

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Monday, 24 June 2024

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Chair:

Mr E.J. Hughes

Members:

Mr M.E. Brown
Mr L.K. Odenwalder
Ms P.K. Pratt
Mr S.J. Telfer
Ms E.L. Thompson
Mr. T.J. Whetstone

The committee met at 09:00

Estimates Vote

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, \$1,118,873,000

ADMINISTERED ITEMS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES, \$235,634,000

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 and Business Services, Department of Human Services.

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

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

Mr J. Young, Executive Director, Disability Services, Department of Human Services.

Ms A. Reid, Executive Director, Community and Aboriginal Partnerships, Department of Human Services.

Ms S. Nicholas, Interim Executive Director, People and Culture, 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, Inclusion, Supports and Safeguarding, Department of Human Services.

The CHAIR: Welcome, everybody, to today's hearing for Estimates Committee B. 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 the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition have agreed an approximate time for the consideration of proposed payments, which will facilitate a change of departmental advisers. Can the minister and lead speaker for the opposition confirm that the timetable for today's proceedings, previously distributed, is accurate?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr TELFER: I can confirm.

The CHAIR: Thank you. 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 Answers to Questions mailbox no later than Friday 6 September 2024.

I propose to allow both the minister and the lead speaker for the opposition to make opening statements of about 10 minutes each, should they wish. There will be 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.

I remind members that the rules of debate in the house apply in the 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 website.

I will now proceed to open the following lines for examination: the portfolio of the Department of Human Services. The minister appearing is the Minister for Human Services. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. I call on the minister to make a statement, if the minister so wishes, and to introduce her advisers. I also call on the lead speaker for the opposition to make a statement, if the member wishes. I will call on members for questions at the appropriate time.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Thank you very much, Mr Chair. I would like to acknowledge we are on Kurna land today and pay my respects to all Kurna elders past and present and emerging leaders. I would like to introduce my excellent DHS team. To my left I have Sandy Pitcher, Chief Executive, and to my far left I have Nick Ashley, Chief Financial Officer, Finance and Business Services. To my right I have Ruth Ambler, Deputy Chief Executive. To my rear left I have Belinda Marsden, Director, Office of the Chief Executive and Governance. To my rear right I have Katherine Hawkins, Executive Director, Child Safety and Family Support. Behind Belinda is Joe Young, Executive Director, Disability, and behind him is Sally Nicholas, Interim Executive Director, People and Culture. Behind Katherine Hawkins we have Alex Reid, Executive Director, Community and Aboriginal Partnerships, and behind her is Trinh Mai, Senior Authorising Officer, Restrictive Practices Unit and Inclusion Supports and Safeguarding.

I do have an opening statement. It will not be lengthy, but it just qualifies some of the excellent work being delivered by our department. I thank the department and the parliamentary officials for the work preparing the estimates process, which is indeed one of the highlights of their year. DHS plays a key role in both cost of living and supporting communities. This work has never been more important than at times like now, when many in the community are doing it tough.

When we were elected in 2022 we promised to double the Cost of Living Concession in the 2022-23 financial year for around 210,000 households, or around one in every four households in

the state. At the time, that \$78 million payment was the single largest concession payment ever made in South Australia. The following year, we worked with the commonwealth government on energy bill relief of \$500 for each eligible household. This was estimated to be worth in the region of a quarter of a billion dollars. Importantly, eligibility for this support was expanded for the Cost of Living Concession, and it was estimated that up to 400,000 households in South Australia may be eligible, or around half of all households.

In the coming year, the commonwealth is again providing energy bill relief but this time to all households in the form of an electricity discount. Delivering on our election commitment in the past year, we completed a review of our concession system, and I was particularly pleased that the state budget we are examining today includes a massive concessions boost and acted on a number of recommendations of the review.

The current budget includes a one-off bonus payment of \$243.90 to all households receiving the Cost of Living Concession, worth more than \$51 million. It also includes around \$15 million per year for other concessions linked to public transport, funerals, glasses, dialysis and asylum seekers, and it also doubles the Cost of Living Concession for renters and self-funded retirees with a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, who used to get half of the payment of property owners. The Treasurer discussed the cost-of-living bonus payment in his hearing, but I am also very happy to discuss any of the concessions measures today.

Mr TELFER: Thank you. Can I thank the staff who have been a part of this process. I am looking forward to digging into what is obviously over \$1 billion worth of expenditure, dealing with some of the most vulnerable people in our community. I am happy to open the bowling by looking at Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 81. Minister, we will go to the 2023-24 FTE budget first. In the budget we looked at last year, the FTE count was 2,783.8. Why has the estimate now blown out to 2,909.9, which is an increase of 125.1?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is actually a combination. I will try to get you the accurate response. Yes, there is an increase in FTEs from the actual FTEs of the previous financial year, primarily due to the increase in provision of services under the Child and Family Support service. As well, we have an increase in FTEs to reflect the achievement of savings targets through measures other than reducing FTEs and lower than budgeted FTEs in the previous financial year across DHS, including lower than budgeted staff required for the provision of interpreting and translating services (which is eight staff).

Temporary increases in the FTE are related to the disability royal commission, delivering on the work around that, and the Port Augusta Safety and Wellbeing initiative and also the Screening Transformation Program. I think the cap for the next financial year is 2,869.4. It represents a decrease of about 40.5 FTEs over the estimated result, which was 2,909. Primarily, that is due to an anticipated reduction in FTEs associated with savings measures and efficiency dividends and the net impact of short-term positions.

Mr TELFER: In last year's budget, when we were sitting here, the FTE was 2,783. For the 125 difference, are you are saying that most were from Child and Family Support?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There are quite a number from the Child and Family Support service; that was 58 FTEs. We have increased—we had a budget investment in that last year, so we have taken some time to recruit and onboard a number of extra staff to do this important work around safe family services and intensive family supports.

Mr TELFER: So it had money budgeted but that was not allocated to an FTE number in the last budget?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That was new money.

Mr TELFER: But it was not allocated to an FTE—it is new money since that budget?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, since that budget.

Mr TELFER: As part of that increase, were there any executives employed?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think there is one executive salary within the Screening Transformation project to deliver on a really important piece of work that will ensure that we can deliver efficient and accurate screening processes for years to come.

Mr TELFER: The increase of 125.1, what was the dollar cost of that increase?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Take it on notice.

Mr TELFER: Looking at the 2024-25 FTE budget then: it is now at 2,869.4, as at page 81. That is still an increase of 85.6 from last year's budget, but a drop of 40.5 from the 2023-24 estimated result. What is the dollar impact of this year's budget?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is a slight reduction between the estimated result of 2023-24 and the budgeted result. There is a slight reduction because of movement of staff between different departments. We can attempt to—

Mr TELFER: The 40.5, that one?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is \$2 million difference.

Mr TELFER: Yes. The actual FTE number there, that 40.5, which you point out from the 2023-24 estimate to the 2024-25 budget, in what aspect of the department are those FTEs? Will it impact on service delivery?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is a small change. It does not affect service delivery. Some are short-term positions to do with particular projects. Most of the time we do cost-saving measures outside of staff reduction, to be honest. Most are just short-term positions doing particular projects, particular jobs. I would expect that is like 13 FTEs for that, but I expect there will be slight variations because we are a really adaptive and agile department that responds to particular needs as they arise, so things will change throughout the year as well.

Mr TELFER: Sure. Has the number of executive positions grown from the 2022-23 financial year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think it is exactly the same, 29 each year.

Mr TELFER: So the additional executive that was employed as part of the increase you referred to before offset the loss of an executive in another section?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Correct. We have done a slight restructure in the department, so we have vacated a couple of positions. One was the director of the Incident Management Unit and the other was an executive director in community investment in support, so there has been a balance with the addition of the position of deputy chief executive and the position I referred to just before, which was the director of the Screening Transformation Program.

Mr TELFER: Continuing on, and looking at the next table down, the program net cost: in last year's estimates we talked about a program overspend for 2022-23 of \$2 million, and you explained it at the time as approved additional expenditure, unpredictability and specific initiatives. Why did, for the second year in a row, the Department of Human Services exceed its program net cost of services budget for 2023-24 by \$20.9 million?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is no overspend; they are all approved budgets that you are referring to.

Mr TELFER: Then what approved expenditure does it include?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think the short version of this is: it is all to do with the transition of the disability services across from in kind through to the per person payment under the NDIS, and also, outside of that, there are other investment costs to provide high-level support to highly complex people in the community from a range of cohorts that we respond to as the need arises. So I would say, broadly, this is about responding to need and we can break that down into the transition from the in kind to the per person NDIS provision and the level of complexity that we are dealing with in the community.

Mr TELFER: So who approved that approved expenditure?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It was approved through the cabinet process.

Mr TELFER: So it was not a CEO approval, it was a cabinet process.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes. The delegations are not quite that broad for the CEO.

Mr TELFER: Last year, you mentioned unpredictability as well. With that additional expenditure, what, if any, unpredictability does that include?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have a transition of different people through our service. We are drifting into disability, which you might want to interrogate further in the next session, but we are providing services for some very complex people in the community and we proudly attest to being a provider of last resort when it comes to stepping in and offering service and provision for people who other providers seem unable to provide adequate supports to. There is quite a range of that activity that happens, and also there are groups of people in the community who have complex situations that we do respond to to provide added community-based supports as well. So that gives you a bit of a broad overview.

Mr TELFER: Can we have a detailed breakdown of that additional spending? Is that something that can be provided to the committee, even if it is on notice?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Which one are you talking about?

Mr TELFER: The additional \$20.9 million.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Sorry, what line was that again, the \$20.9 million?

Mr TELFER: The \$20.9 million is the difference between the 2023-24 budget total and the 2023-24 estimated result, on page 81.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: If you would like us to take that on notice and provide you with an answer on notice and, potentially, a briefing regarding that, I am happy to do that. It is very complicated because we are talking about individual people moving in and out, which I would not be willing to—

Mr TELFER: You do not need to break it down to that level.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, but that is what it is; it really is that. The CEO can contribute, if you wish.

Ms PITCHER: It is just part of the movement of people in and out of our service, combined with, throughout the financial year, the move from an in kind arrangement with commonwealth funding to a client by client arrangement. So because that happened in the financial year, it has extra levels of—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Complexity.

Ms PITCHER: Yes.

Mr TELFER: Even a headcount breakdown of that additional—

Ms PITCHER: A headcount of the clients?

Mr TELFER: Of the staff who are involved in the different aspects of the process.

Ms PITCHER: Yes, alright, we can do that. Not wanting to mislead you, it is in part less about the headcount of the people and more about—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The type of the person.

Ms PITCHER: —the range of services, but we can provide that to you on notice.

Mr TELFER: Minister, two years in a row now there has been a budget overspend. Is this something you think is appropriate even if it has been approved comparatively to a budget? Is this is the sort of thing you expect will be an ongoing habit of the department under your watch, even an approved overspend?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is not an approved overspend though. You are couching it incorrectly. It is approved service delivery cost allocation. The people change and we deliver what we can deliver in the best possible way and we require the dollars attached to that. Again—

Mr TELFER: I am calling it an overspend because it is an amount that is spent over the budget. That is why I call it an overspend. I am just asking if this is the sort of thing you would expect—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: So, again, people change who come into the service and the amount of cost allocated to them and the amount of funding allocated to each person will change. It is almost impossible to entirely accurately predict to a dollar when you are giving service delivery on an individual service basis. We do that as best as we can, but I think money in and money out both are different.

Mr TELFER: So the budget is just a guideline?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, the budget is an accurate tool that we use to anticipate what we will require and we base that on the best knowledge we have of the people we have in the service at the time and the services we are providing at the time. I do not have a calculator in my head, but I am confident that the percentage of deviation outside of the predicted number is quite small.

Mr TELFER: It is 2½ per cent still.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Is it 2½ per cent?

Mr TELFER: That is the calculator in my mind. So for the 2024-25 budget, minister, do you expect there to be additional expenditure as well as we have seen in the last two years?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Ultimately, there could be some variation, depending on the clients who come into the service, the groups that come into the service and the service delivery we need to provide. Ultimately, there possibly could be differences—

Mr TELFER: And based on past performance, those differences—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —but we would seek approval for that. We would go through the appropriate channels for that. We would seek review at mid-year budget as we have done in the past. The NDIS plans are being reviewed as required. That service delivery model we know can vary, depending on the changes of the circumstances of the person, so there will be some changes and every drop fills the bucket, so they say.

Mr TELFER: It overflows the budget with this department, by the looks.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I do not think that is a very fair comment. I think you lack some reality in your commentary.

