

VERIFIED VERSION

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Budget Estimates 2016–17

Melbourne — 19 May 2016

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Witnesses

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

Ms Kym Peake, Secretary,

Mr Lance Wallace, Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services, and

Mr Nick Foa, Deputy Secretary, Sport and Recreation, Infrastructure, International Engagement, and Director Of Housing, Department of Health and Human Services; and

Ms Rebecca Falkingham, Deputy Secretary, Social Policy and Service Delivery Reform, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The CHAIR — I declare open the public hearings for the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee inquiry into the 2016–17 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, Department of Health and Human Services; Mr Lance Wallace, Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services; Mr Nick Foa, Deputy Secretary, Sport and Recreation, Infrastructure, International Engagement, and Director of Housing; and from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Rebecca Falkingham, Deputy Secretary, Social Policy and Service Delivery Reform.

All evidence is taken by the committee under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Comments made outside the hearing, including on social media, are not afforded such privilege. Witnesses will not be sworn but are requested to answer all questions succinctly, accurately and truthfully. Witnesses found to be giving false or misleading evidence may be in contempt of Parliament and subject to penalty.

Questions from the committee will be asked on a group basis, meaning that specific time has been allocated to members of the government, opposition and crossbench to ask a series of questions in a set amount of time before moving on to the next group. I will advise witnesses who will be asking questions at each segment.

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

All written communication to witnesses must be provided via officers of the PAEC secretariat. Members of the public gallery cannot participate in the committee's proceedings in any way and cannot photograph, audio record or videorecord any part of these proceedings. Members of the media must remain focused only on the person speaking. Any filming and recording must cease immediately at the completion of the hearing.

I will now 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.

Visual presentation.

Mr FOLEY — Thank you, Chair, and can I thank the committee for the privilege of reporting to you on the 16–17 budget as it relates to the portfolio responsibilities in housing, disability and ageing. If I could just briefly in the allotted time perhaps talk members through the handout that you have there and that appears on the screen.

From this portfolio's perspective, the 16–17 budget very much focuses on four themes, those being our aspects of the whole-of-government response to the immediate actions that we need to take on the greatest community and community safety issue confronting us as a government — that is, our response on family violence. Related to that but also separately, in its own right, is how we deliver housing, particularly social and community housing as a component of a much wider housing equation, and deliver on the areas of both housing and crisis refuges for vulnerable Victorians. Perhaps incredibly significantly would be the now imminent rollout of the national disability insurance scheme and the prospects that that holds out for over 100 000 Victorians, who carry the burden unfairly and suffer too much stigma and discrimination in our community, with acute disabilities. And finally, supporting our older Victorians.

Moving to the second slide, just as a very general snapshot, the increase from the last budget to this in terms of the housing investment aspects of the portfolio see us leap with a 21.9 per cent increase in funding from the last budget to this. That is made up of many issues which I will respond to in more detail shortly. But the key element of that is the immediate two-year down payment of \$152 million in assets and outputs regarding the housing blitz, largely centred around the aspects of responding to family violence.

On the third slide in the presentation, Chair, you will see the highlighted figures of those: \$50 million for immediate delivery over this coming year for new social housing dwellings; \$21 million for family violence refuges and their modernisation; 25 million for new and upgraded forms of crisis accommodation; 16 million to have a much more central focus on how we can access private sector rental accommodation as part of the housing equation in this space; \$40 million for individual packages for people responding to family violence

and related issues, obviously with an element of housing support; some capital upgrades for rooming houses; the delivery of our election commitment for the Homes for Homes campaign, which was foreshadowed in *Labor's Financial Statement* as to be timed for this budget, which it is; and finally, a \$4.5 million contribution to the Kangan youth foyer in Broadmeadows.

If I could move to the next budget slide, Chair, in the area of disability, without doubt the specialist disability areas of the rollout of the NDIS is a huge program, not just big in terms of scale and the number of people it will affect, not just big in terms of the dollars, but the huge change it will mean to the culture of how community and social services are delivered right across the country. I do not think the wider community, let alone areas of the sector, have yet to come to grips with just how massive the changes that will be rolling out over the next three years will be.

That is why our continued delivery of the 2013 national agreement and the 2015 bilateral agreement with the commonwealth are so important. That is why with an almost 10 per cent increase on last's budget, with a specific \$30 million increase in this area of output and capital, is particularly important as we get ready for the staged rollout, which starts in the north-eastern suburbs of Melbourne in a few short weeks.

