

# CORRECTED VERSION

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into 2002–03 budget estimates

Melbourne – 28 June 2002

#### Members

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Mr R. W. Clark  
Ms S. M. Davies  
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#### Witnesses

Ms M. Gould, Minister for Youth Affairs;  
Ms J. Samms, Director, Office of Portfolio Integration; and  
Mr S. Hamilton, Secretary, Department of Education and Training.

**The CHAIRMAN** — I declare open this Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on the budget estimates for the portfolio of youth affairs.

I welcome the Honourable Monica Gould, Minister for Youth Affairs; Mr Stuart Hamilton, secretary of the Department of Education and Training; Ms Jenny Samms, director, Office of Portfolio Integration, Department of Education and Training; departmental officers; members of the public; and the media.

All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act and is protected from judicial review. However, any comments made outside the precincts of the hearing are not protected by parliamentary privilege. All evidence given today is being recorded. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript early next week.

Before I call on the minister to give a brief presentation on the more complex financial and performance information that relates to the budget estimates for the portfolio of youth affairs, I ask all present to ensure that their mobile telephones are turned off.

**Slides shown.**

**Ms GOULD** — Thank you. Today I want to cover the key initiatives from the 2002–03 budget that relate to youth affairs. In particular, I want to briefly outline to you the government’s commitment to Victoria’s young people, the overall role and purpose of the Office for Youth and the programs that are run by the Office for Youth.

The government is committed to ensuring that young Victorians have the opportunity to achieve their personal goals as well as contribute to building a caring and connected community. We are committed to listening to young people and to working with them. This also extends to organisations that they are involved in and that support our young people. This is part of our process of developing policies and programs that recognise the interests and concerns of young people and seek to address them.

About 20 per cent of the Victorian population are aged between 12 and 25. Victoria’s young people reflect a diversity of socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They have individual needs, expectations, skills and talents which need to be recognised and supported, and at every opportunity I get I try to do that. It is also important that the government recognises that young people are capable of making significant contributions to their communities.

This government does recognise the value of young people participating in all aspects of community life and in policy and program development. We are committed to ensuring that young people are respected within these processes and given opportunities to be involved. Further, about 26 per cent of young people live in rural and regional Victoria. Due to the relative geographic isolation of many of these young people, they often have difficulty accessing services. The Office for Youth is very mindful of this issue and it is taken into account both in our policy areas and in administering grants and programs.

Clearly there are issues affecting young people across the whole of government. However, the focus of today’s hearing is on the Office for Youth and the youth outputs as contained in the budget papers. As this slide presents a summary of the recent budget, it clearly shows that youth outputs are within the broader department’s budget. As you can see from this, the budget for the Office for Youth has increased substantially over the last couple of years.

You will note that footnote B indicates the variations between the 2001–02 budget and the 2002–03 budget, which reflect the transfer of, in part, the youth services programs from the Department of Human Services across to the Office for Youth. In addition, there is increased funding in the Freeza program, which I will go to a little later.

The work of the Office for Youth within my portfolio is central to the government’s commitment to young people. The office was established in January 2000, fulfilling one of our government’s commitments to working with young Victorians. This was necessary because under the previous government there was no whole-of-government office for youth, although there was a small group of people working within the Department of Human Services who focused on youth issues.

As indicated in this slide, the office assists the government to achieve its commitment to young people by consulting on youth issues, providing policy direction and support on issues that impact on young people, and managing a range of youth services programs. As the Minister for Youth Affairs my role is to ensure that the needs and concerns of young people are reflected in government policy-making and program delivery. This is achieved through the particular work done by the Office for Youth and by participating in the work of other relevant

government departments. It also involves providing support and assistance to other organisations that work with young people outside of government.

In relation to its consultation role, the Office for Youth supports a number of processes which I would like to outline briefly. The youth round tables have been a very successful initiative of this government, giving young people the opportunity to share with me and other parts of government their views on a range of issues. Eight youth round tables have been held since they started in 2000, and they have been attended by about 450 young people. The budget papers show that four round tables are proposed for this calendar year, one of which has already occurred. We are looking at enhancing these round tables and how they are run.

The office also supports the regional youth committees which under this government are resourced by youth liaison officers. These committees contribute to local communities and government policy development. In addition, the office works closely with providers and two peak bodies in particular: the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (Yacvic) and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues. Both of these groups undertake policy development and work with the youth sector as a whole and provide another avenue for the government to hear the views of young people and those who are working with them.