Mr TELFER: Two years in a row there has been overexpenditure.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: You lack some reality and some empathy for the clients who we are dealing with. Perhaps, tone it down slightly. That would be great.

Mr TELFER: This is about the budget numbers and the commentary is because there has been overexpenditure.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I am trying to explain to you that people who are vulnerable and highly complex cohorts do change. Those people do vary. We are not talking about sheep and wheat and other types of products. We are talking about people with complex needs, people who require an agile department to look objectively at the person and decide what is required. This also goes through many tiers of approval for the expenditure, such as NDIS plan reviews, etc., but you are couching it and throwing your little glib remarks about—

Mr TELFER: I am never glib, minister.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —budget overflow and what have you. I am trying to have a reasonable conversation with you. Let's wind it back 10 minutes and let's not make those remarks.

Mr TELFER: Minister, with the additional expenditure the department spent last year over the budget and this year over the budget, if you are expecting there to be additional expenditure have you been asking for more within the budget to try to better reflect what the reality of the last two years has delivered?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: One example of the variations that happen is a very large proportion of our money has to be paid to the commonwealth for the service provision of the NDIS, and it is really based on a population count, a population share, of payment. This is quite different from other departments in terms of that, so we expect that sometimes we do have to make variations. It is about \$860 million, actually, I think, for next year.

Mr TELFER: Just to clarify, questions on NDIS will be taken within this hour?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Well, you have started the process.

Mr TELFER: No, I am asking for clarification.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I am happy to take them whenever you wish, to be honest.

Mr TELFER: Gladly. Page 81, sub-point (b) states, 'Amounts may differ from 2023-24 Agency Statements due to internal reforms and the realignment of corporate overheads across the agency.' What internal reforms and realignments occurred?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: In terms of disability, there have been some changes in terms of the shift configurations, the nature of the people who are providing the service in order to make the service the most effective and best service that we can deliver, so there have been quite a lot of changes that have happened internally in terms of that. I think we also did, like I said to you, an internal reform of the department as well, so we have changed the alignment of some of the lines of accountability. I think that covers it.

The move from in kind, as I have already articulated, has been really complex in moving 500-odd clients at the time. I think we have slightly less than that now, but in moving all of those people from ostensibly this block funding amount across into individual plans, it would be fair to say you do not always have the same view of what the plans need to be compared to the federal department. There have been some substantial delays in getting all of those assessments done properly. We are very confident that we are on the right track to get them done accurately and to be able to deliver the best service, but that has been a complex piece of work.

Mr TELFER: Minister, the table on page 82 mentions \$700,000 for small projects. What projects does this include?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That is attached to Kurlana Tapa work, the youth training centre. It is capitalised money, not other money.

Mr TELFER: The whole amount?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes. Sorry, retract. Apologies from Nick, who is usually 100 per cent—

Mr TELFER: That did surprise me because that is further down in the line.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is Kurlana Tapa, but to be absolutely accurate: there was a replacement project done on the cladding. We all love that word 'cladding'.

Mr TELFER: Does the line further down relate to that same project, the sustainment that is ongoing?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That is maintenance, yes.

Mr TELFER: You were budgeted for \$35,000 for consultancy expenses in 2023-24 but spent \$185,000. Can you explain this additional \$150,000?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Sorry, which line are you looking at?

Mr TELFER: It is on page 95, sorry, I have jumped two ahead.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: In the last budget we had four consultancies. We did the transformation project to becoming an NDIS provider, so that required some expertise external to the department to provide support. There was also the review of the Disability Inclusion Act, which we had done some work together on, and that has been funded. We have been looking at the youth justice and exceptional needs models around trauma-informed case management, which is really important to put the young person at the centre of the work that we are doing. We used some external supports to get that expertise, and also looking at some of the work we are doing in the Early Intervention Research Directorate to make sure we are targeting our service provision in the right areas.

Mr TELFER: Was none of that foreseen at the time of the previous budget? They all seem like good projects that you would be involved in, but I am just surprised that they are—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: What, you are surprised that the work happened and the decision was made to do it?

Mr TELFER: That the money was budgeted. The 35—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We had a small budget allocated.

Mr TELFER: —budget allocation was up to 185?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think we have made some really sound decisions based on some reform and improvement of service practice that we have decided on. I think that is in the scheme of things, and for the bang for buck it is a good decision.

Mr TELFER: Is this the sort of thing that ordinarily would have been done out of the department rather than by consultants?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, but I think there is a balance. We have a really knowledgeable, experienced, well-educated, agile team who work on the ground every day to make sure that we are doing the best we can, and we are using the evidence that is provided, but it would be foolhardy to anticipate or to stand by that we are the only knowledge in the space. I think it is a good idea to sometimes go outside to other experts to provide us with a check and also some suggestions as to how we can do things better. We obviously network with other jurisdictions as well and we get a bit of a check like that, but to pull it all together in an independent way we use quite a small amount of money to spend on independent experts, and that is what I have articulated.

Mr TELFER: At what level does that decision around consultancy happen? Is that the CEO's decision?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, that is certainly within the acceptable range of approvals under the chief executive.

Mr TELFER: Are you able to provide a breakdown of those projects that you have talked about, those consultancy amounts?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, I can give you that right now. H/Advisors APA provided strategic advice and assistance in developing a transformational plan for disability to transition into an NDIS provider, and that was \$50,000. Richard Dennis, who we all know and love, provided us with support. This is, I believe, the only one we knew about. Yes, this was the anticipated expenditure. He undertook the review of the South Australian Disability Inclusion Act 2018 for strategic policy and reform, \$34,560.

The University of Adelaide looked at establishing a new trauma-informed case management model for youth justice and exceptional needs. That was \$70,000. That was a good example of us working with interjurisdictional colleagues and looking at other work that happens in other jurisdictions and then getting a check put over that by a team of experts out of the University of Adelaide. That was a \$70,000 expense.

ZED Management Consulting to identify and assess the current gaps in services and support for young people in South Australia for the Early Intervention Research Directorate was \$59,280. That adds up to \$213,840. That is data as of about a week ago. They will be audited, as is appropriate, and of course there might be some small changes once that is finalised.

Mr TELFER: So that estimated \$185,000, as per today, is now \$213,000; is that what you said?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Doesn't that include the Richard Dennis?

Mr TELFER: It is all of them.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes. That includes everything.

Mr TELFER: Yes. If we look in the 2024-25 budget, you are expecting to go back down to \$36,000?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That is our budgeted amount and, as I have described multiple times, we are an agile department looking for best practice to provide the best service to the most vulnerable and people who are needing support the most in our community. It is highly anticipated that we might need to do some additional work. If we do, I think putting the ruler over it from an academic and evidence-based practice point of view is responsible and the best use of taxpayer money.

Mr TELFER: Guideline on consultancy expenses again. I will jump to page 101.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is what it is, my friend.

Mr TELFER: Yes, that is why we have to dissect it, minister.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No smoking gun there, let me tell you.

Mr TELFER: Page 101, DHS grants. The budget 2023-24 for grants and subsidies was \$81 million. It decreased to an estimated delivery of \$77 million. What grants and subsidies were not delivered because of this?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Can you repeat the page?

Mr TELFER: Yes, I have it down as page 101.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think you might be on page 99, are you?

Mr TELFER: Yes, sorry, page 99.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Right, so grants and subsidies, budget being—

Mr TELFER: Yes, halfway through there. There is a 2023-24 budget of \$81,444,000, estimated result of \$77,922,000, so \$3.5 million. Does that decrease mean there were some grants and subsidies not delivered?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We could hypothecate that there are dozens and dozens of small bits and pieces, because there are many, many things made up into that.

Mr TELFER: I would rather just the facts than hypothecation.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: What I am saying is that it is something that I do not think I can give you that accurately. It could be timing of the invoicing.

Mr TELFER: I am happy for you to take it on notice if it is something that is more complicated or convoluted.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, let's take that on notice and then as best as we can do provide you with something that gives you some clarity. It will not be that we have underdelivered on service, but it will be that again there has been an agile reallocation of funding from one thing to another, plus also it could be an invoicing timing situation. We will get you something that makes sense.

Mr TELFER: That would be nice. The 2024-25 budget on that same line is now \$89 million?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, indeed.

Mr TELFER: That is \$8 million more than last year's budget, so 10 per cent more than last year's budget, and \$12 million more than what was the estimated result. Can you give me some understanding of what that additional funding will go to?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It could be timing and carryover, the concessions review. Again, we will take that on notice and give you a bit of a breakdown, but there will be a combination of carryover, a combination of new projects.

Mr TELFER: Have any grants within the department undergone a name change or a merging between 2023-24 and 2024-25? Has there been a changing of what has been delivered under that line as far as the definition or the title?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: If I can couch it in this way: if there is something that has changed, we will provide you with some information. We do not believe there is anything of any concern or substance that has changed.

Mr TELFER: Do you track the delivery grants by region or by geographical area? Do you have a breakdown of subregions or the like?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Can you clarify what sorts of grants you are thinking so I can try to provide you with a bit of an answer?

Mr TELFER: Under the 'Grants and subsidies' line.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is worth saying, in that particular line, this is not group X applies for \$10,000 to do a program in a community centre. This is about how we have undertaken a process, and we may be paying non-government organisations to deliver larger scale service delivery. These are not like one-off grants in general.

Mr TELFER: They would be included as well in DHS grants, would they not?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Not in that line, no. You are talking Grants SA?

Mr TELFER: This one here is—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I am with you now, because my brain was thinking, 'What is he talking about?' but you are referring to, as well, the grants that are competitive?

Mr TELFER: Yes. I get what you are saying, that these are basically funding for programs for NGOs and the like to deliver. The question around this line is: do you have a geographical breakdown between regional areas and metropolitan areas?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We do have—and I have seen it as well—a list of non-government providers. I think that is already publicly available.

Mr TELFER: I am talking about the proportion of the funds that go to each individual region or separation between regional and metro.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Under that service delivery, most of them are per population. They are the needs of the community. We could do for you the whole of state, so it might be that we pay—I am hesitant to say an organisation. If organisation A received, for example, \$5 million to tie up everyone's shoelaces across South Australia, we would deliver that to organisation A, but organisation B might be to deliver the provision of, like, resoling of shoes in the Limestone Coast. There is a variation in terms of who is getting grants for what. There are some that are statewide for service delivery.

Mr TELFER: You should be able to work out that proportion.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is a list. Much of this is available already publicly, but we can see what we can do in terms of providing you with some kind of breakdown of where things are allocated. If you wanted to go into the Grants SA part of it as well, the simple statement in regard to that is that they are not decided at my level. They are decided by committee within the department. I think you might be pleased to know—if I grab the number—I think it is 41 per cent are being currently achieved by regional communities in the Grants SA pool. It is something around that.

I think the 41 per cent is well and truly batting above the average in terms of the population count, and it shows that regional communities are doing a really good job of demonstrating their need to provide activities and service delivery out of Grants SA. They are doing a great job. So it is about 41 per cent.

There are a whole range of grants that are provided. We have tried, in the last couple of years, to really look at what is happening particularly in the community in terms of demonstrating need. Through consultation we are finding out what the community priorities are and we are tailoring grants according to some of those.

We have a couple of really good grant rounds that have been done for exactly that. One of them addressed food security, and that delivered \$1.02 million worth of grants to 27 projects, with 42 per cent of those going to regional South Australia. We also have the recently announced Strengthening Inclusive Pathways to Employment round, which had a budget of \$1 million, and that has provided, currently, some \$700,000. We have some additional money remaining from that one to be able to provide some extra grants in the future.

Mr TELFER: Regarding the process for the Grants SA grants, you say there is a grants committee within the department.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, correct.

Mr TELFER: Are you involved in that grants committee at all?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Not at all.

Mr TELFER: You just get the photo on the certificate and that is it.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Nice flippant comment, mate.

Mr TELFER: No, I am asking questions.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The certificate is provided to you to go to your community—

Mr TELFER: There is no ministerial involvement, is what I am asking.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —and to engage in the provision of government funding to a community that has done a great job of applying. I get the briefing in respect of the allocation, which comes up from the committee through the executive team, where everyone puts an eye on it to make sure there is due diligence around the process, and I sign-off on it. I take a lot of time, actually, to read every grant program that is being delivered by every organisation, because, through delegation, I have approved it at the end of the day.

Ms AMBLER: No, I approve it.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That is right, the deputy chief executive approves, and then I sign-off on it. I take a great interest in what is happening across all communities. As you know, I then provide a certificate to the local member to go out to the organisation and engage in that success with them and to see what they are doing in their communities and the outcomes that are being achieved. I often visit, with the local member, some of those organisations and then take that into account when talking with the executive team about how we might target other grant rounds. It is something I take very seriously, actually.

