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SENATE

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

ESTIMATES

(Budget Estimates)

TUESDAY, 1 JUNE 2010

CANBERRA

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**LEGISLATION COMMITTEE****Tuesday, 1 June 2010**

Members: Senator Moore (*Chair*), Senator Siewert (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Adams, Boyce, Carol Brown and Furner

Participating members: Senators Abetz, Back, Barnett, Bernardi, Bilyk, Birmingham, Mark Bishop, Boswell, Brandis, Bob Brown, Bushby, Cameron, Cash, Colbeck, Jacinta Collins, Coonan, Cormann, Crossin, Eggleston, Farrell, Feeney, Ferguson, Fielding, Fierravanti-Wells, Fifield, Fisher, Forshaw, Hanson-Young, Heffernan, Humphries, Hurley, Hutchins, Johnston, Joyce, Kroger, Ludlam, Ian Macdonald, McEwen, McGauran, McLucas, Marshall, Mason, Milne, Minchin, Nash, O'Brien, Parry, Payne, Polley, Pratt, Ronaldson, Ryan, Scullion, Sterle, Troeth, Trood, Williams, Wortley and Xenophon

Senators in attendance: Senators Abetz, Adams, Boswell, Boyce, Carol Brown, Cameron, Jacinta Collins, Fifield, Fisher, Furner, Humphries, McEwen, Moore, Parry, Siewert, Scullion and Xenophon

Committee met at 8.59 am

**FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS
PORTFOLIO****In Attendance**

Senator Evans, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship

Senator Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and Parliamentary Secretary for the Voluntary Sector

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**Executive**

Dr Jeff Harmer, Secretary

Ms Liza Carroll, Deputy Secretary

Ms Serena Wilson, Deputy Secretary

Mr Andrew Tongue, Deputy Secretary

Mr Bruce Hunter, Deputy Secretary, Chief Operating Officer

Mr Rob Heferen, Deputy Secretary

Group managers

Ms Cate McKenzie, Group Manager, Women and Children

Mr Evan Lewis, Group Manager, Community Engagement and Development

Mr Tony Kwan, Group Manager, Information Management and Technology

Mr Anthony Field, Group Manager, Legal and Compliance

Ms Peta Winzar, Group Manager, Housing

Mr Barry Sandison, Group Manager, Families

Dr Nick Hartland, Group Manager, Disability and Carers

Mr Steve Jennaway, Group Manager, Business and Financial Services
Mr Chris Lamont, Group Manager, Social Housing Initiative
Mr Sean Innis, Group Manager, Social Policy
Ms Donna Moody, Group Manager, Program Performance
Ms Julia Burns, Group Manager, Corporate Support

Cross outcomes

Ms Kim Vella, Acting Branch Manager, Budget Development
Ms Helen Martin, Acting Branch Manager, Financial Accounting and Procurement
Mr Scott Dille, Branch Manager, Business Planning and Financial Governance
Mr Dave Agnew, Branch Manager, Property, Environment and Protective Security
Mr Andrew Lander, Branch Manager, Communications and Media
Ms Susan Black, Branch Manager, Ministerial, Parliamentary and Executive Support
Ms Lynette MacLean, Branch Manager, People Branch
Mr Allan Groth, Branch Manager, Strategic Policy
Ms Diana Lindenmayer, Acting Branch Manager, Social Security Policy
Ms Michalina Stawyskyj, Branch Manager, International
Mr Russell Maher, Acting Branch Manager, Performance Management and Modelling
Ms Andrea Lanyon, Branch Manager, Research and Analysis
Ms Alanna Foster, Branch Manager, Seniors and Means
Mr Andrew Howard, Branch Manager, Compliance
Mr Simon Taylor, Branch Manager, Public Law
Dr Loucas Nicolaou, Branch Manager, Audit

Outcome 1—Families

Ms Karen Wilson, Branch Manager, Children's Policy

Ms Lee Emerson, National Program Manager, Family

Mr Andrew Whitecross, Branch Manager, Family Payments
Mr Mark Warburton, Branch Manager, Paid Parental Leave
Ms Heather Evert, Section Manager, Paid Parental Leave
Ms Allyson Essex, Branch Manager, Child Support Policy
Ms Sonia Cornelly, Acting Branch Manager, Family Support Program, Strategic

Outcome 2—Housing

Ms Susan Finnigan, Branch Manager, Affordable Housing Programs
Ms Kate Gumley, Branch Manager, Homelessness
Ms Leesa Croke, Branch Manager, Office of Housing
Mr Ross Bain, Branch Manager, Social Housing

Outcome 3—Community capability and the vulnerable

Mr John Riley, Acting Branch Manager, Money Management
Ms Caroline Edwards, Branch Manager, Welfare Payments Reform
Ms Agnieszka Nelson, Acting Section Manager, Welfare Payments Reform
Ms Jill Farrelly, Branch Manager, Community Investment
Ms Sharon Rose, Branch Manager, Disability and Carers Payments
Ms Lucy Bitmead, Branch Manager, Disaster Preparedness and Recovery

Outcome 4—Seniors

Ms Alanna Foster, Branch Manager, Seniors and Means Test

Ms Jill Farrelly, Branch Manager, Community Investment

Outcome 5—Disability and carers

Ms Deborah Winkler, Branch Manager, Mental Health and Autism

Ms Sharon Rose, Branch Manager, Disability and Carers Payments

Ms Karen Gauntlett, Section Manager, Disability and Carers Programs

Ms Helen Bedford, Branch Manager, Disability and Carers Policy

Outcome 6—Women

Ms Sally Moyle, Branch Manager, Office for Women

Ms Fiona Smart, Branch Manager, Safety Taskforce

Ms Liz Stehr, Branch Manager, Safety Taskforce

Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency

Ms Mairi Steele, Acting Director

Ms Vanessa Paterson, Manager, Program and Reporting

CHAIR (Senator Moore)—We will reconvene our consideration of estimates for the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs portfolio. Welcome, Dr Harmer.

Dr Harmer—Thank you.

CHAIR—We are looking at outcome 1, Families. I welcome the officers. Are you starting with 1.1, Senator Adams?

Senator ADAMS—Yes, hopefully. I will ask the questions and see where I go. My question is regarding funding to the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. I cannot find any funding in the budget for that organisation. I am just wondering what is happening.

Ms K Wilson—We provide funding for ARACY. We provide funding for their infrastructure. In 2009-10, it was funding of \$2.036 million.

Senator ADAMS—Is that going to be continued?

Ms K Wilson—The current funding agreement we have with them goes up until mid-2011. Funding for 2010-11 is \$1.5 million.

Senator ADAMS—Thank you. That was all.

CHAIR—Thank you, Senator Adams. Senator Fifield?

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you, Chair. I might start with marriage education, if that is appropriate under 1.1.

Mr Sandison—That is the Family Support Program.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. Mr Sandison, has any funding been cut from marriage counselling or education programs in the coming financial year versus the previous?

Mr Sandison—For the families area and in the FaHCSIA component of the Family Support Program, there has been no change in the funding of the appropriation.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. Just talking about marriage education and marriage counselling, in particular, funding is received for that area from both FaHCSIA and other portfolios, is it, or is it just purely from FaHCSIA?

Mr Sandison—Primarily from FaHCSIA. There are elements around the counselling services that you would be aware of that are funded from the Attorney-General's Department, where they have policy responsibility and they have the funding but we manage the contracts.

Senator FIFIELD—Yes. We will just put the family law counselling to one side and focus for the moment on what you might call more traditional family education and counselling. What is the funding that FaHCSIA gives to that?

Mr Sandison—I might ask my colleagues to talk through some of the detail, if you like, of that component of the Family Support Program.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you.

Ms Emerson—What would you like to know specifically?

Senator FIFIELD—The question was in relation to marriage counselling and education programs separate to the counselling that is more associated with Family Court and family law matters. Could you briefly take me through the funding that FaHCSIA provides.

Ms Emerson—We have about \$60 million worth of funding in a range of early intervention services which bring in family counselling under a number of headings, like Men and Family Relationship program, Adolescent Mediation and Family Therapy, Specialised Family Violence Services, Family Relationship Education and Skills Training, Family Relationship Services for Humanitarian Entrants and family relationship counselling in a very broad stream.

Senator FIFIELD—The funding in each of those programs has been maintained?

Ms Emerson—It is maintained, yes.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. There have not been any complaints in relation to the FaHCSIA funding component of those programs?

Ms Emerson—None that I am aware of.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. Thank you. What sort of data does the department require from each of those programs, from the service providers?

Ms Cornelly—The department requires a range of data on clients around age, priority groups et cetera, and also collects some data from the providers themselves.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. On 'age, priority groups', what does that mean?

Ms Cornelly—Whether they are Indigenous clients, or CALD clients et cetera.

Senator FIFIELD—What was that?

Ms Cornelly—CALD, culturally and linguistically diverse, and on age groups as well, and where they might be located.

Senator FIFIELD—You mentioned a second set of information that—

Ms Cornelly—Under our funding agreements, we also collect information around performance et cetera of the service providers.

Senator FIFIELD—What are the measures of performance of the service providers? Just give me a flyover of the measures.

Mr Sandison—Primarily, we look at the flow-through of clients. We have our state office network that provides information, depending on where the location of a service is, on local intelligence. For instance, are they meeting the needs of the local community? So there is a break-up of their customer base to reflect, to some extent, the nature of the local community. We keep an eye on the operations, financially, of the service, so in looking at acquittals and so on in terms of the funding flow and whether they fully utilise the money they have got. We look at the nature of the service they provide and referrals and acceptance of customers. We look at the numbers of registered versus unregistered clients that we have discussed here at estimates a number of times before. It is across the board to get a sense of how the actual service is operating in the context of the community in which they are located.

Senator FIFIELD—Other than for the department's own purposes of making sure that funds are being properly acquitted, that service providers are meeting their contract obligations—other than that sort of analysis and data which is collected for particular age cohorts and demographics, is there anything else the department does? Is there any other way the department analyses the range of data that it collects?

Mr Sandison—With the spread of information that we have, we do do different analyses for different purposes. One of the key things is a statement, or a report, that is done about the services more generally that is an annual report. I believe most of that information is made available to the sector. We work fairly strongly with Family Relationship Services Australia, who are primarily on the family relationships side not the children and parenting side. We use that data to help provide advice about the intake of customers, the numbers of people that are being helped, so that services can have an idea of how they are travelling compared to the broader program overall. That is useful for benchmarking purposes and getting an idea of how they are going.

Senator FIFIELD—So there is feedback to the providers as well. Is any of the data that the department collects made available to researchers or other third parties?

Mr Sandison—I would have to check in terms of the requests. Have we had specific requests?

Ms Emerson—I am not aware of specific requests, but there is quite an amount of information that is readily available on the websites at the moment.

Senator FIFIELD—How would you handle a request from, say, an academic researcher for data which might not necessarily be on the website? Would that be taken on a case-by-case basis?

Mr Sandison—I think primarily on a case-by-case basis. We would look at the nature of the research, the work and the contribution it could make to the broader policy understanding. For an organisation such as the Institute of Family Studies, obviously there is a regular flow of information. For peak bodies, FRSA do their own research in more general terms, so

information is available. Then, for individual research organisations, sometimes when we have engaged them for broader family policy research we have provided information. Then, for individual research bodies through unis and so on, it would be on a case-by-case basis following normal protocols within the department.

Senator FIFIELD—What about an organisation like the Institute of Family Studies. Would they receive and request data from time to time?

Mr Sandison—Certainly we receive requests regularly from the AIFS, in terms of interaction with them, and we have agreements with them about clearing house information and other research they do direct for us. I am sure at times they would also come to us looking for information in relation to work they are doing for other bodies, not just FaHCSIA.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. Ms Emerson, would you mind indulging me and just taking me again through the names of the elements of the various programs. I was not quick enough in writing them down. Could you also give me the funding for 2010-11 for each of those as you do so.

Ms Emerson—The service elements that I spoke of before are under the banner of early intervention services. I can give you an estimate of the 2010-11 figure.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you.

Ms Emerson—Men and Family Relationships was around \$14.4 million; Adolescent Mediation and Family Therapy, around \$3.9 million; Specialised Family Violence Services, \$4.2 million; Family Relationship Education and Skills Training, \$15.7 million; Family Relationship Services for Humanitarian Entrants, \$1.4 million; and family relationship counselling, \$21.4 million. There are some other elements of Family Relationship Services that also have counselling components—for example, the Family Relationship Services for Families in Special Circumstances; that is part of the drought response. Are you interested in those?

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you.

Ms Emerson—That was \$6.6 million. The Kids in Focus—Family Drug Support was \$3.1 million; the Family Relationship Services for Carers, \$2 million; and the Rural and Regional WA Family Support Pilot Early Intervention Program, \$0.9 million.

Senator FIFIELD—Sorry, that was the rural and regional WA?

Ms Emerson—Yes, the Western Australian—

Senator SIEWERT—It is the new drought trial for exceptional circumstances.

Ms Emerson—That is correct.

Senator FIFIELD—How much was that?

Ms Emerson—It was \$0.9 million.

Mr Sandison—They were the primary areas under that broad counselling services banner and some of the associated programs.

Senator FIFIELD—Ms Emerson, you mentioned earlier a figure of \$60 million. Was that the total of the first bracket that you mentioned?

Ms Emerson—That was the first bracket I mentioned under the banner of early intervention services. It is a larger figure that I have read out to you, with some additional elements.

Senator FIFIELD—Are you able to provide—and you may want to do this on notice unless you have it to hand—the same figures for 2009-10?

Ms Emerson—Yes. I think it would be simpler to provide it on notice, if that is all right.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure. That should come forward fairly quickly, I would imagine.

Ms Emerson—Yes.

Senator FIFIELD—And the same for 2009-10, 2008-09 and 2006-07 would be helpful.

Dr Harmer—Senator, which years are you after?

Senator FIFIELD—I would like 2009-10, 2008-09 and 2006-07.

Ms Emerson—Not 2007-08?

Mr Sandison—And 2007-08?

Senator FIFIELD—And 2007-08.

Ms Emerson—Okay.

Senator FIFIELD—You mentioned the humanitarian counselling. What sorts of clients are they? Are they people who come here as refugees?

Ms Emerson—That is exactly the group, yes, humanitarian refugees.

Senator FIFIELD—Is that a number that has grown over the funding? Has that grown over the last few years?

Mr Sandison—I think it has been pretty stable. In most of these areas we have had stability in the funding arrangements, but we would have to confirm that answer on notice.

Senator FIFIELD—If you could, that would be helpful. Moving to Family Relationship Services, do Family Relationship Centres in particular receive funding from a number of portfolios?

Ms Emerson—Family Relationship Centres?

Senator FIFIELD—Yes.

Ms Emerson—They are essentially provided for by the Attorney-General's Department.

Senator FIFIELD—So there is no funding that comes from FaHCSIA for Family Relationship Centres?

Mr Sandison—No. Basically, the policy ownership for FRCs is part of the Attorney-General's Department. The funding stayed with them, so it sits in their portfolio budget statements and we manage the agreements with service providers along with the broader range of the Family Support Program. So, basically, we put the operational side into place but the policies are the Attorney-General's.

Senator FIFIELD—Under the heading of ‘Family Relationship Services’, as the Attorney-General’s Department uses it, is it the case that all of the funding is from the Attorney-General’s Department and none from FaHCSIA?

Ms Emerson—I think it is all from the Attorney-General’s Department. A number of the service providers who deliver Family Relationship Centres would also be contract holders of other elements where there is funding from FaHCSIA.

Senator SIEWERT—Are a lot of your programs delivered through Family Relationship Centres?

Mr Sandison—Not through the centres themselves specifically. It is up to the service provider to work out their arrangements. It really depends whether you are talking about physical location and, at times, they co-locate. There could be half a dozen different lines of activity funded by Attorney-General’s and ourselves, and that might be all done from a location where an FRC is. But, specifically, the FRC provides services under that agreement, or that schedule to an agreement, and then they might have three, four or five other schedules to deliver other counselling services—the humanitarian or whatever it might be. It really depends on the provider and how they want to provide the services. We try and leave that up to them.

Senator SIEWERT—Where there are centres, have you done any cross-referencing on where A-G’s delivers? Where a centre delivers services from the funding from A-G’s, what is the degree of cross-referencing about the degree of services they deliver, for example, through the Family Relationship Services that are funded by FaHCSIA?

Mr Sandison—We have certainly looked at it in terms of the overall Family Support Program reform and the nature of the bringing together of different services. We would have to take on notice a specific question in terms of what you might be interested in getting, because it really depends on the location. There are some 30 different streams of activity in total under the broad FSP banner, so to look at something like that there would need to be a specific example to actually look at and see what the crossover is.

Senator SIEWERT—When you have been looking at that reform process, have you not checked that information to see what the overall services are that the Commonwealth is funding through both A-Gs and these programs, and looked at some coordination or some refining of how those services are delivered?

Mr Sandison—Yes, as I said, in terms of the reform, we have gone through that, but it is not something I could just give you an answer on without a specific location and what is happening there, because every one of them is different. We have looked at the nature of the crossover, both in funding in terms—how to simplify agreements, which is the work that we were doing last year, to get to a common model and approach to give flexibility—and also for our advice to the minister that we have talked about before, in terms of taking FSP forward for the middle of next year.

Senator SIEWERT—In terms of the cuts that the family relationship centres have received from the A-G program, have you looked at how that is going to impact on the delivery for those organisations? I would hazard a guess that many of those services are, in fact, delivering a number of your programs. In fact, I know they are because they have told

me they are. Have you looked at what will the impact be to the delivery of the services that are funded under your funding stream once they get those cuts?

Mr Sandison—We will be looking at that. We have got a meeting this week with Attorney-General's. Again, as the deliverer of the services, or the manager of the contracts, we need to take advice from the policy owner in terms of their intent in relation to the changes. From there, we put that into effect. Obviously, we will providing a contribution to that discussion based on the impact to the services funded from FaHCSIA and we will provide advice to our minister in terms of the impact that might have.

Senator SIEWERT—Were those cuts discussed with you prior to them being made?

Mr Sandison—In the broad context of budget considerations, there was interaction between departments, but on the detailed specifics, no.

Senator SIEWERT—There was no modelling done of what impact those cuts would have on the delivery of the services that are provided?

Mr Sandison—Certainly by FaHCSIA, no. I believe the questions that Attorney-General's answered was that they were looking at doing some modelling.

Senator SIEWERT—They have not done it yet. What my main questions to A-G's were about was modelling that has been done on where it is going to impact locationally as well. My question to you is: was there any modelling done around what impact those cuts would have on the delivery of the services that FaHCSIA funds?

Mr Sandison—No modelling done by FaHCSIA.

Senator SIEWERT—There was no modelling done on anything to do with any of the cuts as it affects FaHCSIA?

Ms Carroll—I think, in the course of the budget process, as Mr Sandison said, there are conversations and there is interaction between the agencies, but the majority of the changes come into effect from 1 July 2011. We are going through a process now with Attorney-General's to look at what the policy changes are, to obviously look at where those changes might take effect. There will also obviously also be discussions with the sector as we go through. The contracts for the existing service providers are in place until 1 July 2011. It is during that period that we would looking at what the impacts are and what changes might need to be made to any contracts with service providers that we have.

Senator SIEWERT—I appreciate you saying you have got another 12 months, but the point there is that there was no modelling done of the impact those cuts would have prior to the cuts being made.

Ms Carroll—FaHCSIA did not do any modelling.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. Sorry, I interrupted you.

Senator FIFIELD—That is fine. As the manager of the agreements on behalf of the Attorney-General's Department, how much money has been cut? I know it is not your money, but how much money has been cut from family relationship centres all up?

Mr Sandison—I would hesitate to actually make comment about the Attorney-General's. That is part of our discussion this week. I believe the secretary of their department gave a

statement at the start about the nature of all of the changes under the Access to Justice initiative. I think the nature of the cuts and changes are really questions for them. If they took anything on notice, it is for them to answer.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. Senator Siewert asked whether Attorney-General's consulted you beforehand and you said that they did not. Did FaHCSIA make any submissions that might have been unsolicited in relation to the future management of family relationship services?

Ms Carroll—Can I just confirm, we said we did not do modelling. As part of a normal budget process, there is a process by which there is engagement across a range of portfolios for things to be considered by cabinet. I would be hesitant to have on the record that we were not consulted, because there is a budget process where agencies are engaged. Clearly, the consultation in that process is part of the cabinet-in-confidence nature of the budget.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure. As an agency that manages the agreement on behalf of Attorney-General's, would it be fair to say that the department is agnostic about funding levels or would the department put a view about funding levels?

Ms Carroll—Clearly, in part of the budget process, normally agencies provide what are called coordination comments, where they are able to comment on different views, but, at the end of the day, it is a decision for cabinet and government, and we implement those decisions because we do not have the policy responsibilities.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure. Because the funding is provided by Attorney-General's Department, does that mean you are agnostic about funding levels, or that you do state a view in that process as to—

Senator Chris Evans—It is does not matter whether they are agnostic or fervently religious; the officer will not be commenting on FaHCSIA's view. It is a decision as to government as to where they allocate the funding.

Senator FIFIELD—I am not going to go there. I was not going to ask whether they argued for funding to be higher, lower or about the same. My question was whether, in this sort of a consultation—and answering this question will not give anything away about the internal deliberations or views or advice provided to the government—FaHCSIA has a view which it puts about funding levels for programs such as this that it manages on behalf of another portfolio.

Ms Carroll—Because Attorney-General's has the policy responsibility, it is primarily the Attorney's responsibility. We would have a view, just as we have a view on a range of different submissions that go forward to cabinet. As I said, we provide coordination comments; we provide an agency's view through that process, and that is not different for this program to others.

Senator FIFIELD—No, I appreciate that.

Senator Chris Evans—I should point out that FaHCSIA have done very well out of recent budgets, whatever they tell you, and that some of us are resentful!

Senator BOYCE—Not a representative minister, I am sure.

Senator Chris Evans—No, of course not. It is not the immigration department, but—

Senator FIFIELD—The department does have moments of clarity and persuasiveness.

Senator Chris Evans—As does their minister.

Senator FIFIELD—Mr Sandison, in relation to how cuts may affect particular sites, you were advising that that is better put to the Attorney-General's portfolio—or is it better put to you, as the portfolio which actually manages the agreement? Who is in the best position to know the effect in particular locations?

Mr Sandison—I think there are two questions there, neither of which I can answer now. One is from the Attorney-General's side, because they have to make the decision and provide advice to us about the implications and the locations of production.

Senator FIFIELD—That discussion is still ongoing.

Mr Sandison—Then it is on the basis of that, and yes, of course we have an interest, which goes to Senator Siewert's question about implications for services and locations, where we would then look at it in the context of the broader funding package that a service might have in a location because it obviously has flow-on implications, potentially, for others.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure.

Mr Sandison—But we can discuss neither of those yet.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. Again, you will advise me whether this is something you can answer or information you can provide. Are you able to provide a list of each centre and its funding level of the last three financial years?

Mr Sandison—The family relationship centres?

Senator FIFIELD—Yes.

Mr Sandison—Can we take that on notice?

Senator FIFIELD—Yes. Thank you. Although I appreciate the discussions are ongoing between your portfolio and Attorney-General's, are you able to say, in net terms, how many jobs may be lost? There may not necessarily be any, but if it is anticipated that there will be a net reduction—

Mr Sandison—I think, again, we would have to wait for advice from Attorney-General's on the way in which they would seek us to implement the reductions in funding.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure. Thank you for that. Do you know if there was consultation with the community sector beforehand? Is that something that would have occurred from your portfolio or from the Attorney-General's portfolio?

Mr Sandison—Again, that is a question for Attorney-General's Department.

Senator FIFIELD—It is not something that your portfolio would do, as the manager of agreements?

Mr Sandison—We would expect to engage when we are actually implementing any changes year by year, or be part of that, but it is a question for Attorney-General's, certainly in the lead-up to the initiative and the changes that they want to have put in place.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. Any change to policy that would manifest itself in dollars is something that, if there was consultation beforehand, would have been conducted by the Attorney-General's portfolio?

Mr Sandison—Correct.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. You mentioned, however, that you expect that you would, as a matter of course and logic, be involved in consultations in any transition. Have you mapped those out as yet?

Mr Sandison—Again, we would have to wait to know what the transition is, with that advice, so that we can then work out an implementation plan for that.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure. Thank you for that. Could you also take on notice what the total appropriation was for the centres for 2009-10, 2008-09, 2007-08 and 2006-07?

Mr Sandison—We will add to the previous question. You asked for funding by the centres and we will have the total there.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure. That would be helpful. I think Senator Boyce has a question on the centres.

Senator BOYCE—I just have a couple of practical questions. When the special disability trusts were first introduced, the family relationship centres were given the role of assisting in estate planning for families that were planning for the future of a child with a disability. Are you able to tell me how many of those types of services family relationship centres have undertaken in whatever is a convenient period?

Ms Carroll—Are you asking where they have assisted with consultation in other areas? Is that specifically the question?

Senator BOYCE—In regard to estate planning for planning for future needs of people with a disability.

Ms Emerson—Certainly, in the period from 1 July 2009 to 31 May 2010, 3,271 clients have been seen during that period. The specific reason that they were getting assistance would not necessarily be about estate planning per se, but issues more broadly for family members around succession planning.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. But that is not specific to people whose families involve someone with a disability?

Ms Emerson—It is, yes.

Senator BOYCE—It is?

Ms Emerson—It is specific to that group of people.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. Not now, but on notice, are you able to break that down into location?

Ms Emerson—Yes, we should be able to do that for you. I have not got that figure with me.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. Again, it is probably going to be one of those questions you cannot answer yet, Mr Sandison or Ms Emerson, but what is the department's view on any need to reduce those services, given the budget cuts?

Mr Sandison—I think you have got it right, but we have to wait and see the advice from Attorney-General's Department and how we would then implement it.

Ms Emerson—Can I just mention this particular service is funded through FaHCSIA and we have no funding cut for this year that I am aware of.

Senator BOYCE—That remains funded as it currently is?

Ms Emerson—I will just double check the figure for you.

Senator Chris Evans—You should not have presumed, you see. This is the one question that they can answer.

Ms Emerson—It is \$2.18 million in 2010-11. It is in the budget.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. Thank you.

Senator FIFIELD—Mr Sandison and Ms Emerson, is post-separation counselling something that also falls under Family Relationship Services?

Ms Emerson—Yes, it is.

Senator FIFIELD—Is that one of the 30 streams?

Ms Emerson—It is one of the streams funded by the Attorney-General's Department, yes.

Senator FIFIELD—Is the cut to that funding separate to the cuts to family relationship centres or is that something that would have additional impact?

Ms Emerson—They are two separate measures, yes.

Senator FIFIELD—I guess all questions on that would receive similar answers to family relationship centres?

Mr Sandison—That is correct.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. Thank you for that.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I just follow on from that? On the issue of the review, the reform and the streamlining of the programs, is it envisaged that that will all come under one, so that there is not this artificial divide between A-G's and the programs that FaHCSIA delivers?

Ms Carroll—At the moment, there is a government decision, which is that the policy and funding for the Attorney-General's component sits with the Attorney-General's Department. Part of the review and the streamlining is about the contracting of services and what they look like. It is a decision for government about whether it moves policy and funding responsibility from one department to another.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay. As per usual, I have a series of questions around data which I will come back to. In terms of the data that is collected, when I asked A-G's about the data they relied on, they said they relied on the online process. Is there any other data process that A-G's undertakes or that is used, because that data is out of data and it suggested to me that it

is quite inaccurate? Is there any other data that A-G's collects or do they rely solely on your data?

Mr Sandison—They rely on the FSP Online data, and I think it is a matter about which financial year of data was used. I think we would argue that the data is accurate for the purposes that it is used for. We have had discussions before about the percentage of registered versus unregistered clients and, when you start looking at unregistered, obviously, there is not a lot of information that might be as useful as the registered. We do a lot of work to try and improve the level of registered clients in the system, but that data is maintained regularly and there is a requirement on service providers to, within 28 days of a particular activity or intervention, update their data in relation to that service.

Senator SIEWERT—The data that shows the number of separations, for example, that A-G's has relied on, you believe is accurate?

Mr Sandison—My only understanding is that they used 2007-08 data and that would have been accurate at the time it was in the system. We have made significant improvements to the system. We have discussed those over the last year or two.

Senator SIEWERT—I will go back to that shortly, but the 2007-08 data, you say, is accurate?

Mr Sandison—I would have to look at what data they used. We have not seen the specific data they referred to. We all use different sets of data to support analysis of programs. Without knowing the specific data they looked at, I would not be able to make a comment.

Senator SIEWERT—I might put that question on notice around asking you to look at that data and to assess the degree of accuracy of that data, because it has been very strongly suggested to me that that data is fairly inaccurate. It is quite old data, as well, to be making decisions on.

Dr Harmer—Senator, what is your question?

Senator SIEWERT—What is the degree of accuracy for the data that was used for the decision making by A-G's on the funding cuts?

Dr Harmer—We will take that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. That is much appreciated.

Ms Emerson—I was just going to comment; I thought that would be an issue for A-G's because we actually do not know that data.

Senator SIEWERT—Maybe you could check which data was used.

Mr Sandison—We will take it on—

Senator SIEWERT—It was 2007-08 data, so I think that you—

Ms Carroll—We will take it on notice and we will work with the Attorney-General's Department. We understand.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you.

Senator FIFIELD—Ms Emerson or Mr Sandison, where is the simplest place for me to go to to look at the 30 streams?

Mr Sandison—You would like a listing of all the different areas of activity?

Senator FIFIELD—Yes.

Mr Sandison—We could take that on notice and provide a list of the streams of activity.

Senator FIFIELD—Unless it is somewhere convenient on a website. Often things are not necessarily pulled together so conveniently.

Ms Emerson—There are certainly summaries of the streams on the website. However, for the more detailed sort of data we have been providing you with, we would have to give you a list.

Senator FIFIELD—If you could, that would be appreciated. Is the Family Assistance Office part of family support?

Mr Sandison—It is within the families area of the department.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay.

CHAIR—Is it under 1.1?

Mr Sandison—It does not really sit with my colleagues. Primarily, just now, it is in the Family Support Program area. The involvement of FAO we normally discuss in relation to the family payments area. We are here and ready to go; it is just that—

CHAIR—Which is 1.3.

Senator FIFIELD—I can talk about it at 1.3, if that is better.

CHAIR—Why don't you let the officers know what the other key areas you are wanting to follow up are and then we will see if we have got the right people.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure. They are the Family Assistance Office and family tax benefit issues. I guess if we are going in order it is family tax next, isn't it?

Senator SIEWERT—I have some issues that go back to data and things like that before we move off that area in 1.1.

Senator FIFIELD—Go for it.

CHAIR—We will stick with those and then we will move down to the others.

Senator SIEWERT—Can we go to the inevitable question about online data? Where are we up to with removing personal information from the data collection forms?

Ms Cornelly—The functionality is actually in the FRSP system now and it will be switched on from 1 July of this year. We have been working with providers, and providers have the choice about when they actually switch on that functionality and start to have the de-identified data available.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I just clarify that? The form is all done, it is all de-personalised if people want it to be, and then it is up to each of the providers. Is that right?

Ms Cornelly—That is right.

Senator SIEWERT—Have each of the providers been notified of that process? Where are you up to in respect of that?

Ms Cornelly—We advised providers in about March this year. There has also been some ongoing dialogue with FRSA and we will continue to liaise with the providers about their needs as we move forward.

Senator SIEWERT—We have been talking about the programs that are funded by the A-G's and all the FaHCSIA programs. Does this cover the whole gamut of work and programs?

Ms Cornelly—It covers all of the Family Relationships Services, both Attorney-General's and FaHCSIA, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay. So it is those that are provided by the centres themselves and those that are provided by other providers that are not necessarily providing services through centres?

Ms Cornelly—That is right.

Senator SIEWERT—Everything?

Ms Cornelly—Everything.

Senator SIEWERT—That is much appreciated. Can we go back to the issue we were just talking about in terms of registered and unregistered and how those people who are choosing to be unregistered are counted in the statistics of the services that are provided? Not for the other data that has been collected but for the services that are provided by the provider, whether it be a centre or not, are the unregistered clients counted in the stats that show up in terms of the number of people that are supported?

Mr Sandison—Yes, they are.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay. I am certainly aware that there are some providers that think that they do not count. So they do count?

Ms Cornelly—They do.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. Does how regularly the data is collected remain the same—in terms of access to it and all of those sorts of things? Is the only thing that has changed now the issue about not collecting personal data?

Ms Cornelly—That is right.

Senator SIEWERT—And that data is shared with A-G's?

Mr Sandison—I have to admit that I am not sure whether they go in and have direct access like an administrator of the system, but we provide information and reports. Part of our role as the implementers and in looking after the contracts is to provide appropriate information and performance data to Attorney-General's so that they can ensure that their policies are being implemented.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I add to the question that you have taken on notice on the issue about A-G's using the 2007-08 data: why would they have used 2007-08 data rather than the most recent data?

Mr Sandison—We will take that and refer it to Attorney-General's.

Senator SIEWERT—If you could take that and refer it to A-G's.

Mr Sandison—Certainly.

Senator SIEWERT—I know that you have been refining the system and it seems to me that, with the refinements that have been made, the most accurate data would be the most recent data. So I am interested to know why they would use the older data.

Mr Sandison—We will work with Attorney-General's for an answer.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated. What is the most recent overall national data report for Family Relationship Services?

Ms Cornelly—The 2007-08 one is the one that is out at the moment, and we are expecting to be able to release the 2008-09 one shortly.

Senator SIEWERT—That is nine months down the track. That is right, isn't it?

Mr Sandison—That is correct.

Senator SIEWERT—Why does it take so long to get that data when you are doing it online?

Mr Sandison—We normally still go through with a lot of work with providers to ensure that they have updated their datasets. So, regardless of the time frames, there is lots of work for providers where they deliver services. We have a time frame for the updating of the data. Unfortunately the providers do not always meet that time frame, so we actually go through a lot of work to make sure it is as up-to-date as possible, and then there is the analysis work to put the report together.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay. I have got a few more questions under the Family Relationship Centres before we move onto other issues. I am not going to go back to the modelling, but I want to explore a few more questions there on the issues around means testing of services under the new proposals with A-G's. Have you looked at what impact that may have on the provision of the programs that FaHCSIA funds through the centres—in other words, in engaging clients as they may be put off attending or from accessing services because of the means testing through the other program? Have you looked at any of that?

Mr Sandison—We have not done a specific analysis yet. Again, it is back to working with Attorney-General's on some of their advice to us on the nature of how they want some of it applied. Obviously the means test is a bit more straightforward, but we do that body of work as a whole, so we have not done that yet.

Senator SIEWERT—So that will be part of the discussions you have with A-G's.

Mr Sandison—Correct.

Senator SIEWERT—I did start exploring this a little bit with A-G's, but have you done any more recent work on geographical access to services—and I am thinking of those areas that are most disadvantaged—or is that part of the national data report on who accesses services on a geographic basis as well? In other words, I am looking at the most disadvantaged areas and I am interested in how any funding cuts may impact on access to those services for the most disadvantaged. Have you looked at that at all?

Mr Sandison—Again, in relation to the budget changes from Attorney-General's, we have not done anything in that context. We would have to take on notice the extent to which the

national report looks at the areas of disadvantage, but we clearly have the information around the locations of services and that would link to some of the geographic areas where we know there is significant disadvantage. But we would have check with the report the extent to which that is a specific item.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay. Could you take that on notice?

Mr Sandison—Certainly.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated. Thank you. Can I go back to this issue of the process of review, in terms of the 2011 contract. What are the time lines for finalising the review process and then starting to work out how the new contracts are going to look, coming up to 2011, when the current contracts expire?

Mr Sandison—Are you talking about, broadly, the Family Support Program; not the Attorney-General changes?

Senator SIEWERT—No, I meant broadly, and we touched on that a little bit earlier.

Ms Carroll—Clearly we are going through a process at the moment of having done some consultations about the broad directions and working through, obviously, some of the recent changes. One of the things that we would be going through is, clearly, consultation with the sector and also decisions for our minister about any of those changes. As those flow through over the next few months, we would clearly be starting to look at what changes that means, what that means for the contracting, et cetera, from 1 July 2011.

Senator SIEWERT—What is the time line for that?

Ms Carroll—I could not tell you the specific time line at the moment. Part of that is that we iterate, obviously, with the minister about the broad directions. Also, we will now be starting to put in place a more specific time frame for the way forward over the next six months.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. Is part of the review reviewing each of the programs? We have just been through the list of programs. Is it actually reviewing those programs, specifically?

Mr Sandison—I would not say there are specific reviews of each and every program or sub-elements. Stage 1 was trying to look at streamlining, which we have done, around the contracts or the agreements that we operate and the number of schedules to try and make it a more simplified process for providers. For the rest of it, it is really the level of flexibility and change we can bring into the service streams rather than reviewing each and every one of them. It is the nature of how they operate, and a lot of the feedback we got last year from providers was the nature of the flexibility, or lack of it, in the way we contract the services—I think we have discussed some of that previously—and also the intent of the minister in terms of where she would like the direction of the FSP to go. It is an overarching issue as much as going through each and every one of the streams to talk about the detail. That is basically what we are working through now. Once we have that guidance from the minister, we can then look at each of the individual elements, because some of them are actually running for different time periods and the natures of the agreements that are in place are different as well.

That is why we cannot quite get an implementation timetable yet, until we know the extent of change or flexibility that we have to introduce.

Senator SIEWERT—I am particularly interested to look at—and I understand the issues around flexibility, and we have had those discussions before—the success of some of the particular programs and not just whether they are meeting their targets but whether they are actually delivering the outcomes or whether, when you are streamlining in delivering services, instead of putting a funding item against each particular item it would be simpler to say, ‘These are the services that we know are needed, and each centre or service provider needs to have the flexibility to meet the needs of the community regardless of which funding stream it comes out of.’

Mr Sandison—That is exactly one of the issues that we have looked at. Certainly in the consultations it was one of the key issues. If somebody had six agreements or schedules for different levels of activity, or different types of activity, is there anything to stop it being one schedule that says that, if a person comes through the door, you can deliver the service rather than operate on all the different levels? Obviously, the capability of the provider will be an important issue; you cannot just open it up to everything, because some providers have an expertise in particular areas. That is one of the issues about how you maintain stability in the service sector but also introduce some flexibility.

Senator SIEWERT—Thanks. With the issues around, for example, how successful the DV line item has been, how are you measuring, then, the effectiveness of some of these specific programs and whether they are meeting their objectives?

Mr Sandison—To the extent we can, we are looking at the performance information. Again, in the discussions that we have had, the building of a performance framework for Family Relationship Services Australia has been an ongoing issue, working with the sector and FRSA to move from just a flow-through of the number of people helped, looking at their presenting needs and those issues, to the actual evidence around what the outcome is for the individual or their family. That is a far harder issue to measure in the context of social policy, but that is the one we have been working on with the sector. That performance framework is something that we will be looking to introduce over the next 12 months, working with providers.

Senator SIEWERT—When you are talking about ‘introduced over the next 12 months’, that performance framework comes in for the start of the next contract—is that the idea?

Mr Sandison—I would have to check on timing.

Ms Emerson—That is broadly the intention, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—So, as you roll out negotiations for the new contract, that will be part of that process?

Ms Emerson—We are actively working on the development of the performance framework now. On current timing, that is what we were hoping to do.

Senator SIEWERT—The other issues are issues around waiting lists. Are you monitoring waiting lists? What are they looking like now? Sorry, I will ask that one first. Are you monitoring waiting lists?

Ms Cornelly—We have run a survey for the FRCs for the family dispute resolution and that is looking at about 70 per cent of clients receiving services within a three-week period, which is similar to what we had through the surveys we ran in October.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. In terms of that 70 per cent, are you looking at it for particular locations as well? Are there particular hotspots where people are having to wait a lengthier period of time?

Ms Cornelly—I understand that we have it against each of the centres, so we could see where the centres that have the longer waiting lists are.

Senator SIEWERT—Are there centres that do have particularly long waiting lists?

Ms Cornelly—I believe there are, but I do not have that information to hand.

Senator SIEWERT—Is that something that you could take on notice to let us know? Then, of course, my next question is: what are you doing about the waiting lists?

Mr Sandison—We will take it on notice. You would like to know where those that might have waiting lists longer than that average of three weeks?

Senator SIEWERT—Yes. That is just general for dispute resolution. What about your other programs? Do you measure waiting lists for some of these other programs?

Ms Cornelly—No, but we are introducing, under FRSP Online, the functionality to collect information on waiting lists from 1 July.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. If you could take that other question on notice, that would be much appreciated. Thank you.

Senator FIFIELD—I will ask Mr Sandison, in relation to Family Relationship Services: has the department received any representations from organisations seeking a deferral of the cuts? I know they would be referred, as a matter of course, to Attorney-General's as the policy department.

Mr Sandison—I am not aware of any.

Senator FIFIELD—Could you take on notice whether any have been received.

Mr Sandison—Certainly.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you for that.

CHAIR—Thank you. Can we just check where paid parental leave comes, Dr Harmer. Is it program 1.1, program 1.2 or program 1.3?

Dr Harmer—Program 1.3.

CHAIR—Okay, we will hold our questions for 1.3. To the best of our knowledge, we have covered 1.1. We will probably go back there, Dr Harmer.

Senator SIEWERT—I have set questions that I know I want to ask and then I ask all sorts of other ones. I just wanted to check: did all the funding for the family relationships program get expended last year?

Mr Sandison—I have to do a check across all the areas. Again, because of that long list that Ms Emerson read out, we will take that on notice.

Senator SIEWERT—If you could, that would be appreciated. Thank you.

[9.58 am]

CHAIR—We will go to 1.2.

Senator FIFIELD—I have some questions on the family tax benefit, part A. Are you in a position to advise how many families got the full family tax benefit A in 2008-09?

Mr Whitecross—In 2008-09?

Dr Harmer—Mr Whitecross has a got a big file.

Senator FIFIELD—Indeed.

Mr Whitecross—I just do not want to get caught out on the specific year.

Mr Sandison—Do you need a full year? We currently have with us a point in time FTBA dataset that just gives the numbers. It would probably be slightly higher than last year, but if you are just looking for broad numbers to indicate—

Senator FIFIELD—Sure. Let us start with what you have got.

Mr Whitecross—The number of people getting maximum rate instalments as at March 2010 is 614,100.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. Will you be able to provide on notice the number for 2008-09 and 2007-08?

Mr Whitecross—Yes, I will. The 2008-09 figure will not be complete. It will be pretty good, but it will not be complete because the period for claiming as a lump sum has not expired.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. Thank you for that and also for 2007-08, if you could provide that.

Mr Whitecross—Yes.

Senator FIFIELD—In terms of families getting part-FTBA for the current financial year?

Mr Whitecross—For a broken rate?

Senator FIFIELD—Yes.

Mr Whitecross—There are three different numbers I will give you. The broken rate, which means that it is more than the base rate but less than the maximum rate, is 541,600. On the base rate, it is 459,900.

Senator FIFIELD—Yes.

Mr Whitecross—The tapered base rate, which means the income is above the higher income-free area, is 118,200.

