

# TRANSCRIPT

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into Budget Estimates 2018–19

Melbourne — 12 June 2018

#### Members

Mr Danny Pearson — Chair

Ms Sue Pennicuik

Mr David Morris — Deputy Chair

Ms Harriet Shing

Mr Steve Dimopoulos

Mr Tim Smith

Mr Danny O'Brien

Ms Vicki Ward

Ms Fiona Patten

#### Witnesses

Mr Martin Foley, Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing,

Ms Kym Peake, Secretary,

Mr Nick Foa, Deputy Secretary, Housing, Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation,

Ms Chris Asquini, Deputy Secretary, Children, Families, Disability and Operations, and

Mr Terry Symonds, Deputy Secretary, Health And Wellbeing, Department of Health and Human Services.

**The CHAIR** — I declare open the public hearings for the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into the 2018–19 budget estimates. All mobile telephones should now be turned to silent.

I would like to welcome the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, the Honourable Martin Foley, MP; Ms Kym Peake, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services; Mr Nick Foa, Deputy Secretary, Housing, Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation; Ms Chris Asquini, Deputy Secretary, Children, Families, Disability and Operations; and Mr Terry Symonds, Deputy Secretary, Health and Wellbeing. In the gallery today is Mr Greg Stenton, Chief Finance Officer, Corporate Services; Ms Fiona Williams, Director, Property and Asset Services; Ms Denise Ferrier, Director, Policy and Planning; Ms Louise Galloway, Director, Community-Based Health, Policy and Programs; Mr Robert Fiske, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Health and Human Services Building Authority; and Ms Janine Toomey, Executive Director, Disability and NDIS Transition. Any witness who is called from the gallery during this hearing must clearly state their name, position and relevant department for the record.

All evidence is taken by this committee under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Any comments made outside the hearing, including on social media, are not afforded such privilege.

The committee does not require witnesses to be sworn, but questions must be answered fully, accurately and truthfully. Witnesses found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard. You will be provided with proof versions of the transcript for verification as soon as available. Verified transcripts, any PowerPoint presentations and handouts will be placed on the committee's website as soon as possible.

Witness advisers may approach the table during the hearing to provide information to the witnesses if requested, by leave of myself. However, written communication to witnesses can only be provided via officers of the PAEC secretariat. Members of the public gallery cannot participate in the committee's proceedings in any way.

Members of the media must remain focused only on the persons speaking. Any filming and recording must cease immediately at the completion of the hearing.

I invite the witness to make a very brief opening statement of no more than 10 minutes. This will be followed by questions from the committee.

At the outset I would like to declare that I am the chair of the public housing renewal advisory group.

### **Visual presentation.**

**Mr FOLEY** — Within the time frame allotted, why don't we move to slide 1, which is just a headline figure that points to the portfolio of housing, disability and ageing. Over the course of this fourth budget of this term it is an equation of 54.1 per cent increase in new initiatives over that period of time. I think that reflects the importance that the government has placed on this very important set of initiatives.

Moving on to the second one, housing and homelessness investment in particular, against that wider 54 per cent increase the housing and homelessness set of initiatives has increased by 240 per cent over the course of these four years. That is because we know that the strong focus in providing housing and housing assistance to those disadvantaged Victorians, particularly those for whom the market fails, is an important priority for state governments as you can get a particularly strong emphasis on this portfolio. This year's budget in particular builds on the significant progress that was set out in this government's whole-of-government policy framework led by the Treasurer, the *Homes for Victorians* approach, with chapters 5 and 6 of that document particularly addressing the challenges of social, affordable and community housing. The key challenge there is the increasing number of Victorians facing housing stress, whether they be in the private rental market, the social housing sector or indeed home ownership. What we have established is that since 2014–15, on the back of this budget's set of initiatives, we will now click over \$1 billion invested in new housing and homelessness initiatives. As I indicated, that is a 240 per cent increase on the initiatives this government inherited.

If I could perhaps move onto the next one, 'Doing more for victims of family violence and breaking the cycle of homelessness', we know that from not just the Royal Commission into Family Violence but from the frontline

experience of many agencies and many service providers that the single largest driver of many drivers into housing stress, homelessness and rough sleeping continues to be family violence. That is why this budget continues to roll out the delivery of funding of the initiatives that were set out in previous budgets in response to not just the Royal Commission into Family Violence but also the subsequent initiatives that flowed through that.

To break the cycle of homelessness is what the royal commission and our policy approach to homelessness and rough sleeping seeks to achieve. By intervening early, getting rough sleepers housed quickly and strengthening support services to keep vulnerable Victorians engaged with the range of services they need, depending on their pathway to homelessness, also necessarily needs to dictate their pathway out of homelessness. This budget, as a result of the rough sleeping action plan that the government adopted in January, funds a \$26.4 million particular package of responses. That ranges from a range of one-bedroom, modular, intensive on-site support units for the really chronically homeless — the almost enculturated homeless with many complex and diverse needs which have kept many of these very chronic rough sleepers in the homelessness environment. These are multidisciplinary teams funded under this program to support these complex clients through a combination of assertive outreach programs that then link them into 24/7 care in a range of dedicated single-bedroom units but with on-site support located around them. These sites are in the process of being rolled out around metropolitan Melbourne, but I can also indicate as a result of the growing issues around rough sleeping in our regions, there is an appropriate feasibility study in the Central Highlands region as to how the project might work there.

The program for the rough sleeping response also includes almost \$24 million to, we hope, match the commonwealth contribution under the proposed national housing and homelessness agreement. I stress 'we hope' because as we sit here with less than three weeks to go until the existing affordable housing agreement and the homelessness agreement which have been in place since 2009 expire, no state has finalised that agreement with the commonwealth. Nonetheless, we live in hope so we have allocated almost \$24 million to make sure that those Victorians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including children and young people in particular, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and, as I have indicated, people with family violence driving them into homelessness, as well as the other major sectors that are driving homelessness, that being those people who exit institutional care, increasingly older people and particularly older women, and a growing number — fortunately from a small base but nonetheless a growing number — of veterans. All of which will be, we hope, the focus of the soon, we hope, finalised agreement with the commonwealth.

The budget also continues, as I have indicated, a further \$27.7 million for the rollout of the 12 family violence refuges. These are important facilities that on the back of the royal commission needed both substantial upgrades and an extension of hours, particularly in situations where they needed to accept women and children with the greatest needs at the highest risk times. Particularly after-hours responses for family violence victims is a further focus of the work in this budget portfolio.

In addition, there is \$1.3 million to provide for additional family violence crisis properties in the Wimmera-Southern Mallee region, an area that like many of our regional communities is confronting the reality of how it responds to women facing family violence issues while seeking to maintain them in their own communities in a safe environment but with the other support networks that that goes with, whether it is kids at school, people at work or people in study.

These 18–19 budget initiatives build on our significant investments to address homelessness and family violence as a wraparound series of approaches. This budget, the 18–19 budget, builds on the 17–18 budget which had support for, as I have indicated, case management to support victims and the survivors of family violence, expansion of the statewide 24/7 crisis services and substantial expansion for 24/7 intake services particularly after-hours, and the movement towards individual flexible packages that are attached to the family, to the person, to the woman largely, and to be tailored to the responses, just like these unique pathways into housing and homelessness crisis to make sure that those pathways out meet their needs.

Equally, there was \$83.2 million for the refuge expansion following the royal commission's determination that the existing model needed to be updated around a new 'core and cluster' facility so as to make sure that those facilities were much more user-friendly. Equally, given the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in family violence, two new Aboriginal refuges to support greater needs in that community. That in turn built on the 16–17 immediate response to the then royal commission which built on \$109 million to target the 19 000 homeless Victorians so as to make sure that that pipeline for those Victorians seeking to enter the social housing and low-end private sector rental market were dealt with at the earliest point of intervention possible, as one of the

approaches to deal with the wider housing issues that we as a community and as a nation are facing. Equally, there was the \$9.8 million initial rough sleepers package to direct housing in response to what then became the Towards Home rough sleeping package.

All of that is set against the stark reality that was reflected in the most recent ABS census statistics, which is a rate of homelessness per 10 000 head of population, that saw Victoria's homelessness rate sadly increase from 41.7 to 41.9. That is a 0.5 increase over that period of time. This stands in contrast to, if there is a comparable jurisdiction, the state of New South Wales where the same rate of increase was from 39.7 to 50.4, which is a 27 per cent increase in the rate of homelessness. Whilst any increase in the rate of homelessness is something that we should all as a very rich community hold as a mark of poor performance, the fact of a 0.5 per 10 000 increase versus a 27 per cent increase north of the Murray, at least points to the impact that some of the investments and practice changes the state is making. But in raw terms that is 37 715 New South Welshmen without secure housing and considered homeless as opposed to 24 817 Victorians. This is an unacceptable standard for us as a state and for us as a country.

