

# PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 5 - JUSTICE AND COMMUNITIES

Tuesday 27 February 2024

Examination of proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas

## WOMEN, SENIORS, AND PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

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The Committee met at 9:15.

### MEMBERS

The Hon. Robert Borsak (Chair)

Ms Abigail Boyd

The Hon. Susan Carter

The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine

The Hon. Stephen Lawrence

The Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones

The Hon. Emily Suvaal

### PRESENT

**The Hon. Jodie Harrison**, *Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault*

## **CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS**

**Corrections should be marked on a photocopy of the proof and forwarded to:**

**Budget Estimates secretariat  
Room 812  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000**



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**The CHAIR:** Welcome to the second hearing of the Portfolio Committee No. 5 - Justice and Communities for the additional round of the inquiry into budget estimates 2023-24. I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales. I also acknowledge and pay my respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people joining us today. My name is Robert Borsak. I am the Chair of the Committee. I welcome Minister Harrison and accompanying officials to the hearing.

Today the Committee will examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolios of Women, Seniors, and the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. I ask everyone in the room to please turn their mobile phones to silent. Parliamentary privilege applies to witnesses in relation to the evidence they give today. However, it does not apply to what witnesses say outside the hearing. I urge witnesses to be careful about making comments to the media or to others after completing their evidence. In addition, the Legislative Council has adopted rules to provide procedural fairness for inquiry participants, and I encourage Committee members and witnesses to be mindful of those procedures. To the witnesses, I welcome and thank you for making the time to give evidence. Minister, I remind you that you do not need to be sworn as you have already sworn an oath to your office as a member of Parliament. The witnesses do not need to be sworn as they were sworn before this Committee during the initial inquiry.

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**Mr MICHAEL TIDBALL**, Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice, on former oath

**Ms ANNE CAMPBELL**, Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Policy and Commissioning, Department of Communities and Justice, on former affirmation

**Dr HANNAH TONKIN**, Women's Safety Commissioner, Department of Communities and Justice, on former affirmation

**Ms KATE MEAGHER**, Deputy Secretary, Community Engagement Group, Premier's Department, on former affirmation

**Ms TANYA SMYTH**, Director Women NSW, Premier's Department, on former affirmation

**Mr ROBERT FITZGERALD**, NSW Ageing and Disability Commissioner, NSW Ageing and Disability Commission, on former oath

**The CHAIR:** Today's hearing will commence at 9.15 a.m. and will run to 5.30 p.m. We are joined by the Minister for the morning session from 9.15 a.m. to 1.00 p.m., with 15-minute break at 11.00 a.m. In the afternoon we will hear from departmental witnesses from 2.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m., with a 15-minute break at 3.30 p.m. During these sessions there will be questions from Opposition and crossbench members only, with 15 minutes allocated for Government questions at 10.45 a.m., 12.45 p.m. and 5.15 p.m. We will begin with questions from the Opposition.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Good morning, Minister. It's nice to see you here. We are all aware of the quarter of a billion dollar cuts to palliative care and that, as the health Minister made clear, these aren't capital cuts; these are cuts to staffing and who can be employed. Are you concerned about who will be asked to fill in these cuts to palliative care?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think the Minister for Health has been quite clear on the fact that there have been no cuts to the palliative care budget in comparison with previous years.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** If I can redirect, Minister, yes, but there are cuts on what was in the forward estimates and there are cuts in every local health district [LHD] on the staff they had been proposing to employ. Who will fill in that care? Who will be providing the care? As Minister for Women, are you concerned about who will be called on to fill in for those cuts in care for people who are dying?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** If indeed there are any cuts, the question should be directed to the Minister for Health. He has oversight of palliative care.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, you would be aware that women are more likely to be carers than men and that women aged between 55 and 64 are the most likely population group to be carers. What modelling work has your department done on the impact on carers, especially women, of these cuts to palliative care?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** As I said at the beginning of my answer, there have been no cuts to the palliative care budget in comparison with previous years. In fact, there has been an increase.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** So, Minister, you are saying that each LHD will be able to employ every single palliative care nurse that was in their business plan for the years out to 2027?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That question is a question that would need to be—

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** Point of order: This is outside the terms of reference for the portfolio committee that the Minister has jurisdiction of. In the resolution appointing the budget estimates committees, it is very clear that questions should be contained to matters over which the Minister has responsibility.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** To the point of order: Chair, these are questions about the impact of cuts on women and on carers, which are the areas of responsibility of the Minister.

**The CHAIR:** There is no point of order.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, were the needs of women specifically considered in the development of the policy in relation to funding for palliative care?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have no doubt that the needs of people of all diversities were considered in relation to decisions that this Government makes.

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**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** As the Minister for Women, was your voice heard in relation to these cuts in palliative care?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm not going into discussions that I've had with my parliamentary colleagues, nor my Cabinet colleagues.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, you would be aware that in the Illawarra local health district they currently indicate a 38 per cent unmet demand in palliative care. Are you concerned about what the impact will be on women and on carers of meeting this existing unmet demand as well as the cuts going forward?

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** There have been no cuts. I think you can stop there.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I will reiterate my previous answer: There have been no cuts, in comparison to previous budgets. There is an increase in palliative care budget in this year's budget, in comparison to previous years.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, does your budget—which is a reduction in the forward estimates—meet the 38 per cent unmet demand for carers in the Illawarra local health district?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** My budget has not been changed at all in relation to palliative care. My budget has no oversight of palliative care. That's a question for the Minister for Health.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** What work have you done to advocate for the interests of women and carers? We know who will meet the burden of the cuts in palliative care. We know it will be women. What work have you done to advocate for those women?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** As I previously said, I am constantly advocating for the issues relating to women and carers, and I have had discussions on an ongoing basis with the Minister for Health—in fact, all of my ministerial colleagues—about issues relating to my portfolio.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** The 50 per cent cut to paediatric palliative care in the Hunter—have you advocated for the mothers who will be providing the care for their dying children?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Ms Carter, as I previously said, I advocate in relation to my portfolio on a regular basis, and I'm not going to go into detailed conversations that I have with my Cabinet colleagues.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** So have you spoken up for women carers in relation to the cuts to palliative care?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I constantly speak up in relation to issues relating to my portfolio.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Thank you.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, on 28 January last year, you made an election commitment of \$7 million for specialist support programs for migrants and refugees experiencing domestic and family violence. Has this money been delivered?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think you are talking about the commitment in relation to a specialist multicultural domestic violence centre, a centre of excellence.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** That's correct.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** It is very close to being delivered. In fact—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Did you announce any funding in the last budget?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There is funding in this year's budget, absolutely there is.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** How much is that?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** It's a four-year commitment for—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** This is your own portfolio, Minister.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes, indeed.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Surely you know how much you announced.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** It's 4.4 million, Minister.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** So \$4.4 million. The centre is going to be based in south-western Sydney, and it's being delivered in partnership with Settlement Services International.

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**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** So why the \$2.6 million cut from your original announcement of 7 million?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** This is in relation to the contract that has been signed for.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I understand that, Minister. But you announced last year 7 million for this, and yet, in this year's budget, you only announced 4.4. Why the cut?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There's no cut. The commitment is as it stands and as it was made. The full commitment is being achieved.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** So you are delivering 7 million?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** We are delivering a specialist domestic violence service in relation to multicultural services, in partnership with Settlement Services International. I'm very pleased to be able to do so.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But your budget only includes 4.4. What has happened to the additional 2.6 million?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The service will be delivered as was committed.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But you've cut the funding for that service. You announced in the election 7 million, but you're only committing 4.4. Why would you mislead the people of Western Sydney?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The specialist multicultural service being delivered in partnership with Settlement Services International will be, in fact, a national first, providing a centre of excellence for domestic violence providers and for victims.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Where will this centre be located?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'll be making an announcement imminently on that. It'll be in south-western Sydney. I'm very pleased that we are very, very close to finalising the details and I believe that we are very close to having signed contracts.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Minister, if I can just supplement, there was a package of announcements for around \$7 and \$7.5 million, of which to my knowledge the allocation for a multicultural domestic and family violence support service was always 4.4. There were some other things in there with a higher figure that came out at 7.5.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, you also announced in October 2022—or Chris Minns announced—the delivery of an independent victims commissioner. Has that been budgeted for?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That is a commitment that sits within the Attorney General's responsibilities.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** In July 2022 you also announced an additional 25 counsellors for the sexual violence helpline. How many have been rolled out?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** We've been negotiating with Full Stop Australia in relation to that. We are in the final throes of the actual contracts for that. As soon as—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** So none to date? Have you delivered any additional counsellors as you said you would?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Full Stop Australia has been providing excellent support and we have been—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I agree that they're doing a fantastic job but you committed to 25 additional counsellors. Have you delivered any additional counsellors to support them?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** We're in the process of finalising contracts in relation to that.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** How many calls have been made to the helpline in the past 12 months?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I would have to take that on notice. Full Stop Australia holds those figures. In the past 12 months—so that I can give you the best possible and most up-to-date figures, I'll need to take that question on notice.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** How many calls were unanswered?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Again, I'd need to take that question on notice so that I can give you the most up-to-date and current figures.

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**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** That's fine. Minister, according to your diary disclosures, you meet regularly with Domestic Violence NSW. Is that correct?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I do.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Where do they consider the investment in domestic violence services should be targeted?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Domestic Violence NSW, I believe—that's probably a question best asked of them directly.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But you've met with them on multiple times.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** What have they raised as the priority?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** They've raised a range of issues in relation to the entire domestic violence prevention—domestic violence and sexual assault strategies. Both of them, in fact.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** What are the top four?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The issues that they raise in those meetings or where they believe funding should be spent?

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** The top four issues that they would like funded.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** They frequently raise the issue of workforce with me. That's probably a key issue that they raise—workforce. And they certainly raise the issue of the need for accommodation, but workforce is probably the key issue.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Have you seen their pre-budget submission?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** The first item is actually an increase of core funding. Will you commit to delivering more funding?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm not going to make any commitments in relation to next year's budget. I know their first call is actually for core funding for themselves as a peak.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Their priorities are, as I said, core funding, increased targeted investment in funding, primary prevention and also further investment in the rollout of Core and Cluster. Do you agree that these are top priorities?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think that Domestic Violence NSW is very good at assessing the issues that face domestic violence victims and where resources should be spent, yes.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you think more resources should be provided to support women and children escaping domestic violence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think we can always do more in relation to the way we support domestic and family violence victims.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you agree that the cost-of-living crisis is hurting families across the State?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Absolutely. Cost of living is a major issue and it is something that this Government is very focused on addressing.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** The CEO of Domestic Violence NSW has also said that. In a budget statement last year, they said:

The cost-of-living crisis is impacting us all, but for victim-survivors it's costing lives and liberty and this is too high a price to pay ... Do you agree with that statement?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think there is a range of things that go towards people who—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** It's a simple yes or no question. Do you agree with that statement?



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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** No, I think there's a range of issues that feed into and result in domestic, family and sexual violence in this State; cost of living being one of those issues.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, why has your Government continued to cut cost-of-living measures that have been supporting families?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** We are providing targeted supports in relation to cost of living wherever we possibly can, given the dire budget situation that we inherited.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, what actual cost-of-living measures support are you providing women and children escaping domestic violence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Staying Home Leaving Violence is one of the key supports that we are providing.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** What specific cost-of-living measures are you providing? What programs, what funding? You've cut Active Kids programs. What support are you actually giving families who are escaping domestic violence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think I can give you the answers in relation to my portfolio. I can't give you all of the cost-of-living measures that we're providing, but I can certainly give you the measures that we're providing in my portfolio. Certainly in relation to domestic and family violence, Staying Home Leaving Violence is a key support. There are also brokerage funds that are being provided to domestic and family violence victims through specialist services across the State. I can give you further detail if you'd like, but I'd need to take it on notice.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Are you aware the Staying Home Leaving Violence program is not a cost-of-living measure?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Spending in the area of domestic and family violence assists victims of domestic and family violence, whether it be as a result of cost of living or not. Staying Home Leaving Violence provides funds to victims of domestic and family violence. To say that it's not—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, there's obviously nothing specific you're providing to support people with cost-of-living pressures. I'll move on to my next question. Are you familiar with the High Court decision in *BA v The King* [2023] that was handed down last May?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** The finding found that a man who kicked his former partner's door in was not guilty of trespass because his name was on the lease. Are you familiar with that?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I am.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** What action have you taken to address this issue?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm aware that the Attorney General is working through that decision and the impacts that decision has and the way that it relates to our laws. That would be a question for the Attorney General any further.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Have you met with the Attorney General about the legislation?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have had discussions with the Attorney General on a range of things.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** When will legislation be introduced?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I will allow the Attorney General to answer that question.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, in relation to the tenders for tranche 3 of Core and Cluster, which closed in January this year, when will the announcement be made?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Announcements will be made in relation to the third tranche of Core and Cluster by, I think, the end of this—

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** The middle of this year.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The end of this financial year?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Yes.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The end of this financial year.

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**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Are you on target to meet the 75 refugees?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think the previous Government actually stopped using those 75 refugees figures.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I'm asking you: Are you on target?

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Were you?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That was the previous Government's target and the previous Government actually stopped using that target.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** How many refugees will be funded?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** We will be on target for providing additional places for more than 2,900 women and children each and every year once—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But you don't know how many refugees you will be announcing?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The previous Government walked away from that target.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, I'm asking you now, tranche 3 has closed—

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm not going to give—I can't give—a figure on the number of refugees. I can give you a commitment that there will be additional places for an additional 2,900 women and children each and every year once all of the Core and Cluster refugees have been provided.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, tranche 3 included a targeted procurement process for Aboriginal-led refugees. Is there a target on the number of Aboriginal refugees?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There is not a target on the number of Aboriginal-led refugees. However, they are being prioritised. The reason I was so keen, as Minister, to make that decision was that, in the 39 Core and Cluster refugees that had been determined by the previous Government, only five were actually Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led, so—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** How many will be announced this year? What is your target? What is the number? How many would you like—

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I can tell you that we are prioritising Aboriginal-led applications and I'll be making announcements in relation to that.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you have a percentage that you're aiming towards?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** This Government is working with peak organisations, including Domestic Violence NSW and Aboriginal-controlled community organisations, to ensure that we get the best possible outcome for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to this issue.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But you don't know how many or what the percentage is of refugees?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm not going to give you that answer today.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Will you take it on notice?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I will provide you an answer on notice in relation to what we will be doing to increase the numbers of Aboriginal community controlled organisation-led Core and Cluster refugees.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Can we start with the Government's response so far to recommendations from the domestic and family violence sector in relation to domestic violence within the queer community? As you will recall, a number of detailed recommendations have been made from the domestic and family violence sector over the past decades, but particularly over the past six years, calling for targeted interventions in that community. What has the Government done?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Firstly, I certainly want to acknowledge that domestic and family violence is an issue that affects all communities within New South Wales, including LGBTI communities. We have certainly seen, allegedly, the horrific event of that in the past week. We know that LGBTI communities face increased risks of experiencing domestic and family violence and that they also have additional barriers in accessing services and accessing support and safety. We have implemented a number of strategies to provide increased support—better support—for LGBTIQ people, including additional frontline workers through the National Partnership Agreement. That is something that is just being locked down now. Only last week I was at ACON to talk to them

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about the additional specialist workers that they are receiving as a result of the National Partnership Agreement. ACON will be getting an additional three part-time staff across Sydney and Lismore from 4 March and they are recruiting for positions in Sydney and Newcastle currently. That is currently underway.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Sorry, what are those positions for?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** They're additional specialist workers funded under the National Partnership Agreement.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Great.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There are certainly additional frontline workers being provided. That is through ACON, through Twenty10 and through the Gender Centre. We are also providing funding to ACON Health for specialist community engagement research and programs, including working through the LGBTI sexual domestic and family violence program, funding for perpetrator programs for LGBTI perpetrators and the NSW Sexual Violence Project Fund also has funds targeted for LGBTIQ people.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Has there been anything done so far in relation to the calls to better educate both the police and the judiciary when it comes to what domestic and family violence looks like within the queer community?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I know that there is a significant amount of work being done within police and the judicial system on their understanding of how domestic and family violence affects communities of all ranges and that would include LGBTIQ people.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Is there anything targeted towards the queer community? One of the main themes of advocacy in the domestic and family violence space over the last couple of decades has been that acknowledgement of the way that intersectionality plays out when it comes to challenges faced by particular groups. When it comes to the queer community there is a particular—given the history of police discrimination against the queer community and the history of some of the battles that have been had there, as we have seen through the gay and transgender hate crimes inquiry and review. There is a real trust issue there between the queer community and the police, which then exacerbate the issues when it comes to policing. What has been done specifically in relation to that issue?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm not aware of what's actually being done within the police themselves, nor the judiciary. Mr Tidball?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** In relation to the judiciary, I'll be back with the Attorney General for his estimates Friday week. I would certainly be happy to inquire of the Judicial Commission for that hearing to give you a specific response.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you, that will be very useful.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Ms Meagher can also provide some additional information.