Senator FIFIELD—Can you also provide that for 2008-09 and 2007-08.

Mr Whitecross—Yes, certainly.

Senator FIFIELD—Does FaHCSIA have projections for what the numbers are expected to be in the years ahead?

Mr Whitecross—Yes. We are expecting the number of children in respect of whom FTBA is paid to be about 2.88 million in 2010-11.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you for that. You do not go out any further?

Mr Whitecross—I have figures for other years if you want them.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure.

Mr Whitecross—For 2011-12, it is 2.81 million; for 2012-13, 2.79 million; and for 2013-14, 2.77 million. Those are children, whereas the numbers I was giving you before were customers, which are the families.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. That is across all the categories of FTBA?

Mr Whitecross—Of FTBA, yes.

Senator FIFIELD—Yes. Thank you.

Mr Whitecross—I do not have any kind of breakdown of what level of payment we expect them to get.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. If someone wants to appeal against an FTBA determination, how do they do that?

Mr Whitecross—There is a layered appeals process. The first thing a customer would do is ask for a review of the decision, which is an internal administrative review. Then they have got a right of appeal against the decision to the Social Security Appeals Tribunal and, from there, to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. From there, if they have a dispute in relation to a point of law, they can appeal to the Federal Court.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay.

Mr Whitecross—I am not specifically aware of cases in relation to FTB.

Senator FIFIELD—What is the highest level of appeal to your knowledge?

Mr Whitecross—I am sorry; I do not have any knowledge to draw on in relation to how high the appeals go.

Senator FIFIELD—That is fine. In 2008-09, how many appeals were lodged, starting with the internal review?

Mr Whitecross—Internal reviews are handled by Centrelink, so they would probably be the appropriate people to ask about internal reviews of decisions.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay.

Mr Whitecross—I may be able to help you a bit. Just remind me again what the question was to make sure I answer the right question.

Senator FIFIELD—It was about 2008-09 internal reviews.

Mr Whitecross—In relation to FTBA there were 7,682 internal reviews.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. How many of those, if you know, were determined in favour of the claimant or the client?

Mr Whitecross—Thirty per cent of the original decisions were set aside or varied.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. What about appeals that went to the next stage?

Mr Whitecross—Eight hundred and sixty-two decisions relating to FTBA only went to the SSAT.

Senator FIFIELD—How many of those were—

Mr Whitecross—Thirty-three per cent of the previous decisions were set aside.

Senator FIFIELD—Was it the Federal Court next, or was there another step in between?

Mr Whitecross—There is the AAT.

Senator FIFIELD—How many went to the AAT?

Mr Whitecross—There were 70 for FTBA only that went to the AAT, and 10 per cent of the previous decisions were set aside or varied. Once you got to the AAT, it could have been an appeal by the department against the decision by the SSAT or an appeal by the customer who was unhappy with the original decision.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. But there were 70, and 10 per cent of them were in favour of the—

Mr Whitecross—They were set aside.

Mr Sandison—We cannot say who they were in favour of.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. So that is the least meaningful figure. Was it the Federal Court next?

Mr Whitecross—I have not got any numbers for the Federal Court.

Senator FIFIELD—No, but it was the Federal Court that was next?

Mr Whitecross—The Federal Court was next, yes.

Senator FIFIELD—And we do not know if anyone—

Mr Whitecross—That would be on a point of law. These are all administrative reviews, where you can re-decide the facts of the case, whereas the Federal Court is obviously only for legal questions.

Senator FIFIELD—Just as a matter of academic interest for the chair and myself, are you able to take on notice whether anything has gone to the Federal Court?

Mr Whitecross—Yes, I can.

Senator FIFIELD—Thanks. I will just move to FTBB. Can you give me a similar breakdown? How many families got the full FTBB in 2008-09? Actually, we will start with this year.

Mr Whitecross—This year there are 926,300 people getting the maximum rate of FTBB by instalments at the moment. Sorry, that is as at March.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. And for 2008-09?

Mr Whitecross—I will have to get you numbers for that year.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you, and for 2007-08 as well.

Mr Whitecross—Yes.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. Part-FTBB?

Mr Whitecross—There are 451,900.

Senator FIFIELD—And that is as of?

Mr Whitecross—That is as of 26 March 2010, and that is people receiving payments by instalment.

Senator FIFIELD—Again, could you provide that for 2008-09 and 2007-08.

Mr Whitecross—Yes.

Senator FIFIELD—What is the total cost of FTBB, if you can provide it, up to March this year as well?

Mr Whitecross—For 2009-10, the estimated expenditure on FTBB is \$4.354 billion.

Senator FIFIELD—That is for B?

Mr Whitecross—That is for B. It is on page 46 of the FaHCSIA PBS.

Senator FIFIELD—And for A?

Mr Whitecross—For 2009-10, it is \$13.441 billion.

Senator FIFIELD—Could you also provide that for 2008-09 and 2007-08.

Mr Whitecross—Yes.

Ms Carroll—I believe those figures would be in our annual report, because both of those figures are broken down in our portfolio budget statement. But we can check that they are.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. What is the projected direction for FTBB recipients?

Mr Whitecross—The FTBB recipient number is 1.24 million for this year and is projected to be 1.23 million for 2009-10, 1.2 million for 2011-12, 1.19 million for 2012-13 and 1.18 million for 2013-14.

Senator FIFIELD—What is the breakdown between those who take FTBB as a lump sum and those who take it fortnightly?

Mr Whitecross—This is for FTBB that you are asking?

Senator FIFIELD—That is right.

Mr Whitecross—I have some percentages here but not numbers. There are different ways that you can take it at the end of the year. You can qualify for instalments and then defer receipt of the instalments, or you can wait until the end of the year and claim it as an end-of-year payment. In relation to FTB, about four per cent of people defer their entitlement, but there would be other people who claim it as an end-of-year amount.

Senator FIFIELD—For people unhappy about FTBB determinations, is it a similar sort of appeal process?

Mr Whitecross—That is right. The determination is actually a determination in relation to your whole payment.

Senator FIFIELD—Your whole situation.

Mr Whitecross—Yes, but the same appeal rights apply.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. The numbers you gave me before in relation to appeals, were they for FTB in general?

Mr Whitecross—They were for FTBA only.

Senator FIFIELD—Do you have them for FTBB as well?

Mr Whitecross—Yes, I do. In relation to FTBB, there were 307 reviews and 29 per cent were varied or set aside. Sixty-one went through to the SSAT, of which 26 per cent resulted in a variation or the original decision being set aside. Twelve went to the AAT, with eight per cent varied or set aside. There were also ones which related to both A and B entitlements. There were 3,522 reviews, resulting in 31 per cent of those cases being varied or set aside. Five hundred and eighty-eight went to the SSAT and 34 per cent were varied or set aside. One hundred and eighteen went to the AAT, with 11 per cent being varied or set aside.

Senator FIFIELD—Are you able to say how much tax was paid by people in families which received FTB in 2008-09?

Mr Whitecross—No.

Senator FIFIELD—I am probably asking in the wrong spot. That is fine; it was just on the off-chance. How many families altogether receive FTB?

Ms Carroll—There are 2.1 million customers for family tax benefit A and B combined.

Senator FIFIELD—How many individuals would this encompass all up? How many children and how many parents, if you can conceive of it in that way?

Mr Whitecross—We estimate there are around 4.1 million children in respect of whom FTB is paid. In relation to the number of parents, I might not have that number with me, but it would be a relatively simple number to calculate because there are partnered ones. On B, for example, there are 781,200 partnered and 596,300 single.

Senator FIFIELD—Yes.

Ms Carroll—The complication is calculating the partners into a whole. We know the number of children and we know the number of customers, and then it is working out the total number from there.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. is the departmental cost to administer A and B?

Mr Whitecross—The major part of the cost of administering FTB is borne by the Department of Human Services through Centrelink, and they are directly appropriated, so you would need to talk to them. In the PBS there is a number identified for program support which would include all the corporate support which went into that. The estimate for 2009-10 for program support for the Family Tax Benefit Program is \$26.2 million.

Senator FIFIELD—Do you have that for 2008-09 and 2007-08?

Mr Whitecross—That would be in the annual report, but I do not have it here.

Senator FIFIELD—That is okay. I will look there. Nothing further to add?

Mr Whitecross—No, sorry.

Senator FIFIELD—I did not want to interrupt. Chair, that is all I have for family tax benefit.

CHAIR—A and B?

Senator FIFIELD—A and B.

CHAIR—Senator Boswell, where do you have your questions?

Senator BOSWELL—I have my questions in paid parental leave and baby bonuses.

CHAIR—Yes, that will be next. So we have no more questions that we know of under 1.2, family tax benefit? We have none under 1.1. It may be useful to take a break before we go into 1.3, because we have questions in a number of areas

Proceedings suspended from 10.22 am to 11.11 am

CHAIR—We will go back to item 1.3. Senator Boswell has some questions on baby bonus and paid parental leave. Sorry, Dr Harmer, I did not check with you first.

Dr Harmer—That is okay. Before we go into that, are there are any more questions in the children and parenting program? If there are not, we can let a couple of people go.

CHAIR—I am unaware of any and, as far as I am concerned, the officers can go and we will put other things on notice.

Dr Harmer—Okay.

CHAIR—Senator Boyce, did you have something?

Senator BOYCE—I presume this would come under parental payments and incentives, but it is just a general question around what the department is doing in terms of the fact that presently a third of children in Australia are born to unmarried women.

Dr Harmer—That is a broader question. We do not need those people for that.

Senator BOYCE—Okay.

Senator FIFIELD—I wonder if those officers are required for Family Assistance Office and questions related to the childcare benefit and childcare rebate?

Ms Carroll—Child care is for DEEWR.

Dr Harmer—Child care is not here.

Senator FIFIELD—I appreciate that, but my questions relate to some activities of the Family Assistance Office. The Family Assistance Office is a unit within Centrelink?

Dr Harmer—Within the Human Services portfolio.

Senator FIFIELD—Let us pin it down now. The Family Assistance Office, who owns it?

Dr Harmer—Human services department.

Senator FIFIELD—Human services owns it in total.

Mr Whitecross—From 1 June.

Senator FIFIELD—But at the moment, who owns it?

Ms Carroll—Up until 1 June FaHCSIA had responsibility for it.

Mr Whitecross—It was FaHCSIA.

Senator FIFIELD—Up until 1 June this financial year. At the moment FaHCSIA owns it.

Mr Whitecross—Today.

Dr Harmer—No. Yesterday we owned it.

Mr Whitecross—The actual services—

Senator FIFIELD—I have never had satisfaction in—

Dr Harmer—We will try to help if we can on that.

Senator FIFIELD—I do not want to take up the committee's time if it is not—

Mr Sandison—But it is not the programmatic area of children and parenting program as part of the family support, and that was the bit we were just trying to clarify. There was a lot of focus on family relationship stuff. We just wanted to confirm the other officers are in the clear. If there are questions I can try and answer them or we will take them on notice.

CHAIR—We think we are safe with the questions that we are now of. On that basis, we will put any others on notice, Mr Sandison, so that group of officers can go.

Mr Sandison—Thank you.

Senator BOSWELL—Table 2.1.3 on page 49 of budget paper No. 1.8 specifies that \$1,327,618,000 is budgeted for 2011-12 paid parental leave. Page 18 of that paper states:

It is estimated that 148,000 families ... will be eligible for the scheme.

Dr Harmer—Can I just confirm which budget paper you are reading from?

Senator BOSWELL—I am reading from the notes in front of me. It says table 2.1.3 on page 49.

Dr Harmer—Of Budget Paper No. 1?

Senator BOSWELL—Of 1.8.

Dr Harmer—Our portfolio budget statements, yes.

Senator BOSWELL—Do you want me to repeat the question again?

Dr Harmer—Thank you.

Senator BOSWELL—There is \$1,327,618,000 budgeted for 2011-12 paid parental leave. On page 18 of that paper, it states:

It is estimated that 148,000 families ... will be eligible for the scheme.

Is this the estimate used to calculate the amount for 2011 and 2012?

Mr Warburton—The number of families eligible in 2011-12 is 148,300, rounded to the nearest hundred.

Senator BOSWELL—What estimated national minimum wage rate has been used to calculate this amount?

Mr Warburton—I do not have the exact figure that is in the estimates model but, broadly, we have used the current national minimum wage, and that has been increased to produce the estimate by a bit more than inflation.

Dr Harmer—Currently, it is \$543.78.

Senator BOSWELL—Thank you. Were there any other factors used in this calculation?

Mr Warburton—The calculation of the total estimated expenditure?

Senator BOSWELL—Yes.

Mr Warburton—Yes.

Senator BOSWELL—Can you give us an idea of what they were?

Mr Warburton—We would have applied a take-up rate to that. We estimate that over 85 per cent of the eligible population will take it up. That is the main thing I can think of at the moment.

Senator BOSWELL—I would have thought everyone would take it up.

Senator BOYCE—Sorry, I did not hear your question.

Senator BOSWELL—I said, ‘What other factors have been used in the calculation?’ The gentleman has just said 85 per cent will take this parental bonus up. Why wouldn’t everyone that was having a baby take it up?

Mr Warburton—There are some individuals who will be better off taking the baby bonus. To assist people assure themselves that they will be better off taking up paid parental leave, there will be an estimator available for parents so that they can satisfy themselves that they will be better off obtaining paid parental leave.

Senator BOSWELL—Paid parental leave works out at around \$7,000. Could you explain to me how you would be better off by taking the baby bonus at \$500 or thereabouts?

Mr Warburton—The baby bonus is a non-taxable payment, whereas paid parental leave is a taxable payment.

Senator BOSWELL—Okay. I have got it.

Mr Warburton—There are a number of different interactions that it has with the family payment system, the income support system and the tax system.

Senator BOSWELL—What is the current expectation for the amount of tax to be recovered from PPL payments for 2011-12?

Mr Warburton—Could I give that to you in broad terms for a full financial year?

Senator BOSWELL—Yes.

Mr Warburton—Broadly, the gross outlay for paid parental leave will be about \$1.3 billion a year. Offsetting that would be income tax receipts of around \$230 million a year.

Senator BOSWELL—Table 2.13 on page 49 of budget paper related number 1.8 specifies that \$10,902,000 is budgeted for 2010-11 for communications and evaluations in relation to paid parental leave. Can you give us a breakdown of that amount and the amount into (a) communications and (b) evaluation?

Mr Warburton—Yes. The amount for evaluation in 2010-11 is \$660,000, and the remainder is for communications.

Senator BOSWELL—What sort of communications will you be undertaking?

Mr Warburton—There will be a campaign to educate parents about the scheme and to inform employers about the scheme, so we need to do work on both sides of the equation.

Senator BOSWELL—An information campaign will go out in the form of what—television, radio?

Mr Warburton—There will be a range of advertising in the campaign, yes.

Senator BOSWELL—When is this envisaged to take place?

Mr Warburton—It will start after the legislation has passed. There have been some very small scale information activities prior to the legislation being passed. The campaign proper we expect to start somewhere around 18 July on the assumption that the legislation is passed. There will be a number of phases to the campaign: an initial period where we are trying to raise awareness of it; another phase around the time that claims and payments start to be made; and a final phase in the lead up to 1 July 2011, which is when, although employers can choose to make payments prior to 1 July 2011, certain employers will be required to make payments of paid parental leave.

Senator BOSWELL—Is there any provision, if there is an election called, that this advertising gets postponed or taken off?

Mr Warburton—I expect that the normal caretaker conventions would apply.

Senator BOSWELL—I am not talking in the last couple of weeks. I am talking about the government's commitment not to use advertising to promote their policies. I would think this would come into that.

Dr Harmer—Are you talking about the caretaker period?

Senator BOSWELL—No, I am not. There is a commitment from the government that they will not use advertising for three months before an election.

Dr Harmer—I am not aware of that.

Senator BOSWELL—You are not aware of that? That is correct, is it not? I will ask my colleague.

Senator FIFIELD—I am not sure that it is three months.

Senator BOYCE—There was that proposal put by the Prime Minister, but, as it was suggested at the time, since we do not have fixed dates for elections, it is a bit hard to follow up.

Senator Chris Evans—I am not sure that is right. For instance, for general information campaigns like defence advertising et cetera I do not think there was any intention that they be postponed. I am not sure that claim is right, but I can take that on notice for you if you like?

Senator BOSWELL—Okay. What percentage of the expenditure on communication relates to the obligations of employers under the Paid Parental Leave scheme?

Mr Warburton—I suspect that we could not give you a split like that because, clearly, some of the advertising will be oriented both at parents and employers. I suppose it is fair to say substantial proportions will be devoted to both parents and employers.

Senator BOSWELL—Thank you. I move to the baby bonus. Table 2.13 on page 49 of Budget Paper No. 1.8 specifies that \$890,134,000 is budgeted for 2011 for baby bonuses. What level of baby bonus was used to calculate this amount?

Mr Whitecross—The level of the baby bonus in 2011-12 is not known precisely yet because that depends on indexation, but the baby bonus is in the order of \$5,185 at the moment. That is subject to an adjustment for inflation for those two years.

Senator BOYCE—This is adjusted by CPI only?

Mr Whitecross—Yes.

Senator BOSWELL—How many receipts were assumed in the calculation of this amount?

Mr Whitecross—You mean how many recipients?

Senator BOSWELL—Yes.

Mr Whitecross—It is estimated that around 160,000 payments of baby bonus would be made in the full year of the introduction of paid parental leave.

Senator BOYCE—What do you anticipate it would have been without the PPL?

Mr Whitecross—In 2009-10, we were anticipating paying around 269,000 lots of baby bonus.

Senator BOYCE—You would have expected it to be slightly more than that, would you, in other circumstances?

Mr Whitecross—I may have that number. Hold on a second. I will just see if I can get that number for you.

Mr Sandison—We will look for that figure, but I think it is safe to say it would be a similar amount.

Senator BOSWELL—Is the baby bonus payable following a post 20-week elective abortion?

Ms Carroll—Since the baby bonus was introduced, there is a payment made for stillbirths that are certified by a medical practitioner and there is a process within the baby bonus system for stillbirths that are certified by a medical practitioner.

Senator BOSWELL—There is a division between stillbirths and abortions?

Ms Carroll—The only provision for payment of baby bonus is for stillbirths that are certified by a medical practitioner.

Senator Chris Evans—Basically the medical practitioner has to certify it. We went through this at a previous estimates in quite a lot of detail. I can get the reference in the *Hansard* for you, but we had a very big go at it one estimates round.

Senator BOSWELL—When was that, just recently?

Dr Harmer—No, it was about two or three estimates ago.

Mr Sandison—At the end of 2008 there was a significant discussion, and then the change took place at the beginning of 2009.

Senator BOSWELL—What is the change? Can you tell me what the change is?

Mr Sandison—It was a change to the form that required the medical practitioner, or the supervising medical person, to state that there had been a stillbirth.

Senator BOSWELL—If it was abortion, he would not sign—

Ms Carroll—They have to certify that it is a stillbirth on the form.

Senator BOSWELL—Abortion is a stillbirth. The result is understood.

Mr Warburton—And that the child was delivered.

Senator Chris Evans—It seeks to define the basis of the eligibility—that is, a stillbirth, delivered and signed by the medical practitioner as being a still birth, effectively.

Ms Carroll—That is correct.

Senator Chris Evans—It therefore excludes other events.

Senator BOSWELL—All right. Will paid parental leave be payable following a 20-week elective abortion?

Ms Carroll—The arrangements for paid parental leave will be the same as for baby bonus, as we have just described.

Senator BOSWELL—Yes. Just so I understand, a stillbirth will be signed off by the doctor as a stillbirth?

Mr Sandison—That is correct, provided there has been delivery of a child. It is the medical practitioner that has to make that decision.

Senator BOSWELL—If it is an abortion, he will not sign it?

Dr Harmer—He would not be expected to sign it.

Senator BOSWELL—I beg your pardon?

Dr Harmer—He would not be expected to sign it if it was an abortion, no.

Senator Chris Evans—Is the department happy with my explanation? I do not want to mislead anyone. I was trying to be helpful.

Dr Harmer—That was fine.

Senator BOYCE—My understanding is that, with a late-term termination, you could be eligible for both the baby bonus and paid parental leave.

Mr Warburton—That is not correct. You can only obtain one or the other.

Senator BOYCE—Sorry, I know you cannot obtain both, but you could be eligible for one or the other if you had a late-term termination.

Mr Warburton—People who have stillborn children may be eligible for paid parental leave and they may be eligible for baby bonus, and they get to choose, as everyone can. They

have a choice between those two payments, but that is for a stillbirth with certification as we have outlined.

Senator BOYCE—But a late-term termination can be considered to be a stillbirth by the doctor?

Mr Sandison—That would be up to the medical practitioner.

Senator BOYCE—Thank you.

Senator BOSWELL—Thank you. That is all I had.

CHAIR—Thank you. Seeing that we have been talking about PPL, we should get on to other senators' questions in that area.

Senator BOYCE—You said that the gross outlay for the PPL would be \$1.3 billion in the next budget year. Is that correct?

Mr Warburton—I gave it for a full year.

Senator BOYCE—Could you give us that gross figure over the first five budgeted years of the scheme?

Mr Warburton—The forward estimates only go out to 2013-14 and the gross figures are in table 2.1.3 on page 49, the same table that Senator Boswell was using.

Senator BOYCE—We are talking about—

Mr Warburton—In the portfolio budget statement.

Senator BOYCE—In Budget Paper No. 1?

Dr Harmer—Page 49 of the PBS.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. So we are up to \$2.5 billion at that stage, up to 2013-14.

Mr Warburton—No, you have looked at the total program expenses for 1.3.

Senator BOYCE—Sorry, I have. I beg your pardon.

Mr Warburton—There is a line with '*Social Security (Administration) Act*', and the line above that gives you the gross outlay for the special appropriation for paid parental leave.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. So you are not anticipating that to increase much over the first three years.

Mr Warburton—Only as outlined—that is, to \$1.44 billion in 2013-14.

Senator BOYCE—You mentioned that there were the \$1.3 billion outlay and \$230 million worth of tax receipts balancing that off. There would be a number of other things, such as the savings from PPL recipients not getting the baby bonus. What do you anticipate the net cost government of the PPL would be in 2011-12?

Mr Warburton—That is outlined in the financial impact statement to the Paid Parental Leave Bill, which has the net cost on it. If there is a particular year you would like, I can give it to you. In 2013-14, the net cost is \$283.3 million.

Senator BOYCE—Did I understand you to say earlier that the percentage of eligible families who will take up the Paid Parental Leave scheme is expected to be 85 per cent. Is that correct?

Mr Warburton—We use more than 85 per cent.

Senator BOYCE—So what is the percentage of eligible families, or women, for the PPL who are anticipated to take up the PPL?

Mr Warburton—In the estimates we use 85 per cent. There is some uncertainty around that.

Senator BOYCE—Obviously.

Mr Warburton—Because parents are able to take the payment at any time during the first year, it is quite possible that a higher proportion may benefit if they move the payment around. At the moment we are expecting 85 per cent. That is our best estimate.

Senator BOYCE—Probably the major reason for moving that payment around would be to take it at the end of other entitlements that you already had. Is that correct?

Mr Warburton—The work we have done assumes that people who have paid leave entitlements take it at the end of that entitlement and that those who do not have any take it from the time of birth. They were the assumptions that were used, but people still have more flexibility.

Senator BOYCE—But, within the time limits imposed, you are assuming that 85 per cent of those who are eligible will take it up. Is that correct?

Mr Warburton—That is correct.

Senator BOYCE—And your forecasting is based on that.

Mr Warburton—That is correct.

Senator BOYCE—Why 85 per cent? What is behind that thinking?

Mr Warburton—That was based on modelling done on the basis I just described. That was the proportion who benefited from paid parental leave, compared to the baby bonus.

Senator BOYCE—We have the \$1.3 billion gross outlay for 2011-12. What is the gross cost for the first six months expected to be? Again, that is in table 2.1.3—\$636.6 million.

Senator BOYCE—What have you anticipated would be the number of payments that would be made in the first six months?

Mr Warburton—What do you mean by ‘the number of payments’? The number of parents—

Senator BOYCE—The number of people who will take up PPL in the first six months.

Mr Warburton—Yes.

Ms Carroll—One of the things that will happen is someone might actually start to take their PPL payments in the middle of June. So they will not actually be finished in a financial year, because of the way the payments will be made.

Mr Warburton—Was the question how many would we pay?

Senator BOYCE—Yes, as in start to be part of the scheme.

Mr Warburton—Sixty-two thousand and five hundred.

Senator BOYCE—In the first six months. Is that right?

Mr Warburton—That is correct.

Senator BOYCE—What are you anticipating that will go to in the first full 12 months?

Mr Warburton—One hundred and twenty-six thousand and three hundred.

Senator BOYCE—Well done, Mr Warburton. I appreciate that this committee has quite recently had an inquiry into the legislation around the paid parental leave and the exposure draft that went with it, but some of this information would be good to perhaps revisit in estimates. How are self-employed women and women who work in family businesses, on farms et cetera to be assessed to eligibility for paid parental leave?

Ms Carroll—Just before Mr Warburton answers, can I just clarify. We want to be as helpful as possible in this committee. As you know, the Community Affairs Legislative Committee still has not passed down its report, so we will provide as much information as possible.

Senator BOYCE—I presume your assumption at the present time would be that the legislation will pass unamended. That is what I am assuming your figures will give me.

Ms Carroll—Yes.

Mr Warburton—Broadly, they are going to be assessed on the same basis as anybody else. In the act, there are definitions of ‘paid work,’ and Centrelink will need to be satisfied that the person has undertaken sufficient paid work.

Senator BOYCE—Who will pay those self-employed people?

Mr Warburton—The Family Assistance Office.

Senator BOYCE—They will continue to do that. How many people are you anticipating the Family Assistance Office will continue to pay at the end of six months?

Mr Warburton—Broadly, we anticipate that 70 per cent of the eligible population will be paid through employers and 30 per cent will be paid by the Family Assistance Office.

Senator BOYCE—Who else, other than self-employed people, might the Family Assistance Office pay?

Mr Warburton—In the draft bill there are a set of conditions which, if satisfied, mean that a person’s employer is to make the payments. That is called the ‘employer determination.’ Broadly, if a person has been employed by an employer for 12 months, they will continue to be employed by the employer through the period of PPL payments. We expect that the person will receive more than eight weeks of PPL payments and, if the employer has an ABN, then an employer determination will be made and an employer must pay parental leave to the person. The Family Assistance Office will provide funding to the employer for that purpose. Does that make sense?

Senator BOYCE—What class of people are we talking about here?

Mr Warburton—Broadly, employees. ‘Long-term employees of employers’ is the general expression that we use.

Senator BOYCE—Sorry. I am going back to this. What categories of employees other than the self-employed might continue to be paid by the Family Assistance Office?

Mr Warburton—Casual workers, seasonal workers. Broadly, there are self-employed, contractors, casual employees, seasonal workers. People either who do not have an employer because of the nature of their work or who do not remain in employment will be paid through the Family Assistance Office. Is that clear?

Senator BOYCE—Yes. As I understand it, the scheme is to be reviewed in two years. Is that correct?

Mr Warburton—The review is to commence after two years of operation of the scheme, yes, and that is to be completed by the end of 2014. An evaluation is going to be undertaken and that will feed into the review.

Senator BOYCE—Will the evaluation will be ongoing? When will it be conducted?

Mr Warburton—It is due to start very shortly. Some baseline survey work will be undertaken prior to the commencement of the scheme. We have just about finished a tender process for the evaluation.

Senator BOYCE—So that is going out for tender?

Mr Warburton—It has been out to tender.

Senator BOYCE—Have the tenders closed?

Mr Warburton—Yes. There will be an announcement made very shortly.

Senator BOYCE—Very shortly. After estimates.

Mr Warburton—There is nothing in that.

Senator BOYCE—Nevertheless, I did have to mention it. Has the department done any costing on the effect of paying nine per cent super to all working women in addition to the PPL?

Mr Warburton—The department has not done costing on that, but the Productivity Commission did.

Senator Chris Evans—You mean for the period of their—

Senator BOYCE—If they got PPL plus super, or including super.

Senator Chris Evans—It was in the report, was it not?

Mr Warburton—Yes. There were figures in the Productivity Commission report. The Productivity Commission report estimated that the additional cost of including super in the PPL scheme would be \$69 million. Fifty-nine million dollars of that would be costs on business and \$12 million to government.

Senator BOYCE—If super were continued to be paid by employers, the overall cost is \$69 million. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Warburton—For superannuation guarantee contributions to be made in accordance with the arrangements that are currently in place.

Senator BOYCE—What is the cost of the Family Assistance Office administering the scheme for the first six months?

Mr Warburton—In the budget before last, with the figures I have got, I have got funding to Centrelink.

Senator BOYCE—For FAO?

Mr Warburton—Yes. There is a significant build, if you like. There is all the development work involved in putting in new software into Centrelink systems, there is capital funding, development of new claim forms, development of new information materials and so forth. The figures I have got are not just an ongoing administrative cost.

Senator BOYCE—If you could give me, perhaps, the figure that you are talking about, Mr Warburton.

Mr Warburton—Okay. For 2010-11, in the last budget Centrelink received \$21.8 million. It received \$4.6 million in capital and, in the recent budget, it received \$3.5 million.

Senator BOYCE—Was that \$3.5 million for the full year or for the half year?

Mr Warburton—That is funding for 2010-11. It is for the full year and it consists of development of the systems, application forms, information materials, as well as the ongoing administrative costs that will be involved once the scheme starts. I cannot disaggregate it and give you a simple running cost just for the six months with all of the development work subtracted. I do not have that.

Senator BOYCE—You do not know the administrative costs? They are not able to be—

Ms Carroll—What Mr Warburton is saying is that what we have is the total cost for the financial year.

Senator BOYCE—I appreciate that.

Ms Carroll—But what we do not have in front of us is a breakdown of what the different components of that are—that is, what is the setup cost versus what is the actual administrative cost of operating the system from 1 January through to the end of June?

Senator BOYCE—Of the money you are talking about here—about \$29 million or \$30 million if you aggregate those figures—what proportion is build?

Mr Warburton—I do not have a disaggregation of those figures.

Senator BOYCE—Sorry, has the majority of that money been spent on computer programs, development of systems et cetera?

Dr Harmer—We should probably take that on notice.

Senator BOYCE—The whole system has been built up within the Family Assistance Office to do this for six months, to continue to do it for 30 per cent of people long term. Why would we spend all this money when the government is intending to put 70 per cent of the cost back on employers to undertake? I do not understand why so much money needs to be spent to develop this up and not continue to be used to pay the Paid Parental Leave scheme.

Mr Warburton—Seventy per cent of the cost is not being put on employers.

Senator BOYCE—They will be paying 70 per cent of the people.

Mr Warburton—They will be paying 70 per cent of people through their normal systems, in accordance with their normal pay cycle, the same sorts of procedures they use to pay other entitlements to their employees.

Senator BOYCE—Nevertheless, if that organisation does not currently have paid parental leave, they have the costs of paying that employee, which they did not previously have.

Mr Warburton—The costs of paying the employee are being met by the Commonwealth funding the employer for that.

Senator BOYCE—I am talking about the administrative costs of paying someone.

Mr Warburton—Yes, there will be some administrative cost on employers associated.

Senator BOYCE—What I am trying to understand is why the government has spent \$29 million setting up a system that will be used a hundred per cent for six months and then used by a third in the rest.

Mr Sandison—We need to clarify, though, that components of the system that are being built will actually still rely on FAO or Centrelink giving employers the money. Part of the bill is not just the payment that goes to individuals, being a hundred per cent for the first six months or thereabouts and then changing over to only 30 per cent. There still has to be the movement of the money from the Commonwealth to the employers. Part of the system build actually covers that, and that is ongoing all the time. So there are two parts to the system, and that will be a permanent fixture. We do not have the disaggregation to show IT build versus the rest, but also which parts of the IT build—

Senator BOYCE—Is that able to be taken on notice, to disaggregate those figures? Or can you disaggregate them in terms of what is being set up and will continue to be used by FAO, in terms of paying employers, and what has been set up and will be used just for the payment of employees?

Dr Harmer—I would normally agree to take that one on notice, but I am not confident we can actually do the split. We can have a look at it, but I doubt that we can actually provide you with that precisely.

Mr Warburton—It is not clear to me that even Centrelink could provide that split. For instance, the payment system is being developed to assess eligibility and to assist in making employer determinations to make the payments. It is being designed, where an employer determination has not been made for the FAO, to make the payments directly and, otherwise, for the payment system to pay employers. It is the one system that is being designed to do both those things under different conditions.

Senator BOYCE—However, it is being designed to do a hundred per cent of two things for six months, and then a hundred per cent of one of them and 30 per cent of the other. Is that correct?

Mr Warburton—No. There will be some technicalities of the system that I am not across. But, broadly, the system within the first six months needs to be able to cope with employers

paying. They can choose to make the payments in the first six months. It will be the case that in some sense the system will not allow a determination that requires an employer to pay. That level of functionality will not go off in the first six months but, after the first six months, it will. The functionality that allows employers to choose to make payments, in cases where they are not required to, will continue.

Senator BOYCE—But it is for 30 per cent of recipients that the FAO will continue to pay direct to the recipient. Isn't that correct?

Mr Warburton—And for that 30 per cent, employers can choose to make the payments. If both the employer and the individual want the payments to be made by the employer, that can occur.

Senator BOYCE—I thought we said earlier that 70 per cent would be paid by their employer and 30 per cent would include the self-employed, the independent contractors, the casuals, the seasonals and others who could not be paid by an employer. Is that not correct?

Ms Carroll—The issue is about whether employers are required to make the payment. What Mr Warburton has described is that for that 30 per cent, if there is an agreement between the employer and the employee, the employer can make that payment.

Senator BOYCE—Such as for independent contractors or something like that.

Ms Carroll—That is right. If it suits the employer in those circumstances, for some of those people—

Senator BOYCE—You might have, say, two or three employers, but one chooses to be seen as the lead employer or something.

Ms Carroll—Yes. In those circumstances, even though they are not required, they can choose to make that payment and they would then flip into the other system.

Senator BOYCE—How many of those do you anticipate there are, Mr Warburton?

Mr Warburton—We have not made assumptions about what level of voluntary payment there might be by employers. The figures I gave you before are based on a full year. The 70 per cent is cases where the employer will be required to make the payments. The voluntary ones are more likely to be for short-term employees rather than contractors. An employer might have in place some arrangement for employees that have been with them for six months and may be happy to make payments for employees who have been with them for six months. We suspect that is more likely than independent contractors.

Senator BOYCE—How many extra staff has the FAO appointed because of the PPL, and in what periods?

Dr Harmer—That is not a question that we can answer right on the spot.

Mr Warburton—We certainly could not answer that.

Mr Whitecross—I think part of the way to answer that is to say that FAO is a virtual office, so the actual constituent service delivery agencies that are in the FAO are—

Senator BOYCE—In Centrelink?

Mr Whitecross—Centrelink and Medicare Australia, which are in the Human Services portfolio. So they would be in a better position to—

Senator BOYCE—Yes—so ask them that. What I am interested in is how many staff overall and that over this six months virtually 100 per cent payment is required. Could you give me the figures on what the savings to the PPL are from having 70 per cent of employers administer the payments instead of the FAO doing it all?

Mr Warburton—No, I do not believe that there are savings associated with that. In fact, there are some additional costs associated with that function, but the government believes broadly that employers should be involved in the scheme.

Senator BOYCE—I am not asking whether employers should or should not be doing it, but you are saying that in the first full year 126,000 people will be paid. Using your figures, 70 per cent of those are going to be paid by their employer, not by FAO. One assumes that FAO would have had to employ one or two extra people, wouldn't you, to service nearly 100,000 people?

Mr Warburton—No, we have not assumed that.

Senator BOYCE—So there would not have been any extra staff needed at the FAO if FAO were to go on paying 126,000 people rather than about 85,000 or so?

Mr Warburton—There are additional costs involved in setting the system up so that employers provide parental leave payments, but that is the preferred position of the government and it has decided to fund those costs to achieve the broader objectives of the scheme associated with employers making those payments to their long-term employees. It is trying to support women's connection with the labour market and with their employers, and for the achievement of the scheme's longer term objectives it decided to fund those costs.

Senator BOYCE—Did the department model what the cost to the FAO would have been if they had made direct payments to employees of PPL?

Ms Carroll—Clearly, the model that was agreed by the cabinet through the budget process and then announced as part of the budget process last year is what is now in legislation going through the process. The modelling that was done is on the scheme that was decided by the government.

Senator BOYCE—But we do have the 'what if' modelling on superannuation. Was there no 'what if' modelling done on FAO administering the whole scheme?

Mr Warburton—While you have just mentioned super, could I correct something? I said before there was \$69 million additional costs in super. Apparently I said \$59 million of that would be met by business. That was an error. It should have been \$57 million would be a cost to business and \$12 million a cost to government. Those figures were figures that the Productivity Commission produced. As I understand it, the question that you are asking now is did we put an option to the government, and can we tell you about the option we put to government?

Senator BOYCE—No. What I am asking—

Mr Warburton—I am not sure that we can answer that question.

Senator BOYCE—That is not what I asked. I asked if you had done ‘what if’ modelling on FAO undertaking the full administration of the PPL? It is a yes or no answer.

Mr Warburton—We do not actually model; we just cost options. If you are asking me what options we did cost, we do that in the context of cabinet submission and budget proposals. My understanding is that I am not at liberty to discuss those.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. It sounds to me—and this is just complete assumption on my part—like you did not but you are not going to tell us.

Dr Harmer—I think we have gone about as far as we go on that one.

Senator BOYCE—Thank you. I have just got four more questions here. We have got the \$21.2 million for implementation, and you have got \$18 million going to Centrelink, Fair Work Ombudsman and the Social Securities Appeals Tribunal. How much of that is actually for extra staff in those areas?

Mr Warburton—You have pulled some figures out there. I just need to make sure that we are talking about—

Senator BOYCE—\$21.2 million is—

Mr Warburton—That is the budget measure from this year, is it?

Senator BOYCE—Yes.

Mr Warburton—Okay.

Senator BOYCE—No, sorry, over five years. We have got that \$21.2 million over five years for implementation.

Mr Warburton—Sorry, what is the figure you are quoting?

Ms Carroll—The \$21.2 million for implementation; that is this budget measure, the five year total.

Senator BOYCE—Yes. Sorry, I have lost the page now. I have got it—

Ms Carroll—It is the 2010-11 budget.

Senator BOYCE—Yes.

Mr Sandison—The issue is: do we have a staff break-up in terms of what is happening with—

Senator BOYCE—Yes. How many extra staff? What is the \$18 million to Centrelink, fair work and SSAT?

Mr Warburton—The measure that is in this year’s budget provides some additional funds for communications. If you have the PBS, on page 26 there is a line for administered expenses. That is essentially additional money for communications. The departmental expenses that are listed there are funding for the Social Security Appeals Tribunal.

Senator BOYCE—The departmental one is all SSAT, is it?

Mr Warburton—The measure that was identified in FaHCSIA’s budget statement is, and there was also some funding for the Fair Work Ombudsman and Centrelink, which is identified in—

Senator BOYCE—Which, on my figures, came to \$18 million.

Ms Carroll—That is correct. There is about \$13.3 million for Centrelink, the \$291,000 for SSAT and then there is about \$4.4 million for the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Senator BOYCE—I am hoping that the department will collect that sort of information, given that it would be a fair slog to go around to those organisations and ask them individually. How does that break up in terms of staff and what else will it be expended on? Could we have the number of extra staff that those organisations will get?

Ms Carroll—I think we will need to take that on notice.

Senator BOYCE—That would be fine, thank you.

Mr Warburton—I do not know that we would have that for the SSAT. We essentially just provide funding to the SSAT.

Senator BOYCE—But they must have told you what they needed it for?

Dr Harmer—I am not confident that we would know. We will give you what we can.

Senator BOYCE—\$291,000 probably does not buy you many staff, does it?

Dr Harmer—We will give you what we can. What Mr Warburton is saying is that we are not confident we can give you a precise number for the SSAT, and I think that is probably correct.

Senator BOYCE—I was pleased to see that you had \$3.2 million for postlegislative approval, communication and evaluation, not pre-approval. Can you break that up into what is going to be spent on communication and what is going to be spent on evaluation each year? Again, I do not mind if that has to be taken on notice.

Mr Warburton—All of those funds were for communications. Funds for evaluation were obtained in the budget prior to that.

Senator BOYCE—The prior budget. Okay.

CHAIR—Mr Warburton, you went through a lot of those figures about communication and evaluation before.

Mr Warburton—Yes. There were a range of questions on notice in respect of the budget before last.

CHAIR—That is right.

Mr Warburton—We covered that.

Senator BOYCE—Just one last question. This relates to an email from a constituent, who makes the point that she has just returned to work after being off for one year with her first child. I appreciate that a lot of these ‘what ifs’ were canvassed during the Senate inquiry into this:

I have just fallen pregnant again and will only be working eight months before going on maternity leave again. I will work at least 330 hours, so meet the other eligibility criteria, but I won’t meet all the criteria because I will not have worked for 10 months.

She is obviously quite keen that the length of time be changed, and I know that this was raised in other circumstances. What avenues are there for women who are affected like this—of which, of course, there will be numbers?

Mr Warburton—From what you have told me, I think she correctly understands the situation. That is the eligibility criteria, and it sounds as though she would not be eligible.

Senator Chris Evans—I think there is a preliminary point, though: the legislation is still before the parliament.

Senator BOYCE—Absolutely.

Senator Chris Evans—That is the first point to make. I do not mean to interrupt the officer, but the first point is the legislation is yet to be finalised by the—

Senator BOYCE—Are you suggesting that there might be a possibility of an amendment there?

Senator Chris Evans—No, I am not suggesting anything, but I also have been around long enough to know that I never predict what the Senate will do and what comes out the other end, so I just wanted to make that point on the record. Secondly, I make the general point that every benefit, every regulation in this area has someone who just falls outside. It has always been thus and will always be thus, and the parliament and the department have always had to make decisions which carry that problem. That is the general point. Mr Warburton may be able to add something on this specific instance, but clearly, on what you put, it seems like this woman would fall outside the proposed qualification.

Mr Warburton—The only thing that I can really add is she is likely to qualify for the baby bonus.

Senator BOYCE—Minister, it is not that I would share the views of a lot of the people who have raised issues, but one issue that has been raised in terms of this sort of thing is that this may encourage people to have terminations of pregnancies where they do not fit the criteria. Obviously, unintended consequences are one thing, but that is certainly one that I do not think anyone would want.

Senator Chris Evans—I think that claim is a fairly long bow, but obviously it is up to other people to make judgments. We had similar sorts of arguments about the baby bonus et cetera, and individual behaviour is obviously a decision of the individual. I know my wife would be aghast at the idea that someone falling pregnant again immediately. It took her four years to work up the courage to do it again. But maybe that is more to do with the father than the process!

Senator BOYCE—I am going to be a grandmother this July, Minister. I am not pleased either!

Senator Chris Evans—But there are always those allegations about how it might impact on behaviour. I think it is pretty hard to answer that other than we would hope that is not the case and that people act in response to better motivations than those.

Senator BOYCE—Thank you.