One of the youth services programs operated out of the Office for Youth is the Freeza program, which provides funding to allow young people to organise music events for young people to attend. The Freeza program was commenced by the previous government but it has been developed and increased substantially since we came to office. In this budget we have made a long-term commitment to the Freeza program, with an unprecedented \$8 million over the next four years. Just yesterday at Eltham High School the Premier announced 68 Freeza providers for the next financial year covering 69 local government areas. This means that 12 new local government areas will have access to Freeza programs in 2002–03.

As I mentioned, on 1 July the youth services program will be transferred to the Office for Youth from the Department of Human Services. This program funds a diverse range of agencies, including local government, to provide services to young people.

Like the Freeza program, the Victorian youth development program has been around for some years. It operates in schools and facilitates the development of partnerships with leading community organisations in a diverse range of agencies, including the Country Fire Authority, the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia, the Red Cross and the defence forces. There are now 178 government schools and secondary colleges with almost 6000 students participating in the youth development program.

Finally, there is National Youth Week, which celebrates young people's contribution. That is held in April each year. More than 200 National Youth Week programs were held right across the state in that week.

Young people participate in a wide range of activities reflecting their diverse interests. In summary, the work of the Office for Youth and the youth affairs portfolio is central to the government's commitment to listening and leading and achieving our vision for all Victorians.

**The CHAIRMAN** — Can I commence by asking you about something on the previous slide in relation to the youth round tables. You mentioned that there are to be 12 youth round tables, 8 of which I think you said have already taken place and there are 4 still to be conducted by the end of this year; I think I am right?

**Ms GOULD** — That is right.

**The CHAIRMAN** — So it is fairly obvious that considerable resources are being allocated into those youth round tables from the Office for Youth. Can you outline to this committee how these youth round tables are conducted, how they are brought together, et cetera, and whether this program is changing and evolving in any way as you have experience of it — whether there are any changes being made to it? Can you also provide to the committee information on how the youth round table process actually contributes to the Office for Youth being able to develop and sustain partnerships with youth bodies throughout the state and its effect on policy and direction of the Office for Youth?

**Ms GOULD** — Sure. The round tables do ensure that the government has a direct listening ability with young people, to hear about what their issues are, which helps with ongoing government policies and it also helps to develop them. The Office for Youth encourages a diverse range of participants at these youth round tables including people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. They also have got to be from various, different, socioeconomic backgrounds and participants from both metropolitan and regional and rural, so we get a

cross-section of the community that makes up the cross-section of our youth across Victoria. These round tables provide advice to government on a range of policies and initiatives, services and government departments that they deal with, and we have found them to be valuable in gaining first-hand information from young people as to how they think these services are affecting them and whether they are targeted in the right area. As you rightly said, there are four round tables that are scheduled for this calendar year, 2002.

I attended one just last week, which was the eighth round table that we have had, called Speaking Out About Sport. That was held at the Monash aquatic centre at Glen Waverley, and at that there were about 80 young people. It was on sport and how sport affected them, and the different sorts of sports, whether it be structured sport or unstructured. That was terrific to hear from young people. We had a lot of other organisations there, Football Victoria, basketball associations, and of course there were government departments, my Department of Education and Training, and there were members of Sport and Recreation Victoria. The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues was in attendance, and so there was a wide variety. There were also representatives from the parents council and parent associations as to how they saw sport affecting young people, so they heard it at first hand from these young people. The format is that they include an input from a range of different organisations and, as I said, at Speaking Out About Sport last week they had Vicsport and Vichealth, Yacvic, which is the Youth Advisory Council, and Outdoor Recreation Victoria, Football Victoria and a number of other organisations.

So what comes out of that is that we are always looking at ways of improving how we consult and talk to young people. We actually want to listen to them, we want to hear what their views are, so we are always looking at ways of improving the program. One of those ways is that this year we are trialling a youth round table action team. The round table will be designed by young people for young people, so the Office for Youth has selected through its networks 10 people to be involved in the development of a round table rather than just bureaucrats, the department, doing it as well. They will do it in conjunction.

We will undergo some mentoring with those young people to show them how to develop the program. We have ensured that these 10 people have the mix of regional and rural Victoria and metropolitan. They will be supported by the Office for Youth in the development of this round table. They haven't come to a conclusion yet as to what the topic will be but that is part of the process that they will undertake, so they will be contributing to it. We have our structured ones and we are trialling new ones, getting young people to actually develop them themselves, so we are constantly improving on how we communicate with young people and allowing them to have participation with government and ensuring that they are heard. All the reports that come from these round tables I then circulate to my ministerial colleagues and their departments right across government so they are aware of what has come out of these round tables. I am committed and this department is committed to continually improving these as much as possible, and the processes, to ensure that we hear first-hand from young people what their views are.