Mr TELFER: Can we go back to page 94. As I was saying, the NDIS stuff bridges the department and disability, obviously, but it is separate to disability services, which we will look at in depth shortly. What expenditure does the state's contribution to the NDIS include? It was budgeted as \$605 million in 2023-24, which is actually less than the 2022-23 actual, but then there has been a significant increase to 723. What does that include?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is ostensibly a variation between the term that we expected to be in kind versus what we actually were in the end. That demonstrates that there was a difference between when we expected to end in kind versus when we actually did, and that is the money washing through. If you turn over the page, to where the disability services budget lines are, you will see there is a corresponding change there.

Mr TELFER: So the reason for the 2023-24 budget being less than the 2022-23 actual is around you trying to guesstimate the timing of that changeover?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes. We did not make any adjustments until we got the actual decision about when the in kind was going to change, so that is why there is a variation. Do you want

a briefing on the NDIS and its transition? You are welcome to it. I do not think anyone has asked me for any of that, ever.

Mr TELFER: It might be of interest, definitely. It is interesting that there are aspects of this budget with a significant increase, and I am trying to break down the difference between the local aspect within the disability services and the way the NDIS comes in over the top. The budget now is \$880 million, which is \$157 million more than this year's estimated result. Obviously, this could be explained due to the expiry of the National Partnership on Disability Care Australia Fund Payments and the conclusion of the in kind, as you are saying.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, you have got it, nailed it.

Mr TELFER: For the \$157 million? Obviously, in the next six minutes we will be able to start to unpack the disability services aspect of it. How much then is left over for the 2024-25 target to respond and implement the NDIS review?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: They are completely different lines from that.

Mr TELFER: Separate to that amount?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes. But that is money through to the commonwealth. The NDIS review, we will have a different line of expenditure from that.

Mr TELFER: Is that within disability services?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is still under negotiation.

Mr TELFER: Sorry, the contribution amount from the state?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is not complete. The handing down of the recommendations, the agreement, is happening at the level of premiers and the Prime Minister, and that is yet to be revealed as to the final negotiations. A lot of work is going into that at the moment. That is Australia-wide. This is not unique to here.

Mr TELFER: Is there money within the South Australian state budget for implementation of the NDIS review?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Not yet. I expect that will happen later. It has not been finalised.

Mr TELFER: Is that 'later on' going to be within this financial year?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Potentially. I genuinely cannot answer the question.

Mr TELFER: The risk for the South Australian budget, the DHS budget in particular, is that there could be a significant amount that is then expected of the South Australian state government to contribute from their aspect of the—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Remember, it is not just going to be DHS either. This is a cross-departmental delivery, so it will be spread out. Various different service delivery models will need to change. We have heard quite a lot of public dialogue around what that might look like. This is still being finalised. We anticipate being heavily involved in the delivery of some of the changed services going forward, but it is not appropriate for me to speculate on exactly what that might look like. There was a national cabinet statement last year in December that talked about a combination of health and NDIS changes that would leave the states better off. We are looking forward to seeing how the negotiations are finalised. There is legislation currently in front of the Senate.

Mr TELFER: But there is no money within the state budget, either at this level or another departmental level, to consider involvement within the NDIS review?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No.

Mr TELFER: You could surmise that there are risk factors to our budget, potentially, with what level of negotiation—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We will definitely need to consider how we deliver on any of the changes that the commonwealth, chief ministers and premiers negotiate.

Mr TELFER: So you as a minister are not involved in any of those negotiations; it is at a higher level?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, not directly. I have certainly been involved in the consideration and the delivery of the NDIS review, and, yay, we are glad that has happened because it has certainly shone a light on an extraordinary number of challenges because of the evolution, shall we say, of the system.

I am not going to politicise it. I think, broadly, there are many people doing very well out of the NDIS. There are some people who have had significant challenges with it, but to say we have been involved in it as disability ministers in terms of that review and guiding the reviewers, hearing from the reviewers, I seriously have lost count of the number of disability reform ministers councils that we have had live and virtually—there have been a lot—and direct conversations as well with the ministers involved, so Minister Shorten and Minister Rishworth. I am excited to see where we go from here with the delivery of the recommendations. That will happen.

Mr TELFER: But those meetings have not amounted to anything yet—

The CHAIR: One quick question and then we have to move on.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Sorry, free-flowing chat here.

Mr TELFER: Yes, sorry, I just have a quick one.

The CHAIR: Yes, go ahead.

Mr TELFER: So the NDIS review implementation—the review itself also included, obviously, recommendations around the health system, education and the like. To the best of your knowledge, health and education, none of them have any money within the state budget for implementation?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The answer regarding the question, 'Do any of the other departments have any money or contingency with regard to the NDIS?' is a matter for the particular ministers in responsible fashion for their portfolio, but we do not have a line currently as we do not know the full flow-on effects of the final agreement. We have made some in principle decisions around the review and its recommendations, but we are still waiting to hear what the chief ministers and premiers decide at national cabinet.

The CHAIR: Thank you. We will move on. The time allotted having expired, I declare the examination of the portfolio of the Department of Human Services completed.

Departmental Advisers:

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

Mr N. Ashley, Chief Financial Officer, Finance and Business Services, Department of Human Services.

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

Mr J. Young, Executive Director, Disability Services, Department of Human Services.

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

Ms J. Rogers, Director, Quality and Clinical Services, Disability Services, Department of Human Services.

Ms S. White, Director, Disability Services, Department of Human Services.

Ms T. Mai, Senior Authorising Officer, Restrictive Practices Unit, Inclusion, Supports and Safeguarding, Department of Human Services.

The CHAIR: We now move on to Disability Services. Once again, the minister appearing is the Minister for Human Services. I advise that the proposed payments remain open for examination.

I call on the minister to make a statement, if she so wishes, and introduce the changes of advisers. I also call on the lead speaker for the opposition to make a statement, if he so wishes as well.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have had a small change in officials in this particular session. To my right is Joe Young, Executive Director, Disability. We have Sarah White also now joining the committee, Director, Disability Services, and I have Julie Rogers behind Belinda Marsden, Director, Quality and Clinical Services for Disability. We still have the remaining people here.

I will provide you with an opening statement, which might actually assist with some of the directions you might want to go in. The past year has been significant for disability, with the changes to the Disability Inclusion Act now passed, but also we have had the completion of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, and the completion of the NDIS review.

We have had a report from the Social Development Committee regarding people with disability in appropriate accommodation. We have had the development and launch of the Autism Inclusion Charter and the development and launch of our state's first Autism Strategy. We have worked on changes to the National Construction Code to make new homes more accessible and adaptable at silver standard. We have work happening on reviewing our State Disability Inclusion Plan.

We have been delivering more Changing Places facilities. We have finalised the sale of Highgate Park. We have done work to reduce the number of NDIS participants experiencing discharge delays from hospital. We are continuing to deliver disability services to hundreds of people with a range of support needs, completing the move from in kind, which we have just had fun with, to state disability supports to provide services funded via individual plans.

I am happy to answer questions on any of these where they relate to a line in the budget papers but note that our response to the disability royal commission, as is the case for both Labor and Liberal governments across Australia, is in the final stages of preparation, so I am really not in a position to go into details on that one as yet. I am always available to provide a briefing as soon as we are able to talk more on that.

I can say that, in preparing our response to the royal commission, we did engage Julia Farr Association Purple Orange to run a series of workshops so people with lived experience could share their views on key things from the royal commission—a great example of commissioning, contracting and subcontracting other partners to deliver consultation work that is best delivered by those who are working in the space. All jurisdictions have committed to releasing the responses in mid-2024, so we are very close and aiming to have that completed in the near future.

There are 222 royal commission recommendations, which cover a huge range of policy areas, including human rights legislation, housing, the justice system, transport, health, education and disability inclusion, amongst others. Not all recommendations had unanimous support amongst the commissioners, who also noted potential time frames of up to 15 years in dealing with some of those recommendations. As such, our response will be a work in progress for many years to come.

Similarly, my department and other agencies are working with the commonwealth on the recommendations arising from the NDIS review, as discussed before. This relates to a national cabinet decision from December 2023 for jurisdictions to work together on a wider set of disability supports beyond the NDIS. I understand there was some general discussion with the Minister for Health and Wellbeing in his estimates hearing in a different place with different systems, so there will be a huge amount of work involved in this over the coming years.

That being said, we have been delivering improved supports for people with disability since the election and well before the royal commission finished, including the appointment of the Assistant Minister for Autism, establishing the Office for Autism, rolling out autism inclusion teachers, retargeting support for autism diagnostics and employing more wellbeing workers in schools.

South Australia has also been a leader in the restrictive practices area and the establishment of our Adult Safeguarding Unit. Under my former ministerial responsibilities linked to social housing, I was really proud that our public housing system adopted the silver level of the Liveable Housing Australia Design guidelines from early 2022, which is more than two years ahead of when it will

become the standard under the National Construction Code. Without any further ado, I welcome questions.

Mr TELFER: Let's start with where we finished the commentary around the involvement with the NDIS and disability services. On page 93, within the explanation of significant movements, it talks about the decrease in net cost of services, primarily due to the conclusion of NDIS in kind funding arrangements for DHS disability services in 2023. How will the conclusion of this in kind funding arrangement impact the department?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: As a basic premise, the requirement to deliver individualised NDIS plans means we are realigning our service delivery to address what has been identified as reasonable and necessary within their NDIS plans. So we are having to realign some of our shift configurations and a range of other day-to-day operational matters in order to be able to do that because no longer is it just a block bucket of budgeted money; it is that individualised plan. Again, that may change from time to time as people's circumstances change, so we put forward a change of circumstance application and funding may change. I think that is the basic premise.

Mr TELFER: Do you believe it will have an adverse impact on organisations and participants, with that change? You talk about shift configuration and the like. Is there a risk that there is an adverse impact on organisations and participants?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Clients are at the centre of everything we do in DHS, as a rule. It is an expectation, it is a given, it is a standard for all of our executive and our staff. It is absolutely my expectation and that of the executive team that the clients are at the centre of the service delivery model and will be absolutely at the forefront of decisions being made, so the expectation is: absolutely not.

Mr TELFER: In regard to the activity indicators, does the number of clients in government accommodation places include hospital beds?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The basic answer is no. We have currently estimated there to be at this point 466 people in community accommodation and 35 people in transitional accommodation, and our budget projection has been for 465 community accommodation and 35 transitional accommodation. Within those, of course there is a range of different funding sources. We have the NDIS funding the vast majority of those—around 430—then we have about 50 who receive the Disability Support for Older Australians funding, and then there are 20 who have other funding sources.

Mr TELFER: Are these numbers comparable to previous years? From what I can see, as far as the 2022-23 actual and then 2023-24—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is a small variation. People have choice as to where they want to live. Also, obviously, some people would age out and, sadly, people succumb to life itself as a limiting factor to age, so there have been some changes to numbers but it is a small variation.

Mr TELFER: Is there any non-hospital facility accommodation that someone with a disability can go to in a non-medical emergency?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Sorry, just rephrase that.

Mr TELFER: Is there any non-hospital facility accommodation that someone with a disability can go to in a non-medical emergency? The sector is calling for emergency temporary accommodation and the like.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Under the NDIS itself, there is funding available for respite, so that can be in somebody's plan. If it was not put in someone's plan, they could seek an emergency review of their plan to provide for that, but the non-hospital accommodation that we provide is really from that transfer out of hospital once ready to be medically discharged and approved for the NDIS to go into our transition facilities.

Mr TELFER: So there is no state respite accommodation?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No. It might be done in partnership with Health as a hospital avoidance measure that potentially is available, but it is not something that we negotiate with the non-government provider sector over.

Mr TELFER: Is there any funding to increase the number of government accommodation places?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have capacity to take more people in if they choose to come to a government service but, again, that is paid for out of a plan. This is where the nuance with the budget might occur, in that X person might choose to come and they may have a plan that is worth \$2 million, for example. It is the commonwealth that has that package allocated to the person who might fund the place within our service, to which we have already contributed through our fixed payment that we do per population. Does that make sense?

Mr TELFER: It is a little bit convoluted. How much additional capacity do you carry?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: In the supported disability accommodation space within our homes we would have about a dozen, or thereabouts, vacancies. It would vary, obviously, again, as people go in and out, but in the transitional accommodation space we have capacity for several dozen more people, but it goes in and out every day, up and down every day as people move in and out.