Senator FURNER—I step through the consultative process you conducted as a result of the explanation of the Paid Parental Leave scheme. I understand there were a number of consultative arrangements that occurred, and I just wanted to get some detail on things like when they occurred, where, in what sort of numbers, and what feedback there was from those groups, please.

Mr Warburton—The consultations on these proposals go right back to when the government first asked the Productivity Commission to look at this issue. The Productivity Commission put out an issues paper. It called for submissions, got a first round of submissions and conducted public meetings. It then put out a draft paper that contained some relatively detailed proposals for the scheme and it ran a further round of submissions and public meetings.

I think they received over 400 submissions all up, of which 160 were on the draft report, if my recollection serves me correctly. The government then largely accepted the recommendations that were put forward by the Productivity Commission. There were some slight variations, which it announced in the budget before last, and it committed to a round of consultation on more detailed matters. Those consultations were undertaken by the department between August and October of last year. We held, if my memory serves me right, 32 meetings with over 300 people. Could I just check that?

Mr Sandison—That is correct; there were 32 consultation meetings with over 200 representatives.

Mr Warburton—Three hundred, wasn't it?

Senator FURNER—And where were those meetings conducted?

Mr Warburton—There were meetings held in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. There were a variety of teleconferences that were held with people in other locations. We provided a response to that question last Senate estimates, I think. It was question number 49 from the February estimates.

Senator FURNER—Okay. The committee or some of the senators in the room here today were on the inquiry into the paid parental leave, and we did hear from businesses that were witnesses at the inquiry. They were, by memory, Australian Industry Group, ACCI and a small retailer association. What other businesses were consulted over the proposal?

Mr Warburton—There was a very wide range of businesses. We tapped into the Australian Tax Office's consultative forums. They have a small business consultative group that has got people like ACCI, Australian Retailers Association, Australian Trucking Association, CPA of Australia, the Council of Small Business of Australia, the National Farmers Federation, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Real Estate Institute of Australia on it. We were invited to a meeting of the Council of Small Business of Australia, where they gave us their views. My understanding is they have got the Business and Professional Women of Australia, Real Estate Institute of Australia, Tasmanian Small Business Council, Independent Retailers Organisation, Westpac and National Independent Retailers Association.

Senator FURNER—Sounds like you have covered everyone.

Mr Warburton—We did attempt to give a very wide range of both organisations and individuals an attempt to give us their views on the scheme.

Senator FURNER—And during those discussions with those businesses and those business associations, were there any discussions centred around the scheme being a government or business funding arrangement?

Mr Warburton—At the stage we did our consultations, the government had already announced that it would fund the scheme. While individuals could say anything they wanted to us basically, some of the main parameters like that were already government decisions and we were really going to the next level of detail. The issue about how a paid parental leave scheme should be funded was one of the threshold questions that the Productivity Commission needed to deal with, and so there were extensive consultations at an earlier stage. At each stage we are getting to a more refined level of discussion of the details and consultations. I was incorrect. There were 200 individuals we consulted in those 32 meetings, not 300. Mr Sandison was right.

Senator FURNER—There was no debate about the funding arrangements with the businesses. As you said, it was part of the process through the PC.

Mr Warburton—I think, broadly, businesses supported the government funding scheme.

Senator FURNER—What were the general views of business other than that? Were there any other issues that were raised at all?

Mr Warburton—When the minister released the draft legislation, I think she put out a press release detailing some of the changes we had made in response to the consultations.

Senator FURNER—What was the date of that media release?

Mr Warburton—4 May was when we released the draft legislation. The employers talked to us and payroll software developers talked to us about the need for them to update their systems and how it would be desirable for them to have more time to do that after the legislation was passed. We broadly had been planning that they would have six months. In response to that, the government delayed the requirement for employers to be paymaster until 1 July 2011, so they have got 12 months before that requirement will apply with them. That later date synchronises it with the commencement of a new financial year.

It is quite common for businesses to update their systems at that time. It is not over the holiday season, which means it is easier to handle with their payroll staff and so forth. Employers talked to us about the frequency of payments to come from the Family Assistance Office. There were a range of views put there. There were clearly people who wanted to receive the payment in fewer instalments, if you like, not fortnightly, so the government announced that they could receive it in as few as three payments. There were quite a wide range of matters that we discussed.

Senator FURNER—No doubt you are aware, and it was raised with some of the businesses that appeared before the inquiry, about concerns about costs in being the paymaster for the fund, and no doubt you are aware that the government, through its budgetary announcements, has announced incentives and also subsidies through initiatives for small business for depreciation and those sorts of things. I am wondering, had those small

businesses been made aware of those initiatives, whether those concerns would have been allayed when they raised those issues before the inquiry? I would like to hear your feedback on that.

Mr Warburton—That is fairly difficult for me to comment on. We did not talk a lot about depreciation arrangements and those sorts of things. There are existing provisions in place. They were enhanced by the government in the current budget, is my understanding.

Mr Sandison—I think we could only conjecture on what their views may or may not have been if they had had that information when we were doing the consultations.

Senator FURNER—Fair enough. That is reality. That is a budget announcement and I guess that is subject to that moving through the Senate chamber. Naturally, that is an alternative for small business. They raise those concerns to alleviate those restraints they have raised. What other assistance is the department offering business in general in terms of the implementation and other measures of the scheme?

Mr Warburton—We had initial discussions with them about what steps they may need to take to play their role in the scheme. When the minister put out the exposure draft of the legislation, we released what we refer to as an employer business requirement statement. We put that out in draft form because we do not think we can finalise it until the legislation has passed. That was giving employers as much information as we could as early as we could on how the scheme would work. We are seeking feedback on that to make sure that it is comprehensive, it has the information employers need. Once the legislation is passed, assuming that happens, we will put that out in final form. We are discussing that in a range of forums.

Again, we are working with the tax commissioner's payroll software developers forum, their small business forum, to get that information out to employers. Centrelink is also engaged in some meetings with some select employers to work through detailed administrative arrangements—the best way of communicating with employers, the best way for employers to communicate with Centrelink. They are working constructively with them to try and put in place the best arrangements for employers. We will also be undertaking communications to make sure employers understand the scheme, what it entails, what their role is. We will be doing that over the next 12 months.

Senator FURNER—If we can reflect back on your discussions with business and business organisations, a question was posed to Mr Smith on the AiG during the inquiry in relation to their members' concerns over the opposition's proposed PPL with a levy of \$2.7 billion imposed upon them. He responded:

... we are concerned about the very substantial cost of the proposal. It would be vastly more costly than this scheme.

In reflection, in any of this discussions you had with employer and employer associations, were there similar feelings felt during the dialogue you had with them?

Mr Warburton—We did not discuss the opposition's current proposals.

Senator FURNER—I am not asking whether you discussed it, but whether that was raised by those businesses.

Mr Warburton—I do not recall any discussion about a levy or those sorts of things. We were focused on discussing the scheme that the government had announced.

Senator ADAMS—I would like to go back to the booklets that were distributed several weeks ago, the *Paid Parental Leave—Information for employers and consultation outcomes* and the *Paid Parental Leave—Information for parents* booklets and the flyer *Planning to have a baby? Introducing Australia's first Paid Parental Leave scheme*. I did ask questions of the department during the inquiry, but I would like to continue there and ask, since the inquiry, how much further these have been distributed, have you had any more printed, and what is the cost?

Mr Warburton—We have not printed any more since the first print runs. To date we have distributed 6,100 parent booklets and 3,400 employer booklets. We had a question on notice from the Community Affairs Legislation Committee on the costs of producing the brochures and the booklets. The information in our response to that is still current. Was there something else I needed to respond to?

Senator ADAMS—What has the response to the booklets been?

Mr Warburton—I do not have a lot of detailed information on that, but generally people have found them informative. They give a sense about how the scheme will operate that you cannot get from the legislation.

Senator ADAMS—Have you had any feedback from members of parliament? They were sent out to all members; has there been any feedback from them?

Mr Warburton—I have not got feedback from members' or senators' offices.

Mr Sandison—There has not been directly to the department.

Senator ADAMS—Would you be able to take that on notice? I am just interested to see how the general public have accepted these books—

Senator Chris Evans—I can certainly take that on notice. I will ask the minister's office whether they have got any correspondence or feedback, and maybe members and the department will do the same.

Senator ADAMS—Thanks.

CHAIR—Thank you to the officers from outcome 1. We will resume with questions in outcome 6.

Proceedings suspended from 12.31 pm to 1.30 pm

CHAIR—We will continue. We are going to start back this afternoon with outcome 6, Women. I welcome officers from the Office for Women and EOWA. I know that Senator Boyce has some questions and Senator Brown has some questions. We will start with Senator Boyce and see how we go.

Dr Harmer—Can I get a sense of the plan? At the moment the people for outcome 5, disability and carers, are planning to come across here at about four o'clock. Is that still right?

CHAIR—I would think so. I can see no value in them coming earlier.

Senator BOYCE—As long as they are here for a four o'clock start that would be fine. I do not have 2½ hours worth of questions but I know there are other questions.

Dr Harmer—If they are watching they might come a little earlier.

Senator BOYCE—One presumes we might break for afternoon tea about then anyway, might we, Chair?

CHAIR—Yes, and Senator Evans is not here to monitor our timing.

Senator BOYCE—However, Senator Stephens can be a very hard taskmaster, I am sure.

CHAIR—Senator Stephens does not operate in the same way. I call Senator Boyce.

Senator BOYCE—I am starting with the Office for Women; is that correct?

CHAIR—Yes.

Senator BOYCE—Where does the Office for Women turn up in the budget papers, please?

Ms McKenzie—In the budget papers the departmentals for the Office for Women relate to outcome 6.

Senator BOYCE—Which is?

Ms McKenzie—Outcome 6 is gender equality for women. I think it is on page 114 of our budget portfolio statements.

Ms Carroll—There is a line on that page called 'Program support'.

Senator BOYCE—A number of people had picked up that there was no new money for the Office for Women. Can you perhaps start by telling me how many staff the Office for Women currently have—that is, full-time, part-time, ongoing and non-ongoing staff.

Ms McKenzie—I do have a piece of paper on that here, but it may take me a moment to find it.

Ms Moyle—The head count as at 2009-10 is 59 staff. That includes the two branches within the Office for Women.

Senator BOYCE—Can we break those down?

Ms Moyle—As at April 2010 we had 29.25 staff in the Women's Branch and the National Women's Safety Taskforce had 19.52 staff.

Senator BOYCE—There are 19.52 staff in what I continue to call the domestic violence area, but I probably should broaden that term out, should I not? What was the first figure again, Ms Moyle?

Ms Moyle—It was 29.25.

Senator BOYCE—I do not mind if you take on notice the breakdown in terms of ongoing, non-ongoing staff et cetera. Your budget goes from \$14 million to \$13.2 million. You have lost about a million dollars out of your budget; is that correct?

Ms McKenzie—If you are talking in departmentals, the program support—

Senator BOYCE—This is for the Office for Women.

Ms McKenzie—This is allocated across the department. The questions about how that funding is allocated really need to be asked of the corporate area. I do not know whether there is a—

Ms Carroll—This covers the staff that Ms Moyle spoke about, but it also covers the kinds of corporate support costs, as you would anticipate.

Dr Harmer—As we discussed yesterday.

Senator BOYCE—The department supporting the office?

Ms Carroll—Exactly. So we could not say to you that exactly this amount goes towards the staff and this amount goes for these other activities.

Dr Harmer—If you want it broken down we can do it, but it is not in this document.

Senator BOYCE—What sort of support does the department give the office?

Dr Harmer—All the HR, IT—

Senator BOYCE—But only that back office support? Is there research support or is that within the office?

Ms Carroll—The Office for Women is integrated within the department.

Senator BOYCE—Do you all sit in one spot?

Ms Carroll—Yes.

Dr Harmer—It is within the department, Senator.

Ms Carroll—For example, there is a communications branch in the department, so any communications activities are supported by that communications branch. There is a ministerial unit, again, within the department. That supports everybody. So the Office for Women is considered just like any other part of the department.

Senator BOYCE—So how will this \$1 million of savings by the office in the coming year be achieved?

Ms McKenzie—It is not necessarily a \$1 million saving by the office.

Senator BOYCE—What programs will not be supported or what programs will have less support?

Ms McKenzie—It does not necessarily predict a change in the functions and resources of the Office for Women. It is a corporate allocation that is driven by a range of factors. Because in the current year, 2009-10, we had an annual administered of \$27 million and in the next year we have an annual administered of \$20 million, the departmental allocation has changed. So it is not just driven by internal factors.

Senator BOYCE—Let us talk about the Gender Equality for Women budget. Is this the place to talk about that?

Ms McKenzie—Yes.

Senator BOYCE—Can you tell me about the saving of \$6½ million that you have there? How is that going to be achieved?

Ms McKenzie—It is not actually a saving.

Senator BOYCE—It is a decrease in expenditure.

Ms McKenzie—Yes. Two years ago there was a \$2 million underspend, which was rolled over into last year's expenditure so that we had a slight increase. Then at the end of that year we rolled over \$7 million to increase the budget for 2009-10 to \$27 million. That has now come back to the normal budget—what it would have been before had we not had that roll forward.

Dr Harmer—Senator, the answer to your question is that the year which is the anomaly is actually 2009-10, because of the rolling over of funds. Ms McKenzie is saying that the ongoing budget for Gender Equality for Women is about \$20 million and the ongoing support is about \$13.2 million. The aberrant year is 2009-10, when there was some additional rolling.

Senator BOYCE—So will the \$27 million for 2009-10 be fully expended?

Ms McKenzie—The expectation is that it will be fully expended.

Senator BOYCE—So what will change in the activities of the Office for Women which will allow you to spend \$6½ million less next year?

Ms McKenzie—Last year the Prime Minister announced the \$42 million package relating to when he received the *Time for action* report from the national council. That included a social marketing campaign. We have spent considerable funds on the development work attached to that social marketing campaign, and that development work will not be required in the future years.

Senator BOYCE—So how much have you spent on that? Is that the tender that has been let to—

Ms McKenzie—J Walter Thompson.

Senator BOYCE—Yes. I was going to say McCann Erickson, but I would have had to go and wash my mouth out after that, wouldn't I? So it is J Walter Thompson.

Ms McKenzie—Yes, that is the social marketing campaign.

Senator BOYCE—So how much has been spent on that?

Ms Carroll—My understanding is that in this financial year there is about \$9 million for the social marketing campaign.

Senator BOYCE—Sorry, I am furiously looking through my papers here to try to find the relevant sheet, but keep going Ms Carroll.

Ms Carroll—The social marketing strategy for the 2009-10 year is about \$9 million. As Ms McKenzie said, that is because of the development work in this year for establishing the social marketing campaign.

Senator BOYCE—Are you able to give me the figures for, as you said, the development of it and then the annual spend on the results of the *Time for action* report? What is that campaign actually being called?

Ms McKenzie—The Respectful Relationships Campaign. The money has been spent on things like research, tracking and benchmarking. I think at last estimates we spoke about the

extensive research that has been done to be able to provide a primary prevention-behavioural change campaign that is going to work with young teens. So there was a considerable amount spent on research; creative development and production; then we have got funding for public relations. We also engaged a CALD consultant and an Indigenous consultant to be able to provide us extra advice on the Indigenous component of the campaign. We have some media placement, some website development and maintenance, some other formats—work to be done in large print—and just some general support costs.

Senator BOYCE—Media placement is actual advertising, is it?

Ms McKenzie—It is actual advertising.

Senator BOYCE—How much was spent on advertising?

Ms McKenzie—That is expected to be about three-and-a-half million.

Senator BOYCE—How much is to be spent next year?

Ms McKenzie—I think it is about the same; I have not got the actual figure with me but I can take that on notice.

Senator BOYCE—What funding are you going to continue to put into this campaign, and what is that money going to pay for?

Ms McKenzie—The campaign is very strongly a web based campaign but it does have media in terms of teenage magazines and other sorts of literature.

Senator BOYCE—Is there an association with footballers or young footballers or something as well?

Ms McKenzie—There is a range of Respectful Relationship programs that have also been funded. I think in the \$42 million package that was announced last year there was about \$9 million that went to Respectful Relationships projects. As part of that, in round 2 that was announced earlier this year, there certainly was some work being done with football organisations.

Senator BOYCE—The Office for Women supports victims of people trafficking. The minister's budget statement says that 154 people to date have been given support and assistance.

Ms Moyle—That is right.

Senator BOYCE—When you say 154 people to date, what are those dates?

Ms Moyle—That is since the program's inception, Senator, in 2003, to date.

Senator BOYCE—How many people have been assisted in 2009-10 to date?

Ms Moyle—We currently have 52 people on the program and so far to date, in 2009-10, 23 new people have come onto the program.

Senator BOYCE—That 52 includes the 23; is that right?

Ms Moyle—That is right. Many of the people on the program stay for longer than a year. So, yes, that is right.

Senator BOYCE—What is the program?

Ms Moyle—The program is a support program for people who have been identified as potential victims of people trafficking. Generally they are identified by either the Department of Immigration and Citizenship or, more generally, AFP. Sometimes state police identify potential victims of trafficking and then they are all notified to the AFP. If the AFP considers that they potentially may have suffered from trafficking they are referred to our program which is managed by the Red Cross. It has four streams to it. The first stream is an assessment stream which is a form of fairly intensive support. We provide accommodation, living allowance, legal advice, medical advice, translation support and a range of other support. That stream lasts for 45 days. If a person is identified then as willing but not able to assist the further investigation process they are given another extended intensive support of 45 days before they are transitioned off the program. If they are considered able and willing to assist the investigation and prosecution of a case, they are then moved on to the justice—

Senator BOYCE—Presumably, after those 45 days they would be deported?

Ms Moyle—In the main, unless they have another visa. One of the changes introduced in July last year was that a person can retain a valid visa if they have one. So if a person does have a valid visa and that 45 days expires, they are clearly able to just stay in the community on their own visa under their own steam. If they are transitioned into the justice support stream, they stay there for as long as needed for the investigation and prosecution to continue and be completed or discontinued. Again, they are able to retain whatever valid visa they may have had. Then if they finish their support—there is a 20-day transition-off period—and then if people go home, there is a final stream that includes the same intensive support for people to come back to Australia to participate in a trial.

Senator BOYCE—You said that, out of the 154, all but 11 were women. What is the current make-up of the 52 in the program?

Ms Moyle—I believe that is still the case, Senator. There are still 11 men who have been on the program. No new men have come on to the program since the last report.

Senator BOYCE—So there are currently 11 men in the program or not?

Ms Moyle—I am sorry, I do not have the breakdown of men who are currently on the program.

Senator BOYCE—But we are right to assume that 90 per cent of the 52 are women; is that right?

Ms Moyle—That is right.

Senator BOYCE—You also had a figure in here for the number who were identified as being possible victims of sexual exploitation over that period. With the current 52, how many would you identify that way?

Ms Moyle—Those who have been identified as possible victims of trafficking within the sex industry, 46; and only six of the current 52 have come from outside the sex industry.

Senator BOYCE—What about the trends in terms of types of people coming onto this program? Have there be noticeable changes in the nationalities or the reasons?

Ms Moyle—The changes to the visa arrangements in July last year have meant that people have been more willing to come onto the program and they have also been able to access the extended support stream. There have been more people coming on over the last financial year to the program and we are seeing still the concentration in New South Wales and Victoria. Currently we have 37 people on the program from New South Wales, three from Queensland, 11 from Victoria and one from the ACT. That is pretty similar to the break-up of the total 154 over the entire period—93 from New South Wales, eight from Queensland, two from South Australia, 49 from Victoria and one each from Western Australia and the ACT.

Senator BOYCE—Would you have their countries of origin there?

Ms Moyle—Yes, I do have the countries of origin—74 in total from Thailand; currently 29 from Thailand. We have also had significant numbers from Malaysia and South Korea. I can go through all the details if you would like.

Senator BOYCE—Perhaps if you could just give us that on notice. That is probably better than going down to one from Ethiopia and one from wherever.

Ms Moyle—Yes.

Senator BOYCE—That would be useful. Regarding the people who are on the program but who are not there because of their involvement in the sex industry, what is the reason for them being in the program?

Ms Moyle—They come from a range of labour trafficking areas—generally rural or hospitality; agriculture labourers or in the hospitality sector.

Senator BOYCE—So they are people who have come in on 457 visas?

Ms Moyle—I do not believe we have had anybody on the program on a 457 visa, Senator. I can double-check that for you.

Senator BOYCE—So they primarily have been here on some sort of temporary visa?

Ms Moyle—It is generally a temporary visa. The most common visas that people present on the program with are either working holiday visas or tourism visas. There have been a range of different visas, but in large bulk they are the working holiday or the tourism visas.

Senator FURNER—What are the ages of these women? Are they young women? Are there children involved as well?

Ms Moyle—I do not have an age breakdown, but generally they are either prime of life or younger women. We have had two unaccompanied minors transition through the program, but they are now no longer on the program.

Senator BOYCE—Why were they in the program?

Ms Moyle—They were identified as being potential victims of trafficking, and then the police investigated that and discovered that there was not sufficient evidence to make any charge around that.

Senator BOYCE—In terms of trafficking for sexual purposes the AFP, as you said, has been very actively involved in this area, as have a number of other agencies. Are we seeing an increase or a decrease in this area, from this program's experience?

Ms Moyle—It has been up and down in the numbers. For example, in the 2003-04 financial year, 11 clients entered the program. That was the first year of operation. The second year, 40 people entered the program and it has been up and down ever since. We are now running in the mid to late 20s per annum, in terms of people coming on to the program.

Senator BOYCE—Is that telling you anything at all? What numbers, for instance, of people who are exploited into the sex industry in Australia would you think you see? What percentage are we talking about?

Ms Moyle—Clearly it is hard to say.

Senator BOYCE—Yes, I realise that.

Ms Moyle—I would also suggest that this would not be accepted as being the entire number of people who are trafficked into Australia, but the estimates for people who have been trafficked into Australia vary wildly and it is difficult to say with certainty. From our point of view in managing the program, it would be difficult to make an estimation or even an informed guess about what this says about the actual number of people who suffer from trafficking.

Senator BOYCE—What other work does the Office for Women do in this area in terms of research or awareness campaigns?

Ms Moyle—The Office for Women is a member of the interdepartmental committee on trafficking and there is an operational working group that sits underneath that. There are a range of agencies involved in the IDC and the working group, and that includes the AIC, which is generally responsible for the research into trafficking in Australia. Awareness raising is the responsibility of the Attorney-General's Department and they have a program that is aimed at people who are in or around the sex industry, but you would need to ask them about the details of that program.

Senator BOYCE—So you have this very practical program.

Ms Moyle—That is right.

Senator BOYCE—But other measures around sexual trafficking or job trafficking are not your responsibility?

Ms Moyle—That is right. Each of the members of the working group and the IDC has their own role in it. AusAID, for example, is involved in a number of overseas development programs to support prevention and resettlement as well.

Senator BOYCE—Are there any other federal government funded programs, to your knowledge, outside the Office for Women for people who are the victims of people trafficking?

Ms Moyle—In terms of support?

Senator BOYCE—I am talking about practical programs.

Ms Moyle—In terms of programs to support people who may be victims of trafficking, Office for Women runs that program. But there has also been funding provided to a range of non-government organisations that provide support as well, and that came through the Attorney-General's Department.

Senator BOYCE—How do you interact with those organisations, or don't you?

Ms Moyle—No. We have regular contact with them informally and we are also members of the roundtable on people trafficking which has met annually for the last couple of years and which invites NGOs to engage with government as well as the Red Cross, which is our case manager, of course.

Senator BOYCE—That was my next question. With regard to the Red Cross, did they win a tender to undertake this work for you? How does it work?

Ms Moyle—Yes, they won a tender to undertake the work for us.

Senator BOYCE—Can you give me the costs now and into the forward estimates for this program?

Ms Moyle—The appropriation is \$755,000 a year. Clearly, as it is demand driven the costs range from month to month according to the needs of the clients and the number of clients. That affects the bottom line core costs that we pay to the Red Cross.

Senator BOYCE—So what have they actually tendered to do, then?

Ms Moyle—Their tender was on a strengths based case management approach. It is not intended to be full-time, hand-holding, moral support. It is intended to be a contact point for people and a referral point to make sure that people have the skills and support they need to manage on whatever stream of the program they are on. In the first assessment stream, it is quite intensive support. The case manager would spend a lot of time with the client.

In the justice support program it is a lot more like a contact point if you are having a difficulty because that period can extend for well over a year. People are supported to live independently, to work if they are able to, to access Centrelink benefits if they need to and to have the counselling, medical, legal and translation support that they need. Basically, it is a contact point for living in Australia independently. Many of these people have only recently arrived in Australia.

Senator BOYCE—Does the program have all the resources it needs?

Ms Moyle—I believe it does, yes.

Senator BOYCE—You have always got to work out how to ask that question, Senator Moore.

Ms Moyle—We have always lived within the appropriation. I believe that the Red Cross is providing excellent support. We did transfer some money this financial year into the program from the broader women's leadership development strategy because we thought the teething problems with the new visa arrangements meant some people came onto the program and stayed for a bit longer. Generally, we are functioning within the appropriation. We are providing a high degree of service. We work well with the working group and the IDC. The difficulty, of course, is that we do not know at any stage when there might be a bust of significant numbers of people. It may be that there is a working group that has all been trafficked to Australia. That would certainly be a moment for us to test how well the system works. To date we are working very well with the Red Cross.

Senator BOYCE—Are there any asylum seekers amongst the people involved in the program?

Ms Moyle—Not that I am aware of, no.

Senator BOYCE—I want to go on to what I think is a different interdepartmental committee, but it may not be. In the minister's statement she says: 'Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) to advance cultural and systemic change in government by ensuring gender sensitivity in government policy development and implementation.' Is that you?

Ms Moyle—That is me.

Senator BOYCE—That is you again. Is that the same IDC that you were talking about for—

Ms Moyle—No, that is a separate IDC.

Senator BOYCE—Maybe I had better not ask how many IDCs there are. We could be here until tomorrow.

CHAIR—It would have to go on notice.

Senator BOYCE—Can you tell me about the work of the IDC on gender sensitivity?

Ms Moyle—The Women's IDC is what we call it. It comprises members from 17 of the 19 portfolios across government as well as members from other agencies.

Senator BOYCE—So you have the lead with this?

Ms Moyle—We do have the lead with this.

Senator BOYCE—And that is you, Ms Moyle?

Ms Moyle—No, Ms Carroll is our chair. I am the secretariat for that. It meets quarterly at this stage. It is intended to support the development of capacity around gender awareness within government to make sure that we can effectively take account of gender issues in all of the work that government does. It helps to develop some of the work that we are doing in that space to develop capacity across government and awareness.

Senator BOYCE—How long has the Women's IDC existed?

Ms Moyle—Since March 2009.

Senator BOYCE—Again, is there any separate line item funding for that IDC or not?

Ms Carroll—It is a part of the normal program work of the Office for Women and just as departments across the public service engage in a lot of interdepartmental committees, this is one that people come to and we facilitate the discussions. Certainly, Ms Moyle's branch puts together the papers and those sorts of things for the committee meeting. I think it is fair to say that we have had incredible support from the different portfolios represented across the service.

Senator BOYCE—What do you mean by 'incredible support'?

Ms Carroll—It is quite a senior level interdepartmental committee. The range of agencies that are represented at that senior level show the commitment across the service to being

engaged in women's issues and coming and discussing and taking issues forward. So we certainly have been very pleased at the engagement that we have across the service.

Senator BOYCE—So there is no actual line budget.

Ms Carroll—There is no line. That is part of the normal departmental funding.

Senator BOYCE—Do you work by focusing on specific projects or areas in particular time frames? How do you achieve gender sensitivity?

Ms Carroll—I can start and then Ms Moyle can add to that. Effectively, that is exactly right: certain particular issues are put on the agenda for different meetings and those particular issues might be progressed. For example, at different points in the annual cycle you might put different kinds of things on the agenda or if there have been particularly big reports—things coming forward at different points in time—then they are put on the agenda to discuss and take forward.

Senator BOYCE—Are you able to tell me the current issues the IDC is looking at?

Ms Moyle—Senator, there are a few working groups that work with that IDC. One is related to gender equality and the way it is advanced in general. So underneath that area of work we are currently undertaking a gender assessment of some of the work within FaHCSIA and we are developing a panel of gender expertise that can be used across government. So we have been seeking advice from the IDC.

Senator BOYCE—So that is aimed at gender equality within the federal government?

Ms Moyle—That is right. We have an economic security working group that largely brings together FaHCSIA, the Office for Women, DEEWR, the Attorney-General's department and other interested departments to talk about a range of work that is going on across government to make sure that they intersect this in a way that is consistent and is able to promote equality—so just to inform ourselves of the work that we have going on.

Senator BOYCE—Is that designed around improving economic security for Australian women?

Ms Moyle—That is right, Senator. One of the minister's three priority areas is improving economic security for women and the aim is clearly that a range of government work affects economic outcomes for women and men and the idea is that all of that work during the consultation process with the IDC and other work should ensure stronger economic outcomes for women at least and equality between women and men in those outcomes.

Senator BOYCE—So, for instance, if you are working on something in the economic security area, what happens to the work of the IDC? Are we talking about work that would feed into policy development or what?

Ms Carroll—A lot of it is around policy development. So it is looking at particular issues in the policy development process to make sure that things happening across government are joined up and people understand what is going on to make sure that those policy objectives are being aligned to extend economic security for women—not so that this happens intentionally but sometimes unintentionally, for example, policy can start to work against

itself when you have policy being worked up in different areas. So the idea is to try to link and integrate at that policy development point.

Senator BOYCE—As a member of the coalition I would suggest that the way the Fair Work Act and the paid parental leave act work on parental leave is possibly one of those areas we currently have—

Senator CAROL BROWN—I was just going to ask there, would the IDC have fed information into the superannuation discussions and the paid parental leave discussions?

Ms Moyle—Senator, there were certainly conversations about the policy processes going across government from a gender point of view.

Senator BOYCE—My question was a more general one to the Office for Women around paid parental leave and the legislation that is going to be passed hopefully soon. What involvement does the office have in that area?

Ms Moyle—We were involved throughout the development of the Productivity Commission's work and have been involved in terms of keeping in touch with what is happening in the development of the PPL response and the legislation with the families group. The families group has the lead on that process.

Senator BOYCE—Is that ongoing? What would you expect?

Ms Moyle—We do not involve ourselves in the detail of the implementation. I am quite happy to leave that to our colleagues. But we do have conversations about how things are progressing, and clearly we are happy to talk about policy questions which may arise. As I say, as we get to the implementation end of it, there are fewer policy questions that do arise.

Senator BOYCE—Do you currently have a formal role within the evaluation of the PPL, which is going to start soon I understand?

Ms Moyle—It is not a formal role at this stage; it is informal contact.

Senator CAROL BROWN—What about an awareness-raising role of PPL?

Ms Moyle—Again, we do not have a formal role in that.

Senator BOYCE—I should ask questions about Respectful Relationships here, should I? And what about questions on the National Women's Alliances? Are they in the Office for Women?

Ms McKenzie—Yes.

Senator BOYCE—Perhaps, Ms McKenzie, I could ask for an update on the Respectful Relationships program to date. Is that what I should be doing?

Ms McKenzie—Yes.

Ms Stehr—I think from previous estimates you would be aware that there were seven round 1 Respectful Relationships projects that were commenced in 2009, covering 56 sites. They were expected to reach approximately 3,000 young people. Two of those round 1 projects to date have been completed—one being conducted by the University of Western Sydney and one by the University of New South Wales and the National Rugby League.

The project conducted by the University of Western Sydney has reported to us that they have 75 participants in that project. Some of the outcomes that they saw from that initial project were things like six months after the program 82 per cent of the young people were reported still using the ideas that they had been exposed to in the Respectful Relationships program and 74 per cent had used the skills they had learnt in the program. They had also reported significant improvements in the young people understanding their own and other people's sexual issues, understanding knowledge about sexual assault, understanding values and ethics to ensure personal safety and negotiate with partners—those sorts of things. That University of Western Sydney program trained 13 trainers who then worked with those participants across New South Wales—inner Sydney, Central Coast, Armidale, northern New South Wales and outer Western Sydney—and that included participants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, young people with disabilities et cetera.

The project conducted by the University of New South Wales and the National Rugby League focused on implementing a sex and ethics program with subelite rugby league players in Queensland—that is, under-16s and under-18s squads. They worked with 60 young people within the Brisbane Broncos and the Gold Coast Titans—National Rugby League subelite squads, as they are known—to look at things like ethical and respectful intimate relationships, knowledge of sexual assault and prevention of sexual assault within a dating context. They are the two projects that have been completed.

There are 10 round 2 projects that were announced by Minister Plibersek in March. They are expected to reach approximately 10,000 people, or at least 10,000 people in those projects. There is also a national project that Ms McKenzie referred to earlier which is with the Australian Football League project. The estimated numbers are that it will reach about 65,000 young people. The preparatory work to implement those projects has been underway and those projects are commencing at various times over the coming months. Would you like me to run through the sorts of providers that are going to be doing those round 2s?

Senator BOYCE—I do not think we need to go through each one of them now, but if you could provide that on notice that would be good. What is the status of the national plan to reduce violence against women and children? Is this the place to ask that?

Ms McKenzie—Yes. As you would be aware from previous estimates, when the Prime Minister accepted the *Time for action* report from the national council he said that he would write to his COAG colleagues and seek an agreement to develop a national plan to reduce violence against women and their children. A ministerial council of Commonwealth and state ministers from a range of portfolios was established. That ministerial council has now met several times. In addition, a working group of officials chaired by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet was established. That working group of officials has met a considerably greater number of times and also had a significant number of telecons to try to work through the issues. Basically where we have got to is that we are in the process where there is substantial agreement around a range of matters and we are finalising a range of other matters for COAG.

Senator BOYCE—This process has been going on for over 12 months now.

Ms McKenzie—No, I think the ministerial council first met in September last year. It met again I think in November, then in January and then in April. So it has been very swift work by a special minco that was set up.

Senator BOYCE—I will ask the question anyway: when might we have a finalised national plan?

Ms McKenzie—I would hope that the answer to that is shortly.

Senator BOYCE—I thought that would be the answer. Are there any specific projects within the plan that you can talk about at this stage? Are there any specific areas of agreement that can be gotten on with?

Ms McKenzie—I think Minister Plibersek and the Attorney put out a media release after each of the meetings and they provided some broad understandings and agreements. That certainly did not go down to the project levels. Project levels are still being very much discussed between the Commonwealth and the states.

Senator BOYCE—What is actually being done around reducing violence against women and children now whilst we all wait for the national plan?

Ms McKenzie—The important thing is that the national plan is using the reform directions that the national council identified, which was a much stronger involvement of community, an integrated approach to service delivery, a fair justice response involving police and justice, but also a focus on perpetrators. We are working with the states and territories to build on their current responses because the states and territories generally are the ones that are taking this work forward and are looking at reforms to their current systems and things that we can do on a national basis. So there has been no work that has been stopped waiting for the national plan.

Senator BOYCE—No.

Ms Carroll—If I can just add to that, I think Ms McKenzie mentioned before that last year when the Prime Minister accepted the *Time for action* report he announced the initial immediate actions, and part of that we have heard about—the Respectful Relationships and the social marketing. So all of those things are continuing and have been being developed et cetera over that period of time. While we are doing things in tandem, we are developing the national plan at the same time as implementing those particular measures.

Senator BOYCE—How much is currently being spent on telephone and online crisis counselling or services, for want of a better word, around domestic violence and sexual assault?

Ms Smart—The 2009-10 budget for the telephone helpline is approximately \$2.7 million.

Senator BOYCE—And for next year?

Ms Smart—Next year's estimate is \$4.3 million.

Senator BOYCE—And why that increase?

Ms Smart—That increase is as a result of the move to a new 1800 and online counselling service which the Prime Minister announced in April last year and the increased allocation—

Senator BOYCE—Sorry, I thought we had done that.

Ms Smart—The increased allocation for 2010-11 represents additional costs for the development of particular elements of that 1800 number.

Senator BOYCE—What sorts of developments?

Ms Smart—Those exact developments will be negotiated with the individual service provider, but we anticipate that they will have additional implementation costs around technology, particularly in relation to online counselling, and ensuring that they have the best and most appropriate telephone technology in place to support both the receiving of calls and also the support of the professional counsellors who will be involved in receiving those calls.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. Are you able to tell us who has the telephone counselling contracts currently?

Ms Smart—The current provider is Lifeline.

Senator BOYCE—Yes, and what is going to happen? Is there any change proposed there in that increase in funding? Will there continue to be just one provider?

Ms Smart—The department has been through an extensive selection process which—

Senator BOYCE—This is an invited tender, or what?

Ms Smart—It was a two-part process which commenced with an expression of interest which was undertaken last year, and from that expression of interest we then went to an invitation to apply; so it was a two-stage process. Firstly, there was a general expression of interest and from that an invitation to apply. We went through an extensive assessment process within that invitation to apply and from that, unfortunately, the department was not able to identify a single provider that was able to deliver the more extensive requirements that we had in relation to the helpline. So the invitation to apply process was concluded in May and we are now looking at what our options are in terms of seeking an alternative provider, including considering a direct approach to one or more service providers to perhaps form a consortium.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. Can you just give me a bit more detail? When you say there was no-one with the ability to provide the extended counselling, can you just tell me what you meant by that?

Ms McKenzie—Perhaps I might be able to assist here. One of the things that I suppose was unusual for the sector was that we wanted to have professional and deep expertise in both sexual assault and domestic violence, which is not necessarily something that the current lines have. They tend to focus on one or the other. At the same time we also wanted the line to be able to have a good technical capacity—so being able to deal with the technology, which is not necessarily a big part of some of the current lines. We wanted them to be able to integrate in a seamless way with the other 34 lines that are around Australia. So the idea was that, no matter the line that somebody rings on, there should be a relatively seamless service that happens around Australia. That set of requirements and the quality expectation that we had on that set of requirements was a very difficult set for the current market to meet.

Senator BOYCE—Who tend to be—or some of them are—quite localised, are they not?

Ms McKenzie—Some of them are quite localised.

Senator BOYCE—I am thinking of rape crisis centres and the like.

Ms McKenzie—Yes. Certainly some organisations demonstrated great expertise in a particular area, but we were looking for expertise right across the board and we believe that we still have an expectation of achieving that.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. But you might have to develop it.

Ms McKenzie—Yes.

Senator BOYCE—So when are you anticipating that the new hotline would be around?

Ms McKenzie—Dare I say shortly?

Senator ADAMS—We need a definition of ‘shortly’.

Senator BOYCE—No, that would ruin everything if we had a definition of ‘shortly’. They are all the questions I had in reducing violence against women or children.

Senator ADAMS—I have one on that particular area. I note on your website the National Community Attitudes survey. Has that started?

Ms McKenzie—The National Community Attitudes survey was undertaken last year and it was released in November.

Senator ADAMS—Did it have a good response?

Ms McKenzie—I think so. It was done for us—you are testing the memory here—

Senator ADAMS—Yes, it was the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

Ms Smart—And the research partners were the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Social Research Centre.

Senator ADAMS—Would you be able to take on notice what the results of it were and whether it was really successful or just how it worked?

Ms McKenzie—I think it is actually loaded up on our website.

Senator ADAMS—Is it? I will go through and have a look then.

Ms McKenzie—But we are happy to provide a summary.

Senator ADAMS—Right. Just another one on domestic violence: does the Office for Women have anything to do with the Women Justices’ Association—JPs—at all? Do you consult with them?

Ms Carroll—Not directly, Senator.

Senator ADAMS—Most states, I think, have an organisation that has a group of women justices and they have been doing a lot of work on this particular issue. I just felt that if you were not communicating with them they would be probably a very good body to speak to and get some information from.

Ms McKenzie—Yes, there were a large number of organisations that provided input into the national council’s report *Time for Action* and since then we have established the Violence against Women Advisory Group, which brings together 10 experts in various areas and they

bring in their connections with the community sector and various other groupings. So that is the way we stay informed of the different things that are going on.

Ms Carroll—The other area is the ministerial council, which we spoke about before, which has a number of state Attorneys-General on it who would also feed in through that process. So the Commonwealth-state process is also getting that feedback.

Senator BOYCE—There are not too many women Attorneys-General out there, I do not think, are there, Ms Carroll.

Ms Carroll—But certainly we would anticipate that their departments, which are also participating in it, would have connection to some of these groups.

Senator BOYCE—If I could just go back a minute, it has been pointed out to me that there were 17 departments involved in the interdepartmental committee on women. Which two departments are not involved?

Ms Moyle—I might need to take that on notice for fear of getting that wrong.

Senator BOYCE—Perhaps you could just read out the ones that are.

Ms McKenzie—Could I just explain it with a slightly different process than that. We actually started with a very small number of departments and departments encouraged other departments to join. Rather than being an exclusive—

Senator BOYCE—Who are the laggard departments, then?

Ms McKenzie—I would not call them that.

Ms Moyle—I can certainly read you the list of the 17 portfolios.

Senator BOYCE—Thank you.

Ms Moyle—We have Attorney-General's Department, the Bureau of Statistics, the Public Service Commission, AusAID, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Department of Defence, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, FaHCSIA, the Department of Finance and Deregulation, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Health and Ageing, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Treasury.

Senator BOYCE—So we do not have Education there?

Ms Moyle—Yes, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is there.

CHAIR—Does anyone in the room know which ones are missing?

Senator BOYCE—We will all work it out over dinner.

CHAIR—I know it is an impost to do it, but would you be able to let us know?

Ms Moyle—Certainly.

Senator BOYCE—Minister Plibersek announced in March that there had been \$3.6 million allocated to six new national women's alliances over the next three years. Could you

outline how that money has been split between the six organisations? We have \$200,000 per year for three years being allocated to each one of those organisations but where is the rest of money?

Ms Moyle—That is the money. It is \$1.2 million per year; \$200,000 to six alliances times three years. There are also costs that the Office for Women will be incurring to support those alliances; for example, having a national forum, evaluating their development and their processes and perhaps discussing further short-term funding for particular projects if we think it is warranted.

Senator BOYCE—There was a particular amount that had been allocated for them up until June?

Ms Moyle—That is right.

Senator BOYCE—Which I currently cannot find.

Ms Moyle—We funded four women's alliances until the tender process was completed. There is one alliance that is not continuing in its current form. That has been given funding until the end of June.

Senator BOYCE—That is continuing in its current form?

Ms Moyle—That is not being funded in its current form. That was given funding until the end of June.

Senator BOYCE—Was that WomenSpeak?

Ms Moyle—No, that was the Australian Women's Coalition. The four alliances that existed before the tender process finished were given their usual amount of funding until May this year. The new alliances were kicked off from there.

Senator BOYCE—Let us go back to the tender process if we could please. I have found my figure; it was \$48,000 from 1 April to 30 June for each national women's alliance. That is the figure I was given. Is that right?

Ms Moyle—I believe that is right. I have here that up until 30 April the alliances were funded to the sum of \$619,864.

Senator BOYCE—For the four of them?

Ms Moyle—That would have been for the four.

Senator BOYCE—Up until when?

Ms Moyle—30 April.