**KATE MEAGHER:** Thanks, Minister. There were a number of election commitments that the Government took to the election that the Premier's Department is implementing now. One of them is an LGBTIQ cross-government committee and our work will be to bring leaders in different portfolio areas, in particular in the police—Mr Tidball's portfolio—with Health, Education, so Police, Justice. Sitting alongside all of that will be an external advisory council, an LGBTIQ advisory council, that's due to be stood up reasonably soon. There are definitely programs and structures in place for making sure that those conversations are joined up.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Perhaps you could take on notice looking at, or perhaps I can provide supplementary questions, the specific calls from the sector over the years in relation to this issue and what the response has been so far to that or what the intended response is from the Government on those issues. Staying with the policing issues then, one of the things I raised with the police Minister last week was in relation to the numbers of serving police officers who have been charged with domestic and family violence offences. The current numbers had it at 59 serving police officers have been charged with domestic and family violence offences and that four of them—I think maybe that had dropped to three by the time we had the estimates—have been convicted of domestic and family violence offences but are still serving police officers. Do you see that as a problem in terms of creating a culture within the police where victims of domestic and family violence can come forward?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think, to start off with, it's worth noting that perpetrators of any crime can come from any walk of life and any professional area. Having said that, people place a lot of trust in police, and they should be able to. I know, again, that there is a lot of work being done in the police space about better responding to domestic and family violence. That would also relate to the way—the detail, that's probably best

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put to the police Minister, but I know that there's a lot of training work being done by police that Domestic Violence NSW has actually seen some of.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** We'll come back to that in the next set of questions, I think. In your comment about that there is obviously a certain percentage of people across all professions who, very unfortunately, have been found to be perpetrators of domestic and family violence. But in the case of serving police officers, these are people on the front line who are then receiving claims from the public in relation to domestic and family violence. In the context of the reports that we saw from the LECC and also from the Auditor-General—really quite scathing reports about the culture of policing when it comes to domestic and family violence. Do you not see that as a particular problem, that we have serving police officers—I haven't even talked about the numbers with ADVOs against them—sitting within the ranks?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think people need to be able to trust the police. A victim of domestic violence who walks into a police station needs to be able to feel that a complaint that they are making in relation to somebody else will be taken seriously and will be dealt with properly. That, to me, is really, really key. The police force should be doing everything in its power to make sure that domestic and family violence victims—in fact, anybody who walks in to report a crime, but particularly, in my portfolio—that their complaint is dealt with properly and investigated fully and their perpetrator is brought to account.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** In both that LECC report and in the Auditor-General's report, they made the recommendation that, at the very least, a serving police officer who is accused of domestic and family violence should not be investigated by their mates within the same basic—sorry, I never get the terminology right, but within the same precinct.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Police district local area command.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** District, yes. But instead of there being a discretion on whether or not to have them investigated by a different—sorry, what did you just say? Command precinct?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Local area command police district. There are two different words for them.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Instead, we have a situation where someone from a different station that doesn't—I keep failing to say "district". Someone from a different district should be basically investigating those claims to avoid at least a perception of bias. That recommendation has been rejected by the NSW Police Force. Do you think that is a recommendation that instead they should be adopting?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think the recommendations of LECC are something that should always be taken really seriously and investigated fully. I don't know the reasoning behind police making the determination that they have, but I certainly would hope that those recommendations have really, really been taken very seriously and examined fully.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** They haven't. As Minister for the prevention of domestic violence, given that we have 40 per cent of all police work being involved with domestic and family violence matters, will you lobby your own Government for them to put in some sort of legislative solution to this to ensure that, at the very least, we don't have police investigating themselves when it comes to domestic and family violence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I will have further discussions, as I have ongoing discussions, with the police Minister in relation to the way that police deal with domestic and family violence, including the LECC recommendations.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** What interaction do you have with the police Minister when it comes to these issues? Is there an ongoing dialogue?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Absolutely. I have regular conversations with all of my parliamentary colleagues, in particular with the police Minister and with the Attorney General.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Are you aware that the police systems are also basically—in my words—setting police up to fail when it comes to dealing with domestic and family violence issues? Is that an issue that you have been looking into?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Could you please explain and take me through that?

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Sure. Again, one of the things that was mentioned in the Auditor-General's report in relation to policing of domestic and family violence issues is that we're working off a system in New South Wales, what they call the COPS system, which is primarily incident based and is a very clunky system. The New South Wales Government has been trying since 2013 to upgrade that system to make it something that is more fit for purpose and something that at least brings it to the standard of other States and Territories in Australia.

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There have been a series of missteps when it comes to doing that work and we've now got to the stage where, 10 years on, the contract with the company that was supposed to be bringing it up to speed to the new IPOS system was torn up and we've had to start again. The police Minister informs us that that is now back in train, but it'll be another four or five years before the issues that were raised in the Auditor-General's report will be addressed. Does it concern you that the police—again, given that 40 per cent of their work is being taken up with domestic and family violence—are using a policing system that is that antiquated and, again, setting them up to fail?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm not sure that I would use the term "setting them up to fail", although I am certainly not disputing your view. The police Minister has certainly indicated that, as you've just said, the COPS system is being updated. I do know that there is a huge amount of work being done within police, as I mentioned, to better deal with domestic and family violence complaints and processes. Change takes time. I'm learning this in government.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I'm sure. Again, you've inherited a lot of these problems. I certainly don't seek to blame you for the previous three terms of government. But what we have now is a situation where we are about to implement the coercive control offence in New South Wales but we have a policing system that makes it incredibly hard to string together incidents and to make all of those connections that we need in order to catch perpetrators before they actually go on to commit a domestic homicide. When I say they're being set up to fail, I don't blame individual police officers, but I believe that the system as a whole is not fit for purpose when it comes to policing domestic and family violence. As the prevention of domestic and family violence Minister, what say do you have in your Government over all of the other factors that are making your job so hard, in particular the police response?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Obviously I have no direct authority over New South Wales police systems. However, I do have, as do all of the Ministers within Government, incredibly good working relationships and a real commitment to fully understand and explore the issues that relate to each of our portfolios so that we can deal with complex problems like domestic and family violence. Certainly, the experience that I have is that the police Minister—as you might have heard her say, you can't arrest your way out of domestic violence—is fully committed to do everything in her power within the police to change, to make sure that the response of police is the best that it can be and the systems are the best that they can be.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Okay. But they're just not, right? Again, I really appreciate that you've inherited a situation, but the situation you've inherited is that we now continue to have people dying every week. There is a continuation of the same issues that we have seen prior to Labor taking government. This is at a crisis point and yet no-one seems to be moving very quickly in your Government. Do you think, perhaps, it is the position of the Minister for the prevention of domestic and family violence being within the Justice cluster instead of, for example, the Premier's cluster that is the problem here? Do you need more say? Do you need more authority in order to make these changes that are desperately required?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think, if the issue was simple, I would have hoped that previous governments might have fixed it too. But this Government is really committed to doing everything that it possibly can.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** When we look—

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I don't think structure will make a difference. I think what will make a difference is absolute commitment and determination to solving the problems that we have in front of us and working across government and making sure that there are systems in place—that we bring systems in a place where we can identify and develop those whole-of-government approaches. So things like reviewing the governance structures around domestic and family violence, women's safety commissioner—a standalone women's safety commissioner.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** What continues to be missing, though, is funding. When we look at Victoria's progress on this issue—and I think they're probably the only State to make any real progress on this issue lately—they have put in over \$3½ billion after their royal commission in 2015 to make a serious commitment to turning things around, and they've seen some results. When are we going to put real funding into this problem of domestic and family violence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Certainly this budget, the 2023-24 budget, has increased spending in domestic and family violence, in comparison to the previous budget. I can't make a commitment in relation to future budgets, but it's something that, certainly, we are working on doing. And it is right across—it affects so many different portfolios, domestic and family violence. It affects Corrections; it affects out-of-home care; it affects, certainly, my portfolio.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Homelessness, housing—everything.

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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, I want to follow on briefly from my colleague's questioning in relation to domestic violence in the queer community. We've unfortunately seen a very tragic—what appears to be a murder of two young men in Paddington, and the police commissioner yesterday described that as a crime of passion. Minister, do you believe those words were appropriate from the police commissioner?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have to say that what is alleged to have occurred to Mr Baird and Mr Davies—and my thoughts are really with their friends and with their families—was not an act of passion but it was a crime. Domestic violence is a crime, and I firmly believe that we should all be mindful of our language, particularly language which minimises the impact of domestic and family violence.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** So you believe that the police commissioner should have chosen a better term of phrase when referring to the alleged murder of those two young men who are in a domestic violence situation?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I believe that it's incumbent on all of us—particularly people in our circumstances, who are in the public eye—to be careful of our language and also, when we see domestic violence and when we hear it, to actually call it out for what it is.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Have you spoken to the police commissioner about this?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have not spoken to the police commissioner about this. I believe that it was a very recent comment.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Do you believe that the police commissioner should apologise, noting your statement that language about domestic violence is so important?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think that we should all be mindful of our language. I am happy to have discussions with the police Minister in relation to this and I'm sure that the police commissioner would actually re-think her language now.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Do you believe the police commissioner should apologise for that language?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm not going to go into what I believe the top bureaucrat of another Minister's portfolio should or shouldn't do. I think that is something that should be done within a particular portfolio. I am not going to tell the police Minister how to do her job. She has the Minister for Police portfolio, as I have the Minister for the prevention of domestic and family violence.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Do you have discussions with the police commissioner or with deputy commissioners in relation to policing of domestic violence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Absolutely, I do. I have had conversations with Commissioner Webb. I have had meetings with assistant police commissioners and deputy police commissioners. I have had discussions and meetings with the police at the domestic and family violence registry and, as would be expected, conversations with police at my local area command.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** You have discussions with the police about domestic violence, yet you say that it's not your role to discuss with the police commissioner the use of language about domestic violence when you yourself have noted how important language is in this area?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think that my comments this morning at this budget estimates session are very clear about what I think language should be and I don't think that I need to say anything more in relation to what the police commissioner should or shouldn't do. I think my comments have been very clear.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Are you satisfied that there is sufficient training in the police around language and sufficient recognition that domestic violence also occurs in the gay and lesbian community? Are you satisfied with training so that all police can speak sensitively about this important issue?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I believe historically there has not been sufficient focus on training for police in relation to domestic and family violence. There is a significant increase in the amount of training that police are currently receiving in relation to domestic and family violence, in the way they deal with it, in their attitudes towards it, in the way that different communities experience it and what it might look like.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Are you following up with the police commissioner about this, given the events of recent days?

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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I regularly speak to the police about the systems in relation to preventing domestic and family violence.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, do you recall meeting with Violet Co Legal and Consulting?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I do.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Do you recall with whom you met?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The person?

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Yes.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Karen Iles.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** When was the last time you met with Karen Iles?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I can't remember. It was some months ago. It would be in my disclosures.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Do you recall who was also at that meeting?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I believe that I had a meeting with the police Minister and the Attorney General with Karen Iles.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** And Minister Graham as well?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes, I believe Minister Graham was in the room.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** So four Ministers. It must have been a very important meeting. What was the purpose of that meeting?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That was to discuss issues in relation to the way that government deals with sexual assault complaints.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Have you been back in touch with Karen since that meeting?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I believe that I have not directly been back in contact with Ms Iles since then. I don't recall, but I can take that on notice. But there would have been one of the Ministers who was tasked with getting back in contact with Ms Iles at that meeting.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Who was the Minister tasked with getting back in touch with Ms Iles?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** This meeting was some months ago. I would need to check my notes. I am happy to take that on notice.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** This is a very important issue which required four Ministers to be in attendance and you are not sure who was responsible for following up?

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** She said she will take it on notice.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I will take that on notice.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, you also had discussions with Karen prior to the election about police accountability in relation to sexual assault victims. Do you recall that?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That was prior to me becoming a Minister.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** But you recall that you had conversations with her?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes, I do.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** And you would recall that on 16 March last year you emailed Karen Iles to provide a response on behalf of NSW Labor and approved that that response be published on Karen's website? Do you recall the commitment that your Government made to Karen just prior to the election? I can help you out if you don't because the email said, "NSW Labor is committed to supporting victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and sexual assault to improve their experiences with police and the criminal justice system and improve access to justice. A Labor government"—

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** Point of order: The point of order relates to relevance. Questions must be relevant to the estimates of expenditure from the Consolidated Fund and other matters covered by budget papers. It's very unclear to me how a question about a matter which occurred prior to the election of a Labor government relates to matters covered by budget papers.

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**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** To the point of order: There is obviously no point of order. The budget estimates relate to the portfolios of the Minister, including the budget papers. That has always been the case.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** While she was Minister, not before.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Why are we wasting time?

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** Further to the point of order—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** You are wasting time.

**The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL:** I am entitled to respond. While wide latitude is given in estimates sessions, under procedural fairness resolution paragraph 9, questions must relate to the estimates of expenditure from the Consolidated Fund and other matters covered by the budget papers, as is the terms of reference of the inquiry.

**The CHAIR:** Where does it actually depart from that?

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** It was before we were in government.

**The CHAIR:** I can't hear you, Sarah.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** To the point of order: The questions being asked were before we were in government so it certainly can't be about what's happened and what the Minister has done as a Minister.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** It would be very strange estimates—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** To the point of order: The Minister has previously answered questions in relation to announcements she made before becoming Minister, so precedent has already been set. As has been said before, wide latitude is given during budget estimates. I know these members are new but that has always been the process here.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Can you not use that as an insult? It's really bad. It's really patronising.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** It's not an insult; it's fact. Maybe you need to have a chat to some of your colleagues.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** It's really patronising in this budget estimates hearing about women in a new job. To do that is really poor form, Natasha. It's really poor form.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Come on, don't try to play games.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** You started it.

**The CHAIR:** Order! We've done reasonably well so far today. Let's try and it keep it that way. There is no point of order. We will carry on.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, do you need me to refresh your memory more about the commitment that was made? You recall the commitment that you made for close consultation with victim- survivors and their representatives and that, "If elected, Labor looks forward to the opportunity to work with Karen Iles and other victim-survivors as well as the sexual and domestic and family violence sector on future reforms." It's now almost 12 months since that commitment was made by Labor. What reforms to reporting support and legislation have been made?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** We've introduced a strangulation offence. In my portfolio, we will very shortly be releasing the primary prevention strategy for domestic and family violence. We have provided additional support in relation to women's domestic violence court advocacy services being available at police stations. We have ensured that every court has a women's domestic violence court advocacy service support person to enable victim-survivors to be supported, not just at the time of first appearing at court but right through the court process. There are a number of ways in which we have improved taking the feedback from victim-survivors in the way that we have improved our systems.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, when was the consultation with those survivors?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** When I meet with Domestic Violence NSW, they certainly have a lived experience group, and the feedback that they provide is in accordance with the lived experience group. We are in the process of establishing a lived experience—

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** If I may redirect, Minister—



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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** We're in the process of establishing a lived experience group. I know that is something that the Women's Safety Commissioner is leading in relation to ensuring that the voices of victim-survivors are heard.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** The commitment was to develop these reforms in close consultation, and you have advanced proposals but not with consultation with people like Karen Iles, yet we understand this consultation may occur after the fact. Is that your testimony today, Minister?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** No. Certainly the feedback that I have had in relation to all of the reforms that we've implemented since coming into government, and in relation to the election commitments that we've made and the implementation of them, the stakeholders that I regularly speak with, including Domestic Violence NSW, including Full Stop Australia, indicate that they are very comfortable with the consultation that this Government is providing and they're very keen to continue to work with the Government and they're very keen with the process that we've developed, and that we are developing in the future, to ensure that the voices of victim-survivors with lived experience are heard.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** What changes have you made to reporting? One of the commitments was changes to reporting in consultation with victim-survivors. What changes have you made to reporting?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** To reporting crime? That's an issue for the police Minister.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** It's not an issue that concerns you as Minister for Women?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The detail of that question will need to be directed to the police Minister.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Yet you were the one who, as shadow, wrote to Ms Iles and indicated that that was a commitment and indicated that it was something that would be achieved through consultation with victim-survivors, including Ms Iles.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The police Minister has oversight of reporting crime.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** How closely do you work with the police Minister in relation to domestic violence reporting?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I work closely with the police Minister in relation to the prevention of domestic violence and sexual assault—and, indeed, with the Attorney General and with my other parliamentary and ministerial colleagues.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Thank you. Minister, the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children for the decade 2022-2032, you would be aware, was established to coordinate efforts across all levels of government to address violence against women. As Minister for Women, is the work that you do for women in this State informed by this plan?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Thank you. The plan outlined six key focus areas to address gender-based violence. One of these, of course, is coercive control, which we did such a lot of work on in the last term of the Coalition Government, and which we will shortly see implemented. Another key area is pornography. What are you doing to regulate and restrict access to harmful pornography?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The regulation of pornography is an issue for the Federal Government, as you'd be aware.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** What are you doing to advocate for the effective regulation and restriction of harmful pornography?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I meet with my ministerial colleagues from other States and Territories.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** How much of those meetings is concerned with addressing this driver of violence against women and children?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The drivers of domestic and family violence and gender equality are the constant agenda items for those meetings.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** In relation to this particular driver—if I can quote the national plan, which says:

With pornography now overwhelmingly consumed online and via mobile devices, it is both prevalent and pervasive, perpetuating sexist, misogynistic and degrading views about women. This is a serious concern in addressing the drivers of violence against women and children.

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What are you doing to address this serious driver of violence against women and children?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The NSW Sexual Violence Plan contains a number of actions to deal with harmful attitudes towards women. Certainly, respectful relationship education within schools is a key part of that.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** You're right, Minister: Pillar 1 of the New South Wales Sexual Violence Plan is early intervention because early intervention focuses on risk factors for sexual violence, especially in vulnerable groups. One of the risk factors is clearly violent pornography. What are you doing as part of the NSW Sexual Violence Plan to address that risk factor for early intervention?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** As I said, the regulation of pornography is a Federal issue. The actions that we take as a State government are in relation to harmful behaviours. The primary prevention plan in relation to domestic and family violence will outline a range of actions that this Government will be taking and that will be released in coming months.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Do you think it's a sufficient response to say, in a State and Federal Government plan, "It's a Federal matter" of an acknowledged driver of violence against women and children and then do absolutely nothing about it in this State?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think that it's worthwhile stating that the evidence in relation to pornography is that it may not be the driver but it certainly indicates an increase in harmful attitudes and behaviours. It's those harmful behaviours—

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, if I can take you again—

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** —and attitudes that we are working to overcome, particularly in relation to our primary prevention strategies within New South Wales.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, if I can take you again to the national plan, it notes a study which found that the more often young men consume pornography, the more likely they are to enact sexual behaviours which the other person does not want. Given the affirmative sexual consent laws which are in place in New South Wales, does this consumption of pornography concern you in terms of sexual consent for women in our State?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** My understanding is that there is some incredibly disturbing pornography out there, and it concerns me that our young people may access it. Young people may access pornography for a range of reasons. But there are a number of ways that we are trying to increase the understanding of young people, in particular, about their sexuality and about what respectful relationships are so that we can counter the existence of harmful pornography.

There are a number of projects that we have been working on with other organisations. We've provided funding to, for example, Rosie's Place for their community connection prevention responses to child sexual exploitation project of \$681,000. That's a project for workers to identify the early signs of child sexual exploitation and to develop strategies and resources to prevent escalation and prevent further sexual harm.

Consent Labs, which is an organisation that you may be familiar with, and their project of youth-led sexual violence prevention in New South Wales schools, co-designing sexuality and gender diversity workshops and resources—they're receiving \$1.1 million to co-create with leading researchers, to pilot and evaluate innovative educational programs that can be implemented at scale to combat restrictive social norms that negatively impact all young people. The National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, in partnership with the Institute of Child Protection Studies, are receiving funding for a trauma-informed program that'll be codesigned with victim-survivors.

Yes Unlimited, in partnership with Albury Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service and Linking Communities Network, the Albury-Wodonga Women's Centre for Health and Wellbeing have received funds for a community of care coordinator, care and access for women experiencing power-based personal violence. There are a range of programs. Youth off the Streets in partnership with Youth Action—a project called Taking Action, Creating Change - Together, which will provide evidence-based training to the New South Wales youth sector and youth specialist homelessness services to build their capacity to respond to children and young people experiencing domestic and family violence. This is all work that we're doing in conjunction with non-government organisations who have experience and expertise to provide a better understanding to young people about what healthy sexuality and healthy relationships are.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Can I just give you the opportunity to correct one thing that was said in response to the Opposition's questions in relation to the strangulation offence? I think you said that Labor brought in the strangulation offence, which is not correct.