If I could perhaps move on to the next slide, against that context, how do we improve the public housing, both the existing arrangements we have while seeking to grow the wider notion of community housing and social housing? If I could just perhaps touch on the budget initiatives that have seen strong investment in social housing over the last four years, and I will just point to that bar chart there indicating that this is a further contribution to our portfolio increase of 54 per cent, but in particular what the 18–19 budget does is build on the strong investment that went before it. Investments include the \$1 billion Social Housing Growth Fund with its aim of 2200 new social housing units, the billion-dollar loan guarantee scheme under the leadership of the Treasurer for community housing organisations, the \$100 million loan facility for community housing organisations to leverage off benefits and a \$20 million upgrade for rooming houses to ensure that what has been traditionally an increasingly problematic form of housing becomes as safe and secure as possible. In addition to that, there were earlier investments to provide renewed public housing estates, which I will return to shortly.

What this budget does is build on that with a focus particularly on safety in public housing and high-rise estates with a \$21.7 million investment into the high-rise estates, particularly following in 2017 two fires in an estate in Fitzroy and an estate in South Melbourne. That is in addition to the \$22 million high-rise upgrade program that the government is rolling out across the 40-plus high-rise estates. In total that is a \$925 million investment in new and existing capital projects over the course of these four budgets in our social housing estates under the direct ownership of the director of housing.

If I could perhaps then move on to that \$185 million public housing renewal program. This is in addition to the 6000 new social housing units set out in the *Homes for Victorians* policy, and its focus is to make sure that we renew the run-down, particularly concrete walk-up, estates. Some date from the 40s, but most are from the 50s and early 60s. Stage 1 of that renewal program includes the replacement of 1800 existing social housing properties and the increase to around about 2000 new state-of-the-art properties, certainly compared to the unacceptable nature of the particularly concrete walk-up units that they seek to replace. The funding through the program is under the directorship of the director of housing and its key policy drivers are to be found in the Victorian Auditor-General's successive reports — not just the most recent but over a number of years — that were critical of successive governments for the postponement of renewal and replacement of properties as an unsustainable strategy both economically and socially. It also reflects the increasingly tight demand for public housing units, especially for one and two-bedroom homes.

The project model delivers the outcomes and the value for money that will enable us to rebuild and replace the 1800-plus aged, tired public homes with better quality, well-designed and thermally much better arrangements than condemning particularly our increasingly aged and disabled set of tenants to struggling up sometimes up to four or five floors of ill-lit and frankly sometimes dangerous stairwells. It will also provide a significant uplift for those communities. Indeed it will retain in public housing ownership those locations that are well-connected to transport, jobs and existing communities, a very different policy approach to some other jurisdictions.

While we are at it, in terms of the next slide, protecting older Victorians, there is a \$32 million package that seeks to again build on work that was done in previous budgets, particularly around elder abuse and securing the future of our state public aged-care services as that significant safety net that is needed by our increasingly vulnerable aged Victorians who are unable to take advantage of the boom in private sector aged care. The

government is investing \$6 million to tackle elder abuse by extending the trial of its successful integrated model of care where the combination of clinical advice, family counselling and remediation services is being rolled out around five locations — Melbourne Health, Monash Health, Latrobe Community Health Service, Western Health and Peninsula Health — as particular models as the data suggests aged Victorians with a vulnerable set of circumstances are over-represented there. Better workforce training to ensure staff can identify and respond is also part of the changes as our community ages and elder abuse becomes more of a community issue.

Finally, the budget also provides a \$26.6 million continuation of our putting an end to the aged care sell-off that we committed to in 2014, which I am pleased to say we have done.

In terms of perhaps my final slide, 'A fairer future for Victorians living with disability', this adds to the already \$2.5 billion commitment for the 105 000 to 107 000 Victorians transferring to the national disability insurance scheme with a \$9.2 million investment around the state's disability plan, particularly with an economic and jobs focus, as well as a \$4.5 million contribution for making sure that the NDIS, for organisations particularly around advocacy and support, is delivered, because of course you cannot really have a choice and control system without advocacy.

**The CHAIR** — Order! Minister, we might now just start with opposition questions; we ran a bit over time there. Mr O'Brien until 1.49 p.m.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Congratulations, Minister. You are the first to successfully ensure the fulfilment of the government's election commitment of no Dixer from the government, so well done. Minister, can I refer you to page 39 of the budget overview, which includes a comment that:

... we're ensuring that Victorians living with disability get the support they deserve.

As you would be aware, the Long Service Benefits Portability Bill 2018 has passed the Assembly, and National Disability Services says it is concerned it 'will undermine the financial viability of organisations'. And I can quote:

Disability service providers are under extreme pressure with the transition to NDIS, and an additional cost impost is not sustainable. We are concerned that this —

which is the long service bill —

will undermine the financial viability of organisations. This could contribute to withdrawal of some services from the market ...

Minister, can I ask what action you have taken to ensure this bill does not impact on Victorians living with a disability and that they get the support they deserve.

**Mr FOLEY** — Thank you very much for that very important question. Only two weekends ago I had the pleasure of addressing the National Disability Services employer congress — if you like, the peak for this sector in Victoria, heading many, many hundreds of NGOs in this sector. And we had also had a number of discussions with them on this very significant issue, an issue which, I am sure you know, is being led by the Minister for Industrial Relations but, nonetheless, has significant impact not just for disabilities but across the whole housing, disability and ageing portfolio, given the scope of legislation.

We have been working with a range of stakeholders, including the NDS, to devise the best way in which we can seek to implement the recommendations from the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee's report to the Parliament, which recommended that we go down this path. That series of work culminated in the bill to which you referred. Fundamentally this bill is about making sure that a group of workers, a group of highly —

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Minister, I understand what the bill is about. I am asking specifically about disability service providers and how they are going to be accommodated.

**Mr FOLEY** — Yes. So in terms of our discussions with disability service providers — largely through that peak but occasionally with some of the more significant players who have sought to have discussions directly — it is about how we make sure that the tool, which employers themselves regularly tell me they support, protects opportunities for long service leave where there is a large turnover of staff and it is unusual for employees to make it to the seven or 10 years for long service leave. All those employers regularly and rightly — because it is their obligation — make allowances for long service leave in their books, so it is not an

issue of them not fulfilling their legislative obligations. It is in the context of what might be the 1.5 per cent of ordinary pay levy that they would be seeking discussions around. This is in the context of a range of wider pressures that they are under that you have identified, particularly around the rollout of the NDIS, through a series of pricing restrictions. From the point of view of the providers they are having some very large difficulties in engaging with the NDIA —

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — So it is affecting them significantly, Minister. Can I ask: did you actually seek to have the disability sector exempted from the provisions of this bill?

**Mr FOLEY** — No, I did not, because the sector have indicated to me their in-principle support for a portable long service leave system. The question is how to implement it. So with that in mind, after discussions with both the Minister for Industrial Relations and the sector itself, we have established through my department a working group that also engages the wide breadth — because whilst we say disability support, there is obviously a wide range of organisations and different types of organisations in the disability sector that have sought to deal with that issue. What we have done is establish that working group, and we seek through that to hopefully be able to manage an agreed outcome that particularly deals with that issue at this tight piece of timing for the sector, given the challenges of the NDIS rollout and the restrictions that the NDIA has brought to providers. We remain hopeful that that working group will be able to work through what is a challenging set of issues to make sure that the sector can continue on and grow to become, as we expect it to be by the end of the rollout of the NDIS, one of the largest employers in the state.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — So will that working group consider, as the NDS has requested, a fully costed impact assessment, and then, depending on the cost that will be imposed on the sector, will the government fully fund those additional costs to ensure that the services are not withdrawn?

**Mr FOLEY** — We are working through all of those issues with the employers and their peak organisations, and we would not rule anything in or out in good faith while those discussions are continuing. We remain hopeful that those discussions will arrive at an agreed position, as challenging as that is, noting that the starting point is that all of those employers currently make allowances for, as they should, long service leave. The question is how to administer the scheme so as to make sure that their growing workforce — but fairly transient compared to many other sectors — can enjoy the benefits of long service leave in return for their hard work.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Minister, you said earlier that the sector indicated its in-principle support for the bill, but they are not saying that. They want to be exempted from the bill. Why are you saying the opposite?

**Mr FOLEY** — In-principle support for the concept of a long service leave system that reflects the important role of the growing sector of the disability workforce — that it should quite rightly be able to take advantage of what is their legal right to recognition of service, particularly given that peaks such as the NDIS, the Victorian Council of Social Service and others have indicated continuing support for the idea. The issue is that of execution at this time, given the range of challenges that the disability sector is under.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — In terms of execution, aged care has been exempted from the bill in part because it is federally funded. Clearly we are moving in a transition towards federally funding disability services through the NDIS. Why we would we then not exempt that sector from this bill as well?

**Mr FOLEY** — That is a misunderstanding of what the NDIA's funding base is. Whilst the NDIA is a commonwealth agency, its funding will forever continue to be a combination of state and commonwealth funding. That was the 2013 national agreement, and then the 2016 bilateral agreements around the country were about how you bring together from a disjointed federally funded and state-funded series of systems the one coherent approach. The states will continue to provide substantial support, to the tune of 2.5 billion, for rollout in 2020, and then there will be a series of indexation arrangements in perpetuity to make sure that the states and the commonwealth are joint funders. That therefore gives the state, I say, a right to have an arrangement in place.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Can I just jump in there, Minister, because that goes to another question that budget paper 2, page 60, highlights — that the NDIS is a specific fiscal risk. You will be aware, I am sure, that a few weeks ago there were a number of media reports that the NDIA had been collaborating with researchers to rewrite the way autism was categorised, which potentially puts people with autism at risk of being ineligible for

the NDIS. What are you doing to ensure that Victorians with autism will not fall through the cracks with respect to the NDIS?

