

CORRECTED VERSION

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into 2003–04 budget estimates

Melbourne–29 May 2003

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Witnesses

Ms S. Garbutt, Minister for Community Services;

Ms P. Faulkner, Secretary;

Mr L. Wallace, Executive Director, Financial and Corporate Services;

Ms P. White, Executive Director, Community Care; and

Mr A. Rogers, Executive Director, Disability Services, Department of Human Services.

The CHAIR — I declare open the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee hearing on the 2003–04 budget estimates for the community services portfolio. I welcome the Honourable Sherryl Garbutt, Minister for Community Services; Patricia Faulkner, Secretary of the Department of Human Services; Lance Wallace, executive director, financial and corporate services; Pam White, executive director, community care; Arthur Rogers, executive director, disability services, Department of Human Services; other departmental officers; members of the public; the media; and Hansard.

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 by Hansard. Witnesses will be provided with proof versions of the transcript early next week. At this point, I would ask that all mobile phones be turned off and pagers turned to silent.

Minister, I call on you to give a brief presentation on the more complex financial and performance information in relation to the budget. We will do the overheads on the disability component, have a break for a cuppa, and community care after that. Are these overheads all of it, or just for disability services?

Ms GARBUTT — Just disability services.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Over to you.

Overheads shown.

Ms GARBUTT — I will look in turn at disability services — first of all, the achievements in the current financial year, 2002–03, and then the priorities for the coming financial year that were contained within the budget. And we will do community care after the cuppa.

With disability services, we are continuing a major investment by the Bracks government. There has been a 48 per cent increase since we came to office in 1999, and the new funding is to reorientate the system towards a more sustainable mix of formal and informal services — that is particularly important. We think those efforts will generate substantial benefits to the people and the families that use the services and provide a better and more effective level of support, consistent with the state plan. The budget for 2003–04 is \$844 million — nearly \$850 million — and that is a 48 per cent increase, as I said. That does incorporate some new initiatives, as well as growth funding for people with disability.

So the priorities are set out there, and I will say a little bit about each. These were the priorities from last year's budget. There has been significant progress made in each of these over the past 12 months. The state disability plan was launched in September of last year. It followed a process of extensive consultation throughout Victoria. It established these goals: pursuing individual lifestyles, building inclusive communities and leading the way. Those are goals that will inform the work of the department over the next decade, so this is a longer-term vision.

There are actions well under way to implement the aspirations of the plan. So far the efforts have been focused on developing an individualised planning and support framework, introduction of a Metro Access program building on the success of the Rural Access program and establishment of innovation grants in the coming year to encourage innovative policy practice and partnerships promoting individualised planning and support and accessible communities for people with disabilities. The aspirations of the plan — the vision — are guiding the direction of the major initiatives, and I will talk about them further later.

Can I briefly summarise progress and issues in relation to the three other areas? On work force development, critical to the success of our efforts in disability services is the importance of a highly trained — a better trained — and skilled work force. Traineeships were introduced in 2002 — I am sure the committee Chair is well aware — and, to date, 1000 existing unqualified disability developmental support officers have been enrolled in the traineeship program to achieve the minimum certificate IV in disability work. The chart on that slide shows the increase in those enrolled in certificate IV studies. And that is a trend that is evident in both government and non-government sectors.

The Kew redevelopment is also progressing really well. The pictures show some of the bedrooms at Kew Residential Services which obviously do not meet contemporary standards: they are simply not what is acceptable any more. This year has seen the rolling out of stage 1 of the redevelopment. That has included extensive consultation with the residents, with their families, with staff and a broad range of stakeholders. Consultation has occurred to assess resident support needs and their preferences. Sixty-five people will have moved by the end of

June, and the majority of the rest by August. There has been some delay in finalising the move of some people, but it is now well on track.

For those that have moved, the improvement in their quality of life is highly visible, and if you talk to them they are very enthusiastic about their new positions. In their new homes they have their own bedrooms, 24-hour support and enjoy full-time day activities. The families of those who have moved are also very enthusiastic about the improvement in the quality of life of their family member. The staff are also pleased with the move.

Meeting the need for growth in these services is a challenge for governments right across the country. This graph shows the increasing number of people in Australia with a severe and profound disability, which more than doubled between 1981 and 1998 due largely to the ageing population. We are seeing that trend particularly in the demand for services, most notably in the number of service needs registered. The ageing population has another result because carers are also ageing and often not able to continue with the same level of care.

Additional research by the Social Policy Research Centre of the University of New South Wales shows that the growth in the need for disability services is underpinned by a cohort effect, which means that young people accessing services early in their life remain in need of services right through their life. As well, new people are coming in all the time which is another reason for the growth in needs. A further factor impacting on growth is the growing complexity of needs. The evidence of service providers, whether government or non-government, suggests that individuals are seeking assistance with more complex needs and more complex and challenging behaviours and requirements for support.

The CHAIR — Minister, given the number of overheads, I remind you that time is limited, so you might like to precis some of them.

Ms GARBUTT — I will go a bit quicker. In addressing those challenges we need to change the service mix and move towards more flexible, individualised support and invest in early intervention whenever possible. We want to shift away from continuing to provide institutional and quasi-institutional services and focus on those more flexible individualised programs such as the Homefirst program. This graphs shows how the service mix will change over time. We have to move to support carers, particularly aged carers. So we need to look at providing support in smarter ways, given this continuous growth in needs.

The disability services budget shows an increase of 10 per cent this year over last year and is now \$844 million. The bulk of the funding is allocated to shared supported accommodation which is 42.5 per cent of the budget. As we shift the focus to more home-based services, the percentage of total budget spent this year on individual support has increased — and you can see it has gone up a per cent or two during the year.

This year there is an additional \$2 million for services at Kew to relocate 60 residents, so that will be 160 residents in the first two stages that I mentioned. In disability support services we are expanding the Homefirst program with an extra \$4.8 million — that is 100 packages in the next financial year rising to an extra 200 packages in the following year. The Making a Difference program supports families caring for people with a disability in their own home. An extra 200 families will be provided with that package.

Carer support and community awareness are two other funding initiatives which will receive an extra \$1.5 million. This reflects the pressure from the ageing population and is for carers who are ageing as well as for people with a disability who are also ageing. Community awareness and inclusion support — that is working with local councils and local communities. We are expanding the very successful Rural Access program, bringing it into Melbourne and having a Metro Access program and I think that will be just as successful as the Rural Access program.

Looking ahead — and I think this is the last slide — we have to consider what we can do to assist in dealing with the growth in disability service needs in the future, so we are focusing more on early intervention, prevention and better targeted responses. That goes hand in hand with more individualised responses as part of the state plan. We anticipate creating additional capacity in shared supported accommodation, perhaps with some people who are identified in the Homefirst package able to move out of community residential units (CRUs) to create some capacity in shared supported accommodation. We are also emphasising better planning at some key transition points in peoples' lives where we know there will be extra tension and difficulty — typically, leaving school or perhaps leaving home or the death of a carer. We should put in additional support where we can see those events coming, so that they does not escalate into a crisis and there is some sense of support and a way forward at those changing points. I think I can leave it there. The next group of overheads will be on the community care budget.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Minister. Your overhead presentation outlined really clearly how the support needs are increasing and the plans that you and the department have to put in place for the future; and the graph was quite illuminating. In your presentation you also referred to pressures on the budget expanding, but you are trying to cope with those by early intervention and better targeted responses. Then you came up with additional capacity, for example, in shared support and better planning. Do you have any more detailed information that you would be able to give us on that given I was hurrying you through the overhead presentation?

Ms GARBUTT — To place it in context, this is an issue facing all Australian governments. Right across the country we have the issue of an ageing population, which impacts both on the caring population as well as people with a disability, so the numbers are expanding. The predication is that by 2006, which is not very far away, 1.3 million Australians will have a severe disability. That is a huge increase in numbers across the country, up from 450 000 in 1981.

We are very committed to providing services to respond to demand and the backlog of demand that we inherited and we have increased our funding there. That funding injection has made a big difference to the lives of people with a disability, but in this state budget we can see strategic measures being funded. It is about shifting the focus away from institutions, which are the large part of the budget now, towards much more flexible, individualised programs such as Homefirst for which there is extra funding of \$4.8 million. Homefirst allows people to stay at home with support. We believe there are people in existing shared supported accommodation — in CRUs — who will want to take up the Homefirst package so we will see some movement out of there. That will then allow others to move into CRUs if that is what is most appropriate for them. The total number in the Homefirst package is around 100 this year, moving up to 200 in the following year.

We are providing additional support for children through the Making a Difference program. That program is individualised tailored to the specific needs and aspirations of the family supporting the children. The Older Years and Carers Support program is aimed particularly at that phenomena of the ageing population, again individual, flexible and tailored to the needs of either the ageing carer or the ageing person with a disability. A range of other initiatives are aimed at effectively planning for future needs at key points in a person's life. It has been about shifting that focus of the budget to more innovative solutions.

Mr FORWOOD — Minister, you may need to take this question on notice. If you can answer it, that is fine. You have six output groups. For each of those output groups, how much of the funding comes from appropriation through the budget, how much comes from the federal government and how much comes from retained earnings such as fees, charges or whatever?

Ms GARBUTT — I certainly do not have that level of detail. To get it right we should take it on notice. We can do part of it.

Mr WALLACE — Page 473 of budget paper 3 highlights all commonwealth grants directed to the department, so within that budget table it highlights the commonwealth funding for disability, but we would have to take on notice the proportions.

Mr FORWOOD — I could not match that to output groups.

Mr WALLACE — We can do that for the committee.