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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Sorry, Ms Boyd, you're right.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Can we look at coercive control. When we had the joint select inquiry, the clear cross-party recommendation was that we introduce an offence of coercive control in New South Wales but also that we only do it if we're going to do it properly. I'll read you recommendation one:

That the NSW Government should respond to the Domestic Violence Death Review Team evidence, by criminalising coercive control. However commencement of a criminal offence should not occur without a considerable prior program of education, training and consultation with police, stakeholders and the frontline sector.

Do you believe, Minister, that that considerable prior program of education, training and consultation will have occurred by the time that the coercive control offence is due to be implemented in the middle of this year?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** This is certainly an issue that the coercive control implementation taskforce is really keenly reviewing. I'm certainly led by the advice provided by that taskforce. My understanding is that the taskforce's recommendation is that New South Wales will be ready for the implementation of the offence from 1 July.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Are you aware of the domestic and family violence sector's call for a delay to that implementation because they don't believe we're going to be ready?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I am aware that the domestic and family violence sector has always had concerns with the implementation date.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Those concerns are twofold. They are, firstly, that the legislation itself is flawed, which I would wholeheartedly agree with, as we covered at length in the last term of Parliament, but also that the implementation is simply not being done correctly. Can we talk firstly about the legislation itself. We've had this conversation before, but I understand that in opposition Labor allowed it to go through in the form proposed by the Coalition Government. But now that you have been the prevention of domestic and family violence Minister for some time, have you made representations to the Attorney General or to others to amend the legislation to make it fit for purpose?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have had discussions with the Attorney General and with the police Minister and received advice from relevant departmental staff in relation to the legislation. I think we need to use the opportunity for review to fully see how the implementation rolls out.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** In the domestic and family violence sector—and I'm just looking, for example, at a letter from Domestic Violence NSW, which they, I believe, sent to you in December—the offence is not only at best unlikely to be used or is unusable; at worst is actively dangerous, particularly when it comes to the misidentification of First Nations women and children. Does it not concern you that we may be introducing an offence that, even if it was implemented properly, could be actively harmful?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** First up, I'll say that I have a very good relationship with Domestic Violence NSW and I thank them for their advocacy on the issues that they constantly raise. They do very good work in relation to representing their members and, in fact, victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. They're also a really good sounding board. I do think, though, that we need to look at the way the legislation rolls out. This Government has been guided by the taskforce and the 10 reference groups set up under the taskforce about whether New South Wales will be ready for the legislation and whether our systems will support the legislation in achieving what it is set out to do. To date the advice from the taskforce has been that the systems that are being developed and the education that is being developed will allow the legislation to be fit for purpose when it comes into effect.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** The taskforce isn't advising you, though, on the legislation. They are advising on the implementation of the legislation. The domestic and family violence sector is telling you that the legislation is actively harmful, or could be actively harmful—I can read out the bits from DVNSW. They talk about their concerns with the legislation being amplified as time goes by rather than changing. They talk about misidentification being a significant problem with existing legislation, further amplified with coercive control legislation, and the new "domestic abuse" definition does not work and is not contextual. There is a whole bunch of really important comments that the sector is making in relation to this legislation itself, some of which are on the basis of changes in the national framework since the legislation was introduced. Why aren't you taking these concerns seriously?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I am absolutely taking the concerns seriously. I take the concerns of particularly the peak body, Domestic Violence NSW, seriously. I also have to listen to advice from my colleagues and from particularly our departmental staff. Just in relation to misidentification, I'll go to what we're doing in relation to—

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**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** We might come back to misidentification in itself, unless you have something specific on the coercive control offence and how that relates to misidentification?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** A consultation group has certainly been established to work through the issues relating to misidentification. That consultation group includes Women's Legal Service, Domestic Violence NSW, the Police Force, Warringa Baiya, Legal Aid and the Aboriginal Legal Service to really work out how misidentification plays out.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Coming back then to coercive control, one of the very strong sentiments when we had all of those hearings we had during the joint select inquiry into coercive control—one of the very, very clear messages from the sector was, "We have been telling you what's required for decades and governments of whatever stripe don't listen to us. Instead, they get their own advice, they get their own ideas about what needs to happen." I had hoped that under the Labor Government we would see a change in that and we would see a prioritisation of the views of the sector and the experts on the front line over departmental officials, with due respect. Why are we not listening to the sector, when they're sounding the alarm about this legislation?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think we are listening to the sector. I think we're doing that through the reference groups.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** The sector are telling you not to implement this.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Well, the advice that's coming up through the reference groups is that New South Wales will be ready for implementation of the offence from 1 July.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Again, that's not about the actual legislation itself. That's about implementation, which we'll come to in a minute. But in terms of the actual legislation itself, the sector is telling you it needs to be amended and that it shouldn't be implemented. Why are we not listening to the sector?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Because there was very clearly a desire at the time that the legislation was being discussed within Parliament to criminalise coercive control.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** It was opposed at the time in the form that it came in, and it was very disappointing because, other than the Greens and, I believe, the AJP at the time—we were the only ones to actually put forward the sector's views at that time. I understand that this was primarily the now Attorney-General's call when you were in opposition, but the legislation that went through under the Coalition Government was the most conservative, perpetrator-friendly and flawed version of this legislation anywhere in the world. We know what needs to happen in order to change it, in order to bring it up to the standard of places like Scotland. We haven't done that. Will you listen to the sector and finally amend it so that it will actually have the purpose desired?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The Government is ready for implementation of the offence to start from 1 July.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Let's talk about that implementation then. One of the recommendations was that there would be comprehensive training of police. I understand that police have done some online training and that then there has been what I believe to be a two-hour face-to-face training session on this, and that that is somehow considered sufficient. Have you seen that training session? Have you experienced that training session, Minister?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I haven't actually seen that training, no.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Have you been involved at all in the design of that training?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have not been involved in the design of the training. However, I do know that key stakeholders have been.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Let me correct you, because they have not been. I brought this up with the police Minister last week. There was a bunch of domestic and family violence sector stakeholders who were brought in and videoed for the purposes of police then taking that away to design their own training, there was no consultation on the actual training—no co-design of the actual training with the sector. Are you aware of that?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm aware that it was probably not co-designed—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** No.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** —but certainly feedback that was received in relation to what police need to be trained in would've been considered in relation to the original design of the training.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I asked the police Minister as well about this—and the police commissioner, perhaps more accurately—and I was told in those estimates that the training was not shown to any external stakeholders prior to it being finalised. So, again, even if it wasn't co-designed, why wasn't it, I don't know, just

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shown to somebody for their check—some sort of external consultation with experts—to ensure that what was being delivered was correct?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm not sure about the way that police training is developed, and probably nor should I be.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I think you should be, Minister. We're talking about domestic and family violence.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Well, generally.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** You've just said that this legislation is fit to be implemented and that the implementation is going to be okay, but you haven't even seen the training yourself, it hasn't been looked at by the experts and the experts weren't involved in the co-design. How are you able to sit here and be confident that such a massive change to our domestic and family violence legislation isn't going to be harmful?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The training of police and a readiness for the commencement of the offence is something that I talk about, as I have mentioned before, with other Ministers, with Domestic Violence NSW and with departmental staff. I know the Women's Safety Commissioner has had discussions in relation to police training. I'll ask Ms Tonkin if she can—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** With respect, I'll come back to Ms Tonkin this afternoon. Are you aware of whether or not the police's technology systems are capable of dealing with coercive control offence evidence collection?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm guided by what the police Minister advises me. The police Minister and, in fact, the coercive control implementation taskforce, and the domestic and family violence board also review—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I'm guided by the independent opinion of the Auditor-General, who tells us that the police systems are not fit for purpose; that they're not able to actively collect and connect a series of incidents; and, instead, there's a laborious trawling-through. Our systems are not fit for purpose when it comes to collecting evidence. Does that not concern you? How are you not getting involved in that aspect of things if you are the Minister for the prevention of domestic and family violence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think the Auditor-General's report into police systems is a very strong report, and New South Wales police certainly should be taking action to review and fully consider the recommendations within that report.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I was fortunate enough to spend the first two weeks of January with people from Scotland, England and Wales—politicians, stakeholders, police and others—talking about their implementation of coercive control in those jurisdictions. Have you spent any time learning the lessons from implementation of those jurisdictions in order to inform your approach here?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I've been guided by what the implementation taskforce, which oversees the 10 reference groups, advises me.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** All right. There are significant learnings from those jurisdictions in relation to police training, for instance. Are you aware of those?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I am not directly aware of those. I'm sure that the Women's Safety Commissioner, though, would have had discussions with other authorities around the world in relation to this offence.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** For example, in Scotland, they've had a review of their legislation recently. They've looked at what went well and what didn't work so well, and the sticking point has been police. In the context of Scotland, they actually put significant resources into training their police. I think they spent a couple of days of co-designed training with police, face to face, where they had people from the sector and experts coming in, speaking with them, interacting, explaining and having an assessment process as part of that, and they still didn't think that was enough. Even though they had done so much more than what we're proposing here—they had set up a system, they had left ambassadors for change behind so they could continue to train police as they go—even though they had done all of that, they had significant comments for reform and how they would do things differently going forward. Don't you think that the New South Wales Government should be looking at that and learning and adapting also?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think when we have some legislation that has a commencement date, we need to be making sure that our systems are ready for that, and that's what we're committed to. The review of the legislation is on an ongoing basis and experiences in other Territories, States, nationally, in fact this is an issue

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that we are grappling with at a national level. We will certainly make sure that we take those learnings on in relation to the reviews.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** But before then, we have been told at police estimates that the system won't be up to speed, that policing system won't be able to effectively capture this evidence until 2027. We know that police have had just two hours of face-to-face training, I understand without assessment, without anything to make sure they were even paying attention. We have a sector telling you to delay this legislation. Will you delay the implementation of this legislation to ensure that we actually get it right?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I go back to my previous comment.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Are you aware of how many women have died since Labor took office, under domestic and family violence offences?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Eleven, allegedly 11.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Since April last year?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Allegedly 11.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** It's 18. There have been 65 in the last—since Labor took office there's been 18 in New South Wales, which is roughly 28 per cent. Do you know that if you look at the—it's a very crude measure—but if you look at the number of women who have been killed under domestic and family violence offences in New South Wales versus Victoria since they brought in that significant funding, it is quite a compelling story. Does that concern you when looking at the paucity of response that we've had in New South Wales versus the real commitment and funding and focus that they put in, in Victoria?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Absolutely it does. One death is too many and I know that you've heard me say that in the past. I think that Victoria would admit that they don't get everything right in this space either. We do have a considerable way to go in relation to preventing domestic and family violence, which is why I'm so keen to put in place the prevention plan.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** In relation to the safe places program, which provides capital grants for emergency accommodation for women and children, I'm interested to know when these grants will open?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That's a Federal grant program.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Domestic Violence NSW has recommended a Core and Cluster implementation community of practice service for leaders to identify and address any quality and operational issues with any new refugees. Do you think this is a good idea?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Certainly. I think working with the sector in relation to whether Core and Cluster refugees are working and how we can make better improvements is a fabulous idea.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** They've asked for \$36,000 over the next two years. In light of your comments that you think this working group would be good, will you commit to that funding?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm not going to commit to anything in future budgets, but making sure that women and children, making sure that families are safe in New South Wales is something that I will continue to advocate for with the Treasurer and with my parliamentary colleagues.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** If you can't commit to \$36,000 over two years, what's your plan for monitoring the success of refugees and any issues that need to be addressed?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There may well be other ways of getting feedback from people who are working within the domestic and family violence sector, including the Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault Council that provides advice to me. My regular meetings with Domestic Violence NSW is certainly a way of getting feedback on the effectiveness of the Core and Cluster roll out. There's a range of different ways that we'll be able to get advice on the effectiveness, although I have no doubt that Core and Cluster refugees will be effective.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But \$36,000 over two years isn't a huge amount of money, yet you can't commit?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** We're talking about future budget money. What we are here to discuss is this year's budget estimates, not future years budget estimates.

**The CHAIR:** I think we have to take a break there. Are there Government questions?

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**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** No.

**The CHAIR:** There are no Government questions. We will now break for morning tea for half an hour until quarter past eleven. Thank you.

**(Short adjournment)**

**The CHAIR:** We might recommence.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Thank you very much. I note that we've started a few minutes late, so I assume we will finish a few minutes late. Minister, have you met with the CWA, either the CEO or the president?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have met with them on numerous occasions in locations across New South Wales.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But these meetings haven't been disclosed in your diary disclosures?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have met with them at events. Also, the CEO of CWA is a member of the domestic and family, sexual violence council.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But you have had no formal meeting with the CEO or the president?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have had regular conversations with them, and I have attended events with them. I have had phone calls with them, and the CEO is a member of an advisory board that I have on domestic and family violence.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But none of these meetings are recorded; they're just informal catch-ups or running into the CEO?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I regularly attend events with CWA. In fact, I have been in a number of regional and rural locations with local CWA members. I've also met local CWA members at events in Sydney for volunteering. I have a very productive and good relationship with both the CEO and the president of the Country Women's Association.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** And yet you were forced to reverse your decision last year to ensure that regional woman of the year would be included as a category.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have already made comments on that one.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Moving forward, do you guarantee that that category will remain?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I am positive that regional and rural women will be recognised for the fabulous work that they do right across the State.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** That category will remain?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have no intention of removing that category.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Thank you.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I will go back, however. That decision was taken on advice to me from Women NSW, and there were reasons provided at that time that that recommendation was made to me.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, are you aware of the Investing in Women funding program?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I am, indeed.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** And that the CWA has received funds in relation to that for one of the co-working spaces that they've rolled out? I understand you've attended a few of those.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** For four of their co-working spaces, in fact, yes.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Will you commit to continuing that investment or funding of that program?

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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The Investing in Women grants program is a really effective and well-recognised grants program. Certainly, it's an annual grants program, and I have no intention of doing anything apart from continuing to provide support and investing in women.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Thank you. The CWA wrote to the Premier and the police Minister, calling for a parliamentary inquiry into regional crime in New South Wales. Do you support that inquiry?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That is an issue for—my portfolio is in relation to women. The relationship that I have with the Country Women's Association is in relation to ensuring that women, particularly in country areas, are well supported. The issues that the CWA raise are legitimate, and that's an issue for the Premier and the police Minister.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** We know that crime is an issue in regional areas, particularly sexual violence and assaults against women, and yet as Minister for Women you're saying this is not your responsibility.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** No, I am not saying that it's not my responsibility. That correspondence was written to the Premier and to the police Minister, from my understanding. Is that what you said? Did you say that correspondence was actually written to the Premier and to—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, I asked whether or not you support the parliamentary inquiry.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The Country Women's Association does fantastic work—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** That's not the question.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** —in raising the issues that their members face. That's an issue for decision by—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Does your Government support rural and regional communities?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** My Government absolutely does support rural and regional communities. I can go through a range of ways in which—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Have you advocated for this inquiry?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I constantly advocate for rural and regional communities. In fact, in the space of domestic and family violence, there is considerable investment by this Government in relation to preventing domestic and family violence and in supporting victims of domestic and family violence. And I can go through the large amount of—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** No, that's fine, Minister. I might move on to the next question.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** —resources and commitment that we put into regional and rural New South Wales.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, I have moved on to the next question. Are you aware of the Carer Knowledge Exchange program?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I am not aware of that particular program.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** It's funded up until 30 June this year. It's funding that has been provided to Carers NSW and it's actually under the NSW Carers Strategy. My question is, Minister, will you continue to fund this program?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I can't make any commitments in relation to future budgets, but there is no intention whatsoever at this point to reduce the support given to carers. There is currently a \$5.1 million budget supporting the carers portfolio in DCJ. What that \$5.1 million delivers is the carers strategy, it delivers peak funding for Carers NSW, it delivers the New South Wales Companion Card, it supports the Carers Advisory Council and it provides funding for the implementation of the Carers Recognition Act.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I'm familiar with that. But you can't commit that this program will have funding from 1 July this year?



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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There is no intention to reduce the budget at this point. However, it's a pretty tough time. I will talk to you about the budget this year. We are talking about \$5.1 million that's committed to carers in this financial year.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** How many young carers are currently in New South Wales?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I will have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you know how many young carers are in our schools?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Again, I'll have to take that on notice. Having said that, young carers in schools sometimes don't even identify themselves as being carers. That's part of the challenge we have in the space of carers—people often don't identify themselves as carers. That is something that the Carers Advisory Council raises with me and the need to better support people who don't automatically identify themselves as being carers.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Can you outline what you're doing to support young carers, particularly young people and children who are carers that are at school?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** We provide funding to Carers NSW to provide support of \$300,000 for the Young Carer Program. Carers NSW is a really key partner for the New South Wales Government in relation to support for carers. They work as the peak organisation for carers and they do a fantastic job. They run the Young Carer Program and that provides—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** On the young carers program, how many young people are being provided support?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'll have to take that on notice as it is a program run by Carers NSW.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you intend to continue that funding for that program?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Carers NSW receives funding for a range of their programs and there is no intention to change funding for Carers NSW.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Are you familiar with the Being a Carer, Being a Student, Being a Kid resource?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** No, I'm not.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** It's in your action plan—the carers action plan 2023-24 that you put out.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm not familiar with that particular resource. I do know, however, that it's an education resource.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But it's in your action plan that you put out last year and you say that you're not familiar with it.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I know it's an education resource that is to support carers.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Did you read the actual document before you released it?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Ms Maclaren-Jones, of course I read the document. I provided the foreword to it. That particular program is an education resource that's available through the Department of Education to support young carers.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you know how many schools have that resource?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'll take that on notice.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you know how many Aboriginal carers there are?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I do know that roughly one in eight Aboriginal people across New South Wales identify themselves as being carers.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** What are the needs of Aboriginal carers?

