you want me to do?

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Is that what you want to do?

The CHAIR: No. Is that what he wants to do? I have given a direction. He has ignored my direction.

Mr WHETSTONE: This session has gone over time.

The CHAIR: He is speaking over me now. I will suspend the session and we will have to convene the house.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Is that what you want to do?

The CHAIR: Really? I will do it.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Do you remember Tom Koutsantonis and Peter Treloar? That would be a ridiculous repetition here. It could be de-escalated very easily.

The CHAIR: The member for Morialta, I gave a direct request to the member for Chaffey. He has the capacity to accept or reject it. I accept that. It is up to him.

The Hon. J.A.W. Gardner interjecting:

The CHAIR: Member for Morialta, tread carefully.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Can I make a little, quick comment, sir?

The CHAIR: Yes.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: Sir, my experience in the house has been that when the Chair of Committees in an estimates proceeding, or indeed even the Speaker in the house, under the standing order, where somebody has taken offence, can make a request of the member in question. If the member declines, then that is a matter for the Chair if they do want to go further, but it is a request in the first sense, not a direction.

The CHAIR: Well, I am requesting, and if he declines then I will be directing. And I can do that.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The house, sir—

The CHAIR: I will do that.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: And if that is what you want to do over the very mild comment the member for Chaffey made, I think that would be a bold move.

The CHAIR: Please do not use *Yes Minister* language on me. I am not intimidated that easily.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Chair, if I may. I am happy to move on, given that I am sure the member knows that that was a trite and unnecessary statement. I have been fulsome in all of my responses. I have been honest in my responses. I took offence at the implication that I was not being honest in my response. I am not trying to create an issue. I simply ask that the member does not, under his breath, make commentary that is not accurate and invites people to believe that what he might say is truth because it is not. I think a good person should do what a good person should do. But I am happy to move on. Thank you for your cover.

The CHAIR: Given that the minister has withdrawn her request, we will move on. That closes the examination of Youth Services.

Membership:

Ms Pratt substituted for Mr Basham.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms S. Pitcher, Chief Executive, Department of Human Services.

Ms R. Ambler, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Human Services.

Mr N. Ashley, Chief Financial Officer, Finance, Digital and Customer Support, Department of Human Services.

Ms B. Marsden, Director, Office of the Chief Executive and Governance, Department of Human Services.

Ms M. Smith, Director, Inclusion Policy and Reform, Department of Human Services.

The CHAIR: It being 11.30, we are now doing Volunteer Services.

The Hon. J.A.W. GARDNER: The omnibus questions are:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2024 and what is the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?

2. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive positions have been abolished since 1 July 2024 and what was the annual salary and total employment cost for each position?

3. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what has been the total cost of executive position terminations since 1 July 2024?

4. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide a breakdown of expenditure on consultants and contractors with a total estimated cost above \$10,000 engaged since 1 July 2024, listing the name of the consultant, contractor or service supplier, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the estimated total cost of the work?

5. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, will the minister provide an estimate of the total cost to be incurred in 2025-26 for consultants and contractors, and for each case in which a consultant or contractor has already been engaged at a total estimated cost above \$10,000, the name of the consultant or contractor, the method of appointment, the reason for the engagement and the total estimated cost?

6. For each department or agency reporting to the minister, how many surplus employees are there in June 2025, and for each surplus employee, what is the title or classification of the position and the total annual employment cost?

7. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the number of executive staff to be cut to meet the government's commitment to reduce spending on the employment of executive staff and, for each position to be cut, its classification, total remuneration cost and the date by which the position will be cut?

8. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what savings targets have been set for 2025-26 and each year of the forward estimates, and what is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?

9. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:

- (a) What was the actual FTE count at June 2025 and what is the projected actual FTE account for the end of each year of the forward estimates?
- (b) What is the budgeted total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates?
- (c) How many targeted voluntary separation packages are estimated to be required to meet budget targets over the forward estimates and what is their estimated cost?

10. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how much is budgeted to be spent on goods and services for 2025-26 and for each year of the forward estimates?

11. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many FTEs are budgeted to provide communication and promotion activities in 2025-26 and each year of the forward estimates and what is their estimated employment cost?

12. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, what is the total budgeted cost of government-paid advertising, including campaigns, across all mediums in 2025-26?

13. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, please provide for each individual investing expenditure project administered, the name, total estimated expenditure, actual expenditure incurred to June 2024 and budgeted expenditure for 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28.

14. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for, please provide the following information for the 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28 financial years:

- (a) Name of the program or fund;
- (b) The purpose of the program or fund;
- (c) Budgeted payments into the program or fund;

- (d) Budgeted expenditure from the program or fund; and
 - (e) Details, including the value and beneficiary, or any commitments already made to be funded from the program or fund.
15. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
- (a) Is the agency confident that you will meet your expenditure targets in 2025-26? Have any budget decisions been made between the delivery of the budget on 5 June 2025 and today that might impact on the numbers presented in the budget papers which we are examining today?
 - (b) Are you expecting any reallocations across your agencies' budget lines during 2025-26; if so, what is the nature of the reallocation?
16. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
- (a) What South Australian businesses will be used in procurement for your agencies in 2025-26?
 - (b) What percentage of total procurement spend for your agencies does this represent?
 - (c) How does this compare to last year?
17. What percentage of your department's budget has been allocated for the management of remote work infrastructure, including digital tools, cybersecurity, and support services, and how does this compare with previous years?
18. How many procurements have been undertaken by the department this FY. How many have been awarded to interstate businesses? How many of those were signed off by the CE?
19. How many contractor invoices were paid by the department directly this FY? How many and what percentage were paid within 15 days, and how many and what percentage were paid outside of 15 days?
20. How many and what percentage of staff who undertake procurement activities have undertaken training on participation policies and local industry participants this FY?
- The CHAIR:** Minister, do you wish to make any opening comments?
- The Hon. N.F. COOK:** No; questions, thank you.
- The CHAIR:** Are there any changes in personnel?
- The Hon. N.F. COOK:** Yes, thank you very much for reminding me. Ruth Ambler, the deputy CE, has come back to the front bench. We still have Belinda Marsden at the rear and Mandy Smith, Director, Inclusion Policy and Reform, behind me.
- Mr WHETSTONE:** I would like to know who has the fastest advice between Sandy and Ruth.
- The Hon. N.F. COOK:** Who has the?
- Mr WHETSTONE:** You have stereo advice coming in there, yet they are both competing for the minister.
- The Hon. N.F. COOK:** That is an excellent question. It is not that I do not want to offer you advice; they are equally as excellent as each other.
- Mr WHETSTONE:** Of course. You sound like a politician.
- The Hon. N.F. COOK:** I know who I need to rely on.
- Mr WHETSTONE:** In Budget Paper 4, Volume 3 on page 117, program summary, what is the FTE count dedicated specifically to volunteer services and how does that compare with the last financial year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is unchanged from last year. It is all part of the cross-departmental inclusion policy unit working with non-government partners, which has continued as per the arrangements for a number of years now.

Mr WHETSTONE: Fees, fines and penalties increased to over \$15 million in 2025-26. How much of this income is derived from volunteer screening fees?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: None of it is from that; volunteer screening is free.

Mr WHETSTONE: Screenings are all free?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: For volunteers, yes.

Mr WHETSTONE: How much of the \$70.7 million for grants and subsidies is allocated to supporting volunteers and/or volunteer organisations?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We fund approximately \$732,000 per annum to support the work of volunteers and volunteer-involving organisations. Outside of that, there are a range of community grants through Grants SA that provide funding predominantly to volunteers throughout the work that they do right across the community. Outside of that, there are also our other grant programs that fund community partners to deliver a whole range of services, such as our community centres and community passenger networks, that have funding attached that funds volunteers.

The \$702,000 is budgeted for this year to fund grants to the sector to support advocacy, community capacity programs and volunteer support. That all contributes directly to increasing the capability. Last year it was \$732,000. Things change from year to year, but millions of dollars are going out the door to support volunteers.

The chief executive has just reminded me of an excellent program that we fund outside of that as well, which is \$140,000 over two years—there is still money this year that is going out the door for this—to fund the delivery of a student volunteering program. There is one school, at least, in the member's electorate that is one of the founding schools doing that work. That is an excellent piece of work that is happening.

I think there were nine pilot schools or thereabouts in the SVA. Volunteering SA is increasing those numbers and working hard to increase the partnerships to try to restore the level of volunteering to golden eras and put in a pipeline of younger people who understand the value of volunteering. It taps into their competitive spirit, shall we say, by getting them to log their hours against each other. It is quite the thing to watch.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is any of the \$1.587 million in depreciation expenses in 2025-26 linked to systems used for screening services, such as IT?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The Screening Unit received funding of \$1.6 million to increase the volume of free volunteers' checks through the Mid-Year Budget Review.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are there any planned upgrades for screening systems to reduce the processing time?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes. The Screening Transformation project is probably the best example that will help not just volunteers, and I am happy to refer to it. It is a significant transformation project that will improve the provision of screening checks for workers and volunteers across South Australia. The Treasurer approved conditional funding for the proposed Screening Transformation Program initiative through the Digital Investment Fund, which the member might be aware of. The total funding estimated for that transformation screening service was \$13.805 million over three years, and that was from November 2023.