**Mr FOLEY** — A range of things. First and foremost, Victoria, I think, can quite frankly lead the charge at the Disability Reform Council, the COAG forum, in which this issue amongst a huge variety of issues is played out. But equally we have the obligation from the autism parliamentary inquiry that also set out a range of activities that we as the Victorian government should take both in our own right and take up to the NDIA, all of which we are pursuing. Equally in terms of the more systematic issues, there are issues around the price modelling that the NDIA are using and their reluctance seemingly — I do not want to put words in their mouth — about their failure to pick up the Productivity Commission's report from October 2017 about how to remodel their pricing and delivery. As well when it comes to autism, given, to use the phrase, if you have met one child with autism —

**The CHAIR** — Order! Ms Pennicuik until 1.55 p.m.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Thank you, Minister, Secretary, deputy secretaries and everybody. Thank you for coming. I would like to talk about the public housing renewal program. Budget paper 4, page 109, lists \$185 million over four years for the public housing renewal program. The recent inquiry into the public housing renewal program by the upper house Legal and Social Issues Committee confirmed that Victoria has the lowest percentage of social housing across the nation at 3.5 per cent and only 2.7 per cent of that is public housing. The national average is 4.5 per cent.

The public housing renewal program website states that around 1800 new public housing units will be built, but of course they are all going to be demolished, so it is only about a 10 per cent increase in the stock of public housing across those nine sites. The committee found that there are 44 000 applications for public housing — 82 499 people, 57 877 adults and 24 622 children on the public housing waiting list.

There are two questions here. How will the government with just this small increase in public housing go anywhere near finding the public housing required to address the applications? Could you update the committee with the actual increase by number of public housing units across those sites and the mix of the other types of housing on those sites?

**Mr FOLEY** — Thank you for those two questions. In terms of your preamble, yes, Victoria for many decades now has had a range of social housing below the national average, if you take social housing to be the combined community housing sector in all of its diversity and the office of housing — the old housing commission — figures. In terms of at least what you indicated — I think you said 44 000 applications for public housing — that just needs a little bit of clarification. What we inherited in 2014 was a combination of the public housing waiting list and up to — it depends how you count them — 40 other housing or homelessness waiting lists, some of which related to that and some of which did not. We have sought to create an integrated single set of data and waiting arrangements, the management of all the data, called the Victorian Housing Register. I think the 44 000 might well — I stand to be corrected, but the last I saw was that that public housing waiting component of applications was around 36 700 by the time the rest —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — There were some transfers — around 7500.

**Mr FOLEY** — Yes, indeed.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Even so, it is a very large number compared to the number of units.

**Mr FOLEY** — It is a huge number, and a number that, in terms of arrangements, we seek to deal with by a variety of methods — one of which is, as I indicated in my presentation, dealing with applications at the source. Particularly given that the largest driver of arrangements is through family violence, how do we deal with keeping people in their own communities in different forms of suitable housing rather than getting into the public housing system with all of the stresses it is under at the moment? Having said that —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — You have just finished your sentence and I am just going to remind you of the questions, because time is of the essence, Minister.

**Mr FOLEY** — So how is the percentage increase — for the first set of questions you asked, for housing — to be delivered? Is that the question?

**Ms PENNICUIK** — The question is: what is the actual number for the 10 per cent increase across those nine sites? What is the actual increase in number and how is that going to make any dent in the number of applications, which you have been talking about?

**Mr FOLEY** — The policy driver of the public housing renewal program for the estates is to replace unacceptable, poor-standard housing.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — I understand that. I just want to know —

**Mr FOLEY** — In and of itself it is not aiming to make a big dent in public housing wait lists. There are other programs there. Having said all that, we would expect an absolute minimum of a 10 per cent increase given not just the housing budget —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — So the other question is —

**Mr FOLEY** — But we are at the moment, as you would be aware from the committee's report, well down the path — even though we were delayed 10 months by a variety of mechanisms, which you are also well aware of — of going to market with these —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — You only put the planning scheme applications in last week.

**Mr FOLEY** — And we are not in a position to give a firm figure as yet because those processes have yet to be resolved.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Minister, perhaps you could take it on notice. It is the total number of new public housing dwellings across those sites — the number —

**Mr FOLEY** — It will be at least 2000.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — and the number of other types of housing that are going to be provided, because of course we know that the vast majority of the land will be handed over to the private sector for private units.

**Mr FOLEY** — Well, you assert that —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — I do.

**Ms SHING** — That's why you voted against it.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — That's right.

**Mr FOLEY** — You assert that; the evidence is yet to be established.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Well, then if you could provide the committee with the evidence, that would be fabulous.

**The CHAIR** — Order! We will have government questions now until 2.06 p.m. Minister, I might ask a question if I may. The budget paper reference is budget paper 4, page 109, which also relates to the public housing renewal program, and also budget paper 4, page 108, which relates to the redevelopment of the Flemington public housing estate. Minister, are you able to outline to the committee the current status of both projects in the context of the current financial year and what you expect to see over the course of 2018–19?

**Mr FOLEY** — Yes, I am, Chair. As you acknowledged at the start, your role is as the convener of one of the groups that is overseeing particularly the tenant engagement process for this. I am sure I am not adding much to your particular level of understanding, but both programs in the budget papers can be essentially combined for this process of renewal of unacceptable public housing that we have, for many generations now, condemned public tenants to. These public housing renewal programs, such as Flemington, which you particularly are well aware of, are funded from the Homes for Victorians project, along with \$2.1 billion in incentives from that program together with \$800 million for growing social and affordable housing.

Since that time the government has undergone a rigorous assessment as to the sites, and the aim of targeting those processes through the social housing standing committee and through the Planning Panels Victoria

process has seen the original proposals come down in scale whilst certainly improving the design, the urban context, the relationship to training, the planning and the linkages to the surrounding communities. Through that process we have been quite keen to extend those discussions for the six particular sites which Ms Pennicuik rightly identified as being the subject of the recent parliamentary inquiry. Those programs, whether they be in the already-far-down-the-path Heidelberg West and Preston sites — where public and social housing is coming out of the ground and indeed in Heidelberg West is being very well tenanted — have come some way. In terms of at least the arrangements in place for the rest of this financial year, I might ask the director of housing, Mr Foa, just to take us through the timetables, some of which I understand were shared with the Legislative Council last week.

**Mr FOA** — Thank you, Minister. The procurement process, as the minister referred to, is currently underway, so we are limited in how much detail we can go into about a current procurement process. Suffice to say my evidence to the committee was that we have been delighted with the response from the private sector, which is bidding in for a development right. It is not that we are selling large parcels of land to individual developments; they are bidding in for a developer right, and the state receives the accretion of value created by the planning scheme amendments.

The process is well underway for what we call package 2, which is three sites, being North Melbourne, Preston and Northcote, and we would expect that we would have some recommendations to put before government in about August in relation to that package. There is another one that is currently in procurement, which is package 1, which is Brighton, Flemington and Prahran. Importantly, both those packages have received significant market interest and we are hoping to again provide recommendations on those to government prior to caretaker. Whilst I cannot say much about the processes themselves, I can say that the quality of what has been presented is terrific and we would expect to meet and exceed the minimum standards that the minister has spoken about.

**The CHAIR** — I know that the federal member for Melbourne, Mr Adam Bandt, has indicated that you should not be knocking down walk-ups, you could just simply renovate them. Do you have any views, Minister or Mr Foa, in terms of the quality of the infrastructure? Would they be able to be renovated?

**Mr FOLEY** — I do, and I point to successive Auditors-General reports over many years. Particularly when it comes to the concrete walk-ups, they point out that not only are these environmentally unsustainable, they are unsustainable in terms of their ability — for investment purposes — to be renovated.

It is not often that your employment cycle comes full circle, but way back in the 1980s I had the great honour of working on the Dight Street, Collingwood, concrete walk-ups being bowled over. At that time the commitment that was made by government was that all of those walk-ups would be gone by the turn of the century. Here we are nearly 30 years later from that point in time and we are still condemning a generation of increasingly older, frail people to lug their way up three and four storeys with no lifts, in thermally unsafe places that cannot be renovated, by the reports. Anyone who wants to condemn another generation of older Victorians to housing poverty, I say to them: go and spend a night on the top floor, either in the middle of winter or the heat of summer, in one of those units and tell me whether you think they can be renovated.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — On a point of order, Chair, the minister said he has information about the condition of those public housing walk-up sites. If he has that, could that be tabled to the committee, please?

**Mr FOLEY** — On the point of order, Chair, I do not think I said that. I said I was able to point to successive Auditors-General reports, which are on the public record, and I would refer the honourable member to those.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — On the point of order, Chair, I do not think the Auditors-General reports went to the condition reports of those nine sites.

