

Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit

Public Hearing – 20 November 2019
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Written QoN 5

Question reference number: SQ19-000500

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 02 December 2019

Question:

How is the Department working with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) towards a National Minimum Data Set for family, domestic and sexual violence?

- a. IF NOT – are you aware of the work by the AIHW towards one? The AIHW is under the purview of the Department, isn't it? Shouldn't you know?

Answer:

Since 2014, the department has progressed a number of data projects aimed at enriching the evidence base with reference to the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework (NDCRF). These have included the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) adding new Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (FDSV) data flags to the Specialist Homelessness Collection; the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) adding new FDSV data flags to the Recorded Crime – Victims, Recorded Crime – Offenders, and Criminal Courts collections; updates to the ABS' FDSV data directory, outlining the features of nationally important FDSV data collections and incorporating the NDCRF into the Legal Assistance Data Standards Manual, which will improve legal assistance administrative data.

Furthermore, as part of the Fourth Action Plan, the department will also invest \$2 million with the ABS and the AIHW to improve existing and developing new data sources with reference to the NDCRF. This will include prioritising and sequencing key activities with the states and territories to improve the FDSV evidence base.

AIHW is under the Health portfolio.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Written QoN 8

Question reference number: SQ19-000503

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 02 December 2019

Question:

Has funding for the FVPLS secretariat function been cut?

- a. Why?
- b. When will it cease?
- c. Have there been any discussions about this with PMC or AGs? Has the Minister been briefed?
- d. Have there been any discussions or briefs in relation to rolling FVPLS services in with other legal services, such as community legal centres?

Answer:

The Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (FVPLS) is a program administered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). Questions about funding for the FVPLS secretariat function should be referred to the NIAA.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Written QoN 9

Question reference number: SQ19-000504

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 02 December 2019

Question:

When will the implementation plan for the Fourth Action Plan be published?

Answer:

The implementation plan was published on www.plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au on 22 November 2019 and formally launched on 25 November 2019.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Written QoN 11

Question reference number: SQ19-000506

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 02 December 2019

Question:

When did the department find out White Ribbon was experiencing financial difficulty?

- a. What were the reasons White Ribbon gave?
- b. Were there any irregularities in financial statement or processes? Or any Governance issues the Department was aware of at White Ribbon?
- c. Did White Ribbon approach the Department or the Minister for help or more funding before becoming insolvent?

Answer:

Refer page 24 of Hansard of the JCPAA hearing.

- a) Refer page 25 of Hansard of the JCPAA hearing.
- b) No irregularities were identified in the financial statements or processes associated with the project funding the department provided White Ribbon. White Ribbon has experienced a number of governance issues recently, with two changes of CEO and multiple board resignations.
- c) Yes.

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Department of Social Services

Topic: Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Written QoN 12

Question reference number: SQ19-000507

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 02 December 2019

Question:

When was the last time the Department audited or assessed the financial management and sustainability of White Ribbon?

Answer:

The department monitored White Ribbon's financial position through engagement with the organisation and review of publically available financial reporting in order to inform decisions about the risk to government funded projects.

The department most recently reviewed White Ribbon's financial situation in February 2019, when White Ribbon published its 2017-18 Annual Report.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Written QoN 13

Question reference number: SQ19-000508

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Written.

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 02 December 2019

Question:

When was the last payment of funding made to white Ribbon? And for what period was it?

a. IF APPROPRIATE – how is it possible that just days before White Ribbon went into liquidation, the Government was approving funding? Was the Department given assurances about the future solvency of the organisation?

b. Had operational funds been provided to White Ribbon beyond 3 October? How far beyond? How much money does this equate to? Will taxpayers get their unused money back?

Answer:

Refer pages 25 and 26 of Hansard of the JCPAA hearing.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Written QoN 15

Question reference number: SQ19-000510

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 02 December 2019

Question:

What was the total funding allocated to White Ribbon across the forwards?

- a. What will happen to this money now? Will be redeployed in family violence programs?

Answer:

Refer page 26 of Hansard of the JCPAA hearing.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Written QoN 16

Question reference number: SQ19-000511

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s: N/A

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 02 December 2019

Question:

When will grants be issued under the \$60 million program for new and expanded emergency accommodation?

Answer:

Funding will be provided to successful applicants in 2020-21 and 2021-22.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Written QoN 17

Question reference number: SQ19-000512

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s: N/A

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 02 December 2019

Question:

In relation to the parameters of the program?

- a. Will co-investment still be required? What will the minimum level be?
- b. Will state/territories be able to apply? If not, what kind of organisations will this be limited to?
- c. How will you ensure the investment is actually used on an ongoing basis for emergency accommodation once investment in capital works is complete?

Answer:

- a. There is no set amount of co-funding. However, applicants are advised projects that bring forward additional funding or in-kind contributions, including land, will be preferred.
- b. Yes. Corporate State or Territory Entities can apply.
- c. In submitting an application, organisations commit to operating dwellings as emergency or crisis accommodation for a minimum of 15 years.