The funding has been released in staged gates and we have mobilised the first gate of funding of \$3.85 million to date. The Screening Transformation project is basically a once-in-a-generation effort to modernise screening here in South Australia and is being led by the department's CE and deputy CE. This is a game changer in terms of being able to support volunteering and screening generally.

Mr WHETSTONE: Looking at the same reference point under explanation of significant movements, you have just explained streamlining volunteer screening and the costs and the challenges. There is \$1.6 million attributed to expenses from the increased volume for free volunteer checks. How many additional checks were processed compared to the last financial year and what do you think drove the increase in demand?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: In the last financial year to 20 June 2024 there were 50,909, and, as you have rightly pointed out, there is an increase in them. I am not sure if that is a cyclic due-for-renewal increase. It could be connected to the cycle of the requirement for renewal of the checks that were done at the start of the legislation. I would like to hope that it is an increase in volunteers, Tim.

Mr WHETSTONE: That would be nice.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think it is a combination effect.

Mr WHETSTONE: We all know the challenges of attracting volunteers is becoming more challenging.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Indeed.

Mr WHETSTONE: Given this anticipated expense, minister, are you expecting a similar increase this year and has the budget been adjusted to reflect the higher demand?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We are projecting a slight drop. Again, these are hypothecated numbers based on previous screenings, so it is very difficult in terms of getting them entirely accurate, but there is a combination of different screenings coming up.

Mr WHETSTONE: Are you able to furnish the committee with the number of screening checks or security clearances that a volunteer would typically have to undergo.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It does depend on the type of volunteering. It could be a person who is volunteering in a school and a sporting club and also may be the treasurer for an organisation—a non-paid treasurer. There might be a volunteer partnering with an NDIS provider to provide visitation and comfort.

There is not a typical profile, but we do have the number. I am happy to provide on notice a table that shows you the different applications, as in total volunteer screenings versus total screenings, and the percentage of that that is volunteer screening and the numbers of different types of volunteers. I do not have the data on individuals and how many they have got, but I can give you on notice information that shows you screening numbers in different types.

I make a comment to you as well that it is acknowledged that this is actually a complex system. We have built an ecosystem of safeguarding and security and a sense of security. In some ways people take screening as a guarantee, but what screening tells us is that the person has not done something bad or wrong. But we know that when we are notified, we check, and sometimes people who do bad things have a screening clearance. We then seek to remove that right. It definitely does depend on the work people are doing, and we are across those relationships intergovernmentally and nationally, talking about how we can make this a simpler system.

Mr WHETSTONE: Thank you. I appreciate your information so that I can have a clearer understanding. Given the increased demand for free volunteering checks, is the department reviewing the sustainability of free checks or planning to change any eligibility criteria for volunteers?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No.

Mr WHETSTONE: Did the increased demand for free volunteer screenings result in any processing delays this financial year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: As a broad comment, it has been pretty good this year. There have been short-term instances where there have been a larger number of checks or a larger number of complex checks that needed multiple layers of review, but a general comment would be that that has not been a big problem this year, certainly not related to volunteers. There have been some challenges with a small number of working with children checks.

There is a good point from the deputy CE: the renewal cycle of working with children checks has provided challenges, but we put quite a large number of staff on to assist with getting that out the door. We did some media on that as well to let people know, and people were helpful in providing us with sometimes very early applications for renewal. It has not been a challenge we have not been able to meet.

Mr WHETSTONE: Is the working with children check an annual check, or is it done every three years?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Five.

Mr WHETSTONE: Every five years, thank you. Moving on to highlights, Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 116: regarding the refreshed volunteer strategy and the three-year action plan, how much funding has been allocated in this year's budget to implement that strategy?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: This is a partnership with Volunteering SA&NT. It comes within the budgeted amount that we fund Volunteering SA&NT as part of their business that they deliver. We work in partnership to provide support with that along with other partners in the community. We have paid close attention to the strategy and also recently the action plan. The strategy was released in 2024 on Volunteer Day, and this year we were able to present the three-year action plan.