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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across New South Wales—in fact, each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community has different needs. Therefore, each carer within each of those communities would have different needs as well.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** In your action plan that you put out last year, you highlighted identifying the needs of Aboriginal carers to provide support. You just said then that the needs vary. Could you outline a couple of areas that you're focused on?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The carers action plan, and that particular action, is currently being worked through and I'll be able to come back with more on that later.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** You haven't identified what the needs of Aboriginal carers are?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Identifying the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is something that takes time and, as I said, different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have very different needs across the State. That is something that needs to be worked through with respect and really wanting to understand the wants and needs of each Aboriginal community in New South Wales.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, last year the Aboriginal affairs Minister made reference to a working group of Ministers looking at the issue of Closing the Gap. Are you on that working group?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I attend the Closing The Gap joint council with the Minister for Aboriginal affairs and CAPO in relation to matters that are relevant to my portfolio.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** That is the ministerial working group that he was referring to. Is that the one that you're on or is this a different working group?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm on the joint council and I attend joint council meetings where they are relevant to my portfolio, as do other Ministers.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** How often have you attended?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have attended four of those sessions so far. I believe they meet quarterly and I have attended two sessions of each.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Two out of the four?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There have been two of those meetings, two of those groups of meetings, and I have attended two of each of those groups of meetings since they started.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Who chairs the meetings?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** They are chaired by CAPO. They are co-chaired by the Minister and by CAPO.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Have you placed on the agenda carers or domestic and family violence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I don't place anything on that agenda.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Have you requested—

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That particular council is a council that is well and truly—and should rightly be—led by Aboriginal-Torres Strait Islander people. It is not for the Government to tell Aboriginal-Torres Strait Islander people what they should be doing, particularly when we are trying to work so hard to overcome over 200 years of non-Aboriginal people telling Aboriginal people what to do.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Previously you said you don't know what the needs of Aboriginal carers are. I was asking if you had raised this as an issue at what is considered the peak government ministerial council?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have not raised it because I am led—and this Government should rightly be led—by the wants and needs of Aboriginal-Torres Strait Islander people, particularly in relation to that council.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Have you met with the Aboriginal Women's Advisory Network?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Will you continue to fund that organisation?

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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There is no intention of reducing funding for the Aboriginal Women's Advisory Network. They've been doing some really wonderful work, travelling around the State and talking to Aboriginal- Torres Strait Islander communities, hearing many different voices, many different experiences, and the advice that AWAN provides is very important.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Have you met with the Minister for Health regarding Key Directions?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I meet with my ministerial colleagues about a range of issues, on many different issues.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** You have met about Key Directions?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** As I said, I meet with my ministerial colleagues on many different issues.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** What are you doing to ensure that Key Directions meets the needs of carers? Again, this is in your action plan. Do you know what Key Directions is?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I will need to seek advice on that.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, under the Carers (Recognition) Act, there is a requirement that agencies must recognise and value carers, ensuring that they are consulted on policy. Key Directions is that for the Department of Health. In relation to local government, what action is being taken to ensure that they are compliant with the Act?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Each department is responsible for ensuring that they are compliant with that Act.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But, as the Minister responsible for carers, are you overseeing, monitoring? Do you have a working group—do you care?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The Carers Advisory Council is the council that provides me advice in relation to carers. They regularly bring issues to me, including cost of living and the need for better awareness of what a carer is. That particular program is not an issue that the Carers Advisory Council has raised with me.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Have you met with the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I certainly have.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I am interested to know if you support their position on lowering the age of eligibility for social housing from 80 years?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing has, I understand, raised this with the Minister for Housing. In fact last year in Parliament I attended a workshop with a number of different ageing peaks with the Minister for Housing, and obviously housing was one of the key issues that was raised at that. The Minister for Housing certainly agreed that we need to do better for seniors' housing and housing more generally.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** You support lowering the age?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think that we need to consider how best to provide housing for people as they age and we need to ensure that there are many different options for people as they age to enable them to have safe and secure housing.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, can you advise what's happened to the Reducing Social Isolation for Seniors Grant Program?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes, I can. It has been more properly identified as the Connecting Seniors Grant Program.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Can we go to something a bit different? Are you aware of the People with Disability Australia's *Building Access End of Project Report*?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm not familiar with that particular report.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** This was a report that PWDA did looking into how accessible the domestic and family violence frontline services were for people with disability and how easy it is for people with disability to access what they need to access around domestic and family violence. Have you done anything in relation to that report? Has anything been done within Government on that?

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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I do know that for women and children with disabilities the new accommodation that is being built in relation to Core and Cluster certainly has to meet disability standards. In fact I had a conversation with a provider very recently about disability standards in a particular Core and Cluster.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** In the report they found a concerning 100 per cent of women with disability said they experienced fear and mistrust of DV services and authorities. What are you doing to address that?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Certainly we need to listen—and we have been listening—to the voices of victim-survivors. In my everyday work my office is frequently contacted by survivors and, as would be expected, some of them—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** This report, though, is pretty damning. One hundred per cent of women with disability have experienced fear and mistrust of services.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That's certainly not good enough.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** No. Seventy-one per cent of women with disability feel unwelcome when accessing DFV services; 57 per cent of women with disability avoid seeking support due to their negative past experiences; and 28 per cent of women with disability report fear of having their children removed from their care if they access domestic and family violence services. These are pretty shocking statistics. Is that the first you've heard of them?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I know that particular cohorts have worse experiences with domestic and family violence and people with disability—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I raised this report in Parliament in November and set out these statistics in a notice of motion which was passed by consensus, including by Government members. Basically it called on the Government to work with victim-survivors with disability and their representatives to create and fund initiatives which understand the nuanced reality of experiences that victim-survivors with disability face. Given that this was passed in Parliament, did you then reach out to advocates in the space and begin those discussions?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Certainly there have been a number of initiatives that are being implemented to improve the experience of domestic and family violence victims with a disability. There will be new frontline workers being provided as part of the national partnership agreement specifically aimed at supporting people with a disability. Funding for People with Disability Australia is being provided to support accessibility improvements and to give specialised support for women with disability at domestic and family violence services across New South Wales. There's been funding for Intellectual Disability Rights Service to expand their service delivery and case management. We're developing, or we have developed, easy-read domestic and family violence awareness resources for people with an intellectual disability.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** But what's been done differently since 30 November, when this motion was passed calling on the Government to speak with stakeholders to improve the experience of people with disability when accessing domestic and family violence services?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The Government, including government public servants, regularly speak with people with domestic—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Have you met with disability advocates in relation to domestic and family violence issues?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I can't recall that I've had formal meetings. However, when I'm at domestic and family violence events then I have conversations with people with disability at those events.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** What is the point of an organisation like People with Disability Australia, an incredibly well-respected peak organisation in Australia, providing these findings and recommendations and being basically ignored? I put up a motion to make it very clear what the findings were in Parliament so we all could see these damning statistics, making a very clear call for the Government to meet with stakeholders to work out what they could do to address this. What's the point of going through all of that if then there's no direct response from yourself as Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** But there is action being taken by the Government to address the issues experienced by domestic and family violence victims with a disability.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Sure.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There's no doubt there's action being taken.

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**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Sure, and there's been some small incremental action taken by successive governments that hasn't achieved what it needs to. The sector is asking for a discussion where they're able to talk about this and say, "Look, what you're doing is or is not sufficient." Why are you not meeting, on the back of that damning report, with disability advocates and seeing what you can do to make sure that what your Government is doing is sufficient? How do you know?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm more than happy to meet with People with Disability Australia. I haven't had a request from them to meet but, having you bring this to my attention, I'm more than happy to meet with them directly to discuss the concerns that they have.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** With respect, you have had a request. You had a request from the Legislative Council to work with victim-survivors with disability and their representatives to fix the issues.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'll take on notice what's occurred in relation to following up on that.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you. Just as a broader point, what happens when we go through this process in the upper House where we pass these motions? Are they brought to your attention?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** They are.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Is there then a mechanism where your department or your office makes sure that they're then followed up on once they've been approved and passed?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That's probably something that, as you've raised, we need to get tighter on.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you. I wanted to talk to you about the Newcastle and Hunter region, in particular. I wrote to you last year—maybe at the beginning of this year—about a crisis that was occurring. There was so much demand for domestic and family violence services in Newcastle and the Hunter that people were living in tents and in car parks; people were sleeping on the front steps of domestic and family violence refuges. They experienced an incredible surge over that holiday period in 2023. I wrote to you and asked you to look into it. You responded by saying that the crisis had passed, which I understand it had. What are you doing to make sure that we don't get this again over the holiday period in 2024?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** As you know, as soon as I became aware—in fact, as soon as the department became aware—of the fact that one of the services, Nova For Women and Children, was having issues in dealing with people who were coming to them for requests, DCJ reached out to Nova For Women and Children and worked through options to deal with that. I will make sure that, coming up to the Christmas period, DCJ does that in relation to that particular service, because that has been two years running now that that has happened. Having said that, quite a number of additional resources are going into the Hunter in relation to additional Core and Cluster accommodation and in relation to specialist domestic and family violence workers. I can tell you how many new specialist workers the Hunter will be getting.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The Hunter Valley, excluding Newcastle, will be getting a total of seven additional workers, and Newcastle and Lake Macquarie will be getting a total of 11 new additional workers. Hunter Valley and Newcastle will be getting three new trainees—two workers who are identified as working with First Nations people, and one to work with children and young people—and six others. Newcastle and Lake Macquarie will be getting an additional one trainee, two new First Nations workers, two new CALD workers, one new LGBTIQ worker, which I spoke about before with ACON.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Can I ask then because you mentioned the specialist worker for children and young people: As you'll recall, at the end of the last financial year, there was a scramble to re-employ those 20 workers—I think we had just a few days before their contracts were to expire. We are very grateful to see the funding coming through, even though it was at the last minute for those people. Are you now committing to provide recurrent funding for those 20 specialist workers, or are we going to have the same issue every year as to whether or not they will be retained?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Those specialist workers are employed with funds from the national partnership agreement. The reason we stepped in is that we didn't have confirmation from the Federal Government last year about exactly what was going to be happening with the extension of that national partnership agreement. Those specialist children's workers at 20 refuges across New South Wales are really, really important supports, because we know that trauma in childhood affects people from a young age and can affect them for the rest of their lives and, indeed, result in perpetration multigenerationally, so it's important.

It's my view that support for children in relation to providing specialist workers continues, and I would ideally like to see specialist workers expanded. Obviously, one of the things that we do need to do, as far as a

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government, is to make sure that the programs we provide are providing evidence-based support, and that's something that the Government is always looking at doing. But certainly the feedback that I've been getting in relation to those workers is that the support they're providing is amazing, not just for the children but allowing also the parent—mother—to recover without having to worry about the trauma on the child.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Absolutely. To keep those people in those jobs, it's very important that we give them certainty that they're going to continue to have jobs.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Is there now a commitment for recurrent funding so that we won't have this uncertainty again when we come to the end of the financial year?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** At the moment I recognise that there is no commitment for ongoing funding. However, it is certainly one of the programs that are really, really high on my list to receive funding in the future.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Because, in the grand scheme of things, we're talking \$10 million. And for this Government, every penny—well, not pennies, cents—has to be spent as effectively as possible. But, really, 10 million is not a great deal, given the impact this has on people's lives.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Particularly the long-term impact.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Yes.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Not just to this budget now. But if we properly support victims now, then there's a whole range of services that those victim-survivors won't need to access in the future, potentially.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Can I just turn to something a bit different? As you'll know, I take a big interest in looking at consulting spend in people's annual reports. In the annual report for the Department of Communities and Justice, there is a line in there about a review by Rooftop Trust, who I understand to be known as Rooftop Social—\$143,000, just over, spent in the 2022-23 financial year. The reason it piqued my interest is that it said that they were paid to review the coverage of sexual violence in men's behaviour change programs. Do you know what happened to that review? Do we have the report? Is it public? Is anything being done in relation to that? I'm just curious.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I haven't seen that as yet. I'll ask Mr Tidball.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Ms Boyd, it's not a consultancy of which I have knowledge. I'm very happy on notice to come back to the Committee. Contextually, we are really bearing down on consultancy cost. In 2022-23 there was an allocation of—let me put it this way: We have significantly underspent on consultancy. Against an allocation of \$10.4 million, we spent 5.5. The underspend was 4.9. But on that specific consultancy, I'm happy to revert.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I think there's been a lot of focus on having a solid evidence base for the types of men's behaviour change programs that we have. I think we're all in favour of rolling them out but having them as most effective as possible, so I'm very curious to know what the findings of that review were and whether it's being used to inform future grants et cetera.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Of course.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Okay. Thank you very much. Can we turn to gender pay gap? Presumably you're aware of the record high \$6,205 a year gender pay gap in the New South Wales public sector. When Labor was in opposition, they described the then 4.1 per cent gap as unacceptable, blaming the disparity on the former Coalition Government's wage cap on female-dominated caring sectors. Obviously it's going to take a while for changes that the Labor Government has implemented to flow through, but what are you doing, as Minister for Women, to close the gap?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There's a range of ways that this Government is working to overcome the gender pay gap in public service, which we are absolutely committed to working towards overcoming. In particular, in relation to the public service and applications for flexible work agreements, there's an "if not, why not" requirement. Basically, there is an assumption that a flexible working arrangement can apply. The Public Service Commission has actually provided a work platform for job sharers to talk about the way their arrangements work and to support trials of flexible work.

The People Matter Employee Survey provides an opportunity for all employees across the New South Wales public service to provide input into what needs to be done further in relation to flexible work arrangements. That's a really important piece of information that this Government takes into account when looking at the systems that we have. In relation to our boards and in relation to appointments at a senior level, it is something that is on

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the entire Government's radar to ensure that we not only have 50 per cent women in Cabinet but also have senior levels of all government properly represented with gender equality and that women have a reasonable representation.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** In the budget estimates hearing last November we were talking about progress on the LECC report *Review of NSW Police Force responses to family and domestic violence incidents*, which was published in June last year. There were 13 recommendations in that report and the Government still hasn't provided a response. What's the status of the Government response?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That is an issue for the police Minister.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** The review of responses to domestic and family violence is nothing that you have any involvement with, Minister?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The police Minister has oversight of providing a response in relation to LECC recommendations.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** When did you last meet with the police Minister to discuss the Government response to this report?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I frequently meet and have informal discussions with the police Minister about domestic and family violence matters.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** And in relation to this report?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** We meet on a regular basis because the matters that are raised within that report are not necessarily just only raised within that report; they may be matters that come up at later points as well.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Can you tell us the last occasion on which you specifically discussed the matters in that report with the police Minister?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** For those particular matters, I'd have to take that on notice. I do, however, need to note that some discussions and developments between Ministers are Cabinet-in-confidence. I will undertake to provide you—

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I'm not asking for the detail of it; I'm asking for progress of it.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think the progress is the detail, really.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** When was your last meeting with the police Minister to discuss domestic violence and sexual assault specifically?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I can take that on notice.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** In budget estimates in November, in relation to the process of dealing with these matters going forward, you said:

... we want to move towards having a real whole-of-government approach to dealing with domestic and family violence. Certainly, at the last meeting I had with the police Minister, the Attorney General was there and it was about progressing a true whole-of-government approach and how we can make sure that all of our systems fit into one another.

What actions have been taken to ensure that this whole-of-government approach exists?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There has been quite a considerable amount of work to ensure that our governance in relation to domestic and family violence is up to scratch, or certainly improves from where it is. Certainly, the domestic, family and sexual violence board, which is chaired by Mr Tidball—

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Sorry, Minister, the question was in relation to a whole-of-government response and specifically coordination between you as the Minister, the police Minister and the Attorney General. I'm not asking you about governance boards; I'm asking about ministerial coordination.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I would've thought that ministerial discussions also related to governance, so the systems that Ministers—

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** —are implementing, thank you. But if there is a whole-of-government approach, why are you apparently excluded from a consideration of the Government response to the LECC report in relation to domestic and family violence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The LECC report is specifically in relation to police.

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**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, with respect, a whole-of-government response coordinating between the Attorney General and police and Minister for women and prevention of domestic violence—wouldn't that require you to be involved in the whole-of-government discussions about the Government response to that report?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** This Government is very clearly taking a whole-of-government approach to a huge number of issues that are facing us, including domestic, family and sexual violence.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Does whole of government include the Minister for Women?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Whole of government absolutely includes whole of government.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Then why aren't you involved in discussions in relation to the LECC report?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The LECC report is the responsibility of the Minister for police. I will let the Minister for police put the response to the LECC recommendations. That's the Minister for police's role.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, you're either working in silos—women's silo, police silo, Attorney General silo—or you're working whole of government across issues that touch everybody in New South Wales. Which one is it?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** This Government is working whole of government way better than previous governments have. For example, the Women's Safety Commissioner, Dr Hannah Tonkin, is the first standalone women's safety commissioner and she was appointed as the standalone Women's Safety Commissioner by this Government—first standalone women's safety commissioner of any of the States and Territories across Australia.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** That's very interesting but it doesn't go to the fact that your insights apparently aren't welcome in relation to the Government response to the LECC report.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I reject that assertion. I totally reject it.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Then when did you meet with the police Minister to discuss the response?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I've taken that question on notice and I will provide it. You asked me about whole-of-government response and I am trying to give you a response on what this Government is doing in relation to taking a whole-of-government response. A key part of that is the work of the Women's Safety Commissioner. Now, the Women's Safety Commissioner, as I said, is the first women's safety commissioner of any State and Territory—standalone position—in Australia. Her role is to provide leadership and oversight of whole-of-government policy and programs on domestic, family and sexual violence. Her role is to provide advice and support on cross-sector and whole-of-government women's safety policy development, law reform and service delivery. Her role—

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** That's very interesting information.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I can continue to—

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** She's not a Minister though, is she?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** No. But Ministers cannot do everything that government needs to do. That's why we employ people.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Absolutely, and that's why whole-of-government oversight for these issues is important. On that point, are there regular joint meetings with other Ministers in relation to domestic violence? When was the last time that you met with the police Minister, the Attorney General, the Minister with respect to homelessness to discuss the whole-of-government response to domestic violence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The last time I met with the Minister for Housing in relation to this issue was last week.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Was the Attorney General also present?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Well, I'm not going to go into discussions that Cabinet have in relation to domestic and family violence.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Minister, I'm asking how your whole-of-government approach is working.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** It's working pretty fine actually. It's certainly working much better than it used to.



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**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** You would be as concerned as we all are about the fact that there are four known deaths in New South Wales due to domestic violence this year, according to Counting Dead Women Australia. Have you met with the police commissioner to discuss these disturbing deaths?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** As I think I indicated earlier in the session, one death by domestic and family violence is one death too many. I think Counting Dead Women counts not just deaths of women who have lost their lives due to domestic and family violence; I think Counting Dead Women also counts deaths of women who have died violently at the hands of somebody else. It may not actually be domestic and family violence. But as I said this morning, I have had phone calls with the police commissioner and I regularly meet with police, including, as I said this morning—

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** And your last meeting to discuss this issue with the police commissioner was?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'll have to take that on notice, and I can take on notice when last conversations were as well.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I understand from your diary disclosures that the last time you met with the New South Wales police was on 25 August last year at a round table to discuss domestic violence matters in the Central West, and since April 2023 your diary discloses no meetings at all with deputy commissioners or assistant commissioners in relation to any of these matters.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think diary disclosures are only for external bodies. They don't reflect—

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** If you can provide additional details of how the whole-of-government focus on domestic violence is working, I would be very grateful.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Absolutely. I can provide you extensive detail on the work that this Government is doing in relation to whole of government—in fact, I'd like to talk about it now, if you'd like to hear about it rather than when I last spoke with the police commissioner.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** What is important is how much attention this issue is getting because, given the increase in domestic violence and sexual assault in our communities and given the cost to the New South Wales budget—\$3.3 billion between 2020 and 2025, according to the 2023-24 *Gender Equality Budget Statement*—isn't this an appropriate issue to prioritise a meeting with the commissioner?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** As I said, I have regular conversations.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, in regard to elder abuse in New South Wales, you said at estimates last year, "The Government will continue to work with the commission on addressing issues relating to elder abuse and demands for its services." Could you outline what work has been done since November last year?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The Ageing and Disability Commissioner has been very active in getting out into the community to improve—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I'm asking about what you have done. I'll be speaking to the commissioner this afternoon, but I'm interested to know who you've met regarding this issue and what your priorities are.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The priority is to identify and reduce elder abuse, and certainly the role of the Ageing and Disability Commissioner is a key role in that. I have met with the Ageing and Disability Commissioner on a number of occasions to talk about the programs that are in place. Certainly, as well, the Ministerial Advisory Council on the Ageing has an interest in this, as do some local governments. In fact, I have been to North Sydney local council for the establishment of their elder abuse collaborative.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I gather from you that everybody else is doing something, but I can't ascertain exactly what you, as the Minister for Seniors, is doing.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I am ensuring that the reduction of elder abuse and raising awareness of elder abuse have sufficient resources for that reduction to occur.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Have you approached the Treasurer or the Premier about increasing funding for the Ageing and Disability Commission?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'll take that on notice.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Your comments in regards to the importance of addressing elder abuse—has your position in relation to a New South Wales strategy for elder abuse changed?