Senator BOYCE—So how does that gel with the comment on your website, which was last modified on 10 March this year, that base funding for each national women's alliance is \$48,000 for the period 1 April to 30 June?

Ms Moyle—That is just a progress payment for the six new alliances. That would have been—

Senator BOYCE—Base funding.

Ms Moyle—Core funding. It is just a pro rata'd amount paid to them. Their funding annually is \$200,000. So for that period the \$48,000 was pro rata'd.

Senator BOYCE—What is the \$619,000? Is that ongoing funding?

Ms Moyle—That was until 30 April and that was for the alliances to that date, including the four before the tender process was completed.

Senator BOYCE—So they have stayed on roughly the same level of funding. Is that correct?

Ms Moyle—There is a slight increase in the annual amount of funding.

Senator BOYCE—The tender process closed in December. Is that right?

Ms Moyle—That is right.

Senator BOYCE—How many applications did you get? And what happened then?

Ms Moyle—We advertised the funding round on 7 November 2009 and the funding round shut on 18 December. We assessed the applications, advised the minister and the successful alliances were announced on 9 March, according to that media release.

Senator BOYCE—How many tenderers?

Ms Moyle—There were 23 applications. Five did not meet the eligibility criteria and the others were assessed and ranked.

Senator BOYCE—Have you made those tenderers public?

Ms Moyle—No.

Senator BOYCE—So then the process of deciding was done by whom?

Ms Moyle—The Office for Women established a very rigorous assessment process including officers from within the Office for Women, people from outside the Office for Women within FaHCSIA and some externals. We received a number of applications particularly for Indigenous alliances. We felt we needed particular expertise in that regard to help us identify the best from that process. We brought in particular expertise on Indigenous issues from within FaHCSIA as well for a separate round for those three applications. There were two teams established to do the assessments with a decision maker within the Office for Women and then the delegate beyond that. So it was a very rigorous process. It involved risk assessment, financial viability—

Senator BOYCE—Did the two teams both look at all the tenders? What do you mean by two teams? Why was that a good thing?

Ms Moyle—I think they split the applications between them and then there were two people within my office who had the overall quality assurance processes on top.

Senator BOYCE—What is the National Women's Alliances? They met in March. They were announced and congregated, I suppose, in March.

Ms Moyle—That is right. They met with the minister and discussed the next steps post the announcement on the day of the announcement. The first forum of those alliances is set for the last week of June. It is intended to bring the new alliances all together for the first time to

discuss their thinking, their vision, their way forward and the beginnings of them settling their work plans for the next year—thinking about what success looks like and how we are going to measure it going forward, and establishing what support they might need in the longer term from the Office for Women to develop capacity.

Senator BOYCE—What is their role in relation to the minister going to be?

Ms Moyle—The minister has said that she would like to maintain contact with each of the alliances through the Office for Women and at times directly. She said that she would like to be the first amongst equals. So she would like the alliances to be able to engage across government and have direct relationships with other departments in areas of relevance to their work. The Office for Women will work to support those alliances to find the right people in terms of the new projects that they are dealing with and make those connections for them. So the minister is clearly very interested in the alliances and, through the Office for Women particularly, we will keep a very close relationship with them.

Senator BOYCE—Would their role be to keep her in touch and to be advised? Would that be a reasonable summation?

Ms Moyle—Certainly, the alliances will be in a position to be in touch and advise the minister of issues that they would like her to be aware of. They will be inviting her to speak at events, I know, and have already started doing so.

Ms McKenzie—To go back to a question that you raised previously about the role of the IDC, one of the discussions that we had at the last meeting of the IDC was how departments could make better use of the alliances. So it is not seen to be just a relationship between the Office for Women and the alliances or the Minister for the Status of Women and the alliances; it is very much meant to be about how departments can get value from the alliances, because now they have some clear indication of some of the groups that they can go to—and there is considerable depth in those groups, with over 100, I think it is, women's groups spread across those six alliances. So it gives departments, if they are interested or need to engage with women around a particular policy issue or a program issue or want some advice, a point of contact to be able to do that. That was made clear to the alliances that that was going to be part of what we really wanted them to be able to do going into the future.

Senator CAROL BROWN—From the work plans that each of the alliances will develop, is it envisaged that the government will then at some point ask an alliance to carry out some work for them?

Ms Moyle—It could, certainly. It clearly depends on the issue and the ability and willingness of the alliance to do so. But certainly, the Office for Women and other government departments we would envisage would be able to contract directly with the alliances to do particular pieces of work—consultation processes.

Senator CAROL BROWN—We have seen before, particularly with the paid parental leave work through the Productivity Commission, that they went out and did their own awareness raising and report back.

Ms Moyle—That is right.

Senator CAROL BROWN—One question that I wanted to ask about tenders as well is: was a decision made about what areas you wanted to cover and then you decided on who the winner was, or was it the other way around?

Ms Moyle—There was a long process before we put out the expression of interest for alliance funding. The alliances that existed before them came very strongly with the suggestion that we needed to have Indigenous representation. The minister was very keen for that to happen and also to see rural and remote women strongly represented. But the advertisement itself referred to particular groups and relevant issues. It referenced the minister's three priorities of reducing violence against women, improving women's economic security and ensuring women's equal place in society. But it was not a directive about that; it was an open process.

Senator CAROL BROWN—Thanks.

Senator BOYCE—My question is a follow-up question from Senator Brown's around the work plans for the alliances. Who will decide what their work plan is?

Ms Moyle—The alliances will decide what their work plan is. We will provide advice to them in developing their work plan around things that we know are happening and the policy agenda across government, for example. The work plan is something that is agreed as part of our contract but it is their work plan.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. Will they be free to publicise their work and what their work is around, or will they need to work through the minister to decide what—

Ms Moyle—No, they are free to publish their work.

Senator BOYCE—Some of the organisations that form the alliances—the alliances that form the alliances—are actually new organisations, are they not?

Ms Moyle—That is right.

Senator BOYCE—How many of the six are new?

Ms Moyle—Three of the six are new alliances. Only one of the alliances is a real start-up. The Australian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Alliance is building from NIRWA, the Network of Immigrant and Refugee Women Australia, and FECCA, so it has a strong foundation of national organisations to support it. WEAVE, Women Everywhere Advocating Violence Elimination, works from a foundation of organisations that have an ongoing existence. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance is being auspiced by the YWCA, but it is coming together for the first time as a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's organisation.

Senator CAROL BROWN—How many groups have come together under those alliances?

Ms Moyle—At this stage around 100 national women's organisations.

Senator CAROL BROWN—In all states and territories?

Ms Moyle—Yes, in all states and territories.

Senator BOYCE—I was going to ask for a breakdown of those by alliance, if we could get it. I wanted to just work through them, if we could. The Economic Security for Women Alliance grew from an existing organisation. Security4Women was an existing organisation.

Ms Moyle—That grew from Security4Women. That is right.

Senator BOYCE—How many member organisations are in the Economic Security for Women Alliance?

Ms Moyle—I do not have that breakdown of numbers of organisations in front of me.

Senator BOYCE—Perhaps you can provide it on notice.

Ms Moyle—Certainly.

Senator BOYCE—I note that a lot of the minister's information talks about organisations and individuals, so if we could have a list of the member organisations and then a number of individuals, if those individuals—

Ms Moyle—Yes.

Senator BOYCE—What is the existing governance structure for the Economic Security for Women Alliance?

Ms Moyle—I would have to take the governance arrangements on notice. There is a range of governance arrangements for the different alliances. Some of them are incorporated. Some of them are loose organisations. I am loath to lead you astray, so I would like to take that on notice.

Senator BOYCE—I might just work through the list, then. Equality Rights Alliance is new and has not actually been established; is that correct?

Ms Moyle—That grew from WomenSpeak, but it is a new alliance in the sense that it has a new focus. But it did grow from WomenSpeak.

Senator BOYCE—It says here that this new alliance is not yet established and that until it has a website or an appropriate email address the Office for Women is the place to write. When are you expecting the Equality Rights Alliance to be established?

Ms Moyle—It is now contracted, and I believe they have developed a website. But I will certainly confirm that for you.

Senator BOYCE—WEAVE is a new alliance, but it comes out of old alliances; is that right?

Ms Moyle—It comes from other organisations that have a long history, yes.

Senator BOYCE—Again, for each of these, can I have the member organisations and their governance structure. The National Rural Women's Coalition and Network has certainly been going for a long time, so I can probably skip that one. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance is a new alliance. Again, can you provide that information. The Australian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Alliance is new. My interest here in the newness of some of these organisations and their governance structure is that I could imagine that the opportunity to be involved in advising government departments and the Minister for Women et cetera could be a very hotly contested issue. I think it is really important that we at

least understand how these organisations go about selecting their board or their committee, or whatever, and how open and transparent that process is. Were there any minimal governance requirements of the organisations that you chose?

Ms Moyle—Yes, both from the point of view of their governance and from the point of view of their financial viability. The contracts with each of the alliances require them to be broadly based and open, and we are not in a position to direct particular alliances as to who they should engage with or who their members should be. One of the performance indicators for each of the alliances is that they should have strong governance and be broadly based and open, so that is part of the requirement within the contract. But of course they are not intended to be representative organisations as such. They are NGOs.

Senator BOYCE—But what I am concerned about is that they use democratic processes to elect the people who run the alliance.

Ms Moyle—Yes. As I say, the contracts do require them to be broadly based, have strong governance arrangements and be open.

Senator BOYCE—I went to the website of one of the organisations here and, despite going into ‘members’, it was not quite clear how I might go about becoming a member, which of course is obviously the first step in getting involved if you were to do that. So I would very much like to see that information on notice, and then I can take that from there.

Ms Moyle—Certainly, Senator.

Ms McKenzie—As Ms Moyle pointed out, we have got a meeting with the alliances in late June. These are, as you pointed out, some organisations that have only recently come into being. They were assessed as suitable through the application process, but certainly we would intend when we met with them in late June to talk about some of these issues and to assist them to get some of the infrastructure together that will enable them to be more effective.

Senator BOYCE—Sorry, Chair, but I have just one last question that I forgot about.

CHAIR—Certainly.

Senator BOYCE—Are the National Council of Women, YWCA and the National Rural Women’s Coalition and Network members of these alliances?

Ms Moyle—With regard to the National Council of Women, I could not say for sure. I will certainly check for you. YWCA certainly is, yes.

Senator BOYCE—There was a third organisation that had peak women’s status, and I cannot think which it was.

Ms Moyle—I am not sure, Senator.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. I will try to remember and ask on notice if I do.

Ms Moyle—Okay, thank you. And I will certainly check about the National Council of Women. I am fairly certain that they are represented, but I will make sure.

CHAIR—Are there any other questions on alliances? If not, we will go to another topic.

Senator ADAMS—I want to talk about leadership and the Appoint Women program or database that you have. How long has it been going?

Ms Moyle—The Appoint Women database has been going since 1998 in its current form, I understand, but since last year it came into the Office for Women and it is maintained as a database within the Office for Women.

Senator ADAMS—Do you have a separate budget for that?

Ms Moyle—No, we do not have a separate budget for it. We spent a small amount of money developing the database in-house and with a contractor, and now it is maintained by Office for Women staff.

Senator ADAMS—Do you do an evaluation of the number of women you have on that and then the number of appointments that are made in terms of whether they are successful or not? Do you follow that through?

Ms Moyle—No, we have not done such an assessment. Given that it only came into the Office for Women to manage last year, we have not yet done that assessment.

Senator ADAMS—So have you got plans to do that?

Ms Moyle—Depending on where it heads in the future we may well have, but it is not part of our plan right now.

Senator ADAMS—With appointments, the main thrust and objective of the Office for Women is to get more women into corporate areas and onto boards and to be in more senior roles than they are at the moment. Can you explain how you are doing that?

Ms Moyle—Dividing it between public sector and private sector work, in the public sector we have support for supply through the Appoint Women database—we respond to requests across government for that—and we also develop specific lists for board memberships on request from other departments. Also in terms of reporting, we produce on our govboards database the number of women and men who are represented on government boards and appointment decision-making bodies. The rate in the Commonwealth public sector currently runs at 33.4 per cent for women members of boards.

We work across government as well to raise the profile of the issue through our IDC, for example, and through engaging with other departments. Internally to government, that is the process that we are going through. We also engage with our women's ministerial council and the women advisers meeting that sits underneath that to talk with other jurisdictions—states and territories—around the work that they do to share information and to develop common procedures and common thinking around some of these things.

In terms of the private sector, we have been engaging with many of the players who are currently moving forward on this issue—for example the ASX, the Human Rights Commission, the AICD, the Australian Institute of Management—to talk about what they are doing, to keep abreast of what they are doing, to express our interest in participating with them and to talk about further work as well.

Senator ADAMS—So each year do you do an assessment as to how many more women have been appointed to get your percentage? How are you doing that?

Ms Moyle—In terms of public sector appointments, as I say, we maintain a Govboards database, which is a particular database that all departments are asked to contribute to, and

then we run a report on that every year. As I say, the most recent is from 2008-09 and the annual outcome was 33.4 per cent of appointments. I know that Ms Steele runs a biannual survey on private sector ASX200 companies as well. That is where we get our private sector data from.

Senator ADAMS—Is that going up?

Ms Steele—At the last survey that was conducted we had a low figure of 8.3 per cent women on boards. We are currently undertaking the research—as we speak, in fact—so I am not quite sure what the position will be, but we should know quite soon. I do understand that the ASX will be producing some data towards the end of June or beginning of July, once they launch their new guidelines on reporting.

Senator ADAMS—So quite soon? You think you will have a result around August?

Ms Steele—The ASX will certainly have their data out. Our data will be out a bit later in the year, because we drill down a bit more into senior executive positions and key management personnel. We have the historic trend data there, too, which is really important.

Senator ADAMS—Looking at government boards or a role in executive within the Public Service, does the Office for Women provide any support to them to get their CVs and everything up to speed so that they are actually answering the right questions in the right areas? Is there any sort of practical support to help them?

Ms Moyle—No. That is not something that we currently do.

Senator ADAMS—I will now go to rural women. What programs do you have associated with the Office for Women that look at increasing the number of rural women on boards—giving them opportunities to have a place on a board?

Ms Moyle—Our main engagement with rural women is through our National Rural Women's Coalition and Network. We support them in some of the work they do. We also funded \$190,000 to a couple of organisations in relation to local government leadership for women. Of course, local government is often a way through for women in rural areas to participate in leadership positions. We funded, along with the department of infrastructure, \$490,000 to support women's local government leadership. We funded a separate award for local government women's leadership to the department of infrastructure in the sum of \$15,000 as well. Engagement through local government is one of the ways that we are engaging to support women in rural areas to participate in leadership. That is the program funding, but we also engage through DAFF, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and the department of infrastructure and directly with NGOs in terms of supporting, talking to and presenting at forums and functions.

Senator ADAMS—I think this year—2010—is the local government push for women anyway, for local government positions.

Senator Stephens—Can I just comment on that question, if I may. For someone in a rural community like I am, I see this issue as very important. I know that Minister Burke made a very strategic decision in his portfolio where he said that in determining the membership of advisory bodies right across the portfolio the prescription that had been in the criteria for selection of previous service on a similar committee or board would be removed. Eliminating

that condition opened the pathway for many more women to participate. I think the figures in the DAFF portfolio really speak for themselves about what a change that has made in policy terms.

Senator ADAMS—I took note of his speech at the dinner, because it is just so hard coming from a rural area. City women have a much greater advantage in being able to access services to help them get up the ladder. That was the reason I asked that question because, when it gets to rural women, it really is very difficult to understand, if you have an application, just exactly where these are people coming from and what they want. It is just that guidance. That seems to be missing and that is where I wonder if perhaps local government might be able to pick that up, because it is just so much harder. With Minister Burke taking that out it has opened a lot more doors, because if you have not had a position on a board, and that is part of the criteria, your application is just wiped at the start. There are some very good women out there, but it is just a matter of how we get those women or give them the opportunity to apply. I know that you can do lots of things online and everything else. It might be a program that perhaps could come through that way.

Senator BOYCE—There is a joke in the Institute of Company Directors that the best way to get on a leading public company board is to be a director on a leading public company board. It does not make it easy for women.

Senator ADAMS—Certainly not; that is right.

CHAIR—Anything else in that area?

Senator BOYCE—Sorry, if I could just go back to a couple of questions I forgot to ask around the rights alliance. Which group are they?

Ms Moyle—ERA—Equality Rights Alliance.

Senator BOYCE—Yes. The Equality Rights Alliance. In their suggestions that the party should have for the 2010 election platform, under ‘Reducing violence against women’ they have suggested that there should be a nationally standardised police response and legal approach towards violence against women. Is the office aware of that and, if so, what has happened about that?

Ms Moyle—Certainly we are aware of the election platform from the alliance.

Ms McKenzie—Considerations about how the Commonwealth and the states need to approach issues of violence are really being discussed in the context of the discussions on the national plan.

Senator BOYCE—So that is one of the issues being discussed?

Ms McKenzie—Those issues are being discussed in the context of the national plan.

Senator BOYCE—Right. Sorry, that was just one that I had missed there.

Senator CAROL BROWN—At the last estimates, I think it was Senator McEwen who asked about the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women’s meeting that you were gearing up for at that time. Would you like to give us a report on the activities there and who was part of the delegation?

Ms Moyle—Thank you for the question. Yes, we sent a delegation to the Commission on the Status of Women this year—the commission’s 54th meeting—which also coincided with the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. It is called Beijing +15. We sent a delegation that was led by me. It included Ms Steele from EOWA. We also had senior representation from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, AusAID and the Sex Discrimination Commissioner and one of her staff.

We also fully funded three NGO delegates, two Indigenous delegates—Mary O’Reeri and Leanne Miller—and Carole Shaw, our community sector expert delegate. Each of those participated as members of the government delegation throughout and had a really strong engagement in the process. They were also responsible for liaising with the very big NGO delegation that attended CSW this year. We generally organise a dinner on the night before CSW begins. This year there were so many delegates that not everybody could fit into the restaurant that we had hired. It is a chance to touch base with people. Well over 50 Australian NGOs attended CSW, so we had a fair degree of work to do to make sure that we stayed in touch with the NGOs that attended.

We supported the Pacific nations to participate as well. Maybe in the last estimates I spoke to you about the support we were providing in terms of developing a regional platform for funding for a regional statement around progress towards the Beijing Platform for Action. We funded two delegates to attend. We provided support by way of a side event for Pacific leadership issues to be discussed at a networking capacity development event and we supported the Pacific delegates through caucusing regularly during the course of CSW.

This year there were no agreed conclusions that emerged from the commission. Normally there are a set of agreed conclusions on a theme but this year, being a review year, there was a general political declaration supporting the ongoing commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action which was very short. There were seven resolutions that went along with that. The main ones from that were a resolution on maternal mortality which was introduced by the US and had some quite strong language around sexual and reproductive health and rights. Australia participated in the negotiation of that quite strongly. There was a resolution on economic security for women which was debated at quite some length. Ms Steele participated in that. It ended up with some good language. It had a reference to Pacific nations and a reference to Indigenous women. We were pleased with that language as well as the language that was introduced around the role of men sharing unpaid care work. We thought they were strong resolutions that emerged. There were a number of other resolutions. One was on gender equality architecture reform which is happening in the UN at present.

I think the Australian delegation was well regarded in the way that it engaged our own NGOs and its willingness to engage with other NGOs and to take a leadership role in negotiations. We are seen as a bit of an honest broker in some of the negotiations as well.

Senator CAROL BROWN—Can we get a copy of those seven resolutions? Or are they on your website?

Ms Moyle—They are certainly on the UN website, but sometimes it is quite difficult to navigate that website. I am more than happy to provide copies of those resolutions.

Senator CAROL BROWN—I have enough trouble with the department's website. What future actions do we have arising out of the meeting?

Ms Moyle—The commitments, particularly around the economic security and the maternal mortality resolutions, are going to be of interest for a range of government agencies and NGOs in their implementation. Our minister has written to her colleagues pointing out the relevant parts of those resolutions. We have engaged across government to feed back the commitments that were made through those resolutions and see how we can work together to action them. We have shared them across government with NGOs so that they can use them as well in their advocacy role. That is where we are up to. We are still engaging strongly in the development since then on the gender equality entity that the UN is working to develop now.

Senator CAROL BROWN—Do you monitor progress in terms of the commitments that have been made? Does your office monitor the progress?

Ms Moyle—There is not a formal monitoring process but we certainly keep our eye on the main provisions that emerge from there and the commitments to see that we are taking appropriate action.

Senator CAROL BROWN—I was going to ask about International Women's Day. I was not too sure: was the theme for this year Empowering Women to End Poverty by 2015? Can you give me an overview of what activities are taking place?

Ms Moyle—For International Women's Day next year?

Senator CAROL BROWN—There was an announcement in March that the theme for this year's International Women's Day is Empowering Women to End Poverty by 2015. I want to know what programs or projects are being put in place for International Women's Day.

Ms Moyle—For International Women's Day 2010 there are no particular programs that have emerged from that, although, of course, that theme is directly relevant to the work of the safety task force and the work it is doing now. So there were not any particular programs that emerged from that, but I would note that next year, 2011, is the centenary of International Women's Day so we are gearing up now for thinking about how best to celebrate International Women's Day next year.

Senator CAROL BROWN—Are you at a stage where you can talk a little bit about the work that you are doing for next year?

Ms Moyle—It is still early days. We are now in the process of working up ideas for how to celebrate International Women's Day, but it is a bit early for us to say with certainty where that is going to go.

CHAIR—We will now move on to EOWA. Senator Boyce, I know that you have some questions.

Senator BOYCE—Thank you. Ms Steele, you are the acting director of EOWA?

Ms Steele—Yes.

Senator BOYCE—How long have you been the acting director of EOWA?

Ms Steele—Some 10 months now.

Senator BOYCE—There has been a review conducted of the EOWA Act and KPMG have published or you have published—

Ms Steele—No, Office for Women.

Senator BOYCE—Office for Women published KPMG's consultation report from that review. As I understand it from last estimates, this had now gone to the minister to decide what to do about EOWA and the EOWA Act. What progress can we report here, please?

Ms Moyle—Office for Women is conducting the review of the act and the agency. As we said in the last Senate estimates, we were preparing advice for the minister about ways forward from that consultation process and the review itself. We have done that. We are working through an iterative process now with the minister to develop recommendations and, of course, engaging across government as well on where the review should go. That is, as I say, an iterative process and we are working hard on it.

Senator BOYCE—It seems to me somewhat unsatisfactory that EOWA appears to have been in limbo now for perhaps even longer than 18 months, waiting to see what it should do differently from the past. Have we got any sense at all about when this is likely to happen or why?

Ms Moyle—I hesitate to say it but, again, soon.

Senator BOYCE—Shortly is the answer, Ms Moyle.

Ms Moyle—We are working hard. Of course, it does take some time to bring these things to fruition, but we are working hard on them, so as soon as possible.

Dr Harmer—Ms Steele has been doing a very good job as the acting head. So it has hardly been marking time; it has been making good process.

Senator BOYCE—I hope this brings me back to EOWA. There are no budget measures for EOWA which one presumes is another outcome of the fact that this review has not been finished. You have the same budget as you had for last year; is that right?

Ms Steele—Just about, yes.

Senator BOYCE—You have \$3.468 million for next year and you had \$3.358 million this year. Again, is that the case? There are no EOWA budget measures for the 2010-11 budget because you are just marking time, waiting to find out what the outcome of the review is.

Ms Steele—We are obviously keen to see the outcome of the review, as is everybody else, but for the time being it is business as usual for the agency. We are progressing with our obligations under the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act. The agency is engaging in its normal business.

Senator BOYCE—What is your current staffing?

Ms Steele—At this particular time, we have 27.4 FTE. Averaged over the year we have 20 FTE, but at the moment we have—

Senator BOYCE—So you have quite a few extra staff at the moment?

Ms Steele—We supplement staff during the period from May to September, which is the reporting period.

Senator BOYCE—Sorry, I am going all over the place here. In your reporting, from my count, there are 11 or 12 organisations that are currently noncompliant. Is that right?

Ms Steele—There is a bit of an update on that.

Senator BOYCE—My figures were as at the end of April.

Ms Steele—At the moment, we have nine noncompliant organisations. We have recently had—

Senator BOYCE—So two have come off the list?

Ms Steele—Two have come off the list. We have another organisation which was noncompliant in the past which has submitted a report. It has submitted a report and we are in the process of assessing that for compliance.

Senator BOYCE—We have talked about this before. One would hope that when your annual report comes out and is tabled and so forth this would be some sort of an incentive for noncompliant organisations whose details are published to become compliant. Nothing else happens during the year, except for your website being updated, does it?

Ms Steele—That is correct.

Senator BOYCE—I want to talk about some of these organisations, so I do not want to mention anyone who is not currently on the list. Could you tell me what the current list is please?

Ms Steele—I will have to refer back to the annual report.

Senator BOYCE—I have a list which names the noncompliant organisations as at 29 April 2010. This has come off your website.

Ms Steele—I am sorry, I do not have the website list with me at the moment. I have the noncompliant list as at October-November last year, but I have got the names of the two—

Senator BOYCE—You can read it out and omit some.

Ms Steele—Perhaps it is easier if I tell you who has come off the list.

Senator BOYCE—That might be better.

Ms Steele—Janagrom Nominees Pty Ltd, trading as Morgan's Supa IGA of Melton, Victoria, was compliant with the act up until 2004 and from 2005 has been noncompliant. The owner decided to submit a report due to bad press resulting from their inclusion on the noncompliant organisation list. The report has subsequently been assessed as compliant, which is very good news.

Fashion Fair Pty Ltd, trading as Fashion Fair of Lidcombe in New South Wales, has been noncompliant with the act each year since it was registered as the agency in 1995. This is also due to failure to submit reports. In 2010 a new female sales manager was appointed who felt it was pretty important to get the organisation compliant. The CEO supported that move and the report has now been assessed as compliant.

Senator BOYCE—So then the non-compliant organisations are: AJ Mills & Sons Pty Ltd; Berri Hotel Inc.; Charles Hull Contracting Pty Ltd; JJ Richards & Sons Pty Ltd, incorporating JJ Richards Pty Ltd, JJ Richards Engineering Pty Ltd, Regwaste Australia and EnviroCom

Australia; Nowshire Pty Ltd; Rivers (Australia) Pty Ltd; Ross Cosmetics Aust. Pty Ltd; Roverworth Pty Ltd; Thomas Jewellers (Aust) Pty Ltd; and Tyrrell's Vineyards Pty Ltd. Is that correct?

Ms Steele—That is correct. However, I should say that JJ Richards has in the last week submitted a report which we are currently assessing for its compliance status. Again, that was due to pressure from other people in the community.

Senator BOYCE—That is interesting because they are a group that I have been looking at in the last little while in terms of mentioning them here. I will proceed to use them as my example, although I am delighted that they have now submitted a report. Companies that are listed as non-compliant are not supposed to be awarded federal government contracts—is that correct?

Ms Steele—That is correct.

Senator BOYCE—Do you monitor whether that happens?

Ms Steele—No, we do not monitor that. That is part of government procurement policy. It is actually not part of the EOWA legislation. It is the responsibility, I believe, of individual departments to monitor their own procurement policies.

Senator BOYCE—Would you know whether a non-compliant organisation was awarded a contract?

Ms Steele—We would not in the normal state of affairs unless we picked it up through some other means, by accident really. Sometimes, however, we do get businesses who have not been reporting under the act which we have not identified as being covered by the act, but which have sought business with the government and need to get compliant.

Senator BOYCE—And they read the criteria and thought, 'Oops, we need to do that.'

Ms Steele—That is right.

Senator BOYCE—Whatever works, Ms Steele.

Ms Steele—That is right, yes. It does not happen very often, but we get a couple every so often.

Senator BOYCE—Certainly, it would seem to me that somehow the government should be monitoring whether non-compliant organisations are getting federal contracts or funds. JJ Richards—and this is why I am using JJ Richards as my example—point out on their website that they are currently contracted by 60 councils in eastern Australia to collect rubbish. Do you communicate the non-compliant list to state or local government?

Ms Steele—I understand that the arrangements between states and the federal government re contract compliance are a bit of a mixed bag. So in some states they follow the Commonwealth procurement guidelines and the EOWA act would be covered in that, but not all states do.

Senator BOYCE—But you do not actively seek to advise and, hopefully, persuade state or local government not to use non-compliant organisations?

Ms Steele—To date, I do not think that has happened. We do write to all federal members of parliament and senators with the list, but at this stage that is as far as we have gone.

Senator BOYCE—Have you any feedback or indication as to what happens then in terms of what promotion of the noncompliant list is done by MPs and senators?

Ms Steele—No. Sometimes they write back and say, ‘Thank you for sending the list,’ but that is about all we know. We have tried to get some more coverage in the media, which I think has had obviously some success here, and we have certainly anecdotally heard of women in certain local authorities bringing the issue to the attention of the local authority.

Senator BOYCE—Going back to the current noncompliant list, are you able to give us the reasons these organisations are not compliant or choose not to be compliant? Do you have that? Is that information something you have?

Ms Steele—They may be the most compliant organisations in Australia, but because they have not submitted a report to the agency as required by the act we cannot make any judgment on whether they are good employers for women or bad employers for women.

Senator BOYCE—I am not suggesting that they discriminate but they are noncompliant by virtue of not—

Ms Steele—Of not submitting a report.

Senator BOYCE—Yes, of not submitting a report. You do not know why these organisations have not submitted reports?

Ms Steele—Historically it is about burdens on business. It is about, ‘Why should we have to do this?’

Senator BOYCE—‘No-one’s going to tell me how to do it.’

Ms Steele—Yes.

Senator BOYCE—In terms of some of these organisations, for example Tyrrell’s Vineyards, you would imagine some government money from one of the three levels must find its way into Tyrrell’s Vineyards’ coffers over time. If the three levels of government were not supporting organisations like that, you imagine that it would cause them to consider reporting.

Ms Steele—Senator, understand that Tyrrell’s Vineyards were up until last year compliant. Last year we spent some considerable time trying to assist them with their report, but the report was ultimately not forthcoming so we had to name them.

Senator BOYCE—And we will not speculate as to why that was. That is all my questions in that area, Chair. I want to ask some questions around Equal Pay Day. Can you just update us on this program? I think you have been quite successful in publicising the fact that it will be 4 September this year before Equal Pay Day—when women’s wages would be the same as a man’s on 1 July; is that correct—will happen.

Ms Steele—Yes.

Senator BOYCE—Could you explain what else you are doing around this, other than publicising this fact?

Ms Steele—Senator, our main stakeholders are obviously private sector businesses and at the moment we are trying to think of some event whereby we can engage private sector businesses on Equal Pay Day. In addition, we have recently amended our Employer of Choice for Women criteria in a number of areas, one being the requirements to provide us with data about what they are doing about pay equity.

Senator BOYCE—So that goes into the next level of reports or it is—

Ms Steele—No. An Employer of Choice for Women is a voluntary citation. So businesses basically put an application form in, they are assessed and if they meet the higher criteria for that citation they are then awarded it. There are about 100 or so businesses currently labelled Employer of Choice for Women.

Senator BOYCE—As I understand it, the gender pay gap in Australia is now at its highest level since August 1994; is that correct?

Ms Steele—That is what I understand from the ABS data, yes.

Senator BOYCE—Do you have any sense of why that is? Why has it worsened? Given your work and the work of a lot of other organisations, why has it worsened?

Ms Steele—It is a very good question and we could spend a considerable amount of time on this but, from the agency's point of view, certainly through talking to our report contacts, we feel that there is a lack of understanding about the problem in the private sector. That is all I can speak for. We do not think that businesses are looking at the issue with as much rigour as they should be and with a critical eye. The tendency seems to be that people see the remuneration system as being fair if they are being set by an award or a certified agreement and do not like to drill down into the variations and work value issues that arise there. There are obviously some economic indicators for that, but I am not particularly—

Senator BOYCE—I guess the economic imperatives for a private company compared to the national economic imperatives—the effect of a gender gap for an individual private employer is obviously quite different—

Ms Steele—Quite often they do not have a gender pay gap until they have a good look at it and a critical eye looking at it, so yes.

Senator BOYCE—The gender pay gap in the public sector is, according to the ABS, at 12.1 per cent currently, which is by no means any better than it has been. I appreciate that you are just looking at the private sector but, given that you sit within the federal public sector, what has been said about that figure?

Ms Steele—I am not sure I can comment on that. I perhaps could take that on notice.

Senator BOYCE—If you could, please. If you are able to give me the public sector and the private sector gaps for the last five years or something and comment on them, if you can, that would be good. I think the figure in the public sector is 12.1 per cent and in the private sector 21.7 per cent. Can we have any sense of what needs to happen to fix this and when it might be fixed by?

Ms Steele—It is a very difficult problem to fix as such and I think we can see that from other countries where there may have been more activity in the courts and so on than there

has been in this country. Obviously, the Fair Work Act and the new equal remuneration provisions have yet to be tested and they are going through the Fair Work Australia process at the moment. So hopefully at the end of that we will have some principles to guide future cases and guide some future activity in this area. We continue to work directly with private sector businesses to try to encourage them to take some action and also to suggest to them that there is a new legal requirement on gender pay equity and that they perhaps should be more mindful of this issue to avoid litigation in the future.

Senator BOYCE—But you do not have any funding?

Ms Steele—I have no quick fixes, I am afraid.

Senator BOYCE—Nor do you have any program or specific funding to increase work in the gender pay gap area; is that correct?

Ms Steele—No. We are doing it within our appropriation. We have, in addition to promoting Equal Pay Day and making that a community issue where many others get involved—it is not us who are leading the efforts on the day—we have commissioned some research on a pay equity tool to assist managers, particularly human resource managers.

Senator BOYCE—That is to discover if you have a gender gap in your—

Ms Steele—It is a bit more than that. It is to understand what we talk about when we talk about gender pay gap. It is to try to encourage managers to ask the right sorts of questions even before they conduct an audit. On paper it is an easy enough task to audit your payroll but in practice it is very complex and takes quite some time.

Senator BOYCE—I am not sure whether it is a publication that you were involved in but there was a report from the University of Canberra on the impact of sustained gender wage gap on the Australian economy which suggests that a one per cent decrease, from 17 to 16 per cent, in the gender wage gap would increase per capita GDP by \$260, or half a per cent of GDP. The gender pay gap comes down one per cent and GDP goes up half a per cent. Do you agree with those figures or are you aware of those figures?

Ms Steele—I am aware of those figures and I will ask my colleague Ms Moyle to speak to them.

Senator BOYCE—I knew I would end up overlapping.

Ms Moyle—That piece of research was funded by the Office for Women and, yes, the then 17 per cent pay gap between women and men was found on modelling to cost the Australian economy \$93 billion per year, or 8.5 per cent of GDP. If the wage gap were reduced by just one per cent the Australian economy would grow by 0.5 per cent of GDP.

Senator BOYCE—One assumes it would be worth spending some money on how we might go about fixing it.

Ms Moyle—Certainly. The modelling was based on a very careful methodology and the finding was that the absence of a pay gap or a reducing pay gap would induce more women to participate in the paid workforce which would deliver a GDP benefit. Certainly the participation by women and men, in the context of an ageing workforce, is no doubt a benefit.

Senator BOYCE—We were talking a little bit before with Senator Adams about board quotas and the like. What can be done in terms of the gender pay gap and mandated behaviours?

Ms Moyle—Mandated behaviours?

Senator BOYCE—Yes.

Ms Moyle—In the context of the EOWA review and the review of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act and agency, we are thinking of a range of responses. They are all part of the process of thinking about how to proceed. In terms of mandated targets or quotas for private sector decision making and representation, the minister has said clearly that she is not convinced that targets or quotas should be legislated, but of course she is watching with interest the work of the ASX that is requiring private sector organisations to report on the—

Senator BOYCE—That is the top 200 companies they are asking, is it not?

Ms Moyle—It is all ASX listed companies, I understand. It is private companies, so clearly that excludes partnerships and non-incorporated bodies. But my understanding is that all ASX listed companies are required to set—

Senator BOYCE—Public companies, you mean?

Ms Moyle—ASX listed public companies. The government is clearly watching with interest to see what effect that might have. But we certainly know from pay equity statistics that the pay equity gap is the widest at the higher levels of pay. At minimum wage levels the pay gap is much lower or in fact negative in some cases.

CHAIR—Does anyone have any other questions for EOWA? Thank you very much, officers from outcome 6. The committee will now take a break until four o'clock. I believe we are having a change of minister, Senator Stephens. I believe Senator Evans will be coming back at four. We will not tell him we have had a long break. We will return with officers from outcome 5, Disability and Carers.

Proceedings suspended from 3.35 pm to 4.03 pm

CHAIR—We now welcome officers from outcome 5, disability and carers. I know we have questions from Senator Fifield and Senator Siewert. I believe other senators may come in as well, but Senator Fifield will lead off. Dr Harmer, is there anything you want to tell me now?

Dr Harmer—No.

Senator FIFIELD—Dr Harmer, you would be aware of the regular letter that the minister for families and community services signs to the President of the Senate pursuant to Senate order 95 in relation to grants from departments and agencies?

Dr Harmer—I am not.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. It is good if we can all learn something, but I am sure your officers would be aware.

Dr Harmer—I am sure someone in this building would know.

Senator FIFIELD—If someone is aware, I would like to go through each of the grants in that letter of 17 May to the President.

Dr Harmer—I am getting some blank looks here, so I do not think there is anyone at the table who is aware of the document. Is there something you could give us?

Senator FIFIELD—It is from your minister dated 17 May to the President pursuant to Senate order 95.

Dr Harmer—So it is an answer to a question on notice in the Senate, is it?

Senator FIFIELD—No.

Dr Harmer—It is a regular—

Senator FIFIELD—It is an order of the Senate. It is an order which requires all portfolios to provide details relating to departmental and agency grants for the period 19 January 2010 to 3 May 2010.

Ms S Wilson—So it is a compendium of all the grants that have been made?

Senator FIFIELD—Correct, and a subset of which are in the disability portfolio.

Senator Chris Evans—It is the grants list?

Senator FIFIELD—Yes, the grants in support of disabilities.

Dr Harmer—We are just getting a copy of it, Senator.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure.

Senator Chris Evans—‘By order of the Senate we have each been assessed of’—

Ms S Wilson—Yes, I understand.

Senator FIFIELD—That is right.

Senator Chris Evans—But you would have it in other forms, I am sure.

Senator FIFIELD—Indeed. It is always pleasing when Senate orders are observed by the executive, is probably how the executive would view it.

Dr Harmer—We have it, Senator.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you for that. I think, relevant to this outcome, it starts with the grant to Able Australia Services for \$11,000. I am just interested in a quick run-down of what the purpose of each of the grants is. It may be a similar thing for each of them, that it is to assist them—

Dr Harmer—For all of the grants or the ones in disability?

Senator FIFIELD—The ones in disability. The ones in outcome 5.

Ms S Wilson—So Able Australia Services for \$11,000; I suspect we might not have all of this detail.

Senator FIFIELD—It may be that there is a common descriptor for each of the grants to each of these organisations, that each is for a similar purpose.

Dr Harmer—Senator, can we hold that and try to get you the information? Your questions is: what is the grant for?

Senator FIFIELD—Yes.

Ms S Wilson—Perhaps if we could get a list of the ones that you have questions about, we might be able to get them answered in the course of the hearing.

Dr Harmer—You want all program 5 ones?

Senator FIFIELD—That is right, program 5.

Dr Harmer—There are about seven or eight there.

Senator FIFIELD—So if we can start with Able Australia and it goes down to Women with Disabilities Australia. There are 11 grants there. Each of them is under the program Services and Support for People with Disability.

Dr Hartland—Sorry, Senator. The reason we are spending a bit of time on this is that the grants would come from a number of different subprograms, so we do not have a consolidated list of all of 5.4 that we can quickly go to.

Dr Harmer—There are two choices, Senator. We can fumble our way through and try to find these—we have probably got the information here and can find it—or we can—

Senator FIFIELD—Carry on and pull it together in the meantime.

Dr Harmer—Yes.

Senator FIFIELD—I am happy for that, thank you. If I could turn to the portfolio budget statements and something I raised in cross-portfolio but was directed here. That is the table covering the movement of administered funds between years, on page 139. I will start with outcome 5, which is where we are. Program 5.1, targeted community care to provide additional capacity building for carers and training and support for workforce development. I am wondering what the explanation is for the movement of funds between years for that.

Ms Winkler—Is that the 1.95, Senator?

Senator FIFIELD—That is right.

Ms Winkler—There were phasing issues with the dollars in the targeted community care appropriation and some of those funds were phased into 2010-11 to accommodate the phasing issue to cover all of the funding arrangements going forward into that year.

Senator FIFIELD—What is targeted community care?

Ms Winkler—Targeted community care is the mentor: community based mental health services.

Senator FIFIELD—And phasing?

Ms Winkler—If you look across the out years for that program, there was slightly reduced amounts of funding in 2010-11, 2011-12 and they were the result of the original costings for the program which creates some issues going forward in terms of being able to fund into the next cycle. So some of the funding was moved from one financial year into the next.

Senator FIFIELD—That sounds pretty straightforward. Just below that program, 5.4, services and support for people with disability, this item seems to cover a number of matters. It starts, ‘Extended time frames for implementation of the autism package.’ We will take that one first.

Ms Winkler—In terms of the autism package, particularly in relation to the childcare centre component, there were some delays in the construction of those centres so some of that funding in terms of operational dollars was not going to be expended this financial year so it has been moved into the next financial year.

Senator FIFIELD—Some of the 12.65, how much of that represents the autism?

Ms Winkler—About 1.131.

Senator FIFIELD—About 1.13, thank you. That is now on track, is it?

Ms Winkler—Yes.

Senator FIFIELD—All the autism centres are open?

Ms Winkler—Three are open and three are expected to open in June.

Senator FIFIELD—It was six in total, was it not?

Ms Winkler—Yes.

Senator FIFIELD—The three which are open are Adelaide—

Ms Winkler—Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane.

Senator FIFIELD—And the three to go are?

Ms Winkler—Sydney, Melbourne, north-west Tasmania.

Senator FIFIELD—How can we forget north-west Tassie. It is by when in June?

Ms Carroll—By the end of June.

Senator FIFIELD—What was the original time frame for all six?

Ms Winkler—That they would be all operating in this financial year.

Senator FIFIELD—So that has been met. How many children will be benefiting from those by the end of 30 June?

Ms Winkler—By the end of the financial year?

Senator FIFIELD—Yes?

Ms Winkler—There are 20 places in each centre. Twenty places does not necessarily equate to 20 children because they attend for different sessions. There are 34 currently enrolled at Adelaide and they are getting close to capacity. We have 34 in Brisbane. We have 27 in Perth. We have four confirmed enrolments in north-west Tasmania. We have 39 enrolments in Sydney and we have 50 interested families as at mid-May in—

Senator FIFIELD—Was that 50 or 15?

Ms Winkler—50.

Senator FIFIELD—And do you anticipate Sydney, Melbourne and north-west Tasmania being at capacity by the time of opening?

Ms Winkler—Certainly Sydney and Melbourne will be close to capacity, based on these numbers.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. Do you have dates for the opening of Sydney, Melbourne and north-west Tasmania—or target dates for opening?

