

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Inquiry into the 2025-26 Budget Estimates

5 June 2025

PORTFOLIO: PREVENTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Witnesses:

- The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP
- Peta McCammon
- Melanie Heenan

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QUESTION 1

What is the total number of family violence victim-survivor households accommodated in motels in a year?

Name of Committee member asking question: Richard Welch MP

Excerpt from transcript, p. 5:

Richard WELCH: Minister, I just want to talk about crisis accommodation. Page 40 of the 'Department Performance Statement' shows 959 family violence victim survivors received refuge responses last year, and over 60,000 nights of refuge accommodation was provided to victim-survivors of family violence – that is on page 41. It is an average of 63 nights. You can tell me if I am wrong, but I think it is 63 nights – nine weeks. Does 'refuge response' include nights spent in motels?

Natalie HUTCHINS: I might ask Mel to clarify that, but before I do –

Richard WELCH: Just a yes or a no really.

Melanie HEENAN: The answer is no.

Richard WELCH: If no, how many women and families have been forced to stay in motels for more than a week because appropriate accommodation could not be found? Can you provide that figure?

Melanie HEENAN: I can tell you the number of households that stay in motels on any given night. So 120 households will be accommodated in a motel or emergency accommodation option, and those accommodation options are organised through either The Orange Door or family violence case management.

Richard WELCH: Sorry, is that an average or a total?

Melanie HEENAN: That is an average.

Richard WELCH: An average. Can you provide a total?

Melanie HEENAN: A total across the year? I should be able to get that figure for you.

Richard WELCH: Can you provide that on notice?

Melanie HEENAN: I am happy to get that.

Richard WELCH: Thank you. So on any given night how many women and families are spending a night in a motel? You just mentioned it.

Melanie HEENAN: In a motel or emergency accommodation – 120 households.

Richard WELCH: And how many in a motel?

RESPONSE

Answer:

DFFH is working to enhance data recording and reporting of motel use across the specialist family violence service system, including The Orange Door Network. Prior to 2025-26, it has only been possible to capture whether the accommodation was short term or emergency rather than the specific dwelling type. A recent enhancement to the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP) adds an extra field to capture details on dwelling type, including hotels and motels. DFFH is currently working with service providers to implement the changed reporting approach.

QUESTION 2

What is the funding for The Orange Door for the coming financial year (2025-26) and forward estimates?

Name of Committee member asking question: Nick McGowan MLC (Deputy Chair)

Excerpt from transcript, p.9:

Nick McGOWAN: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, secretaries. Also thank you to the secretaries who throughout the course of our work in any given year do liaise with us as individual members in the work that we do with a number of women and men and children, so thank you for that. I will start with a couple of quick questions, if I can, perhaps for the secretaries. I know that the Orange Door funding last year was about \$231 million. Do we know what that figure is going to look like for this next financial year and the forward estimates?

Melanie HEENAN: I do, Mr McGowan. I can take that question. Just bear with me.

Nick McGOWAN: Sure.

Melanie HEENAN: For 2023–24 the amount was \$226 million that was invested in the Orange Door network, and \$188.5 million of that was invested with the partner agencies in the Orange Door. That is the 51 partner agencies that support the full network.

Nick McGOWAN: And for the next financial year?

Melanie HEENAN: It will be the same amount. This is the kind of funding that Orange Door needs to function.

Nick McGOWAN: So that is a set amount each year?

Melanie HEENAN: It is for now.

Nick McGOWAN: And when does that expire? When is that due for review, so to speak?

Melanie HEENAN: I believe it is ongoing, but I can just check that for you.

RESPONSE

Answer:

The funding allocated to The Orange Door network including Community Sector organisations and Aboriginal Services for 2025-26 is \$231.8 million. This funding is ongoing.

QUESTION 3

What amount of funding was carryover in the Family Violence Service Delivery output from 2023-24 into 2024-25?

Name of Committee member asking question: Nick McGowan MLC (Deputy Chair)

Excerpt from transcript, p.10:

Nick McGOWAN: Okay. Perhaps a question for the Secretary: you referred earlier on to the movement of the budget and that the envelope for 2025–26 is larger because there is perhaps a carryover. What was the carryover from that previous year, which makes it look –

Peta McCAMMON: I am sorry, I do not have that detail with me today in terms of what that amount or –

Nick McGOWAN: That is okay. Would you mind taking that on notice?

Peta McCAMMON: We can look at what we can provide.

Nick McGOWAN: Would you also be able to tell us what that carryover was then used for? Because obviously it looks like a spike at \$811 million versus the \$786 million for 2025–26.

Peta McCAMMON: I guess the rules governing carryover for us are that we need to spend it on the original purpose. It is not unusual if we have a delay that we will seek from the Treasurer, ‘Can we move that into a new financial year?’, but the commitment is that we will spend that in line with the original purpose of the funding.

Nick McGOWAN: Do you mind coming back to us on what that purpose was and confirming where that money envelope was spent?

Peta McCAMMON: Yes. We can look at what we can provide in relation to the carryover, yes.

RESPONSE

Answer:

Carryover from 2023-24 to 2024-25 made up \$4.089 million of the 2024-25 revised budget. This included funding that had been provided through the Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence National Partnership 2023-2025 and the Commonwealth’s Keeping Women Safe In the Home program, as well as state budget funding allocated for Aboriginal Frontline Service Delivery and the Aboriginal Sexual Assault Program. This funding was spent during 2024-25 on service delivery related to these programs.

QUESTION 4

What is the 2025-26 budget allocation for Children in Refuge?

Name of Committee member asking question: Aiv Puglielli MLC

Excerpt from transcript, p.12:

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Minister, can I ask: how does this budget's allocation for refuge operations compare to the 2024–25 budget?

Natalie HUTCHINS: Given I was not the minister last year, I might ask Mel to supplement that one.

Melanie HEENAN: Yes, happy to do that. The funding for the operation of refuges was contained in last year's budget, so it will have another year to go. We will certainly be ensuring that that is a focus for next year's budget requests.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: So are there any relevant figures for this year in this budget?

Melanie HEENAN: Principally around the crisis brokerage, and that is for Safe Steps to be able to utilise that crisis brokerage. Essentially they use their crisis brokerage for sanctuary, as a substitute. There was certainly that outcome, and there was also an outcome in relation to refuges for children, which is a really, really important aspect of the program of course, for them to be able to access educational supports and other therapeutic supports in refuges.

Aiv PUGLIELLI: Can I ask: what is the budget allocation for those items that you have just listed?

Melanie HEENAN: I will try and get that for you in terms of the children in refuge amount. I do not want to guess it, but I can get that for you.

RESPONSE**Answer:**

The Family Violence Service Delivery Output Initiative *Supporting Victoria's response to family violence* in 2025-26 includes:

- **\$1.790 million** over two years in Family Violence Crisis Brokerage funding for Safe Steps, the statewide 24/7 crisis service, providing immediate access to emergency accommodation, transport, and material aid for highest risk victim survivors seeking support.
- **\$4.404 million** over two years to deliver intensive support to children in family violence refuge to help them begin to recover from the cumulative effects of their exposure to family violence.