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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** No, it hasn't.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** You don't support a strategy?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Sorry? Has my—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Your position in relation to having a strategy—

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There is currently work being done at a national level with the Standing Council of Attorneys-General on what needs to occur at a national level in relation to elder abuse. New South Wales is working with the Federal Government and other States and Territories.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Will you commit to a New South Wales strategy?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I will work with the Attorney General, who is represented on that SCAG, for want of a better term, on that.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** So you have put to the Attorney General that we should have a strategy?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think we need to be doing everything that we possibly can in relation to reducing elder abuse. We have provided a status update in relation to what New South Wales has done for the first elder abuse national plan. We are in the process of providing our second status update in relation to the national plan and we'll work with the Federal Government on ensuring that New South Wales has actions and strategies that are consistent with the upcoming national plan for reducing elder abuse.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, have you been consulted on the new NSW Homelessness Strategy?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I frequently have discussions with the Minister for Housing, and Minister for Homelessness, on the needs in relation to my portfolios in relation to housing.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** So you have been consulted on the strategy?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have no doubt that comments and conversations that I've had with the Minister for Housing, and Minister for Homelessness, will be considered in relation to that strategy.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** You are aware that women who are over 55 are one of the fastest growing cohorts of people at risk of experiencing homelessness?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Absolutely.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, in regards to women escaping domestic violence, are you aware that they're required to provide evidence to access temporary accommodation?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes, and I am also aware that this Government actually loosened up the requirements in relation to evidence that was needed to access temporary accommodation.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** So you're aware that women are being turned away from temporary accommodation because they don't have that evidence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** These are vulnerable women with children that are being turned away.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I can tell you that many, many fewer women are being turned away as a result of not having sufficient evidence since this Government has gotten into government, and—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** How many women have been turned away?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** —I will always work to ensure that we improve what we provide in relation to women and children needing homes, and their experience when they need a roof over their head when they've experienced domestic and family violence, whether that be in refuge or whether it be, indeed, in their own home.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But Minister, you admitted that there are women and children being turned away from temporary accommodation because they don't have evidence, which means they are either going back to the abusive relationship or having to sleep on the street. What are you doing about that?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I did not admit that.

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**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** You said that there is a requirement to produce evidence and that people are being turned away.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** No, that was what you said. I said that since coming to government, this Government has relaxed the rules around evidence being provided for women who need emergency accommodation, and so this Government has provided a much, much better outcome for women who are experiencing domestic and family violence in relation to emergency accommodation. Can we do better? No doubt we can. But we've made considerable loosening of requirements since coming into government.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Are you aware of the Homelessness NSW report they put out in December last year: *Safe, Accessible & Available? Examining the temporary accommodation system in NSW*? In that report they said—and this is information provided by clients—that women have been turned away. What action will you take?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** We're doing a lot in relation to providing additional accommodation for women.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I'm asking about what action you will take to ensure that women are not being turned away from temporary accommodation.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I've already indicated that we have loosened the requirements around women and children being turned away from temporary accommodation. If there's more to be done, I'm happy to listen to it, as I'm sure is the Minister for Housing. Not wanting to speak for her, but it is an issue that is very close to—I don't want to use "close to our hearts", because that sounds trite, but it's an issue that we want to deal with better than what has been done.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** So you have met with the Minister about this particular issue?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** As I said, I meet with my parliamentary colleagues, my ministerial colleagues, in relation to issues—

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But not this one?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'm not saying that. As I said, I meet with my parliamentary colleagues and my ministerial colleagues on issues relating to my portfolio on a regular basis.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Coming back to the People with Disability Australia report on their Building Access project. I understand that they've called on the New South Wales Government to invest just over \$1.8 million over five years for continued delivery of that program, which will basically see all New South Wales domestic and family violence services brought up to standard in terms of accessibility. Is that something that you are advocating funding for?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think we need to explore, absolutely, how to ensure that women and children who need accommodation—certainly, our new Core and Cluster accommodation will be disability friendly. We certainly need to do work to retrofit our existing, and there is work being done in that space. At the moment the responsibility for that sits under Minister Jackson, but I do know that there is work being done in that space.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Following the disability royal commission, will the New South Wales Government actively support or work with the Federal and other State and Territory governments to develop the five-year action plan for women and children with disability to accompany the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Could you please ask that question again? I want to make sure that I answer it properly.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Yes, that's all right. Looking at the disability royal commission recommendations, being asked to develop a five-year action plan for women and children with disability to accompany the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032—is that something that you will be participating in the work of?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That recommendation is certainly a recommendation that we need to certainly consider and work out how to implement.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Has your office been involved in the New South Wales Government's response to the royal commission recommendations?

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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The disability commission recommendations are being worked through. It's a pretty big piece of work. I'll ask Mr Tidball.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Very quickly, the disability royal commission that DCJ is leading—and Ms Campbell on my left, as deputy secretary, is leading the whole-of-government response, and it is very whole-of-government. It's a considerable piece of work, and that work has begun already.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Okay. But it definitely involves the overlap with the Minister for prevention of domestic and family violence and sexual assault as well?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Absolutely, all Ministers.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Absolutely. There are specific recommendations that relate, as you said, to domestic and family violence. So we've rung Minister Washington, who has actually got lead responsibility, and there have been two forums with the sector and people with lived experience. There are some further ones coming up to get their feedback on the recommendations and what we need to do in New South Wales to respond to those.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Minister, we talked briefly about the definitions of domestic violence and coercive control earlier and the criticisms of those definitions in our legislation—specifically, in relation to coercive control, because it's now out of line with the national principles—to address coercive control. One of the other recommendations coming out of the disability royal commission is that the legislative definitions of family and domestic violence be expanded to include relationships in which people with disability would commonly experience domestic violence—so including from family, carer and support workers—and to cover that sort of disability-based violence and abuse and coercive control. Is that something that you've been looking at?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think we need to look at the implementation of the legislation itself, first up. There certainly has been a call for relationships that aren't intimate relationships to be included under the legislation. The definition is quite narrow at the moment. We'll see how that definition works and the piece of legislation works, to start off with. But then it's certainly worthwhile looking at expanding beyond intimate partner relationships in relation to the application of the coercive control legislation.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** In relation to the National Construction Code minimum accessibility standards, I think I asked you about this last time. This is the minimum accessibility requirements for new builds in the State. So this is something—

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Silver, gold standards?

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** That's the one. It's something that Queensland, Victoria, the ACT—everybody except us and, I think, one other State—have adopted.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** It's not just a matter for people with disability, obviously; it's a matter for people who want to live in their house as they're getting older or for those with mobility issues.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** What have you been doing to advocate for New South Wales to adopt those standards?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Certainly, this is an issue that has been raised by a number of the key groups that I meet with—the Older Women's Network, the ministerial advisory council on the ageing, COTA—because it is a really key part of people being able to remain in their homes, and that's what we want people to be able to do, rather than them having to move out, and we want homes to be as adaptable as they possibly can be. So I've certainly been hearing those voices and hearing the issue. I know there is work that is being done by Minister Chanthivong. That's something that is being reviewed. The piece of legislation—not legislation; the standards and the implementation of the standards within New South Wales is something that the Minister for Building has oversight of, and I would think that he would be aware of the concerns in relation to the need to ensure—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Have you been adding your voice, though, as the Minister for Seniors, to—

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Absolutely.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** You will have no doubt seen the quite shocking report in relation to the Northern Rivers floods and the reports of just completely inappropriate response to people suffering from domestic and family violence situations—and even reports of sexual assault. What is the Government doing to ensure that domestic violence responses are embedded in disaster response?

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**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have actually recently met with the authors of that report, Associate Professor Foote and Professor Margaret Alston and talked about the issues in relation to that report. Even before that report was brought out though, there are changes being made in relation to how we deal with disasters and particularly how evacuation centres are run. Domestic Violence NSW, as you know, ran a forum about regional responses to disasters. Prior to the bushfire season, just before Christmas, I really wanted to make sure that our services and that our Government response would be ready if there were any emergencies. Thankfully, we didn't have any significant emergency over the Christmas period. But it is absolutely true that responses need to be trauma informed in those centres.

One of the things about that report that really struck me though, there was certainly the issue about the terrible experiences of people who had been in evacuation centres, and certainly anecdotal reports of people having been sexually assaulted. But what struck me was the incredible leadership of women. I think that was one of the things that Associate Professor Foote was really keen to talk to me about, the way that women actually are often, just through a need for survival, actually at the fore in those particular circumstances, without necessarily having a formal evacuation centre. There has been the development of an evacuation centre manual. This is not within my portfolio but I have—

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** You've been speaking with the Minister for Emergency Services on this?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The portfolios that have responsibility for this are actually the Minister for Housing, and Minister for Homelessness through SHSs. When it gets to a larger evacuation centre, police become involved. At a smaller level, the evacuation centre manual has been developed and that provides guidance on how to set up and run a centre that promotes safety and privacy. This is since the Lismore floods. There's been recruitment and training of an additional 200 personnel, which will allow for more personnel to be rostered on. There's also been—and this is something that Associate Professor Foote talked with me about—the need for exercises, for training. There's certainly been a program of exercises which simulate a real centre. There were five exercises held in 2023 and there's 10 intended for 2024. At the end of last year the State Emergency Management Committee tasked the police and DCJ to review the major evacuation centre guidelines. I just need to check the numbers that we're talking about.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Maybe come back.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'll come back with the numbers that that applies to. That review commenced at the end of last month.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Are you aware of the recent analysis that found that a third of Australian universities have still not set up specialised committees to address sexual violence, despite it being a key recommendation since 2017?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes. Certainly that most recent report was very disturbing.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Very disturbing. Did you meet with the education Minister ahead of her meeting with other Ministers last week to finalise that action plan that she then participated in?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have had discussions with the Minister for Education and Early Learning and my office has had discussions with that office in relation to that.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Did you have involvement and input into the draft action plan that was released last year in December?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I don't recall. I'll have to take that on notice.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** That would be useful. Can I ask you about drink spiking? You'll recall that in the last estimates hearing I raised with you the misstep from your Government, unfortunately, in relation to the drink-spiking campaign. I understand that that has now been fixed and the messaging has been fixed, so that's fantastic. When I asked in the estimates hearing last week Liquor and Gaming NSW said that they still have no time line for rolling out training across pubs and clubs. Given that we've had a 20 per cent increase in reported drink spiking in 2023 compared to 2022, I'm a bit concerned that we're going a bit slow. Is this something that, as Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, you are involved in or pushing for? What can you do to try and push that along a bit quicker?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I can certainly, knowing that answer, take that on board. As you know, there was some movement last year. The CEO of Full Stop Australia actually chaired the workshop in relation to drink spiking, which ended up coming up with a result that was very acceptable and quite welcomed by victim-survivors, particularly the organisation What Were You Wearing.

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**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Something we've talked a lot about over the last several years is the lack of line items in the budget to allow us to track spending on domestic and family violence prevention and response. There's no clear line where we can see how much was spent over different years. Will you commit to finally having such a line in the 2024-25 budget?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I can't commit to what will actually be showing up in the budget but I can tell you that we will have a primary prevention strategy in place and that will be identifying right across the Government all of the work that is being done within the primary prevention space, including what is being done with sporting organisations, what is being done in education and what is being done with the corporate world. I will be taking that to our ERC for budget consideration.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** We have spoken a lot in these estimates about your interaction with other Ministers within your role as Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. This is not something that is unique to the way that the Labor Government has set up departments and responsibilities and it is something that I certainly experienced frustration with in the last Government as well. Whether it's disability or it's domestic and family violence, the criticism is that when we have a whole-of-government response to something often then nobody is actually responsible. In everybody being responsible, there's nowhere that we can point to and say, "The buck stops there. This is your responsibility. If we don't see change, then we know where to look." I know that you care deeply about this issue. Do you think that there is anything structurally that the Government could change to prioritise your voice on these issues across government?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I certainly think that there's work to be done in the governance space for domestic and family sexual violence. There are structures currently in place, including the council that advises me, the board that has the DCJ secretary and the deputy secretaries on it, and the steering council in relation to domestic, family and sexual violence. A lot of bodies are working in the space. It's a matter of whether they are actually fitting together. Work is being done currently by the Women's Safety Commissioner in relation to governance structures to reduce and hopefully eradicate this kind of thing.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Do you think that if your position was within the Premier's cluster it would carry more weight and you would have more ability to progress this issue, or perhaps be more directing on the issue? Would it give it a higher priority within government?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** One of my portfolios is Women and it sits within the Premier's Department, so there is that. But I don't think it necessarily comes down to one person. I think it comes down to making sure that we've got much better structures, and that is one of the things that I'm excited about in relation to the work that is being done by the Women's Safety Commissioner. When this Government first came in, I saw it exactly how you see it. I think, or I know, that if we develop better governance structures and if we make sure that our governance structures are tight and accountable, and the domestic, family and sexual violence board is properly accountable—and, dare I say it, secretaries are properly accountable—then we'll get real outcomes. And Government, ultimately, is accountable.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, have you read any of the submissions to the statutory review into the Ageing and Disability Commissioner Act?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I haven't read any of the detailed submissions, no.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Have you been briefed, or did you ask for a briefing, in relation to the commissioner's submission?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have been briefed as part of the decision in relation to the Government's response to that review.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Were you consulted on the recommendations and Government's position?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes, I was.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you support a parliamentary committee being set up in relation to the Ageing and Disability Commissioner, similar to the one we had for the Advocate for Children and Young People and LECC, as recommended in the submission by the commissioner?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That's something that is currently being worked through by the Government. I have discussions with the Minister for Disability Inclusion on that. The Minister for Disability Inclusion and I have oversight of that piece of legislation and I'm not going to indicate which way the Government is going to land on that.

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**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, you have a discretionary fund of \$200,000 in relation to carers. Has that money been spent?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I do not have a discretionary fund of \$200,000 in relation to carers.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you have one in relation to Women?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I do have a \$200,000 discretionary fund in relation to Women.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Have any of those funds been spent?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I believe there are currently a couple of applications being considered in relation to that fund. They are currently with Women NSW for recommendation to me.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you have a discretionary fund for Volunteers, Seniors or Domestic Violence?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I do not have a discretionary fund for any of those portfolios.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Why is it only for Women and not for the others?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** That is probably a historical issue, Ms Maclaren-Jones. When we came to government, that is the discretionary fund that was allocated to this portfolio.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Have you sought to have a discretionary fund for the others or considered spreading that \$200,000 across the other portfolios, or have you chosen one over another?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I think one of the things that is very important for government to do is ensure that the spending that we make is accountable and transparent and that where funds are spent, and there are grant funds already available, those grant funds that are already available are applied for those funds. It is important that what we do, as a government, is to spend money in accordance with what the community—taxpayers—expect of us and I'm quite happy to do that within that discretionary fund.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Can you take on notice how much money from that discretionary fund has been spent to date?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I can tell you that no money has been spent from that discretionary fund as at today.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** But there are two applications in.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There are currently two applications in for that fund.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Minister, are you aware of the national Carer Survey that was released by Carers NSW late last year?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I am.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** And you've read the report?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I have.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** You're aware that they have raised concerns about cost-of-living pressures and how carers have been affected because of reduced incomes and also the rising cost-of-living pressures, which is also impacting on their health and wellbeing? What support are you giving carers in relation to cost-of-living pressures?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I actually met with the previous chair and deputy chair of the Carers Advisory Council recently in relation to cost of living and, indeed, this report. There are a number of ways that this Government provides support to carers to assist with cost of living. The Companion Card provides free access to venues and events for a cardholder's companion. The Companion Card is actually held by the person who needs care.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** How many people have the Companion Card?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There are currently—

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Fifty-five thousand.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** —55,000 people with a Companion Card. There is also a carers landing page for Service NSW, which helps carers navigate the cost-of-living measures that are in place to support them. And, depending upon a carer's individual circumstances, different cost-saving measures are available to them. One of

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the things that we talked about—that the chair and deputy chair talked about when I met with them recently—was about the knowledge of that carers landing page. That's a real challenge for us, as government, to increase the awareness of that carers landing page, particularly—as I think I said earlier in budget estimates—when some people don't even identify themselves as being carers. That's certainly a challenge that we have. The conversations with carers that are run with Carers NSW is one way of raising awareness in relation to cost-of-living measures that the Government provides, but it's a real challenge. When carers are so busy caring for the person they're caring for, they sometimes don't have the chance to look outside their day-to-day.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Is there any support that you provide to help a carer re-enter the workforce?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** There is, particularly for women, because, as you know, most carers are women. The Government provides a number of programs to assist carers to re-enter the workforce.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** What's the name of the program?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The Return to Work Pathways Program is one.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** How many people are participating in that program?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The Return to Work Pathways Program actually provides grants to organisations. I can take on notice exactly which of those grants have been provided to carers organisations.

**TANYA SMYTH:** I think Carers NSW have a grant.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Just a couple of final questions in relation to the Seniors Festival. Has the Government cut funding to that?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** The Government has not cut funding to the Seniors Festival.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** In relation to questions you were asked at the last hearing, you indicated that 20 per cent of the funding that has been allocated was to go to the regions. What percentage of seniors reside in the regions compared to metropolitan areas?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I'll take that on notice just to ensure that I give you the correct figures.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** If you can also check whether or not the amount that's actually being given to the regions is fairly proportional to the number of seniors in the regions.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** When I provide that information, what I'll do is not just provide information in relation to the festival and the activities that are undertaken with the festival, but I'll also make sure that what I do is provide you with all of the Connecting Seniors grants that have been given to organisations that are in the regions and rural areas, because there is a significant proportion of that that has been provided to organisations and councils that are in regional, rural and remote New South Wales.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Can I also check again whether or not you have a carers' discretionary fund.