**Mr FOLEY** — They went to the financial viability. I think they did.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — So given your question, Chair, in order to that, if there is any further information on the condition of those sites — condition reports of those sites — if the minister could table that.

**Mr FOLEY** — I understand that in 2013–14 the then government did an assessment of every public housing unit in the state and published those at that time, and I am sure that the then minister, Ms Lovell, would have

made those arrangements public. I will establish whether in fact they did, and if the member's assessment is correct, I will make sure that we forward those to her.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Minister. Ms Pennicuik, you and I can have a visit of the Flemington public housing estate and afterwards I will shout you lunch at #Somali Eats and we can have a chat about the quality of public housing in my electorate.

**Ms WARD** — I have to say, Minister, having spent a lot of time working with the people of West Heidelberg, I am very familiar with the walk-ups and not even having a laundry. For a single mum, having to lug a baby and a couple of other kids up the stairs with bags of groceries is not easy. Where do you put your pram? Not easy at all.

Minister, can I please get you to direct your thinking towards protecting older Victorians. In your presentation — very comprehensive, thank you — you talked about \$6 million to tackle elder abuse by extending a trial for an integrated model of care across five locations, including offering specialist clinical advice, family counselling and mediation services. Can you talk us through that, please? And also talk to us about how it relates to the Royal Commission into Family Violence. I understand there are two recommendations that relate to this issue.

**Mr FOLEY** — Just as an aside, it is interesting to see how at the Heidelberg West estate, we are oversubscribed by the number of public tenants who want to get into those estates, because they can now see the outcome of better 21st-century housing that replaces 1950s housing.

In terms of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, you are correct. Recommendations 139 and 153 indicated that elder abuse within families — amongst a range of hidden family abuse issues — was particularly invisible to the family violence service system. And that is why issues around workforce training and an integrated model of care in instances where suspected elder abuse was underway was the focus of that recommendation and later in the report a focus on making sure that better information about the impacts of elder abuse and how to respond to it was dealt with.

The royal commission noted that older people face particular barriers; for example, a reluctance to report violence, sometimes because of shame, fear of not being believed, the financial reliance on sometimes their direct family who might be the perpetrator and a desire to maintain closer family relationships. That is why in response to the budget paper items that you identified in this and previous budgets, we are investing some \$6 million to build that support for elder abuse, particularly around counselling and mediation services, to identify it and respond to it in an integrated model of care, given that so many of the points of intersection for elder abuse are the health and community provision services. That is why the integrated model of care has been rolled out across five different sites, and this investment will support community awareness —

**The CHAIR** — Order! We will come back to that.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 3, page 72, disability services. I particularly want to raise Arnold Cook House — Guide Dogs Victoria — in Kew. I have raised this in adjournment with you on a number of occasions. There have been questions on notice about this. I understand that your staff have met with Karen Hayes at Guide Dogs Victoria. My understanding is that your staff said that any funding requests were under consideration but nothing was in the budget for Arnold Cook House. Can you explain why this very important facility has not been funded?

**Mr FOLEY** — Guide Dogs Victoria does an excellent job and has for many generations. And not just my office but I myself have had a number of discussions with the CEO and indeed board members of the organisation. They are, as you have indicated, seeking to redevelop their Kew facility to provide an integrated, world-class training and education centre for excellence for people of low vision or blindness. I understand it is to be called the Guide Dogs Victoria sensory campus, and it is a combination of repurposing subspace and using unutilised space at the others for the goal of increasing their reach by a further 300 clients together with a range of social enterprises to both diversify their service delivery and equally their income stream.

Guide Dogs Victoria is seeking \$5 million over two years from the government and a matched contribution from the commonwealth. The commonwealth has yet to indicate any financial support for the project, and we are monitoring very closely the discussions with Guide Dogs Victoria.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Minister, the commonwealth have already funded aspects —

**Mr FOLEY** — Aspects, yes.

**Mr T. SMITH** — Aspects of the redevelopment.

**Mr FOLEY** — As indeed the Victorian government also provides over \$817 000 in support to the delivery work of Guide Dogs Victoria, because it is a very significant service provider. In terms of the training and education centre of excellence around the sensory campus, I understand that is where the discussions at different levels of government are at the moment.

**Mr T. SMITH** — So to paraphrase: you will put money on the table.

**Mr FOLEY** — Your words, not mine, member for Kew.

**Mr T. SMITH** — So you are ruling out funding this.

**Mr FOLEY** — No. I am not ruling in or out support, but I do indicate the significant service that we know Guide Dogs Victoria is and the extensive work and the need for the extensive work to land — ongoing discussions continue to occur with guide dogs around all of those factors, and I would not want to close off or unreasonably raise expectations given the multilayered discussions that are happening with guide dogs, philanthropy, the state and the commonwealth.

**Mr T. SMITH** — So it is a no at this stage, but it could become a yes.

**Mr FOLEY** — I would not want to rule in or out any particular outcome because there are many variable moving parts.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Minister, could you tell us how many public housing tenants are currently in arrears with rent, and how many have been evicted? I am happy to take it on notice if you do not have it.

**Mr FOLEY** — I might throw to my officials, but in terms of the general proposition —

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — I am not really after general propositions, Minister. Given the time, I am after some actual numbers. I am happy to take it on notice.

**Mr FOLEY** — My officials may know. The goal is, however, to avoid that situation.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Of course.

**Mr FOLEY** — And 93 per cent of public housing tenants are on some form of fixed commonwealth statutory benefit, and increasingly they are aged and increasingly overrepresented in any number of other vulnerable quartiles of disability, mental health and other low-income issues. Combine that with the increasing tightening of Department of Social Service arrangements and it is unsurprising that tenants regularly but not consistently fall into rental stress. That is why we have reintroduced schemes in a new way to sustain those. Having said that, I might ask Mr Foa, as the director of housing, whether we have those figures or whether we take them on notice.

**Mr FOA** — I will have to take those on notice, I am sorry.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Thank you. I will continue on. There have been reports, Minister, about 47 000 public housing residents with different gas heaters having been sent precautionary letters with respect to their heaters, telling them that they will be receiving safety checks. In your most recent audit how many public housing dwellings have been found to still be using those gas heaters, and how many have been found to be faulty?

**Mr FOLEY** — This is a very serious issue, and I am glad you have raised it. This issue is currently the subject of a Coroners Court hearing where a tenant of the office of housing, Mrs Sofianopoulos, tragically died as a result of, it would appear, carbon monoxide poisoning. I just pause to reflect on her case to then extrapolate from that. When my department became aware of the concerns regarding the circumstances of Mrs Sofianopoulos's death, that heater was tested for carbon monoxide and it passed the initial test. That was then followed up with a more vigorous secondary test which that unit failed. All the heaters at that block were

then subsequently disconnected and medical support offered to the block of the tenants there. As a result of that we established that there were some 6500 tenants who had had installed the Vulcan or Pyrox Heritage heaters. Of those, 4000 plus space heaters were disconnected, are pretty much in the process of being disconnected or have been. Energy Safe Victoria then withdrew those two units from the market, and that has then set off because of course the office of housing was far from the only provider of those in the wider marketplace.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — So what has happened to the other 2500?

**Mr FOLEY** — In terms of that, they are also being tested, but testing and replacing is now a much wider program. That was the initial program. We have now extended that to testing and replacing all 6500 heaters, and that is quite a job. The best estimate for that in terms of the immediate two, the Vulcan and Pyrox ones, which were the initial focus, has been to both disconnect those and to replace them in the immediate short term with temporary heating in a very cold winter whilst then going through a process of assessing what this means in a wider Energy Safe Victoria, wider market role, which is a process being led by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, with that responsibility for Energy Safe Victoria.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — So 6500 will all be tested.

**Mr FOLEY** — Disconnected in fact.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Will actually be disconnected. What will they be replaced with, and what are they being temporarily replaced with?

**Mr FOLEY** — For temporary purposes, a series of plug-in heaters, which we know will have an impact on immediate costs, particularly in regard to electricity. We are currently in discussions as to what we need to do to make a rebate contribution to the increased cost that this will invariably result in for a large number of tenants and at the same time start a process of rolling out a variety of different replacement heaters, which I might ask the director of housing to respond to because this is making a huge demand not just on the workforce for gas fitters and plumbers but equally on the marketplace for heaters and coolers. So I might ask the director of housing, who is leading this.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — As you throw to Mr Foa, could I also ask when the process of testing and replacement will be completed? What is the timeline on it?

**Mr FOLEY** — We hope that will be completed by September, but I might ask the director of housing to discuss the replacement heating arrangements ongoing.

**Mr FOA** — Thank you, Minister. Yes, so the eventual replacement heater would be a powered flue heater so that does not rely on —

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Is that electric?

**Mr FOA** — No, a powered flue heater is a gas heater, but it has an internal fan that pushes the carbon monoxide out through the flue, rather than a passive flue heater that in certain circumstances can be dangerous in homes. The option of a split system will also be made available for those that would want to choose a split system.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Just given the timing, Mr Foa, what is the expected cost of this whole process is going to be?

**Mr FOA** — We are still working through costs at the moment. It depends on how many clients choose which form of heating.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Has there been something put in the budget?