Mr ROGERS — The overall commonwealth contribution to next year's budget is \$124.1 million out of the total budget that the minister mentioned. You are looking to get it by output, are you?

Mr FORWOOD — Yes, by output group, and if I cannot add the amount appropriated with the amount from the federal government then I would like to know whether the difference comes from charging fees, the Community Support Fund or whatever.

Mr ROGERS — That is a state contribution and the commonwealth. If there is a difference between that then what is the difference and how that is explained?

Mr FORWOOD — Yes.

Ms GARBUTT — Broadly, we have \$124 million from the commonwealth out of a budget of \$844 million. It is not a big proportion — about 15 per cent — but that will have different impacts on those different output groups.

Ms GREEN — In your presentation you touched briefly on the redevelopment of Kew Residential Services. What funding has been allocated in the budget to progress this important major project?

Ms GARBUTT — This is a further round of funding in this budget, which is \$2 million. Stepping back, what is already under way is the relocation of 100 people leaving Kew Residential Services. A large number has already left, so they are in new shared supported accommodation. They are very happy. The \$2 million recurrent expenditure will allow a further 60 residents to move in this financial year. That money is recurrent because it provides them with extra services, extra support and day programs which they are currently not getting at Kew to the same extent. That support continues all their lives, so the money has to be recurrent. They now have 24-hour support and full-time day activities.

I visited one of the new community residential units in the eastern suburbs and met with five people who are now living there. Their families were there and absolutely delighted with very obvious progress that they could see already. They had only been there for a month or two. The staff who had also been redeployed from Kew to the CRUs, and who had volunteered for that, were very enthusiastic and enjoying the new surroundings enormously. Neighbours had called in there as well and were delighted to have these people as their neighbours, and were there providing support as well. It has been a great story.

Prior to anyone moving, the department has undertaken detailed consultation not only with the people who expressed their preferences, but also the families and the staff. People have been relocated according to where their families live; where they want to live; where some of their existing contacts or day programs might be; and how they get on with the other people in the houses so that they have compatible people who want to live together and express that preference. That process has been externally verified by the Office of the Public Advocate who has been involved, by the Intellectual Disability Review Panel that has overseen the process and heard concerns, and some self-advocacy has also been provided. It has been a careful and detailed process to make sure that the move is very successful. There was a total of 480 residents, so we have some time to go.

Mr FORWOOD — Is the \$2 million coming out of the individual support output group on page 87?

Mr WALLACE — The best place to find that highlighted in the budget papers is budget paper 2, page 209. About three-quarters of the way down the page you will see Kew Residential Services redevelopment as a budget initiative.

Mr FORWOOD — Which output group in budget paper 3 does it come from?

Mr ROGERS — In budget paper 3, page 87, under shared supported accommodation it is included in the increase there shown to be \$359.5 million for 2003–04. It includes the money for Kew Residential Services.

Mr CLARK — My question also relates to accommodation support. I understand that as at 31 December last year the Department of Human Services service needs registers showed that there was a total of 3186 people waiting for shared supported accommodation, of whom 1068 were classified as in urgent need. I am trying to track down what additional places and accommodation support is being provided as a result of the budget. At page 87 of budget paper 3 there seems to be an increase of 60 in the numbers of shared supported accommodation clients, but also a reduction of 60 in congregate care shown at page 88 of budget paper 3.

The eighth overhead that you showed us earlier, 'Changing the service mix', shows an increase in total numbers being supported from around 11 000 to around 12 000. Can you explain what that increase consists of and how does that reconcile with the other numbers I cited about the 60 increase and decrease in supported accommodation and congregate care?

Ms GARBUTT — Is that the one headed 'Changing the service mix'?

Mr CLARK — That is correct.

Ms GARBUTT — The difference of 60 reducing from congregate care and increasing in shared supported accommodation is the 60 people moving out of Kew and into shared supported accommodation, so they come off one list and into the other. The overhead you referred to shows that the system of in-home support as being strengthened, so some of those are in-home support obviously where people are living at home with family members. As I said, we are strengthening that, and provided more flexible individualised support. That is the 200 Homefirst packages that we promised during the election platform and are now being delivered in this budget. The graph does go on to show that that mix will change as we fund more Homefirst packages. Flexible support

packages are also available to people living at home. That number is in that as well. The older carers package that I mentioned will also be available and will keep more people in their homes.

The answer is in two parts: first of all there is extra funding in the budget for various programs but secondly we are looking at more flexible and innovative solutions to providing extra support to people. That suits people with disabilities — they want to have some say in how they live, where they live, who they choose to live with, what support they need and where we should direct funding. It also allows us to meet the needs of more people.

Mr CLARK — What I am trying to see is can you give us a reconciliation of that 12 000-odd with the various output lines that you have in the performance measures in budget paper 3 to show us how the 12 000 is made up?

Mr ROGERS — The in-home support numbers in terms of the columns for 2003–04, the dark part of the column at the top is the combination of people living in community residential units and people living in congregate care. The lighter section of the column underneath it is the combination of flexible support packages and Homefirst. It is the various numbers of individual packages in the Homefirst program. That is the description of both.

Mr CLARK — Which output group does Homefirst come under?

Ms GARBUTT — It is individual support.

Mr ROGERS — Page 87 of budget paper 3.

Mr CLARK — That is part of ‘Clients receiving individual support’. Is that the total of the light column in the chart — clients receiving individual support?

Mr ROGERS — That is correct.

Ms ROMANES — The outputs for information and advocacy services are outlined on page 89 of budget paper 3. That is a very important part of the government’s support for the protection of the rights of Victorians with a disability. Could you outline for the committee what sorts of groups are being supported in this area of advocacy?

Ms GARBUTT — We place a great deal of importance on advocacy, particularly at a local level and including self-advocacy. We have put a lot of additional funds into that: there was \$300 000 in the current financial year; another \$700 000 in 2003–04 — the coming financial year; and from 2004 there will be an extra \$1 million recurrent supporting advocacy. That will take the total amount up to \$1.7 million. I know the previous minister was also very pleased to see that money coming in. That has been a big boost, a lot of additional funds. We are developing a new model for the delivery of services. It has two main features: building up a vibrant local advocacy service and having an effective and efficient infrastructure of statewide services. There will be two resource units to provide support for the advocacy organisations across the state — one will be for advocacy providers and one for the self-advocacy sector. They will be providing a coordination role in their various sectors.

I was able to advise some groups of the funding that came out of this — around \$478 000. I was able to announce this on Tuesday. We are looking for innovative programs, not just the same thing but quite innovative ones. For example, Action for Community Living got \$35 000. That is a leadership project to produce television programs for community television — Channel 31 — covering a broad range of topics relating to disability advocacy. People with disabilities will be involved in producing those programs. The Barwon Disability Resource Council got \$28 000. That is a program that will provide self-advocacy training for people with a disability on a group basis as well as an individual basis. It will also develop a framework for a self-advocacy group to give individuals an opportunity to participate and provide peer support on an ongoing basis.

One innovative grant has gone to Elwood College, \$39 000. That is focusing on children and is trying to involve four local state primary schools and one state secondary school, as well as the parents, local community groups and disability support providers. That is trying to build that inclusive community, supportive community — to build an inclusive education system and to provide some leadership and mentoring opportunities for children with disabilities. It is quite different to other sorts of advocacy that we have been used to seeing. There is funding of \$12 000 for the Association for Children with a Disability, a group that does a great job and is very active in lobbying. That aims to target a highly marginalised group.

Mr FORWOOD — Captured by the department?

Ms GARBUTT — No. If you heard some of their lobbying exercises you would not say that.

Ms ROMANES — Don't you read their newsletter?

The CHAIR — It is sent to every electorate office.

Ms GARBUTT — That is right. All members of Parliament are very familiar with what they say and how sharply they lobby.

There is funding of \$35 000 to the Communication Aid Users Society. That is to develop an advocacy service for people with complex communication needs. That is quite a specific one there. Under other funding there is Valid, a well-known advocacy group which is very strong. It is developing a manual which it is calling the *Building Strong Self-Advocacy Manual*. Again, there is that emphasis on self-advocacy. In contrast, the City of Greater Geelong got \$40 000 to provide training, mentoring and support opportunities for people with a disability to ensure they have the skills and the confidence to participate in neighbourhood house activities and local management committees and be very active community members. Advocacy takes many forms, and I think you can see that we have tried to broaden it and be very flexible and innovative about what has been funded.

Ms ROMANES — I have a supplementary question. Are these annual or yearly grants or are any of the organisations able to take advantage of the new three-year human service agreements?

Ms GARBUTT — The total funding of \$1.7 million is recurrent. That will be available from next year, once we have built the funding up.

Mr ROGERS — The grants that the minister has just mentioned are non-recurrent grants. As the minister mentioned, the total funding is recurrent but there are some organisations the minister referred to as getting non-recurrent grants which also receive recurrent funding. They would be the Association for Children with a Disability, Valid, and another group, Disability Rights Victoria, which I do not think is mentioned there. There is also an organisation that represents people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities, which is also receiving recurrent grants. Those four groups, and a number of others which are funded through regions, are funded in addition to the grants mentioned. Those recurrent funding arrangements will be subject to the three-year funding agreements.

Mr BAXTER — In regard to disability personnel employed by the department, are you able to give some indication of the Workcover experience, particularly in relation to stress claims? What is the trend, and how does it perhaps compare with other service providers?

Ms GARBUTT — The department has been doing quite a lot of work on the Workcover issue. You would appreciate that there are issues of manual handling, safety. In the middle of last year the department started a major injury management project called Safer Staff, Better Services, designed to improve the practices and performance in occupational health and safety areas across the department.