Ms Winkler—They are all June, Senator. I do not have the actual—

Senator FIFIELD—Due to be open by then, but you do not have actual target dates for opening?

Ms Winkler—Certainly in their funding agreements there would be because, obviously, there are payments to be made.

Senator FIFIELD—So they cannot open before 30 June; is that what you are saying?

Ms Winkler—It is all about finalising construction.

Senator FIFIELD—So construction is the—

Ms Winkler—Is the critical issue.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. Thank you for that. Also in the item it says ‘Extended time frames for the implementation of the National Disability Parking Scheme’.

Dr Hartland—That relates mainly to the cost of printing the new parking permits. We were hopeful of being able to do that this financial year, but it just looks like that has crept a little bit into the next financial year.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. What is the dollar value for those?

Dr Hartland—\$1.07 million.

Senator FIFIELD—So that is the printing of the physical parking permits, which will hang—

Dr Hartland—Hang in people’s cars or, alternatively, would be on their windshield.

Senator FIFIELD—Yes, hung or stuck. Just on that, were those produced by an Australian disability enterprise? Is there that opportunity?

Dr Hartland—No, they were not. They require quite specialist printing machines.

Senator FIFIELD—Was that an option that was examined?

Dr Hartland—I am pausing because, obviously, I do not know off the top of my head. I think we would have to check.

Dr Harmer—It would have been an obvious candidate for exactly that. So I suspect we discovered that they did not have the specialist printing facilities, but we will check.

Senator FIFIELD—I was going to say you would be surprised but, actually, you would not be surprised—

Dr Harmer—I hope I would not be.

Senator FIFIELD—as to the range of capabilities, which are sometimes tucked away in ADEs.

Dr Harmer—Indeed.

Dr Hartland—That is a fair point, Senator.

Senator FIFIELD—So if you could please inquire about that. Will the delay in having the permits printed delay the introduction of the new parking scheme?

Dr Hartland—No, I do not think so. I think we have always said September. So we are looking still for September, Senator.

Senator FIFIELD—So September this year always has been the target date for the new scheme?

Ms S Wilson—Yes, that is correct, Senator.

Senator FIFIELD—You are not aware of anything that would interfere with that?

Ms S Wilson—No, Senator. I understand that September is the target date to enable jurisdictions to have the time to make sure they have correct lists of all of their current permit holders. So that is the date that has been negotiated with state and territory jurisdictions and local government authorities and all of those who issue the parking permits.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. Is it the intention that the Commonwealth will in the future print the permits?

Dr Hartland—No, there is not. We have undertaken to do the initial batch of printing which, of course, is the total stock of people who would have been entitled to the permit. It would be difficult to ask the states and the territories to meet the cost of that. But once that is done, the states and territories will, as they do now, meet the costs of providing a permit to a new permit holder.

Senator FIFIELD—And they will all obviously use the template and design that has been agreed upon?

Dr Hartland—That is right, Senator, yes.

Senator FIFIELD—Do you know if the states are looking at or if it is part of the agreement that the states at least look at the possibility of having ADEs print? I guess if you do not know the answer to my first question you probably do not know the answer to that one, either.

Dr Hartland—I think that is a fair assumption, Senator, yes—although we could check that as well, yes.

Senator FIFIELD—If we could, because it could be an opportunity to help drive more business to ADEs.

Ms S Wilson—Certainly. We will follow that up.

Senator FIFIELD—As I say, I never cease to be surprised by what capacity ADEs have—often in specialist and niche activities that you would not expect.

Dr Hartland—We do have some information. It does not go directly to the printing, but the design of the permit was by an ADE.

Senator FIFIELD—Which ADE was that?

Ms S Wilson—We will take that on notice.

Senator FIFIELD—You get an E for effort or an A for effort.

Ms S Wilson—Thank you.

Senator FIFIELD—That would be interesting to know. Thank you. Were there any other aspects of the program which an ADE looked after? I had not thought of design. I had only thought of printing. Are there any other elements to the scheme?

Dr Hartland—We will have a look at it. So there is design, printing and distribution. We will check on that.

Senator FIFIELD—The next element of the movement of administered funds is ‘combined with lower than budgeted demand for several programs, including business services temporary viability support’. Am I assuming correctly that business services refers to ADEs?

Ms S Wilson—That is correct.

Senator FIFIELD—Could you take me through that, please?

Dr Hartland—Temporary viability support is a source of funds we had set aside to assist services facing financial difficulty. Last year we had not spent all of the money that we put aside for that.

Senator FIFIELD—I guess that is a good thing.

Dr Hartland—That is right. So there is about \$3.8 million there. That money became available to be rolled over. This is a fund that runs on an application basis, so we do not do it on a pro rata basis. Services approach us if they need assistance. The type of assistance that we can provide under that is reasonably flexible. For 2009-10, we had \$5.13 million notionally allocated against this pressure. Until 30 April, we had spent \$1.6 million.

Senator FIFIELD—Are you expecting a greater call on that fund in the coming year than the previous year?

Dr Hartland—No, we are not.

Ms S Wilson—It was established essentially during the period of the global financial crisis when there was a concern that ADEs might feel some reduction in demand for their services and face pressure as a consequence. In the event, there were not as many applications for assistance as perhaps it had been anticipated at the outset.

Senator FIFIELD—Had that funding existed previously?

Dr Hartland—It existed in the financial year before, 2008-09. It was introduced on 1 July 2008.

Senator FIFIELD—Is it anticipated that there will be some contingency of a similar amount going forward?

Dr Hartland—That is right, yes.

Senator FIFIELD—The next item here which refers to lower than budgeted demand is postal concessions for the blind. Could you take me through that? Is that what is referred to as blind post Australia?

Ms S Wilson—That is one of the services.

Dr Hartland—This is a program that ensures that people who are blind can get access to material appropriate to their needs for free through the post. It is demand based, so we pay Australia Post for the work that they do. As it turns out, the demand has not been as much this year as we, again, notionally set aside when we started planning for the year.

Senator FIFIELD—Is it usually sort of about \$10-odd million per year?

Dr Hartland—It was somewhat less than that last year. We would usually set aside around about \$5 million and I think we were about \$4 million last year.

Senator FIFIELD—So that is \$4 million in 2008-09?

Dr Hartland—No, 2009-10.

Senator FIFIELD—So that is for the financial year that is yet to be completed?

Dr Hartland—Yes. This is for the current year. We are rolling over funds from this financial year into next, so it was around about \$4 million for this financial year. We spent \$1.8 million less than what we anticipated and so we have sought to have those funds rolled over into next financial year.

Senator FIFIELD—Do you have the figure for 2008-09?

Dr Hartland—I may do, Senator. It will require a bit of shuffling, but let me see.

Senator FIFIELD—I mentioned blind post Australia. So this is not blind post Australia?

Ms S Wilson—Australia Post is the provider.

Senator FIFIELD—Yes, they are the provider. Is that what they call it? I have that wording in my head.

Dr Hartland—I have not heard that wording, Senator.

Ms S Wilson—No, nor have I.

Senator FIFIELD—Maybe it is a form of wording that goes a little way back. In terms of that \$4-odd million in 2009-10, is that the sum total of postal concessions for blind people per year that is funded by FaHCSIA?

Ms S Wilson—That is the total that was allocated for that function of which only—

Dr Hartland—\$3.4 million.

Ms S Wilson—Yes, \$3.4 million was spent.

Senator FIFIELD—Yes, \$3.4 million and \$1.8 million rolled over.

Ms S Wilson—Yes.

Dr Hartland—I just scanned the briefing note, but blind post has not cropped up. This is done through Australia Post.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure, and it is demand driven and you basically pay Australia Post for the services that they provide?

Ms S Wilson—That is correct.

Senator FIFIELD—Could you take on notice, if you do not have it to hand, what the spend was in 2008-09?

Dr Hartland—Yes, Senator. I do not have those—

Senator FIFIELD—And 2007-08?

Dr Hartland—Yes, of course.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. I still have a figure of 10 in my head in relation to blind post, so maybe that is what it was.

Ms S Wilson—It may have been over a number of years.

Senator FIFIELD—Maybe when there was less digital technology there was a greater demand for it.

Ms S Wilson—I think that is correct. We are seeing quite a change in communication for people with sensory impairments and much more reliance on digital technology and readers on PCs and those sorts of things. So that may well be the case.

Dr Hartland—Which is of course cheaper than braille, so it is cheaper to mail a CD than braille.

Senator FIFIELD—Yes. This is the sort of service—correct me if I am wrong—where I think Vision Australia in Melbourne basically have an Australia Post mail room at their Kooyong facility.

Dr Hartland—Yes. Vision Australia are the largest provider of services, so they are a major user of this. They are a major source of the postal concessions that we provide, yes.

Senator FIFIELD—Do you have a dollar figure by organisation such as Vision Australia for the transactions that pass through them?

Dr Hartland—I do not have that with me. We can try to find out whether we can.

Senator FIFIELD—If you could.

Dr Hartland—Let us see if we can find out. I am not entirely confident that we would have it but we may be able to.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you.

Dr Hartland—Certainly, Vision Australia—no, it is not recorded.

Senator FIFIELD—It is not recorded, okay. That is easy then. The final element in the movement of administrative funds between years is the lower than budgeted demand for interpreter services.

Dr Hartland—This is a very small component of the rollover. It is about \$400,000. Again, the Auslan booking service is a demand driven program, so we start the year by indicating what we think we will spend on the program, and as it turns out we were \$400,000 out. So, again, that is money that we did not spend that was available to be rolled over.

Senator FIFIELD—Do the figures that you have given me total the \$12.6 million, or are there other miscellaneous elements in there?

Ms Winkler—There was one component that I did not mention in relation to autism—that is, in the previous financial year we rolled over \$8 million in terms of the commencement of the program and take-up at that point. So approximately \$4 million of that rollover into this financial year will go into the next financial year.

Senator FIFIELD—It has been rolled over twice.

Ms Winkler—Yes.

Senator FIFIELD—Does that then account for all of the \$12.65 million?

Dr Hartland—There are a couple of other small items to do with marketing activities. We also were underspent on the implementation of a budget measure relating to DSP by a small amount. So when you add those up, there is about another half a million dollars.

Senator FIFIELD—So that accounts for that.

Dr Hartland—If it suits you, we can go back to your first question.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure.

Dr Hartland—I do need to correct the record: they are not spread across programs, it is in relation to one series of rounds. This is about conference funding, so we have a component of our program which allows people who are organising conferences to bid for funds in order to facilitate the participation of people with disabilities. So these organisations are all in that area. There are the different amounts that they bid for and possibly some editing on whether what they were bidding for fell within the guidelines of the conference.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. That is all easily explained. I might move to ADEs. There is an ADE expo on today down at the convention centre. I realise estimates has been on so most people here have been occupied. Dr Harmer and colleagues, have you had an opportunity to get down there today thus far?

Dr Hartland—I did not and I would be surprised if Jeff did.

Dr Harmer—I have been here all day.

Dr Hartland—We did have a couple of people from our section that looks after ADEs attend, including some who came down from Brisbane in order to participate.

Senator FIFIELD—I did pop down during the lunch break to have a chat. Bedford Industries, which was there, actually provided some of the product of their employees—some chocolate coated—

CHAIR—You should be declaring these.

Senator FIFIELD—I am declaring these. They asked me to provide them to the committee.

Senator Chris Evans—I am not sure whether the rules of conduct apply here in terms of advertising. I am not sure what the Senate guidance on this is.

Senator FIFIELD—They are fruit shocks covered in milk chocolate. They are Australian owned and produced and Bedford packaged them. They do have plans to produce what is inside. Those are here for everybody. I think the large pack is probably for Dr Harmer. We will actually come to the rationale for that a little later.

Senator Chris Evans—I am sure around 10 o'clock they will be useful.

Senator FIFIELD—Did FaHCSIA provide funding to support the expo that NDS are running?

Dr Harmer—We will take that on notice.

Dr Hartland—We are certainly a strong supporter of these expos.

Ms S Wilson—I believe that we have supported it. To what extent financially is not apparent in the briefing material I have. We have funded the procurement manager with National Disability Services who has been the organiser of the expo. I think we have talked about that position at previous estimates hearings. I am sorry I do not have any information about whether there was any additional financial support over and above that but we will check for you in the course of the hearing.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. The procurement manager was funded for 2009-10; is that right?

Ms S Wilson—It was for 12 months.

Senator FIFIELD—And the funding for that position finishes at 30 June. Is there provision beyond that?

Dr Hartland—At this stage we have not made a decision on continuing it. At the moment the arrangement is that it is for 12 months and that will finish on 30 June.

Senator FIFIELD—The fact that this expo is happening at the moment may be a good opportunity for Parliamentary Secretary Shorten to announce the continuation of the position.

Ms S Wilson—Could I correct the record. It was actually funded for a 12-month period commencing December 2009. We first agreed to fund the position and talked about it probably around the middle of last year, but it was not actually put in place until December 2009. So it will run through until later this year and then we will have to consider the issue of ongoing funding.

Senator FIFIELD—It is always good for planning purposes for an organisation to have a good six months notice of whether a position will be continuing. Again, this expo may provide an opportunity for Parliamentary Secretary Shorten to talk about the future of that position. I commend it; it was a good initiative. Did FaHCSIA have any role in publicising the expo? I know we are waiting to find out whether FaHCSIA financially supported it, but I am just wondering whether FaHCSIA, as part of its ongoing endeavours to raise the profile of ADEs in the government sector, publicised it?

Ms S Wilson—We have been talking in a range of forums, including a procurement roundtable, about the issue generally of procurement for ADEs by government departments. I would be surprised if we had not foreshadowed the expo in those forums. I do not have any very specific information.

Senator FIFIELD—Those are internal government procurement forms.

Ms S Wilson—That is right, government procurement forms.

Senator FIFIELD—Would you be able to check or take on notice if it was raised in those forums in any other ways?

Dr Hartland—My colleague, Karen Gauntlett, has very helpfully been providing additional information. In relation to the publicity for the expo, we wrote to Commonwealth and state departments about that. That is a practical instance of what Ms Wilson is talking about. We also supported the expo through \$9,900 which we paid to National Disability Services.

Ms S Wilson—So we provided financial assistance as well.

Senator FIFIELD—And it is a good thing that that money was provided. When an amount such as that is provided for something like this expo, does FaHCSIA have any particular goals or outcomes that it looks for, other than holding a good expo and giving people the opportunity to have a greater awareness of the products and services?

Dr Hartland—No, for that amount of funding, Senator, we would not have over-engineered the approach. We would be concerned if the expo was not held, but we would not ask them to report on additional business.

Ms S Wilson—We are trying to balance red tape with accountability. So we have been at the forefront of reducing red tape for providers as well, Senator.

Senator FIFIELD—That is commendable. I just want to raise a particular ADE, Wangarang Industries in Orange.

Dr Harmer—The reason we are taking a little bit longer to check information than we would normally is that our key branch head who runs this is actually on leave. Dr Hartland is doing a very good job with the detail but we would normally have a branch head here. You will have to bear with us a little longer.

Senator FIFIELD—No. I appreciate that. I have a staff member who has appendicitis and has just gone into hospital so I know diminished staffing can cause trouble.

Senator Chris Evans—Having said that, your concern for their welfare was the pre-eminent response.

Senator FIFIELD—Absolutely.

Senator Chris Evans—It just seemed to be missing there. Otherwise when the *Hansard* comes out you might have needed to look for a new staff member.

Senator FIFIELD—That is right. Best wishes, David.

Dr Hartland—We do have some information about this product.

Senator FIFIELD—They are undergoing some financial difficulties which have been in the press. Firstly, are you aware of the difficulties that they are experiencing?

Dr Hartland—We are in contact with this organisation so we are aware that the CEO resigned on 7 May. We are aware of the issues you just referred to of local media and local MPs receiving information about its viability.

Senator FIFIELD—You are quite right; its viability is probably a better way to phrase it.

Dr Hartland—We do know that the organisation had a deficit in 2008-09 but was forecasting a turnaround in 2009-10. We do take these things seriously. The only other thing I have before me that is material is that they have not actually applied for the temporary viability funding that we were talking about before. Nonetheless, we are in contact with the organisation. But I do not have information about what that contact has resulted in. It does seem that it has occurred, but we have not got a brief back on it.

Ms S Wilson—Very recently I think there was a meeting, Senator, through our state office in New South Wales.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. I am in no way, shape or form drawing any parallels with the former ADE I am going to mention now, Cumberland Industries. I will just make that clear. I know you are aware of the unfortunate situation that befell Cumberland Industries. I think some of those matters are currently going through the courts. I am wondering, in the wake of what happened at Cumberland, whether FaHCSIA has altered—and I am not suggesting that they needed to alter—or augmented in any way its monitoring of ADEs, and if there is anything that is of use or that is positive that has been learnt from the Cumberland episode? As I say, I am not suggesting there is anything that FaHCSIA should not have been doing, but whether there is anything new in FaHCSIA's approach to monitoring ADEs.

Dr Hartland—I think the answer is: not yet. We are looking and doing some work internally on that question, but we have not got to a stage of crystallising our advice to our parliamentary secretary and minister as to whether we should alter our procedures.

Ms S Wilson—And there are a couple of things that have occurred more broadly that our program performance group has led work on that goes to risk assessments and using a risk based approach for contact with third party organisations that we formed. Certainly, the ADE program is one of the programs that is pursuing that approach. When these sorts of issues arise, that would heighten the risk and imply closer monitoring of an organisation, but in terms of our overall procedures in respect of the ADE program, what Dr Hartland has said is correct.

I would also note that our state and territory officers are in contact with large organisations when they identify financial viability issues for us. So to the extent that we are made aware of that, we follow that up quite assiduously. To the extent that an organisation has not applied through, for example, the temporary viability support component of our ADE program or other like components in other programs, it can take an event like something getting out into the public arena before one becomes aware.

Senator FIFIELD—Are there any ADEs other than Cumberland that have failed over the last year or so? I appreciate that sometimes ADEs might merge or combine for good business reasons.

Dr Harmer—We might have to take that on notice, Senator.

Dr Hartland—I do have some information. I am just thinking about how best to describe it most accurately. We have 11 organisations where the outlets have merged, or there have been transfers or they have been reauspiced under another provider. No ADE has actually closed. I

suppose I need to go back a step here. In a sense, Cumberland did not close. That business was reauspiced under another provider. Of the 11 that involved mergers or reauspicing, there are a whole lot of different things going on. Some of them are because of the Cumberland type scenario where the organisation in that entity was not able to continue. Others are of a different nature where it is just a matter of two organisations getting together to get more economies of scale, if you like.

Ms S Wilson—There have not been any closures since 2006, I think. Is that correct, Dr Hartland?

Dr Hartland—That is right, yes.

Senator FIFIELD—I want to move to the issue of indexation of funding for ADEs. The current funding agreement for ADEs concludes at the end of this financial year. That is correct, isn't it?

Dr Hartland—That is right.

Senator FIFIELD—When was the agreement which concludes at the end of this financial year entered into?

Dr Hartland—It was three years ago. The agreement ran for three years. It would have been July 2007, so it was 2007-08.

Senator FIFIELD—Given 1 July is close at hand, the department has asked ADEs to enter into a one-year agreement.

Dr Hartland—Yes. From about 20 May we wrote to ADEs offering a one-year extension.

Senator FIFIELD—There is no indexation as part of that one-year extension; is that correct?

Dr Hartland—Yes. The way I put it is that the price that we have offered them is the same. There are a number of things going on in relation to the offer that we were able to make to ADEs of which the indexation for the appropriation is one factor.

Ms S Wilson—So we have offered a funding agreement for a 12-month extension which maintains the current level of case based funding in the year 2010-11.

Senator FIFIELD—So the funding or the price is the same as July 2007?

Dr Hartland—That is right, Senator. I think we do need to be a bit careful, though, in saying that. Indexation debates are endlessly fascinating.

Senator FIFIELD—And there are multiple ways of determining indexation.

Dr Hartland—There can be disputes about how is the best way to look at a problem.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure.

Dr Hartland—They have had a fixed price since the start of the funding.

Senator FIFIELD—Since the offer at the start of the funding in 2007.

Dr Hartland—It is true that they have had a fixed price for three years, but that offer at that point included an estimate of indexation for the three-year period of the contract. In addition, it included a time limited supplementation to the price.

Senator FIFIELD—Could you explain what you mean by a ‘time limited supplementation’?

Dr Hartland—There was an additional amount of about five per cent provided to ADEs as part of that contract. That was to increase the price for the period of the contract. That additional amount, which is worth about \$8.9 million a year, was a terminating program, and it terminates at the end of this financial year.

Senator FIFIELD—What was the anticipated indexation or the indexation factored in?

Dr Hartland—The price that we offered them three years ago included that amount of about five per cent and it included an estimate of indexation at the midpoint of the contract. So it included a price increase of 3.42 per cent, plus 5.08 per cent. That contract incorporated a price increase of about 8.5 per cent. So if you are saying that they have not been indexed for three years, it is a complex question because, while the pricing is complex—

Senator FIFIELD—Because it goes up to the midpoint—

Dr Hartland—On the first year they have got more than what they wanted, the middle year you say, ‘Well, they might be right’ and last year—perhaps a bit—they have a constant price. So as I said, we would not say, from the department’s perspective, that they have not been indexed for three years.

Senator FIFIELD—What would the department say?

Dr Hartland—I think just what I said, unfortunately.

Senator FIFIELD—I know what the department would not say, but what would they say?

Dr Hartland—That they have had a three-year contract that incorporated an 8.5 per cent price increase. What we have offered is a contract that continues at that price level.

Senator FIFIELD—Okay. If there had been indexation for this one-year agreement, what would be the measure that you would typically use? Given that there is a range that you could use, what is the typical measure for FaHCSIA?

Dr Hartland—I think we need to keep in the back of our minds this \$8.9 million supplementation, which has ended. So, in effect, the price that we have offered them incorporates a holding of that \$8.9 million, which is a significant commitment.

Senator FIFIELD—So you would do the indexation, including the factoring in of the supplementation rather than excluding it, and treating what remains as the base?

Dr Hartland—Maybe we will come back. Let me go back to your original question. I just wanted to flag that this \$8.9 million is an—

Senator FIFIELD—An interesting figure.

Dr Hartland—An interesting figure that makes it a little bit difficult to explain. The indexation factor that is applied to the whole appropriation is the wage cost index 2. In addition, the appropriation for 20 years perhaps has had an efficiency dividend applied to it.

Senator FIFIELD—Which has not been applied in every year?

Dr Hartland—It has been applied to the program—the appropriation in every year. It has not always been passed on to the providers.

Senator FIFIELD—I tell you at this point I am thinking, ‘Gee, I’m glad I don’t run an ADE.’ That is just editorial comment, feel free to ignore it.

Dr Hartland—No, it is a difficult business to be in, because it has all of the issues that you would have in a grants program, and in addition you operate in the marketplace. So, yes, it is a tough gig. If you had simply passed on the indexation that we got from the appropriation to ADEs you would be taking money off them this year.

Senator FIFIELD—Yes.

Dr Hartland—Right. Because this year the wage cost index is estimated to go up by 1.5 per cent, as it turns out, last year we were slightly overindexed in the appropriation. So we have to give back 0.3 per cent. So now the appropriation is going up by 1.2 per cent. The efficiency dividend is 1.25 per cent. So, therefore, in round maths, there is .05 per cent that the appropriation goes down. So we have done two things in making it a constant price. In offering them a constant price contract we have decided not to pass on that reduction of indexation. In any event, the .05 per cent is not major but it would seem a bit flint hearted to have simply passed it on. We have found resources to cover loss of the \$8.9 million from the terminating program that has not been provided to us in forward estimates.

Senator FIFIELD—Let us take the funding which is there for the coming year as the base, which includes the \$8.9 million equivalent. We assume that indexation reduction is not factored in, as you have not factored it in. If you did use some indexation—whatever way you wanted to calculate it—what would be the additional money that would be there for the year, if a decision had been made to index it rather than continue it on?

Dr Hartland—Longstanding policy has been that the indexation that applies to this area of government activity is wage cost 2 less the efficiency dividend. That is a longstanding government position about the appropriate indexation for this area of activity. It is one of those bizarre situations where you would diligently apply a formula and the result would be zero.

Senator FIFIELD—Take me through it one more time—that is, why it would be zero.

Dr Hartland—The efficiency dividend basically cancels out the wage cost index for this year. So the wage cost index which drives the ‘up’ bit of the indexation is about equal to the efficiency dividend which drives the ‘down’ bit of it.

Senator FIFIELD—So the price which an ADE will get in the coming financial year will be the same as it received in 2007?

Dr Hartland—The price for their case based funding will be the same. What they get depends on the mix of workers.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure.

Dr Hartland—Have we taken you through case based funding in the past?

Senator FIFIELD—Not in estimates. Can you give me a short summary in case there is something that I am not factoring in or am not aware of? We can always be educated.

Dr Hartland—We provide funding for the support that ADEs give to workers. That support varies depending on how much support the worker needs. We do not look at an

individual package for each worker, but we do recognise that there are some people who need more support than others, so we fund them in basically four bands. We do an assessment of which band the workers should go into and then we pay them the price, which is meant to be the average cost of a worker in that band. The funding for an organisation could vary if their mix of workers changes or their occupancy rate changes, but the price per worker per band will not change.

Senator FIFIELD—That is what my understanding was, so thank you for confirming that. I guess there are two ways to describe the current situation, as NDS does. One is that there is no indexation, but you are saying if there was—

Dr Hartland—There was indexation but it did not result in an increase.

Senator FIFIELD—It would result in zero. I still struggle with that; NDS does as well. I am sure there are actuaries who nod their heads knowingly. The other way to look at it is that it is an effective funding freeze—putting formulas of indexation to one side. You would no doubt have seen material which NDS is understandably circulating which says that the difference between FaHCSIA indexation rates and CPI at 1 July 2009 is 8.52 per cent—that is, I assume, going back to an earlier base year—and the difference between FaHCSIA indexation rates and NWC at 1 July 2009 is 11.91 per cent. I guess they are using different measures of indexation than FaHCSIA would use anyway.

Dr Hartland—Thanks, Senator. I am aware of those figures and have had them for about a week but I have not called someone to go over and check the calculations in part because I am not sure where that would—it gets back to what we were saying before about there being a number of different ways you can look at indexation problems and where do you start the series—

Senator FIFIELD—That is right, and I think the NDS started in 2000-01.

Dr Hartland—Yes. You get a different result if you start—2001 would be a bit confounding for us to look at because between then and now we have completely rebased the funding provided to ADEs, so we have moved to an entirely new system. That was why I was reticent to pass on the calculations to say, ‘Go check it,’ to someone because it would have involved us having to recalculate notionally how we would have been funding people in 2001 if we had used the funding system now and then trying to figure out—

Ms S Wilson—It is an apples and oranges problem.

Senator FIFIELD—My head is already hurting.

Dr Hartland—I think perhaps the bottom line is I would not want to give evidence that endorsed the 8.5 per cent, but I do not think it is the department’s position that there are not pressures on ADEs. I think we would say, looking broadly at the issue, that some of the pressures they report to us when we meet with them do not concern the actual price of the support that they provide to the worker. So if you go back to the case based funding description, that component of funding is about the support for the staff that they employ to support the worker. Some of the pressures that ADEs report do not relate to that issue. They are still concerned about their cash flow coming out of the economic slowdown. So this is a pressure that is not really actually about indexation; it is about their economic position and it

goes to what we were talking about before that it is a hard gig in that you have to balance what the department is doing to you not only with their apples and oranges but also in relation to the market that you are in and the contracts that you have.

Senator FIFIELD—You are not the only—

Dr Hartland—I do not want to be entirely unsympathetic to the—

Senator FIFIELD—I was going to say you are not the only variable, but then again you are not a variable; it is pretty fixed.

Dr Hartland—A constant.

Senator FIFIELD—You are not the only factor in their revenue.

Ms S Wilson—Senator, I guess the upshot is that there is a funding offer out with the ADEs. There have been discussions with the peak NDSs. Those discussions are ongoing and I understand that the parliamentary secretary is meeting again with CEOs tomorrow, but that is where it currently lies.

Senator FIFIELD—What is the funding offer that is currently—

Dr Hartland—That is the one with the fixed price.

Senator FIFIELD—That is the year?

Ms S Wilson—Yes.

Senator FIFIELD—Given that you have put it in terms of a funding offer, that means that it is potentially subject to some negotiation, some change?

Ms S Wilson—I could not say that. There is an offer with the ADEs. Discussions are ongoing and the parliamentary—

Senator FIFIELD—So it is an offer in terms of you can accept it or not?

Ms S Wilson—I would not say that either. The discussions are ongoing and the parliamentary secretary is meeting again with the CEOs tomorrow.

Dr Harmer—That is as far as we can go on that.

Senator FIFIELD—The bottom line is that many ADEs, as you would be aware, are hurting. You have acknowledged that they are under pressure. I know that this is not in the area of FaHCSIA, but I guess it would be understandable that ADEs see billions being found, seemingly at will, for school halls—and I will mention the insulation word very quickly and move on—and think money can be found for other purposes but not for them. I will not continue with that other than to make that observation on their behalf. Have any ADEs indicated that, as a result of the funding offer, they would find it difficult to continue?

Dr Hartland—I think the answer is no in the sense of someone coming to us and saying: ‘That’s it. We have to close the doors.’ As you know, they have been approaching government and the parliament in relation to their funding and they are mounting a serious case for the need for additional funds. In the broad they are saying that they feel that they need additional funds in order to maintain the level of service, but I do not think we have any responses that would indicate that if the funding was not increased the service would close—not that have been brought to my attention, anyway.

Senator FIFIELD—Have NDS put a submission to FaHCSIA with a dollar figure as to what would be their ideal in terms of the—

Dr Hartland—They have put the submission that you are aware of, which is a 3.5 per cent increase. That is their preferred position.

Senator FIFIELD—What is the dollar value of a 3.5 per cent increase?

Dr Hartland—That would be around \$6 million to \$7 million.

Senator FIFIELD—ADE put that figure to me the other day and my initial thought was that they must be talking about their particular enterprise. How many ADEs are there?

Dr Hartland—There are 206.

Senator FIFIELD—So \$6 million to \$7 million would seem to be a bargain for 206 ADEs. I hope that Parliamentary Secretary Shorten has the opportunity for two bits of good news tomorrow when he meets with the ADE CEOs—one bit of good news for NDS in terms of the procurement position going on and the other being some good news in relation to the funding for ADEs. We will watch and see. It looks like Senator Brown would like to interpose.

Senator CAROL BROWN—Were there any additional payments made to ADEs last year?

Dr Hartland—In this financial year, the year before and the year before that there was a program that provided about \$8.9 million per annum. That was provided to them as part of a price increase. When that program was set up it was not provided for in the forward estimates beyond this financial year and it is terminated.

Senator CAROL BROWN—I thought I had read somewhere that there were additional payments because of the GFC.

Ms S Wilson—That was the temporary viability support.

Senator CAROL BROWN—What amount was that?

Dr Hartland—There are two sources. There were a couple of additional payments. As Ms Wilson was talking about, there is the temporary viability fund, which we dealt with briefly earlier this afternoon. That is a fund where, if an ADE is facing business pressures, they can come and approach us and seek funding for things like mergers, business cases and maybe even some extra cash or a capital injection. Those additional funds are available. As part of the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy, a one-off payment of around about \$4 million, I believe, was provided. That was at the start of the global financial crisis, and that payment addressed the business pressures that were anticipated to apply to ADEs.

Ms S Wilson—That may have been last financial year, Senator—I just need to check that—rather than this financial year.

Senator CAROL BROWN—If you do not have that information—

Dr Hartland—I am sure we have it. It is finding it that is the problem. The information I have is that it was provided in June 2009 as a one-off payment.

Senator CAROL BROWN—And that was \$4 million, did you say?

Dr Hartland—It was \$4.3 million.

Senator CAROL BROWN—Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

Senator FIFIELD—I said at the start of this bracket on ADEs that I would come back to the larger packet of ‘fruit shocks’, Dr Harmer. I think these were actually sent as some form of inducement prior to the discussions tomorrow. Thank goodness we do not have an ICAC federally; otherwise we might both be in some difficulty.

Senator Chris Evans—He is cheap, but he is not that cheap. It would take at least two packets.

Dr Harmer—Indeed.

Senator FIFIELD—I will turn a blind eye. That is all I have on ADEs. I will yield very shortly, because I know other colleagues are—

CHAIR—Can I just check whether anybody else has anything on ADEs? Senator Boyce?

Senator BOYCE—ADEs are in Support Services for People with Disabilities; is that right?

CHAIR—We have been very generous with our subsets in this area, Senator.

Senator BOYCE—I must admit, I do not think I have anything in that area.

Senator FIFIELD—I will just ask questions in another area briefly.

CHAIR—Which one is it, Senator?

Senator BOYCE—Can I just ask: where are Special disability trusts? Are they just in 5?

Dr Hartland—Yes, certainly in 5, with disability support pension, I think—

Senator BOYCE—No, Special Disability Trusts.

Dr Hartland—We would deal with them in 5.2 with disability support pension, when we come to that.

Senator BOYCE—Okay.

CHAIR—I will just check what Senator Fifield’s area is. Which is the area you want to take up, Senator Fifield?

Senator FIFIELD—The National Disability Strategy.

CHAIR—Which would be 5.1?

Dr Hartland—I think that is 5. Let us just say 5.

CHAIR—That is safest. Senator Fifield, we will go to the strategy.

Dr Hartland—Because it crosses all of our outcomes.

CHAIR—Dr Hartland, everything crosses when I am in the chair. Senator Fifield, are you going to go on to the strategies area?

Senator FIFIELD—Yes, very briefly, because I know a lot of other colleagues have questions. Where is the National Disability Strategy at?

Ms S Wilson—It is still being developed and is under discussion with states and territories, Senator. The draft strategy will go to community and disability services ministers on Friday, and it is still on track to be considered at the next COAG meeting.

Senator FIFIELD—When is the next COAG meeting? It is not scheduled yet?

Ms S Wilson—I could not answer that, Senator. I anticipate it might be midyear, but there is no date that I am aware of at this stage.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure. What was the original time frame for the National Disability Strategy to be in place?

Ms Bedford—We had talked about it being launched in 2009. The timing got extended after the Prime Minister announced last December that it would be developed under the auspices of COAG and that first ministers would be involved in the development of the National Disability Strategy, so that extended the timing.

Senator FIFIELD—The time frame was extended because anything that goes through COAG automatically takes more time?

Ms S Wilson—I think also the issues that came up in the Shut Out report, which was a key input for the strategy, did certainly straddle Commonwealth, state and territory responsibilities and were of such a nature that it was appropriate that the strategy be developed under the auspices of COAG.

Senator FIFIELD—In the budget there was an item for National Disability Strategy coordination which does not have dollar figures flowing through the years. It does say that the government will provide \$6.2 million over four years to establish a policy coordination and secretariat unit within FaHCSIA. Is that a new \$6.2 million or not?

Dr Hartland—The value of the unit is estimated at \$6.2 million, but the department was asked to absorb that amount.

Senator FIFIELD—From within resources—okay. Talk to me about the work of that unit. If we are looking at having a National Disability Strategy adopted possibly by the middle of the year, is the purpose of the unit to implement that strategy which is agreed upon?

Ms S Wilson—Its purpose would be to support the implementation of the strategy, Senator—to coordinate and support reporting back on the strategy over the course of the life of the strategy. Currently it is envisaged that the strategy will be for a 10-year period. That reporting will aim, subject to being agreed, to also integrate with Australia's reporting under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. So, it will be a small coordination policy.

Senator FIFIELD—The staff in that unit will be dedicated to that function?

Ms S Wilson—That is the intention, Senator.

Senator FIFIELD—How many staff?

Ms S Wilson—Six to eight.

Senator FIFIELD—Will those staff come from within other areas of FaHCSIA?

Dr Hartland—It may. We will seek to put the right people in that unit, so some of them may come from the group at the moment, in which case then there will be some consequent changes. Some may come from other areas of FaHCSIA. Some may come from outside FaHCSIA, if they have the right skills.

Senator FIFIELD—Who will the unit report to?

Dr Hartland—At the moment it will report to me, and then to Serena and then—

Senator FIFIELD—Dr Harmer and then the minister or Parliamentary Secretary Shorten?

Dr Hartland—Both.

Senator FIFIELD—Issues such as how often the unit will report progress—all those things are yet to be determined?

Ms S Wilson—They are under negotiation currently, Senator.

Senator FIFIELD—I could keep going and I am happy to, but Senator Siewert and colleagues have questions.

CHAIR—What we might do is let some other people ask some questions in the areas they have identified. If we then have time before 6.30 we can come back if you have more questions. I know it is all the same officers who are here.

Ms S Wilson—Senator, I wondered if this was the appropriate point to report back on the question that Senator Boyce I believe raised about disability action plans. We said that we would answer that in outcome 5. Would now be an appropriate time?

CHAIR—It seems perfectly reasonable, Ms Wilson. Senator Boyce, were you clear with the question? Do you have to ask what you want again?

Ms S Wilson—Shall I have a go?

Senator BOYCE—Yes, please.

Ms S Wilson—By way of background, disability action plans were established by the Commonwealth Disability Strategy in 1994. They have quite some history and they were developed initially to fulfil reporting requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act. As you noted on the website, the CDS is currently under review and that is because we are in the process of developing the National Disability Strategy. So we need to ensure that—

Senator BOYCE—It does not say that, though.

Ms S Wilson—It does, actually.

Senator BOYCE—Sorry, I did not read the small print, I must admit, Ms Wilson.

Ms S Wilson—I think it says at the bottom of the page:

The Australian Government is in the process of developing a National Disability Strategy ... the NDS will serve as an overarching policy statement setting the national view, direction and priorities to tackle the complex needs of people with disability and their carers.

Then it goes on.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. Yes. I must admit, I guess there is a missing link there in terms of perhaps it should have said, ‘There is no 2010 Disability Action Plan because’—but anyway, go on.

Ms S Wilson—So having said that it is currently under review, there have been quite some considerable changes since the initial Commonwealth Disability Strategy was established in 1999. Since the midterm evaluation of the Commonwealth Disability Strategy 1999, agencies have not been required to implement disability action plans and there have been new reporting requirements established in relation to departments’ actions as employers since July 2007, which has a bearing on this as well—largely in response, I believe, to the MAC report, which looked at the employment of people with disability in the Australian Public Service. The Australian Public Service Commission has taken on a much more enhanced role in terms of reporting and oversighting on activities in respect of employees with a disability. We provide our input to that reporting through our contribution to the *State of the service report*. So that is where our activities are externally reported currently.

The other initiatives that have a bearing are that the Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy was announced last year. This also provided a significantly increased focus on employment for people with a disability in the APS, which involves the APSC. The National Disability Strategy, as noted, is the other policy initiative and, moreover, Australia’s adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and our adoption also of the optional protocol are the three policy changes that have a bearing here.

The Commonwealth Disability Strategy and our Disability Action Plan under that covered our role as an employer, a procurer, a funder and a policy adviser. I could go through each of those in turn on what we currently are doing. It is something that we have continued to be extremely active in across disabilities. So as an employer, in all of our recruitment advertisements we explicitly invite people with disabilities to apply for jobs. We have a people strategy with a number of initiatives relevant to people with a disability and they are available on our intranet—so for staff internally—and they include the provision of a disability access coordinator, which is a designated position that provides an advocacy role for staff with a disability in the department.

We have centralised funds that provide for reasonable adjustment, like the purchasing of equipment and other needs that staff with a disability might have. We run disability awareness training to assist staff and managers working with people who have a form of disability. We have an online disability awareness training program available to staff and supervisors as well. We undertake and provide a mentoring program that provides additional support structures in the work environment for staff with a disability. I am the occupant of a position in our organisation called the Senior Disability Champion. That means that I am responsible for promoting disability awareness throughout the organisation. We also have a group of staff who come together interested in disability issues, which is the FaHCSIA Leadership disAbility Group, and that was established late in 2008, and we have an ongoing review of our recruitment processes.

Senator BOYCE—Does that group look only at disability issues or other issues as well?

Ms Wilson—It is specifically on disability. We have engaged in the Stepping into ... internship program, which provides work experience placements in the department for university students with a disability. We also work quite closely with the Australian Employers Network on Disability and get advice and guidance as we attempt to improve our employment support for people with disability. We have engaged beyondblue to provide awareness training and information sessions on depression to FaHCSIA staff and graduates. We have put additional hearing loops in all of our national office meeting rooms.

We are also participating in the Paralympic Diversity Workplace Program following on from the work that the parliamentary secretary has been undertaking through his chief executive officer forum. We have created a 12-month employment opportunity for a paralympian within the department. We are also very active in the APSC disability steering group. I am trying to assure you that, whilst we have not got a plan up on our website currently, we continue to be extremely active in our role as an employer.

We also have talked at length—and I do not need to go through this again—about encouraging purchasing from Australian Disability Enterprises both within FaHCSIA and more broadly. In terms of our property, which is important for not only employees but also access for stakeholders, all of our property portfolio is managed in compliance with the relevant building codes. All of our facilities management employees have an understanding of the standards for access to premises that were launched in March this year, so we are making sure that everyone is up to date with their requirements. All of our communications activity is subject to internal guidelines to ensure that it meets, and where possible exceeds, our obligations as a Commonwealth government agency under the Disability Discrimination Act. So we attempt to be an exemplar in this area as well.

We also follow the mandatory requirements of the Australian government's web content accessibility guidelines. Our website is generally rated at AA, which is the second highest level of accessibility for websites, and all of our content is provided in HTML—

Senator BOYCE—By 'second highest', do you mean second best?

Ms Wilson—Second best. Yes, my business card has braille on it as well.

Senator BOYCE—And you have braille on your business cards.

Ms Wilson—We do. All of our information materials for external audiences are made available in accessible formats, large print, easy English, audio recordings, captioning, audio description, radio and braille. Also, we try to encourage people to get braille business cards.

In terms of events that we undertake, including with the community, and consultations, we follow these requirements: that there is a hearing loop; that the venue is wheelchair accessible both inside and outside and friendly for guide-dogs and assistance animals; that the venue includes accessible toilets and parking spaces; and that all material produced for events, including PowerPoint and audiovisual material, has to meet accessibility guidelines.

On the policy front, we chair the Commonwealth interdepartmental committee which is developing the Commonwealth's contribution to the National Disability Strategy and we co-chair the Commonwealth-state working group of officials that is developing a National Disability Strategy for COAG's consideration. Our secretary is also extremely active in the

forums in which he participates as a secretary in raising with his colleagues how they can ensure that mainstream services consider the needs of people with disability in policy development and program design in each of their portfolios.

I am trying to assure you that, whilst we do not have a current disability action plan on our website, we are definitely not resting on our laurels. We continue to be very active.

Senator BOYCE—It was the fact that it had 2006 to 2009 but there was nothing to send me somewhere else to find out what is happening now that had concerned me, Ms Wilson. I think I am reassured.

Ms Wilson—Good.

Senator BOYCE—I might just point out to you though that during this committee's hearing health inquiry we discovered that having a hearing loop in a meeting room and having a functioning hearing loop in a meeting room were two quite different things.

Ms Wilson—I understand, Senator.