**Mr FOA** — The director of housing is a public non-financial corporation. It has sufficient funds at the moment to handle the initial component, but we are working through the eventual costs.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Minister, you mentioned Energy Safe Victoria. There is a recommendation from them that these sorts of heaters be tested every two years. Has that been done by public housing?

**Mr FOLEY** — In terms of Energy Safe Victoria that is not one of my agencies, but in terms of its regulatory framework —

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — I am asking how often the testing has been done.

**Mr FOLEY** — I am happy to take that on notice.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Thank you, Minister.

**Ms PATTEN** — I would like to turn to the ageing in your portfolio. I note the \$26.6 million that has been allocated to the future provision of public sector residential aged care, which is in budget paper 3, page 72, but there is no further funding allocated in the budget. Obviously we are a rapidly ageing community and without any future funding in the budget, I am looking for strategies that we are placing in the future that your department is planning, and also if we are going to get a long-term ageing strategy in Victoria as we have seen in other jurisdictions.

**Mr FOLEY** — Thank you for the question. The public sector aged-care renewal program was a policy response to put an end to the sell-off of public health aged-care beds in metropolitan Melbourne, which formed the basis of, if you like, the port of last resort for aged care in Victoria. The government has not just continued the necessary budget allocations to sustain those beds in the public sector system, but it has also invested quite substantial capital in a program to consolidate some of those numbers in some sectors which were, really, struggling to be fit for purpose. The member for Kew's electorate has been the first recipient of a process through St Vincent's public to consolidate those. In terms of at least this budget process it is nothing other than the policy intent of this government to continue the number of public aged-care beds, particularly in metropolitan Melbourne, to be that safety net in the sector, which I think is 93 per cent to 95 per cent funded by the commonwealth, to be delivered.

**Ms PATTEN** — Minister, does that mean what you are saying is that that \$26 million will fix that?

**Mr FOLEY** — Will sustain that —

**Ms PATTEN** — Will sustain that, and that is all you need.

**Mr FOLEY** — Sustain that, and in addition to that there will be the capital program that will need to renew and consolidate into greater numbers those public sector facilities. That is in Melbourne metropolitan, but of course in the regions it is a different question again. Unless some of those public sector beds attached to smaller regional and rural hospitals are there, largely with an income stream from the commonwealth, some of those hospitals and healthcare systems will become even more marginal than what would otherwise be the case. This government is clearly of the intent that it will sustain in terms of the public sector — the aged-care beds that are the subject of this budget item which are city focused — that number of beds.

**Ms PATTEN** — Thanks, that clarifies that, Minister. Just moving forward to an ageing strategy. Is the department planning on an ageing strategy? We have certainly seen them in other jurisdictions like New South Wales, and it certainly seems to be quite crucial.

**Mr FOLEY** — As our community ages, gracefully in so many ways, it also poses many, many challenges. We contribute whether it be in this portfolio or in others, most notably health and community service-type arrangements, whether it be mental health or particularly for families and communities. There are lots of opportunities for dedicated streams for particular sectors, whether it be regional and rural, multicultural or disadvantaged Victorians with particular ageing needs, to be addressed. In terms of at least a wider strategy I will ask the secretary, who has the privilege of standing at a wider point than I do with my portfolios, to perhaps add a bit of value to that.

**Ms PEAKE** — Certainly. Yes, we have had a number of conversations with the commissioner for senior Victorians about a whole range of activities right across government: making sure that senior cards really deliver the best value for people around public transport, for example, as well as the sorts of programs that we have in our own portfolio. Some of the initiatives that flow from that are looking at particular supports for carers, recognising that there is a large part of our population who are caring for another aged person.

**Ms PATTEN** — Thanks, Secretary. I guess the question is: is the department looking at a long-term ageing strategy?

**Ms PEAKE** — Certainly that is the work we have been doing with the commissioner on how these different strands fit together to provide that long-term picture. Just a couple of others that I would mention that form part of that long-term — whether you would call it a published — strategy or a strategy that is driving the activities that we are doing across the department. There is quite a lot of work we have been doing in the dementia space as well, which came through a lot of his consultations around what really matters to older Victorians. Then the final piece that I would just mention is the work that we have been doing with local government in the context of some of the HACC services moving across to the commonwealth. So the short answer to your question is yes, we are working with the commissioner across the breadth of state government responsibilities.

**Ms PATTEN** — And will it result in a document? As I say, we have seen in other jurisdictions that there really is a plan on paper.

**Ms PEAKE** — Ultimately — and that is a policy question for government — certainly the work that we are doing with the commissioner is making sure that we are working right across government to ensure that all of the issues that are raised with him as being important to older Victorians are being progressed.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — Good afternoon, Minister, and officers. Minister, I just want to ask you a bit about the state disability plan. There is an investment in the budget, BP3, page 73. I am interested particularly in the economic participation and the language and the ambition for economic participation by people with a disability. Page 80 of the same budget paper talks a bit about the deliverables, including increasing employment and participation across the Victorian public sector. I am just wanting to get a sense from you what that investment will entail in terms of jobs for disabled people?

**Mr FOLEY** — There is now an obligation in Victoria as a result of changes to the Disability Act for an annual disability plan, and so there should be because we want to make sure that beyond the 107 000 Victorians who will be in the NDIS by the time it fully rolls out there are still many hundreds of thousands of Victorians that identify with a disability who will not be in that scheme. We need to make sure that the Australian ethos of a social compact in the area of ‘In return for support, your participation in either work or education’ applies as much to people with disabilities as it applies to the rest of the community, because of course people with disabilities are disproportionately under-represented in education, in the workforce and in just about any measure of social participation. So the dignity of work or training to be extended to people with disability lies at the heart of the economic participation plan that underpins one of the pillars of the state disability plan.

We want to make sure that government, as the largest employer in the state — and one with far from the best record when it comes to the engagement of people with disabilities, particularly compared to some larger private sector employers — lifts its game. Whether it be through good jobs, mentorships or internships with the public service, we think there is the prospect for us to do better and to look to different models. We know that in terms of numbers the jobs in the public sector undertaken by people with disabilities have been lower than they should be and indeed have been going backwards for some time. We set ourselves the target of making sure that by 2020 — the most recent disability plan — we lift the number of Victorians with disability in the public sector to 6 per cent. That is double what it is now, and I think that is achievable.

We have tasked the secretary, together with secretaries of the other departments and agencies, to make sure that that target is met. We think this \$2.6 million investment to implement some of the model programs on a smaller scale and replicate them and expand them, together with a process of engaging with change agents and those who would challenge some of the preconceived ideas of what people with a disability can achieve in the workplace, will mean we will be able to achieve that target and make economic participation, which is also one of the goals of the NDIS, a reality by making sure that the Victorian public sector is exemplar in this space.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — It is profoundly important, not only obviously for economic reasons for people with a disability but also for empowerment, for pride and for the people who work with them. It demystifies it for all of us, in a sense, through personal contact. I just wanted to get a sense of this. The risk of having programs that support a specific cohort, whether it be LGBTI or regional or whatever, is that we, the other, seem to group them into one category and say they are homogenous. Obviously they are not homogenous. Is there any part of that investment that will look at different strengths and different abilities amongst the cohort of people with a disability?

**Mr FOLEY** — There are indeed, and I would refer to the state disability plan in more detail, but through engagement with the advisory bodies that the state has set up, together with fierce advocacy from the disability sector, we are supporting, whether it be Victorians on the autism spectrum through the Dandelion project, specific targeted initiatives for that group; for people with psychosocial disabilities, there is the Wise Ways to Work group, who are an outstanding exemplar of working with people with mental health challenges to align them with proper work; for people with intellectual disabilities, we have got the Victorian Employer Enablement project; and for autism in regional areas, because of course the further you get away from Melbourne the tougher it is, as tough as it is to start with, for people with disabilities to land opportunities. In that last group, whether it be the STEM group or the agri-lab model, there are specific projects going on there. Overlay those with the state's significant social procurement model through its record infrastructure investment plans, you see all sorts of opportunities for both social enterprises together with direct employment opportunities for people with disability to be engaged. Now, whilst those are not with the state they are nonetheless contributory parts of the economic participation plan. In terms of our own employment, we really do think that there is a lot more that we can do. We are confident that the challenge of doubling the numbers by 2020 is well and truly within our grasp, and we hope to achieve that.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — I have just a couple of follow-up questions, Minister, and maybe one for the secretary. What is it? How do you get from here to there? Can you give us a granulated example? Is it about eligibilities do not apply as much, or is it about your staff being a bit more open?

**Mr FOLEY** — I think it is a bit of both, but I will throw to the secretary. It should not be a surprise that the stigma and discrimination that people with disability face in the wider community is what they are also faced with in the public service. Having said that, we need to — as the state disability plan and indeed the NDIS is predicated on — take us from the bottom of the OECD pile in terms of economic participation and social participation for people with disabilities to a new model. We like to think of ourselves as a nation of 'fair go for everyone'. By any measure, people with disabilities continue to be the least fairly treated in our community, and as to the leadership that we have got in the state disability plan and the implementation of that across the public sector I might ask the secretary to expand in a little bit more detail.

**Ms PEAKE** — I would really like to commend the Enablers Network, which is being created across the VPS and —

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — What is it called, sorry?