I think it is fair to say there were contrary and competing views in terms of some of the narrative and some of the language that was used in the action plan. They have done a good job of simplifying that and making it clearer to people how the community can go about delivering on the strategy together. There is not a separate targeted budget line as part of the partnership and the agreed contract with Volunteering SA&NT. They deliver the strategy, they have contributed to creating the action plan, they deliver on the Volunteer Awards; they do a range of things for that budget.

Mr WHETSTONE: Which volunteering organisations does the department still continue to fund, and is there a budget line directed to supporting them in 2025-26?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I cannot quite put my finger on the actual year, but the deputy CE might be able to. There was a review and a reform—and I think it was under Minister Ruston at the time—of the funding model of volunteering nationally. What that did was change the management funding for volunteering, and that left some of the smaller organisations unfunded. One of them—I am not sure if it was in your electorate or maybe the member for MacKillop's—the Limestone Coast group disappeared under that model. It had to have been in 2019, maybe, or thereabouts.

Mr WHETSTONE: It was the member for MacKillop's.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Nevertheless, there are a couple of suburban localised groups that still do contracted work across a range of areas to deliver local volunteer support and are working hard and have worked hard to adapt to the volunteer funding model from the commonwealth government.

Again, Volunteering SA&NT do not just get money from us. Our funding is through the advocacy and impact program to them as a peak, and then the commonwealth Volunteer Management Activity funds them—and I do not have that number—to do peak body funding. That was the piece of work under Minister Ruston, I believe, that then saw the local volunteer resource centres no longer funded. We have been providing them with some money to try to assist them to transition under the new model and work with Volunteering SA&NT as the peak body.

Mr WHETSTONE: Under performance indicators, regarding screening application times, how many applications does the 98 per cent rate represent and how does that number compare to last year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think it is pretty stable. The number of screening applications received this year is projected because we do not have to the end of June, but the projected is 244,000 for next year and 250,000 for this year. The actual result for 2023-24 was significantly lower at 190,447. I think that goes back to the question that you asked me previously.

Mr WHETSTONE: It goes back to COVID.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Some of it is linked with the cycle of reapplication on the timing of the length of the period that the screening applies for, and some of it might be new volunteers. I cannot tell you which is which.

Mr WHETSTONE: I would have said it would have been a hangover from the pandemic—scared volunteers.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Potentially.

Mr WHETSTONE: That is a comment more than a question. You have talked about a small percentage, that 2 per cent, that has complexity when people are looking to apply as a volunteer. What were the primary reasons for delays on that 2 per cent? You have already made comment that that 2 per cent was—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Do you mean the delays in receiving a clearance back?

Mr WHETSTONE: Yes.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: In general, there are people with the same name, there might be notifiable activity that occurs on a screening, there might be past history that needs to be dealt with, people change addresses and move around—there is a cumulative range of challenges, and some people have got more than one.

Mr WHETSTONE: Minister, in Queensland the average blue card processing time is two business days. Does your department have any future plans to reduce its target from 30 days?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We discussed the screening unit transformation program. Absolutely, our ambition is to reduce the waiting time for people for clearances and respond to the need.

Mr WHETSTONE: Under activity indicators, the number of volunteer screening applications is a new indicator this year. Of the 63,000 applications in 2024-25, how many contributed to the \$1.6 million expense increase?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: They are all part of the overall cost. I am not sure I can divvy that out, sorry.

The CHAIR: Last question.

Mr WHETSTONE: Sure. Over one million clearances are actively monitored. Can you give me an understanding of the monitoring process and what it looks like or what it looks out for and how frequently checks are monitored?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There are certainly incidents that get reported, recorded and notified. I will let the deputy CE answer that one.

Ms AMBLER: Those screens are continuously monitored. What will happen is there would be an alert that might come up if there was an offence that was registered perhaps through ACIC. All those screens that are actively monitored are continuously monitored all the time and if an offence is then reported through to the Screening Unit, they would assess that then to see whether that is something that would mean that we might want to reconsider a person's check.

Mr WHETSTONE: That is a daily check, potentially.

Ms AMBLER: Absolutely. It is an overnight run of the system that will pick up a whole range of those offences that will come through on people and then we assess to see how serious they are and how material they are to the particular check.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will just quickly add to that: any time we see anything public or hear of any type of offence that could be putting individuals at risk, my staff will all chuckle and laugh and say, 'She sends a message.' The very first thing I do is to ask the department, 'Have you checked? Does this person have any form of clearance held with us?' Given the process behind it, I am very confident that that is very responsive in terms of withdrawing the clearances.