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** I do not have a carers' discretionary fund.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Minister, you were asked earlier about support to women leaving a violent relationship and support for housing. One of the Government's election commitments was to waive the eligibility for victims of domestic violence to access the Rentstart bond loans scheme. Is there an update you could provide us on that?

**Ms JODIE HARRISON:** Yes, there is. Let me just find the information on Rentstart. I have information on the shared equity scheme. Let me just find the Rentstart information. What the Rentstart Bond Loan scheme does is extends waiving the bond loan scheme to victim-survivors of domestic and family violence so they don't actually have to achieve what was the existing eligibility criteria. It waives or provides a loan for the bond and also provides two weeks advanced rent to establish a tenancy. As at just a few days ago, there has actually been 42 women who might not have otherwise been assisted in achieving a rental home. They've been assisted with a four-week bond and an additional two-week rent assistance under that scheme—so 42 clients who would otherwise not have a permanent roof over their head who have been able to achieve that through expansion of this fund under this Government.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Minister. We'll now break for lunch and come back at two o'clock.

**(The Minister withdrew.)**

**(Luncheon adjournment)**



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**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Afternoon, everyone. Thank you for your continuing presence. My first question is to you, Mr Tidball, in relation to coercive control. In an answer to a question on notice following a previous budget estimates hearing, the advice was that funding of \$1.98 million had been allocated to the delivery of community education and awareness about coercive control. Could you give us some details about how that money is being spent and what form and shape that community education is taking?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Yes, I can. The first phase is an educational website, which was launched in August last year. Feedback from stakeholders and members of the public on that has been noted, but it has generally been positive. The second phase—

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Sorry to interrupt you. The feedback was solicited or it was spontaneous?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** I believe it was solicited. We have been careful to user test and to market test all that we have done.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Great. Thank you.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** The second phase currently underway is a broad advertising campaign designed for social media, and that is designed for launch in April this year. The third phase, which is also currently underway, is tailored campaigns for First Nations and multicultural communities, due to launch in May of this year.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Great. If we wanted to have a look at these, are they available anywhere?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Of course.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Great. Thank you very much. Deputy Secretary, in an answer to a question on notice following the previous estimates hearing, we were advised that the domestic and family violence workforce development strategy is expected to be finalised by mid-2024. Is that still the case?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Yes, that's still the case.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Great. Thank you. Once it's been finalised, will there be an allocation of funds for its implementation?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I think that's under government consideration, once we get the workforce findings. Obviously, it's really important that we act on any findings we get out of the workforce survey, so we'll be working with key stakeholders to inform a government response to that.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** But you don't yet know whether you've got money to implement the findings that you hope to make?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Not at this point, no.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** When would you be looking to have funding secured?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I guess because we don't have the workforce survey yet—it doesn't come back until, I think, closer to the middle of the year, the analysis—I would have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** So if it's still on track to be finalised by the middle of 2024, and we're in the first third of 2024, we have no idea if it can be implemented or whether there will be money to implement yet?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Not at this point, until we know what the findings are and what resourcing is actually required or do we need to do something different with the existing resourcing that we've got.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Again during budget estimates in November, we were advised, in relation to New South Wales police training for coercive control, "That training was developed in collaboration with DV specialists". Could you please elaborate on what that collaboration looked like and which domestic violence specialists were involved?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I again need to take that on notice. I'm not sure. I think it was spoken about this morning, but there may have been people who are on a panel, which is quite different I guess in terms of actually being participating in a co-design process. I will need to take that on notice and follow up with police.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Thank you very much, if you could take that on notice. Again, back to you, Mr Tidball. In an answer to supplementary questions it was acknowledged, "People living in regional, rural and remote areas of New South Wales who experience violence face specific issues related to their geographic location and social and cultural characteristics of living in small communities." What are some examples of programs that are delivered specifically to those affected by domestic and family violence in regional, rural and remote communities that address these specific issues to which we've just made reference?

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**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** We definitely can help. I might ask Ms Campbell to start responding.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** In terms of the Core and Cluster, which I know is only just beginning now, there's only been five on the ground. Of the existing tranche 1 and tranche 2, 39 refuges, 26 of those will be in—tranches 1 and 2 will be in regional and rural areas. With the Men's Behaviour Change Programs, there are 16 providers in total across 29 locations in New South Wales and this includes 13 providers be in 22 rural and regional locations. In terms of Staying Home Leaving Violence, as you know, that's delivered by 32 providers across 91 LGAs. This includes 29 providers in 69 rural and regional LGAs.

With the Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Services Program, again that's delivered by 11 providers in 14 LGAs and this includes five providers in five rural and regional LGAs. The WDVCS, we have 27 providers operating statewide with 18 in rural and regional locations. Similarly with the Local Support for Services, we have four covering rural and regional New South Wales. Obviously with Sexual Assault Services, NSW Health is the main provider and that's delivered through local health districts. I can certainly give a breakdown of the locations.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** If I may supplement Ms Campbell's response, similarly with Men's Behaviour Change Programs, there are 16 providers which deliver programs in 29 locations, this includes 13 providers in 22 rural and regional locations.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I wonder if on notice, if it doesn't involve too much administrative work, the number of programs, it would be very interesting to see how they map out across New South Wales and also the reach that each of them is expected to have. What is the travel time expectation, for example, and what is the ability to travel in that particular area? If it was possible to generate something like that, that would be very helpful.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** We will do our best.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Just, finally, in that last one did you talk about Staying Home Leaving Violence?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I did indeed.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I note that the Far West Community Legal Centre Ltd issued a media release on 31 January this year advising that by 31 July this year they will cease delivering their four services, being the Far West Community Legal Centre, Warra Warra Legal Service, Staying Home Leaving Violence and Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service. What arrangements are being made to ensure the ongoing delivery of these critical services to the Far West?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** In responding to this question—I'm happy to answer the question—it's more in the context of the secretary with the responsibilities to the Attorney General that I've become aware of this issue. In one set I acknowledge that it does impact women, but—

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Happy to get a whole-of-government response, Mr Tidball.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** I know as much as there was a specific issue which pertained to insurance, and discussions were held with the peak group—I'm just trying to remember the name—the Community Legal Centres peak group, and the issue was resolved. I have indicated that if there is an impasse or a difficulty I'm available to—I was aware of the issue. The issue has been resolved. If there was a problem with service continuity, I would be very happy to deal with this matter offline. But I gather the issues were resolved. In terms of the granular detail of it, I would need, Ms Carter, to take that on notice. But I gather the issues have been resolved.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** If you could take it on notice, because the primary concern is continuity of service delivery.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** It came about because of the PII matter, as I understand, and I believe that is fixed.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** It is important if you could just confirm that it has been fixed and there will be continuity of service. I note BOCSAR data indicating that the Mid North Coast has one of the highest rates of domestic violence in regional New South Wales and, indeed, the State as a whole. Despite this evidence for need, why is the Staying Home Leaving Violence program not funded in the Port Macquarie-Hastings local government area?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I would need to take that on notice. I might be able to come back to you before the end of today's session.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Does the Government intend to expand this very successful program so that more women and children will be able to benefit?

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**ANNE CAMPBELL:** My understanding is that we're doing an evaluation of the existing program. It's up for recommissioning I think the year after next. Obviously, we'll be looking at how it's working in different geographies and how it works for Aboriginal women and children, and that will then inform where there are gaps in services, because we do recognise that in some parts of New South Wales we don't have great coverage. Some of that's to do with having thinner markets and not enough providers on the ground and also with this Government really focusing on building our ACCO service delivery. Given that about 30 per cent of women and children are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, we really need to look at how we co-design and how we work with the sector, particularly through Closing the Gap, to really improve those outcomes and look at different ways perhaps of how we deliver some of those services.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** When you say "recommissioning", is there any risk that any of these services will stop operating either generally or in particular areas?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Not that I'm aware of at the moment. I think from time to time some providers choose not to continue and then sometimes there may be issues around performance. But obviously you go down a particular path if there are performance issues in terms of that NGO.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** And you've got continuity plans in place to ensure continuity?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** At this point, yes. And we've had some examples—the one you talked about earlier in relation to the Staying Home Leaving Violence, out in Far West New South Wales. We'd be looking at other providers to pick up those services, so it could be either through a direct negotiation with that provider or it could be an expression of interest process if there are multiple providers.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Sorry, I'm a little bit confused. I thought I understood from Mr Tidball that the issue had been resolved and those services were continuing but I think you've just said that some of them will be maintained by different providers.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I'm happy to get some further information. But my understanding, Secretary, is that service provided the Staying Home Leaving Violence program, so I know there's work underway to look at how that can transition.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** But the Warra Warra Legal Service, the Far West Community Legal Centre and the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services—that was an insurance issue that we understand has been resolved?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** I am running off memory. I am happy to confirm it, but I believe that to be so.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** If you could confirm—the issue that we are focusing on is continuity of service.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Yes. Can I say, bundled in there, that the dealbreaker in terms of service continuity was the availability of PII. That issue has been fixed but I need to check whether there is anything at the back of that that's not resolved. I'm happy to do that.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I want to clarify a couple of things from this morning. In relation to the \$7 million funding for the migrant and refugees for domestic violence, the budget papers showed the \$4.4 million for the centre. Mr Tidball, you referred to a \$7million package.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Various elements of the package, yes.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Yes. I just want to clarify the additional money on top of the 4.4. Is that all going to the settlement?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** No, it wasn't. There were some other services, and I'm just trying to remember which note it was. The other elements to it were—just bear with us.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Maybe if I just go through the 2023-24 budget. It was 4.2 million for 12 domestic and family violence projects, due to end at June 2023—last year; 6.55 million for specialist workers for accompanied children and young people; 8.1 million to continue and expand the Redfern Legal Centre Financial Abuse Service; 7.5 million for the WDVCS workers at local court hearings and extension of the WDVCS/police co-location pilot; then the 4.4 million for the centre that you've just mentioned; and two million to refurbish Illawarra Women's Trauma Recovery Centre, and then access to the Rentstart Bond Loan scheme. In terms of sexual violence under that budget, 52.7 million for 48 new sexual assault nurse examiners and medical and forensic officers; 4.2 million to the NSW Sexual Violence Helpline; and 2.1 million over two years for a pilot program of sexual violence liaison officers in five local police commands to work with survivors of sexual abuse or violence.

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**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Is any funding given to Settlement Services International for domestic violence programs?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I think there is. I will take that on notice. Certainly the 4.4 I mentioned is going to Settlement Services.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Could you clarify if that is an existing contract or it's new money in this budget?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** The 4.4 is definitely new money in the budget, but I will take it on notice, the other part to your question, because I do know they're funded for other sorts of services through DCJ.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** In relation to the discretionary funds, the Minister said this morning that there was no carers discretionary fund. However, in answers that she provided following the last estimates to supplementary questions, she stated:

The Carers' discretionary fund is \$200,000 per annum. The Women's discretionary fund is \$200,000 per annum. There are no discretionary funds for Seniors or Domestic Violence Sexual Assault.

I just want to clarify: Does the carers discretionary fund exist or not?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** It doesn't exist.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** It doesn't, and neither do any others.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Is there a reason why the Minister would have put in her supplementary answers last year that there is a \$200,000 fund?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I would need to take that on notice and check.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Did that fund ever exist? If it did, where has that money now gone?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I will take that on notice.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Following on from Core and Cluster, you said there are 39 proposals. Did you say five were complete?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Five have either commenced, are complete or partially commenced.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Are they all tranche 1?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Tranche 1 and 2, from memory.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Yes.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** How many under tranche 1 are still to be completed?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I would need to take that on notice. I might be able to find it before the end of this session.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Then also for tranche 2; basically a breakdown between the two as to what has been completed and how many are outstanding.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I think I do have that, if you bear with me. The most recent report I've got is the quarter 2, 2023-24, which shows, of the total 39 projects, nine of them are showing some delays, and that's partly to do with construction and obviously issues that have cropped up in the normal project management of these new facilities; 15 out of the 39 have commenced building, refurbishment and renovations; and seven out of the 39 projects are in the planning phase.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you have any concerns about whether or not you will be able to deliver all 39?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Not at this stage.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you have a time frame for the delivery of them?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** For quarters one and two, I think—and again I'm happy to be corrected and will take it on notice and maybe get back to you this afternoon—by next year we're hoping to see most of the construction and services ready to start operating. For tranche 3, because we're going through the request for tender process at the moment, they're likely to come on board in 2026.

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**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** You said nine of them have been delayed. What were the causes of the delay?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Things like shortage of builders, particularly in parts of regional New South Wales, supply chain issues, rising interest rates and enduring impacts from the pandemic. But we're working with each of the providers and other agencies to mitigate any delays that have been incurred and, for example with planning, to help with the DA approvals so that they have a single gate to go through, so it actually assists in progressing those projects.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I might start with you, Mr Fitzgerald, if I may. We spoke last time about the figures in the annual report and the continuing increase in demand for services. How are things looking now in terms of budget and numbers? Can you give us an update?

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** The demand in relation to both the abuse of older people and people with disabilities will continue to increase. In the first six months of this financial year, compared to the same period last financial year, there has been a 28 per cent increase in the helpline calls and a 17 to 18 per cent increase in the number of statutory reports. That is higher than we would have expected, and it may or may not trend down a little bit. What it simply shows is that the trend line is up and, for all the reasons that I've explained at a number of these committee meetings, that will continue. It will continue because there is an increase in the number of people who are vulnerable. It will increase in the ageing area because of the deferral of transfer of wealth from older people to their children. It will increase because there are more people who are living with cognitive decline. It will increase because there is greater awareness. And it will increase because hopefully the commission's presence is being felt. Those trends will continue.

In relation to the budget, this year's budget was supplemented by DCJ to the tune of \$2.5 million. The original budget was \$4.5 million—a ludicrously small amount. DCJ provided \$2.5 million, but it's a one-off and, as I have indicated for five years, this might be the year in which we actually fix the broken budget. The budget, as you know, is unsustainable, and it has been from the moment the commission opened. But I am optimistic that this year we might be able to finally fix the budget for the next four years going forward. That budget is modest, even taking account of projected increases.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** You've spoken many times about the need for a demand-based model of funding.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Is there any sign that the Government is adopting a budgeting model that is going to increase over the years or, from what you're saying, has that not happened yet?

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** On the advice of DCJ and the suggestion of Treasury, we entered into a demand funding model a couple of years ago. It was unsuccessful, which is surprising, given the very people that made that decision were the people that recommended it. We've abandoned doing a formal demand funding model, which means, if you have that model and it's approved by Treasury, there are automatic increases. What we have done, however, to make sure that the budget is as rigorous as possible is use the demand funding methodology through DCJ to inform the actual budget requests. Whilst there is no demand funding model approved by Treasury, we do use that same methodology to advise in relation to the budget.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** In terms of what you're using that extra \$2.5 million for, is that an additional resource for people answering the phones, or what is it looking like?

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** It's to simply provide the basic service that should have been provided with the budget properly constructed from the beginning. There's no point in going back four years, but to understand where it is, the 2.5 effectively simply brings us to where we should have been during that period of time. Once we've re-established the baseline, then in fact we can start to actually increase it for demand, a demand increase. The \$2.5 million both helps the baseline but also takes up some, but not all, of the growth.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Right.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** Going forward, what we've said to the Government is to fix the baseline and from then on to try to use some form of demand growth funding model.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Is that still then just to do the bare statutory minimum?

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** In an ideal world, if you were to have a commission that was able to, for instance, do outreach or do some sort of community education and other things, how much extra would we be looking at?

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**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** I've avoided answering that question on numerous occasions and I'll avoid it again, because I haven't actually costed it out. The question for the Parliament and the question for the Government is: Is it prepared to start to resource this exponential growth in demand that will occur? This is occurring right throughout Australia. Today we've heard what is an exceptional tale of increased resourcing in relation to domestic and family violence. That's welcome and it's been a long time coming.

The truth of the matter—there are two things I should say. The first thing is that part of elder abuse and the abuse of people with disability is, in fact, domestic and family violence. Some 12 to 13 per cent of our matters deal with intimate partner abuse. But both the ageing sector and the disability sector don't see themselves within the domestic and family violence arena, generally, so they're treated separately. But as we see the demand for increased responses to domestic and family violence, so too in the future we'll have to see a similar response in relation to these areas.

The second thing is the area that I've raised before, and it's worth making the point. The greatest concern I have is twofold. One is in relation to regional, and we've put up three or four budget submissions in relation to a regional strategy, all of which have been unsuccessful. It is not possible to service regional New South Wales with the current funding and the current model. It is simply not possible to do that. At some stage we have to say, "What, in addition to what we're doing, will be necessary in that space?"

Another one that I've mentioned before is our outreach into the CALD community and the Indigenous communities, which generally enter the space of abuse, in terms of children and domestic violence, differently, but certainly in relation to elder abuse. They require specific interventions and work. The long and the short of it is that the more funds you have, the more you can do. But at the end of the day, my view is that's a matter for the Government and we'll just simply perform within the envelope that we're given. But if we really want to address the regions and the CALD communities, we will have to increase resourcing over time.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** A lot of what we are dealing with, or you are dealing with through the commission, is predominantly responding at the moment—there's the desire to do some proactive intervention also—to reports of abuse. In that whole-of-government response to preventing it in the first place, what would you prioritise? What should the Government be focusing on?

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** It won't surprise you to say that it's a multilayered issue, as it is in relation to child protection and domestic violence. All forms of violence, of course, are multilayered. The second thing I want to qualify is that each of the types of abuse is driven by different factors. Most abuse is driven by socio-economic circumstances—including, I might say, in the domestic violence area—and then there are certain types of abuse that are not. One of those is financial abuse. The drivers are slightly different, depending on the nature of the actual abuse itself, but there are some key underlying issues.

The biggest one at the moment is housing. The chairs of the ministerial councils on ageing, on disability, on carers and our own, the ageing and disability advisory council, have all got together at our instigation to identify the one priority that was across all groups—carers, disability and ageing—and it's housing. Housing has got two elements to it. Firstly, inadequate housing is a risk factor for abuse of all forms. Secondly, without the ability to access affordable and appropriate housing, you can't actually solve the problems we're dealing with.

So it's not only people in domestic violence arrangements that need to be able to change their accommodation. That applies right across the board. So they identified that housing was the critical issue. And, going forward, it will even be more so as we have an ageing population that has increasing levels of disability, and the vast majority of people with disability acquire it in old age. So housing is one of those factors that, if you get it right, you reduce the risk factors. If you get it wrong, we increase the risk factors and reduce the ability to find appropriate solutions.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you. We talked before about the way that domestic abuse is defined in New South Wales, and particularly the set of circumstances a coercive control offence will be applied to has been quite limited to that intimate partner relationship.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** Correct.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** There have been a lot of calls to expand that. Do you support those calls to include a broader range of relationships?