Mr TELFER: That is capacity not just for care but physical accommodation capacity?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr TELFER: Yes, so both. What are the locations of the community accommodation places and the transitional accommodation places?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Community accommodation we have regionally and in the metropolitan area. They are not addresses that I am prepared to put out publicly.

Mr TELFER: No, in general though.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: They are in all parts of the metropolitan area and there are also regional accommodation facilities. I am not opposed to a request, if you wanted to visit a facility. You can go to the website as well to find out some more locations. In the transitional accommodation we have beds in the south, beds in the west, and beds at Daw Park and Brighton.

Mr TELFER: Are they owned or are they leased? What are the arrangements for them?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is a variety of them. Some are with an NGO, some are with Health. They are the transitional ones, I flowed straight to transitional. The community ones are largely owned by community housing providers, the actual bricks and mortar, with around 20 that DHS own.

Mr TELFER: Are the associated costs for those accommodations all covered within the budget of the department?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: What do you mean?

Mr TELFER: This is the interesting part with the different arrangements as far as ownership goes. Within this aspect of the budget, is the capital responsibility and the like, for those ones which are not purely community housing, involved within this aspect of the budget?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think you are asking about any, are you not, rather than one particular type?

Mr TELFER: Yes, any, sorry.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Perhaps it is time for Mr Young to shine.

Mr YOUNG: For the community housing aspects, most would be deemed as some specialist disability accommodation and the community housing provider would receive payment through the NDIS, essentially as a user cost to capital in that space. Maintenance would be a requirement of that community housing provider. That is often tied back to the SA Housing Trust, and they would have some responsibility for planned maintenance. If there was damage or that aspect of it, depending on

what that damage is, then that is the responsibility of the tenants, including us as a provider in those cases.

Mr TELFER: Is the community accommodation permanent?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Permanent to whom? Do you mean a permanent structure or permanent to the person?

Mr TELFER: Permanent accommodation for individuals.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: While they choose to live there and while the arrangements are in place and working, then yes. People have the capacity to exercise choice and control. There is a tenancy agreement with all of the people living in each of the homes, under whatever circumstance.

Mr TELFER: So when that agreement comes up it is renegotiated if they want to stay in that same community accommodation?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Relatively. I am not aware of anyone moving anyone on, actually. It is down to the person to choose where they want to live. Sometimes, as we have said, there is a review of plans, and people might be able to exercise their rights to get a more appropriate home more suitable to their needs and so they stay somewhere and wait for accommodation to be built. We have certainly had people in that circumstance awaiting construction of their own properties.

There may be situations where an eviction might occur, for whatever reason. Again, that is not something that I am aware of, but every effort would be made to provide adequate supports to ensure that that person is going to a safe place.

Mr TELFER: In regard to the transitional accommodation, how long does it take for clients to transition out of the transitional accommodation?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think the average stay is some 80 days or thereabouts, give or take. Some would be much quicker than that and some would take much longer. People have a varying level of, shall we say, need. There are different diagnostic groups. Some are there with predominantly physical barriers to discharge. Some have emotional and mental health barriers. Some have support barriers.

It does vary, and for some people it will be significantly longer than that, but what I can tell you is that there are many more people now who are going and being in a much more suitable location because it is there but also because we have reviewed that system and are providing much better outcomes for them.

We recently could say 80 NDIS participants have transitioned out of hospital since 1 July last year, and 79 were discharged out from T2H. So we have a people in people out kind of balance happening there. The average length of stay of clients who entered T2H since 1 July last year was 85 days, so I was pretty close.

Mr TELFER: And the whole nuance with averages is that, yes, if there is somebody in there the whole time it can throw the whole average out.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr TELFER: What is the success rate of moving from the transitional to community?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Not everyone goes to community housing. Not everyone goes to a community support provider. Some people go to T2H and then go to their home, with supports in place. I do not know if I can tell you what the success rate is. Some people will have gone into hospital from home, had an exacerbation of their condition, require escalated levels of input, huge changes to the physical environment, so therefore it has been decided that they cannot go back to the same place, so have to find alternative SIL accommodation. I think it varies. It is hard to say success, but the same number who have come in have gone out.

I can give you a bit more of a breakdown. There is an assessment team that has been put in place, that was piloted. That was to help with discharging our participants, and they have supported the discharge of 98 participants over the time. That would be since before, obviously, the financial year. Exit pathways: 30 have gone to supported independent living; 23 to specialist disability

accommodation; 12 into public housing; 10 into a private home or rental; seven to a NDIA provider lease; six to community housing; five to residential aged care; four to a supported residential facility; and one to state-funded transitional housing.

That one-year pilot that has been put in place since the negotiation between us and the federal government happened—well, we started talking through the Disability Reform Ministerial Council I think at some point. Anyway, that has been quite successful. That has been extended until 30 April next year as well. There is a variety of discharge destinations.

Mr TELFER: Are the number of home equipment items provided by the DHS equipment program capped?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Per person?

Mr TELFER: Yes, per person.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No.

Mr TELFER: Is there a cap in place at all on the number of home modifications undertaken by that same program?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No. Every person is taken on an individual basis and provided the best possible pathway.

Mr TELFER: The same with repair and maintenance?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: And according to eligibility, yes.

Mr TELFER: Does the DHS equipment program generate a revenue?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Basically, no is the answer, but we are considering whether there is the capacity to recoup some of the money through an NDIS or My Aged Care pathway. If sometimes people have not been made aware of their ability to charge through that or seek support through that and we have found that out, then we have been able to recoup costs, but it is a state service.

Mr TELFER: I will turn back to page 91 and look at the Agency Statements in particular. Within the disability agency, what portion of staff employed are living with a disability themselves?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will get it to you in a minute; how is that? We will get you the exact answer in a moment. We have the number.

Mr TELFER: I asked a similar question last year.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I have read it, yes.

Mr TELFER: You referenced that close to 50 per cent of NDIS employees have a disability.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Oh, NDIS. I am sorry, I am thinking about our department. Is that what you asked?

Mr TELFER: Either/or.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Whatever it is, I am very confident that the feds would love to answer the question. I think it has increased, but I do not know the number. Google might be able to help us with that one. I do not have that answer, but I know that publicly last year the minister had talked about around half the people in the department. I will take it on notice.

Mr TELFER: So you are taking on notice your department's portion.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Also, just to caveat, I might say, if it is okay, we do survey our staff because we want to make sure we are providing the best possible diversity and also support in the workplace. It is an anonymous survey that we undertake, because not everybody declares their disability either. The last anonymous staff survey told us that about 5 per cent of people in DHS have a known disability.

Mr TELFER: That is your mechanism for collecting—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That is a staff survey.

Mr TELFER: Yes, that is a mechanism for collecting that information.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, I think people can declare it up-front if they wish. Our department encourages applicants from diverse backgrounds of all sorts. It is a right to actually maintain your own level of privacy around that. We do have an anonymous staff survey, and the declaration was about 5 per cent.

Mr TELFER: On the same page, page 91, we are looking at the FTEs. Under the 2023-24 budget of 1,631, there is a 34.1 increase to the 2023-24 estimate. Can you explain that, minister?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Between the 2023-24 budgeted amount and the estimated amount?

Mr TELFER: Yes—FTE, at the bottom of the table on page 91.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is a small amount of change. It is about 30 FTE you are talking about, yes?

Mr TELFER: Yes, 34.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is a small amount of change with people who are working on the royal commission response. There is a small variation of activity.

Mr TELFER: Is it the same answer for the 2024-25 budgeted, which is a bit less than the 2023-24 estimated?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The variation happens with different projects, such as the royal commission response. It happens because of the change from an in kind to a service delivery model, and it happens because of activity change—client numbers, client changes.

Mr TELFER: But no impact on service delivery?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, not at all.

Mr TELFER: How many of the FTEs are employed as marketing or advertising staff?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Do you mean marketing or comms or something in disability?

Mr TELFER: Marketing in general.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There are three people who work to support the communications around the whole part of the department that is called disability. That is three out of 1,600 and something staff, or whatever it is. There is nobody in marketing. For comms and engagement, the entire department is 17 people.

Mr TELFER: That includes things like advertising of services, supports and stuff.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, they support. We can talk about Here For The Game, we can talk about 'stop the gambling, danger ahead'—did I just get the name wrong?

Ms PITCHER: Yes, but you got the spirit of it.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Anyway, that kind of name. There is also See Me For Me. The vast majority of anything that comes out of DHS is a social change initiative and is very effective. Our comms and engagement team do that, sometimes with help with creative, which is pretty obvious, but also they are involved in the engagement events that seek to get advice from the community and inform the community about things that are going on. They hold those community events, they help with round tables and support a whole range of activity. A very small part of their job is messaging. Did you want the numbers of people with disability? In the whole department we have 105 people who have declared a disability, and in disability services we have 60.

Mr TELFER: Very good. Continuing on page 91, was the decrease of \$83 million in commonwealth government revenues something you were expecting?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: At the end of the national DCAF partnership?

Mr TELFER: Is DCAF an acronym I should know?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The DisabilityCare Australia Fund.

Mr TELFER: Thank you. So that was an expected decrease in the commonwealth government revenue?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: With the end of the five-year agreement, yes.

Mr TELFER: The sales of goods and services has increased dramatically: the budgeting of \$17 million in the 2023-24 budget, the estimated \$100 million more than that and now the \$153 million in 2024-25. Where are the sales coming from?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Services.

Mr TELFER: So this is around the transition of the services from—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: End of in kind.

Mr TELFER: That number you have in the 2024-25 budget, is there still uncertainty about that transition? Is this number likely to vary?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The uncertainty is directly linked to the choice and control of the participants, who decides to stay, who decides to come in. That is the uncertainty of any service provider. The plans we wait on will inform us. We are also waiting in hot anticipation for a price increase from the NDIS as well.

Mr TELFER: Do not get too hot with that anticipation.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I am getting very hot over that, let me tell you.

Mr TELFER: Is the \$757 million in the 2023-24 budget for the net cost of providing services and then the increase in 2023-24 and 2024-25 all associated with that transition you have talked about?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, it has the NDIS payment in there as well.

Mr TELFER: So that was an expected variation.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think this has been well discussed publicly as well. We know the cost of providing services is increasing over and over again, so it is all part of that. There is obviously a determined effort being made by the commonwealth to attempt to control the expenditure, but our contribution goes up 4 per cent annually. That is the bilateral agreement that you are probably well aware of.

Mr TELFER: The statement at the bottom, in (a), talks about the internal reforms and realignment of corporate overheads across the agency. What internal reforms and realignment of corporate overheads across the agency happened in this disability aspect of DHS?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Because we are in kind now, we have to show true cost, to cost of the delivery of all the services.

Mr TELFER: That is the realignment of the corporate overheads. The internal reforms?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is just how some of it appears in the budget papers because it is not block grant now, so it is just how it is divvied out within the papers.

Mr TELFER: So it is just a definition of the same sort of thing: an internal reform and a realignment of corporate overheads?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, pretty much.

Mr TELFER: Very interesting.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is not that interesting, honestly.

Mr TELFER: It is very *Utopia*. Does the department have a marketing budget? We talked a bit about the marketing team, the 17 marketing staff. Is there a marketing budget for the sale of their goods and services and, if so, how much is that?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Are you talking about specifically in disability?

Mr TELFER: You split up the marketing and comms stuff.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No is the answer to disability, although disability is not just the NDIS or the service provision. We do a whole range of other community awareness. We have invested money from the department area in terms of autism and a whole range of things that are mental health connected and a whole range of other things that are connected to disability, but those things, as I sort of mentioned before, the See Me For Me is absolutely about disability. Those campaigns do a lot to reflect the need of raising awareness in the community around disability, but we do not have a specific marketing budget at all in disability.

Mr TELFER: But there is a marketing team within DHS as a whole?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: DHS as a whole—that is that engagement team that I talked about before that had 17 people across the whole department, which is communications and engagement, that does much more than marketing; in fact, that is a very small part of it.

Mr TELFER: Yes, it is all incorporated altogether.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr TELFER: We have had discussions privately as well around the disability advocacy funding. Is there any funding allocated for JFA Purple Orange?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have done projects with JFA Purple Orange. As I spoke about before, we do engagement programs with JFA Purple Orange. We do not have a specific pool. We work closely with them. We lean on them and reach out to them as absolute experts in the space and we contract them to do pieces of work, including six workshops on the royal commission around employment, housing, education, health, safeguarding and justice, and to do focus groups.