The CHAIR: The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of Volunteer Services complete. I move now to the Office for Ageing Well.

Departmental Advisers:

Ms S. Pitcher, Chief Executive, Department of Human Services.

Mr N. Ashley, Chief Financial Officer, Finance, Digital and Customer Support, Department of Human Services.

Ms R. Ambler, Deputy Chief Executive, Department of Human Services.

Mr J. Young, Executive Director, Ageing, Disability Policy and Safeguarding, Department of Human Services.

Ms K. Delguste, Executive Director, Disability and Specialised Services, Department of Human Services.

Ms S. White, Director, Office for Ageing Well, Ageing, Disability Policy and Safeguarding, Department of Human Services.

Ms B. Marsden, Director, Office of the Chief Executive and Governance, Department of Human Services.

The CHAIR: Minister, do you have some new advisers?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, I do. I bring Joe Young back to the front bench and introduce Sarah White, replacing Mandy, as the Director in the Office for Ageing Well, Ageing Disability Policy and Safeguarding, and also bring back Kirsty Delguste, who is the Executive Director, Disability and Specialised Services.

The CHAIR: Minister, you do not wish to make any opening statements?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, I do not.

The CHAIR: Lead speaker, the member for Frome.

Ms PRATT: Let's see if I can push this one through to the keeper on volunteering, even though that was the previous session. The question that I had crafted really had older people in mind. Noting on page 116 as a highlight that DHS has launched a refreshed Volunteering Strategy with an action plan out to 2027, it is really just a soft approach to the Office for Ageing Well, which, given the prevalence, is the larger number of elderly people who volunteer. How would this refreshed Volunteering Strategy support older volunteers specifically? If you can say, what metrics are in place to track older volunteer participation? I am really just interested to know what actions that the strategy might be putting in place to recruit a younger generation.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes. If I can go back to front and then as I forget bits you can prompt me. I talked about the student volunteering project through Volunteering SA&NT where they are targeting schools—nine pilot schools to start with—and now we are watching Volunteering SA&NT go out to seek further partnerships. Trust me, whenever I have an opportunity and I am at a school—I was at a school in the western suburbs not that long ago and I spoke to the principal and said, 'I think your students would really benefit from this,' so I think there is an active dialogue going on there.

It is about getting people to volunteer who are much younger, who then volunteer for life in multiple different ways. As I said as well, the competitive spirit of children and young people to want to actually do the best they possibly can in terms of achieving those numbers drives them to participate as much as they possibly can. That culture of volunteering is going to be embedded from a younger age with those people, so as many schools as we can get involved, we want them to get involved.

Most definitely in terms of the Volunteering Strategy—if I can just give you some loose commentary, broadly—we know that we need to embed a culture of acceptance and inclusion within organisations. We need to educate people who are volunteering about the differences that communication can make in terms of making people feel welcome and the different ways of volunteering. If we can spread that information, young people and children are setting themselves

up for life to support the transition of volunteering and securing work sometimes from those opportunities. So, that is a cultural message that we need to ensure happens.

Also the Volunteering Strategy taps into providing flexible opportunities for volunteering, understanding that life is different and people's working arrangements are different. One of the key barriers to volunteering, in fact, is time and opportunity that suit an individual. Also, we want volunteering organisations to understand that they sometimes have to change a little bit themselves as well to provide those opportunities.

I think the broader accessibility and inclusion framework that we are delivering as a lead department across government ensures that the standards of accessibility from a physical and environmental point of view, and also from an emotional point of view, are matched. All of that work through the Disability Inclusion Act and the state plan, setting those plans up with local authorities and state authorities, is going to help in the future as well to enable the accessibility and inclusion for different types of people to continue to participate through the life trajectory.

That is a really important segue into the seniors and ageing well portfolio, as you have rightly identified, and that is not just obviously in the metro area but also in the regions. So the other good questions that the member for Chaffey was asking around the Changing Places accessible bathrooms, that is really important too so that people of varying degrees of physical and intellectual disability can participate as well in volunteering, making sure we have those accessible facilities on site as much as we possibly can.

The new targets around beaches and parks and all of that as well are going to be really great because we know that there are so many volunteers who participate in coastal activities, environmental protection and national parks, and the parks' volunteers are one of the terrific groups that assist to maintain those public spaces and keep our environment strong for the future. Those investments are going to be great, so I think that is kind of a life trajectory.