In disability services, where many of those issues apply, some major projects are under way. These include a review of CRUs — one is owned by the secretary — implementing a safe client transfer practice in high-risk units and in training centres, and developing an injury reduction strategy in high-risk CRUs. The issue has been taken up and the department has put plans in progress to address it. In addition, over the next few months the regions and the programs will have to develop occupational health and safety action plans to outline what they are going to do about reducing those risks. The department has made funding available to purchase equipment to address a lot of the manual handling issues.

Mr BAXTER — I would like to get a handle on stress claims more than injuries caused through manual handling.

Ms GARBUTT — The secretary needs to answer that.

Ms FAULKNER — If you want the trend in stress claims, we will have to take it on notice. The focus of our Workcover effort has been on the areas identified by the Victorian Workcover Authority as the most pressing concerns for disability workers. What the minister has described identifies stress as not one of the most pressing concerns for disability workers. It identifies manual handling and occupational assault as the two areas that we have to pay most attention to. We can get the stress claim information to you after the event, but the focus of our effort is on the ones that have been jointly identified between us as the likely causes of increasing premiums.

The CHAIR — On occupational assault, by way of a supplementary question, significant work was being done through the behaviour intervention support team, or BIST program. Has that been factored into your work in occupational health and safety or are you focusing that more on clients? You might like to take that on notice.

Ms GARBUTT — That group certainly continues.

Mr ROGERS — As the minister and the secretary mentioned, in terms of claims experienced and issues for us these involve manual handling and occupational assault. We have produced guidelines for staff for how they may respond to both of those issues and how we might improve manual handling practices. The work that has been done in regions by the behaviour intervention support teams, which you have mentioned, has been taken into account in developing those guidelines for staff. They are both different documents. One deals with the safer transfer of clients in terms of manual handling, and the other is for staff about how to prevent, handle and manage situations where they have clients with complex behaviours that sometimes lead to assault of staff by clients.

The CHAIR — When you take matters on notice if you could give us some information on BIST that would be very useful in occupational health and safety.

Mr BAXTER — I seek a further clarification, and I thank the secretary for that information. Is the definition ‘occupational assault’ a physical injury or could part of claims made under that category be stress related?

Mr ROGERS — My understanding is that it would have had to have led from a physical assault of a staff member. At times it is difficult to separate out the after effects of that in terms of the impact on staff, but it generally leads from a physical assault. In terms of the clear guidelines, I do not have them here.

Mr BAXTER — An assault might not necessarily lead to an injury to the employee, but it might result in a Workcover claim for stress, and that is what I am trying to get at. Is that a fair deduction?

Mr ROGERS — It may result in a Workcover claim as a result of the incident. It could either be a physical assault or an issue of stress for the staff member. I am just not aware whether that is then classified as a stress claim or not. It is something that we would have to check.

Mr BAXTER — I appreciate that, thanks.

Mr FORWOOD — Just a quick supplementary: what is the extent of the problem? If the Victorian Workcover Authority is concerned that this is something that needs to be addressed, how many assaults are we talking about?

Mr ROGERS — I do not have the number, but it is a cause of concern for both the department and the authority.

Mr FORWOOD — Could you get the number for us?

Mr ROGERS — Yes.

Ms FAULKNER — Can I just add to that? The Victorian Workcover Authority is working with all government departments to try to assist them to reduce their premiums.

Mr FORWOOD — Yes, and as shadow Minister for Workcover I fully applaud that work. I would be interested to know the extent of the assault problem in disability services.

Mr ROGERS — If I may go back, by way of clarification, our major issue is still manual handling in terms of the number of claims.

Mr DONNELLAN — Regarding the commonwealth-state-territory disability agreement (CSTDA) negotiations, what were the outcomes for Victoria; and were any allowances made for growth funding to meet the needs of Victorians?

Ms GARBUTT — Yes there were in the end, after quite a lot of hard negotiating, and that is the shorter answer.

We have signed the new CSTDA and it will provide funding of around \$640 million over five years. It is a five-year agreement and a 50 per cent increase on what was under the second agreement. This is the third

agreement. The previous agreement was around \$430 million. As I said, this one is for \$640 million, at a 50 per cent increase.

We managed to get some extra concessions about growth funding of about \$35 million nationally, which is \$8.6 million to Victoria over five years. It is still not a big amount, but I do not think further negotiations would have got any more so we accepted that offer. There is also some funding to address the unmet needs. Not only are the needs growing but we have not met all the needs through the existing arrangements. It took nearly a year to negotiate this agreement, and I think we are the first state that has finalised it — or we are pretty close to it any way — so we did get some extra funding through some pretty hard negotiations for unmet need.

We also got a bit of supplementation for the compulsory employer superannuation contributions and some indexation, which was better than last time. Last time the indexation over five years was 1.6 per cent. This time it will average 2.3 per cent. It is still not meeting the costs as they rise, but at least it is better than it was. We have settled on that. It has taken nearly 18 months of negotiations. I am satisfied that we went to all practical limits to get the best that we possibly could. We got a range of concessions. The opening offer was pretty woeful, but we managed to ramp it up and we will get around \$640 million over five years. Still the bulk of funding for disability services comes from the Victorian government, as we saw in those earlier budget figures, where \$124 million comes out of \$844 million. By far the biggest amount put in is from the Victorian government.

The CHAIR — Has the commonwealth been prescriptive in terms of what can be delivered and the approach that is taken? For example, Victoria is very strong on flexibility and meeting the needs of people with a disability and trying to fit funding to the person's needs rather than the other way around. Has the commonwealth acknowledged our ability to do that, or is it being quite prescriptive?

Ms GARBUTT — No, I think we are reasonably relaxed about how we are going to deliver the programs. It is also within the vision and priorities of the state disability plan.

The CHAIR — That is right.

Ms GARBUTT — We are confident we can deliver that. It of course separates out the commonwealth responsibility for employment programs and shared responsibility for advocacy programs, then basically I think nearly everything else is a state responsibility. It does reflect those divisions — and they go back quite a few years, I think, to 1996 or something.

Mr ROGERS — The bulk of the money is basically within the purposes set out in the agreement. The amount of money that the commonwealth made available for unmet needs a few years ago was tied to specific purposes, which was around older person support and care, as in non-residential care. It continues to be applied to that purpose. The remainder of the money is basically within, and as long as it is within the context of the CSTDA, and the principles in the CSTDA now that have been agreed on basically reflect the Victorian position in the state plan, there is a consistency in terms of approach. The commonwealth has, however, required extra accountability in terms of what the money is spent on after it is spent.

Mr FORWOOD — Minister, we were talking earlier about the six output groups over which you have authority: disability services, child protection placement, juvenile justice, early childhood, family and community and concessions.

Ms GARBUTT — Yes.

Mr FORWOOD — Leaving the last one out, I guess, if you look at the — —

Ms GARBUTT — Some of those are. They are community care, so — —

The CHAIR — The first one is disability.

Ms GARBUTT — Thank you.

Mr FORWOOD — I am trying to deal with this. The minister is the Minister for Community Services, and I am trying to deal with this. My very first question was in relation to the six output groups for which she has the authority.

Minister, I ask you to look at page 217 of budget paper 2, which refers to the asset investment initiatives — that is, new works for the department in the forthcoming year. I want to know whether any of the new capital initiatives of the department relate to any of your six output groups.

Ms GARBUTT — Yes, they do. We do have some in terms of juvenile justice in Malmsbury and Parkville.

Mr FORWOOD — I think that is last year, is it not?

Ms GARBUTT — In last year's, and Kew is the other one, stage 2. It is not there? Kew is not there — —

Mr FORWOOD — Is that not last year?

Ms GARBUTT — There is more this year, but of course the capital there is funded, or will be funded, from the partial sale of the land. That is not reflected in these. I mean, there was start-up funding last year.***

Mr FORWOOD — Right, the \$12 million?

Ms GARBUTT — Yes, I think — — .

Mr ROGERS — The Kew capital money?

Ms GARBUTT — Yes.

Mr ROGERS — What applied for this year is intended to apply for next year. We have approval to expend capital money on the houses in the community, but there is not actually an amount in the budget because that is to be recouped through the sale of the land of Kew. So in a sense it does not appear in the numbers there in terms of the capital expenditure.

Mr FORWOOD — Help me, then. This year, 2003–04, will the department in the six output groups that belong to the minister be spending new money on capital works — that is, will you be building CRUs and buying CRUs? If so, where does it appear in the budget, because it is not on this page?

Ms GARBUTT — There is Kew, which as I said is self-funding in a capital sense. The other capital works — you did refer to those other output groups — are things like kindergartens and maternal and child health where we work through local government. So you will find in the next session that we do \$8 million for new preschools, but that will be funded to local government and it will then build the preschools.

Mr FORWOOD — Out of which bucket?

Ms GARBUTT — That is from community care. As I said, there is \$8 million. We will not be building the entire preschool; we will be funding some councils, and \$250 000 will be the top. They will add in their part. Often they have their own council land and they build the preschool. Maternal and child health is similarly funded, with a partnership with local government. So you will not find it in here, but you will find us funding local government. For children's centres we are also putting in \$8 million over four years once again. That will be a maximum of \$250 000 to encourage local councils to build children's centres. Once again — —

Mr FORWOOD — Maybe I am confused, Minister. I am not talking about, and I do not think you are either, output funding; I am talking about asset initiatives. If it is an asset initiative it must appear somewhere in the budget as a capital outlay, if it has been appropriated. If it has not been appropriated and it has been funded through the sale of Kew or whatever, then that is a different way of doing it. So I guess the question I am asking is — —

Ms GARBUTT — I think Lance can — —

Mr WALLACE — Perhaps I can help explain what the difference is. The convention under the budget papers is that expenditures on assets that goes to the balance sheet of the state are described as asset initiatives. You can spend money out of the budget for asset purposes on community facilities that the government does not own, and therefore they are not part of the balance sheet of the state. They appear as output initiatives. So the minister has described capital expenditure for preschools, but because a preschool is not owned by the state — —

Mr FORWOOD — It is an output initiative?