**Mr CLARK** — I want to raise the issue of the appointment of advisers and you will recall the controversy over the appointment of Mr David Henderson. I don't obviously want to canvass the merits of that issue, but I was struck by a press report of yours saying that you weren't aware of the previous views of Mr Henderson until after he had been appointed. What I want to ask is what processes did you have in place prior to that and what changes, if any, have you made to the processes for appointment of advisers and people to similar positions to make sure that they are in a position to properly advocate government policy and not be supporting views that are contrary to government policy?

**Mr HOLDING** — The Communist Party?

**The CHAIRMAN** — It is up to the minister, I guess, but I am not sure of the direct relevance of that to the estimates. She might like to clarify it for us.

**Mr HOLDING** — It's beneath you, Robert.

**Mr CLARK** — If I need to spell it out, it relates to the effectiveness with which staff in the department or ministerial advisers are able to perform their duties and therefore the value for money and quality of the results that the public is receiving from the government's expenditure of these estimates.

**Ms GOULD** — I am prepared to make a general comment in the sense that, as Robert indicated, this matter has been dealt with some time ago in the Parliament and I fully explained my position with respect to David and his conduct that occurred prior to him starting employment with me. I am a bit concerned that the opposition is continuing to attack a young man who has only just started in his professional career; but what occurred back then were allegations that were relevant to events that had taken place a number of years ago, over four years ago, and

we all agreed at the time, both David and myself and I think the public generally, that it was inappropriate and it was stupid — the comments that were made in that article.

I will say now as I said then that with respect to David and his performance, I will continue to judge him on the work that he does for me and on his performance, and I will continue to do that. With respect to his employment, he was interviewed and was the successful applicant. He continues to work for me and I will continue to judge his ability to work for me based on his performance.

**Mr CLARK** — I think that I actually asked about process. Have there been any changes to processes that you follow in filling such positions to ensure that the staff that you engage do advocate government policy?

**Mr HOLDING** — Did you check that he was a member of the Communist Party?

**Ms GOULD** — I didn't do a check.

**Mr CLARK** — That is not an appropriate answer to that question.

**The CHAIRMAN** — No, the minister did answer. The minister said there has been no further vacancy.

**Ms GOULD** — There are no vacancies in my office.

**Mr CLARK** — My question related to the processes you have in place for the engagement of staff. Are you changing your processes?

**Ms GOULD** — Ministerial staff are employed by the Premier. With respect to the processes that are in place, I have no vacancies.

**Mr DAVIS** — You must have input into the processes.

**Ms GOULD** — I have a chief of staff and two advisers in my office, and there are no vacancies.

**Mr DAVIS** — What sort of processes would you follow?

**Ms GOULD** — You want an answer to a question about something that will occur in the future. That is hypothetical.

**The CHAIRMAN** — The minister has answered the question. She said there are no vacancies.

**Ms BARKER** — I would like to ask a question that relates to the reason she is here today — to talk about public accounts and estimates.

Minister, in your presentation you stated that Freeza was put in place by the previous government but that it was always a 12-monthly, may-or-may-not-happen program. Firstly, on behalf of the area I represent when I am not serving on this committee, I congratulate you on providing the security of a long-term program for Freeza. You mentioned in your presentation that yesterday you announced 68 Freeza grants recipients and a four-year program. The budget papers give us some details of the program. Can you give us more detail about this first round of the guaranteed secure four-year Freeza program that will take place in Victoria, and if you have managed to get a spread across Victoria, what the spread is?

Before you start may I say that I am aware that one of my councils, Glen Eira, has not applied for Freeza funding. I spoke to the council about that yesterday.

**Ms GOULD** — I am delighted to speak about the Freeza program. I am sure Peter will be pleased to hear about the Freeza program provider, the Courthouse Youth Arts Centre, which stages events in his electorate of Geelong North and is a very successful and Freeza provider.

**Ms BARKER** — It is great place.

**The CHAIRMAN** — Ms Barker has visited it with me.

**Ms GOULD** — It is fantastic. The Courthouse runs fantastic events in Geelong and has been awarded the largest Freeza provider grant — \$26 790 — to run a minimum of 10 events over the coming year in recognition of

the fact that more young people live in the Geelong area than in any other municipality across the state. This Freeza provider has had great success in running high-quality, well-attended events for young people.