**Ms PEAKE** — The Enablers Network. It is a network of people living with a disability and working with a disability across the public sector, and they have been giving secretaries, the public sector commission and the heads of HR departments really fabulous advice.

As to your question about what does make a difference,; there are, as a result, trials around unconscious bias being removed in recruitment processes, about how to have the conversation — so management training on how to have the conversation when someone starts in the workplace — to make sure their aspirations are clear and their career pathway is supported.

We have been trialling a particular initiative in DHHS for people with autism about a different pathway into work, which is a much more supported pathway where there is an induction into work so that the unfamiliarity of the workplace is taken into account and the adjustment into the workplace is better supported. That is something that we are evaluating and looking to share those learnings across government. So I think there is a long way to go across the VPS, but we really are committed to listening to the real-life experience of people, what worked for them, what did not, what sort of mentoring and different types of recruitment processes work, and learn from that.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — I am sure it is very much a two-way relationship, so the public service will gain staff it did not have before because of that talent pool.

**Ms PEAKE** — Absolutely.

**Mr DIMOPOULOS** — Just in finishing, Minister, you talked about the social procurement framework as a — my language, not yours — leverage point for the private sector with similar aims. Is that the primary tool in terms of this investment in the budget to influence private sector recruitment for people with disabilities?

**Mr FOLEY** — Far from it. In the time available I would point to the attitudinal partnerships that our advisory councils and our advocacy groups insist, quite rightly, that people with disabilities be leading and helping shape. In fact we are providing access to disability-led groups to change some of those attitudes in the wider private sector community — for instance, we are providing funding to Get Skilled Access to provide that cultural change training. They are already doing it. They have the human phenomenon of Dylan Alcott as their lead person, and if you sit through one of the Get Skilled Access seminars in terms of challenging views on disability in the private sector you will come out completely transformed. It is that type of work; about changing attitudes and changing, from that, plans and outcomes.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Just for clarification, Mr Foa, what I was asking before for the data on arrears and evictions, so if I could just get the most recent data. I do not think that is exactly what you had, so whatever you have got that is the most recent.

Minister, you talked earlier about the homelessness and rough sleeping action plan and the one-bedroom modular units. Could I ask will they be permanent sites that are being set up around the metro area?

**Mr FOLEY** — There is not one program, but I think you are referring to the Towards Home program, which is a series of single-bedroom units where really chronic rough sleepers with multiple and complex issues that have led to, or been fuelled by, their homelessness are being identified and supported. We have seen those roll out in a variety of locations and they are still ongoing.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — South Road, Brighton, is that one —

**Mr FOLEY** — That is one.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Is it completed?

**Mr FOLEY** — That site is completed, yes. There is a range of others: Preston, Reservoir, Chadstone, Doveton, and a variety of other locations planned. The plan is for people to be in those locations. These are empty state government land blocks and the goal is to get people back into a culture of engagement with agencies and services by having 24/7 support onsite. These are temporary but fairly sturdy buildings, and they are relocatable.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — So how long do we expect people will be in them?

**Mr FOLEY** — I think the goal is for individuals to be in them for up to two years.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Two years?

**Mr FOLEY** — Two years for individuals, but that will vary depending on the pathways that individuals have to re-engagement and recovery.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — What about the sites themselves? Are they there permanently?

**Mr FOLEY** — They are not permanent buildings — they are plumbed, they have foundations, they are wired, they are all those kinds of things. But they are on pieces of land which, given other processes such as the one in Preston, ultimately will form part of the public housing renewal program in that estate, which is a much wider multi-year set of arrangements that will flow out over many, many years.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — So some will become permanent but as part of —

**Mr FOLEY** — Not that type of housing. Having said that, one and two-bedroom units will continue to be the priority. Overwhelmingly the single largest group of demand in that space is for one and two-bedroom units.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — You said they are on unused government land at the moment. Are any of those sites likely to be sold?

**Mr FOLEY** — I do not believe so. They have been targeted because they have got other uses in the strategy.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Down the track.

**Mr FOLEY** — Yes, down the track.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Can I move to children. Do you have any figures at the moment of how many of the homeless and rough sleepers are under the age of 21? I know we have discussed this before.

**Mr FOLEY** — When we commissioned the rough sleeping task force, a lot of that data was sought and gained by our friend the former director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Tony Nicholson, and he worked in conjunction with our rough sleeping task group, which was headed by Dr Ruth Vine from NorthWestern Mental Health and Melbourne Health, and had a wider sector of participants. I might have to make a bit of a check, and yes, I am being helped here by my helpful officials. In terms of young people, under 21 might be a little bit difficult, but I can tell you for under 18 — 18 and under — and I can tell you for between 19 and 24. In terms of the most recent data we have, for young children 18 or under we know that the most recent data showed us that whilst there were 5382 homeless — homeless is a broader generic definition than rough sleeping — of those some 49 are believed to be rough sleepers. That is from the most recent census data. In terms of young people from that 19 to 24 category we understand that that figure for Victoria reflects as 4360 people in that group. Interestingly enough —

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Sorry, so that is 2016 census data; is that right?

**Mr FOLEY** — Correct. In terms of growth or reductions that was actually a reduction of some 26 per cent in young people under 18 but an increase of 18 per cent in the 19 to 24 category.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Do you have data on other age groupings — under 10, for example?

**Mr FOLEY** — No, we do not go that far.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Is it only under 18?

**Mr FOLEY** — Yes.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — What support services, then, are provided to children from families who are sleeping rough?

**Mr FOLEY** — There are many agencies that specialise in family support, assuming that there is a functioning family there to support, because of course we know that alienation of young people for various reasons, particularly LGBTI young people, is one of the major drivers that sees homelessness in that younger group. Mental health issues — Indigenous young people are disproportionately over-represented in that group, and rural and regional Victorian young people. If you add those different lenses to a LGBTI young person in regional Victoria with mental health challenges, then your risks magnify.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — High risk. Can I just clarify, when you said, where a family situation exists, are those 49 rough sleepers believed to be sleeping on their own or not with family?

**Mr FOLEY** — I do not know if that is readily available from the data, but not necessarily, because you could be homeless but in a rooming house with one parent and not be considered a rough sleeper but still be considered homeless.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Yes.

**Mr FOLEY** — If you are sleeping in a car, if you are with one parent and you are under 18, then you are still in a family. But there is no easy definition that fits the range of circumstances that vulnerable young people face. In terms of the range of points of access that young homeless or rough sleepers face across the state we now have 79 separate access points for homelessness and housing engagement. Invariably some of those will specialise in that crisis accommodation for young people, and we will particularly see that in the larger urban centres, as well as, for historical reasons, where service provision has congregated, in the inner suburbs of Melbourne in particular. So all of those agencies have specific skill sets where they seek to engage with young people — some have dedicated youth workers, some have outreach workers such as Youth Projects in the city, and dedicated health and housing workers that go out in an assertive way looking for young people. For others it is a more walk-in-the-front-door service.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Do we know of the rough sleepers how many are attending school? What is the department doing to help ensure they are?

**Mr FOLEY** — The short answer is I do not know, but if that data is available I am more than happy to make that available. I just know from anecdotal evidence that — I have been involved with going out with some of these outreach services — yes, there are. Some kids are remarkable in the way in which in squats they can continue to go to school. To continue to engage with the post-school sector is a remarkable achievement — sometimes with the support of one those agencies, sometimes without that support. But to engage with mainstream services as a hook back to a sustainable lifestyle is really, really important.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Minister, thank you for that. Can I just move on. The public housing inquiry detailed the public housing renewal program sites. Could you tell us when the contracts for each of those sites will be completed?

**Mr FOLEY** — I think Mr Foa indicated in his response to Ms Pennicuik's question that time frame. I think he indicated for one package it is August and for another package prior to caretaker. I do not want to verbal him, but I am pretty sure that that is what he said.

**Mr FOA** — That is right.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Thank you, Mr Foa. Are you able to give us any details of who has shown expressions of interest for those?

**Mr FOLEY** — As the minister and under probity arrangements, I am blissfully unaware, as would only be appropriate. I might ask —

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — I take it, then, you are not going to ask Mr Foa to tell me.

**Mr FOLEY** — I do not think he will tell me, but I might ask him —

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — You can go out of the room for a minute and he can just tell me, and it will be fine.

**Mr FOLEY** — I might ask him nonetheless to talk about the process, if you think that might be of benefit.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Sure. That would be great.

**Mr FOA** — Thank you, Minister, and through you, Chair, I alluded earlier to obviously being constrained by a live market process. However, my advice to the committee is that we are very pleased with the level of interest from partners and I specify partners as —

**The CHAIR** — Order! We will come back to that.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Perhaps we will be continuing on this line of questioning, going back to the budget paper, reference page 109 of budget paper 4 with regard to the \$185 million set aside for the public housing renewal project. Minister, just as you were finishing off your answers to my questions earlier, you said that I was asserting that there was a sale of land associated with the public housing renewal program. I note that on page 96 of the report of the Legal and Social Issues Committee, quoting Mr Foa, it says:

... the proposed model includes the development and the sale of private homes.

So I am sure that is pretty clear. I think it has been clear from the start.