Mr WALLACE — It is called an output initiative, but it is for capital purposes. So if you reconcile the government's promises on capital, you will find they are funded and they will be in the — —

Mr FORWOOD — Can you do me a favour? For each of the output groups for which the minister is responsible can you take out, when you do the other exercise, the capital component? Thank you.

Ms GARBUTT — In summary, Bill, what you have to say is that this portfolio area does concentrate on services rather than on capital.

Mr FORWOOD — I understand that. And you have significant funds left over from last year in relation to Malmsbury and the other one, and there is a CRU program across the state of, I think, \$10 million, that is still going on. I understand that.

Ms GARBUTT — Yes.

Mr FORWOOD — I was just trying to get my head around the way it works. It is not easy, particularly if you are as slow as me

Ms GARBUTT — I will try to help you. Get that onto the Hansard record too.

The CHAIR — I am particularly keen to have identified what measures have been initiated as a result of the budget to minimise isolation for people with disabilities in rural and regional Victoria.

Ms GARBUTT — I am sure your interest stems from the fact that you initiated the Rural Access program, and I am very pleased to report that it has been very successful. It is receiving recurrent funding now for full implementation right across rural and regional Victoria, and there are now 25 rural access workers. They are based in different local government authorities, and some are in community health services, right across regional Victoria, and they have significant achievements on the board.

They have created over 400 projects across the full range of community infrastructure. They are great examples of partnerships with different community groups, they are great examples of collaboration and they are about linking people with disabilities to disability service providers and mainstream community organisations. It really is trying to break down those barriers of isolation. It has allowed a lot of people with disabilities to participate in a whole range of activities, and it has increased cooperation between different disability service providers and their community organisations. It is really, I suppose, building up what community is about — that is, the linkages between people and the activities that people undertake together, and they now include people with disabilities. This is great to see. Because it is so successful we are taking it into Melbourne as well, so it is a good story.

The CHAIR — Thank you. You might like to know that we are going to follow up with the President and the Speaker on access around this place when they come before the committee.

Mr CLARK — I would like to raise the issue of respite, which is at page 86 of budget paper 3 as one of the outputs under the heading of 'Primary support'. I want to raise it both at a presentational and a substantive level.

In terms of presentation, you are probably aware that the specification measure has gone from 'Carer households provided with a respite service' to 'Episodes of respite provided'. You may also be aware that this committee has been very adamant that where there is a change in the performance measure whenever possible the past history of the new measure and/or the final year's worth of the old measure should be provided to Parliament in the budget papers. That has not happened here — we just have a sudden change of measure that leaves the reader with no way of telling what exactly has happened. Can I ask you first of all whether you are able to provide the committee with past figures on the new measure of episodes of respite care provided and/or for the 2003–04 target for carer households provided with a respite service. And in relation to substance, can you tell the committee how much money is being provided for respite care this year? Is that an increase on last year, and how exactly is 'Episodes of respite care provided' defined?

Ms GARBUTT — Let us work our way through those. In relation to clients receiving respite care there certainly has been a change, and that is to provide a more meaningful measure. But of course many clients receive several lots of respite, and we wanted to measure all of those. So the change has been from the number of people to the number of episodes. As to whether we can get figures going back, I will ask the director of disability services.

Mr ROGERS — As I understand your question, you wanted to know the time series of the new measure of episodes of respite care. I do not have that here, and I will have to check whether they are available. In relation to

the discontinued measure, 'Carer households provided with a respite service', the time series is there except for the 2003–04 target that is no longer included. Had we kept with that measure the target would have been 10 550 for 2003–04, and I will have to check whether the time series on the episodes is available.

Mr CLARK — The last two components of my question are: has there been an increase in funding provided for respite care; and how is this new measure, 'Episodes of respite provided', defined? If I get three hours of respite care in the year, is that one episode; if I get six hours, is that another episode; if I am on a series of respite care during the year, how is that counted?

Mr ROGERS — In terms of the episode, it is a defined time of respite, so it can vary between a smallish time to a longish time. It is defined as a particular beginning and end of respite.

Mr CLARK — Regardless of the length?

Mr ROGERS — The difficulty with — —

Mr FORWOOD — So two weeks in a CRU as a respite is counted as one episode and 3 hours as being the same?

Mr ROGERS — They are both considered as episodes of respite, yes.

Mr FORWOOD — This is nonsense.

Mr ROGERS — The difficulty with the first measure was that there was no understanding in terms of the distribution of the episodes, so the measure that is discontinued is an imperfect measure because it tells you the carer households, it does not tell you anything about the number of episodes and the spread of them. So that was why — —

Mr FORWOOD — It looks as though this one is equally deficient in a different way. You could have a huge number of 3 hour respites — —

Mr ROGERS — We will, however, collect the number of carer households provided through data collection measures, and we will be able to give that sort of detail in terms of the use of it beyond the performance measure, because as you would understand the performance measures are only one part of it. So in fact we will collect a range of data through the new quarterly data collection system that will in a sense give you some idea of the number of episodes, the length of time and the number of carers.

Mr FORWOOD — So you will report episodes by length.

Mr ROGERS — We will report as per the budget paper, but we will be able to collect data that tells us more than that.

Mr CLARK — Would you not be better off reporting in terms of hours of respite care, rather than episodes, to achieve the objective you are talking about?

Mr ROGERS — I would have to have a look at that. I do not know is the short answer, but I presume we can collect hours of respite care. We will probably know that number anyway, and it is a matter of which one you report as a performance measure, but we could have a look at that.

Ms GARBUTT — I would like to give a little bit of background. Between 2000 and 2002 respite funding increased by over \$7 million and that was a new program, the Great Break initiative. That again emphasised flexibility, with an emphasis being placed on weekend and holiday respite services that are traditionally high demand times. So we funded that. A further factor is that non-government agencies also provide respite services. There are around 9000 carer households using non-government agency respite services and people are very satisfied with that particular program. Part of the older years and carers support program that we have funded in this budget for the next financial year will support ageing carers of people with disabilities by providing extra respite. That is a \$1.5 million program overall. It is not all for respite, but respite is certainly built into that program. So we have focused on respite very strongly, not only in past budgets but also in this one. We are putting in extra funding aimed particularly at the area of ageing.

The CHAIR — Just a question in relation to the consistency of measures around the nation. The Productivity Commission and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare have made a number of comments

over the years about the variety of state measures. Has there been any progress in achieving some consistency in respite measures, and where does this fit into that?

Mr ROGERS — The work that the national disability administrator has been doing around the CSTDA is for more consistent collection and comparison of data. What I referred to earlier as the quarterly data collection (QDC) system is a part of that approach to more consistent reporting. So the answer is yes, there will be some consistency of reporting. As I mentioned, QDC which is the quarterly collection system that is about to start, will actually collect for respite the hours, the episodes and the households. That will be part of a national approach to data collection.

We will feed that through the commonwealth as part of our reporting on the CSTDA.

The CHAIR — And that is publicly available?

Mr ROGERS — Yes.

Ms ROMANES — Minister, I would refer to the work force development table and the presentation that you have given the committee this afternoon.

Ms GARBUTT — Could you give me the page number.

Ms ROMANES — Page 3. The increase in traineeships, in particular for those who have undertaken certificate IV in community services disability work over the last couple of years, is very impressive. I would like you to tell us about the impact of that program and whether there have been changes in retention rates and an impact on the quality of care or in any other areas.

Ms GARBUTT — One of the features, and in fact of this whole portfolio, has been the emphasis we need to place on skilling the work force. If you go back, decades I suppose, many of the areas that I am dealing with had volunteers. Certainly in disability services the traditional pattern was groups of parents coming together or other family members providing services.

We still need even now to upskill the work force. We have put in a big effort to provide traineeships and getting as many into further education as possible. As I said, we are providing certificate IV for as many people as we can. That is to be the base level. We have training for supervisors as well, so there is a large number there that will go through, particularly trainees.

We also need to look at those occupational health and safety issues we talked about before. Training is usually done regionally. It involves the local TAFEs, private training providers, as well as community agencies. We are mapping the job profile of our workers as well just to see what extra is needed. It is about valuing staff, it is about better services for people in a whole range of programs, and it is something into which we have put a lot of funding and effort.

The CHAIR — Mr Baxter.

Mr BAXTER — I would rather move on to the next section.

The CHAIR — That will be just about it then.

Mr FORWOOD — As long as I can keep asking questions on this during the next section.

Mr BAXTER — I am happy to forgo my turn to Mr Forwood.

Mr FORWOOD — Can I say at the outset that the minister is here as the Minister for Community Services and the committee ought to be able to ask questions according to the six output groups.

The CHAIR — I am relaxed about it. If you want to ask some questions on disability later, that is fine.

Ms GARBUTT — I do not have a problem with that. It just seemed a logical way to do half and half, but flexibility is the word of the day.

Overheads shown.

Ms GARBUTT — Can I clarify to the committee my answer in relation to the commonwealth-state disability agreement. I have signed it, but we are still waiting on the federal government to sign it. It has been agreed but it has not yet completed its formalities, so technically I suppose it is not fully agreed and signed.

I turn to the community care side of the outputs. In community care we have seen budget growth of 36 per cent over five years. The scale of the new investment is quite large, and that does not count funding for concessions which is not related to services as such. It is an entitlement-based program.