The additional money will also allow this particular Freeza provider to stage events both in Geelong and around the Geelong area. It will be expanded so it can provide Freeza events for young people in the Bellarine Peninsula, which is an isolated area. It is not easy for young people to get from peninsula to Geelong to attend those events. Freeza recognises that and so does the government, which is why we have increased the funding.

Another great aspect of the increase in Freeza funding has been the new demographically focused providers, so the basis is not only geographic but demographic. One of these groups is the Club World group — a new provider as a result of the increased funding and this new round — which is supported by the St Laurence Community Services organisation. Club World will run Freeza events that are focused on young musicians and performers with disabilities; we acknowledge that young people with disabilities should have access to Freeza programs. Club World will receive \$18 750 to run a minimum of seven events over the next year, which is good.

Another new demographically based provider is the Vietnamese Welfare Resource Centre for Vietnamese young people in the western and northern metropolitan regions of Melbourne. We recognise that young Vietnamese people form another group of young people who need access to these events.

Since taking up the youth affairs portfolio I have met with a lot of young people, and there are three groups who benefit. There are the young people who work on the committees that establish the events. They do the marketing, hire the halls, get in the security, hire the bands, and get involved in the lighting and all the staging of the events. There are the young up-and-coming bands who get an opportunity to perform a gig in front of a crowd of their peers. Then there are the young people themselves, who get to attend these events which parents recognise as being as a safe environment for their children to be in.

**Ms BARKER** — And there are the parents who get a night off.

**Ms GOULD** — And they know that their children are in a safe drug-and-alcohol-free environment. We also know that we need to expand the program so there are more providers out there. We are specifically targeting demographic areas. The stability provided by the four-year funding has helped a resurgence in organised events.

The number of providers has been increased from 60 to 68, which is basically a 10 per cent increase. All providers received an increase in funding. They are broken up across regional and rural Victoria; there are 36 regional providers and 32 metropolitan providers, which is a good spread. I am delighted that Freeza has secure funding, and that the number of providers has been expanded across local government areas and in specific demographic areas.

**Ms BARKER** — As more organisations become aware of their ability to have some security you will probably find your demand outstrips your budget in a very short time.

**Ms GOULD** — We will ensure that we are prudent in our management of this.

**Mr DAVIS** — I would also say that I am very happy to be here this year and to hear that Freeza is in a lot stronger position than it was at the time of the estimates hearings last year.

My question relates to the position of the Office for Youth in the Department of Education and Training. The budget puts out the spending areas and so forth and the spending by output group, but I am interested in how the staff in the Office for Youth fit within the Department of Education and Training.

First of all I am interested in how many members of the Victorian public service (VPS) are employed by the department and how many of those are in the Office for Youth. At the same time I am interested in the number of executive officers who are employed within the department at the various levels, and how many of those at each level are employed in the Office for Youth as well.

**Ms GOULD** — I will hand that over to the secretary of the department.

**Mr HAMILTON** — Since it was formed the Office for Youth has been headed by an executive officer, and it remains headed by an executive officer. There has been one position at the executive officer level dedicated to that function.

**Mr DAVIS** — Among how many in the department?



**Mr HAMILTON** — The department itself has 74 executive officers.

**Mr DAVIS** — Can you provide a breakdown in the different categories, different levels?

**Ms GOULD** — Do you want education or youth?

**Mr HAMILTON** — That is in the education budget as a whole, you mean?

**Mr DAVIS** — Yes.

**Mr HAMILTON** — A breakdown in what sense?

**Mr DAVIS** — The different levels.

**Mr HAMILTON** — There are 2 EO1s, there about 20 EO2s and the rest are EO3s. The director of the office is obviously an EO3.

**Mr DAVIS** — And the total number of staff in the Office for Youth and the department itself?

**The CHAIRMAN** — For the Office for Youth, which we are addressing here.

**Mr DAVIS** — I want to see it in the position of the broader department.

**Mr HAMILTON** — The Office for Youth is a small office; it has about 19 staff. That is central office, plus there are also positions in our non-metropolitan regional offices.

**Mr DAVIS** — That is the other thing I want to come to in a second, but how many VPS staff are there in the Department of Education and Training?