Senator FIFIELD—Ms Wilson, are you able to provide the summary that you went through of actions taken by the department internally?

Ms Wilson—I will probably need to clean up a couple of scribbles, but I am happy to provide it on notice.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. We could use that to wave around at other departments from time to time.

Senator BOYCE—I have been assuming, having asked some time ago in estimates about the number of staff in each department who identified with disability and getting a variety of answers that seem to fit varieties of time lines, that I am currently best to look at the Public Service Commission's figures on this as the collated figure and I am assessing whether they increase. Is that something you do? Do you look at that?

Ms S Wilson—Certainly we look at how we benchmark against other agencies. We assess the *State of the service report* for FaHCSIA's performance across a range of areas, and this is one of them.

Senator BOYCE—How do you mark yourself at the moment, Ms Wilson?

Dr Harmer—We have one of the highest proportions of people with disability in the department. As I understand it, I think we are five point something—well above the APS average.

Senator BOYCE—I had a feeling that you were—I would have guessed—seven, but being better than average is—

Dr Harmer—Indeed. We are quite a bit better than the average I think, but I am not sure of the figures exactly. I think it is about five point—

Senator BOYCE—I think the average is around two.

Dr Harmer—Two and a half I think.

Senator BOYCE—Yes.

Ms S Wilson—As at 30 June 2009, three per cent was the average across the whole of the Australian Public Service and we are at 6.5, this tells me.

Dr Harmer—I did not think we were that high.

Ms S Wilson—I did not think we were that high either. I do not believe that that is the right figure.

Senator BOYCE—You might on notice like to provide your figure.

Ms S Wilson—We did read it out earlier in the hearing. I am sorry; I just cannot recall it exactly in my mind. Certainly in the disability and carers group we are much higher than that.

Dr Hartland—We are a bit over twice the FaHCSIA average.

CHAIR—Do you have another question, Senator Boyce?

Senator BOYCE—I have a couple where I know the area and a couple where I do not know the area.

CHAIR—Do you know some areas in 5.2?

Senator BOYCE—Yes, I have some in 5.2. I have one for 5.1 I believe.

CHAIR—You had better get that one out of the way first.

Senator BOYCE—Maybe I have several in 5.1.

CHAIR—Why don't we go until a quarter to on 5.1 and that would give us some time for the other sections?

Senator BOYCE—Okay. This query comes not just out of the hearing health inquiry that the committee did but a number of other surveys that have been done around people with hearing and other disabilities in custody. Has there been any work done on that by the department and, if so, what? The committee hearing that we conducted into hearing health demonstrated that within our prison populations people with intellectual disability and people with hearing problems et cetera are very overrepresented. Is the department, firstly, aware of this and, secondly, involved in any way in doing something about it? I realise that it is a state funding issue, but it is a national issue as well.

Ms S Wilson—We are certainly aware of the issue. There is no question of that. It does come up from stakeholder groups. It has come up through our national council and one of the outcome areas in the National Disability Strategy will be access to rights, protection, justice and legislation. So it is relevant in that context. I cannot talk in any more detail about the National Disability Strategy as it is under negotiation currently. You have identified that it is not an area of responsibility for FaHCSIA, but we are certainly aware of it as an important issue for stakeholder groups and for people with disability. Clearly, one would hope over time to see the proportion of people with such disabilities in the prison population falling as a consequence of actions that states and territories might take.

Senator BOYCE—Except along with some other areas to improve the outcome for individuals with disabilities within particular disadvantaged areas. It seems to involve some federal funding along the way to make it happen in a number of areas around the disability sector. I have one other question in this area. It is a specific one related to the special

disability trust situation. I am aware that we have the impending legislation to change the tax treatment of them and a number of other things which also came out of this committee. Can you tell me how many trusts are currently in existence?

Ms Rose—There were 91 trusts at the end of March.

Senator BOYCE—That is a significant increase but still a very small number. I think you were able to give us inquiry numbers at the last estimates or the estimates before that.

Ms Rose—I can tell you that since the program's inception 463 families have tested the eligibility of a family member. Some 423 were found eligible and granted beneficiary status, including the 91 I have just mentioned, and 40 did not meet the requirements. That obviously indicates that there are others who would be eligible but have not gone to the next step to set up a trust.

Senator BOYCE—Of those 40 who were ineligible, would you have any idea of how many of them might now be eligible? For instance, the work criteria will change.

Ms Rose—Sorry, I cannot answer that, but I could take that on notice.

Senator BOYCE—If you are able to answer that without too much work, that would be good. Have you looked at what the cost will be to the department of changing the tax treatment of trust income?

Ms S Wilson—That would not be a cost to us; that would be a cost to revenue.

Senator BOYCE—Yes, it would be.

Ms S Wilson—I am sorry. Treasury would be able to find out an answer to that question.

Senator BOYCE—Mind you, I think it is going to be a number of years before they come out in the red on this one because of the fact that the uptake was expected to be much higher than it has been.

CHAIR—Do you have any more questions on trusts, Senator Boyce? I know that Senator Siewert has something on trusts.

Senator BOYCE—Nothing more on trusts.

Senator SIEWERT—Have the trusts been completely established?

Ms Rose—That is my understanding, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—I understand with the changes that are going to be made that there is an estimate that the additional cost is going to be about a million dollars over four years.

Ms Rose—That is correct.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you tell me the number of additional trusts that are factored into that? Am I correct in thinking that it is 78?

Ms Rose—Yes, that is right.

Senator SIEWERT—On what basis do you estimate the 78 additional beneficiaries?

Ms Rose—We have estimated that by taking into account ministerials and submissions that people have raised in terms of what has prevented them or been a disincentive for them

setting up a trust. We then looked at the changes that have come through the budget. That is the number that we have come up with—a likely 20 per cent increase.

Senator SIEWERT—People are concerned—as you are probably aware, because I am sure you have seen the correspondence—about unexpended income and how that interacts with what people earn. The concern is that it will force them into a different tax bracket. I presume you have had correspondence from people raising those concerns?

Ms Rose—I am just looking for that.

Dr Hartland—If you make a complaint about your taxation arrangements, you would usually make it to Treasury—although in other areas people who have a number of beefs and want them consolidated do put a consolidated view to us.

Senator SIEWERT—I am aware of the issue. In fact we did have a briefing on this, as you are probably aware, from Treasury officials. However, I am aware that people with concerns about this have been writing not only to Treasury, as I understand it, but also to the department, given that you are the lead agency on this issue and on disabilities. People raise these issues with you, so have your estimates taken that issue into account? In other words, now that people have seen the amendments, it may still put them off that issue around which tax bracket they go into?

Ms Rose—No, we have not looked at that.

Dr Hartland—That would be a very hard thing to estimate for us. Ms Rose has told you about how we estimated a 20 per cent increase to get it to arrive at the figure of 78. I think it would be very hard to start with those types of figures—looking at offs and ons for small subgroups.

Senator SIEWERT—The estimates that you have done for the 78 were prior to the release of the exposure draft for the legislation. Is that right?

Dr Hartland—They were done at the start of the budget process so probably late last year, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—In other words, the 76 does not take that issue of bracket creep into account. That is correct, isn't it?

Dr Hartland—No, but I am not certain that if we had been aware of the issue we would have changed our mind.

Ms S Wilson—I am not sure that we would have been able to revise the estimate to take account of that issue.

Senator SIEWERT—That is the point. The problem here is that obviously a great deal of effort, as you are aware—and I am not trying to teach you how to suck eggs—has gone into trying to change this particular provision to enable people to use it. Certainly, the feedback that my office is getting—and I am sure a number of other people are getting this feedback as well, as you are too—is that the changes may not accomplish that, which is why I am interested in the estimate of the 76 and whether that takes into account the concerns people have about bracket creep. I am not a taxation expert—I have to put that on the table right now—but that is the issue that has been raised with us very strongly.

Dr Hartland—The estimate of 78 did not specifically take account of bracket creep, but I do not think on the basis of the information we have that we would be seeking to revise the 78, taking into account when we started the estimate and comment on the Treasury legislation between now and then. We would be confident I think that the 78 is still the appropriate estimate.

Senator SIEWERT—That is much appreciated, thank you. As I recollect from our last discussion you were still responding to some of the other recommendations in the community affairs report. Where are you up to with that?

Ms Rose—My understanding is that there are only two recommendations now that are outstanding, and those are to change the name of Special Disability Trusts and to change the provisions in relation to who can seek an audit of those trusts. What has been agreed in relation to those is that two years after January 2011, when these amendments come in—in January 2013—we will be able to have a look and see if those provisions that have come through this measure have led to a significant uptake. So it will be reviewed in two years.

Senator SIEWERT—Just to clarify: the point is no further action now until the review of the current changes?

Ms Rose—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—Why is there a wait for the issue around the name, for example?

Ms Rose—Sorry, the decision was that that was not accepted by government.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay. And the same with the audit?

Ms Rose—That was to be looked at within two years.

Senator SIEWERT—That was the two years. So the name is no, and the audit is the two years?

Ms Rose—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I go back to the issue of the bracket creep or the going into the higher tax bracket. Do I understand you correctly that you have not had correspondence from people raising that concern?

Ms Rose—To my knowledge we have not had any.

Senator BOYCE—We will have to forward ours on then.

Senator SIEWERT—I was going to say I do not know why I am getting them and you are not. They are not being shared. Would they have gone to Treasury?

Ms S Wilson—Most likely, Senator.

Senator SIEWERT—I will ask Treasury, but Treasury have not come back and raised that with you?

Ms Rose—No, they have not.

Senator SIEWERT—I will make sure that we raise that with Treasury. If you have not had correspondence about it I cannot ask you any questions around it. There is no point in asking any questions if you have not actually had any correspondence.

Dr Hartland—We do not have a view on this. It is a Treasury policy matter.

Senator SIEWERT—That leads me to the next question. Going back to the issue of trying to make these trusts more reasonable, if the feedback from the community is it does not achieve that objective surely as lead agency in disabilities that raises concerns for you?

Dr Hartland—Yes, but they are concerns that we would ask our colleagues in Treasury to look at. If they had a view that that was correct then they would provide advice on that basis. If they did not have that view then they are responsible for government policy around taxation matters.

Senator SIEWERT—Would you be open to discussing this issue with stakeholders if you thought it was a serious issue?

Ms S Wilson—It is not open to FaHCSIA to discuss issues of taxation policy with stakeholders because we have no remit in this area. Taxation policy is the province of the Treasury.

Dr Harmer—We would direct them to the Treasury, on tax policy. We would have to.

Senator SIEWERT—You can see why members of the community find this issue so difficult. They find it difficult to engage with Treasury. Treasury are a mechanism, surely, to provide better outcomes for people trying to look after their children with a disability. They get caught between FaHCSIA saying this is a Treasury issue and Treasury putting a taxation measure in place when what they are trying to do is actually make special disability trusts work better.

Ms S Wilson—The government has responded to the committee's report in full with the exception of the two-year review on the proposition around who may request an audit. With this package of budget changes that is the government's response to the committee's report.

Senator SIEWERT—Other than the review in two years' time?

Ms S Wilson—That is correct.

Senator SIEWERT—You mention that issue around the audit. Are there other issues that the government will look at in two years' time besides the audit? Surely you are monitoring also the effectiveness of the changes.

Ms Rose—Yes, we are. That was implied.

Senator SIEWERT—Have you worked out how you will undertake the evaluation process? Is that purely on the number of people who take it up or will there be some sort of evaluation of people—for example, stakeholders—who have chosen not to put in place a trust?

Ms Rose—We have not come to a decision on that yet.

Senator SIEWERT—Will you be consulting with stakeholders to work out that evaluation process?

Ms Rose—We have not made a decision about that either.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I urge you to consult with stakeholders?

Dr Hartland—Thank you, Senator. Yes, you can.

CHAIR—That finishes disability trusts. We have half an hour left to go.

Senator BOYCE—I have a question. I do not know where it goes. This relates to a court case earlier this year in the decision *Re: Angela* (Special Medical Procedure) in the Family Court of Australia which allowed for the sterilisation of a 10-year-old girl. It has been argued by Women with Disabilities Australia and myself that this contravenes the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Are you aware of the case? Have you contributed information in any way towards it?

Dr Hartland—We are aware of the case, Senator. We are not the department responsible for handling it on the basis of government.

Senator BOYCE—I realise that.

Dr Hartland—I am not sure whether we have been asked for advice on the case. We would have to check.

Dr Harmer—We will take that on notice.

Dr Hartland—We would have to take that on notice.

Senator BOYCE—That is fine. I have recently had correspondence from the Attorney-General stating that he would not be able to appeal this decision, nor does he intend to attempt to change the way that we currently go about using the best interests of the child rather than the reproductive rights, which is the criteria used in the UN convention. Again, has any information or advice been sought in regards to those two areas?

Ms S Wilson—Senator, this is the province of the Attorney-General's Department.

Senator BOYCE—Okay. If you were able to, would you be able to provide to me any information or advice that you had given in respect of the first area?

Dr Harmer—I think what we could do, Senator, is that we could tell you if we were asked for advice. That I think we could do.

Senator BOYCE—And then, if possible, provide same.

Dr Harmer—I do not think we could do that.

Senator Chris Evans—I think Dr Harmer was nicely indicating to you, Senator, that you are not going to get that. It was advice to another department.

Senator BOYCE—However, I would not want to miss out on getting it because I had not asked for it.

Senator Chris Evans—I would not want to suggest it. You have been around a long time.

Dr Hartland—We think that we have not been asked or provided information in relation to the case, but since you have asked the question we will check.

Senator BOYCE—Thank you. That is the question that I did not know where it went. The rest are primarily 5.2 and 5.4.

CHAIR—We have half an hour, Senator. I will just check. Senator Adams, do you have questions?

Senator ADAMS—Not on that particular area.

CHAIR—Do you have anything on 5?

Senator ADAMS—Later, yes.

CHAIR—Okay. 5.2?

Senator SIEWERT—I have 5.2.

CHAIR—Okay.

Senator SIEWERT—I presume this is where I ask this question. It is the issue around the savings of \$3.88 million that have been made in the way the job capacity assessment process for those with a disability—

Ms S Wilson—That is correct, Senator.

Senator SIEWERT—This is where I ask about that?

Ms S Wilson—That is correct.

Senator SIEWERT—I did ask some of these questions yesterday in DEEWR. They told me to come back here and ask you some more. Yesterday I asked them about how the process is going to work. As I understand it, Centrelink and CRS is now going to be doing the assessment process; is that correct? They said to ask you about how that process will operate in terms of the criteria that will be used for that assessment process; is that correct?

Dr Hartland—Yes, we are the agency responsible for that.

Senator SIEWERT—So can you tell me how that process will be rolled out, how you are setting a criteria, where the savings are being made? First, let me start by asking: are the savings purely being made in the fact that Centrelink and CRS are now going to be doing that process?

Ms Rose—That certainly comprises part of the savings.

Senator BOYCE—Where is the rest?

Ms Rose—There will be some people who will not get onto DSP, so there are savings to be gained from that.

Senator BOYCE—What are they? How much are they? Because I was not given that yesterday, what are the savings made from Centrelink and CRS doing it, what are the savings from people not going onto DSP, and I will come back to more questions there, and what are the other savings?

Ms Rose—I understand that ceasing the use of private providers accounts for approximately \$46 million. Savings on the disability support pension are \$596 million.

Ms S Wilson—That is then offset, Senator, by the alternative payments that people will receive, which is 294.5, by increased levels of employment assistance for people who have been rejected for DSP and 77.4—

Senator SIEWERT—Sorry, what was that?

Ms S Wilson—Those people who have had a DSP claim rejected and have been asked to go and work with the employment service will get that employment service, so that increases the outlays in respect of employment services.

Senator SIEWERT—277 million?

Ms S Wilson—It is 77.4. In terms of JSA programs, that is similarly employment assistance, it is 9.7. So there is a different element of the employment assistance that is 9.7. Savings would also arise in ceasing job capacity assessments for incapacity exemptions for Newstart allowance.

Senator SIEWERT—Sorry, but can we go back a step? The offset is—sorry, I missed it—two hundred and—

Ms S Wilson—Against the savings of 596 for DSP rejections and ceasing the use of private providers for undertaking the job capacity assessments, there are savings arising out of paying the alternative DEEWR payments. There are costs that arise out of—

Senator SIEWERT—Yes, that is seven hundred and—

Ms S Wilson—That is 294.5.

Senator SIEWERT—So 294.5 is the costs of DEEWR payments?

Ms S Wilson—That is correct. So that is the alternative income support. There are costs that arise in employment assistance of 77.4 and 9.7—

Senator SIEWERT—For the JSA?

Ms S Wilson—For JSA and for disability employment services. There are savings that arise from ceasing job capacity assessments for people on Newstart applying for an incapacity exemption.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you explain that to me?

Ms S Wilson—That is a DEEWR element.

Ms Rose—Yes, it is a DEEWR element. But under the current rules people who seek an incapacity exemption from the Newstart activity requirements have a job capacity assessment and my understanding is, bearing in mind it is another portfolio, that those were deemed to be a Rolls Royce mechanism to find out something and it was deemed that they would no longer be required.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay. So where will they go now?

Ms Rose—I presume that the Centrelink officers will look at the medical certificate provided rather than send them for a job capacity—

Senator SIEWERT—Okay, so that will just go back? Sorry to be a bit dense, but that will just go back into the new process that Centrelink is undertaking?

Ms S Wilson—That is correct.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay. Thank you.

Ms S Wilson—Costs arise again related to DEEWR costs by replacing the job capacity assessments with the Centrelink employment service assessments and ceasing private provisions. So that is 65.4.

Senator SIEWERT—And they will pick that up by putting their people on board to be doing assessments?

Ms S Wilson—I beg your pardon; that is a save. No, it must be a cost. No, it is a save.

Senator SIEWERT—Does it have a negative or a positive?

Ms Rose—It is a save because it is a cheaper form of assessment.

Ms S Wilson—Okay. It is a net save.

Ms Rose—Yes, it is a net save.

Ms S Wilson—It is a net save, I beg your pardon. It is just the description of it does not make that clear.

Senator SIEWERT—If you are struggling, imagine how we struggle!

Dr Hartland—There is one thing we should say. If you diligently added those up, you actually would not get 383.4. Those are apportioned estimates that we retrocalculated, if you like, because we anticipated that someone may wish to know these things. But the actual costing is kind of interactive and so in apportioning those costs you do not quite get to 384.

Ms S Wilson—So you might get rounding between elements and those sorts of things.

Senator SIEWERT—I am sorry, Dr Hartland, but I have no idea what you have just said.

Ms Rose—If you added them all up, they add up to 391.

Senator SIEWERT—Is there any way that on notice you can make that make sense?

Ms S Wilson—Yes.

Ms Rose—If you added all of those up—

Senator SIEWERT—They will not come to what they should come to?

Ms Rose—They come to—I have done it—391 million as opposed to 383, and a lot of that is that we have rounded these figures up.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay. Can we now go back to how this is actually going to work in reality in terms of the number of people who will not be on DSP. Is this a retrospective process? In other words, will some people who are currently on DSP be reassessed and come off?

Ms S Wilson—No.

Senator SIEWERT—So this is just for new claimants?

Ms S Wilson—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you walk us through how this process is now going to work?

Ms S Wilson—I will ask Ms Rose to do that.

Ms Rose—Currently, people claiming DSP are asked to provide evidence that they have a disability via a report from a treating doctor. Under these changes they also need to provide evidence that they are not able to do any work even with appropriate capacity building and rehabilitation. Approximately half of the people who come on to DSP do so from employment. It may be that they have lost their job and that is what has caused them to seek income support and DSP rather than the disability, per se. So this is asking people to test their

capacity, if they have not already done so, by participating in an employment service which will help build their capacity and skill potentially to undertake a different job.

Senator SIEWERT—Is this before they are assessed by Centrelink or CRS?

Ms Rose—If at the job capacity assessment stage they are unable to say, ‘Look, I have tried. I have already been to a capacity-building service and it has not made any difference,’ they will possibly go under depending if they meet the 20 impairment points. If they do not, they say, ‘Go and have a go.’

Senator SIEWERT—So the 20 impairment points will still stand; is that right?

Ms Rose—Absolutely, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—So that is not changing.

Ms S Wilson—It is the assessment process that is changing rather than the rules—that is the way you describe it.

Senator BOYCE—So the list of recognised disabilities is not changing at all?

Ms S Wilson—That is currently being updated. You may recall at the estimates last year that the budget measures around better and fairer assessment for DSP included a broadening of what we call the manifest list.

Senator BOYCE—The list of recognised disabilities. Is that what you call that?

Ms S Wilson—No, the list of recognised disabilities applies to carer payments. The term that we use with the disability support pension is a manifest ground. That list is being updated and broadened so that there is more information available about a range of terminal illnesses, catastrophic disabilities, syndromes and the like that would manifestly entitle someone to a disability support pension. That measure comes in from July this year.

Senator BOYCE—When will that list be available to the public?

Ms S Wilson—It has been consulted on.

Ms Rose—We sought advice from various medical colleges. This is the fast-tracking you are talking about, Ms Wilson?

Ms S Wilson—Yes.

Ms Rose—We got some advice from medical colleges and we will be passing that on to Centrelink, but I see no reason it could not be provided.

Senator BOYCE—I am sure the stakeholders will be interested in it.

Senator SIEWERT—Can we just walk through this process. So we have the new list and that will come into place at the beginning of July, did you just say?

Ms Rose—Are you talking about the impairment tables or the fast-tracking?

Senator SIEWERT—The fast-tracking.

Ms Rose—Yes, indeed it does come in on 1 July.

Senator SIEWERT—So we have the impairment list, which remains the same, plus we have the fast-tracking list?

Dr Hartland—We are reviewing the impairment tables as a result of last year's budget measure as well.

Senator SIEWERT—When does that come into place?

Dr Hartland—On 1 July next year.

Ms S Wilson—No, 1 January 2012.

Dr Hartland—There you go. It is a bad day when you do not learn something.

Senator SIEWERT—The new impairment tables will come into place in January. But that is a bit separate to this process; is that right?

Ms S Wilson—It is separate to this process other than this new process will be implemented at the same time as the new impairment tables are put in place. It will come together at that point.

Senator SIEWERT—So you have your impairment points. I am still not quite with you in terms of how the process will work. You will apply for DSP now and you will be assessed against the new impairment tables in January 2012.

Ms S Wilson—That is correct.

Senator SIEWERT—Then you will go and see Centrelink. When and where does the assessment process occur?

Ms Rose—If you go to Centrelink and say, 'I want to claim the disability support pension,' and if you are either manifestly in or out, that will be dealt with there. If not, it will be sent to a job capacity assessment and that is when this whole process commences.

Senator SIEWERT—And that is done by Centrelink or CRS.

Ms Rose—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—So that is done. Then what happens?

Ms Rose—If you do not have evidence to show that you cannot build your capacity, then you will be assessed for another income support payment, more than likely Newstart.

Senator SIEWERT—Sorry, in terms of 'you cannot build your capacity' what does that mean, or is it that you have not built your capacity?

Ms Wilson—Currently what happens is that job capacity assessors are asked to make a prospective assessment of whether someone after two years with training or rehabilitation would be able to work 15 hours or more at award wages in the full labour market. That is without any evidence from an employment assistance provider or a vocational rehabilitation provider. That assessment is about saying, 'This person is here now. We think if we did these things with them they would or they would not be able to do that.' So that is currently what job capacity assessors are asked to assess. What this new process will say is, 'If you have not had an employment assistance intervention and therefore you are not manifest—you do not have evidence that your capacity cannot be improved—we will ask you to work with an employment assistance provider to see whether your capacity can be improved through a program.'

Senator SIEWERT—How long will you require that to happen before you work out whether the capacity can or cannot be improved?

Ms Rose—That will depend on the individual. If it becomes clear very quickly that it is not possible to build that capacity, they can reapply for DSP.

Senator SIEWERT—If you are then judged by the assessment process that you have not been through the process of seeing whether you can build your capacity, you will be put on to Newstart while you do that.

Ms Rose—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—And who makes the call then? What is the criteria for making the call: ‘No, you won’t be able to meet that criteria and therefore you should go back through the DSP process’?

Ms Rose—I imagine that whoever is working with the person in the disability employment system would be making that decision and suggesting to the person that they do reapply and giving them advice about whether or not they can—

Ms S Wilson—So the employment service provider will get an outcome payment for placing someone in employment at the end of a period of working with them. If it becomes clear early in the process that the level of work capacity of this person cannot be increased to 15 hours per week or—

Senator SIEWERT—If the supports are not in the workplace for them in order for them to do that, does that count as well?

Ms S Wilson—No, because there are supports available in the workplace through a range of government programs. It is about whether this person could work at full award wages for 15 hours or more with this intervention. If it becomes clear that this person cannot work for 15 hours or more and we cannot do anything to support them to work, including the provision of aids or equipment which are available, then that person could reapply for DSP. The information from the employment service provider would be available to the job capacity assessor to make a reassessment.

Senator SIEWERT—Will you be providing criteria to the employment providers as to when that can occur? So would it occur after three months or four months?

Ms S Wilson—We would be providing guidance to them, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—Have they been developed yet?

Ms S Wilson—No.

Senator SIEWERT—Is that what will happen between now and January 2012?

Ms S Wilson—That is correct, Senator.

Senator SIEWERT—So that is what happens if people have not been assessed to go through that process. Presumably there will then be people who have gone through the process and then you make a call. What happens then? Centrelink makes a call as to whether they go on to DSP?

Ms S Wilson—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—So, if they have had all the training, they have been through the capacity assessment and they have been through an employment provider, do they then go on to DSP?

Ms Rose—That would be a matter for the job capacity assessor. But the more evidence that there is to suggest that no program will bring them up to capacity then that is likely to be the outcome.

Senator SIEWERT—And this process applies to people who have not met the 20 points. Can you just go over again when they go into this program?

Ms Rose—There are two things you have to do to qualify—the 20 impairment points and the continuing inability to work. Even if you had the 20 points—

Ms S Wilson—You might be able to work nevertheless.

Senator SIEWERT—Exactly. So people who are manifestly unable to work will not be going through this process.

Ms S Wilson—That is correct.

Senator SIEWERT—How is that call made?

Ms S Wilson—That is determined by the evidence that a job capacity assessor has available to them, if it has not already been determined by Centrelink that they have a manifest incapacity to work. So we have a broader list of things that will be available that denote a manifest inability to work—

Senator SIEWERT—And that will be permanently on someone's files so they do not have to keep revisiting it?

Ms S Wilson—That is correct. Once they have been diagnosed with something that is on that list and it is clear that the severity of this disability or this illness means that this person will not be able to work 15 hours a week on full award wages in the open labour market, then they would be manifestly entitled to the disability support pension, subject to income, assets and those sorts of criteria.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you.

CHAIR—We have just under 10 minutes left in this session so it will now be a matter of priority.

Senator BOYCE—I have one question. Under 'Program 5.2 expenses' in relation to the disability support pension, there is the following statement:

The strong increase between 2009-10 and 2010-11 is mostly attributed to an increase in customers during the economic downturn and is not expected to continue at the same level across the forward years.

How can there be an increase in the disability support pension during an economic downturn?

Ms S Wilson—People with disabilities were claiming the DSP at a much faster rate during the GFC than in other periods. If the labour market is soft, people with a disability find it harder to get a job than is otherwise the case, or their partners may fall out of work. That is the other thing that would occur.

Senator BOYCE—But if they are seeking work and have worked, would they not be on Newstart rather than the disability support pension?

Ms S Wilson—It depends upon the level of the disability and whether or not they were being supported in the labour market in employment. A significant number of claims for DSP are made for people who come out of employment. One of the budget measures that has been implemented arising out of last year's budget changes on better and fairer assessment is for job capacity assessors to take into account recent employment history, which previously was not the case. But during the period of the GFC, which started in 2008, that budget measure had not at that stage been fully implemented.

Senator BOYCE—I can understand that more people might apply. I am just a bit surprised that more people are accepted during an economic downturn.

Dr Hartland—It has been the experience of the last couple of downturns that we do, unfortunately, see an increase in DSP associated with that.

Senator Chris Evans—It is in a sense like when people who are employed last on, if you like, are first off. Those who might have some barriers to employment are more likely to get picked up in an economic boom, as are those with lower skills, with low English language skills or who are Indigenous—

Senator BOYCE—But we have just been talking about the fact that the assessment is around whether they are employable, not whether they are employed. I am just intrigued.

Dr Hartland—The other way of looking at it is to go back to the discussion we were just having with Senator Siewert, which is that we know there are a group of people who go from employment into DSP and we are concerned about that flow and we are doing all we can to make sure that the gateway for the DSP is right, but there is a flow there, too. So this is an aspect of that which goes to what Senator Evans was saying. It would also be the case—to a much less order of magnitude but still you would expect to see it to some degree—that the people exiting the DSP would slow down to the extent that people exit into employment. Again, that is actually a very small group, but it is not a null set, as I understand. So that would slow down.

Senator BOYCE—But a lot of that would be about opportunity to do so rather than their disability?

Dr Hartland—That is right. That is what an economic slowdown does, of course. It does reduce also the opportunity to leave payment and so therefore the stock of people that you are paying goes up.

Ms S Wilson—The other contributor is where a partner loses work. The person with a disability may have been a non-working partner and now they have become eligible for DSP and their partner has become eligible for Newstart allowance, so that has a flow-on effect.

Senator SIEWERT—That one makes sense. Thank you.

Senator ADAMS—Does the National Respite for Carers Program come under FaHCSIA or is that somewhere else?

Dr Hartland—We run a couple of respite programs—one for young carers, if that is what you are thinking of.

Senator ADAMS—It is a combination. The background to this is that a respite centre has been built by the Lions club in Albany in Western Australia. They can take six people but the problem is that they do not seem to fit in. They have elderly people and young people in respite, but they cannot get any recurrent funding at all. They are just wondering where they can go.

Ms S Wilson—It sounds like it is a department of health issue.

Senator ADAMS—That is what I thought. The second issue relates to the Association for the Blind of Western Australia. The first question, which you may need to take on notice, is: what funding do they receive from FaHCSIA? Secondly, is the print disability funding still available? It is something they have been applying for each year.

Dr Hartland—You may have to bear with me.

Dr Harmer—We will take that on notice.

CHAIR—It is quite a specialised question.

Senator ADAMS—Yes, it is. The other question was in relation to the new funding round that is to be evaluated during May 2010.

Dr Hartland—Is this the print disability question?

Senator ADAMS—Yes, and whether that might come to fruition.

Dr Hartland—That is still being considered.

Senator ADAMS—When do you think there will be a result?

Dr Hartland—Soon.

Senator ADAMS—We have ‘shortly’ and ‘soon’.

Senator Chris Evans—If you are not careful it will get to ‘in the fullness of time’.

Dr Harmer—Do not push it back.

Senator Chris Evans—You know, ‘It is not happening any time soon.’

Ms S Wilson—We have not said that, Senator.

Dr Harmer—We have not used that; we said ‘shortly’.

Senator Chris Evans—‘Shortly’ means soon.

Senator ADAMS—But ‘shortly’ to date has even got to the end of 2010, so I am getting a little bit worried about this.

Ms S Wilson—We anticipate it will be well ahead of the end of 2010.

Senator Chris Evans—If it was the end it would have been ‘in the fullness of time’!

Ms Rose—Can I mention something that I forgot to mention earlier in relation to special disability trusts? In two years the government will undertake a review of the amount that can be held in the trust on a concessional basis, the amount that can be gifted, as well as who can request audits. I am sorry, I left that out before.

Senator SIEWERT—I am told that Minister Macklin has received letters around the concerns on the tax creep. I am just wondering: did she pass letters on?

Ms Rose—They just may not have got to us yet.

Dr Hartland—They may not have got to us or a parliamentary area might have given them straight to Treasury without telling us. Alternatively, no-one told me and Sharon. There is a whole series of possibilities.

Senator SIEWERT—I suspect that those people—I understand that people are paying close attention to it—will be sending you copies of the letters.

Dr Hartland—We will get to see them eventually in that case.

Senator SIEWERT—I very quickly want to go on to PHaMS, if possible. Is this where I should be asking about PHaMS?

Dr Harmer—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—I may be being cheeky but, firstly, I want to provide some feedback which I feel I ought to provide—and that is that we have had enormously strong feedback to our committee about people really supporting and liking the program. So I just thought I had better do the right thing and pass that information on. People really like it.

Dr Harmer—Thank you, Senator.

Senator SIEWERT—The second message with that is that we will be watching it like a hawk to make sure it keeps getting funded. But I do have a specific question. It is actually an Indigenous question but I thought it was probably better to ask it here than on Friday so that you can tell me whether I am asking the right area.

Dr Harmer—We will have a go.

CHAIR—It is under PHaMS, so I think it does qualify.

Senator SIEWERT—It is specifically about the program that has been funded in the APY Lands. Is it appropriate to ask that question here?

Ms Winkler—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you tell me whether there has been a program that has been funded in the APY Lands and, if there was, when it was?

Ms Winkler—Yes, there has.

Senator SIEWERT—When it was and who has been funded to provide it?

Dr Harmer—Just bear with us.

Ms Winkler—As you would appreciate, there have been quite a number of different rounds of PHaMS in recent times.

Senator Chris Evans—It is a bit like question time in the Senate: you can never actually find the right brief when you need it. So what I usually do is just make it up. Give that a try.

Ms Carroll—Senator, while the officer is looking for that, could I just give a couple of answers that we took on notice from outcome 6?

CHAIR—Certainly, Ms Carroll.

Ms Carroll—There were two questions. Senator Adams asked about the national community attitudes survey. On the Victorian Health website, there are fact sheets about the survey, the technical report and a summary of findings. I can table this piece of paper which gives you—

Senator ADAMS—On the Victorian Health website?

Ms Carroll—The website is vichealth.vic.gov.au, but it has a very long URL. So I can table this piece of paper which shows you the front of the website and points you to that website. Also, in outcome 6 Senator Boyce asked for some detail about the Respectful Relationships program and the projects funded under round 2. I have the printout from our FaHCSIA website again which points you to which projects were funded, how much they were funded for and a quick description of the project. I will provide both of those.

CHAIR—Thank you, Ms Carroll. Ms Winkler, have you found it?

Ms Winkler—Yes. Centrecare Northern Territory is the organisation that was funded to provide PHaMS in the APY Lands. It first received funding in 2008.

Senator SIEWERT—Is that ongoing funding?

Ms Winkler—They are just about to get a new funding agreement. So they were funded through originally until 2010. So we had three sites.

Senator SIEWERT—You have pre-empted my next question. So there were three sites in the APY Lands.

Ms Winkler—No. There were three remote sites funded at the same time.

Senator SIEWERT—Which ones were those? They were all funded separately. Is that right?

Ms Winkler—Yes. There was the APY Lands, Yuendumu and also Kimberley.

Senator SIEWERT—Are they all the same providers?

Ms Winkler—No, they are not the same providers. The Red Cross is the provider for Kimberley and off the top of my head—I have all the organisations but I would have to work my way through the list to find out who is the provider for Yuendumu.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you take that on notice perhaps?

Ms Winkler—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—Where are they actually providing those services on the sites in the APY Lands? Are they providing them to particular communities on the APY Lands?

Ms Winkler—Yes. In every funding agreement, there was an area specified. I do not have that information in my folder this evening but we do have that detail.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you provide that on notice, if that is possible?

Ms Winkler—Yes.

CHAIR—Ms Winkler, can we get a full briefing on the APY Lands site for Senator Siewert? Can that be put on notice?

Senator SIEWERT—Is that possible?

Ms Winkler—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated. If I could have a briefing on the provision of PHaMS in remote communities—because I am interested in how it is operating in some of the communities—that would be very much appreciated.

Senator Chris Evans—Were you looking to get that as a verbal briefing for interested members of the committee?

CHAIR—Because of the interest in that issue by this committee, we will actually put that into a request for a briefing for the committee on remote PHaMS delivery.

Senator BOYCE—I would like it for PHaMS, full stop. If we are about to finish one question, I would like to ask how many PHaMS places will be funded in 2010-11.

Ms Winkler—In 2010-11, we will have just finalised the rollout. We have just finalised PHaMS round 4, so in 2010-11 we will have the full rollout of the program. Originally, that was meant to be around 900 workers. The client numbers that they are servicing currently without the new services being rolled out indicate that we are well on target to achieve what was originally intended.

CHAIR—Senator Evans, we will get the form of the briefing request correct and we will put that through to the minister.

Senator Chris Evans—Yes, otherwise it was beginning to sound like a conference.

Dr Harmer—Before we break, can I just ask whether there are any questions on special benefit in outcome 3? If not, it will allow me to send a couple of people home who need not wait.

CHAIR—Does anybody have anything in their folders on special benefit?

Ms S Wilson—It has not changed.

CHAIR—Dr Harmer, to the best of our knowledge we do not, so any questions on special benefit will go on notice.

Dr Harmer—Thank you.

CHAIR—We want to thank the officers from outcome 5, Disability and carers. We will have a break and come back with the final one—outcome 3, Community capability and the vulnerable.

Proceedings suspended from 6.33 pm to 7.30 pm

CHAIR—We are moving to the last portfolio outcome for the day, which is outcome 3, Community capability and the vulnerable. Senator Fifield, I believe you are heading off.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you, Chair. There will be the flexibility that there was in outcome 5?

CHAIR—Always.

Senator FIFIELD—That's fantastic!

CHAIR—I have given up.

Senator FIFIELD—I might start at outcome 3.2. I think this is where ‘adventure playgrounds’ falls.

CHAIR—We should put on record, Minister, that we are enjoying now the bribes that Senator Fifield gave us earlier! And we strongly support—

Senator FIFIELD—Bedford, a South Australian disability enterprise.

CHAIR—A very worthwhile company.

Dr Harmer—Can the record show that I have not yet opened mine, Senator!

CHAIR—Thank you, Dr Harmer.

Senator Chris Evans—Let me make it clear: I will succumb at some stage, particularly if we are here at 11.

CHAIR—Ms Farrelly, are you going to take this one? Welcome.

Senator FIFIELD—Thanks, Ms Farrelly. I always learn new things when I am going through the measures budget paper, and I was intrigued that the Commonwealth has been providing direct funding for five adventure playgrounds in Melbourne since 1978. Firstly, could you provide the locations of the five adventure playgrounds?

Ms Farrelly—Yes. Those five playgrounds are located in Melbourne, St Kilda, Fitzroy, Kensington and Prahran.

Senator FIFIELD—There is a certain common theme to those locations: they are very nice inner-city suburbs. Do you have the street addresses for those?

Ms Farrelly—I do not have them with me, but I could provide those on notice if you would like.

Senator FIFIELD—If you could, thank you.

Ms Farrelly—Certainly.

Senator FIFIELD—How much will each playground receive annually?

Ms Farrelly—The total across the five playgrounds, as you will know from the measure, is \$2.7 million over the next four years.

Senator FIFIELD—How much does each playground receive?

Ms Farrelly—Funding until 30 June 2014 for the Fitzroy Adventure Playground is \$768,000.

Senator FIFIELD—I live in Fitzroy, so I am particularly interested in that one.

Ms Farrelly—The Prahran Adventure Playground is \$467,636; the Kensington Adventure Playground is \$467,636; the South Melbourne Adventure Playground is \$494,545; and the St Kilda Adventure Playground is \$447,273.

Senator FIFIELD—Before I ask what the funding is used for, who is the money actually given to? Is it to local government?

Ms Farrelly—They are run by community organisations and the funding is provided to support young people from disadvantaged and/or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Senator FIFIELD—Are they five different organisations that the money goes to or is it the one organisation that looks after the five playgrounds?

Ms Farrelly—I would need to check, but I think one organisation runs two of them. I do not have that in front of me, but I am pretty sure that, out of the five, two are run by one organisation.

Senator FIFIELD—Could you provide the names of the organisations which are funded. What is the funding for? Is it just maintenance?

Ms Farrelly—No, they are staffed playgrounds. They have staff who provide support to young people. The playgrounds are located in or near housing estates and they are to provide access to support. Staff can provide a suitable safe learning environment for young people. They also give opportunities for the parents of those young people to receive assistance and referral services.

Senator FIFIELD—Are these playgrounds open to the public at large?

Ms Farrelly—Yes, they are open to other people who are in close proximity.

Senator FIFIELD—They are not enclosed playgrounds?

Ms Farrelly—No, that is not my understanding.

Senator FIFIELD—Do you know the hours that the playgrounds are staffed?

Ms Farrelly—I do not have that specific information; I am sorry.

Senator FIFIELD—Could you provide that information?

Ms Farrelly—Yes.

Senator FIFIELD—I am wondering whether it is business hours, after hours, weekends.

Ms Farrelly—Yes, certainly I can provide those details.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. So the funding is essentially for staffing. None of the money goes to maintenance or upkeep of the playgrounds? It is all for the provision of the staff who provide the services?

Ms Farrelly—That is my understanding.

Senator FIFIELD—Could you check if any component goes to maintenance?

Ms Farrelly—Yes, I can check that. Ultimately, it is to provide the environment that ensures the facility is open and provides opportunities for young people and their families. Many of our community funding agreements are done in that way, so an organisation is funded to provide that service, but I could find out more specifically if there are any additional maintenance items. It is not specifically noted in the funding agreement, but I will need to check that.

Senator FIFIELD—Are the playgrounds required to provide progress reports or acquit evidence of how they have spent the money?

Ms Farrelly—These adventure playgrounds were formerly administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. We will be starting new funding agreements with the organisations, and part of the way that we work with organisations is to require reports on progress and how they are going. That is done as part of setting the funding agreement in place.

Senator FIFIELD—How do adventure playgrounds indicate their progress and how they are going?

Ms Farrelly—They would be things like how many people come, what sorts of referrals are provided and what sorts of activities are done.

Senator FIFIELD—Does FaHCSIA fund any other adventure playgrounds in Australia?

Ms Farrelly—I am not aware of that. My branch certainly does not.

Senator FIFIELD—So just the five for favoured Melbourne?

Ms Farrelly—It may be that some of the other community grants have other add-ons that involve activities for children around school hours, so I cannot be quite so categorical.

Senator FIFIELD—That is okay. I realise that 1978 is a little while back, but do you know the genesis of this particular program? It does seem to be of a niche nature.

Mr Lewis—As Ms Farrelly has said, we have inherited the program from DEEWR, and it is a long time ago, as you have noted. I do not think we are privy to the original genesis of the program many governments ago.

Senator FIFIELD—No-one has received a grant to write the history of the playgrounds or anything like that?

Mr Lewis—Not at this stage.

Dr Harmer—Not that we are aware of. They are associated with some of the big public housing estates.

Senator FIFIELD—I know them well. They are within eyesight of home. Given the Commonwealth only funds five of these playgrounds, it should not be too hard to provide the addresses of those, so I look forward to that information.

Mr Lewis—I can give you the addresses now.

Dr Harmer—We have those.

Mr Lewis—The Fitzroy Adventure Playground is at the corner of Condell and Young Street in Fitzroy. The Prahran one is at 2 Simmons Street, Prahran. The Skinners one is 211A Dorcas Street, South Melbourne. The St Kilda one is at Neptune Street, St Kilda and the Kensington one is at 85 Kensington Road.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you for that. Anything else that is useful to know about the adventure playgrounds, Ms Farrelly?