For the committee's information I will run through some of the areas that are the responsibility of community care: child protection and placement services include the statutory child protection services and associated placements, foster care and so on; early childhood services including preschool, maternal and child health, and the early childhood intervention services which are for preschool children with a developmental delay or disability; family and community support services which include general parenting support services as well as particular programs tackling things such as problem gambling, family violence and so on; juvenile justice services which provide the custodial services as well as some community-based programs, probation and so on; and concessions to pensioners and other beneficiaries, and that includes energy, water, municipal rates and so on.

The next slide shows some of the previous budget priorities, and they reflect a two-pronged approach to support families and children right across that range of services. The early years services were strengthened, particularly through the implementation of the first stage of Best Start and the enhancement of preschool services in line with the recommendations which the government accepted from the Kirby report on preschools. We also funded a range of new services to enhance the system of child protection, particularly focusing on some diversion and prevention services to be piloted in six regional and rural areas as well as indigenous communities.

Some of the achievements in the 2002–03 year include the innovation projects which are family support innovation projects which were operating in the last budget. They have started operating. They are in Ballarat, Central Goldfields and East Gippsland. There is a range of them there including one targeted to indigenous communities in Greater Shepparton. The service provider has been selected for the indigenous East Gippsland project which will commence shortly. The others are all in operation.

We have introduced a new program focusing on the welfare of children in care — that is, looking after children. In relation to juvenile justice, the demountable at Malmesbury is complete and we are commissioning that now and clients will relocate there shortly. Eleven Best Start projects have commenced. These are bringing together a range of early childhood services in some pilot areas. The preschool enhancement program has assisted around 375 preschools through the introduction of the group employment model. The preschool participation rate has increased.

The next slide shows there is a good story to tell from when we came to office. From 1999 to now we can see a big increase of nearly 6 percentage points, and that shows there is now a very high participation rate. The number of indigenous children who attend preschool has also increased, and that is a very pleasing outcome. The number of children having a second year at preschool has also increased slightly, and that is a very important capacity that we need to build because some children are simply not ready for school, and if they go to school early they often have quite negative experiences. It has a big impact on children. We are very focused on those early years. We think the evidence is there now to say it is an absolutely crucial foundation for children's later success in life.

The total community care budget is nearly \$612 million, an increase of more than 6 per cent, or \$35 million. Various components of it are shown with their percentage of the budget. The largest growth was in early childhood services. That was a 10 per cent growth from last year's budget and reflects the priority that we have put on that area. There is also 6 per cent growth in child protection and placement, which followed on from a boost last year of 9 per cent, so we are investing heavily in that area.

The next slide shows some of the initiatives coming through in this year's budget. New initiatives in community care will include child protection and placement, and I will outline these a little further. There are five areas there and they are outlined further in the next slide. In child protection and placement there are new initiatives to build on what really is a second stage of the integrated strategy for child protection and placement. For innovative family support there is an extra \$1.3 million to increase the number of projects there. There will be two more projects — one in Darebin and one in Latrobe — and they will target Aboriginal children involved in child protection.

There is extra funding for the Aboriginal protocol to expand it so it will now cover the whole state. Kinship care and permanent care is a very important and expanding area of placement. Kinship care is where children are placed with family members or close family friends rather than with foster carers. We are funding an extra 200 placements

throughout Victoria. Home-based care includes financial assistance to foster carers, as well as to kinship carers and permanent carers, so it is increasing their base rate of payments.

The leaving care initiative is a mentoring program for young people who have been in care and who have reached adulthood and now have to step out as independent adults, and this initiative puts in place a mentoring program to provide some assistance for them.

In early childhood services we have also invested heavily. We are expanding the maternal and child health service again and increasing the number of children who will be accessing that. We are increasing the linkages and integrating that further with other early childhood services. We are also putting money into the professional development and further training of maternal and child health nurses, so they will have greater skills in the prevention and early identification of and intervention in health concerns for preschool children.

We are putting more into early childhood intervention services as well. These provide therapy and educational and support services for children with developmental delay and their families. We are expanding them to reach another 310 children.

There are seeding grants for children centres or hubs there — this is the \$8 million I mentioned before, Bill, to encourage the co-location of early childhood services — typically for preschool child care and maternal and child health but also for early intervention services so that parents do not have to tramp around the suburbs trying to find the appropriate service.

The CHAIR — Minister, I draw your attention to the time again.

Ms GARBUTT — Okay, I think we are nearly completed.

The CHAIR — Thank you.

Ms GARBUTT — For problem gambling there is a lot of extra funding — \$12 million over the next two years to implement those initiatives. The communications strategy really builds on the previous advertising program on ‘Think what you’re really gambling with’.

There is extra funding for preschools. There is more funding for group employment to implement those reforms and further funding for the enhancement of advisory support — that is a quality improvement program — and information technology support for preschools. So there is funding for computer equipment and the training and support that goes with it for each of the preschools. That is a \$5 million program.

We are putting in funding for drought social recovery. It will provide more counselling services for the shires that are affected by the drought.

I think it is worth looking at community care priorities. This is about rebalancing the service system by investing more heavily in prevention and early intervention to protect the wellbeing of children, and enhancing the family support services provides us with that. We will also strengthen the home-based care system — that is, foster care, kinship care and so on — and make sure that children’s welfare is better protected through that system.

The final one is upgrading the physical fabric of juvenile justice. There is a new facility at Malmsbury, which will commence operation next week, and young offenders will move into that. We will be closing the substandard classification A facility at Parkville — that is one old, fairly Dickensian piece of infrastructure. There are other more modern buildings there that will continue of course. That will then complete the total modernisation of Victoria’s juvenile justice system.

As I mentioned, there is further investment in assisting problem gamblers and their families. So there is a bit more focus on assisting families to cope with the difficulties that come up when they have a problem gambler in the family.

Mr BAXTER — In budget paper 3 at page 91 there is a table on performance measures. At about halfway down the page under the heading ‘Placement and support services’ we see in 2001–02 the actual number of children in daily care was 3997 and the target for 2002–03 is a reduction on that of about 7.5 per cent, which one would have thought was trending the right way, but the expected outcome for this year has gone about 7.5 per cent in the opposite direction, and the target for 2003–04 has been set at about another 5 per cent. My interpretation of that is that the program is not working as well as it might, otherwise the target figure presumably would have been

set somewhat lower than the actual figure, as it was in the previous year. Do you accept my interpretation of the table, and if so what steps are being taken to have this trend in the opposition direction to what it is?

Ms GARBUTT — I think the answer lies in the past before I was the minister, so I will ask the executive director to catch us up on that.

Ms WHITE — The target in this performance measure is set by the amount of funding we have got, but the numbers coming in are basically driven by demand. We have had a growing number of children particularly coming into kinship care, so they are still within their family unit. That seems to be the biggest number growing. In foster care they are not growing that much and in residential care it is quite stable too. The growth has been in permanent care and in kinship care. So the target was set according to the amount of money we had. The numbers coming in particularly to kinship care and permanent care grew so we have increased the target. It is basically driven by demand at the end of the day.

Ms GARBUTT — And the Children's Court determines whether the children are placed in care or not — it is not a decision made by the department, it is made by the Children' Court, and the department responds to that with appropriate levels of care and placement.

Mr BAXTER — Thanks for that explanation. So they are the raw numbers for each year plus the targets. Then I have some doubt, Chair, about whether it is an appropriate performance measure — —

Ms WHITE — Yes. It is an accounting measure rather than a performance measure.

The CHAIR — By way of a supplementary comment, I notice that the output cost has gone up. You made reference to the fact that that target is a feature of budget allocation. Could some of it also be explained by the fact that with the number of kinship carers that are now being funded that number has risen, whereas historically the department may not have had the funds to be able to provide some financial support where kinship occurred?

Ms WHITE — That could be part of it, but I think we have seen a general growth in kinship care and permanent care. They have been the two elements that have grown in the budget, and the others are remaining stable. Yes, it is not so much a performance target — unlike some of the others around such as with response times and things like that — it is really a measure of activity.

Ms GARBUTT — And we have put in extra funding, as I mentioned, for kinship care for this coming year, and there was extra funding for last year as well. That is probably reflected in the figures. It is a priority, I suppose, in terms of placement that children are placed with members of their families rather than outside their extended family totally.

Mr BAXTER — I appreciate that explanation, but I think it is unfortunate that it is put under the heading of performance measures when clearly it is not. It is not perhaps a matter for this department to take up, but it might be a matter for the Treasurer to take up in the preparation of these documents so that the lay person might have some chance of understanding them.

The CHAIR — It is a good idea for us to include that comment in our report on budget estimates. I was really keen to ask about the innovation projects in child protection. Could you give us some details of the funding allocated to that, a little on the project to date and what you have set in place by way of performance measures for those innovation projects?

Ms GARBUTT — Family support innovation projects were funded in both last year's budget and this year's. It was \$3.75 million last year to provide eight new innovation projects, and a further \$1.3 million in this year's budget to establish two further projects. The ones funded under last year's budget were in Ballarat, Central Goldfields, East Gippsland, Frankston, Geelong and Shepparton. And there were two indigenous programs, one in greater Shepparton and one in East Gippsland. The East Gippsland one has not yet commenced but all the others have. The two further projects this year will be in Darebin and Latrobe — they are both indigenous programs.

Those were chosen because these are local government areas, and are areas of quite high notification rates. So we have simply taken the highest ones and selected those. These projects aim to divert a significant number of families who are currently notified to child protection services into community-based services. So they are prevention programs, and they aim to give those families quite intensive, long-term support. Child protection is not actually about long-term support for families; they investigate and support, but on a fairly short-term basis. So this is about

building long-term supports, wrapping long-term supports around these families which will usually have a very complex range of issues — it will not be a single, simple problem, it will be a whole range of them.