**Mr HAMILTON** — It is a couple of thousand. I cannot remember what it is exactly, but roughly 2000.

**Mr DAVIS** — Can you come back with the figure?

**Mr HAMILTON** — Yes, I can give you the exact figure; it is in our annual report.

**Mr DAVIS** — That would be helpful.

**The CHAIRMAN** — It would probably be best to do that through Minister Kosky, I would have thought.

**Mr HAMILTON** — Yes, well, it relates to the education portfolio.

**Mr DAVIS** — Coming back to the regional issue, how many of the Office for Youth will be based in the regional offices?

**Mr HAMILTON** — There is a person in each of our non-metropolitan regional offices and there are two people in the central office who are responsible for metropolitan services. So there is one in each non-metropolitan region and two people in the central office who deal with the four metropolitan regions, so seven in all.

**Mr HOLDING** — Could I take you to page 40 of budget paper 3, which includes the output deliverable youth policy coordination. There is a reference there to regional youth committees. I would like to ask you about the regional youth committees which are highlighted on that page. Could you provide the committee with some information about the extent to which the Office for Youth resources those committees and the role that those committees play in keeping the government informed about the priorities of young people in the different regions?

**Ms GOULD** — The regional youth committees were actually established back in 1995, and they are again a valuable means for the government to be aware of what the youth sector issues are right across the whole of the state. On the other side of this, the committees also provide an effective way for the youth sector to have direct access to the decision making of government. We use the youth committees to get people to come to the youth round tables. They were involved in the selection of the action team that is going to develop the round table that will be held later this year by young people. So it is a great network.

We place a high importance on these roles. In April 2000, we increased resources to the 15 regional youth committees that exist across the state. Following on from David's question to the secretary, we did this by the establishment of the seven youth liaison officers across the regions and in the central office. Their role is to support

the regional youth committees. These liaison officers have been able to provide support for them and they have assisted them in developing their policy advice to government.

This increase in resources has also meant the committees have been able to broaden their membership base to include more local services, which is also a very important — the linkage of all these services — so that young people know where to go to get things. We want to make sure that the Office for Youth has a broad whole-of-government approach to things, to act as a resource.

The regional committees now include senior members of the police force in the area, local school teachers and principals, community social workers, local government representatives, public servants and employer organisation representatives in regions — members of the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry or the Australian Industry Group are sometimes on these regional committees as well. It is important that we have these people on these committees that discuss and identify issues that are relevant to young people.

The committees to date have been involved in activities such as establishing rural networks and publishing a 'Making it in Melbourne' kit for regional young people who leave the regions and come into the city; so that was a resource use for young people. There is an implementing vocational education and training (VET) pilot which has been going on because of lack of transport. That is to assist young people to get into VET programs. That was a pilot they undertook for this year. They have also been coordinating nominations, as I said, for the action team that is going to look at developing the next round table, and National Youth Week representatives.

As it is a national approach, we have to have Victorian representatives to go to Canberra and be acknowledged. They have also undertaken some policy research, and these committees have forwarded on to government advice on young people's mental health, youth participation and resource allocation for young people. They have identified issues in their regions and areas, and forwarded them to the Office for Youth, and where appropriate I forward them to my ministerial colleagues across other areas of government.

The chairs meet on a regular basis — four times a year. I met them the day after I became Minister for Youth Affairs. They were having their regional meetings and I met the chairs of the 15 regional committees. I have also met the full committee of the South Barwon Regional Youth Committee, and the Wimmera region committee when I was in Horsham a couple of days ago. These two particular committees have been quite helpful. The Horsham one was involved with the pilot for transport and the South Barwon one was involved with youth participation. They have done two very important research papers. It acknowledges the fact that they are aware of and attuned to the issues of young people in their regions.

These committees are good. We have enhanced them; we have acknowledged their existence but we have improved them and resourced them with youth liaison officers. We continue to support them.

**Mr HOLDING** — I notice that on page 40 of budget paper 3 under 'Youth policy coordination' and the subheading 'Quality' there is a new measure included in the budget for the 2002–03 financial year that will test satisfaction. Will there be a survey or something of some sort to test satisfaction?

**Ms GOULD** — The executive satisfaction of services?

**Mr HOLDING** — That is the Office for Youth satisfaction with the feedback from how these regional committees are functioning?