Just in highlights, that rollout of the NDIS has a few big-ticket items associated with it. The rollout stages, whether it is through allocations of money for community groups, for any number of arrangements, for support for advocacy in a range of areas, also includes an aspect which I am sure has wide support across the Parliament and the community, and that is the closure of the last institutional setting for people with disabilities, the Colanda Residential Services facility outside of Colac. That was a program that clearly had significant support across the Parliament. I am very pleased that after a generation we now seem to be on the verge of closing the last of those institutional congregate care facilities.

It also has funding for the preparatory arrangements for the rollout of the NDIS, particularly for those vulnerable groups of young people, particularly school leavers. As the rollout takes a degree of time across the state, as agreed with the commonwealth, they are a particularly vulnerable set of groups that we would need to make sure are looked after.

There is the fact that we proudly still have a support for the state's ongoing role in disabilities and the legislative obligation to roll out the next state disability plan commencing in 2017. There is funding for the processes that are already well underway for that to happen. There is a capital grant for Vision Australia for the important work that they do.

Just finally, noting the time, Chair, there are the support arrangements. We are again very proud to deliver on our election commitments for particularly older vulnerable Victorians, again in the context of the national agreement from 2013 around the NDIS and related home and community care and other client-centred packages in the aged-care area — all designed to not just have a better, more efficient system of how nationally we respond to these areas but to improve the quality of life, particularly for vulnerable Victorians. There is significant delivery of our commitment around support for public sector metropolitan aged care with the delivery of a \$57 million commitment for a new public sector aged-care facility in Kew; our delivery as promised for an election commitment around culturally appropriate aged care for Melbourne's Chinese community; further support for that home and community services funding area; and \$25 million to support the provision of residential aged-care services right across Victoria.

Whilst that is very much a whistlestop tour, Chair, I am of course here at the committee's disposal with my colleagues from both the Department of Health and Human Services and in the context of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the whole-of-government relationships that we have been having particularly around the rollout of the NDIS.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Minister, for that comprehensive presentation. Now we have got government questions until 9.23 a.m.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Good morning, Minister and officers. I just wanted to start off the questions with budget paper 3, page 17, and specifically in relation to the housing blitz as part of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Can you give us a bit more detail in relation to how the funding will be rolled out and how it will support a cohort of women and children that we are interested in supporting?

Mr FOLEY — Thank you, Mr Dimopoulos. This government knows that housing stress and homelessness are a significant contributing factor to family violence and the issues associated with it, because that is what the family violence royal commission highlighted. That found that family violence is the major reason that women seek assistance from homelessness support services. For many years, the commission rightly pointed out, we as a community have failed to properly and systematically respond to family violence. The first part of that is to recognise, as the commission has and as the government has in its initial response to the commission, and show some leadership in responding to that.

The Premier announced — in fact in this room immediately prior to the budget — an initial two-year \$572 million whole-of-government contribution to that. That is a very significant package, but, as the Premier indicated, that is a first down payment, because of course the royal commission sets a number of standards and obligations on the government having accepted the recommendations. As part of that is the \$152 million initial housing blitz that is referred to across the different areas of the portfolio.

In regard to the budget item that you draw attention to under asset initiatives, that is \$25 million in crisis accommodation and \$21 million in the redevelopment of refuges in the short term, and then for longer term accommodation support to the tune of \$50 million to bring about the delivery of 130 new social housing dwellings; those areas of head leasing that I referred to in the presentation, which is targeted to land in that immediate period, of some 100 dwellings, together with deploying the initiative around the Safe at Home concept, where we want to provide flexible packages built around the individual needs of women and children fleeing family violence or seeking refuge from family violence. It also works as part of the \$16 million private sector rental subsidy.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Minister, if you do not mind, can I ask you specifically: you mentioned just then the redevelopment of the refuges. It is one of the asset initiatives on page 17. Can you give us more detail on what that actually will do?