Typically in a local government area there will be a number of welfare agencies involved along with the child protection service as well as local government as well as the police — all of them working together to support vulnerable families. The research done by the department in the past has shown that these families are often not just notified once but 3, 4, 5 or 10 times to the child protection service because they have long-term issues that are not dealt with as each notification is investigated and some short-term support is put in place. So these particular projects, we think, will also reduce the number of renotifications and instead provide better preventative support for the families that are involved.

It has been a matter of trying to get together the services that are often already involved with the families but on an intermittent basis, trying to get them to work together to provide that long-term support. I will just read to you a vision statement from the Shepparton Service Network. This is something they have developed themselves, and it says:

We share a sense of hope and a working commitment in supporting families and ensuring the *wellbeing of children. We need to work together, be available to each other, strengthen our connectedness ... and assume a whole-of-system approach to provide early intervention and a future direction for families we work with.

It really is a local response to local issues, so each of these projects will be quite different as the problems and issues they are facing are different and as the local agencies work out what might be some solutions to those issues. So there have been a lot of people working together from particular local regions to support the families. We are optimistic that these will be successful in cutting down the renotifications, but more than that in actually supporting families in whatever they need. It is up to the local committees and local groups to identify what they need to be doing for these families.

We are committed to 12 of these projects across the state now, determined by the notification rates to child protection in the various cases, and we think that they will be very successful in supporting families, and in particular in supporting children and improving the wellbeing of those children. So it is part of that shifting of the emphasis, of rebalancing the system away from, if you like, crisis intervention into earlier intervention — solving issues that families have before they escalate into crisis, before they escalate into something that child protection needs to be involved with. It really is that sort of preventative model that we are working on, so the funding has been directed there because we think that there have been gaps in that particular part of the child-welfare system.

Mr FORWOOD — I think I am after a bit of a reconciliation regarding page 95 on early childhood intervention services. I refer you to an answer to a question on notice from myself — number 94, which was tabled in Parliament on 29 April — which indicated that, and I quote:

The overall service provision target to support children aged 0–6 with disabilities/developmental delays for the 2002/03 budget was set at 12 845 clients.

And the answer also indicates that the total amount allocated for that purpose was \$31.6 million in the 2002–03 budget — and I have got a copy of the answer here if it is any use to you.

What I am keen to do is try and match that with the figures in the budget paper both for last year, which shows 9000 clients and \$39.2 million — I make the point that the year before the number of clients was 15 795 — and then of course with this year, which shows 8000 clients for \$41.8 million. Maybe you would like to do the maths?

Ms GARBUTT — Let us just get it all together. The answer is, Bill, that the strengthening parents support program, which was included in that — in the 2001–02 figures — has been transferred out from this output to the support services for families output.

Mr FORWOOD — How many are we talking about?

Ms GARBUTT — That is the next question. So there has been an administrative transfer of part of it — —

Mr FORWOOD — Yes. That is not there.

Ms GARBUTT — From this to disabilities. So is that it?

Mr FORWOOD — I do not think it is. If you look at the answer to the question, which deals specifically with developmental delays, it tells you the four output measures where the funds came from added up to \$31.6 million, and it says on the very bottom line that the budgeted amount of clients for 2002–03 was 12 845, and I cannot find that figure anywhere.

Ms GARBUTT — I think perhaps we might take it on notice.

Mr FORWOOD — Take it on notice. Get it back to me, and I would really appreciate it.

Ms GARBUTT — I think what I am being told is that when you take it from one to the other you have to backtrack through previous years and take them out as well. So there are a whole lot of figures that have to be adjusted on the way back, so we will provide all of that.

Mr FORWOOD — Now I am confused.

Ms GARBUTT — Good.

Ms GREEN — Minister, in your presentation you referred to the Looking after Children framework. Can you provide the committee with some more detail of what is involved with that program and how much it has cost?

Ms GARBUTT — The Looking after Children program has been a big initiative of the government. In the past one of the problems has been that when children were taken out of their families people lost track of, for example, when they last went to the dentist and whether they had had the appropriate injections at the right stages. Also tracking things about their schooling — for example, what reading level were they at, had they had any extra support and so on, even things like what sport they liked and what sport they were involved in. Those are the sorts of things that a good parent keeps track of as a child grows up and thinks, ‘Now they are ready for the next thing’, or whatever. Those records have been kept very haphazardly in the past. When I spoke to some people who have now grown up they said, for example, ‘I have not got any photos’, and, ‘Nobody knows whether I had all the correct injections’.

This program establishes that record keeping and includes everyone involved in a child’s care; whether it is a foster carer, the agency that supports the foster carer or the department workers, they will all be involved in keeping records. A record book goes with the child which explains what they have had and whether they have reached certain developmental milestones so that everyone is able to keep track of those important things about the child.

In rolling out this program every single one of the 43 community service organisations that provide any sort of care to children across the state has been trained. All the departmental officers have been trained as well and all the agencies will now keep compatible records on all those things about children. They have actually made a big commitment and investment themselves in keeping that essential information. It really is about partnerships between the government and non-government agencies — and it speaks volumes that everyone involved has been able to make that commitment. It is also about focusing on the child. It is not just about the history of the problems but the child himself and his or her experience of the placement system and more broadly, children’s services, particularly the early years service.

This \$2 million program has been invested to train all those people involved. I think it will go a long way to boosting the quality of care and the experience of care from a child’s point of view. It will provide them not just with a lasting record but appropriate services and a good careful parent, even if it is a substitute parent, watching over all the developmental stages of their life. It is a very important program. It is about rebalancing the system as I said before, putting funding into focusing on the child and their welfare and experience of placement. It is about emphasising the focus on the child and that is something that the whole system needs to be focused on.

Mr CLARK — I refer you to the department’s annual report for last year, which referred to the child protection outcomes project as a flagship project for the department. I refer you subsequently to the document that I think you described in Parliament as a draft internal working document, which the *Age* newspaper described as a draft report prepared by four of your child protection officials. I understand it has now been sent to Allen Consulting for further work. Can you tell the committee if it has gone to external consultants and how much it is costing? Have you now seen that document and when do you expect it to be finalised and made public?

Ms GARBUTT — This is stage 1 of the flagship project where various people have been brought in from the department, made a contribution and then returned to their normal work. The project continues, the department is working on it and an external consultant is assisting. I do not think it is Allen Consulting — —

Ms WHITE — It is.

Ms GARBUTT — It is Allen Consulting, I beg your pardon. It is about improving the outcomes for children and young people who are notified to the child protection system, or indeed children who are already in statutory care. It is examining the Children and Young Persons Act and looking at policy and practices around Australia and overseas to look at the frameworks that protect children. It is not yet complete so I have not seen any pieces of paper that might be under way.

Stage 2 is a public consultation about those issues. We have not yet got to that, but it will come shortly and there will be public information available. But it is not a completed piece of work, either stage 1 or stage 2. Allen Consulting has been engaged, and I am told that the cost is \$179 000 to provide further information. They have a lot of expertise in the social policy area and specific expertise in child welfare, but this is a project that is continuing. It is under way and stage 2 will be a public process.

Mr CLARK — Can you tell the committee when you expect the first document to become public as part of that process?

Ms GARBUTT — In a couple of months, I understand. I am keen for it to be sooner rather than later.

Mr DONNELLAN — To continue on a similar subject, it would seem that kids coming into contact with the child protection system today have more complex needs, often due to serious abuse and neglect that they have suffered in the past. What programs does the government have in place to assist and treat these children?

Ms GARBUTT — The most common comment I get from foster carers, for example, and departmental workers is that children coming into care these days have often experienced years of abuse and/or neglect and they exhibit very challenging behaviour. They have very complex needs which need to be addressed. Dealing with a child with such challenging behaviour is one of the things that is making foster care more difficult for the ordinary family.

I recently announced a new project called Take Two. It is a \$20 million program over four years to provide intensive treatment services and therapeutic services for children who exhibit or are at risk of exhibiting severe emotional and behavioural disturbance, often following years of abuse and neglect. The service will be delivered by four groups in a collaborative project: the Austin hospital's Child Adolescent Mental Health Service — which is a very well-known and well-respected service, particularly in my electorate; Berry Street Victoria — one of our welfare agencies; La Trobe University; and the Victorian Child Psychiatry Training Department, which calls itself Mindful. It will establish 36 positions across the state with a multidisciplinary approach so a whole lot of different specialities will be involved, particularly people with expertise in this area. It will provide intensive support for those children in an ongoing way, so quite long term if that is what is needed. It will address some of the underlying issues as well as some of the problem behaviours that have been caused by those issues, such as high-risk behaviours, instability in relationships, alcohol and drug abuse, dropping out of school, and placement breakdowns. There is a whole range of behaviours that are a real problem and something the child needs to address to be able to move on.

Take Two will develop and deliver training and professional education services for the child welfare sector to manage and respond to the children and their behaviours. It will also have a research capacity that will include the education and development of more effective interventions and responding to children. Those research findings will be taken back by us and used in the development of further programs and to form policy development. It is a very comprehensive program focused on the welfare of the child. It is about that rebalancing, bringing child welfare back into focus and providing those sort of supports. It was a program identified by departmental research last year which showed that there was a real gap in the services provided to children.

This, plus the Looking after Children program, underlines that we need to get better at looking after children and their experience, particularly out-of-home care where they are taken away from their families, but it will also have an impact on the foster care system. The foster carers are saying that these children who are very disturbed and have very challenging behaviours are very difficult for an ordinary volunteer foster family to care for in their own home with their own family. Those complex needs and the challenging behaviours will address some of the problems we are seeing in foster care as well and allow foster carers to work more effectively with children. It has that benefit as well as simply looking after kids much better. It will be a real turning point for a lot of children.