**Mr HAMILTON** — That is the satisfaction of the executive of the portfolio with the Office for Youth, yes.

**Ms GOULD** — So it is actually the department being satisfied with the Office for Youth.

**Mr HAMILTON** — With the advice and administration.

**Mr HOLDING** — That is not related to the work of the youth committees?

**Ms GOULD** — No.

**Ms BARKER** — That is interesting.

**Ms GOULD** — Stuart assesses the department.



**Mr DAVIS** — But there are no measures, as I can see it, to measure the satisfaction of young people. Which measures do you have to measure the satisfaction of young people?

**The CHAIRMAN** — Do you want to save that for your question?

**Mr DAVIS** — No, I am just following up from that point. It is a follow-up point from Tim's comment about the measure of executive satisfaction. What measures have you got that actually measure the satisfaction of younger people with the services?

**Ms GOULD** — Part of that is ongoing work. After the youth strategy is released, measures will be developed.

**Mr DAVIS** — There are none currently?

**Ms GOULD** — Currently, in the paper, no.

**Ms BARKER** — I think that will be in the development of the new office. That is the strategy — something that is dedicated to young people. These things take time to develop.

**The CHAIRMAN** — I also go to page 40 of budget paper 3, to the other output area 'Services to youth'. I note the new measure there of an allocation of youth services program grants. My understanding is that while this is a new service and measure for you, it is actually not a new service in the sense that it was administered by the Department of Human Services previously and that the Office for Youth has now taken responsibility for that program area.

**Ms GOULD** — Yes.

**The CHAIRMAN** — That is my understanding.

**Ms GOULD** — That is right.

**The CHAIRMAN** — Can you then outline for us about that transfer whether the total of the grants under that area that were with DHS have come across to you, or whether there is some form of split? If so, can you outline which is with DHS and which is with you? Further to that, could you indicate how the office is administering that \$3.9 million that is under that program area — or, in fact, it is slightly larger for this year; it was \$3.9 million last year — and how that relates to the current arrangements? Also, as a follow-up of what was asked before, with the allocation of that money what form or process of consultation with young people themselves is undertaken to ensure that the youth service program grants are allocated according to young people's needs and requirements?

**Ms GOULD** — I am happy to answer that, Peter. As you rightly say, the grants were originally housed in the Department of Human Services. The youth services program, in total, is \$4.8 million, and \$3.9 million of that money is being transferred over to the Office for Youth. So as you rightly said, the total amount of the program is \$4.8 million, and \$3.9 million is coming from DHS to the Office for Youth. This program actually started in the 1970s, so it has been around for quite some time. But it has been sponsored by four different departments over that period of time, which has made it have a mix of activities, and quite diverse.

The remaining \$0.9 million that is staying with DHS is primarily used to support agencies concerned with providing crisis care for young victims of sexual abuse and sexual assault. It is appropriate that that money stays within the DHS area, because it is better able to provide appropriate management advice and services in that highly specialised area for young people.

That is the split-up. The \$3.9 million that is coming across makes up grants, going mainly to community service organisations and local government authorities across the state. The groups are funded from the \$3.9 million, which takes effect on 1 July, which is Monday. I have ensured that they are rolled over to the end of this calendar year so there is some certainty because of the change occurring on 1 July, and the programs involve staff. There is a surety there so they know that the funding will stay in place until the end of this calendar year. Moving these grants to the Office for Youth will mean that we have a whole-of-government approach with respect to youth policies and services, so they will be enhanced.

To make sure that this happens, the future direction of these programs is to be reviewed in consultation with the youth sector. Over the next few months that will occur. We will consult with the youth sector and ensure that those

programs are targeting the right area. That will allow us to give appropriate consideration to where all those programs are. It is an important funding source for many youth agencies, so we want to make sure that it is spent as efficiently and effectively as possible and that it supports new opportunities for young people in Victoria.

**The CHAIRMAN** — Yes. What you are saying is an important point. The performance measures refer to the youth services and program grants being allocated — and 100 per cent is the target, as it should be. I assume from what you are saying that where you use the word ‘allocated’ there you do not mean that the money has been paid over but that you are ensuring that the service is delivered in that measure?

**Ms GOULD** — Yes; it is all part of a performance agreement and a contract is undertaken with all the providers. So they fulfil their contractual obligations before they can apply for — if they apply for new funding, that is all taken into account. So contracts are exchanged and there are performance measures, outcomes, reporting procedures and all that sort of stuff.