Mr FOLEY — Indeed I can. Sadly for many women and children staying at home — in the case of family violence and dealing with men who choose violence as an option in that relationship — is not an option. The royal commission showed to us that the current model of refuges, as fantastically supported by so many wonderful community groups and committed people, nonetheless is not meeting the demands on it, and frankly is not up to the standard physically that so many people would come to expect, particularly when it relates to the communal living models that go with it. And that does not respond to the diverse needs that children and women in particular have. It presents particular barriers to diverse families, from people with disability. Sometimes there is sadly an overlay with mental illness and other vulnerabilities that cannot be more appropriately dealt with in those contexts.

The royal commission has proposed what in other jurisdictions have come to be referred to as a core and cluster model. So you have a core of services in the community — discreetly placed, obviously, for this need — that deal with the combined needs of women and children seeking refuge, but you also have around that a cluster of modern facilities. It is our funding proposition here that this funding will enable six refuges to not just be modernised but to be transferred to a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week, delivery of service, and we think that that will make sure that that \$21 million will go some way to phase out, in the very near future, the communal refuges and provide more appropriate and accessible support to those families. Also, this 21 million will be 15 million in assets, and then in terms of support for the organisations delivering the services, 6 million in output over, as we say, the immediate period of the next two years.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Thank you, Minister.

Ms WARD — Good morning, Minister, how are you going? Good morning, everyone. It is good to see people again.

Mr FOLEY — Thank you. Good morning. Are you well?

Ms WARD — I am pretty good.

Mr FOLEY — I am pleased.

Ms WARD — It is the second-last day of PAEC. We are all pretty excited, I can tell you. Minister, you referred to in your presentation the NDIS and its rollout in Victoria in a few weeks and, as I am sure you would imagine, having it roll out from 1 July in Banyule and Nillumbik, being the member for Eltham, we are all pretty excited about what is going to happen in this space, especially my agencies and families and people with disabilities. If I can go to budget paper 3, pages 78 and also 103, where we have the line item ‘Getting ready for the National Disability Insurance Scheme’. Some substantial money has been invested in actually getting the state ready for the NDIS. What steps have been taken by the government with this funding to make sure, particularly in my community, where it is being rolled out in a few weeks, that people are ready, that people understand what the NDIS is, what they are going to receive out of the NDIS and how it is going to move forward?

Mr FOLEY — Thank you for that question. So just to return to basics, the NDIS is a national partnership between different levels of government, particularly the commonwealth and the state. Through the national disability insurance authority, which whilst a commonwealth entity in terms of legislation is funded by all jurisdictions, I think it is fair to say at the moment in terms of the transitional arrangements it is majority funded in this state by the state. So we are in partnership with them. We are also in partnership with the specialist disability organisations — our own substantial contributions to the department in the area — and a range of not-for-profit organisations or non-government organisations who operate in this space. As part of that, when it comes to the rollout schedule, which was agreed between first ministers in Victoria and New South Wales in September of last year, there is a scheduled rollout over the next three years. This year, in a few short weeks, that starts in the north-eastern suburbs of the honourable member’s electorate, amongst others, based on local government areas.

As part of that process there has been extensive support for community organisations, there has been extensive support for transitioning the whole notion that we are going from a system of essentially rationed block funding, that when the funding expires you wait in a queue, and that queue in this area is called the disability support register, or it is called the early childhood intervention services in education and other areas. But essentially it is a queue-based system once the funding ceases. The whole thesis of the NDIS is to change it to an insurance-based model based on need and based on appropriate funding for that. And as we have seen, not without many challenges, in the big geographic trial areas — the Hunter area in New South Wales and the Barwon area in Victoria — queues have ended and thousands of more people are now funded individually to choose the services that they seek to deliver the services and support that they need.

That huge paradigm shift is a massive change, not just first and foremost for people with a disability as they seek to be empowered to be in control of their packages and their lives and seek what all Victorians seek — access to an ordinary life rather than the segregation that so many people with disabilities and their families and their carers have had to endure for many, many decades; it is also a massive change for communities. It is a massive change for the entire service system, and we should not underestimate that. That is why we have got funding both in the last budget and this budget for continued support for that transition of the national disability insurance system. Because it is meant to be a partnership with the commonwealth, we are little disappointed that so far less than half a billion — —

Ms WARD — Minister, thank you very much for answering my question about the NDIS.

Mr FOLEY — I have not finished.

Ms WARD — I know that there are a number of people around the table who do want to talk to you about the NDIS.

Mr FOLEY — Fair enough.