Mr BAXTER — The community services policy of the then opposition in 1999 said in relation to adoption that the Labor government would hold a parliamentary inquiry into past adoption practices. That was not

done in the last Parliament. Is it intended to be implemented in this Parliament, and what budgetary implications might that have for your department to respond to such an inquiry?

The CHAIR — The minister only has to comment in relation to her current portfolio in matters relating to this Parliament. She does not have to comment on the 1999 policy.

Mr BAXTER — This government — —

The CHAIR — The second component of your question is relevant to the minister; the first part is not.

Mr BAXTER — Whether the government keeps its promises is surely relevant to budgetary considerations.

The CHAIR — The second part in relation to a parliamentary inquiry and any budget implications to her current portfolio is relevant. The first part is not.

Mr BAXTER — The second part is hardly relevant if the answer to the first part is no.

The CHAIR — The minister can answer the second part in relation to any budgetary commitments this time.

Ms GARBUTT — As you pointed out, it was an issue dealt with by the previous minister. I have put in place assistance to former wards, adoptees and so on for searching through records to get some of their background, but that is as far as it goes.

The CHAIR — I have a question in relation to the preschool participation rate. In one overhead you made reference to the fact that 97 per cent of preschoolers are involved in a preschool program. Can you provide information about what sort of investment the government has made to achieve that result?

Ms GARBUTT — During the week I was able to announce with the Premier that the preschool participation rate is now at 97.2 per cent. That is a record high: 97.2 per cent of all four-year-olds as best we can calculate it are in preschools now. That is coming off a low of just under 88 per cent in the 1990s. It has been a major investment and major commitment and priority by the government to lift that participation rate. We eased the financial burden on preschool parents by providing further assistance for the preschool subsidy. We increased the subsidy for all children by \$65 per child and for low-income families, who we believe were the ones who were not participating in preschools, we lifted that by \$150 — from \$100 to \$250 for low-income families. We also addressed the issue of quality of preschool teachers. It is my observation that where you have good preschool teachers parents seek to send their child to that preschool. We provided a 20 per cent salary increase to retain and attract quality preschool teachers. Most of that 20 per cent salary has been delivered, but I think the final part is on track shortly.

Some \$28 million in this budget for the next financial year provides \$5 million for computer facilities. Another focus has been to encourage children with disabilities to attend preschool, and we expanded the preschool inclusion support program to provide greater support not only to the preschool but also to the preschooler, the child with the disability, so that they could attend the mainstream preschool. That has honestly benefited a large number of children with a disability who are now attending preschool.

I am particularly pleased that this year the number of indigenous children enrolled in preschools has also increased. There has been an increase of 7 per cent from last year's figures. Whether it is for low-income children, indigenous children or children with disabilities, we are seeing them all participate to a much greater extent. That has been the reason for the participation rate being so high.

The government has committed \$97 million to the preschool program across the state, an increase of 37 per cent on 1999. That is a measure of how determined we have been to increase the participation rate of preschoolers. That comes from a fundamental belief that preschool is a very critical year for children. Research evidence shows that a positive experience at preschool leads to a much greater success at primary school and, of course, lays the foundation for the future, for a lifetime. We want it to be as positive as possible. In this year's budget the government has committed, in partnership with local government, further funding for new preschools in growth areas to try to keep up with the infrastructure provision of preschools not only in outer growth suburbs but regional Victoria as well where considerable growth is occurring.

We are also providing seed capital, as I mentioned before, for children's hubs which typically might include preschools and a range of other early childhood services. Funding is there to provide the infrastructure support as well as the service support. We are delighted by the participation rate. I think there was a graph that I showed earlier about the participation rate continuing to climb. I think that is a great outcome. It is something we are very proud of.

Mr FORWOOD — I refer you to pages 92 and 93 of budget paper 3 which cover juvenile justice. You may not have it but I also refer you to the Victorian Council of Social Service's analysis of juvenile justice. Am I right in saying that the quantity output measure of 125 is the number of beds available for senior males in the system and 91 is the number of beds available in the system for junior youth residential centre/youth training centre and female custodial capacity?

Ms WHITE — Yes.

Mr FORWOOD — We have 125 senior beds, we are closing some at Turana and replacing the exact number in the demountable at Malmsbury?

Ms WHITE — No.

Ms GARBUTT — What we are intended to close at Parkville is the old classification A building, which was known as Turana. The other components of the Parkville juvenile justice system — the parts you can see from the road — will remain. At the same time there is the demountable being constructed at Malmsbury and a new facility going in at Parkville — two new facilities. We are closing the worst of the facilities in Parkville. It has Dickensian conditions — it is awful — and should be closed. However, as I say, there are two building projects — one at Malmsbury which is complete apart from the fitting out, and a new one being constructed which I think will be open next year, in June 2004.

Ms WHITE — There is a period of time in which we will have a reduction of eight beds but at the moment the demand is such that we feel we can accommodate that.

Mr FORWOOD — Of the 91, how many are female beds and how many are junior male? You can take it on notice if you want.

Ms GARBUTT — We might have it. Did you have a further question?

Mr FORWOOD — I am interested in working through the relationship between the beds and the capacity shown in the juvenile justice custodial services and the two quantity measures in the following output group for juvenile justice clients on community-based orders where you are talking about a number of 800 and a percentage of 80. When I do the maths it does not seem to work.

Ms GARBUTT — What is your question?

Mr FORWOOD — The total number of clients in the juvenile justice system is between the ones who are held in custody and the ones who are on community-based orders and your measure is 80 per cent of clients on community-based orders. Are you saying that the total number of clients for the year — —

Ms WHITE — There is the custodial services and a percentage of those are participating in pre-release programs.

Mr FORWOOD — Above that?

Ms WHITE — Yes.

Ms FAULKNER — Is that right with the maths? As we understand it, 800 on community-based orders and approximately 200 in beds — system total, 1000; 80 per cent of that is 800.

Mr FORWOOD — Is it not on a daily basis? Are you saying there are going to be only 1000 clients through the system in the year?

Ms FAULKNER — You are talking about a daily basis?

Mr FORWOOD — Yes.

Ms FAULKNER — We are talking about clients.

Mr FORWOOD — You think there will be 1000 clients in the system this year?

Ms GARBUTT — Once again, that is not something in the department's control — it depends on the courts.

Ms WHITE — The 800 is the number of clients rather than a measure of the daily basis.

Mr FORWOOD — So that is the number of clients who will be on community-based orders throughout the year.

Ms WHITE — Some of those will not have gone through custodial services — most of them will not. Most of them will be sentenced to a community-based order.

Mr FORWOOD — Let me change my question and ask: what does the next measure mean?

Ms WHITE — That is juvenile justice clients on community-based orders.

Mr FORWOOD — As a percentage of what?

Ms WHITE — Of the total clients.

Ms GARBUTT — Custodial and non-custodial, in that case.

Mr FORWOOD — We have the number of beds on the first page and presumably there will be more than one client to a bed?

Ms WHITE — Absolutely.

Mr FORWOOD — Throughout the year?

Ms WHITE — I assumed that.

Ms GARBUTT — Never more than one in a bed — I guarantee it.

Ms WHITE — Do not even suggest that!

Mr FORWOOD — Throughout the year?

Ms WHITE — Yes. There is a high level of throughput in the custodial services in juvenile justice.

Ms GARBUTT — Typically they are quite short-term sentences. Three months, I think it is, around the average.

Mr FORWOOD — Picking up Mr Baxter's point, I think if you have more than 200 clients who go through the custodial system in the year and you have a total number of clients in the year on custodial then the maths do not work. It makes the 80 per cent nonsense.

Ms WHITE — The target is at a point in time.

Ms FAULKNER — At a point in time 80 per cent of the population would be on orders and 20 per cent would be custodial — that is at a point in time but you are right. If people are cycling through then it could be confusing. However, to be very clear about the target, we really want to make sure that we aim for 80 per cent at a point in time.

Mr FORWOOD — There is an interdepartmental committee looking at whether juvenile justice should go from you to the Minister for Corrections. It is being run through the Department of Premier and Cabinet and I presume it is about to report. Are you going to lose this?

Ms GARBUTT — No, that is not what it is looking at. The government does not have plans for that move at all. It is looking at the system more generally and bringing the system up to date. That is not a correct characterisation of it.

Ms ROMANES — We were discussing earlier the pleasing increase of 7 per cent of indigenous children in the preschool program. Not so pleasing is over-representation of indigenous children in the child protection system. Could you tell the committee what the government is doing to address this over-representation of indigenous children in out-of-home care and what funding is being provided?

Ms GARBUTT — There is an issue there with indigenous children in the child protection system and families involved in the child protection system. In 2002 we allocated \$1.2 million to provide resources to the Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service to lead an initiative to implement a protocol. We have supplemented that in this year's budget with another \$600 000 to extend the coverage of that protocol and that child specialist advice and support service right through the whole state. It began in six regions last year and this will now complete it. That service is operated by two agencies — the Mildura Aboriginal Corporation and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency.

Essentially what that does is make sure that whenever there is a child protection issue involving an Aboriginal family or child the Aboriginal community is involved in all decisions about the child or family so that specific cultural issues can be taken into account, the Aboriginal community can be involved, and the broader extended family of the Aboriginal child can also be involved — for example, in a matter of removing a child from family and looking for foster carers. Under this protocol the department would look at Aboriginal families, particularly the extended family of the child and then more broadly among the Aboriginal community, so that the child can be placed within the Aboriginal community.