**The CHAIRMAN** — That is right.

**Ms GOULD** — We ensure that the money that is given over is delivered — —

**The CHAIRMAN** — Is effectively used?

**Ms GOULD** — Absolutely.

**Ms BARKER** — I have a follow-up question. You said that you are reviewing or going to consult on the funding that is coming over and is being delivered from the Office for Youth to youth workers out in those areas. Do you yet have any thought about that process? The reason I ask the question is that, for example, the Monash council in my area received funding — which would have previously been through DHS and which I presume will now come through DEET — for youth workers. They — and, I suspect, like other local government areas — actually auspice out the funding, so the funding is fed through them but is not necessarily coordinated by them. So the process of consultation would be more appropriately with the auspicing body or the worker rather than the local government area, which I suppose, on the books, gets the money?

**Ms GOULD** — I suppose with all the different sorts of programs that I have been talking about up until now, there are regional committees and the two peak bodies that we fund and consult with, Yacvic and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues. What is occurring is that we will have consultation with peak stakeholders, with the small group. Because these programs have been at DHS for a while, I have rolled them over at least until the end of this calendar year. They will look at the direction of them to ensure that they are addressing the needs of these young people. Then that committee will consult with the new proposed guidelines to make sure they are addressing young people in the right areas. Then we will implement the new guidelines for application for new funding at the end of this calendar year.

We are going through a consultation process. We cannot speak to every single one, so we have a process in place where there is a group of people that represents the youth sector. They will then in turn talk to their networks, and if they think we are on the right track — which, through that consultation process, we believe we will be — we will then send out as soon as possible, so that everyone knows where they stand, what the guidelines are. If those that are running the program meet that, there will not be a problem. It might need a bit of rejigging or slight refocusing, but we want to ensure — as you rightly said, Peter — that the programs they are delivering are appropriate and of benefit to our young people.

**Ms BARKER** — I could not pass up the opportunity to ensure that the Oakleigh integrated youth resource centre is minuted as an excellent example of how funding should be delivered.

**Ms GOULD** — I am sure it is, and you have been known to mention it to me.

**Mr CLARK** — I raise the question of the Victorian youth strategy and refer to budget paper 3, which says at page 22:

Beginning with an extensive process of public consultation, the government has been working on the development of a comprehensive whole of government youth strategy, to be finalised by mid-2002.

As best I can make out, the process for this strategy was commenced back on about 8 February 2001, when your predecessor released a public discussion paper on the strategy, and public submissions on that strategy were to be received by 18 April 2001.

My questions are: what has happened between 18 April 2001 and now; what is the current status of development of the youth strategy; and when do you expect it will finally be released?

**Ms GOULD** — It is important to start off by noting that Victoria has not had a comprehensive youth strategy since 1991. This government has a commitment to developing and releasing a youth strategy. The strategy will provide a whole-of-government policy framework which will guide and direct the way government interacts with providers of services for young people. It is true that we hoped to have already released the strategy. Obviously that has not happened but the government is still committed to releasing this strategy document as soon as possible. Of course that document will be a public document and publicly available. We want to ensure that we have a quality document, one that provides a strong direction. I am committed to achieving this even if it takes a little longer than we would have hoped.

It is also important to remind the committee that the Office for Youth is a relatively new office. We are working on the strategy and we are committed to releasing it. It will be released as soon as possible, but I want to make sure we get it right. We have done a lot of work following on from the discussion paper that was released. I as the minister and the government are committed to releasing that strategy and we will release it as soon as possible.

**Mr DAVIS** — On that strategy, will you release a draft for final consultation before you release the final strategy? Will young people get the opportunity to look at the draft strategy before it is finally adopted?

**Ms GOULD** — We have already had some consultation. I am hoping to release the strategy soon.

**Mr DAVIS** — So they will not get an opportunity to look at the final draft before it is adopted.

**Ms GOULD** — I think there has been extensive consultation with the sector. We have kept them informed of where we are up to in the process.

**Mr DAVIS** — But not the final draft is what you are saying. ‘No’ is the answer.

**Ms GOULD** — The strategy will be released publicly.

**Mr DAVIS** — But there will be no draft strategy that will be — —

**The CHAIRMAN** — I think we have pursued this to death.

**Ms BARKER** — You referred briefly to National Youth Week in your presentation and page 22 of budget paper 3 refers to the Office for Youth having managed the delivery of a number of programs including Victoria’s participation in National Youth Week 2002. Do you have any further detail that you could provide to the committee on what I think is a very successful initiative? There is a lot of variation in the programs. From memory, in my area one was an art show and one was an outdoor theatre night which was very successful. Could you provide some more information to the committee on this initiative and whether you see it progressing in the future?