Ms PRATT: I think it is, and thank you. I think the minister has certainly addressed the recruitment strategy, but does the Office for Ageing Well share my concern that the burden of volunteering continues to rest with elderly people, metro and regional? How might the current action plan—or does the action plan—address what I see as stress and guilt felt by older volunteers that they have to keep our Lions and Probus organisations going in the absence of any other volunteers coming through?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, I think the Office for Ageing Well has already started, and one of the first things I did was to say we want to make sure we get the policy and strategy started, the review of the current—and I think that is where you are segueing into, are you? Yes. So, from the Volunteering Strategy into the ageing well, one of the first things I did was I said, 'I do not want to be left at the end of the strategy without the new strategy ready to seamlessly link in.' We know how society changes through the generations, so it is really important that we are responsive and prepared and listening to those service groups and the community in terms of making sure we provide as many opportunities as we can to participate in volunteering. So, yes, of course, and, as part of the review of the strategy, I would expect we will get feedback around that and I would expect that there will be a section in there regarding participation.

Ms PRATT: I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 111, workforce summary. I am just trying to understand the process of MoG-ing or shifting the office across agencies. Looking at the 42 FTEs for the year 2023-24, what would the workforce summary be now for the Office for Ageing Well? How do we understand that figure?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think it is a slightly higher number than it was when the unit came across. It is 53. The total for supporting the Office for Ageing Well, housed within the Office for Ageing Well line, is 46.3—bingo!

Ms PRATT: I will stop writing.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We will just double-check it for you. It could be a flick of the fingernail on the typewriter. It is 46.3.

Ms PRATT: Final call?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Final call, 46.3—sold!

Ms PRATT: I am scared to ask: do we understand then what is that increase of four FTEs? Is it admin staff?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is just filling vacancies that were present; that is my understanding.

Ms PRATT: Okay, we were carrying vacancies previously?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, that is right.

Ms PRATT: Thank you. Over to page 112 and the cost of moving. I am looking at a budget line that says Office for Ageing Well from the Department for Health and Wellbeing on 1 July 2024 in the 2024-25 budget was \$9.2 million. What is the operating budget? How do we understand the operating budget for this financial year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The statement is it is consistent; we do not perceive that there is a change. Are you satisfied with that response?

Ms PRATT: I am satisfied with that response. Can I understand why the field is blank in this budget?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes. It is Nick's time to shine.

Mr ASHLEY: The table you are referring to is actually a reconciliation between the program numbers in the Agency Statements and the comprehensive financial statement in the back. The reason these numbers show in this line is because as the MoG occurred from 1 July, and the agreed budgets were transferred during 2024-25, the numbers were not in the financial statement at the start of the year. This is effectively just putting them back in. So the budget is within program 2 and it sits there across all four years.

Ms PRATT: And that amount is?

Mr ASHLEY: That was the amount that was transferred over—the 9.2.

Ms PRATT: Continues as consistent.

Mr ASHLEY: Yes, and I think in 2025-26—because there have been no specific budget measures associated with that—there will be indexation applied to that.

Ms PRATT: Thank you. I refer to page 116. The question is about the Community Transport SA program. Noting that the minister has taken questions on this topic already, I am just going to read in the target dot point 2, which states that DHS will:

Integrate the New Community Transport SA program within the Community Connections system to enable a coordinated, systemised response to social isolation and loneliness.

For fullness of this dot point, is this now a new name for what we understand or recognise as community passenger networks?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is helpful nodding—yes.

Ms PRATT: Yes, a lot of nodding. Can the minister provide an operating budget or speak to the contract so that we know what is the cost of running the new Community Transport SA program, or what is the investment?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The estimated result for this year to next week is \$1.515 million. Budgeted amount for next year is \$1.553 million. The year previous actual was \$1.493 million, and the anticipated budget is only about \$5,000 off by the look of it.

Ms PRATT: You have given me a figure for the next financial year. Is it budgeted across forward estimates?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Ongoing.

Ms PRATT: It is ongoing?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, it is an ongoing program that we index.

Ms PRATT: It is not a contract that ends?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: As you rightly say, there are reviews and renegotiation with communities as to how it best works, and sometimes there are changes and tweaks and reprioritisation depending on need. We work within the packet.

Ms PRATT: Let's go there. Has there been a change in fees for passengers, as part of this new naming and perhaps new contract?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No.

Ms PRATT: Do people over 65 now have to be registered with My Aged Care to qualify for this subsidy? If they are not a My Aged Care recipient, can they still access this service?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, they do not.

Ms PRATT: They do not have to be registered?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is not a community home support program. I think I might need to ask the executive. I am happy to answer these questions in this line because it directly impacts ageing communities. If the committee is happy, I will ask Ruth Ambler to come back down just so she can offer technical advice on it.