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** The commission's position has been consistent. We believe that the definition should not be just intimate partners but should be domestic relationships. We acknowledge, however, under the former Government, that there was a view that to go to domestic relationships at this stage would be expanding the scope too great and it was better to simply go with the intimate relations as a starting point. Attorney General Speakman indicated that in two years time from the introduction of the scheme—not the introduction of

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the bill but the introduction of the scheme—it would be reviewed. He was of the view at that stage that a reconsideration of a new definition would be appropriate. I'm not aware of the current Government's view in relation to that. So the long and the short of it is we would support an expanded definition. We acknowledge, however, it may be wise to allow some time for the coercive conduct regime to be established and then to do a fundamental review of that definition, having regard to the costs and consequences of doing so.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you. I understand that you are very unfortunately stepping down from this role to take on another very important role, and so I understand this will be your final estimates. You'll be also in the disability one, but this is your final session of estimates in New South Wales. Is there anything that you wanted to put on the record, I guess, as a parting gift?

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** How long have you got?

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** Firstly, I should say going to the Australian Human Rights Commission as the Age and Disability Discrimination Commissioner is a great privilege and a great honour. I did say to someone earlier in the day that the chance of not only annoying one government but nine governments is exceptionally appealing. I do want to say, however, two or three things. The first thing is I think the Parliament of New South Wales is to be congratulated for the courage of establishing the Ageing and Disability Commission across the board five years ago. That was really a huge leap forward in trying to meet the needs of older people and people with disability, and the Parliament as a whole is to be congratulated.

The second thing is I think, in the most part, we've tried to meet the aspirations and expectations of the Parliament, and I hope that that has been the view going forward. However, the journey forward is long. The third thing is I think that the success of the commission has been seen by the support that it has with the broad stakeholders: service providers, advocate groups and those communities. Nevertheless, I think, as I've indicated, we are really at the very earliest stage of this particular journey, so it will challenge governments right around Australia as to how they meet this growing demand. Lastly, I want to express my thanks to this Committee but also to the nine Ministers that I've been responsible to in 4½ years.

**The Hon. Dr SARAH KAINE:** Wow!

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** I don't know if I'm skilled at this, Deputy Chair, but I certainly know how to meet and greet new Ministers, and I must say most have been very supportive. But, overwhelmingly, I think the commission stands in good stead. That's been reflected in the fact that the disability royal commission recommended that other States establish a body such as ourselves, Queensland and Victoria have both recommended to their governments the establishment of a body such as this in New South Wales, and even internationally it's regarded as an appropriate response. That's great credit to the people that designed it, well before I got to being commissioner.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Ms Tonkin, I'm very pleased to see that your role has been expanded. I understand you now have a full team of people. Can you give us a bit of an update on what your role and your team now looks like and what you're focusing on?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** Sure. My role was made a standalone role on 30 October last year, so that is about three and a half months—almost four months ago now. I'm currently recruiting—so still in the process of recruiting, but I am getting some new staff so I'm really delighted about that. I now have a separate office within the Department of Communities and Justice, recruiting for a number of staff and a dedicated directorate with my own team, which is fantastic. That's been a real game changer and I'm really thrilled about that. In terms of my work, I'm going to release my strategic plan on 14 March. That's going to have six priority areas. I won't go into too much detail because I haven't released it yet but, broadly speaking, I've been working on that for a while.

Ever since I started in February last year initially in that dual role, I've been meeting regularly with many, many people from across the sector, across government, even the private sector, victim-survivors to work out what will be the priorities. All of that has fed into this strategic plan, which will be for the next three years. A key priority for me as commissioner is making sure that people with lived experience have a voice and amplifying their voice and making sure that their perspective and their expertise is actually not just incorporated but really embedded in government processes, and that lived experience informs the design and the implementation of policies and programs.

The Minister mentioned earlier that we are going to be establishing a lived experience advisory body for New South Wales, so I'm in the process of working with DV New South Wales on what that would look like—probably a core group with a broader network as well. No single group, even with that broader network, can ever represent the full diversity of experiences, but you can certainly do your best to capture a wide range of experiences if you do it properly. We're looking at best practice and looking at what has been done in Victoria and also with the Federal commissioner and how they went about it, and other examples of good practice, to make sure that we

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get it right. So that's a big priority. Another big priority will be primary prevention as well, so having a stronger focus on primary prevention and early intervention.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** What has your role been so far, then, in the domestic and family violence piece? I'm interested to understand structurally how you fit. Is it a leading role within government or is it a supporting role? How do you see that?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** The vision is really to provide whole-of-government leadership and oversight. Although I'm sitting within DCJ, it's meant to be a leadership role that's really driving change across the whole of government. Some of the ways I'm doing that is, first of all, the governance of domestic, family and sexual violence has moved under me in terms of managing that. The domestic, family and sexual violence board, the steering committee, all the other governance mechanisms—the team that manages all of those bodies has moved under me. They're not new staff. That's pre-existing work but it's a realignment to realign with my new functions. I'm going to be doing a review of governance starting on 27 March with a governance forum. We're looking at improving it, streamlining it, making it more effective. That's one of the ways that that whole-of-government leadership will be really implemented in practice. So, even though I'm within DCJ, I'm really working on that whole-of-government perspective. To the extent that I'm participating in different government bodies and forums, it's from that whole-of-government position and trying to apply that lens rather than as a DCJ lens per se.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** What has your interaction been with the coercive control taskforce?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** At this stage I'm not a formal member. I have attended meetings as an observer and I'll continue to do that. We're looking—after the governance forum on 27 March, it's envisaged that there will be a review of a few different mechanisms and I will be made a member at that stage, most likely. So that's what is envisaged at this stage, but I'm attending as an observer until then. I'm also a member of the government reference group for coercive control and I've presented to the service delivery reference group a couple of times as well, and I'm presenting I think to the culturally and linguistically diverse reference group next month. I'm trying to engage with all the reference groups as well as my own membership and participation.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Some questions were put to the Minister earlier about whose responsibility it was to—for example, Commissioner Webb referring to a crime of passion and those sorts of missteps. If that's not the responsibility of the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault is that something that you have a role in doing and educating and picking up or is that outside of your scope?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** I think I definitely have a role. A key aspect of my role is actually external engagement and trying work on changing community attitudes and norms and behaviours over time. I'm doing a lot of external engagement and some media. I'm looking at maybe later in the year convening some media together to talk about reporting in this space and the use of language in the media. This is definitely all part of my remit, broadly speaking, and they're all things I'm looking at. I think the use of language is really important in this area.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Will you then have direct input into the police Minister and the education Minister? When you talk about having a leadership role, does that mean that you then will be able to jump on those moments to speak to the different Ministers or is it not quite set up like that yet?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** There's nothing structural but I did meet directly with the police Minister two weeks ago, for example. That is one example. I'm meeting with senior government colleagues in the Department of Education later this week. I am really trying to engage across government. And I met with the Attorney General. There are opportunities to meet with different Ministers. There's nothing structural in terms of a reporting line, but certainly I will be making my best efforts to engage as much as I can.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Ms Tonkin, I think these questions are probably best directed to you. I'm interested in following up some of the discussion with the Minister from earlier this morning when we were looking at responses to domestic violence and how they would be informed with a lived experience group. I understand that a lived experience group is in formation and I wondered if you were the right person who could tell us something about where we are in the process of formation, how many members, who will be members and some of the details of this.

**HANNAH TONKIN:** The first thing to say is that this is in its early stages and it's envisaged that it will complement existing groups. There are already some existing groups in the sector. For example, DVNSW has a group and there are some other groups, like at Full Stop. There is also the reference group for lived experience for part of the coercive control implementation architecture as well. This is not intended to replace them; this is intended to complement them.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Can I ask you then—and I'm sorry to interrupt—if there are existing groups that are doing this work, what was the driver for the department creating its own?



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**HANNAH TONKIN:** It's looking at something similar to what exists in Victoria and at the Federal level and to have one that's informing the Government. There's one that Domestic Violence NSW has, which informs Domestic Violence NSW and is in that sort of sector space, but there's nothing in terms of general domestic family and sexual violence feeding in systematically to government processes.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Sorry, is that to suggest that the Government hasn't been listening to the advice from stakeholders in this area?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** No, they have. There is a reference group set up for the coercive control implementation architecture. There is a lived experience reference group that's chaired by Annabelle Daniel.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** But if the lived experience groups have informed the stakeholders and if the Government has been listening to the stakeholders, why is there a perceived gap of a lived experience group to inform government? Isn't that what the stakeholders have been doing?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** The Government has been using the Domestic Violence NSW lived experience group when we get the opportunity and also drawing on the reference group for coercive control, but in the course of doing that we identified that it would be useful to have a general group that cuts across the whole of government in a really systematic way, similar to the good practice that exists in some other jurisdictions. It's been identified that we can do it better, basically. We're doing it well at the moment and with the lived experience reference group for the coercive control implementation that's been a really good example, but that's specific to coercive control. This will be a broader one that's domestic and family violence in general, not just coercive control, and also sexual violence, which is really important not to forget that.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** When you say "inform whole of government", will this lived experience group be speaking to the police Minister, for example?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** It's in its early stages, but it's envisaged that it would be informing the whole-of-government perspective. But it's in its early stages in terms of how structurally it would feed into that. An important thing to note is that the governance forum that I'm convening on 27 March will bring together the domestic, family and sexual violence board and steering committee. A key aspect of that discussion will be how to incorporate lived experience in governance. That will actually be part of that forum on 27 March, part of that agenda.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** How many members will the group have?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** That's still under consideration. At the Federal level, Micaela Cronin, the Federal Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner, has—I believe it was 12. We will be looking at that as an example and what exists in Victoria, but then of course a broader network to support that. Twelve people can never represent all of the lived experience across New South Wales, and neither can 100 people, neither can 200 people. But the idea is to have a broader network as well that you could draw on as needed.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** How will members be identified? Will they be appointed? Will there be expressions of interest?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** Most likely an expression of interest process, as was followed at the Federal level.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** And lived experience, will they all be female? Will there be recognition that, while it's predominantly a female issue, there are also men and other groups in our society who experience sexual violence?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** All of this is still to be worked out. But it would be as diverse as possible, noting that the Federal group contains men as well as women and also LGBTQI communities, so really a big emphasis on diversity in the group.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** When you say it's all to be worked out, how far along the time line of developing this lived experience group are we?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** It's relatively early. We've consulted with DVNSW, we have a discussion paper that we've worked on, looked at with DVNSW. We've consulted with other jurisdictions. The next step is the governance forum on 27 March. Then after that, in April, that's when we will be really moving forward with concrete next steps about getting moving.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** What's the projected deadline for the operation of this group?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** I would say towards the end of the year, but it's still quite early days.

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**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Have terms of reference for its operation been developed?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** No.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Is there a budget allocated for it?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** No.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Will members be paid or are they expected to be volunteers?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** They'll be paid.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** They'll be paid?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** Yes.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** If there's no budget for it, what's the process for obtaining appropriate allocation of funds?

**HANNAH TONKIN:** That will all be decided later on through the appropriate channels when making the applications.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Ms Campbell, I might go back to a couple of Core and Cluster questions to finish off there. I'm interested to know about the pathway out of the accommodation of Core and Cluster into long-term accommodation. How does that look?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Each of the models varies slightly. Some have longer-term accommodation, so transitional housing linked to the Core and Cluster. Obviously there is an issue in terms of housing in New South Wales and access to affordable housing. There are a number of projects that we've got underway through the Community Housing Innovation Fund. There was 52 point something million that was announced some time ago. I think we've got about four or five projects that are started which provide longer-term social housing. As you are aware, there are also products around Start Safely that subsidise women and children escaping DV for up to three years. I think it will be really important that each of these Core and Clusters have very strong networks locally where they're based and actively working to look at how we move people out of crisis accommodation into medium- or long-term housing.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Do you keep the data on the average length of stay that women are in Core and Cluster accommodation?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** It's still early days. I think it was to your earlier question, we've got I think five services that have commenced and there certainly is data collection associated with that. It will vary, obviously, depending on an individual's situation. But we will be able to capture that data as we roll out Core and Cluster to understand the experience of women and children in these services, but equally how long they're there and what some of the barriers might be to moving into more medium- to long-term accommodation.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** And that evaluation and monitoring is all going to be run through the department?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Yes.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Is it set to actually have a formal evaluation?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I'm confident that we actually had funding allocated through the budget for an evaluation of this program, given its size and scope.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I'm happy for you to take it on notice, but could you give details of when that evaluation is likely to commence and conclude?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Yes, I'm happy to.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I might actually turn to a couple of questions of the commissioner. I begin by saying thank you very much for your time and also the work that you did in establishing and building up the ADC. You will be missed, but thank you very much for everything that you've done as well.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** Thank you.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I wanted to just touch on, first of all, the ADC bill that's before the Parliament. Obviously your recommendation had that there should be a parliamentary committee established. In your submission you don't go into the details of it. I'm more interested to find out why you feel that there should be a parliamentary committee set up and what the benefits would be as opposed to appearing at estimates.

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**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** You're absolutely correct. In the submission to the review and subsequent to the review we've continued to advocate that the ADC would benefit from reporting to a parliamentary committee, a pre-existing parliamentary committee—not a new one or a separate one. We've been ambivalent as to what that committee would be; it's up to Parliament and to the Government to decide. When the commission was established, the government of the day and the Parliament decided there would be no parliamentary committee to which the commission would report. History has told us that the commission would have benefited had that been the case, in a couple of ways.

On paper it seems eminently noble to report only to the Parliament—and of course that should continue. But, in truth, that's a very difficult process. You can only report to the Parliament through special reports. The sorts of issues that we've been dealing with over the five years have really only been able to be articulated through the Minister. We believe that with a parliamentary committee many of those issues would on an ongoing basis be able to be both scrutinised by the committee but there'd also be a capacity to advocate as a commission to the Parliament, but through a parliamentary committee—in the same way as the Office of the Children's Guardian, in the same way as the new Anti-slavery Commissioner and in the same way as many others.

Deputy Chair, it's a very pragmatic approach but it's one that's been borne out of actually operating for three to four years. I want to be clear: I did not believe we needed a committee when we started, and the Minister of the day, Gareth Ward, was clear there would be no committee. I was wrong, and that changed position was reflected in the submission we made to the review. But we do not believe you should have a separate committee and we do not have a view as to which committee it should report to. Ultimately, it's up to the Government. As you'd know, we've been supportive of the bill that's come to the Parliament but that has been our position.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I turn to one of the last reports that you put out. I think it was the October to December report in relation to—there's been a 13 per cent increase of reports to the ADC.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** Yes.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Some 76 per cent were in relation to older people. Of those, 247 reports were about older people with disability. What are the trends that you've found as to why those reports are increasing? I assume you expect it would continue to do so.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** It's always very dangerous to take one quarter or six-month period and say that's a trend. Those figures that you've seen there are higher than normal. I can't give you a reason to why it would be higher than normal in that particular three-month or six-month period, but overall there has been a consistent increase right throughout the existence of the commission—and that will continue. Let me just speculate on a couple of things. The first thing is the economic circumstances and the financial pressures on families have a direct correlation to their level of abuse. Financial pressures within family units—and in this case it's carers or children who are supporting older people or people with disabilities—will be a key indicator as to why you might see increase in risk.

The second thing is that there is a flow-on from the pandemic. During the pandemic, older people were severely disadvantaged relative to the rest of the community. We saw a substantial increase in what's called medical neglect—that is, older people were not seeing doctors, accessing medical service—and part of that's continuing. We saw a rise in neglect generally, and that's continued on. There may be some pandemic effects. One or two others which are of interest are during the pandemic, a number of older people left their homes and went to live with their families on the promise they'd be cared for in the future. What actually happened was that their funds were taken and the children now want the older person out of the house, but there's nowhere to go. Another thing that happened is children moved in with the older parents and now won't leave. The only way you can get rid of children out of your family is to charge them with trespass, which is a very strange law. To be totally honest, Deputy Chair, it would be wrong of me to say that there are absolutely clear reasons for that increase.

Another thing is it might trend down a little bit in the second half, so we need a little bit more data to go. But I think the overwhelming thing is the causes of abuse are increasing, the recognition of the issue of abuse is increasing, and I think the commission, through its extensive community engagement activities—particularly working with intermediaries and also our training of frontline staff—may be starting to have some impact. So, again, always cautious. It could be an increase in reporting, but I think it's also likely to be an increase in actual abuse taking place as well.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** That turns me to some of the figures that came through about the Hunter and the Central Coast, which were quite high compared to previous reports. Do you have an opinion as to why that has occurred?

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** Again, I want to be cautious. The Hunter is an area which often appears very high in all forms of abuse: child protection, domestic violence and in elder abuse. There are socio-economic

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circumstances in parts of the Hunter which give rise to that, but there is another thing that could be happening in the Hunter. The Hunter was a very high level of community service activity, it has very high numbers of NGOs, and it could be that there is a greater degree of reporting. I do think there's an increase in the level of abuse in that community.

I also think that there's a high level of reporting that takes place in the Hunter itself. But, beyond that, I think it would be inappropriate for me to give any other reasons at this stage. I should say that it is interesting that, for example, the Hunter is much higher than the Illawarra. When you look at that, that's unusual. The Hunter and the Illawarra are not dissimilar in socio-economic circumstances, but they rate very differently in relation to abuse matters. The Central Coast I think has its own particular peculiarities. There's a very high concentration of older people and housing stress is a particular problem. But, again, I think we'll know more as we go on.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I have a question for Mr Tidball. In the New South Wales sexual violence plan 2022-2027, pillar 1 identifies that there is a New South Wales domestic family and sexual violence primary prevention strategy in development as part of the prevention strategy of pillar 1. Can you tell us what the progress of this prevention strategy is?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I'm happy to take that question. It's currently under construction—that's probably a very poor use of word—but I think shortly, within the next few months, something will be made public in relation to that.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** It's designed to identify the drivers of family violence, and the same sexual violence plan identifies that a major driver at an individual level is exposure to violent pornography and a major driver at relationship level is pressure to pursue sex with women in coercive and aggressive ways, which is recognised as being related to use of pornography. Will that strategy address measures to limit use of pornography because of its driver in family violence and violence against women?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I am happy to take that on notice. Obviously, it is still in draft and we're still working through it, but I'll have a closer look at that draft strategy to see if it picks up those issues.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I think, Mr Tidball, this question is probably for you. It relates to the LECC review of police response to domestic and family violence. Is the department collaborating with New South Wales police in the formulation of recommendations in that review responding to the report in relation to domestic and family violence incidents?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** I believe that it is in play. I would prefer to come back to the Committee with a considered response, though, if I may?