**Mr FOLEY** — Could I interrupt you?

**Ms SHING** — So there is context for everything, though, isn't there, Ms Pennicuik?

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Minister, if you could hold that thought.

**Mr FOLEY** — I will.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Well, I think it is very interesting because there are also some issues there about the undervaluing of the sale of the land at the Kensington site and there is a lot of detail there which I will not go into.

**Mr FOLEY** — I am happy to go into it.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Well, there are lessons to be learned, aren't there? The question really is: the \$185 million, did the government do a costing on the renewal of those public housing renewal sites of just replacing them or with a 10 per cent increase? What would the total cost of that be — without any sale — to government?

**Mr FOLEY** — Overall, globally, yes, and I will get the director of housing who oversaw that process. But in terms of some of the assertions that you made in your preamble which I think I am entitled to respond to, what is being sold is a development right, and it is a different approach whereby the state seeks to gain access to the value of the uplift, to not just replace run-down, unfit for 21st century living housing but in so doing create a different type of community. These are not the estates, socially, from the 50s, 60s, 70s — indeed even 80s and 90s. These are now long-term disadvantaged estates where vulnerable, disadvantaged people are being concentrated in a way that is not just bad for them — despite the many virtues that so many public tenants bring — but is bad for the wider community outcomes as we see those communities and estates disproportionately overrepresented in so many bad outcomes. So it is not just a question of replacing poor housing with better housing; it is also a question of using this as an urban design and urban renewal opportunity. In that context —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Thank you, Minister.

**Mr FOLEY** — You asked me a question —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — I did ask you a question, but it was not about that.

**Mr FOLEY** — about sale. What we are selling is a development right which the state can then return to.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Just get back to the question.

**Mr FOLEY** — In terms of the Kensington estate —

**Ms SHING** — Because you didn't get the answer that you wanted?

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Because the answer the minister is trying to give me is a question for debate —

**Mr FOLEY** — I refer to page 96 —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — but I am talking about the actual cost.

**Ms SHING** — You opened the door to debate, though, by quoting the report incompletely. It is mixed development.

**The CHAIR** — Order, Ms Shing!

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Are you taking a point of order or are you just interjecting?

**Ms SHING** — I'm not even sure they're questions anymore.

**Mr FOLEY** — In terms of the Kensington estate, I refer you to halfway down page 96, where the director of housing responded and the valuer-general's figures. Not that the Kensington estate forms the model for what the PHRP is doing. We have well and truly learned from earlier examples; this is a development rights sale and indeed the final sale price was \$6 million —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — So, Minister, my question is: what was the costing —

**Mr FOLEY** — as opposed to the assertion of 3 million.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — What was the costing that the government did? You said yes. You answered my question yes. What was the costing of the total revamp in your project?

**Mr FOLEY** — I might ask the director of housing to give that ballpark figure, but the state is building much better housing with much better financial outcomes as a result of this process.

**Mr FOA** — Through you, Chair, the advice I gave to the upper house inquiry was that the 185 million will grow to about 900 million worth of stock by this model, whereas if you replaced it, just used the 185 million to replace the housing that there —

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Thank you, Mr Foa. If you have that information, could you supply to the committee?

**Mr FOA** — Certainly.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — Thank you.

**Ms SHING** — I would like to continue along the lines of what was being discussed with Mr O'Brien and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan. In relation to the work, we have seen, as you noted in your presentation, an increase in homelessness across the board. I think the census has increased in 2016 that appears to be replicated in Victoria and not so much New South Wales, despite the fact that their numbers are higher. Taking you to budget paper 3, page 73, I would like to get a sense of the implementation of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Plan and how that will actually in practice, on a day-to-day level — again, at a granular level — assist people who are most in need, and how it will actually address and reduce homelessness over time because there is such a long tail in this particular issue of social policy and the way in which funding then takes time to bed down. Also, if you can, in answering this, talk us through how this will be addressed beyond just the CBD, which is an area which gets a lot of attention, a lot of focus and a lot of media, often I think at the expense of broader areas across the suburbs and indeed the state.

**Mr FOLEY** — Thank you. Without going back through the census figures that we have already addressed, the rough sleeping action plan in particular as part of the homelessness package seeks to make sure that we establish, as one part, the six to nine sites that are being developed through the Towards Home program, but more importantly they seek to engage wider than the CBD, as you have indicated. The \$9 million for six supportive housing teams was one of the key factors there, and this was six teams that will target the state's major hotspots and deliver targeted, assertive outreach support to go and engage directly with rough sleepers and make sure that with the housing agencies, given the earlier investments, that people can get housed — housed in different ways, not necessarily in social and public housing, but in crisis housing, supported private sector rental housing.

Those programs are being rolled out, and they come on top of a \$4.5 million package of therapeutic services for those crisis locations where those rough sleepers are then engaged with. There is then the rapid housing initiative, which has a focus on family violence survivors, where we have been beyond our expectations successful in engaging over 106 different accommodation units spread throughout all of metropolitan and regional Victoria in a pepper and salt kind of way so as to be indistinguishable from the wider community that they are a part of. That was a \$13 million program.

In terms of how that then works, we would expect that all of that \$109 million package, which I know from talking to the newly elected Lord Mayor is one of her priorities — she makes the point that people do not become homeless in the CBD; they end up homeless in the CBD — is to re-engage people back in their communities and their services. We would expect 19 000 people over the course of this budget cycle to be in a position where they engage with these services, be they rough sleeping or homelessness services, to keep people engaged locally and to keep people engaged in a way that keeps them out of the wider homelessness and housing circuit.

**Ms SHING** — How does that fit in with the assertive outreach teams and modular units, then? You have indicated that there is a process associated with getting people out of homelessness after identifying that they are there in the first place, but what is the process whereby those connections are made and those improved trajectories for homeless people are realised?

**Mr FOLEY** — It varies. There is no one path into homelessness. In terms of identifying, if you like, the point of origin, targeted assistance for veterans, for instance, is going to be different to targeted engagement for young people or indeed those exiting prison or Indigenous people or those leaving state care or those with mental health challenges. In that kind of regard how those assertive programs find people and then link back to the relevant service specialist — if it is a specialist, or a generalist provision — is how that would occur. In terms of at least dealing with the issues where they occur in the suburbs and the regions, that is a particular different set of challenges again. That is why as part of this \$19 million building on last year's budget cycle the hotspots that I have identified for these outreach services are not just in the CBD; it is in the City of Yarra, the City of Port Phillip, the Dandenong community, Frankston, Maroondah, Swan Hill, Geelong, Warrnambool, Ballarat and Bendigo, all of which data shows act as specific kinds of communities, some hidden, some not so hidden, that attract increasing concentrations of — sometimes invisible concentrations, but nonetheless there — arrangements.

What we want to make sure of is that the services and the support are back in communities closest to the point of origin where people come from on the basis that that will then assist a re-engagement with mainstream community, and through that training, support, education and a holistic approach that wraps around people the services they need, which is why, whether it is family violence or mental health or disabilities indeed, you have got that flexible package approach that not just houses someone, not just puts a roof over their head, but also gives them the opportunity to re-engage. Once they have dealt with the causes of their homelessness and generally the trauma that goes with that, there are opportunities to then re-engage. When that happens we hope to keep them out of the wider homelessness and housing system.

**Ms SHING** — On that point, Minister, you have referred to overwhelmingly women and children who are victims and survivors of family violence. In budget paper 3, page 73, there is a reference to after-hours refuge responses for victims of family violence, and this is a clear nexus with the royal commission's findings. What are the investments, how do they relate to the redevelopment of refuges under the directing of housing's existing projects table and what is the work to interface that with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women within this particular cohort?

**Mr FOLEY** — Thanks for that. In this budget, the 18–19 budget, we are investing a further 27.7 million for those 24/7 responses for up to 12 refuges across Victoria so that 24/7 opportunity to engage is there. That builds on the successful trial of an initial eight that was funded through the initial \$152 million 2016 family violence housing blitz. In terms of how that then links into the particular needs of over-represented communities, one of which is Indigenous women, two of the refuge upgrades will be particularly targeted to Indigenous women in our regional communities.

**Ms SHING** — And by targeted to those particular women, what does —

**Mr FOLEY** — Delivered by and in consultation with Aboriginal-controlled organisations.

**Ms SHING** — So control and self-determination are at the heart of the provision of those services?

**Mr FOLEY** — Indeed.

**Ms SHING** — Okay, thank you very much for that, Minister. I would also like to go back to the discussion we had on fire upgrades and public housing towers across metropolitan Melbourne. This was mentioned in brief in relation to questions from Mr O'Brien and also questions at the outset. Sprinklers and smoke detection and smoke separation barriers are all a really important part of making sure that we keep those buildings safe and minimise the risk to public safety. It is a really significant investment of funds. I think BP3, page 86, is the reference. When will tenants first see upgrades to their homes, and what does this look like in common areas?

**Mr FOLEY** — In short, they already are. The two high-rise towers in South Melbourne and Fitzroy that were the locations of the fires that kicked this program off are already seeing that work commence. The others will have that rolled out over the forward projections, and we will see 44 high-rise public towers dealt with through this program.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Minister, just going back to what Ms Shing was talking about on communal family violence refuges, you said there were a further 12 funded in this budget, building on eight previously. I thought there were 17 previously announced. Can you just clarify? Are there 20 in total?