Mr TELFER: Is there disability advocacy funding allocated full stop, rather than specifically for JFA Purple Orange? Is there an aspect of that within the budget?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: In terms of advocacy broadly, there are a lot of different things that come under that area. We obviously support the Community Visitor Scheme and we have increased the funding to that since coming to government. There is the Public Advocate, Equal Opportunity Commission, Adult Safeguarding Unit and also the Uniting Communities fund that has been ongoing since coming in that really specifically have been involved through the Uniting Communities Law Centre, which did a lot of work to support people with their access and challenges around the NDIS of the past few years. They have done a really good job.

That original three-year contract ended in December 2023 and we have continued it for a while to continue that work. We want to work cooperatively and consistently with the commonwealth government around the direction for advocacy and funding of advocacy in the community. The federal government provides more than \$5 million a year to advocacy services in South Australia. They do that through the Brain Injury network, Advocacy for Disability Access and Inclusion, Citizen Advocacy, DACSSA—

Mr TELFER: No new state government funding? This is all ongoing?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will finish—Disability Rights Advocacy Service, DACSSA and Independent Advocacy. You might be interested to know that I received, not long ago, some documents to review ahead of the release under a commonwealth freedom of information request. Sadly, you probably would not be happy to be made aware that they showed that in late 2019 former Minister Lensink, in attendance at a national disability ministers meeting where there was an agreement at that meeting that advocacy was a shared responsibility between commonwealth and states, was the one minister who dissented from that agreement—

Mr TELFER: What budget line is this?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: You asked the question.

Mr TELFER: This was not the question I asked. I was asking if you had any new—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: She dissented and disagreed that it was shared.

Mr TELFER: I was asking if there was any new state government funding. I think the answer is no.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: So that was the forward plan set out, that it was not a commonwealth and state shared position. We have boosted the annual funding of the Community Visitor Scheme by more than 35 per cent, around \$320,000 per allocated under the previous government, which was due to cease in June 2023, but we have provided long-term funding to them for \$450,000 per year, indexed.

We have allocated \$3.4 million to the Adult Safeguarding Unit in the first budget, and then a further \$8.7 million in our second budget. We obviously have incredible advocacy happening through the Office for Autism and with the Assistant Minister for Autism. The wellbeing workers and autism inclusion teachers in schools are also working in the advocacy space—

Mr TELFER: So no new independent advocacy money?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —and 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, something which the previous minister, Minister Lensink, refused to do.

The CHAIR: With that very comprehensive answer, the time allotted having expired I declare the examination of the portfolio of Disability Services completed.

Sitting suspended from 10:46 to 11:00.

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 and Business Services, Department of Human Services.

Ms A. Reid, Executive Director, Community and Aboriginal Partnerships, Department of Human Services.

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

Ms L. France, Director, Inclusion Policy and Reform, Inclusion, Support and Safeguarding, Department of Human Services.

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

The CHAIR: The portfolio is Youth Services. The minister appearing is the Minister for Human Services. I advise that the proposed payments remain open for examination. I call on the minister to make an opening statement, if she so wishes, and introduce the advisers. I call on the lead speaker, if he also wants, to make an opening statement.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is a short session. I will reintroduce Ruth Ambler, who has come back to the front bench, and Alex Reid, who has popped back in behind me, Executive Director, Community and Aboriginal Partnerships. Welcome to two excellent people in charge of various areas of our department. We have Liana France to my rear left, Director, Inclusion Policy and Reform and Inclusion, Support and Safeguarding. To my rear right is Mellanie Fernandez, Director, Youth Justice and Exceptional Needs and Community and Aboriginal Partnerships.

Mr TELFER: I will turn to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 89 to start. Obviously, there is significant reference here to the Kurlana Tapa Youth Justice Centre. Minister, how many children are in the centre as of now?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I am pretty confident that nobody has been released yet this morning, but at the start of the day, if my memory serves me, there were 36 young people in Kurlana Tapa.

There was actually only one young person under the age of 14 in the centre. The vast majority of our young people are not sentenced.

Mr TELFER: How many children have been in the centre for longer than a month?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We might have that by the end of the session. It is a small number.

Mr TELFER: A small number for longer than a month? So that number for longer than—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have the average length of stay, but that was for the previous financial year. We will get you a number, hopefully by the end of the session, but if not it is on notice.

Mr TELFER: The average length of stay?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have the full year's average up to the end of 2023, with it being an average length of stay of 15.8 days, which is slightly down on the year before, which was 16.8. The median length of stay, as you know with calculations, is 3.3, so very small.

Mr TELFER: So with the question you are taking on notice about children who have been in for longer than a month, are there any who have been there for longer than three months, six months or 12 months?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There would be some, but it is a very, very small amount.

Mr TELFER: Can I get that number as well then, perhaps, minister—one, three, six, 12 perhaps?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, sure, no problem. We can get the breakdown for you. That probably will not be before the end of the session.

Mr TELFER: Yes, that is fine. It is on notice.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Honestly, it is very small amounts of young people.

Mr TELFER: In the highlights, dot point 4 is:

Expanded the scope of the Child Diversion Program statewide, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to divert Aboriginal children aged 10 to 13 from custody.

How many Aboriginal children have been diverted from custody as a result of the program?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: As of 21 April this year, 36 children have successfully participated in the diversion program. Out of those, 32 received family scoping—which is a deeper interrogation of their situation—and were successfully returned to family. The other four were provided with supported accommodation.

Mr TELFER: How many Aboriginal children were diverted as a result of the program prior to its expansion, when it was operating before—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Sorry; I could not hear you then.

Mr TELFER: Prior to the expansion of it being 24 hours a day, seven days a week, what was the number of children who were diverted as a result of that program?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I do not know if I have that number, to be honest. I am happy to get back to you; in fact, again, I offer a briefing on this really important work.

Mr TELFER: What is the cost of the additional operating scope, the expansion out to 24/7?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We got a million dollars put in the budget, and it is still within that budget. That was put in the 2023-24 budget, and we are within that budget.

Mr TELFER: So the cost to expand was less than a million dollars?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes. The age range was increased at that point in time too, up to 14, and some of the criteria was amended as well. A million dollars was the original budget, and we have expanded within the original budget.

Mr TELFER: So the expansion included the scope to divert children from 10 to 13; is that what you are saying?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We expanded it to 10 to 14.

Mr TELFER: Okay, thank you.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Also—and this would be interesting for you—we expanded the footprint to Port Lincoln in response to local concerns and issues being raised. We have it right across the state, but it is fair to say that we have put an increased focus for supports in Port Lincoln.

Mr TELFER: On page 90, in the activity indicators it talks about the number of youth justice clients who have one or more supervised orders issued and the number of youth justice clients who had one or more community-based orders. Why is there a significant increase in the number of youth justice clients in 2023-24 in comparison to what the projections were?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I hate to bring back the word, but the anticipated calculations are based on activities from previous years and, of course, previous years were COVID-impacted. The predicted future numbers are based on activity numbers from the year before, and so the projection was COVID-affected and, therefore, without COVID impacting, the numbers have increased. There is a slight decrease in the number of unique youth justice clients who had those orders, compared with the previous year, but it was calculated on COVID. It is a methodology that is used to calculate predicted activity.

Mr TELFER: Yes, I get that, but I am looking at some of these numbers in the 2022-23 actuals—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr TELFER: —which were up. These are actual numbers, and then the projection—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The world has changed and so actual activities took a while to reset, things that people were doing took a while to reset. We know that the world globally has changed. In fact, if you overlay our numbers with other jurisdictions, the trends and the movements are very similar. However, what we know is that the average occupancy, for example in Kurlana Tapa, has not jumped to the same number as it was pre COVID. The last unaffected COVID year was 2018-19, so we have not got back to that level. The predictions are a methodology of calculation projections based on the previous activity numbers which were COVID-impacted.

Mr TELFER: I love that explanation, except I am looking at—

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

Mr TELFER: But I am looking at the actuals of 2022-23 and then the projections for 2023-24, then the estimated results. The estimated results of 2023-24 and 2022-23 actuals are pretty comparable, and now we are projecting on a lot of these lower numbers than what was actually—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: What two numbers are you particularly concerned about?

Mr TELFER: Let's just take that first line, if you are trying to have a COVID overlay on some of these numbers: 2022-23 actual, 522.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr TELFER: This is in a year you just said was not affected by COVID.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Correct.

Mr TELFER: Then the projection in 2023-24 was for 100—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Less.

Mr TELFER: —less in drop.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr TELFER: But the reality was, no, there is no drop. It was 490, so it was a drop of 32, rather than a drop of 100. I am wondering why there is a low projection. You are budgeting for a much lower number than what reality is. Where is the accountability for these numbers?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is a projection. There is no smoking gun here.

Mr TELFER: I am trying to work out—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is projections—calculations based on previous years—not necessarily the one year, multiple years.

Mr TELFER: How can the projections be so wrong?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: They rely on a range of factors like the courts, the court process, police activities, one generation compared with another, activities being undertaken or influences upon our children. There is a range of differences that dictate the numbers, and we are satisfied that we have been able to respond and deliver safe—it is not like we cap what we do.

We are available to deliver services to the numbers of young people who appear before us, requiring support and assistance under a custodial or non-custodial order, a supervised order, or whatever you want to call it. The courts will decide how they manage what is coming through the door. There are variations in offences and the typology. I do not know what is within there, but there may be a really large number of very minor offences that suddenly start to happen, that are being dealt with in a particular way.

Mr TELFER: Where is the expertise within the department to make sure that the projections you are putting into a budget process are actually accurate? I get that there is variability.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, and our budget does not really change, frankly. It is indexing from one year to the other. These are activity levels that we are aspiring to and aiming for, based on past experience and trends. Our budget does not vary hugely from one year to the other, although we have had some joy with some capital expenditure. There was a downturn. We thought the downturn would continue. It did not, and so we have adjusted the projection.

It is timing. This does not have a significant impact on service delivery or anticipated service delivery. We are well within our capacity to service and provide services to young people. That may include noodle soup as well—good food.

Mr TELFER: So the reason that activity indicator is included in a budget is to try to give an indicator of what the expectation of the department might be for whatever measure point that is.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, and you base that on a range of calculations.

Mr TELFER: The projections from other years when I have looked have been well below what the actuals have actually delivered. So the question that probably then flows on is: is the 2024-25 projection going to follow that same pattern? Are we going to see these numbers even more increased than they actually are because that is what the pattern has been previously?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The overarching statement is that each year there is a variance. We calculate on multiple years to estimate the following year. We cannot second-guess the courts. We do not know what Her Honour and the team may decide. We cannot anticipate activity levels sometimes in cohorts of young people across our state.

We are there to provide the best possible support and rehabilitative and restorative justice programs that we can, and we are meeting our budget and service provision on that, as well as being agile enough to respond to new trends and work across cabinet as a government to produce policies that are implemented, not just in DHS but through other ministerial portfolios, to target and support young people who are at high risk of coming to the attention of youth justice.

I draw your attention to all of the significant and substantial work being done across the autism portfolio, given that young people with autism are at much higher risk of being engaged in these types of behaviours. It is a guide. It is based on multiple years, and it is very, very difficult to anticipate what might change from one year to the next.

Mr TELFER: Dot point 5 on page 89 is this statement around the highlights of 2023-24:

Continued to strengthen engagement and partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organisations to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people in the youth justice system.

That statement is in the shadow of the escalating numbers which we see.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: You assume that they are all Aboriginal children; they are not.

Mr TELFER: Certainly the two lines at the bottom of those activity indicators are.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have worked really hard to establish the Aboriginal Practice and Partnerships Directorate to ensure that those partnerships with Aboriginal communities and those organisations deliver innovative solutions that improve significantly the outcomes for Aboriginal families and communities. During that time, as we have couched and canvassed, we delivered the child diversion program, as well as several other programs and services in regional South Australia.

We have the Service to Aboriginal Youth (STAY) program, which focuses on early intervention, providing at-risk Aboriginal young people aged 10 to 19 with access to services, guidance needed to achieve their goals, strengthen their cultural and community connections and build long-term resilience. So we are investing significantly in out-of-custody programs, including, you would be well aware, our programs in Port Augusta and around South Australia to provide support and assistance for young people to divert them away from activities that might get them into trouble.

That STAY program has nine providers that we engage. Four of the nine providers are Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. That is very important, particularly when we consider the focus that we are placing as a department and a government on Closing the Gap and providing the autonomy for Aboriginal communities to participate in and lead that service provision. That STAY program is being delivered across Yalata, Koonibba, Ceduna, Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Coober Pedy and in the Riverland and Murray Bridge, so that is a significant investment across many parts of regional and remote South Australia.