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** If you could, thank you. In particular, I think the Committee would benefit from understanding the nature of the whole-of-government response and who is engaged in responding appropriately. Mr Tidball, the previous Government committed \$18 million for new and upgraded audiovisual facilities in about 50 courtrooms. How many of those have been completed?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** That is not with me today. The Attorney's estimates, if you prefer there, might be the appropriate place and I'll make sure I have the figure with me.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I will have the opportunity to ask you then.

**KATE MEAGHER:** The other folder.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** One of the other folders.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I hope you may be able to answer this question today: There was also \$8 million to provide court-appointed questioners to ensure that domestic violence victim-survivors are not directly cross-examined by an alleged perpetrator. How many court-appointed questioners have been engaged using this funding?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** I will need to take that on notice, but I am close to the work being undertaken with the departmentally recruited people as well as working with Dr John Brodie of the JPs association of New South Wales. Those resources are in play, but the JPs association is also playing a very active part at the moment in the questioning, and I can come back with the number.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** And, if you wouldn't mind, as well as the raw number, the geographic availability of those examiners.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Of course, yes, which is really important, I acknowledge.

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**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Can I come back to you, Mr Fitzgerald? You said a couple of times, quite strongly, about the commission not reporting to a new committee. Why was that? What was the basis for that?

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** The reason is they don't want to overburden the Parliament. The Parliament is significantly burdened with committees as it is and one of the dangers is you keep overloading to the point that they're ineffective. Our view is it would be more effective to place it within an existing committee. I did note—correct me if I'm wrong—that the Anti-slavery Commissioner has a committee of his own. I found that unusual. There might be a reason for that—Mr Tidball might know, but I'm not sure.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** The LC is best placed to do all inquiries.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** Yes. You shouldn't read too much into what I just said, we were just really trying to save—there are similarities. I think one of the things about sitting in this Committee, listening to my colleagues from DCJ, is that there are similarities around all abuse. There are very big differences, but there are very great similarities. There is some synergy. Whether or not parliamentary committees can acknowledge that, I'm not sure.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I think the resources for a committee are not really very different to the resources for a hearing, so whether it's a committee with an additional hearing day or a new committee, it's probably the same. But, from what I'm hearing, that wasn't your point. Your point was just not to overburden because then we're not effective.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** You're closer to this, Ms Boyd, and you understand this stuff much better than I do. The first thing is you're absolutely right; it was simply not to overburden the Parliament. The second thing is that I think there are some synergies with other areas that might well go together, but again that would be a matter for advice from DCJ and your own consideration. There was nothing more in it than those.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Thank you for clarifying. Mr Tidball, I have a couple of questions on the consultant disclosures from the last financial year. Under "management services", there was just over \$200,000 given to EY, and it says in the description, "Conduct an independent review of existing policies and practices." Was that for a particular part of the department or was that department-wide?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** I am really sorry; I wish I had it with me. I would really like to refer to it with a quick response.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Certainly.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I'm just curious. Then there was one here that reminded me of an issue that I'm not sure we talked about in the last estimates. This is the issue of New South Wales having to provide indemnity for organisations against child abuse claims because insurance companies were pulling out.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I understand that there was—well, the report I'm looking at says 47 organisations. So there were quite a few non-government organisations who were under government contracts. The bit of the consultant disclosure I'm looking at is that Finity Consulting were paid 429,000 to develop a national course of action in relation to that issue. Can you update us? What did that report show? Has it helped? Where are we going?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Yes, Ms Boyd. I'll ask Anne Campbell to respond in detail to the work that's being done with that insurance. We continue to be working at the table in terms of the national solution, but immediately in New South Wales the issue for those NGOs is access to cover, and we're working with Treasury Corp—Treasury with a solution. It is advancing, but on the detail I might ask Ms Campbell.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** It was extended it till the end of this year, so it went through the budget process last year. What we have been doing with other States and Territories is looking at the principles around this framework. This is the physical and sexual abuse insurance that predominantly applies to some out-of-home care providers and to some youth homelessness services. There are 46 at the moment that have got coverage through this scheme we've got in place, the interim one. The funding, in terms of your original question, is both the contribution from other States and Territories. So New South Wales isn't picking it up on their own. I think towards the end of this year we'll have some more advice on a final solution.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Okay. Because I think—

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** But we've had no claims, interestingly, to date.

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**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Retroactive cover, but no claims to date.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** No.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I think we all agree that we don't want victim-survivors to go without—

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Compensation, yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** —compensation, but also we don't want to create a moral hazard where these organisations aren't paying or having any kind of financial penalty.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Yes.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** If you did have a claim under this current arrangement, would that be directed back for recovery from one of those organisations? Is there any comeback in terms of those organisations being made liable?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I think we'd obviously look at it on a case-by-case basis. This particular interim scheme goes back to 2017, and that's when particular contracts were made. But often the State is party to some of those claims as well, so we really look at it on a case-by-case basis.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** Okay.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** But happy to take on notice some more specific questions, or it may come up in the—I think it usually comes up in a couple of the other hearings as well.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** In the other one, yes.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** So I'll make sure I'm across the detail.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** I think this is probably the final one I have for now, if the Opposition wants to get ready to take the questions. I just wanted to find out, Mr Tidball, the children and young persons committee, last year when we did that really quick but important inquiry into the relationship between the Federal or the Family Court system—

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Yes, I know it really well.

**Ms ABIGAIL BOYD:** —and children that were at risk under domestic violence situations, effectively, there was a bunch of really great recommendations in that report. I don't think we've seen a Government response. When will we see the Government response to that report?

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** I know the issues really well, and we've talked about some specific ones. If I may take that on notice. I really can't remember whether there has been a response and I absolutely acknowledge the sensitivity of interplay between the two jurisdictions. I will come back with an answer.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I have a couple of questions for the Commissioner that I didn't cover off. We've spoken earlier this morning about elder abuse. I'm interested in the power of attorney and the enduring power of attorney and whether or not you've been approached by the Minister or the Minister's office to provide either a briefing on that or what recommendations you would have.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** The answer is, yes—not so much to the Minister but with DCJ. There are working groups that have been established in response to a number of reports, including a Law Society report of 2018 in relation to guardianship and trusteeship, which deals with issues such as supported decision-making. But as part of those discussions as well, there has been ongoing dialogue in relation to powers of attorney and enduring powers of attorney. We support the move to a harmonisation of those instruments across Australia. However, that will take considerable time. My understanding—and I could be incorrect on this—is the SCAG has agreed in principle to the harmonisation of those instruments across Australia. What was not agreed at this point was a national register for the registration of powers of attorney, which many in the sector believe is appropriate. So as I understand where we're at the moment—is there is work being done by the nine governments in trying to get the harmonisation of those powers of attorney.

In New South Wales the ADC has been very active in working with a number of agencies in relation to this matter because there is an increasing level of abuse by attorneys appointed under powers of attorney and particularly enduring powers of attorney. What we now know is that most people that provide powers of attorney have little understanding of what powers they're giving away and in what circumstances they'll be used notwithstanding advice from lawyers. Even more alarming is the complete lack of knowledge by the attorney who is appointed as to his or her duties. So, whilst we're seeing increased abuse, some of that is unintentional. It's a misunderstanding, but it is of such a severe concern to us that we believe that there does need to be reforms of the

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powers of attorney themselves but, most importantly, in relation to the information and education that is associated both for the person giving the power but also for the person that is being appointed.

That is a longwinded answer to say, yes, we are providing advice. It is related, however, to one last thing, I should say. The Ageing and Disability Commission wishes to have a meeting between the Law Society of New South Wales, Legal Aid NSW, New South Wales police and ourselves and perhaps DCJ in relation to the adequacy of laws generally in relation to elder abuse in particular. I'm not indicating that there should be new laws but, after five years of operation of ourselves, it is probably time to say: Are the laws in New South Wales adequate? Part of that is around powers of attorney and enduring powers of attorney. Certainly, those bodies that I've just referred to—Legal Aid and Law Society of New South Wales—are very supportive of some reforms in those areas. What that would be I'm not yet clear.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** The other question I had was in relation to some of the feedback that the commission may receive and whether or not you've had any contact or reports or complaints made about Carer Gateway, NDIS or My Aged Care. I'm mindful that they are Federal issues.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** Let me just put a few things. Carer Gateway is an under-utilised resource which has great potential. For reasons which are not clear to me, there has been a significant under-utilisation by carers of that gateway and yet it is one of the more significant and better established services by the Commonwealth. I don't say that often of the Commonwealth, but it is. Why it is under-utilised, I think, is an issue and, if you talk to Carers NSW, who actually have a contract under the Carer Gateway, they will say that. My understanding is Carer Gateway has a real potential. We use it. We think it is quite a good instrument. The second one, in relation to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission—was that the agency you referred to or the helpline?

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** The helpline.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** At the national level?

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Yes.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** The national disability helpline is useless. It's an ineffective tool. It's poorly managed, poorly constructed and under-utilised. The disability royal commission basically said it needed to be completely reshaped, and we would agree with that. We are the recipients of calls from that line but they're very few in number and the lack of use of that line is indicative of the fact that it's not working well. My comments are mild compared to what I think stakeholders would say about that line. The good news is that I think the Commonwealth will respond to the recommendations in the royal commission report and fix that line up considerably.

I just want to make one point. Despite all the criticism of the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, we have a very good relationship with that organisation and we do find it a responsive organisation to many of our needs and demands, and you don't often hear that. In relation to My Aged Care, we find it to be an exceptionally difficult service. It barely fulfils any of the requirements that it should as a responsive helpline. Again, there's been substantial criticism of that line in the royal commission on aged care, and we support that criticism. Again, aged-care reform is underway. There will be a reform of that particular My Care into something different. I'm not quite sure what that will be but certainly My Aged Care is a very unresponsive service. I just might explain that without taking much time.

The NDIS has been—even when the services were owned and controlled by New South Wales, there is in the disability space a real understanding of the need to be responsive to the changing needs of people with disability. You can do that poorly or well. But that is in the NDIS system. For reasons largely around this obsession with packages, the aged-care system doesn't respond in the same way. It is highly unresponsive to emergency, crisis and changed circumstances. There's a history as to why those three lines that you've referred to operate differently. That's my honest opinion about those three lines, but it is now supported by the royal commission findings as well.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** The only other question about types of complaints is have you received many in relation to sole traders operating, whether in the disability space or carer space?

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** A couple of things. In relation to the disability marketplace, there are now over 160,000 providers providing services to people with disability. A very small percentage of that are registered providers. The vast majority are unregistered and the vast majority of those are very small operators—sole traders, small partnerships and so on. The royal commission made recommendations in relation to that and there is ongoing consideration following the NDIS review as to whether or not registration should be required by some of those currently unregistered providers.

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The problem with the unregistered provider market is that, whilst there are many good operators in that space, there is almost no quality control at all. We have a huge part of the market effectively—not completely, but effectively—not only unregulated but there's actually no way to determine the quality of the services being provided. That's an issue. In relation to our own of the ADC, what we have been trying to do is to educate frontline workers both in the aged sector and disability sector so that if they identify abuse by family members or community members, for example, then they'll report those matters to the ADC. We spend a lot of our time trying to educate the service provider staff and service providers such that they can acknowledge and understand what abuse might be and then report it. But the nature of the market in the disability space is problematic in relation to that issue.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I might move on to some broader questions. I understand some of these might need to be taken on notice. I'm interested to know how many carers have actually contacted the service centre of the New South Wales Savings Finder specialists to utilise that tool.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I think I'll need to take that on notice.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Yes, on notice, thank you.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** The other thing is whether or not the NSW Health Carers (Recognition) Act and Strategy Implementation Group still exists?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Again, I'd need to take that on notice.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I understand the Department of Planning and Environment is developing and launching an internal employee network group called Yammer page, which is a peer support platform resource to support carers. Do they update you on that? Are you aware if it's been launched?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Through the action plans, they often report on specific strategies. I can't recall that one but I'm happy to take that on notice.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** That would be fine. If you could also take on notice—would that hub be available to all employees?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Okay, I'm happy to.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** In relation to the volunteer recruitment portal, how many organisations are registered?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** It might be in my notes, if you give me a second. It doesn't actually quantify it in my note but I'm happy to take that on notice.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** In relation to the Volunteering Strategy report card, how many actions are in progress at the moment?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Again, I'm happy to take that on notice.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** And then also the number that have been completed or are on track?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Yes, happy to do that.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** And for any that are delayed, the reason why?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Okay.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** How much has been allocated to volunteering in the budget?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I can tell you that. I think I'll need to take that on notice.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** Yes.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I've got quite lot of other information but not that specific one.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** The one thing we don't have.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** That's fine. I want to move to the Australian Institute of Family Studies and an evaluation of the National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians 2019–2023—and, my apologies, it is a Commonwealth plan. But in that evaluation I was interested to know whether or not the New South Wales Government or the department has been approached to provide feedback in relation to that plan?



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**ANNE CAMPBELL:** It generally is but, again, I'll take that on notice.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Commissioner, have you been approached in relation to that plan?

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** Sorry, which plan are you referring to?

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** It's the National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians 2019–2023.

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** Yes, we have been. DCJ itself has been providing some sort of facilitation in relation to the New South Wales Government response and we've been part of that, and we separately have been engaged in that process.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Could you share with the Committee your opinion of the plan to date and what is in that?

**ROBERT FITZGERALD:** This particular plan is due to come into place in the middle of this year. I don't think there's been a delay in relation to that. The issue going forward in relation to this plan will be the necessity for the States to have action plans. There will need to be a mechanism by which there can be a reporting back of the outcomes that are achieved by the States, which has been hitherto absent, and there will need to be some sort of measurement framework that underpins that outcome reporting. It's not so much in the actual plan what's being proposed; it's actually whether or not the desired outcomes can be measured and then reported against, which will be critical.

That mimics the new Australian Disability Strategy, which in fact does have an outcome framework. Underpinning that, of course, is a measurement framework. I think that's a very important thing going forward. The second thing is the plan itself will now have to take learnings from the various activities that have been taking place in New South Wales, South Australia and the ACT, where there are agencies such as ourselves operating. I suspect the plan will call on State and Territory governments to establish bodies similar to our own in that plan. But beyond that, it's a multidimensional plan—as you would imagine—and I don't know if I can add any value beyond what I've said. But we have been part of the process. And if Anne wants to comment?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** No, no comment on that—just to your other question about the budget for volunteering. It's \$200K.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** Thank you.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** I have a question arising in relation to a discussion that was in police estimates and in relation to 91Q, which is about dissemination of images—it's broadly called revenge porn and in relation to figures that we find in the NSW Sexual Violence Plan. An estimated 60 per cent of Australians had experienced online sexual harassment or abuse; 11 per cent of Australians 18 and over have experienced sexual abuse; online child sexual abuse is a growing problem, with the numbers of associated reports increasing by 122 per cent; and the plan recognises technology-facilitated sexual violence, including image-based abuse, which would be captured by section 91. The police, however, said that there are practically no reports of this. I wondered whether any thought had been given to some sort of advertising campaign to destigmatise people who are experiencing this image-based abuse, to recognise that this is not their fault and it is something that they can appropriately report. Because we've seen this before with other types of abuse. This is a new and developing form of abuse, which is skyrocketing, yet it's only when Taylor Swift is involved that we seem to be able to take action.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** I appreciate the seriousness of the matter you raise. I therefore would not want to just respond here without taking it on notice, Ms Carter, and coming back with a considered response. I will undertake to do so.

**HANNAH TONKIN:** Could I flag a couple of things, just briefly? On 14 March there's a round table that I'll be attending with the Federal Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner and the eSafety Commissioner in Sydney, which is specifically looking at tech-facilitated abuse. It will be interesting to see what comes out of that. I also participated in a webinar a few weeks ago on Safer Internet Day with the eSafety Commission, which covered tech-facilitated abuse and specifically this issue as well. There was a webinar facilitated by Women NSW, which went really well.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** If we could be updated on the fruits of those round tables and those discussions and how that flows into policy and actually empowering young women, in particular, to be less subject to that abuse, I'd be very interested.

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**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** I've only got two more questions and I think that's it. The \$4.3 million that has been allocated to extend the service delivery of 12 community-based prevention and early intervention crisis projects—where are they based?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I can get that for you. I'm sure it's in here. I've got a list of locations so I can provide that on notice.

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** That's fine. Also with the \$2.1 million over two years to fund a pilot program of sexual violence liaison officer for five police area commands, the five areas?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Yes, I can get that on notice for you.

**The CHAIR:** No more questions?

**The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:** The rest can be put on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Any further questions can be put on notice, except by the Government. Do you have questions?

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** No questions.

**The CHAIR:** No questions. You are not going to spoil an early finish?

**The Hon. STEPHEN LAWRENCE:** Absolutely not.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I was going to answer some earlier questions.

**The CHAIR:** Answering earlier questions—you can do that in Government time.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Deputy Chair, you asked a question about whether all tranche 1 services under Core and Cluster have commenced. Yes, they have; all four have, and also one in tranche 2. I think you asked earlier whether there was a Staying Home Leaving Violence in Port Macquarie, and there is. There's the Kempsey Families Staying Home Leaving Violence program, which covers Port Macquarie.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Kempsey covers Port Macquarie?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** It does.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** What's the travel time between Kempsey and Port Macquarie?

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** I have to take that on notice.

**The Hon. SUSAN CARTER:** Thank you.

**MICHAEL TIDBALL:** If I may supplement my inadequate response to Ms Carter's question about the Far West Community Legal Centre, I think there was a very immediate issue that I dealt with some time ago, but the full context is that on 25 January of this year the Far West Legal Community Centre board advised of their intention to cease operation of their legal and domestic family violence related services in the Far West on 31 July of this year. The board's position is that the service is no longer viable as a standalone organisation due to staff shortages and compliance costs.

There are four services that operate under the auspice of Far West: Staying Home Leaving Violence, which clearly is funded by DCJ; Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services, funded by Legal Aid; the Far West community legal service, which is funded by Legal Aid, and the Warra Warra Legal Service, which is an ALS service funded under the NIAA. Work is being done by DCJ certainly in relation to Staying Home Leaving Violence and the board of that entity, of the four services, so the overall auspice, is requesting funding bodies to ensure the continued delivery of critical legal and DFV services under the auspices of larger organisations, which will reduce future viability of these services. DCJ is playing a role. After this hearing today, I certainly will make the effort to find out whether there is a role that the department can further play in ensuring connection with ongoing service access.

**ANNE CAMPBELL:** Ms Boyd, you asked earlier about a consultant called Rooftop Social. My understanding—it's the only one we could find—is it's an evaluation of the Maitland Local Court DV services hub and the evaluation is due to be completed early this year.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you very much. A number of questions were taken on notice today. The secretariat will be in contact with you regarding when those answers are due.

**(The witnesses withdrew.)**

**The Committee proceeded to deliberate.**