**Ms PEAKE** — There were 17 support and safety hubs that were announced, but the refuges are the numbers the minister has provided.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — So eight previously have had a trial, and another 12 are funded in this year's budget?

**Mr FOLEY** — Refuges. Refuges are separate from the hubs.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Right.

**Mr FOLEY** — The hubs are holistic, all-of-government and indeed all-of-community support services — Victoria Police, legal aid and family violence response. The refuges are separate again —

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Somewhere to live.

**Mr FOLEY** — built around the hub and core model so as to be accessible and hopefully invisible in terms of their location in communities.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Yes. Budget paper 4, page 108, has a note that says that the completion date has been extended due to difficulties with locating suitable sites. Can you explain what those difficulties are?

**Mr FOLEY** — I might seek some advice, but this is the refuges we are talking about?

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Yes.

**Mr FOLEY** — Yes. So we have announced some sites — not specifically because there are obviously security issues that go with the locations — and we are in the process of finalising others. In terms of at least specifics for some of the difficulties, I might throw to the secretary.

**Ms PEAKE** — I will start, and Mr Foa might want to make a few comments as well. There are a couple of things that were really important in the development of this. The first and most important one was just getting the design right, as opposed to the site right, and there was a lot of work that was done with the actual victim survivor advisory group and people who had used the refuges before to say, 'As we move to a core and cluster model, what do its features need to be?'. How do you make sure that it is going to work best for people? How does the central support fit with the individual units? How do we make sure that we have got therapeutic play areas? If there are, to your earlier question, families with young children, how do we make sure that this accommodation works? Then the second really important security and safety issue around the location of the sites was making sure that they would be, frankly, in places where they were not going to be readily identifiable and therefore would be safe places for women to go, and so those first four sites have been secured, as the minister said, and work is happening.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — So the first four sites, did you say? Can I ask, Secretary — obviously not identifying where — can you tell me the breakdown of the 20 refuges and where they will be by region?

**Ms PEAKE** — I am happy to take that on notice.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — If you could provide that on notice, that would be good. Also, perhaps a question back to the minister: of those areas, what are the priority ones for the government?

**Mr FOLEY** — Well, it is driven by data and demand. For instance, we did announce one in Morwell publicly because, sadly, the valley and the region has continued to be a particular area of demand in this space, but you can be assured that they are all driven by the response based on data.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Perhaps, Secretary, if you can give me the refuges via region and whether there is a time line for each one, if you have one.

**Ms PEAKE** — What I can say is that the vast majority will be redevelopments of existing locations. I think there is one site that is completely new, but most of them are redevelopments. The royal commission really strongly indicated that the model that was out there at the moment really was not best practice, and so we are moving to this core and cluster model. So it will be the footprint that is there now, and I am certainly very happy to take it on notice. I just want to make sure that in the information we provide we do not compromise any of that for safety.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Of course. I am very happy to have it simply by department or region. That it would be fine.

Minister, just moving on, in January this year I am sure you were aware of the reports that Park Towers in your own electorate of Albert Park was described as being horror housing where tenants live in constant fear because of the dangerous activities that occur on a daily basis. Have you received any advice about Victoria Police seeking to locate a police station on the actual site of the Park Towers development?

**Mr FOLEY** — Park Towers is a 1970s 30-storey tower, the largest single building that I think the director of housing has on his books, home to over 3000 people. I did notice an FOI reported in the media recently that had indicated that whilst there continue to be a large number of police call-outs to that site by any measure — we are talking about 3000 people, a large concentration of people, many of them with very complex issues — I was pleased to see that that figure had been coming down year on year since 2013–14.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — So, that is the figure of police call-outs?

**Mr FOLEY** — I also noticed that within about 400 metres of Park Towers is the South Melbourne police station. That police station has been there for over 80 years, thereby making it probably, of all of our public housing estates, one of the most accessible to Victoria Police.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — So can I just go back to the question? Are you aware of any plans by police to establish a station at Park Towers?

**Mr FOLEY** — Well, I am not the Minister for Police, so I would not be aware.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — No, but presumably if they were planning to, Minister, it would be something that the minister for housing would also be aware of, let alone the local member.

**Mr FOLEY** — And in my regular meetings with both South Melbourne and Port Phillip policing districts, that issue of Victoria Police seeking to establish a police station at Park Towers has never been raised by me or Victoria Police.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Are you concerned about security at that site?

**Mr FOLEY** — Not only am I concerned, after a process of consultation with staff and with tenants, led by my department and which I had the privilege of participating in, we are actually funding the expansion of security services at the site. The site, because it is a 1970s site with four different entry points, currently has 12-hour security at night. The trouble, then, with that site is it cannot view all the entrances at once. Whilst it has CCTV and other arrangements on the ground floor, its tenants quite rightly pointed to the fact that there needed to be some physical changes to the entry space that made sure that not only would any expanded security deliver line of sight to all entrances, but it would also be properly located when it came to the lifts. Because of course in a 30-storey building the lifts are obviously the main point of entry and exit from the site.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Minister, is that expanded security going to 24 hours now?

**Mr FOLEY** — Yes, indeed. The tenants were very pleased some months ago. So despite the inaccuracies that we might see in some journals that come out on a daily basis, the truth of the matter is that as a result of consultation with staff, with the department and with the tenants themselves leading the process, we were very pleased to announce this some months ago, and work has already begun on both the design and the location, and on some of the physical changes that we needed on the site as part of that change. That is funded in this year's budget.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — When will it go to 24-hour security, or has it already?

**Mr FOLEY** — It has gone already. Those changes we talked about about the design and the location of the security unit need to be put in place, but it would be my expectation in line with the meeting that we had with tenants that we would see the design finalised. Indeed, my understanding is that it might well be finalised, and that then would see contracts let and then construction would begin, I would certainly hope, in this calendar year.

**Mr D. O'BRIEN** — Can I just quickly move on. Budget paper 3, page 80, talks about delivering on the state disability plan by:

expanding the changing places program to create 11 new, fully-accessible public toilets and changing facilities ...

This is still fairly inadequate, given the number of people who require changing place facilities. Minister, could you give me an idea of what your sustainable long-term solution is for people who have high support needs and require these sorts of facilities?

**Mr FOLEY** — I am quite proud of our substantial ramping up of this program, because it addresses the needs of —

**The CHAIR** — Order! Ms Patten until 3.15 p.m.

**Ms PATTEN** — Just a quick follow-up on the public housing renewal program, and noting that with Markham estate there were 60 new social housing dwellings and approximately 180 private dwellings as part of that mix. I accept the salt-and-pepper mix and I accept PPPs, done well. I was just wondering if you could clarify a bit further. Throughout the inquiry we talked about a 10 per cent increase in public housing, but I also noted that there was some movement in that in looking at the tendering process — that those tenders that could offer a greater proportion of social housing may be looked upon favourably. Is that a condition of the tender process that you would look at what sort of increases could be provided?

**Mr FOLEY** — Thanks for that question. Just to use Markham as an example, the dominant coalition in the Legislative Council has knocked Markham's planning approval off; that has knocked off a set of outcomes that would have seen over 31 per cent of the units there — not 10 per cent; a 31 per cent increase in social housing units delivered up there, together with a further 34.5 per cent of affordable housing targeting first home buyers, an arrangement which would have then seen 34.5 per cent private housing. That is roughly one-third each, with two-thirds being that.

In terms of the requirements, because it is a development right as opposed to the sale directly of land, can we lever the value of these arrangements to not just replace better housing but can we get a better social and community mix outcome rather than the perpetuation of an almost apartheid system of housing in some of these communities?

**Ms PATTEN** — I appreciate that and I certainly think that we have seen this overseas, and there are lots of different models. One of the models that has been presented to me is the build-to-rent model that we are seeing in Europe. Is that something that the department is actively considering? I know it would require some legislative changes outside your department.

**Mr FOLEY** — That is a very good question, and when we talk about innovation in responses and if we are going to be serious about making sure that we as a society address affordable points of housing in the private sector areas with big institutional players, providing that they are in areas close to jobs, education et cetera, then these sites pose real opportunities. I might ask the director, within the bounds that he can comment, because he has been involved in this as opposed to me, because of probity arrangements, specifically to address the build-to-rent issue.

**Mr FOA** — Innovation was the key requirement in our market process, and that could be innovation in terms of partners, in terms of management models or in terms of design, ESD outcomes and all of those sorts of things. We have sought innovation, and I have been very pleased with the market's response to that at this point in time. I probably cannot talk about the individual structures of each of the proposals, but suffice it to say that the range of partners — community and private — and funders and financiers are coming forward with very innovative proposals.

**The CHAIR** — I would like to thank the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, the Honourable Martin Foley, MP; Ms Peake; Mr Foa; Ms Asquini; Mr Symonds; Mr Stenton; Ms Williams; Ms Ferrier; Ms Galloway; Mr Fiske; and Ms Toomey. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing. A written response should be provided within 10 business days of that request.

**Witnesses withdrew.**