We have been really agile and responsive as well to the needs in particular regions, to partner with such as the West Coast partnership over in your neck of the woods, the Port Augusta township and surrounding regions. Also, we are investing heavily in our return to community programs. Not all people on those return to community programs are adult. There are quite a significant number of young people and children as well. So this is quite an interconnected, focused piece of work that is aspiring to do much better for Aboriginal families, including Aboriginal young people.

Mr TELFER: But the numbers are still going up?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: This is a challenge that we are facing that we are working very hard to intercept in and provide good quality programs and service providers. This is one of the priorities of our department to ensure we provide young people, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal young people, with the leadership, the community autonomy to deliver and support and help write the programs as much as we can.

Mr TELFER: With regard to the program you talk about in Port Augusta, obviously it has had a lot of attention in the last 18 to 24 months. Is that funding for the work that your department is doing in that space ongoing?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have received significant support from the Treasurer and the cabinet to continue to do this work. We have an ongoing funding source for that at the moment, and we work with the federal government as well to secure investment to ensure that we can provide that. We are providing about half a million dollars towards the Port Augusta Social Vision project, the youth centre, providing after-hours structured activities, the outreach service, where there are trained and really excellent, well-qualified youth workers.

I believe they all are Aboriginal workers in Port Augusta doing outreach services and providing support and an opportunity for young people to work with them. There is the bus service. I have been to Port Augusta, I think, eight times potentially—seven or eight times—and have been on the bus, been out with the outreach service, been to the youth centre, and participated in community

forums. The work of the department and the NGOs is absolutely guided by the community and their ownership of improvement to circumstances in that region.

Mr TELFER: What is the total budget of that program in Port Augusta?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Federal and state?

Mr TELFER: Yes, total.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will take it on notice. It is in the millions.

Mr TELFER: I am trying to get into these numbers a bit because, as you are saying, I am also talking to a lot of people around the state and they are frustrated by the fact that the results on the ground are not the positive results that the community expect with the amount of attention that has been given. I am not being flippant about numbers; I am being serious about the impact that it is actually having in communities on the ground. I am trying to work out whether this is a recognition of, especially, the 2024-25 projections around Aboriginal young people who have had one or more community-based orders or admission to a secure youth justice centre. Is it an admission that the system at the moment is failing those kids, because those numbers only escalate?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Social justice and social justice reform takes time. Social impact takes time, investment and consistency in the community. Following the previous government cutting the community safety program in Port Augusta, we have invested significant resources, effort and time into turning that around. It was cut and was replaced by nothing. It was not supported by the previous Liberal government. We have consulted with, worked with and empowered the community to become engaged in the process. We acknowledge this will take time to turn around. Social impact is not something you can turn on and off like a light switch. The previous government cut the community safety program and replaced it with nothing.

Mr TELFER: I turn to volume 3, page 86. Under highlights it states that you plan to launch and commence the implementation of South Australia's Youth Action Plan 2024-27.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes; it is very exciting.

Mr TELFER: What funding has been allocated to that plan, and how many FTEs?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The Youth Action Plan has been out for consultation. It received an extraordinary amount of young people engaging in it. I think there were 880 total engagements in the consultation, and about 83 per cent of those were young people. So we feel very confident that we have a good snapshot of the attitudes and priorities of young people.

In response to early feedback on that, where mental health was by far the biggest concern of young people, we immediately—even while the Youth Action Plan was still being developed—pivoted to investing nearly \$200,000 in grants to support peer-to-peer mental wellbeing initiatives under our Grants SA program. We have already done that, and there are 15 projects. Again, I believe that regional South Australia has done more than its population share in providing those successful applicants.

We are still working the Youth Action Plan out. We are attaching money to projects as they arise, and we will continue to do that. I look forward to hearing some of the results of the Youth Mental Wellbeing grants, which cut across carers, refugees, asylum seekers and young people at risk. They are being delivered right across South Australia. You have the town of Kimba in your patch, which you might like to reach out to.

Mr TELFER: I have spoken to them.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Great. The regional town of Goyder would be in the member for Frome's district. There are quite a few really respected organisations delivering projects, including Youth Opportunities and SHINE. Underneath that, the other priorities that we see coming out of it are quite insightful and show young people saying, 'We want to know how to develop our skills and transition to adulthood. How do we get support for that? Where do we reach out to? How do we adult?' There are a whole range of those priorities that I look forward to because it is a priority of mine to ensure that young people thrive.

Mr TELFER: You spoke a little about the youth mental health stuff in particular. I know that on page 42 of these budget papers, which is within the health department, the correlation between the \$9.7 million increase to the Women's and Children's Health Network, explained as primarily funding to support youth mental health services, also includes the expansion of the Child and Adolescent Virtual Urgent Care Service. How much of that is going toward youth mental health services?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That is a question for the health minister.

Mr TELFER: There is no correlation between the work your department does?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: They are part of the working group. There is a coordinated approach to this, but in terms of the percentage of the amount, that is a question for the health minister. There are cross-portfolio, cross-departmental working groups in a lot of these areas. As you well know, we have a Premier's advocate for suicide prevention, who is working hard to get out and around and talk—being one of the younger members of parliament, highly appropriate—to young people in our communities about that very important piece of work.

Mr TELFER: What is the name of that committee?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The Youth Action Plan Steering Committee.

Mr TELFER: To put a pin in this one, the department does not get any funding out of that increase?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No.

Mr TELFER: The role the department plays is purely around advising and directing, but no decision-making capacity over any of that youth mental health allocation? I guess this is the relationship between all the ministers around the cabinet table. Is this something you believe needs more attention given to it with the role you play in the youth space?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I think it is part of what we are doing. We are putting more emphasis on this. As part of the Youth Action Plan it is contingent on us now to listen to what young people have said to us. As with all our other programs, and the things I was just talking about before with Aboriginal communities and regional communities, we visit, we listen, we take away the information and we help construct the evidence base, person-at-the-centre programs, from our department's point of view. There is a lived experience youth consultation process that is about to happen, too, next month I think. It is 100 young people as well to continue the work.

The CHAIR: With that answer, the time allotted having expired, I declare the examination of the portfolio of Youth Services complete.

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 and Business Services, Department of Human Services.

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

Ms L. France, Director, Inclusion Policy and Reform, Inclusion, Supports and Safeguarding, Department of Human Services.

The CHAIR: The portfolio is Volunteer Services. The minister appearing is the Minister for Human Services. I advise that the proposed payments remain open for examination. I call on the minister to make a statement, if she so wishes, and to introduce any additional advisers. I also call on the lead speaker, if he so wishes, to make an opening statement.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Thanks to Alex and Mellanie, who have retreated to the gallery, and Liana France has come forward, Director, Inclusion, Policy and Reform, in this area. I do not have an opening statement.

Mr TELFER: Neither do I. I will start with questions. Looking at Volunteer Services, minister, what is the FTE count focused on for Volunteer Services?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have continued to provide funding to Volunteering SA&NT as the peak organisation and the partner in delivering the predominant pieces of our volunteer work and strategy. We have the inclusion directorate that does a range of things across youth, across volunteers, and social policy. We do not have an allocated volunteer FTE, but we work with Volunteering SA&NT as the key delivery partner. You would be aware I think that the previous federal government made significant changes in terms of the delivery of volunteer services across Australia, and Volunteering SA&NT are the key delivery partner in that.

Mr TELFER: What is the dollar figure allocation to Volunteering SA&NT?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have Volunteering SA&NT funded as the peak delivery vehicle for advocacy and impact funding. This next year, we have indexed that to \$404,770. Also, we provide them with funding to deliver grants to support the implementation of the volunteering strategy and also they receive some funding to deliver the corporate volunteering program, and on top of that there is some money allocated to Northern Volunteering and Southern Volunteering, community volunteering core funding, until the end of next financial year, to total \$702,170.

Mr TELFER: Out of that \$702,170, how much is grant funding that you referred to?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: You would call it all a grant in terms of government money.

Mr TELFER: No, you were saying, sorry, they were delivering grant programs?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No, it is a grant to them to support the delivery of the strategy. It is a transfer of cash. If you want to substitute the words 'transfer of funding' for 'grant', that is what you would do. This is not like competitive tender grants. The \$160,000 is allocated to support the implementation of the volunteering strategy, which they can do as they decide to do.

Mr TELFER: Do you have the breakdown of that \$702,170, apart from the \$404,770 and the \$160,000?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is \$45,800 times three, that is each to Northern Volunteering, Southern Volunteering, and corporate volunteering under Volunteering SA&NT, and then \$404,770 to Volunteering SA&NT. Volunteering SA&NT also get that \$160,000 to support the implementation grants of the volunteering strategy, which totals \$702,170.

Mr TELFER: Yes, very good, thank you. How many volunteer organisations received grants from or administered from DHS in 2023-24 and 2024-25?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We will take that on notice because it may cut across different portfolios.

Mr TELFER: You referred before to Southern Volunteering SA, which was the—I did my maths and then I added them together but I did not have the final number—\$136,000 divided by three to get you to—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, \$45,800 each.

Mr TELFER: Is the minister aware that Southern Volunteering SA lost its core funding, and is that \$45,800 sufficient for them to continue to do the work that—

The CHAIR: What page are we on?

Mr TELFER: Sorry, this is around pages 85 and 86. Is there an assessment of the output that is done for the \$45,800 that is allocated, and is that allocation with a vision of it being used in conjunction with other funding?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Again, there were huge changes under the previous commonwealth government in terms of volunteer funding and the funding of Southern Volunteering and

Northern Volunteering that has been provided is to help them to transition to deliver services under the model that has been dictated by the federal government, that I am informed is constitutionally bound. That was a framework set up under the previous Liberal government, if I recall maybe Minister Ruston. I am very pleased now with the work that is happening under the watch of Minister Rishworth to try to improve the situation they inherited two years ago.

We have been providing some additional money. I could take up the whole half an hour describing this, but you probably do not want me to. We can provide you with a briefing. Again, I offer that. I do not believe anyone has asked me for a briefing on these matters. There is quite a succinct target of work that has to be adhered to in terms of delivery vehicle for the volunteer groups and that is around culturally diverse and online—a range of parameters. We have provided additional money to assist them with their transition to do this.

Mr TELFER: Page 85 is about the screening transformation program, which will streamline processes, enhance customer experience and strengthen data security. I am interested in a bit of this as a whole. How many are under the screening services aspect of the department?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will get my department to help me out with a piece of paper because that is back under the first session, but I am happy to answer it as it is very important work.

Mr TELFER: I was just trying to work out what fits under volunteering.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: While there are a number of volunteers who require screening, the percentage of people who are volunteers is much less than workers and the screening unit itself is now not represented fully, but we can talk to it. We are continuing free screening for volunteers. The screening unit, as of 31 May, so not quite a full financial year, had received and determined 44,163 applications from volunteers during the financial period from 1 July to end of May. Out of those, 28,910 were for working with children checks and 3,768 were NDIS worker checks.

But volunteers who are in positions where a statutory DHS screening is not required can obtain the free police check through SAPOL if the organisation they are volunteering for has a VOAN (Volunteer Organisation Authorisation Number) allocated. There are about 2,320 organisations who are registered with SAPOL for a VOAN. As at 5 June, the VOAN numbers processed by SAPOL were 3,914—a substantially lower number than the rest of the screening. Of course, you would be aware that, under the legislation, if people move into paid employment and are working more than seven days in a year they will need to apply for a new check.

Mr TELFER: That is significant—44,163. How is that comparable to previous years?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We do have that. I do not think it is dissimilar, but we will have a little peek. We are very heavily screened here in South Australia. We have some 800,000 people screened. It is slightly less. It is about 1,000 less this year than last, but that was to the end of May, so it looks like we are projecting to go a little higher maybe. The year before was higher again, 48,000, but again that was just post the delivery of the legislation potentially as well, so maybe it had changed. It might not be a unique figure either, just so you know. Say we round it to 45,000. That might not be 45,000 just getting that check. A percentage of those might get multiple different types of checks.

Mr TELFER: Is there a measure and/or a KPI for wait times from that process?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We are doing better than it was. Again, as I said it is a different folder, but we are happy to go back there. I do know we have improved. What the time is, it is currently 7.8 average processing time days, and last year it was 10.1. The year before it was 7.6. It has sat fairly steady.

Re the KPI, over 97 per cent of screens are completed within the month and we monitor 836,000 screens in the continuous monitoring program. We attempt to turn them around as rapidly as we can but, as you know—and all the local members have been subject to the inquiries—sometimes there are some challenges, and that comes with common names, and previous issues, shall we say, that people do not always declare when they come to chat with us.