Ms PRATT: I appreciate the flexibility because, as the minister will appreciate, the volume of people using this service are older people in the regions.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: With this particular program, this is an under 65s program.

Ms PRATT: Can people over 65 use it at all, or to access it do they need to be registered with My Aged Care?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, not to use this program. There is a commonwealth passenger network funding model. It would be right to say that many of the people who deliver our service for the under 65s deliver the commonwealth-funded program, and I believe it is through the Department for Health and Aged Care. This is the under 65. That is an over 65, and if the question is pertaining to the use by over 65s in the commonwealth-funded program, you will need to get a response from them. I am not being funny, I just I do not have authority to provide answers on a commonwealth program.

Ms PRATT: Of course it is fine. You are being flexible and allowing questions that relate to over 65s. We are that we are trying to address the equitable access for older people accessing the Community Transport SA program. Minister, if I am on the right track and I have not got my wires crossed, when we are talking about the Community Transport SA program, that is the new name for community passenger networks that generally are operating in the regions across the state, where, volunteers aside, the greatest volume of passengers will be elderly people. I am going to eventually move us to the state ageing plan, but what would the new state ageing plan say about equitable access to transport for older people living in the regions, and does it incorporate the Community Transport SA program?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: This particular program, as I said, is under 65s. There is the commonwealth program that is supporting over 65s. They need to talk to each other and, as part of the renewed strategy for ageing well, there will absolutely be feedback, as there is from non-ageing—everyone is ageing—but non-older people regarding barriers to securing transport across a number of areas in South Australia.

However, this is not related to the funded service that we are doing, which fills a gap for under 65s. The federal one is targeting the over 65s. I can confidently tell you that, if we receive information and feedback, our officers will speak to the commonwealth in regard to any of the feedback we get in that area, and they most certainly will now.

Ms PRATT: If we move on to the state ageing plan, there are a number of budget lines. I will pick up on page 112, though, the final dot point as a key agency output. I am going to assume it is the Office for Ageing Well, but DHS will:

Support South Australians to age well, safeguard rights, create age friendly communities, challenge ageism and respect diversity.

The reference to the actual plan is on page 116 and 117: 'Finalise and launch the new state ageing plan.' How will the new state ageing plan challenge ageism? For example, minister, we understand the disadvantage that elderly people find themselves in when they no longer have appropriate accommodation and are moving from acute care to ongoing care, such as the Care of the Older Person and Community Transition (CO-ACT) service at Hampstead. The question is about the ageing plan. How will it address ageism? I have given an example of where I think we see that happening.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: In terms of the state ageing plan, the review of the previous plan, or the final impact review following all the conversations that have happened by the reviewers, is now going to inform that plan, which we expect to be released in early 2026. They are being developed in partnership with government, non-government and community organisations. We receive feedback all the time on attitudes of the community and the use of language around ageing. We participate in campaigns around that, to talk in ways that do not reinforce negatively the connotation about ageing through the use of particular words.

As you know, in terms of the Retirement Villages Act, we are very keen to make sure that operators are the appropriate people, as are the staff working in those spaces. All these things work across the community to support positive ageing. The ageing and adult safeguarding amendment bill is keenly anticipated. All of those things, as well as the partnership with the Office for Ageing Well with business and community to seek feedback, are going to inform the new plan.

We have already had conversations with more than 3,000 people for that, and the tackling ageing campaign operated last year for a week in October. I am sure we will see similar things happening: public campaigns, conversations and getting the plan out. We know that there are barriers to securing housing outcomes and safe outcomes for people from hospital, and that is across disability and ageing. We all work across departmental lines to try to do this as well as we possibly can, and there are a range of projects that I am sure will come out of this.

Ms PRATT: To pick up on that thread, I know the minister is very familiar with the circumstances that add to bed blocking: people living with disability and mental health. It would not be right to ask a health system question, but can you expand further on this plan? How will the new 10-year state ageing plan help to address housing insecurity for older people, particularly those living in the regions who I see are often dislocated from their area, due to bed shortage?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think a lot of this comes down to the interaction of the new Aged Care Act and the levers that can be pulled by other ministers around housing and planning. While not spending too long reflecting, I think it is fair to say there was not enough done for a period of time in history which we will not talk about over the 10 years—nine years federally—before 2022 in terms of housing. I think we have seen some real focus on that.