**Ms GOULD** — As I said, more than 200 events were held across Victoria during National Youth Week. This year’s theme was ‘Bring it on’ and it was a fantastic success. I went to a number of events across Victoria. It was terrific to have so many young people participating in a diverse range of activities. During that week I took the opportunity to remind people not to stereotype young people. National Youth Week showed young people to be creative, artistic and enthusiastic. It is a great opportunity to show the community what young people are like.

Of the more than 200 events, 111 were funded events. That was made up of federal and state government money and local government put a lot of in-kind funding into National Youth Week. Again we targeted regional and rural areas against metropolitan areas. Rural and regional areas got about 56 per cent of the funding and metropolitan areas got 44 per cent. We ensured that there was a strong emphasis on initiatives in isolated areas and the outer metropolitan areas like the Yarra Ranges. It is harder for people to go to events in those areas so we targeted them.

There is a strong emphasis on a partnership approach to National Youth Week with local agencies, local government and schools. It is in April and is right across Australia. This year it was during the school holidays. It is always a vexed question as to whether that is a good thing or a bad thing: in school holidays kids get to go to activities during the day, but they are not at school to be reminded that they are on. However, the events were still well participated in by young people. The cross-sections of the community and the activities they have were great. We will continue to work to improve and grow National Youth Week. It is a great opportunity for the community to see young people in a positive manner and see how artistic they are. I saw some great portrait art, a lot of great reading and music and dance festivals right across multicultural, socioeconomic and regional areas.

The Office for Youth is working with groups to encourage government agencies to support National Youth Week. We have to get other government agencies to promote it. The office uses the week to promote youth initiatives across government. An example of that came from the Department of Infrastructure with the Nightrider bus service. It was promoted during that week and is a great thing for young people to help them get home and get around to events.

**Mr DAVIS** — Following up on National Youth Week, what have you done in formal evaluation of National Youth Week? Perhaps you could outline the process of formal evaluation.

**Ms GOULD** — The funding for it is half commonwealth and half state — the commonwealth puts in a little bit more than the state.

**Mr DAVIS** — Not of the funding, of the actual outcomes.

**Ms GOULD** — It is a bit difficult to assess the outcomes because a lot of these events are run by other organisations. There were more than 200 events, 100 of which were co-sponsored by the commonwealth and state governments. They run events across National Youth Week. To get the funding, programs have to meet certain criteria and if they do not meet that criteria they obviously do not get the funding. National Youth Week spans the whole country.

**Mr DAVIS** — I am just interested to know whether your office has sat down and done a formal evaluation of the outcome of the week in a systematic way.

**Ms BARKER** — It was very successful in my area, I know that.

**Mr DAVIS** — That is one area and I am quite supportive of it, but things can always be improved.

**Ms GOULD** — Of course and we are always into continuous improvement. As I indicated, it is National Youth Week and there is actually a national evaluation of the success of that week being undertaken and Victoria is participating in that.

**Mr DAVIS** — Does your office do a separate one itself?

**Ms GOULD** — Because it is national there is a national evaluation done and Victoria is participating in that. Obviously Victoria will put its views on how Victoria performed.

**Mr DAVIS** — Would you make available a copy of your evaluation of the Victorian part of it?

**Ms GOULD** — I think that will have to go through the national. I am sure the federal government will make it available.

**Mr DAVIS** — So you do not have the Victoria — —

**Ms GOULD** — As I understand it, the national evaluation will be made public. That is what I am advised. When the feds make it available — —

**Mr DAVIS** — But your corner of it is what I am interested in, the Victorian section.

**Ms GOULD** — The national one will incorporate Victoria's view's on it.

**Mr DAVIS** — So you do not evaluate it separately.

**Ms GOULD** — It is a national one and we are participating in it.

**The CHAIRMAN** — That concludes the hour allocated for questions under the youth affairs portfolio for which you have responsibility.

**Ms GOULD** — Excuse me, Mr Chairman. There was a figure specifically asked for.

**Mr HAMILTON** — I said I would follow up the figure: in our annual report the total number of VPS staff in the Department of Education and Training at the end of last year was 1435.7. I was thinking of a figure that included some school-based staff.

**Mr DAVIS** — What is the figure for this year estimated to be?

**The CHAIRMAN** — We are not starting another round of questions. Thank you. There may be some matters that the committee will follow up with you arising from this hearing and there may be some further questions in writing forwarded to you at a later date. This committee is now adjourned until 9.30 a.m. on Tuesday of next week when the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrections will appear.

**Committee adjourned.**