Mr TELFER: We are getting to a point—and I know this because we have been doing a bit of work in a different committee—where there is going to be a significant glut of reapplications that

will be necessary, as first when the changes came in with the working with children checks. Have there been any additional resources allocated within the department to process these claims, to try to fix this backlog?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr TELFER: How many more? What has the increase been?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Significant. We have put on an additional 38 staff to manage the increase in screening applications that will be subject to the due date, because of the timing. The screening unit received in May 2024 23,997 compared to 16,537 in May the year before.

We have put out messages, contacted organisations, you would be aware that we have made a significant effort—as we do with a lot of things, like our PASA, the personal alerts, all those things, concession is another one. We want people to know there is a change happening, so we make every effort we can to make contact and hope that people come in early.

The signs are good that there are a lot of people coming in, but we have also invested heavily in the department. We onboarded—going back, perhaps it was three months ago—extra people; we have been bringing them on to skill them up, because the expertise required to put a lens over these applications is quite significant.

Mr TELFER: That is 38 extra people?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr TELFER: Extra FTEs?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I am hesitant to say FTE, but there are certainly 38 staff, and the majority of those would be full-time workers—I would be happy to say that.

Mr TELFER: What is that additional cost expectation?

Membership:

Mr Cowdrey substituted for Mr Whetstone.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Is he very tiny? He has got the cloak of invisibility. Where are you?

The CHAIR: I am sure he will be here any minute, minister.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We hold our breath. I think we would like to get you that on notice, so we do not waste any more time, but I think we only have it in dollars, somewhere. Anyway, we will get that on notice. Are you happy with that?

Mr TELFER: Again, I will say that I was one who put my application in in May and got it through within a week—so well done, department.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Magic, absolute magic. You could stand up with me and do some media, if you like.

Mr TELFER: I could do. Regarding the—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: With the additional staff, there will be the additional cost of screening that will come in, and the revenue will come in, so we will recoup some of the staff. There will be swings and roundabouts.

Mr TELFER: Regarding the Volunteering Strategy for South Australia 2011-2017, what update can you provide on this strategy and how much of the budget has been allocated, etc.?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We are obviously the lead agency for implementing that. It talks about a vision for volunteering moving forward. It is localised, it is distinctly South Australian. We have done that in partnership with key stakeholders. We have delivered a number of initiatives—the State of Volunteering report which was released not long ago. Again, I could talk for hours on it. It is fantastic to actually have a document now with some meat on the bones in terms of how we are

volunteering and the challenges and barriers to volunteering. Often it is about people being asked. We know that one of the things we need to do is to actively encourage people to volunteer.

There is the capacity building and support programs for volunteers, involving organisations. Also, something I have talked about is an excellent program called the Student Volunteer Army which is now in seven schools. It is about generating a competitive mindset between young people to volunteer and enter all their volunteer hours in apps so that they can compete with each other. I have been to visit students who are doing this and they tell me that now they are volunteering every day because they want to beat their schoolmate. They are doing an excellent job. These are the sorts of things that are being invested.

Mr TELFER: Is there a budget allocation to the volunteering strategy?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, we are leading it, and that would come out of the directorate around inclusion. The focus might be on youth to do that part, and volunteering to this part, but we are partnering with the agency Volunteering SA&NT to generate that and to deliver on that. That comes within that \$700,00-odd worth of money that is—

Mr TELFER: That \$702,000.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr TELFER: Is there a measurable outcome?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That was the \$178,000 for last year. There were five projects supporting that volunteer strategy. I can tell you quickly there was the biennial State of Volunteering report, the Student Volunteer Army, the Volunteer Organisations Community Support Program, the Volunteering Strategy Partnership Board, and the Volunteer Awards. All of those things are funded to deliver on that strategy to Volunteering SA&NT in partnership with us, done on a shoestring, with a little group.

Mr TELFER: In all my reading of the budget subject matter, which we talked a fair bit about last year, but I cannot find it mentioned at all in the budget papers, is the Community Visitor Scheme.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That would come under Disability. We can talk about that if you wish.

Mr TELFER: Under Disability?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Mr TELFER: I could not find it anywhere. I was wondering if there was a budget allocated to the scheme.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, there is. I think I did talk about that in my opening statement when we talked about increasing it to \$450,000 per year to ensure that ongoing recruitment and retention of visitors could happen. I meet regularly with the Principal Community Visitor. If you remember, the Community Visitor Scheme is funded not just by us but across mental health.

Mr TELFER: On page 92 it mentions it, but it does not give any scope as to the budget allocation, FTE allocation and the like.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It sits in the Office of the Public Advocate. We fund the \$450,000. Obviously, the annual report has not been tabled yet for this year. The estimated budget is in there. The budget for the next financial year is \$474,000, with our estimated result for this year being \$462,000, which is bang on—you will be very pleased with this—exactly the same as the original budget. We finally got one that makes sense for you, well done.

Mr TELFER: One that matches.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is 6.6 FTE.

Mr TELFER: Is there a target that the government has for new visitors to join the scheme in 2024?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: As many as we can.

Mr TELFER: There is no target? There is no KPI? There is no measure point? It is just take it as it comes?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Not that I am aware of. It is managed, as I said, by the Office of the Principal Community Visitor. I believe we have, as of last month or thereabouts, 41 community visitors, which is an increase of six from last year, which is promising and much welcomed. Feel free to spread it amongst your community.

We did have a little win with the Treasurer, where we managed to get him to exempt people who had recently received a package or a payout from the Public Service. Community visitors get a little bit of an allowance, and under those rules they were unable to pay them that, so the Treasurer has provided us with some exemption in that—very generous of him.

Again, I am happy to provide a briefing if you are interested, on the breakdown of numbers and visits, but for the financial year ending, 2024, it is predicted that there would be 755 visits, which comprise 239 scheduled disability service visits, including 217 homes and 575 disability service clients. It is also estimated that the community visitor service visited 22 homes more than once. That is good.

The mental health services made 280 scheduled visits to 455, and 61 other visits to clients of the Office of the Public Advocate. We are working along the recommendations again. We are working out with the disability royal commission, NDIS review, to aim towards having the best, most consistent scheme nationally that we can absolutely deliver on. Knowing that there are extra community visitors gives me some confidence. It is quite a specialised piece of work and it takes quite a dedicated volunteer to do such a piece of work, but it is very rewarding.

Mr TELFER: I would like to ask my colleague the member for Frome to do the omnibus questions.

Ms PRATT: The omnibus questions are:

1. For each department and agency reporting to the minister, how many executive appointments have been made since 1 July 2023 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 2023 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 2023?

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 2023, 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 2024-25 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 2024, 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 2024-25 and each year of the forward estimates;
 - What is the estimated FTE impact of these measures?
9. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
- What was the actual FTE count at June 2024 and what is the projected actual FTE account for the end of each year of the forward estimates;
 - What is the budgeted total employment cost for each year of the forward estimates; and
 - 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 2024-25 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 2024-25 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 2024-25?
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 2023 and budgeted expenditure for 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27?
14. For each grant program or fund the minister is responsible for, please provide the following information for the 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27 financial years:
- Name of the program or fund;
 - The purpose of the program or fund;
 - Budgeted payments into the program or fund;
 - Budgeted expenditure from the program or fund; and
 - Details, including the value and beneficiary, of any commitments already made to be funded from the program or fund.
15. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
- Is the agency confident that you will meet your expenditure targets in 2024-25?
 - Have any budget decisions been made between the delivery of the budget on 6 June 2024 and today that might impact on the numbers presented in the budget papers which we are examining today?
 - Are you expecting any reallocations across your agencies' budget lines during 2024-25; if so, what is the nature of the reallocation?
16. For each department and agency reporting to the minister:
- What South Australian businesses will be used in procurement for your agencies in 2024-25?
 - What percentage of total procurement spend for your agency does this represent?
 - How does this compare to last year?
17. What protocols and monitoring systems has the department implemented to ensure that the productivity, efficiency and quality of service delivery is maintained while employees work from home?

18. 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?

19. 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?

20. 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?

21. 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: With those always very comprehensive questions, the time allotted having expired, I declare the examination of the portfolio of Volunteer Services completed.

Departmental Advisers:

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

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

Ms K. Delguste, Executive Director, Office for Ageing Well, Department for Health and Wellbeing.

Ms C. Mason, Director, Office for Ageing Well, Department for Health and Wellbeing.

Ms H. Watts, Director, Finance and Reporting, Department for Health and Wellbeing.

The CHAIR: Moving to the portfolio of the Office for Ageing Well. The minister appearing is the Minister for Seniors and Ageing Well. I declare the proposed payments open for examination. If the minister so wishes she can make an opening statement, as can the lead speaker for the opposition, and introduce the new advisers.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Thank you. I have with me Kirsty Delguste, Executive Director, Office for Ageing Well. Behind us we have Cassie Mason, Director, Office for Ageing Well, and Heather Watts, Director, Finance and Reporting, Department for Health and Wellbeing, where all the arrangements still sit until 1 July. We are in a transitional phase, so bear with us.

Because it is a bit of transition, I just want to go through a quick opening statement, if that is okay. This is a new area for me and I am very excited to make some new colleague relationships and join in with this important agency. You always back a horse called 'self-interest', and I am one of the older members of the caucus. Most of the Office for Ageing Well will formally transfer over, as I said, on 1 July and that will be a bit of a homecoming for the Office for Ageing Well, with the former office, as it was known, being part of the former Department for Families and Communities, the old version of DHS. It is great to have everyone back together again.

The clinical part of the office that deals with commonwealth aged-care assessments will remain with SA Health, while matters relating to retirement villages will be shared until the legislation before the parliament is completed. That will stay as a kind of shared arrangement. DHS will now have policy responsibilities over the whole course of people's lives, from programs helping young families and youth to older people. In between, during the younger and the later years, we have responsibility for disability inclusion, LGBTQIA+, carers and volunteers, amongst other areas. So we will have links to people at different times in their lives and in different circumstances.

In 2023-24, the Office for Ageing Well directly funded, managed and collaborated on 72 projects to deliver on its strategic plan while also offering various grants, which is a big difference since the days when ageing was a part of Human Services. We have established the Adult Safeguarding Unit, which received significant funding under the first two budgets of the Malinauskas government. The unit receives more than 3,000 contacts a year and provides a range of advice, assessment and referral to help people in situations, including suspected elder abuse. The

office is working on the SA Law Reform Institute recommendations that are expected to result in a bill to amend the Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act.

At a broad level, the office has a huge focus on tackling ageism. With 700,000 South Australians aged over 50, this is something we should all reflect on in our own lives and workplaces. Something many of you will be aware of is the Seniors Card program, which is managed by the Office for Ageing Well. It has more than 400,000 card holders, who now all get free 24 hours a day public transport.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Member for Frome.

Ms PRATT: Thank you, Chair. I thank the minister and the public servants who have come along today to support this final session focusing on the very important topic of ageing. I do not think my questions have been leaked to the minister, but she has certainly pre-empted what I imagine is going to be a discourse on this transition process so that we can understand it as well. Congratulations on taking on this portfolio of seniors and ageing well. It is a history lesson for me to see it absorbed back into what was, I think you said, Families and Communities previously.

If you will indulge my questions along the way, minister, as I risk doubling up on some of the topics you have just covered. My first question to you—and I refer to Budget Paper 4, Volume 3, page 80—starts with ministerial office resources (but that is because there are limitations across the budget in terms of reference points). Minister, can you expand on your opening statement in terms of the transition on 1 July? Has the Office for Ageing Well been MoG'd? Has there been a machinery of government piece where we are going to see it come out of Health and into DHS, or is there a different—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, apart from the clinical component of the aged-care assessments that will remain in health, which is appropriate. Apart from that, the rest of the agency will be MoG'd across to the Department of Human Services. There are five business units in the Office for Ageing Well, and the Ageing and Adult Safeguarding Act, the Retirement Villages Act and South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well are all being delivered by those units.

Ms PRATT: Sorry, minister, to clarify: is the Office for Ageing Well, being MoG'd to DHS as per the website, still going to be managing those?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, they will be picked up and moved across, ostensibly under the chief executive direction of Sandy Pitcher, with support by the deputy chief executive, Ruth Ambler. Kirsty Delguste and the team will come across but currently remain in the same offices that they are in.

Ms PRATT: A clarifying question on that: the clinical element that is to be retained by SA Health is what specifically?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Specialist dementia care and aged-care assessments.