It does not happen all the time at the moment — it has not been the case, but this new protocol will put in place a system that requires Aboriginal community and family involvement whenever there is a matter involving an Aboriginal child. That protocol has been operating in part of the state. We intend to extend it right across the state because it has been quite an issue. It is very important that Aboriginal children are kept within their own community, within their own culture, and this is a program that will support that to happen. It is a very important program.

It fits within that area that I was talking about before, about focusing on the welfare of the child, making sure that the experience of the child in the placement system is as good as we can possibly make it. This is a third program, looking after children, a Take Two program, and this one focuses on the child's needs and making sure that they are upfront and centre when we are dealing with these very difficult issues.

Mr CLARK — I refer you to page 77 of budget paper 2 which refers to the \$16 million over four years to boost payments to foster carers. First of all, I assume that is to go into increased payments and support for existing foster carers rather than to increase the total number of foster carers. How much additional payment per foster carer does this \$4 million translate into? Also, I understand that there has been a University of New South Wales Social Policy Research Centre study in 2002 on appropriate foster care payments for home care. I assume you would be familiar with that. How will the payments that you will be making to foster carers in the forthcoming year compare with that study, and will any of the \$16 million be used for support other than additional payments to foster carers?

Ms GARBUTT — I will answer that last bit first. No. The payments will all go to carers — foster carers, kinship carers, permanent carers — all those parts of the care system.

To go back to how much extra — this is \$4 million a year for four years — the answer depends on the age of the child in care because they are different rates for different ages, and that is pretty typical across Australia. We have tried to increase it where the payment has been most out of kilter with other states. For young children, aged 0 to 2, the current weekly payment is \$90, and the payment will go to \$110.

Mr CLARK — I am sorry; I did not catch that figure.

Ms GARBUTT — It is \$110 per week — sorry, that is for children aged 0 to 7 — so that is an increase of \$20 per week. For children of 8 to 10 years it will go to \$115, and that is an increase of \$29.50; for 11 to 12 years it will go to \$130 per week, and that is an increase of \$17.50; for 13 years and over it will go \$175 per week and that is an increase of \$10.50.

You mentioned *The Costs of Caring* report from New South Wales. No state anywhere in Australia reaches the levels recommended in that report. Our new figures in comparison with New South Wales, for example, in the 13-plus years, will be the same. In other years it is less, although better than most other states. It has lifted the percentage. Currently it is around 50 per cent of the estimated cost. It is going up to around 70 per cent of the cost. It has never been the full cost of caring. It is a volunteer activity. People have done it because they want to make a

contribution. We have lifted the funding considerably, recognising that it has got too far behind. This will make a difference. In those percentage terms it certainly is a big improvement.

Foster carers are a key to our system. They take on quite difficult children, as I have mentioned before. They open up their homes to children. They provide them with a lot more than food and clothing. They provide them with support and care; they fit them into their own homes. They often have to meet additional costs, such as dental services and shoes, which in these times can be pretty costly. They are a key component of our system and this \$16 million program recognises their importance and makes some further contribution towards that.

Ms GREEN — Minister, Victoria has a world-class system of maternal and child health services. Even though my baby is 13 years of age I still have a very fond memory of the support that the services offered me as a mum. In your presentation you mentioned that Victoria has invested heavily in our early years services, and I note the increase on page 94 of budget paper 3. Could you tell the committee a little bit more about this expenditure?

Ms GARBUTT — Yes, we are providing an extra \$16 million over the four years of the budget to improve support for families with babies and young children. I think it is an absolutely fundamental service. I can remember taking my kids up there — and when I was in a bit of strife it was nearly every day. It is just a fantastic backup and a vital service for new mums. We are looking to improve the support provided to families. It is a service provided in association with local government, delivered by local government which also contributes funding towards that service.

We are trying to improve the skills and training of maternal and child health nurses. They are highly skilled people, but we want to improve their ability to respond to more vulnerable families — at-risk families — so that they are part of the very broad prevention service for families at risk. We see them as a universal service that provides support for everyone, but certainly they are the frontline in supporting families who might otherwise slip into more severe crisis. We are trying to provide extra training for nurses. We are also trying to link them very closely with other services — neonatal services, early intervention, family support and child protection — as well as kindergartens. We need to link all those services. One of the key priorities of the government is to better link those early years services to provide a platform of support for families. That has been very important.

One area of focus is in trying to encourage families to keep seeing a maternal and child health nurse into a child's second year. Most people go voluntarily and very frequently in the first year when a baby is very small, but it does tail off after that. We are trying to encourage families to keep going over four years. It is a very important program. We are also trying to get services to focus on the needs of families with particular difficulties such as drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, and homelessness, so they are able to identify those issues and link them into more specialised services whilst continuing to support the family. I think it is an absolutely fundamental service, and it is one that we are keen to expand and build on and strengthen so that it is able to quickly identify any more particular issues that need longer term follow-up, I suppose.

Mr FORWOOD — I would like to go back to disability services, if I could. I refer you to page 60 of budget paper 3. The budget for 2002–03 was \$766.5 million. The anticipated actual expenditure is \$813 million. The first part of the question is: what did the extra \$46.5 million get spent on? Then this year's budget is \$844.4 million. The next part of the question is: what will the additional \$31.4 million be spent on — new initiatives, or wages top up, or whatever? Finally, what is your relationship with the audit committee of the Department of Human Services?

Ms GARBUTT — I will go back to the budget and the actual. The budget is adjusted throughout the financial year according to wage movements, so that where there are salary increases they are paid for during the year.

Mr FORWOOD — Do we know how much of the \$46.5 million was due to wages?

Ms GARBUTT — From the initial budget to the revised?

Mr FORWOOD — Yes.

Ms GARBUTT — We can get a figure on that.

Mr FORWOOD — Thank you.

Ms GARBUTT — I outlined some major initiatives — the \$77 million for disability services in this year's budget is over four years, so you have to divide it by four — of Homefirst packages, the further

redevelopment of Kew, the Make a Difference program, and funding for the Older Years and Carer Support program. So it is a range of initiatives. But as well there will be some salary increases built in. There has been a parity case in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission looking at the parity between workers in non-government agencies, such as E. W. Tippings, compared to those in government agencies, such as workers in CRUs, and at the different amounts. There has been a wage outcome there. It has not been finalised yet; it has to go back to the commission. That will be built into the revised — —

Mr FORWOOD — An increase in wages in the non-government sector?

Ms GARBUTT — The NGOs, yes. It has not been — —

Mr FORWOOD — And the top up will come from you?

Ms GARBUTT — No, the top up comes from the Treasurer.

Mr FORWOOD — Sorry, yes.

Ms GARBUTT — If it occurs during the year.

Mr FORWOOD — But if the wages go up in the NGOs, you will increase the unit cost to each of them to cover the wage increase?

Ms GARBUTT — To some extent, yes.

Mr ROGERS — In 2002–03, when the wages increase we apply for a change to our budget to cover the increase in the funding that would flow from those wages — in 2002–03.

Mr FORWOOD — That is standard.

Ms GARBUTT — Yes, that is across government procedures; there is no change.

The CHAIR — Thank you. Mr Donnellan.

Mr FORWOOD — Sorry, Lance was going to tell me how much it was.

Mr WALLACE — It is about \$34 million, the movement between the revised and the published.

Mr FORWOOD — So \$12.5 million of the \$46.5 million was not related to wage increases?

Mr WALLACE (Nods).

Mr FORWOOD — That was?

Mr WALLACE — There is a variety of things. You have got some changes to the CSTDA, the commonwealth flows; there are also accounting adjustments in there as well. They are the major sorts of items.

Mr FORWOOD — Thank you.

Mr DONNELLAN — Minister, can you provide the committee with an assessment of what the Victorian government is doing to assist problem gamblers and any money that has been allocated in this budget for that activity?

Ms GARBUTT — Indeed. There is extra funding of \$12 million over two years, so \$6 million in this year and \$6 million in the next year — that is in addition to the nearly \$25 million over the period from 2002–05 — for problem gambling services, and \$16.5 million for the problem gambling communication strategy, through to June of next year. It stems, of course, from our commitment to prevent and minimise harm arising from gambling. There are several new initiatives. We are extending the hours of operation for the gamblers help services. We are providing funding to assist problem gamblers and their families in financial crisis. I mentioned before that we wanted to bring families into the picture as well because often they will suffer considerable harm. We are trying to more closely integrate the gamblers help service and the family support and general financial counselling services.

We are putting in place a community partnerships strategy as well, focused at culturally and linguistically diverse communities, where the messages have to be culturally relevant and strike the right mark. We are working with

those communities to put in place the most appropriate forms of assistance. We are putting in place training programs for professionals and developing curriculum materials, and we are providing a community grants program for local communities as well. So it is a full range of services.

We will be embarking on another stage of the advertising material that you would be familiar with: what are you really gambling with? Those ads will be extended. They have been very effective and very powerful. So there is a whole range of new initiatives there. One that I have been particularly supportive of is working in partnership with other community organisations. For example, with the division of general practitioners I launched a resource kit for GPs. It was a CD-ROM, as it turned out. It provides information to GPs as to how they can recognise that problem gambling might be the cause, as opposed to the symptom or whatever it is they are seeing. We are working in partnership with a whole range of community organisations to get the messages out to their particular segment of the community. The RSL is another one we are working with, to target older people in this case — so there is a whole range of community projects.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much, Minister. That concludes the consideration of the budget estimates for the portfolio of Community Services. I thank you and your departmental officers for their attendance today. We also thank Hansard for their support; it has been extremely useful.

The committee will write to you on matters that you have taken on notice and any other matters that require clarification. Thank you and good afternoon.

Committee adjourned.