I would expect the new strategy to help us continue to do more work—work across health, across the Housing Trust and also reforms with the retirement villages—that improve the opportunities in supply. The member, like myself, attends public forums and other events, and we often end up in a mini strategy conversation about how we can do better and how we can do more.

As more supply comes on board—we know there is a pipeline of many, many homes and Minister Champion is leading some of that work in terms of land releases—we have spoken as well, together, about how we can do better for the community. As these things come online, it will take time but we know there is a demand there for better, more accessible housing.

I talked earlier about the silver standard in design. All of those things are really important so that we have more accessible housing and different options—large-scale and small-scale retirement villages and the like. The regions are very important in that regard.

Ms PRATT: The budget is littered with little references across different agencies to outcomes and action plans, but I am bound to a line in this budget. I go to page 112, where the Office for Ageing Well is established to support South Australians to age well. Do you think that trials like the registered nurse 24/7 trial helps the government to improve its understanding of the challenges

that we are seeing in regional areas about aged-care reform and aged-care beds and access to them?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think it is outside of our budget, to be honest. But as a nurse for nearly three decades, you can take the nurse out of the hospital but you cannot take the hospital out of the nurse. I know these conversations that we have over and over again are so important in terms of driving the opportunity to do better in that space, but the budget component is outside of our scope.

Ms PRATT: I go to page 119, the Personal Alert AssistanceSA (PAASA) rebate. It is an activity indicator. What can we understand from that dramatic drop in rebates for the systems provided through PAASA as part of that end to 3G services? The figure I am looking at is 4,530 rebates in the financial year 2023-24; fast-forward to this financial year and it is 1,900. What is it about the end of 3G that has seen that rebate number reduce, and does it reflect fewer people using a personal alert system?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The Department of Human Services did the two-year 4G upgrade project for 9,612 PAASA customers who were using those devices that were issued on the 3G network. That closed on 28 October 2024. At the completion of the project, out of the 9,612 customers 4,518 had got a replacement device; 2,882 were declined due to them having a My Aged Care status and then obtained a device through their My Aged Care home package, which was the appropriate funding pathway; and 2,011 exited the program, which might have been because they had entered aged care or sourced their own device through other means. People have a choice. The remaining 201 did not have a confirmed plan to purchase a 4G device or exit the program, and DHS remains ready to assist should they want to.

I will just use this opportunity to say thank you to the DHS team who put on extra resources, went the extra mile and reached out in every way they could to try to get into contact with 100 per cent of people to ensure that the transition was smooth, safe and effective. It was a huge effort, with multiple phone calls and letters, including sending mail by registered post, to contact people. It was a huge effort and I think they have done everything possible to ensure that nobody has been left with a device that does not pick up the network.

The CHAIR: The allotted time has expired, but I will allow a supplementary question, if you have one.

Ms PRATT: I do. I think the minister will be happy to speak to the social prescribing model on page 116, a pilot project in the southern suburbs. Minister, can you speak to who the target demographic is for this program, what targets have been set and how this program would reduce social isolation and loneliness?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We do not have enough time in our day for me to speak about what is absolutely a huge—I do not use the word 'passion' lightly—passion of mine. If we learnt anything through COVID, we know that ordinary folk who previously had no clue what loneliness was became subject to this terrible feeling and some were very confused as to what that was, and that was in fact being lonely—lonely and isolated.

As we know, social prescribing is a way of connecting people outside of the health system to supports and services, and our community partners play a huge and important role in doing this. We have expanded the program's impact through providing opportunities for collaboration, partnership, co-investment and integration of services, trying to align with the outcomes of all of these programs.

We have the Community Connections program infrastructure and we are engaging with the think tank on the future of social prescribing in South Australia. I am happy for you to connect up on that. We will be working in a cross-sector pilot to design and trial a technology-enabled, place-based social prescribing model in the southern Adelaide region, and Flinders University's Caring Futures Institute and Centre for Social Impact will be leading this. We will be using place-based alliances to wrap around people and dealing with loneliness and preventing that from happening in the future as much as we possibly can.

Ms PRATT: The question was demographic—age group, young or old. Any.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: This is an under 65s one, but I just make the point that the place-based solutions and the places that are in place where this will happen attract the attendance of all age groups and I am sure this will flow on.

The CHAIR: The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of the Office for Ageing Well completed. The examination of the proposed payments for the Department of Human Services and Administered Items for the Department of Human Services are also complete. Thank you, minister and advisers, and thank you to the members of the committee.

At 12:34 the committee adjourned to Wednesday 25 June 2025 at 09:00.