Ms PRATT: The opening statements by the Chair were read in very quickly. Do you mind explaining what is the operating budget of the Office for Ageing Well as it transfers over? I heard \$1 billion or thereabouts, but that might not have been the figure, I do not think.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The budget is \$8,257,000 that will transfer.

Ms PRATT: Better. Are any new positions being created in that transition?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: None.

Ms PRATT: None advertised?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No.

Ms PRATT: Any lost?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No. There are about eight to 10 FTEs who remain with the clinical and dementia component, and the rest come across.

Ms PRATT: Have you or will you acquire more ministerial staff as a result of that additional portfolio?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No.

Ms PRATT: You have not lost any to colleagues as part of the portfolio shift as well?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No. We had a shared MLO to support housing, but that is a departmental staff member.

Ms PRATT: At the departmental level, in regard to any expertise and shared understanding around housing, staff with that expertise as public servants might have moved on, but no shift at the ministerial adviser level?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: No.

Ms PRATT: What briefings have you already received as a result of becoming the Minister for Seniors and Ageing Well? Can you expand on that perhaps?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That is a really great question; I am glad you asked it. It also shows insight as to your understanding of how operations occur. Immediately we had a catch-up with the executive team and talked about all of the areas that each part of the portfolio covers. We talked about the aged-care assessment component and what was not coming.

I visited the Office for Ageing Well. I have spoken to every section in that area. They have an open plan work space, but have separate areas. I met with the team that does the Seniors Card, adult safeguarding, retirement villages, the aged-care strategy—all of those groups—and spent a morning there with my ministerial adviser team as well. We went to get to know them. I had really excellent incoming briefs provided to me as well to absorb, and I have read them multiple times and carry them with me quite a bit.

We have incorporated as well the executive team into our huddles we have as part of the team to come across. I have separately had two sessions to brief me on the Retirement Villages Act and its current status, so that I can help support Minister Picton through the carriage of that bill and respond to inquiries.

Ms PRATT: As a result of those briefings, who would you say you have identified as the key stakeholders for this portfolio, which is not just simply called the Office for Ageing Well but is seniors and ageing?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There is an exhaustive list, but a lot of them mirror the stakeholders we already have contact with as part of Department of Human Services: obviously COTA, ARAS—organisations you would be well familiar with—SA Retirement Villages Residents Association, multicultural ageing groups and the aged-care sector. To be perfectly honest, I have not met with all of them yet.

Ms PRATT: There is no gotcha coming. I am comparing notes with my list to see whether I can discover any groups that are not covered off that should be.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: There are also priority communities like the Aboriginal community, obviously SACOSS is a big, important stakeholder in this, local government and regional communities.

Ms PRATT: That is comprehensive, minister. To state the obvious, there is not a natural way for me to, I guess, interrogate the budget around this agency, so I appreciate the goodwill this afternoon. As the incoming minister for this newly named portfolio, do you have key priorities? I know what the website stipulates are legislative statutory requirements, but what is the government's ambition, through you, for the next 12 months?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Often, when I am speaking to communities, I talk about the fact that we have done really well as a society to engage with health and other portfolios to make sure people live longer, and that is a reality: we are living longer. My key ambition is to assist the agency to put in place priorities and strategies around living better and living better into older age, and helping to break down some of the ageism ideology that many people have in terms of their conversations.

The Plan for Ageing Well, there is a final review to come on that. I think, if I can remember my wording to Kirsty, it was something like: the new one is due next year but let's not stuff around,

let's get stuck into this right away and start having some key conversations that will stand us in good stead to have the new plan ready to roll next year. I do not want it to get lost in the noise that becomes an election. Let's have a good conversation and, in what have been changing times, older people have significant concerns about their children, their grandchildren and the future, and we look forward to making sure we have statewide conversations with communities about their priorities to formulate the next Plan for Ageing Well.

I think that is the key. Once we get through—I will not call it noise—the delivery on the Retirement Villages Act in its newest form, which obviously we cannot talk about right now, but once we get through that I want us to start talking about how we support our community that is ageing to live in better quality housing that is better fit for purpose. I still retain some of that thinking, so I think that is something I want to talk to the community about moving forward as well.

Ms PRATT: Just to jump around a bit then and move on to the state ageing plan, I will be referencing what is an SA Health page, page 23 of Volume 3, the sub-program Strategy and Governance, but you would be familiar with this target to undertake statewide consultation to inform the development of a new state ageing plan. That is it in terms of budget reference. To extrapolate: the next transition that we are seeing in ageing between the current plan that we have, as I understand it, is South Australia's Plan for Ageing Well 2020-2025, yes?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes.

Ms PRATT: That is what we are currently operating with?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, correct.

Ms PRATT: It was published on the website in June last year and October, this new phase that the agency will be working towards: the state ageing plan. They are the two—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, they are the same thing. They are all synonymous.

Ms PRATT: They come across as two separate documents that will interact. So one concludes and the state ageing plan consultation process is underway?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Correct—the next iteration, yes.

Ms PRATT: You can pre-empt the questions: what consultation has been planned? What regions are going to be involved in any consultation process? What is the cost to implement that state ageing plan?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The final review of the impact of the current plan is happening and then the plan is being put in place to consult statewide. Clear Horizon is the group that will be undertaking this. We talked about this in one of the last sessions. Sometimes it is advisable to have someone with an independent view that can come in and do that work and that is what is happening with us. We are seeking outside support. The midpoint review happened in 2023 and that was measured against the Ageing Well Measuring Success Framework. Do you want to hear what the review said?

Ms PRATT: I do, but if I can just ask a clarifying question. What is the difference between the Plan for Ageing Well, which was reviewed by UPRS in your first year of government, and the state ageing plan? What is the change in language?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The state ageing plan is a colloquial term for the South Australian Plan for Ageing Well. It is a bit like with disability—we call that the state plan, but it is the Disability Inclusion Plan, so it is a colloquial term.

Ms PRATT: That is fine. I am bound to use the language that the budget gives me, which is a colloquial term, so I can read between the lines.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The review indicated that there were ongoing concerns around persistent ageism, with 50 per cent of older people not feeling valued by those around them. I think there are lessons in this for all of us. Negative language persists in the public domain, even when it is used jokingly. I think that is one of the key points. Policies and programs do not necessarily cater

for individual needs and language, culture and identity are barriers to connecting with others and receiving appropriate supports and services.

Some older people felt that they were treated as if they are a single, homogenous group. I will extrapolate from that and go off script just slightly to say that I spent some time last week with the LGBTIQ community. I should say LGBTI+ community because older people find the word 'queer' an offensive term. I spent some time with that cohort, and they strongly said to me that people expect older people to just be white, straight people and they are not all like that. I think we need to acknowledge there is a diversity amongst older people that is rich and particularly interesting and valuable to our community. There are a range of services, such as aged care, health, housing and Centrelink, that appear to the consumer as quite indifferent when it comes to people identifying as diverse.

It also says that less than half of the people surveyed felt that support and services focus on what is important to them as individuals, so we need more individualised services that acknowledge diversity, use better language and probably celebrate what is a diverse ageing population.

Ms PRATT: Minister, it is no surprise to you, I am sure, that the Council on the Ageing's pre-budget submission called for a number of things, including better investment in transport for elderly people living in the regions, so how does this budget or the state ageing plan start to address that need?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: We have already put in place 24-hour travel in the metro area, which is great and well celebrated. I acknowledge that there are particular challenges, but I can traverse across a little bit to the passenger transport network, which is up to the age of 65 in the age group that it services. We have shifted some money in that service from the inner metro area out to regional, so we have moved some money to fund some additional services. The simple answer is that there is not a specific budget investment at this point, but that is not to say it is not something I will certainly be discussing.

Ms PRATT: So how would you classify 'some money'? I refer to page 86 of this same budget paper where there is a commitment to redesign and recommission the CPNs. What is the time frame and cost to review and redesign the CPN network?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes; we will do that recommissioning within existing resources.

Ms PRATT: What is 'some money', as you explain it, that will be transferred?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Passenger network is \$1.49 million, and we moved—

Ms PRATT: Is that all state money or is there a commonwealth contribution to that?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: That is state money.

Ms PRATT: Is there a commonwealth contribution to the CPN?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes, the commonwealth does over 65.

Ms PRATT: So there is a financial contribution to the community passenger—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Yes; it is separate.

Ms PRATT: A different age group?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is different, a different service; yes.

Ms PRATT: Alright; I will write you a letter.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: You can; and we will explain it. We expanded to Gawler, Alexandrina and Upper Spencer Gulf, which did not previously have a service. That was money we identified was being put into inner suburban Adelaide, which had a plethora of alternative methods of transport. So we did what we could to provide options in those other areas.

Ms PRATT: Page 23, referencing through the health budget a commitment to aged care, the Office for Ageing Well website does have what I am going to take as my permission to ask this

question about workforce. What proportion of the nursing workforce for aged care is employed on a state-based EBA, and what steps is the government taking to recruit more?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I apologise but that is a health workforce, and I cannot answer those questions for you. They have to go to the Minister for Health.

Ms PRATT: Can you explain further, then, why workforce would not be a key priority for the Office for Ageing Well strategic plan in delivering appropriate quality aged care?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: The Office for Ageing Well has a focus on the delivery of community strategy and policy. The provision of clinical services is under the Minister for Health, but we have, across a number of portfolios—and I can think of Disability, which is similar to this—made an absolutely concerted effort to invest in TAFE to provide a range of subsidised and free training programs to lift the workforce and build the skills and capabilities of people working in all of these care roles—which are also traditionally women in the main, but acknowledging that diversity is welcomed.

Across government we have a focus and priority on training and skills, and I understand Minister Boyer has made another announcement today. Also within the strategy, and separate to that, we are focused on ensuring that people who are ageing can still participate in the workforce. This is one of the problems with the language and with ageism, that people assume that people who are older are unable to undertake certain work. We know that is not true; we know that older people are reliable, committed and also knowledgeable.

Ms PRATT: Are you aware then—a final question on that unsanctioned topic—that employees of SA Health Country Connect have not benefitted from or received the federal commonwealth pay rise, and that that is a tension point for state-based versus federally employed—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will refer that to Minister Picton.

Ms PRATT: Will you take it on notice or—

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will refer it to Minister Picton as a question.

Ms PRATT: Thank you. I am mindful of the time, but just referencing the retirement villages—this is page 23—in terms of the government having already introduced into parliament the retirement villages amendment bill. You have signalled that there will be shared responsibilities and we are likely to see it return for spring. Who is going to be leading the legislation?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Minister Picton.

Ms PRATT: What support will you be providing? What role will you play in the carriage of that bill?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I will continue to talk with stakeholders and continue to offer my support in terms of provision of time to help with people contributing towards the debate. Minister Picton will maintain the responsibility for that. That is the summary, that is it, basically. He will maintain the responsibility as the minister who has tabled the bill and he will continue with that. I have had a comprehensive briefing and I am able to provide support in the community to people who are asking questions and seeking information on its carriage.

Ms PRATT: Thank you, minister. What might be the final question then, pages 87 and 88. Just as a way for me to better understand this reference of funeral concessions, who qualifies for funeral concessions, and how would the additional \$1.0 million be distributed?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: I like the segue from older people to funerals.

Ms PRATT: May they never read into it.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: Do not read anything into it, anybody. Often the funerals are younger people, to be quite honest, because they are—

Ms PRATT: That is why I am asking.

The Hon. N.F. COOK: —people who are experiencing significant disadvantage. You will be pleased to know that we have reviewed the qualification and are expanding it. The provision provided

is the arrangement and delivery of dignified, simple funerals for people with insufficient means, including all legally necessary inclusions as part of the funeral provision. From 1 July, we are increasing the means test of permitted accessible funds in estate and for immediate relatives from \$3,000 to \$4,000, and we expect to support up to 50 more funerals annually.

Ms PRATT: I am sure that expansion will be welcome. How is that determined? Is there means testing? How are their needs assessed?

The Hon. N.F. COOK: It is means tested. We have taken it from \$3,000 money in the bank to \$4,000 money in the bank. That is the means test. Our experience is that people who have more means available do not apply for it. In fact, we need to make sure that people know that we are there to help, and we have proactively offered this as well to families in distress.

Ms PRATT: Thank you.

The CHAIR: The allotted time having expired, I declare the examination of the portfolio 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 is now complete. Thank you to the minister and the opposition, all the public servants and advisers, and the parliamentary staff for all the effort that goes into preparing for estimates. I declare the committee now stands adjourned until Tuesday 25 June at 9am.

At 12:32 the committee adjourned to Tuesday 25 June 2024 at 09:00.