Ms Farrelly—What else would you like to know?

Senator FIFIELD—I do not know. Is there anything else that is of historical interest? No gems you want to share?

Dr Harmer—I do not think we have any further information.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you for that. Dr Harmer, obviously you would remember the launch of the national compacts. I know Senator Stephens is the responsible member of the executive. She wears a number of hats and that particular hat is her FaHCSIA hat in relation to the compact, isn't it? What has been the total cost to date of the national compacts process?

Dr Harmer—The development work?

Senator FIFIELD—The development work; the whole program to date.

Ms Carroll—To explain a bit about that, clearly there are two parts of the development work. One is the departmental staff that are involved. We are involved in regular policy development et cetera. Then there are the specific developments like printing, publishing, the cost of the launch, and those sorts of things, which we are able to run through, if they are the kinds of components that you are after.

Senator FIFIELD—Sure. Let's start at the end and work backwards. The cost of the launch?

Ms Farrelly—The cost of launching the compact was \$7,866.53.

Mr Lewis—The bulk of that was probably venue hire costs to the Department of Parliamentary Services; security.

Ms Farrelly—A small amount of catering.

Senator FIFIELD—And I must say, I thought Reverend Costello spoke magnificently there. All those Costellos have the gift of entertaining yet informative speeches.

Ms Farrelly—Since we got excited about it last time, I would like to say it was very exciting on this occasion that there were so many people from across the parliamentary spectrum who attended the compact launch and to see such support and acknowledgement that it was a really sensible way to work forward. It was good you were there.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you, Ms Farrelly. Before I forget, regarding the big board which a number of the participants signed, what has happened to that? Where has that gone to live?

Ms Farrelly—The board is accessible on the compact website. You can actually see the board. There was the signed board which had the—

Dr Harmer—You mean the physical board?

Senator FIFIELD—The physical board. I know the signatories to the compact are available elsewhere, but where has the actual big signed board gone to live?

Ms Farrelly—That is a very good question.

Mr Lewis—We will have to take that one on notice.

Dr Harmer—Do you know where it is, Senator?

Senator FIFIELD—I do not. I often wonder where these things go.

Dr Harmer—We will take that on notice.

Ms Farrelly—It is certainly available. I do not know whether you have been to the national compact website, but it is certainly available there.

Senator FIFIELD—In virtual form, but I am interested in the physical, hard copy.

Ms Farrelly—Yes. I am sure we could find it and let you know.

Senator FIFIELD—If you could. I would hate to think that that is sitting in a FaHCSIA basement car park or something.

Dr Harmer—No.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you—that would be useful. Regarding the various materials produced in relation to the compact, such as the compact book, how many of these were produced and what was the cost?

Ms Farrelly—The total cost of the publishing and design was around \$74,000 and producing the submissions, getting them web-formatted and having appropriate accessible formats cost \$18,442.84.

Senator FIFIELD—Were there any other publication costs for ancillary materials?

Mr Lewis—Much of the material was online—this was quite revolutionary in many ways—in the lead-up to production of the hard copy that you have, which is why I think Ms Farrelly is referring you to the website. It has been quite a deliberate stratagem to mitigate the costs and to engage quite differently using electronic media. If you look at the site, you will see how many have signed up electronically since that day when you saw the board signed. That has been deliberate. That is a useful thing to keep in the back of your mind.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you for that. No wristbands were produced? I remember being critical of the former government for producing wristbands for Harmony Day as not a necessary expenditure.

Ms Farrelly—No wristbands.

Senator FIFIELD—No ancillary material such as that?

Senator Chris Evans—I am a fan of mousepads myself. I have some in my office.

Senator FIFIELD—At least they are functional and of historic interest.

Senator Chris Evans—And conversation starters.

Senator FIFIELD—That is right. They are of historic interest as well. Putting those sorts of production issues aside, what would have been the other costs in the compact process?

Ms Farrelly—I can break those down for you.

Senator FIFIELD—Yes, thanks.

Ms Farrelly—In 2009-10 the total cost was just over \$195,000. That was made up of some of those costs I have just mentioned in terms of developing the compact itself. Launching of the compact I have mentioned, and also the sector advisory group, the joint task force that was convened in July 2009, and also the 20 July workshop in 2009.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you for that. More generally, where to now for the compact?

Ms Farrelly—To date, to 25 May, 214 organisations have signed up as partners in the compact and we have 15 champions of the compact, of whom five are senior government members, including Dr Harmer, and 10 sector leaders. Their role is about promoting the principles of the compact in their work. For the next stages of implementing the compact, we have developed a sector advisory group to work with us. We also have an across-government group that works with us to ensure that we have a united way of working as a government service and developing and implementing the compact itself.

As I mentioned, we are also working on the website, which has key information about the compact, and increasing functionality. People can interact with us through the website. They can come online and provide information and ask questions. As Mr Lewis mentioned, that will be a very key way of moving forward in terms of our relationship on the compact. The cross-government working group is looking at a Commonwealth implementation plan: what will be the Commonwealth's role and what we will do differently in relation to the eight key action areas. As you know, it was launched in March, so we really are very much in the starting implementation phase.

Senator FIFIELD—Has it yet been determined what the reporting framework will be for achievements on the eight priority areas for action?

Ms Farrelly—We are still working through the most sensible way to do that, but it will certainly involve public accountability, using the website.

Senator FIFIELD—Anything more specific or concrete that you can indicate?

Ms Carroll—I will respond to that. Clearly this is one of the areas where we have had the launch of the compact. There is an advisory group, as Ms Farrelly said. There is also the interdepartmental working group and we are working through developing what the Commonwealth actions might be et cetera. That is a work in progress, so at this point in time we cannot be very specific. For example, there is a Secretaries Committee on Social Policy and Dr Harmer has spoken there about the compact and how other departments are able to take forward some of the key components of the compact. We are certainly spreading the word and making sure people are aware of the compact.

At a recent Community Response Task Force—that is a joint ministerial task force—some of the sector were saying that there is still a need for people to be aware of the compact. There are a lot of organisations that are not aware of the compact, are not aware that they can sign up, are not aware of what it means and all of those things. We are spreading the word across government as well as across the sector.

Mr Lewis—Senator, you would have seen the media release a week or so ago from Senator Stephens in relation to red tape. There are other progressive announcements that have been made. Media releases can be made available to you in relation to elements that align with the eight priority areas.

Senator FIFIELD—That would be good. Thank you. Is there a compact unit or a compact secretariat in the department, or is that managed from within your area, Ms Farrelly?

Ms Farrelly—Yes, it is managed in my branch.

Senator FIFIELD—There is no dedicated compact unit as such?

Ms Farrelly—There is a very small team of people who are working on that.

Senator FIFIELD—How many people?

Ms Farrelly—Between three and four FTE.

Senator FIFIELD—Is there a separate budget for compact-related support?

Ms Farrelly—It is managed, effectively, as part of the whole branch.

Senator FIFIELD—So there is no dollar figure that specifically links to the compact support work going forward, other than the three or four staff?

Mr Lewis—There is no specific budget in that sense. Ms Farrelly's branch manages the across-the-board spectrum, including volunteering and a whole lot of other activities that align with the compact work, so the same resources are able to be moved to different work points and pressures.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you. I will move to volunteering. There is a volunteers strategy in the pipeline?

Ms Farrelly—There is a National Volunteering Strategy. That is correct.

Senator FIFIELD—Where is that up to?

Ms Carroll—It is another thing that is being developed. It is part of the broad suite of components. We have the compact; we are working on the Volunteering Strategy. The department is working that through, but it is not at a point where we have anything significant to share. But Ms Farrelly can probably give a little bit more detail.

Ms Farrelly—The National Volunteering Strategy is being developed to be released next year, ahead of the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteering. Senator Stephens is leading the work on the strategy and has spoken to her state and territory government colleagues, in particular through the Community and Disability Services Ministers Committee. The work is being progressed in consultation with each of the state and territory governments, who, of course, have their own volunteering strategies. The aim is to look at harmonising some of that work to make sure that we really and truly have a national effort in working towards supporting volunteers. There is also the Volunteering Policy Advisory Group, and that advisory group has met to provide advice on the strategy. I could give you the names of the people on the advisory group, if you are interested.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you.

Ms Farrelly—The advisory committee is chaired by Senator Stephens, who, as you know, is the Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and Parliamentary Secretary for the Voluntary Sector; Mr Doug Taylor, who is the chief executive officer of United Way; Associate Professor Melanie Oppenheimer from the University of New England; Ms Catherine Hunter, who is the director of corporate citizenship for KPMG; Mr Jelenko Dragisic, who is the chief executive officer of Volunteering Queensland; Margaret Bell, who is the president of the Chain Reaction Foundation; Major General Hori Howard, who is the chair of Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum; Mr Cary Pedicini, who is the chief executive officer of Volunteering Australia; Mr Gregory Andrews, who is the chief executive officer of Indigenous Community Volunteers; Mr Matt Miller, who is the chief

executive officer of the Australian Sports Commission; and Ms Dimity Fifer, who is the chief executive officer of Australian Volunteers International.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you for that. In developing the National Volunteer Strategy, are there any main principles or objectives underpinning the strategy?

Ms Farrelly—The main aim of the Volunteering Strategy is to look at ways to support volunteering in Australia, to look at some of the potential barriers to volunteering as they currently exist, and to set a course for volunteering—to set a blueprint—for the next 10 years.

Senator FIFIELD—There is a program called Indigenous Community Volunteers.

Ms Farrelly—That is not within my branch.

Senator FIFIELD—That is something we should look at for Friday.

Ms Farrelly—I think it is in Greg Roche's branch.

Dr Harmer—On Friday we can answer questions on that.

CHAIR—Dr Harmer, do you wish to put on record that it is a separate organisation?

Dr Harmer—It is a separate organisation, yes. It is not a statutory body within government like, say, IBA or ILC.

Senator SCULLION—It does receive funds to the tune of \$1.7 million, doesn't it?

Dr Harmer—Yes.

Senator FIFIELD—Who does it receive those funds from? Is that from the FaHCSIA portfolio?

Dr Harmer—It is now, I think. I would need to check. It was funded by DEEWR and I think it is now primarily us. I am operating from memory. I do not think I have the people here who know the detail, but I think it was funded partly by DEEWR and partly by us; I think it is now primarily us.

Senator FIFIELD—Senator Scullion was indicating that there is an issue of funding being cut by 83 per cent.

Dr Harmer—We can answer that. I know a little bit about that, because they are being allowed access to their \$20 million capital, which compensates for the cash flow—the funds that they are now getting from DEEWR. That is about the extent of my understanding of it. On the surface, it does appear that they have had a big cut, but the truth is that, for the first time, they now have access to the return from their \$20 million capital, which they did not have before.

Senator FIFIELD—So we will achieve full satisfaction on Friday?

Dr Harmer—Indeed. Minister Evans is not so sure.

Senator SIEWERT—I would not guarantee that we are getting a satisfactory—

Dr Harmer—'Full satisfaction' is a tall order. We will do our best.

Senator Chris Evans—I must say, I have never got it out of estimates.

Senator FIFIELD—We dream big dreams here!

Mr Lewis—I have a series of media releases starting on 23 October 2009 and progressively going forward, which have all been put out by Senator Stephens, that will answer many of your questions in relation to the purpose of the strategy. They have a range of explanations about what the strategy is aiming to achieve. Would you like me to table those?

Senator FIFIELD—Sure. That is it on volunteering. Before I yield to my colleagues, we have discussed Victorian bushfire recovery at each estimates since the fires, and the Commonwealth's involvement has been progressively and understandably winding down. FaHCSIA has been the lead Commonwealth agency, so I would like just a quick update as to where the Commonwealth involvement is at.

Mr Lewis—We have copies of the report that we have been tabling regularly at the last series of estimates. We have a copy for everyone here, if you would like those.

Senator FIFIELD—Thank you.

Mr Lewis—It is fairly exhaustive.

Dr Harmer—I think it contains similar information to what has been previously tabled.

Senator FIFIELD—I am having a quick perusal as it is handed around.

Senator Chris Evans—Mr Lewis, is there anything you particularly want to draw the committee's attention to?

Mr Lewis—As you have probably gathered, it has been some time since the fire, and the Commonwealth—certainly FaHCSIA—has maintained its involvement right through. Up until recently I have been regularly chairing a whole-of-government committee of senior executives from across most portfolios.

Senator FIFIELD—Commonwealth?

Mr Lewis—Commonwealth portfolios. That has then been echoed by the work that VBRRA has been continuing. As you can see from the attachments to the material that has been given to you, the Commonwealth has made a huge contribution to a range of activities in Victoria, and we continue to maintain close contact with VBRRA as they progress with their state-wide recovery plan.

Senator FIFIELD—Does the Commonwealth have any representation on VBRA?

Mr Lewis—Not formally at this time, no. We have an observer state office person who goes along and is party to the discussions, but who does not actively participate in decision making.

Senator FIFIELD—It is someone from the state FaHCSIA office?

Mr Lewis—That is right.

Senator FIFIELD—Is that the state manager?

Mr Lewis—Yes, it is.

Senator FIFIELD—Forgive me for my lack of knowledge on the structure of VBRRA, but is that on the board of VBRA or whatever the senior executive organ oversight in VBRRA is?

Mr Lewis—I will pass to Ms Bitmead.

Ms Bitmead—The FaHCSIA officer who would attend meetings is in discussions with VBRRA and with Victorian government officials. I do not have a list of who would attend those regular meetings, but we could get that for you. FaHCSIA is involved in regular monitoring of progress against the national partnership agreement which supports the Rebuilding Together plan. There are details of that in some of the material we have tabled here today. The bulk of those meetings would be going through the projects which have been set out in those agreements and status reports, and discussion on the achievements against those project plans.

Senator FIFIELD—Many of which would have a component of Commonwealth funding from a range of portfolios?

Ms Bitmead—There is Commonwealth funding as part of that agreement, yes.

Senator FIFIELD—As the minister kindly invited, is there anything in particular about the Commonwealth's involvement that you would like to draw to our attention?

Ms Bitmead—The Commonwealth is continuing to promote the services that are available to those in the bushfire affected regions, and that is to ensure that those people are fully aware of entitlements and services that are available to them. In addition to those provided by the Victorian government, there are a range of services from the human services portfolio that remain relevant for these people—for example, Centrelink, the Child Support Agency and the tax office. There is a long list of services that remain relevant for these people. As people move forward in their recovery—and that is different for everybody in recovering from such a significant event—there is close monitoring of what services are required and how people can be directed to those services.

Senator FIFIELD—Is there any formal or informal ongoing liaison or briefing with federal members of parliament in the affected areas in relation to Commonwealth involvement? I know that obviously it was intensively so in the immediate aftermath, but I am wondering if that is something that is ongoing or if it has wound down as the Commonwealth involvement has wound down.

Ms Carroll—Parliamentary Secretary Shorten has recently held a meeting of bureaucrats across the Commonwealth government to make sure people are aware that while the intensity is not there any more, we certainly are still very closely involved in making sure we maintain engagement. As you indicated, there is funding in the \$466 million that comes from quite a range of areas across the Commonwealth government.

I am not aware of direct briefing with other members of parliament any more—we would have to take that on notice—but certainly there is engagement at both ministerial and parliamentary secretary level on these issues.

Senator FIFIELD—If you would not mind taking on notice whether there is any liaison that happens. It may be that the FaHCSIA state manager maintains contact with the federal members in the relevant areas, or maybe Parliamentary Secretary Shorten himself does.

Ms Carroll—Parliamentary Secretary Shorten certainly still visits the area and has a range of engagements at different times.

Mr Lewis—Through briefing Parliamentary Secretary Shorten for those activities, we are certainly aware that he is very active in talking to local members and others in the affected areas. He takes it very seriously.

Ms Bitmead—The scale of that interaction would average about three times a week every week. The parliamentary secretary brings a range of issues forward for the department to look at in terms of where coordination from the Commonwealth may be relevant to addressing the issues that have been raised with him as he visits the areas.

Senator FIFIELD—As I say, I would be interested as to the ongoing contact and liaison there is with the federal members in those areas.

Senator Chris Evans—I am sure Fran Bailey would not miss him at the divisions if she had not been kept informed.

Senator FIFIELD—Ms Bailey does not need an invitation to put her thoughts. Anyway, I appreciate your advice on that.

Senator Chris Evans—As is perfectly appropriate.

Senator FIFIELD—Indeed, thank you for that.

Senator SCULLION—I will be dealing with the expansion of compulsory income management to the Northern Territory and, potentially, nationally. I know that legislation has not passed in the Senate, but it is proposed to commence on 1 July. What preliminary work has been done to expand the number of BasicsCard merchants in Darwin?

Ms Edwards—That question is primarily one for Centrelink. They particularly deal with merchants. We can say there is a lot of work being done to increase the number of merchants over the Northern Territory and I can provide you with how many there are, but the actual process is for Centrelink.

Senator SCULLION—But you have how many?

Ms Edwards—I think I do, yes.

Dr Harmer—We can probably get that for you quickly, Senator, if we do not have it.

Ms Edwards—You would be aware that we are very well advanced through a replacement BasicsCard process to replace the original card with a new enhanced card. I have figures for the two different cards, which are slightly different. There are 3,012 merchants approved for BasicsCard 2 and there are 2,945 merchants approved for BasicsCard 1. Obviously that transition is now in its late stages.

Senator SCULLION—So 900-odd have still got to transition. Those two numbers are the sum of the merchants?

Ms Edwards—No. Most of those will be overlapped. They will fall into both categories. There will be merchants who are taking both the old BasicsCard and new one. The key number at the moment is 3,012 approved for BasicsCard 2 that will be going forward. That is at 26 March. I would expect there would be a few extra by now.

Senator SCULLION—Given that the income management is going to extend out of the notional intervention area into other areas, how many of the merchants that are outside the

intervention area are new to the system? I acknowledge there were some in Katherine and Tennant Creek—those that were closely adjacent—but there were probably not a great number in places like Darwin.

Ms Edwards—I should clarify that the 3,012 figure is for the whole of Australia.

Senator SIEWERT—That is what I was going to try and clarify. Can you break that down into states?

Ms Edwards—Yes, I can. Going with the BasicsCard 2 numbers—which, as I have explained, vary slightly because of the transition—in the Northern Territory, 529; in Western Australia, 647; in Queensland, 496; in South Australia, 208; in Victoria, 481; and in New South Wales, ACT and Tasmania, for which I have aggregated figures, 651.

Senator SCULLION—We will deal with the trial and the spread in the Northern Territory first. Of those 529, how many are merchants that would have been certified since the announcement that they would be expanding the trial out of the intervention area?

Ms Edwards—I do not have those figures, but I do have some information about where some of those merchants are located. Obviously a lot of community stores would be amongst BasicsCard merchants. In addition to that, for example, in the Northern Territory there are 40 Best and Less stores. No, hang on. This tells me it is the Northern Territory, but I do not think there are 40 Best and Less stores in the Northern Territory. There are 40 Best and Less stores, presumably, Australia-wide. There are a large number of Woolworths stores—nearly 200. That is including Big W. There are a large number of Coles stores, including Kmart, Target, Bi-Lo, and Coles itself. The majority of those merchants would be in urban centres or in centres such as Katherine.

Senator SCULLION—Most of those would have been in existence prior to the rollout. Woolworths as a franchise signed up; so did Target, Coles and Big W. The circumstances, as you would be aware, after the initial rollout within the intervention area and adjacent areas, were that there were a number of merchants who relied on or had the convention of a lot of Indigenous trade or trade generally, and those were the ones which were quite slow in acknowledging their difficulties. We eventually caught up. It took some time.

I am hoping that we have learnt from each tranche. We have now done the rollout of the BasicsCard within the intervention area. We have done some stuff in Cannington in Western Australia. Hopefully, the rollout in Darwin would inform that. Do you have how many merchants in the Northern Territory would now have access to the BasicsCard, as a consequence of the intervention, that did not have access? In other words, we are saying we are now spreading. We did have some areas or large organisations with a BasicsCard capacity, but have we engaged—

Dr Harmer—Do you want us to discount those or count those as well?

Senator SCULLION—I am basically asking: how many did we have then? How many extra people have taken this up as a consequence of notionally saying, ‘We are now expanding it’?

Ms Edwards—I can take on notice the gradual increase in BasicsCard merchants. I expect the trend that will be seen is an increase in the number of merchants throughout the period. I

would not expect there to be any particular jump at the time of, say, the announcement of the new income management scheme, but more a gradual increase over time. But we can provide you that trend data.

Senator SCULLION—Clearly, those are some of the large stores, and in Darwin we have probably got more of them than we have had in other areas and I would expect it is not going to be as painful as it used to be, but there would be still quite a number of areas that I know in Darwin that would not be close to one of those stores or areas. If it is the case that there are going to be people who have their income quarantined to be able to get access to one of those stores now, what sort of work have you done to ensure that there is access across Darwin? Have you done some mapping or modelling to show that people will have access to somewhere with a BasicsCard?

Dr Harmer—I want to be as helpful as I can, but those questions would best be answered by Centrelink, who have responsibility for distributing the card and doing the marketing and the negotiating. I know the sorts of stores you are talking about. They are not the Coles and Woolworths but they are other grocery stores et cetera. Once it is marketed properly and the Centrelink organisation makes it available, they will want to come on board because they will know that their business will not be as good if they do not. I do not think there will be such a huge marketing or take-up issue in those areas, but I do not think we would know precisely what Centrelink are doing to effect the rollout.

Mr Sandison—We can take that on notice—

Dr Harmer—We can try to find out for you.

Mr Sandison—and work with Centrelink to get some information for you.

Senator SCULLION—All right.

Ms Edwards—I mentioned the larger stores are the ones I have got in my folder here. But, as you would know, there are a large number of smaller merchants across the Territory. Exactly the spread we will take on notice, but there are a large variety of merchants involved in the BasicsCard scheme.

Senator SCULLION—Just a quick segue: this may well be a Centrelink question, which I suspect a number of them will be now, but you might be able to have a bit of a crack at it. You are aware that one of the concerns about the BasicsCard, from what we remember as the original notion—now a somewhat changed notion—has been this: is it a card with which you can buy everything except for cigarettes, alcohol, pornography and gambling materials, or is it a card that provides you with a list of things that you can buy? It is a significant difference. Has much thought been given to that, given our learnings about that and constant change in a different demographic? It is now going to Darwin, a fundamentally different place, where you have got people selling furniture with a pie warmer and a coke, so that of course gives them access to the BasicsCard. We have seen all that happen. Have we taken that into consideration when expanding it into mainstream places?

Ms Edwards—As I understand it, I would explain it in this way: obviously, income-managed funds cannot be used to buy the excluded goods you have referred to—alcohol, tobacco, gambling and pornography. The BasicsCard is our central mechanism for delivering

a convenient way for people to use those income-managed funds. It is not the only way, and we, with Centrelink, are working hard to make sure there is the greatest range of merchants.

The criterion by which merchants are permitted to join the scheme is that they deal primarily in priority-need goods. Those are set out in the legislation. That is a very broad range, and so there is a broad range of merchants that can become eligible for the BasicsCard. That is in continual review, both as to the merchants that may have applied or that might need to become BasicsCard merchants. But we should note that it is not the only way you can use your income-managed funds. You can go to Centrelink and say, for example, 'I have met all my priority needs and I really want to go and buy such-and-such a good from a shop that is not a BasicsCard merchant,' and Centrelink will make arrangements to allow that money to be spent there. So the BasicsCard, yes, is a work in progress to have the greatest amount of merchants and it does not include everyone as yet, but there are other methods to use those income-managed funds at those other businesses in appropriate cases.

Senator SCULLION—My concern with that would be the information that we have from the original rollout. I followed, as you would be aware from previous discussions, one particular lady who wanted to buy a fishing reel and it took nearly three days—and they cut down half a dozen rainforests—to get Centrelink to say, 'Yes, you can go and buy the fishing reel.' A handline would have been, I think, \$13 or something.

Dr Harmer—I think they have learnt a lot. Centrelink have been doing a lot of work in this space. They know this is the way we are going. They have been investing, they have been looking at what is happening around the world. We would not have the detail of precisely what effort and work they have put in or how much they have come along the track in development, but I would be pretty confident—

Senator SCULLION—Dr Harmer, I accept that. I am just saying these are the issues that we faced before.

Dr Harmer—Let me assure you that, as the policy body working with the delivery body, we are very keen to make this work as well as we possibly can so that neither the merchants nor the individuals are disadvantaged. We need good technology to do it and I am pretty confident that Centrelink have got this now pretty well under control. That is not to say that there will not be a few little glitches, but I think it is unlikely we will find the problems that we had in the early stage 1 BasicsCard.

Senator Chris Evans—Senator, I had you undercutting the role of professional fishermen by supporting that intervention!

Senator SCULLION—Indeed, and I am always concerned about that, Minister, but I give exemption to some circumstances.

Senator Chris Evans—Yes. It was a very strange example coming from you.

Senator SCULLION—Perhaps it is a question of Centrelink on Friday. We will deal with some of those issues then. In terms of looking for what sort of modelling has been done, one of the clear impacts, we would think, is that, if you have more clients that are coming in, you are going to have a spike in the need for assessments and officers generally. Obviously, that will be for Centrelink officers and perhaps they will have the numbers. But are you aware of

some modelling that has been done to try to get to the bottom of exactly what extra resources there are going to be?

Dr Harmer—I am aware that they will be working very carefully to stage the rollout so that the numbers coming in will be digestible. They are giving a lot of thought to the staging of the rollout to make sure that we do not get ahead of ourselves. I am not sure that they have planned precisely the communities, but—

Mr Sandison—There has been lots of work done through the development of this process and the initiative to ensure that Centrelink believe they have the capability to implement it appropriately. One of those primary issues—like with anything in the Northern Territory—is the mixed capability that is needed for remote areas, metro areas and so on. That has been the discussions that we have had with them. Whether it is the BasicsCard or the broader engagement of individuals, the implementation plan that will be needed to institute this has been carefully worked through.

Senator SCULLION—So as you carefully roll out something, the values behind the care in the rollout—and I acknowledge and appreciate that it should happen—what are the principles behind that? Are we going to deal with those people who most need income management first, or are we going to do it in Karama and Malak or Palmerston? Is it a spatial rollout?

Dr Harmer—We will have to do it on a spatial basis. I think that is the way that Centrelink are planning it, is it?

Ms Edwards—That is right. The planning is well advanced, although exactly when has not been locked down. But it will be done quite quickly across the whole of the Northern Territory, within say two to three months, in a staggered way, in an orderly way; so one area of the Territory first, starting the next zone perhaps only a couple of weeks later. So within two to three months every customer, in the whole of the Territory, who is continuing, exiting, transitioning, coming on, would have had a one-on-one interview with Centrelink. The vast majority of those will be done in that initial sweep of the Territory.

Senator SCULLION—So do you know how many you have been planning on? What sort of numbers do you think that would mean? Everybody who is currently on some sort of income support, apart from those acknowledged in the legislation, is going to have a face-to-face interview, a phone interview, or a file assessment.

Ms Edwards—Our estimated numbers, which I think were discussed in some detail last time, have not changed.

Senator SCULLION—Can you tell me what they were again?

Mr Sandison—Slightly over 20,000 would be on the new scheme, and I think it was a bit over 16,000 of the current numbers on the existing scheme. But I think we also discussed last time that there are a range of people on some of the income support payments, like students for example, where we would not expect them to have to go through a full process. But as students they will have certain amounts of information that will be available, and even Centrelink systems, already to get on that income support payment that might prove their abilities or what they are actually doing at that point in time.

Senator SCULLION—So you are confident—it is not your organisation—that the planning indicates that Centrelink are going to be able to triage some 20,000, give or take three months; whatever it is going to be?

Dr Harmer—In a staged way, we believe that they have done adequate planning to do that.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I jump in here? Are you saying this is going to be rolled out in two or three months to everybody who is on income support, within the categories, in the NT?

Ms Edwards—Over two to three months it will be rolled out, under current planning, to all the regions of the Territory and capture a large number of all the people who are either coming into the scheme for the first time, transitioning from old income management to a new income management category, or exiting the scheme. There will always be individuals who, perhaps in a remote context, are not there on the day that the remote team goes or something like that; people who are difficult to find. But for the bulk of them, yes, it is proposed to do that in that initial sweep and then follow up with people after that.

Senator SIEWERT—So in the NT there is going to be no designation of disadvantaged areas; it is just rolling out to everywhere?

Mr Sandison—It is working through. It is designed to be for the whole of the Northern Territory, with the intent that by the end of December the huge majority will be completed after we have started in the stages that Ms Edwards has talked about.

Ms Edwards—But we think, presuming a 1 July start date for the legislation, it will be well before December, well before the weather problems come in, that the vast majority will be done.

Senator SIEWERT—In terms of what we discussed earlier, I thought you had given an indication that the first area you are starting in, geographically, was the Palmerston area. Is that still the case or has that changed?

Mr Sandison—I do not recall Palmerston being indicated.

Ms Edwards—No, I am not aware of it ever having been proposed to be Palmerston first.

Mr Sandison—Was that from the last estimates, that you thought that was—

Senator SIEWERT—To tell you the truth, I cannot remember if it was actually in estimates or whether it was in the Senate inquiry. We have definitely been told at some stage that it was intended for Palmerston to be first. I just cannot remember if it was here or the Senate inquiry.

Dr Harmer—I do not think that is accurate.

Ms Edwards—No.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay.

Mr Sandison—We will check and see whether or not there was a statement made to that effect and, obviously, if there has been, we will correct it.

Senator SIEWERT—Okay, that is fine. What you are saying now is that it is not starting there, it is just going—

Dr Harmer—No.

Senator SIEWERT—Where is it going to—

Ms Edwards—Choosing the first region depends a bit on picking somewhere that is manageable to start with, also picking somewhere where there is a relatively large number of people on new income management, to give them the priority to transition.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you explain what you have just said in a bit more detail, please?

Ms Edwards—People who are on income management now, some of those will be transitioning to new income management, some of those will be exiting.

Senator SIEWERT—Sorry. Why will they be exiting?

Ms Edwards—They might be on age pension or disability support pension and not be subject to the vulnerability. The areas where the least number of existing income management customers are: there are reasons for those to be later: to allow the communication campaign to have more coverage before we get to those people, so the people are more familiar with income management first.

Senator SIEWERT—In other words, those people that are already in prescribed areas will go on to a new process first. Is that what you are talking about?

Ms Edwards—Not necessarily. I am just trying to indicate the various factors. The current planning of Centrelink—and this is not set down—is to start somewhere like the Barkly first, where we have a number of communities right across the area, including the town and so on, and then move into other regions.

Senator SIEWERT—So where you have a high proportion of people already on income management? Is that what you mean?

Ms Edwards—Yes.

Ms Carroll—I think it is just trying to describe the factors that are being taken into account, to look at what area Centrelink would go to first—a kind of roll-through. One of the big things is going to an area which would have a lot of people already on the current income management system.

Senator SIEWERT—And filling the gaps.

Ms Carroll—And then moving from there, because clearly it is easier because they are already on income management.

Senator SIEWERT—When I was in Centrelink on Thursday of last week, I asked about the \$450 million budget.

Ms Edwards—\$350 million.

Senator SIEWERT—They break it down, anyway, into four years. Why has there been an allocation for four years when the government said this is, in the first instance, being rolled out in the NT for two years, after which there will be an evaluation, as I understand it, and then there will be a decision made about the future of the process?

Ms Edwards—May be that is a question for Centrelink, I would imagine.

Senator SIEWERT—No, this is policy.

Mr Sandison—But I think the issue is that the policy decision was that the evaluation work would commence, so it would not necessarily commence and finish just on the two-year point. So there is still a requirement for the ongoing work—

Dr Harmer—While the evaluations continue.

Mr Sandison—and the decision government said about where it might go next would happen subsequent to an evaluation. It would be ‘informed by’, I think was the term used by the minister—that any expansion beyond the Northern Territory would be informed by the review or the evidence that came through from this process and that that would start in two years time. I do not think that is out of kilter with having a four-year cycle of funding to run it, and the evidence would inform future decisions of government on where they might go next or if they go somewhere next after the Northern Territory.

Senator SIEWERT—So we might have to renew the budget just in case we roll this out everywhere else?

Mr Sandison—No, that is a separate issue. This is funding that is based on the Northern Territory.

Dr Harmer—The budget is for the Northern Territory.

Mr Sandison—The only thing the budget is there for is the Northern Territory.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you.

Senator SCULLION—In the exposure draft there are a few references to the requirement to do a money management course as part of the policy of being on income management. What are the circumstances that you settled on that would require completion of a money management course?

Mr Sandison—Are you talking about the exposure draft of the policy papers that were recently released?

Senator SCULLION—Yes, indeed. I am asking about the circumstances under which someone who has been deemed to have their income quarantined would also be expected to do a money management course. I hope I have got the right vernacular there. That is what I took from the draft.

Ms Edwards—There is only one circumstance in which someone is required to do a money management course absolutely—a hard requirement like that—and that is when they are seeking to access the matched savings payment, which is a scheme whereby, if you do a money management course and then establish a pattern of savings for at least 13 weeks, you will get a payment to match the amount of those savings. However, all income managed customers are to be offered money management opportunities.

Dr Harmer—If they want to participate, they can.

Ms Edwards—It is not compulsory.

Senator SCULLION—So one lot have to do it?

Dr Harmer—Yes.

Senator SCULLION—I understand that. But the other cohort are either offered it or they are told, 'You should take it up,' and there may not be a particular requirement.

Ms Edwards—They would be encouraged, and it would be made available to them.

Senator SCULLION—What is the cost of the money management course?

Mr Riley—There is no cost to the client. They are referred to it and the cost of delivering it is included in the cost of funding the money management services which exist throughout the Northern Territory.

Senator SCULLION—I would have thought with the announcement of this, given that some would be required to do the course and some would be encouraged to do the course, that there would be an additional pull on resources.

Mr Riley—There is and there is also additional funding for the services.

Senator SCULLION—But the additional funding would reflect a predicted increase in demand.

Mr Riley—It would reflect a predicted increase in demand for use of the money management support, whether that is provided in an emergency relief agency financial counselling service or a money management service, as well as the delivery of an approved money management course.

Senator SCULLION—It would not be correct for me to link the specific compulsory requirement and the voluntary, encouraged requirements to the increase in funds for the financial management services generally?

Mr Riley—There would be a range of demand for money management services.

Senator SCULLION—What is the increase?

Mr Riley—Just bear with me while I turn to that page in the brief.

Mr Lewis—While Mr Riley is looking for that, obviously we have got some experience in running the money management program, both in WA and in the NT, and this expansion to support the changes in legislation is something that is predictable, to the extent that we have a customer base and we know what the services are.

Mr Riley—Senator, there is \$53 million allocated over four years, from 2010-11 through to 2013-14, to continue and expand coverage of financial counselling and money management education in the Territory. That is comprised of \$46 million for money management and Commonwealth financial counselling, \$4.8 million for the matched savings payments and \$2.6 million for departmental expenses.

Senator SCULLION—How many providers of the money management courses are there across the Northern Territory?

Mr Riley—There are 15 organisations that are currently delivering services in the NT. Four of those deliver money management services only, four deliver an integrated financial counselling and emergency relief service, six deliver money management with emergency relief and one delivers money management financial counselling and emergency relief.

Senator SCULLION—So it can still be said that all 15 in some aspect can deliver money management.

Mr Riley—They can deliver some form of money management or financial management support, yes.

Senator SCULLION—In your answer, for each of those the words ‘money management’ came out. When we are talking about doing a money management course, that is the same thing. Would they be able to meet the requirements of FaHCSIA?

Mr Riley—In the first instance, only money management services are currently equipped to deliver an approved money management course. The plan is to train workers within the financial counselling organisations to, over time, also be able to deliver an approved money management course.

Senator SCULLION—I just want to know—because the vernacular is subtle but it is all in the nuance—that the 15 bodies at some stage will be able to provide the money management course, both the compulsory one and the one that we encourage.

Mr Riley—No. I would need to clarify that for you.

Senator SCULLION—I will rephrase my question, sorry, Mr Riley. How many of those 15 organisations do you think would be able to meet the requirements of the money management course that we are talking about?

Mr Riley—All 15 can deliver money management support. Only the money management services at this time will be able to deliver an approved money management course.

Senator SCULLION—How many are there of those?

Mr Riley—There are 11 services.

Senator SCULLION—It is not important to know where those services are. Do they cover the whole of the Northern Territory?

Mr Lewis—There are two other things that we perhaps should mention. In addition to those 15 organisations, a recent innovation was the mobile money management education unit, which was launched by Minister Macklin only a month or so ago. That involves two vans with trailers which travel around the Territory and educate in situ in schools and in other venues and they have the money management capacity as well. In terms of the breadth, you have your fixed sites, which we can provide to you, no problem, but you also have this new innovation, mobile MoneyBusiness and MoneyMob, that is going on that you might be aware of.

Senator SCULLION—But would those mobile vans have the capacity to deliver the course in the same way that financial services does?

Mr Riley—No. The intention with the van is that it helps to embed the services within a community.

Senator SCULLION—Are you aware of the locations?

Mr Riley—I apologise in advance for my pronunciation of some of these names. We have Nguigu and surrounding districts serviced by a money management service. There is a

MoneyBusiness service in Tennant Creek. That just goes to the type of course they deliver. There is a money management service in Oenpelli, Belyuen, Bagot and surrounding areas. There is a money management service in the Laynhapuy homelands. There is another money management service at Kalano. There is a money management service servicing the Alice Springs town camps, as well as out to Hermannsburg, Papunya and surrounds. There is a money management service for Angurugu and surrounds. There is a money management service in Wadeye and a money management service in Maningrida.

Senator SCULLION—That certainly appears to cover the main centres. Clearly there are areas where there are not those organisations. You might want to take this on notice, Mr Harmer: have you done an assessment to ensure that people will be able to get access right across the Territory?

Mr Harmer—Sure. We are hoping that the mobile centres, once at capacity, will help fill in. We are hoping also that the money management services in their various locations will be able to move and service people in other places.

Ms Carroll—And, as Mr Riley said, in terms of trying to develop the capacity of the other services that we have in other places, it is also about building that capacity to offer those programs as well.

Mr Riley—At the moment we believe that we service 90 communities. Over the coming weeks we will be engaged in expansion and activity to try and expand that service out.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I jump in there?

Senator SCULLION—Certainly.

Senator SIEWERT—How many people have been accessing the financial services over the last 12 months?

Mr Riley—I will give you two figures, if that is okay.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes.

Mr Riley—Money management financial counselling serviced 5,277 people in the NT in 2008-09. We only have figures for the first six months of this financial year and that data suggests there were 3,756 people in the first six months.

Senator SIEWERT—Do we know if they are new clients or if they are people coming back for further support?

Mr Riley—I do not have that breakdown here. We do have that data.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you take that on notice?

Mr Riley—Yes, we can.

Senator SIEWERT—I want to know how many actual clients you have, rather than how many visits. Is that clear?

Mr Riley—Certainly.

Senator SIEWERT—That is just the NT?

Mr Riley—Just the NT.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you tell us for WA.

Mr Riley—We can. The same comparison: 2,672 people in 2008-09 and 2,557 people in the first six months of 2009-10.

Senator SIEWERT—Sorry, Senator Scullion, I just want to go a little bit further.

Senator SCULLION—That is all right.

Senator SIEWERT—When we say ‘financial counselling’, is that for one-off advice or is it for a series?

Mr Riley—The range of assistance provided by a financial counsellor will vary. That is people who have seen a financial counsellor or money management service.

Senator SIEWERT—Do you offer something ongoing, like short courses, so that you are not just going for a one-off visit to fix the budget for this week? I am just using that as an example, but—

Mr Riley—I understand the point you are making, Senator. The financial counsellors are the more sophisticated part of our service spectrum in the financial management program. The assistance that they will provide will be tailored to the needs of the individual, so for some of them, yes, that will involve referral to a course, or an education component. For others, it will be about unpicking a complex credit or debt issue. For others, it will be even as simple as explaining language in a bill that is a little puzzling. That last part is certainly the case with the money management services as well. It will vary with the clients.

Mr Lewis—Senator, as an example, I recently talked to a financial counsellor who is also at a site providing ER in Katherine. They told me a story about a fellow who had come in. He presented—and I use that term deliberately—with issues about an immediate debt, which they were able to assist him with, but, in the discussion about the cause of that immediate debt, it turned out that this particular individual had trouble paying for his cooling and he had issues with transport access and cost. A range of things emerged in that discussion. The financial counsellor was able to walk that person through and alert him to the entitlement to the air conditioning rebate, the power rebate and the transport subsidy to get a job and to get access to services, and this person was absolutely blown away by the fact that, through a discussion about financial stress to a counsellor, in that context, all those other issues had then been addressed. The counsellors are a fairly powerful model in that sense.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you, Senator Scullion.

Senator SCULLION—I understand that the budget for this measure in total—mostly, I would imagine, for Centrelink—is about \$100 million a year. In the modelling, have you planned for any externally provided support, apart from the direct injection into the money management, the increase—we have seen about \$10 million; the spike that we get next year—in terms of trying to actually roll it out? The management seems to be around \$95 million a year or \$100 million a year from then on. Does that budget take into consideration just the Centrelink stuff or does it take into consideration external services and counselling services or any other requirement around this?

Mr Sandison—The only other direct service that sits within the total amount of money that was costed is the money management financial services. Broader issues, as I think we have

discussed before, in relation to some of the other FaHCSIA services and so on are separate appropriations and separate issues and at this stage there is no additional funding in other areas.

Senator SCULLION—You have said there is no additional funding, so you think you can dodge and weave and whatever you do? You have made an assessment that you can deal with those issues within the current budget?

Mr Harmer—Yes. Our assessment is that the vast majority of the additional work will come to Centrelink—the assessors; the social workers. Centrelink has a significant capacity in social work and other areas, and the money management is the bulk of the additional work.

Senator SCULLION—Are those other externals, the small ones, ready to kick off on 1 July?

Mr Sandison—If there is a referral to, for example, a family relationship service, the presenting issues and so on will be the same, and a lot of the clients that might cross over with some of the income management—particularly vulnerability indicators and things like that—may well already be engaged with those services, or it will be a similar client base to that which those services are already supporting.

We did not see that there was a need for a rollout or an information campaign about a different kind of client. It is actually just identifying them more readily through some of the income management and using that to support them on the financial side. Other services—and some of them will be the Northern Territory government services, as well as Commonwealth—would continue as normal.

Dr Harmer—The reason for doing this is to improve the situation in many of the households. While there will be some additional services needed, we are hoping that in some cases there will be fairly significant benefits to individual households arising from this which will perhaps reduce the demand for some of the other services.

Senator SCULLION—One would hope so, Mr Harmer.

Dr Harmer—Yes.

Senator SCULLION—Because of this legislation or this policy, an awful lot more people are going to, for the first time, be going through a number of services.

Dr Harmer—Yes, that is true.

Senator SCULLION—You can recycle. In a 90-day period you can go and get retested, if you like. I would have thought that those external services in the first instance—certainly in the first three months—would have been expecting an increase in demand, simply because of the nature of the referrals. As Mr Lewis has kindly pointed out, some of these conversations lead necessarily to perhaps counselling somewhere else or to another service or another area. Have you had any planning to ensure that these other services are ready to go on 1 July and have they, to your knowledge, been provided with sufficient extra resources to deal with that?