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Department of Social Services

Topic: Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Written QoN 18

Question reference number: SQ19-000513

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Written. Hansard Page/s: N/A

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 02 December 2019

Question:

When selecting where to invest the money, will this be based on levels of need, or on where co-investment is available?

- a. Does the department have information about the amount of emergency accommodation available in each region? Can you provide that on notice? Including where the highest unmet need is?
- b. Do you track the number of women turned away from emergency accommodation or placed in motels?
- c. If Governments don't have this information, how can investment be effectively targeted?

Answer:

To be successful for funding, applicants must demonstrate the unmet demand in their proposed priority location. Applicants that bring forward additional funding, or in-kind contributions, including land, will be preferred.

- a. The department uses the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data on regions with the highest unmet need.
See <https://www.grants.gov.au/?event=public.FO.show&FOUUIID=370AAFA5-FFC0-FD4E-FAE0C2A55895667C> for publicly available data. This data was provided to potential applicants at information sessions.
- b. The department uses data from the AIHW.
- c. To be successful for funding, applicants must demonstrate the unmet demand in their proposed priority location. The department will use the AIHW data as a guide during the assessment process.

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Public Hearing – 15 November 2019
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Hansard QoN 1

Question reference number: SQ19-000519

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 27

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 05 December 2019

Question:

Mr HILL: Can you provide the committee with the original scope of the work that you engaged and then show us the variations where you formally varied the scope to include this other bit of work—because there may have been other people in Australia who might have thought that they may like to do that bit of work?

Ms Hefren-Webb: We can certainly provide that.

Mr HILL: I think it's a bad practice, as a general rule—and we've heard this before—that, when you have a bit of spare money left in the contract and you get the contractor to do something else and it wasn't put to the market.

Ms Hefren-Webb: I understand. We can provide you with the detail of that.

Answer:

KPMG was originally contracted to provide a comprehensive analysis on the cost of violence against women and their children, to build an evidence base and inform future policy decisions.

A deed of variation was made to include additional data gaps analysis, providing a formal report on the data investment needed to improve future analysis on the cost of violence against women. This included an impact analysis framework and tool development to inform the development of the performance monitoring and reporting framework for the Fourth Action Plan, including potential key performance measures and indicators and an assessment of the data available to measure progress.

This complied with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules and Guidelines because it utilised the procurement panel, took into consideration value for money, and leveraged existing work and analysis.

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Public Hearing – 15 November 2019
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Hansard Question 2

Question reference number: SQ19-000520

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s:

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 05 December 2019

Question:

Mr HILL: Okay, if you could take that on notice, that'd be helpful. Finally, can you tell us what's been done regarding women's refugees?

Ms Stratford: As part of the fourth action plan, there is \$60 million allocated for safe housing, and that's currently in preparation for going to market. There are consultations underway.

Mr HILL: What does 'going to market' mean?

Ms Stratford: There'll be a tender process, a grants process, for people to apply for that funding for—

Mr HILL: Just to clarify, a tender's different to a grant, so what do you mean?

Ms Hefren-Webb: That particular funding is being managed by the housing part of our department, so we're not oversighting it in detail. So it will be either a tender or a grants round. I'm not sure, but we can get that information for you. But it will shortly be advertised, and that's to provide additional accommodation or upgrades to existing accommodation.

Mr HILL: Will there be a requirement for matching funding?

Ms Stratford: It's encouraged in the guidelines but not a requirement. But it is encouraged.

Mr HILL: Have the guidelines been finalised?

Ms Stratford: I think the draft guidelines have been released.

Mr HILL: So the draft guidelines encourage it, but we haven't got final guidelines?

Ms Stratford: I'm not aware.

Ms Hefren-Webb: But we can send you a link to them.

Mr HILL: Can you take that on notice. Thank you. I appreciate that it's another part of the department now.

Answer:

The Safe Places Emergency Accommodation guidelines are finalised and published on the GrantConnect website, <https://www.grants.gov.au/>.

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ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Social Services

Topic: Parl Com QoN - Joint Committee on Public Accounts and Audit inquiry into Efficiency and Effectiveness - Hansard Question 3

Question reference number: SQ19-000521

Member: Mr Julian Hill MP, Deputy Chair

Type of Question: Spoken. Hansard Page/s: 31

Date set by the Committee for the return of answer: 05 December 2019

Question:

Mr HILL: I have a particular interest in dowry abuse. The Victorian royal commission recognised dowry abuse as a specific driver of family violence in CALD communities and a rising concern and recommended legislation, which Victoria has passed. So far, it appears to actually be moderating reports of dowry abuse and family violence. Is consideration being given at the Commonwealth level to similar legislative clarification to send that normative signal and make clear that dowry abuse is a form of family violence?

Ms Stratford: That would be a matter for the Attorney-General's Department.

Mr HILL: Has your department expressed a view to the Attorney-General's Department on that matter?

Ms Stratford: Possibly in the context of preparing the departmental response to that inquiry, but we'd have to confirm on notice.

Answer:

No.