Mr Sandison—I think, yes, they are ready to go. They are already doing that. The services that are on the ground under the various arrangements across FaHCSIA, and indeed other departments, are already there. They are in place and have been running for some time, but

not specifically for this initiative. From 1 July, we will be monitoring FaHCSIA funded services, particularly some of those in the family space, and looking at client numbers and the presenting needs and so on.

We will provide advice and feedback to the minister, very much like we would have in Western Australia where the trial was done, and Cape York where the trial is happening. Where we have services that operate in those areas, we keep an eye on the numbers and what is going on.

Dr Harmer—Remembering that on 1 July Centrelink are going to stage the rollout and we will be able to monitor what is happening, and we will have some early warning if there are unexpected, unestimated impacts.

Senator SCULLION—What do you do in those cases, Mr Harmer, if there is a sudden unexpected need in a particular area? It might be family counselling, it might be family relationships. They have got a lot of people going there because it is a condition of vulnerability, or whatever it is. How do you resource those?

Dr Harmer—We are not expecting that that will be the case. But to the extent that there is, there is some flexibility in boosting some of the services.

Senator SCULLION—Dr Harmer, I think we have established that there is going to be an increase in demand for a number of those services. Perhaps I have made that assumption because many of these people will have for the first time—instead of automatically receiving things—to do a face-to-face, and that face-to-face will create references, particularly if we are testing the nature of vulnerability and those things. I would think that other services will be needed.

I accept that there are services on the ground, and they are probably very good services, but my question goes to an increase in demand for those services. Whilst I acknowledge that the rollout, as you have indicated, should protect them from a spike, I would have thought there would still be services, as they have come about, that would come under more demand at some particular time in this process.

Ms Edwards—It is possible that there might be more demand in the way you have described—that things come out of these income management interviews that have not come up before. We see financial management services as a key one of those, which is why the additional services are being provided for that group. These are existing Centrelink customers. Although some of them may be new to income management, they will not be new to Centrelink. I am not across the detail, of course, but Centrelink already has very rigorous processes for referring to social workers and so on any of their customers who come to their attention for any of these reasons.

Many of those issues that are relevant to the income management scheme will already have been brought to the attention of Centrelink and to the attention of a social worker and we think in many instances have already been referred to the ancillary services, so we are not expecting the type of very major jump that you are suggesting. As the secretary has indicated, we will be monitoring very closely to check that we are covering any additional ones that come out of this particular additional process.

Senator SCULLION—There is a fixed cost around the \$100 million that goes onto forward estimates. Given that you have had some experience in the intervention in Western Australia, and in some cases in Cape York—and obviously you have some confidence in forward estimates—do you think that that is going to be applicable in terms of the rollout beyond the Northern Territory, given that there are some very similar demographics in the Territory as in other places?

Dr Harmer—From our experience, we think that the main additional resources need will be with Centrelink and the money management providers. They are the two big areas. I do not think we are expecting that there will be a huge spike in demand for services arising out of income management that is beyond the capacity of both services at the moment.

Senator SCULLION—You appear to have a fair bit of confidence in that in the Northern Territory context. Given that the minister's announcements were foreshadowing a national rollout, have you done some modelling to cost an expansion nationally?

Mr Sandison—The minister has said that we are waiting for the information. There is no plan to roll out in any specific locations. We are waiting for information obtained through the Northern Territory approach. Last time we discussed that, while the legislation provides the national approach, it is to be done in the Northern Territory and then wait and be informed on that basis. At an appropriate time, I am sure there will be consideration of what that might mean for any future expansion.

Ms Carroll—Clearly the learnings from the rollout in the Northern Territory would then be able to be used in any sort of modelling down the track, but certainly they are not in train at the moment.

Senator SCULLION—The reason for my question is that whilst the intervention, the Northern Territory, Cape York, Cannington and the Kimberley, will give some indications of that—probably apart from Cannington—most of them will come under a demographic of 'pretty far away'.

Dr Harmer—Sure.

Senator SCULLION—In comparison with places like Melbourne and Sydney, I would have thought that the approach there, and the numbers and the demographics, would not necessarily be applicable in the model.

Dr Harmer—I think that is true. Darwin and Alice Springs will give us a little bit more of an indication of what will be the likely experience in more built-up urban areas. It will not be exactly comparable, I know, but we will be able to learn some things from Darwin and Alice Springs, I think, that will help. Remember, we have got a couple of years of evaluation and looking and modelling to do the work. By then, we would hopefully have a pretty good grasp of what the likely impact is going to be.

Senator SCULLION—That is fair enough, but you will know—and I know that you would be aware now—that whilst Darwin and Alice Springs will have a pretty good comparison with Wagga and Dubbo, there are significant differences between the notion of a metropolis in New South Wales and the Northern Territory.

Dr Harmer—Sure.

Senator SCULLION—Have you done some work on the modelling of the costs and the differential that those costs would incur?

Dr Harmer—I do not believe we have yet.

Mr Sandison—I think the only comparable area that we have worked on has been school enrolment attendance, where it has been an urban setting, like the work that has been done in Queensland. We would really have to wait on advice from government to actually ask us to go and look further afield, and the government said that that will be in a number of years. So at this stage the concentration is on the Northern Territory rollout.

Dr Harmer—Given what we have done with the Northern Territory emergency response and the rolling out here, we are pretty confident, given that we have got a couple of years to look at this and work through it—and evaluating the Northern Territory—that we will be able to manage the rollout. That might be false confidence, but I think between FaHCSIA and Centrelink we will learn how to do it.

Senator SCULLION—Have you had a lot of submissions to the exposure draft?

Ms Edwards—Just to be clear, when you refer to the exposure draft, are you talking about the policy outlines that were recently made available on the website?

Senator SCULLION—Yes, the five policy outlines. Its title—'Exposure draft'—is perhaps where the confusion arises.

Ms Edwards—They were posted on the website yesterday, and so we would not have expected to have many submissions as yet, but we have had a number of people making contact and showing interest in our briefing sessions.

Senator SCULLION—I know this may have been discussed in the Senate inquiry, but one of the concerns that has been put to me is that the difficulty we know we will have is that it is not expanding the same thing in another area. We are actually doing something different in the intervention, as well as doing that new different thing in the remaining areas. Because the legislation specifically excludes the automatic quarantining of two particular cohorts—those receiving a disability pension and those with an age pension—on the notion of vulnerability we will then obviously be looking at a number of people in the community and, from my perspective, certainly some or many of those recipients in that environment, and there is a significant difference in a regional and remote Indigenous community environment and Darwin, Alice Springs or Katherine; perhaps more so Darwin.

The notion of humbugging is one that I suppose many people consider to be, 'Can you lend me a tenner till Friday?' Certainly, Dr Harmer, I know you are aware of the nature of the humbugging. I can recall an incident in the Central Desert where a boy, around 12 years old, came across to his grandmother when she was painting. He was quite annoying and it then escalated and escalated. I was sitting there with her, rolling the odd cigarette to help her health along. The young bloke had a rock. I stood up to say, 'Look, what are you up to, son?' He certainly was not going to throw the rock at his grandmother, but he hit himself in the face with it several times, and was bleeding all over her and her painting.

I have a really serious concern about the nature of humbugging and the vulnerability of so many people that this legislation will put outside of what I consider to be the protection of

income quarantining. Whether you accept that is not the case. My question is based on the indicators of vulnerability in terms of financial exploitation in the exposure draft in the policy. I will not read it into the *Hansard*; I do not think that is necessary. But it pretty much absolutely describes those circumstances and situations.

Many people, like myself and, I am sure, you guys, would be aware that that is a very vulnerable cohort that is subject now to change, in that they will be changed in a different way to how everybody else will. In fact, they will be seen with people who will now have twice as much cash in their pocket as they did before the changes, and they are not subject to the whole range of inquiry and three-month cycles of anyone else.

I am acutely aware, Dr Harmer, that compliance in this area is more a matter for the police, but have you put any special things in place to ensure that an assessment for vulnerability would be able to be assessed across that cohort?

Dr Harmer—Let me assure you we are acutely aware of exactly what you are talking about. There is always a difficult balance in these really sensitive issues around social policy. What about the freedom of a pensioner who has managed their money well and is looking after their money? Should they be income quarantined? If they have not got any disadvantage, they are not spending money on grog and drugs and things, there is a lot of argument to say they should not be involved in compulsory quarantining.

There are others that say, ‘Well, if you let them out of it, then they will be humbugged.’ We have had to look at those two competing issues and it is a difficult question. We have tried to come up with something where the governments let the aged pensioners off the compulsory quarantining, provide the opportunity for them to volunteer, but also provide the opportunity for Centrelink to determine, if there is a vulnerability, that they can put them on it. That will be done by Centrelink people, who will have got to know the individuals; they probably already know them, because they are dealing with Centrelink. I think that is the strategy.

Senator SCULLION—Thank you for that, Dr Harmer. I agree. I do not think there is any question about those issues, the sensitivity and the difficult challenge that we all have in that area. What I would like to know is the trigger points. Do we automatically assume that we should actually go and visit or make some sort of assessment? I understand that it will now be voluntary and the pressures and the tension about volunteering to go back under those circumstances has to be taken into consideration.

Dr Harmer—I stand to be corrected, but I think there are two triggers. One is the volunteering, but there is also the Centrelink objective assessment of the vulnerability.

Ms Edwards—There are actually three potential triggers. Dr Harmer has picked the two key ones for the situation you are talking about: that a person can either voluntarily enter income management or be assessed by a Centrelink social worker as being vulnerable—or being subject to a child protection notice; so there would be some parents who might fall into that category. In relation to the instrument, you are right in identifying that one of these criteria is designed to deal with the sort of situation you are referring to. I would say, of course, that these went out yesterday for consultation and we would value views as to how we can improve that. So, thank you.

But I would also say that one of the key initial things that is to be done in order to try and capture those people who would otherwise be coming off—age pensioners, for example—is that there will be an interview not just for people going onto income management, but we will make sure there is a careful one-on-one exit interview for anybody coming off.

Senator SCULLION—Everybody who is moving off from those two cohorts will have an exit interview?

Dr Harmer—Yes.

Ms Edwards—Correct.

Dr Harmer—Where the Centrelink social worker or the operative from Centrelink will be able to get a sense of whether the person coming off feels that they are going to be vulnerable and will be able to make some assessments.

Ms Edwards—And will specifically be directing themselves to those possibilities.

Senator SCULLION—Will Centrelink have the capacity at that stage to say, ‘We have deemed you, on the exit strategy, a vulnerable person,’ and that would simply trigger the fact that they were a vulnerable person? Do Centrelink have that capacity in the exit interview?

Ms Edwards—They would have the capacity definitely, in every case, to collect all the evidence they could and, in many cases, to make the decision there or to make a phone call. There might be some circumstances where a couple of days would be required in order to look at—

Dr Harmer—They might need to verify it, but they would have that capacity—

Ms Edwards—Very quickly.

Dr Harmer—if they were convinced, through the interview, that the person is in such a vulnerable situation that it would benefit them. Obviously, in the discussion they will give signals to the Centrelink social worker and interviewer about their feeling about the likelihood of them being humbugged.

Senator SCULLION—One of the quick responses could be that you would explain that they have the opportunity simply to volunteer.

Dr Harmer—Yes.

Senator SCULLION—So then no other changes would be made simply from the interview process.

Ms Edwards—There is no question that that will be raised in those exit interviews.

Senator Chris Evans—Senator, I think we have had a discussion about this before. We are very alert to the concerns you raise. I share them and I have spoken to the minister about it myself, but the department have done everything they can to make sure the triggers are there because of the vulnerability of some in the community. You are teasing this out, which is perfectly all right, but I need to make clear to you that we get it and we also are looking to address it. We will have to see how we go, but I think the passage off is something they are very focused on to make sure that, as a result, we do not have people who feel that they are

exposed in a way they were not before. I accept that one of the most depressing things about dealing with some communities is that whole humbugging culture.

Senator SCULLION—I do appreciate that, Minister. I know over a number of governments, including ones that I was a member of, in the translation of the very fine motive—

Senator Chris Evans—Yes, I know.

Senator SCULLION—sometimes it does not translate quickly enough. That was why I was trying to tease out, in a practical sense, what you had thought of and how you were going to, in an operational sense, apply it.

Senator Chris Evans—We have had 200 years of bugging up Aboriginal policy, so there is a track record.

Senator SCULLION—Indeed. Hopefully, these processes make it just a little better.

Dr Harmer—Senator, the reason I think you can afford to be a bit optimistic—and we are—is because many of the Centrelink officers who are doing the interviews et cetera come from the implementation of the compulsory quarantining. They do know pretty well the sorts of things that you and the minister know about what happens in those communities, so they are going to be, in the vast majority of cases, erring on the side of protecting the individual.

Senator SCULLION—My last question in this area goes again to communication. As we all know and acknowledge, we have not done it particularly well, necessarily, in the past. One of the big issues is availability of interpreters. You need a high level of confidence that they can communicate in what is quite often not one particular language. In a community it can be quite a number. Have you had any particular focus, discussions or thoughts about resourcing interpreters in the communities? This is the time in which they understand their rights and exactly what is happening. I think it is the time we can either blow it or get it as good as we can.

Ms Edwards—There is a lot of careful planning going into how these initial remote area teams—in the case of remote communities, how these Centrelink teams—will go out and conduct one-on-one interviews. Clearly making sure that the communication is done in the best possible way so that people understand is at the top of that list. It is being managed directly by Centrelink, so I am not across the detail of interpreters or exactly how that is managed, but I can assure you that we are very concerned to ensure that this communication process happens as best as it possibly can.

Senator SCULLION—Thank you. I would be very keen to know what is happening with the interpreters at that time.

Senator SIEWERT—I would like to ask a question about the issues around exit interviews. How long do you anticipate that each interview will take and how many people are coming off?

Dr Harmer—I think we would be guessing the length of the interview. Centrelink may have a better estimate of how long they are going to take. We would not be able to deal with that.

Senator SIEWERT—How many are coming off?

Dr Harmer—We would have an estimate of those who would be eligible under the current categorisation who would be coming off. In terms of who actually comes off, going back to the discussion—

Senator SIEWERT—How many are eligible to come off? I understand the situation is that you are going to try and keep people on. How many are eligible to come off?

Mr Sandison—Last time we did a breakdown of the different payment types, so that would identify eligibility—

Senator SIEWERT—There has not been an update from that.

Mr Sandison—We will go back to that one and update if there is any newer information,

Senator SIEWERT—If you could, please do.

Mr Sandison—If not, we would resupply the information we gave last time.

Dr Harmer—Senator, I do not want you to misunderstand. We are not going to try and keep people on if there is no reason to have them on in those categories. That previous discussion was about those who might be vulnerable and who are in the category to come off but who might be advantaged by staying on. Those who prefer to stay on can. If they are in the category to come off and there is no vulnerability and they want to come off, then they will be able to come off.

Senator SIEWERT—You can guarantee that I will be here at every estimates asking how many you have taken off and—

Dr Harmer—We will look forward to it.

Senator SIEWERT—how many you have classified as vulnerable. I know there is no point having a policy argument with you here, but I am extremely sceptical.

Senator Chris Evans—The department understand that. They also know you will be back.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes. I would like to know the numbers in terms of those exit interviews, and how long you propose that process takes. I understand the issue about you not being able to tell me about the length of the interview.

Dr Harmer—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—Will all of those people have been assessed, if the legislation goes through, by the December deadline? Is that the proposal?

Ms Edwards—It is a proposal to go everywhere and have those interviews with everybody who can be found or located, yes. So that will be the vast majority.

Senator SIEWERT—Sorry, can we just—

Ms Edwards—The vast majority within that—

Dr Harmer—I think the answer to your question is ‘yes’.

Senator SIEWERT—In light of your comment about being able to find them, do they come off or on if you cannot find them?

Ms Edwards—We have rolling visits, going to places, having interviews with people, capturing everybody we can in that process. Then at the end of that process there is an assessment of who has not been contacted and who has not had an opportunity, and then contact is made with those individuals directly through the appropriate means. If we still cannot get on to them, then there will be a regrouping and we will look at another way to go out and search out those individuals.

Senator SIEWERT—So nobody comes off until they have actually had an exit interview. Is that the point?

Mr Sandison—I would have to check that—if we have made a few attempts to contact a person. We will take that on notice, in terms of what the status of the individual would be if they had been unable to be contacted once we get to January next year.

Ms Edwards—I think that having it done by 30 June next year would be the absolute end of ensuring everyone was caught, but we want to have everybody we possibly can by 31 December.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. Can I ask some questions, please, around the evaluation process that it is intended to be put in place when the two years are up and the progress has been made in terms of determining the planning for that?

Ms Edwards—We have some colleagues from the evaluation area who may need to deal with some of your more detailed questions, but at the outset I would just like to mention that it is a four-year evaluation which is being proposed.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you tell me more detail about that, please?

Ms Edwards—It is in two phases. The first phase is the development of the methodology. That is underway now. The second phase will be implementation of the methodology that is developed.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you explain why we have a four-year evaluation phase?

Ms Edwards—So it is throughout the full period of funding period for the new income management in the Northern Territory.

Senator SIEWERT—So what happens in two years?

Mr Sandison—That gets back to what the minister has stated: that any decisions of government would be informed by the evidence coming out of the Northern Territory in this rollout. By doing baseline data collection now and starting evaluation work, that would still be ongoing all the way through to ensure that evidence throughout the whole four-year period is picked up for a variety of purposes in terms of policy development and analysis. But the statements made by government have been ‘informed by’ at a two-year period. I do not think there has been a statement to say ‘at the end of the evaluation’. I think the terminology used is ‘informed by’.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you tell me what progress has been made? How long is it anticipated that the methodology will be developed? How long is that proposed to take?

Ms Lanyon—We have currently contracted a consortium to assist us in the challenge of developing this methodology. We hope that by the end of June the methodology will be

proposed. As we discussed at last additional estimates, we would then take the proposal to the departmental research and evaluation committee for consideration and approval and then go out to tender for the evaluation proper.

Senator SIEWERT—The ‘end of June’ proposal—that is, 30 June this year?

Ms Lanyon—This year, 2010.

Senator SIEWERT—What is the time line, in terms of taking it through your process, before you take it out to tender?

Ms Lanyon—Internally we have a 20-day turnaround for approval. That is our standard agreement with the business to get these projects considered and approved. Then, of course, tender processes can take a couple of months. I must admit I have not thought in detail through those next steps, but I would envisage that certainly we would have somebody in place before the end of 2010 to do the evaluation.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you tell me how much money has been allocated against the evaluation process?

Ms Lanyon—There are a couple of figures that I can share with you. In terms of the consortium—the development of the methodology—we have \$200,000 that has been allocated to assist us in that process. It is a very challenging methodology to develop. Part of the reason why it is very helpful for me to be here to hear the conversations today is that there is a lot of data that we would need to bring to the table to be able to answer a number of the key questions that people are very interested in—quantitative data, administrative data, Centrelink data—as well as the challenges in collecting very useful information from people who are on the program and the money management service providers that John Riley talked about. In addition, we need to think about how we would collect information in a useful and reliable way from service providers in terms of retail services in different communities.

We also have to work through quite some process with the Northern Territory government agencies. We have a workshop planned with the consortium and those agencies in a couple of weeks to try to get a sense of what they could bring to the table and the extent to which they want to be involved in the evaluation, so there is a lot of work to do in order for us to be able to make sure that we have a good method in terms of addressing implementation, which I think is what Barry is referring to, around that first phase of the evaluation and then focus on the outcome.

Dr Harmer—You can get a sense that we are taking the evaluation very seriously as a significant step. We are investing significantly in a proper methodology to do this properly.

Senator SIEWERT—So there is \$200,000 for the development of methodology. How much is there for putting this evaluation process in place so you get the baseline data et cetera?

Mr Sandison—I think the full evaluation is approximately \$2 million.

Ms Lanyon—I think it is \$2.15 million.

Senator SIEWERT—And that is over four years?

Ms Lanyon—Yes, that is correct.

Senator SIEWERT—Once the methodology is available at the end of June, is that methodology going out for a peer review process prior to the department making a decision?

Ms Lanyon—We have a couple of peer review processes built into the approach. By seeking the services of an expert consortium, we are clearly going to somebody independent and a number of experts. The consortium comprises the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. It includes the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Australian National University, so we certainly have available to us some very good minds in this area.

Quite clearly, from our perspective, procuring the services of the consortium is helping us to get one level of peer review. Once we have gone through the research and evaluation committee, we will then go to an ethics clearance process. Again, that will be independent peer review and throughout the evaluation we would expect that different reports would be peer reviewed.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you take me through the ethics? Is this the same ethics clearance process that we talked about last time?

Ms Lanyon—We will have to seek new ethical clearance for this new methodology.

Senator SIEWERT—Sorry, I was not clear. Is it the ethics review clearance process that the department uses internally or have you got a separate process?

Mr Sandison—After the last estimates, some of the work that we are doing within the department will be to work out the approach that we will take through this process, in terms of the clearance process.

Senator SIEWERT—For the ethics clearance process?

Mr Sandison—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—So you cannot tell me whether it is going to be internal or external?

Mr Sandison—No, I think we are working through some of those processes now. As we have said, it is a fairly significant evaluation and some of that needs to be worked through once we have the methodology sorted out.

Dr Harmer—We need to evaluate whether we need to boost our ethics clearance process.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I be clear: the methodology will go through the ethics clearance process?

Ms Lanyon—The methodology will go to the departmental research and evaluation committee and, once we have a better sense of what the methodology will be, we will make a decision about ethical clearance and what would be the most appropriate approach.

Senator SIEWERT—Prior to the tender being released?

Ms Lanyon—Yes, that is correct.

Senator SIEWERT—What is the time line for the ethics clearance process?

Ms Carroll—I think the key will be, as Ms Lanyon said, once the actual proposal and methodology have gone through the research committee, there will be some decisions about

what the ethical clearance process needs to be. We will then be in a position to work out exactly how long that will take.

Senator SIEWERT—My take on the situation—I emphasise my take—when the data on the purchases on the BasicsCard was released some months ago and some statements were made around that was that there was great difficulty in separating out the information. There was food but on the BasicsCard it was a judgment call made on where the purchase was made rather than on what was itemised, because you do not get an itemised readout of everything somebody buys on a BasicsCard. Are those basic data collection issues going to be resolved? How are you going to deal with that?

Mr Sandison—One of the issues that we are going to have to work through is how we clarify some of that information. We realise that last time some of the data that was presented did leave it open. I think it was shops that were primarily food-selling; but there was a discussion around the bar coding and the use of the BasicsCard. I am not sure with the BasicsCard 2 the extent to which that might have changed.

Ms Edwards—You have identified issues with the way BasicsCard's raw data can be used. But I think we will be looking to the consortium and the methodology to see whether there are other methods for gathering evidence in a different or enhanced way which would answer some of the questions you are alluding to.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. In terms of the methodology, is that going to be publicly released so that other members of the community can see that prior to it going out for tender and before finalising it?

Ms Carroll—As that goes through the research committee, normally we would not yet have made the decision about how we would release any of that information, so that will be part of the process. We would need to think about whether we released, for example, the methodology paper ahead of going to tender because of whether that created any bias in the tender process et cetera. We would need to just be careful as we thought about what the next steps were within the department.

Senator SIEWERT—I am not clear about what you mean by whether there would be a bias in the tender process. This is a major social experiment that the government is carrying out in Australia, and you cannot tell me whether the methodology will be publicly available for comment prior to that being put in place?

Dr Harmer—We are going to be very careful and get very expert researchers and evaluators helping us with the methodology for the evaluation. What Ms Carroll said is that we have not determined yet the extent to which, beyond that Australia-wide expert input into our evaluation methodology, we would need further advice. When the evaluation results are in, the methodology will be part of the report.

Senator SIEWERT—It will be too late to change it then.

Dr Harmer—It may be but at some point you have to say—if you have some real experts who understand data gathering and research methodology et cetera, from two or three of the significant tertiary institutions who have expertise in this area—that the benefit of going broadly to consult on it is—

Senator SIEWERT—Dr Harmer, I will be totally frank. How do we know that what you present as the methodology is what you are given by the experts unless that is released?

Dr Harmer—That is a matter for government. I understand the point. If the government assessed that that was an important issue for public information and transparency, they may decide to release it, but it is not a decision that we would make.

Senator Chris Evans—The officers are trying to be as frank as possible, but the reality is that this is evolving, so they do not have the answers to a lot of what you seek and I suspect that, at the next estimates, we will go through this again and we will see where they are up to.

Senator SIEWERT—We will see whether there are any developments.

Senator Chris Evans—We will see if they have more formed ideas.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. I appreciate that it is something I will need to pursue with government. Could you tell me how you formulated the budget for the evaluation process of \$2.15 million over the four years? How was that arrived at? What did you use to calculate whether that was an adequate amount for the level of evaluation that is needed?

Mr Sandison—I think I would have to take that on notice and go back to the paperwork that was used to provide the numbers.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated.

Dr Harmer—We will take it on notice.

Senator SIEWERT—You will be aware of what I am looking for. I want to know if we are going to get a good job. I have no idea. I know social research is very expensive.

Dr Harmer—I understand, and we will take it on notice.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. In terms of the processes this is starting, you are doing exit interviews. Is that data going to be used to inform the evaluation process?

Mr Sandison—Is this the information from the exit interviews, so people coming off?

Senator SIEWERT—Yes.

Mr Sandison—That is part of the methodology; we could not say yet.

Dr Harmer—We cannot really answer that until we know the methodology.

Senator SIEWERT—That is fair enough.

Mr Sandison—That will be taken into consideration as a valid point to consider, being part of the methodology.

CHAIR—We have been going on for a while. I have been hoping that it might wrap up, but we are going to be a bit longer, so we will take a short break now and then we will come back with Senator Siewert's questions.

Proceedings suspended from 9.32 pm to 9.45 pm

Senator SIEWERT—I want to go back to where we were at with the evaluation process. You were getting back to me with an estimate of where you got the figures—

Dr Harmer—Of how we developed the \$2.1 million estimate, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated. Thank you. Where I want to go next is to make sure that all the processes and evaluation processes are in place before you get too far down the track.

Dr Harmer—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—The idea is to have that process in place by the end of this calendar year?

Dr Harmer—Yes. We understand the importance of knowing the evaluation methodology before we get too far down the track in the data we collect.

Senator SIEWERT—This is an evaluation question. I do not know if this is the appropriate place to ask this question. It is in the Cape York trial process. I understand there is an evaluation process being undertaken there as well.

Dr Harmer—There is. The Cape York stuff we would normally expect to deal with on Friday.

Senator SIEWERT—I appreciate that. My question is to do with linking this evaluation process with that evaluation process. Should I ask that now?

Dr Harmer—If you ask it on Friday, we will be better able to answer it because there will be someone listening and they will work it out by Friday.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you take that on board?

Dr Harmer—Sure.

Senator SIEWERT—I am trying to look at how you are going to take on the learnings from that.

Ms Carroll—Into this evaluation process?

Senator SIEWERT—Yes. I will do Cape York on Friday. Can I move on to Western Australia? Are there any new numbers—and you do not have to tell me, unless there are new numbers—apart from what I was given during the committee process for the inquiry into the bills?

Ms Edwards—I have some figures from 21 May.

Senator SIEWERT—They are new. Thank you.

Ms Edwards—They are fairly high-level figures, but presumably what you are after, in terms of how many people are on the various—

Senator SIEWERT—Yes, please.

Ms Edwards—As at 21 May, 613 customers were subject to income management in Western Australia—that is, 384 on voluntary income management and 229 on child protection income management.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you break that down into metropolitan versus the Kimberley?

Ms Edwards—Yes, I can. I will start with voluntary income management. There were 79 in Perth metro—that is about 21 per cent—and 305 in the Kimberley.

Senator SIEWERT—Is there anybody from the Pilbara on that? If people from the Pilbara wanted to go on voluntarily, are they able to, and have they?

Ms Edwards—I think the answer to that is no. There has been some scope for people a little bit beyond the boundaries in Perth metro to be part of the scheme, if they wanted to. But my understanding is—and I will come back to you if it is a different situation—that there is nobody in the Pilbara. I will not come back to you unless that is not correct.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated.

Ms Edwards—In relation to the child protection measure, I am just looking again. It is the same number, 79, in Perth metro, 34.5 per cent, and 150 in the Kimberley.

Senator SIEWERT—Sorry, I have messed this up. I am writing them down. Out of the voluntary?

Ms Edwards—The voluntary was 79 in Perth metro and 305—

Senator SIEWERT—In the Kimberley.

Ms Edwards—Yes. And the figure for child protection in Perth is the same—which is why I looked at it twice—79, and 150 in the Kimberley.

Senator SIEWERT—One hundred and fifty.

Ms Edwards—Correct.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. Sorry.

Ms Edwards—With the two 79s, it also was confusing.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes. Do you keep data for both on how many people have come on and come off again? Do you track that and, if you do, can you tell me how many?

Ms Edwards—Yes, I can. In relation to voluntary income management, as at 21 May—this is a figure of how many people have exited through the entire period.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes.

Ms Edwards—Four hundred and fifty-two customers have exited voluntary income management.

Senator SIEWERT—Can I refine that? Do we know if some of those people have come back? Are people coming off and then going on again?

Ms Edwards—I think that would include people coming off and on, but I do not have the breakdown of those figures and I am not sure whether we would have them necessarily.

Senator SIEWERT—Do you do an exit interview, like you are going to do in the Northern Territory? Do you find out why people are coming off?

Ms Edwards—This is one of the issues that we have been looking at. We think that information may exist and be recorded, but we have not found a way to extract it at this stage. It is something that we are looking at, because obviously it is an important factor. I do not think we have access to that information at this stage.

Senator SIEWERT—I have had purely anecdotal stuff to say that people did not realise how hard it would be to manage on the quarantine money. As I said, I have had a few people talk to me about it.

Ms Edwards—We have had some various thinking about what the reasons might be. The reasons range from it being different to what people expected, but we also have anecdotal information to suggest that some people have gone back on, once they get used to the idea. We expect that, in the 452 who have exited, there will be quite a number of on and offs. Also, there might be people who are really keen to go on voluntary income management to get their affairs in order and then perhaps have a bad week and go off, because it is in and out as you please at the moment. But we do not have that data in a hard form, I am sorry.

Senator SIEWERT—There may also be people who have benefited from the process and have decided that they have got their affairs in order and now come off it.

Ms Edwards—That is right.

Senator SIEWERT—But the bottom line here is that we do not actually know at the moment.

Ms Edwards—That is right.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you break that 452 down into metro versus Kimberley?

Ms Edwards—I do not think I can at the moment. I could take it on notice to check whether that is available.

Senator SIEWERT—If you could, that would be appreciated. How many child protection orders have been removed?

Ms Edwards—From the beginning of the scheme, obviously?

Senator SIEWERT—Yes.

Ms Edwards—One hundred and five clients have exited at least once.

Senator SIEWERT—So there could be more, but they have gone back on. Is that what you are saying?

Ms Edwards—There could be less than 105 people, we expect. There are 105 exits.

Senator SIEWERT—So that could mean that one person has come on and come off—

Ms Edwards—That is right.

Senator SIEWERT—and come back on again. You budgeted for 1,000, didn't you, in the Perth trial? Is that correct?

Ms Edwards—That was one of our assumptions for budget—1,000 commencements, not necessarily—

Senator SIEWERT—There are 1,613 on there now. So if you had commencements you could have reached 1,000. Is that the point?

Ms Edwards—Some people might have commenced several times or people have come on and come off, so the current number is not indicative of the number of commencements.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes, I take your point. In terms of the evaluation process, where are you at now with the Western Australian evaluation?

Ms Edwards—The evaluation is in the throes of being done. The process is now in train and we are expecting to have that evaluation done by the end of the financial year, by 30 June.

Senator SIEWERT—Who is doing it?

Ms Edwards—It is being done by FaHCSIA, in partnership with the Department for Child Protection in Western Australia. We have put it out to ARIMA as an independent contractor.

Senator SIEWERT—And that is to the end of June?

Ms Edwards—Correct.

Senator SIEWERT—Has a decision been made yet about the release of that evaluation?

Ms Edwards—No decision has been made.

Senator SIEWERT—That evaluation process has involved discussions with stakeholders?

Ms Edwards—Yes. It involves in-depth face-to-face interviews with current and past participants, online surveys for staff from Centrelink, the Department for Child Protection, money management and financial management support services and peak bodies, and focus group discussions with community leaders in the Kimberley.

Senator SIEWERT—In the Kimberley as well as in Perth? I will not call it Cannington anymore, because it is the whole of the metro area virtually.

Ms Edwards—My understanding is that the community leaders aspect of it is designed for an Indigenous community context—that is, with peak bodies and people in Perth, as well as with past and current clients—but it is with the Kimberley in particular with community leaders.

Senator SIEWERT—When you say ‘peak bodies’, you mean WACOSS and whoever is providing the services. Is that correct?

Ms Edwards—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—What is the plan for this process after 30 June?

Ms Edwards—What happens to—

Senator SIEWERT—Income management in Western Australia after the evaluation.

Ms Edwards—Funding for the program has been extended for an additional year in Western Australia. We are in negotiations now with the Western Australian officials to develop a new bilateral to continue the program for the extra year, and we will be doing additional evaluation work in relation to that year.

Senator SIEWERT—For that extra year? You say you are discussing a new bilateral. Are significant changes going to be made over that year, or is it just a continuation of the process as is?

Ms Edwards—It is a matter for ministers to sign up on the bilateral, obviously. We do not expect there to be major changes. We are using it as an opportunity to revisit the documents and see whether there is a way that we can better support the way it is delivered by the

Department for Child Protection, Centrelink and us, but we do not expect there to be major changes to those documents, no.

Senator SIEWERT—Has the evaluation process looked at the level of case management that individuals have received?

Ms Edwards—The evaluation that is going on now?

Senator SIEWERT—Underway at the moment, yes.

Ms Edwards—I will see if my colleague can help me with that.

Dr Harmer—We can take it on notice. I anticipate that it would have, because it is an important element of it, but we need to check.

Senator SIEWERT—I am particularly interested, because the Cape York process, as you know, has had a high level of case management.

Dr Harmer—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—Is it anticipated that after the year there will be follow-up evaluation?

Ms Edwards—As part of the—

Senator SIEWERT—As part of the new bilateral.

Ms Edwards—Yes.

Senator SIEWERT—So the evaluation process for 30 June this year. For the next 12 months, is it anticipated—

Ms Edwards—Evaluation will also be part of the new bilateral, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—With the same process and the same contractor?

Ms Edwards—No.

Dr Harmer—We would not necessarily have the same process.

Ms Edwards—Similarly independent, we would expect.

Senator SIEWERT—In terms of accessing financial advice in Western Australia, we have the Kimberley process and the Perth metro process. Do you have some up-to-date figures on that?

Mr Riley—The number of services?

Senator SIEWERT—Yes.

Mr Riley—Yes, I do. I will just turn to that part of the brief.

Senator SIEWERT—Sorry, I am just waiting for the other answer to come back.

Mr Riley—There are five money management services in the Kimberley IM trial locations and one MoneyBusiness service in Geraldton.

Senator SIEWERT—That is where I want to ask that question. There are five in the Kimberley and one in Geraldton?

Mr Riley—That is right. There are 13 financial-counselling services across WA, as well as one telephone service, which is a state-wide service. In terms of financial counselling in the income management locations, there is Jacaranda Community Centre in Cannington; Salvation Army WA in Perth, which includes Mirrabooka; the City of Wanneroo; Midland Information Debt and Legal Advocacy Service; UnitingCare West in Perth, although they are not funded for income management—it is a generalist financial counselling service; the Ngunga Women's Group in Derby; and, as I mentioned, the Financial Counsellors Association of Western Australia.

Senator SIEWERT—You can tell he isn't from Western Australia, can't you, Senator Evans.

Senator Chris Evans—There are two rules, mate. It is 'Al-bany', not 'All-bany', and 'Durby', not 'Darby'.

Mr Riley—Sorry.

Senator Chris Evans—That is how we can always tell the foreigners.

Mr Riley—My apologies for that. I will probably mess this one up—the Jungarni-Jutiya Alcohol Action Council Aboriginal Corporation in Halls Creek.

Senator Chris Evans—There are a lot of very difficult Aboriginal words that many of us do not get. That is all right. The 'Al-bany' and 'Durby' thing is a real no-no.

Ms Edwards—Excuse me, Senator Siewert, just to correct one thing: my impression about the community leader focus groups not including Perth was incorrect. We are having community leader focus groups in Perth also.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. And the case management issue in terms of reviewing—

Ms Lanyon—Case management will be captured through the interviews with clients, looking at the level of support they have received over the period of time that they have been supported.

Senator SIEWERT—I appreciate that, thanks. In terms of the number of people that have accessed financial counselling, does the same issue apply that I asked of the Northern Territory—that is, with the client numbers that you gave us before that have used the services, you do not know if they are ongoing or new individual clients?

Mr Riley—My BlackBerry was buzzing after my last answer, but I can confirm that the clients are only counted once, irrespective of how many times they present for service.

Senator SIEWERT—You said that there are 2,672 in WA; that is actual people?

Mr Riley—People. That is correct.

Senator SIEWERT—In the metropolitan area we have a lot of people accessing the services that are outside of those that are income managed. That is correct, isn't it?

Mr Riley—That is right.

Senator SIEWERT—I am going back to some questions I have asked previously. Obviously, as the trial in Western Australia was expanded to the metropolitan area, there were more services added, but initially the services were established in the Cannington region.

Mr Riley—That is right.

Senator SIEWERT—Have you got the time sequence of how people have been accessing those services and where the greatest call on services has been?

Mr Riley—I do not have a breakdown by service with me.

Senator SIEWERT—Is it possible to take that on notice?

Mr Riley—I can certainly look into that for you.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated, thank you. Do you monitor the link between those that are going onto voluntary income management and access to services? Are the clients going onto voluntary income management the most likely to be accessing financial services?

Mr Riley—In terms of reporting their income management status to money management or financial-counselling service providers—and it is voluntary that they identify that—346 people identified as being voluntary income management participants, and 217 identified as child protection income management participants.

Senator SIEWERT—That is across the whole of Western Australia?

Mr Riley—Yes, it is.

Senator SIEWERT—That is helpful, thank you. Can I ask a specific question about Geraldton. I understand the MoneyBusiness project has gone to the Geraldton Resource Centre.

Mr Lewis—Yes, it was the Geraldton Resource Centre.

Senator SIEWERT—Can you tell me how the decision on where the funding went was made?

Mr Lewis—The process for allocation of that funding?

Senator SIEWERT—Yes.

Mr Lewis—Our processes are either done by an open tender at certain points in time or a select tender in cases where we urgently need a service. I could not tell you off the top of my head how we sourced that particular service.

Senator SIEWERT—Could you take that on notice?

Mr Lewis—Yes, I can.

Senator SIEWERT—Have you done an evaluation—and I am not asking whether the Geraldton Resource Centre is doing a good job. I am asking whether the level of service that is able to be provided with that contract is meeting need. In other words, is there a big waiting list for those services?

Mr Riley—I am not aware of the waiting list for the individual services in WA. I can certainly take that on notice as well.

Senator SIEWERT—If you could. I will specifically say that I am not questioning whether the Geraldton Resource Centre has been doing a good job. In fact, by the looks of it,

they are doing a good job. My question is about whether the level of need in Geraldton is being met.

Mr Riley—I understand.

Senator SIEWERT—There is a question around the level of service that is able to be provided in Geraldton. Is that purely for Geraldton or is it for the region?

Mr Riley—Let me check if I have got, in my papers, the service coverage for that particular outlet. The Geraldton Resource Centre provides service to Geraldton with outreach to Meekatharra, ‘Mulluya’, Morawa, Dongara and Northampton.

Senator SIEWERT—Stop smiling, Senator Evans!

Senator Chris Evans—Not bad, but you know she is going to ask you a question soon where the answer is one of the real beauties!

Senator SIEWERT—I am actually not trying to be smart here, but do you mean Mullawah?

Mr Riley—Yes, I do.

Senator ADAMS—And Dongara.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes. I had a specific question about Mullawah, though.

Senator Chris Evans—I get the same when I have to answer questions as the senator in this portfolio and there is a list of 18 Aboriginal communities. I know I have buggered up the first and it just gets worse after that! It has happened to us all.

Senator SIEWERT—The centre is able to provide services into Mullawah, is it?

Mr Riley—Yes, that is right.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. You will get back to me with that other issue?

Mr Riley—About Geraldton, yes, we will.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated. Thank you. That is all the questions I had there. I do have my other general question.

CHAIR—Senator Adams, do you have anything in this area?

Senator ADAMS—No, I am fine.

CHAIR—Senator Siewert, go to your next question.

Senator SIEWERT—In actual fact, sorry, one more on the issue around Geraldton. Do you have an understanding of any of the waiting lists in any of the other areas that you have been through, in terms of how need is being met?

Mr Riley—I can tell you about the target times that the financial counselling services have to make appointments. That is in the three- to four-week bracket. We are not aware of any significant problems outside that target range, but I will specifically look into the Geraldton issue for you.

Senator SIEWERT—That would be appreciated. Thank you. I have a general question about whether there has been any work commissioned on living standards for income support

recipients. Has there been any work done there looking at what the living standards are for those on income support? I did not know whether I was supposed to ask this here.

Dr Harmer—The people who would best be able to answer that are the social policy people who were here and across programs. But let me say, having done the pension review, we did quite a lot of analysis of work in the pension review on living standards for the pensioner cohort—that is, the aged pensioners, the disability support pensioners and carer payment recipients.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes. I am interested in the other groups as well.

Dr Harmer—We also did quite a bit of work in the tax transfer review on the other forms of income support: Newstart, parenting payment et cetera.

Senator SIEWERT—Yes.

Dr Harmer—I would just refer you to—

Senator SIEWERT—To look at the Henry report.

Dr Harmer—Have a look at some of the analysis in the tax transfer review. There is some work in there, yes.

Senator SIEWERT—You have not done any extra work besides that?

Dr Harmer—No. The work that we did and DEEWR have done on the living standards for the Newstart and parenting payment people will show up in the tax review. The work we did for the disability support pension, aged pension and carer payment was done at the pension review.

Senator SIEWERT—I am specifically after the other areas and asking if there is any extra stuff that was done.

Dr Harmer—If you have a look at the tax transfer review, we had quite a bit on that.

Senator SIEWERT—Thank you. That is me done.

CHAIR—Thank you. There are no further questions. Dr Harmer.

Dr Harmer—Senator, I have got two answers that I have been given during the day. There was a question Senator Fifield asked on external legal expenses. I have got that answer to table. And there is the question we took from Senator Fifield on a couple of loose ends from his questioning around Ms Rein's role in the dialogue.

CHAIR—Yes, the questions from yesterday, Dr Harmer.

Dr Harmer—That is tabled as well.

CHAIR—Thank you very much. The questioning in this area is completed. We would like to thank all the officers from outcome 3. Dr Harmer, thank you as always for the support and the information from all your staff members. We really do appreciate it. Thank you, Minister.

Committee adjourned at 10.11 pm