Ms WARD — So what I will ask you to segue to, Minister, if you do not mind, is rooming houses. In Banyule it has been an issue in the past. We have had people die who have been in rooming houses. It can be quite a problem. I see that in budget paper 3, page 89, at the very bottom you have got ‘Housing assistance’ and ‘Rooming house upgrade program’. Could you please explain to the committee how this money is going to be spent and for Victorians who will be in the very unfortunate position of needing a rooming house, what advantage it will give to them?

Mr FOLEY — Yes. The north-eastern area, sadly, in 2006 was a bit of a driver for this when there was a tragic fire in Brunswick, which took the lives of two young people in an unregistered rooming house. The coroner's work and subsequent work since then has seen a whole range of things. There has been consistent legislative change, which has only just come to a final position with the registration processes for operators and owners. This small but significant contribution is to upgrade rooming houses to a legitimate standard, a higher standard, than they have perhaps historically been. Whilst it is not specifically NDIS related, we know that people with disabilities for a whole range of reasons are disproportionately represented in rooming house facilities. That is why this investment for a number of targeted areas — mostly, can I say, in the honourable Chair's electorate — is for facilities to be targeted for an upgrade. With that will go the support, more importantly, for the packages of support for those people.

The CHAIR — Order! Mr O'Brien until 9.34 a.m.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Good morning, Minister. Budget paper 5, page 173 lists the concessions in the state budget and it highlights that there is a \$31 million cut to electricity concessions this year from last year, 165 million down to 134 million, which is about a 19 per cent cut. Given that many of these will be senior citizens on electricity concession cards, why is there such a drastic cut in this concession?

Mr FOLEY — Budget paper 5, page?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Page 173, table 5.5.

Mr FOLEY — Thank you. Of course, as the committee will be aware, the eligibility for these concessions is based on arrangements that flow from our friends at the commonwealth. As we saw in 2014 through arrangements that the commonwealth government was able to get through the Senate in more recent times with changes to a whole range of pension eligibility arrangements there were some fairly savage cuts to pension entitlements and who was entitled to what particular level of commonwealth support. That is the threshold issue that then brings you into eligibility status for a whole range of other supports from both local and state government. It is my understanding — and I might seek assistance from Mr Wallace on the specifics in terms of its flow-on — is that the figures that the honourable member refers to are a direct flow-on as a result of the reduced number of people on commonwealth pension arrangements that then has an impact on the Victorian delivery of service.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — From the 2014 federal changes?

Mr FOLEY — There was, as you might recall and as I understand it, some difficulty from the commonwealth government's point of view in getting arrangements through the Senate and the changes to the pension eligibility were finally announced in the 15–16 arrangements and then finally flowed through into how we have projected these budgets going forward. In terms of specific detail, with the Chair's indulgence, I might ask Mr Wallace to — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I think, Minister, that probably answers it. I am happy. Mr Wallace may be needed for the next one, which is: as you know, the former coalition government stepped in and provided assistance to meet the gap from the cut in the federal concessions; why is your government not doing that as well? Why is your government not stepping in to assist with the changes?

Mr FOLEY — I am advised that there are no changes to the processes in the government's arrangements that we inherited from the former government and that we have continued them in full. Again, I seek assistance from my friend Mr Wallace, but that is certainly my understanding. Should I be incorrect in that, which I do not think I am, I would seek further guidance, with the indulgence of the Chair.

The CHAIR — Mr O'Brien, are you happy for Mr Wallace to provide a further response on this matter?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I do not think I have a choice in this case, but yes, that is fine.

The CHAIR — You do.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — The minister can still direct to a public servant, but not vice versa.

Mr WALLACE — I would just add a couple of points to those made by the minister. The first is that there has been no entitlement change. The second point is that the concessions program is an entitlement, an uncapped program, so it is based on eligibility. There has been no change in eligibility, so all of those who are entitled to a concession — people who have applied for a concession and meet the current unchanged eligibility — will receive a concession. The reduction in the budget is just based on the estimates that we believe and some reductions that will occur in concessions because of the reasons the minister talked about, the federal policy changes.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Sorry. Were the federal policy changes not due to eligibility changes? Maybe I misunderstood. I thought that was what the minister said.

Mr WALLACE — The state has made no changes to its policy. Its policy is to provide concessions based on pension decisions made by the federal government.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Minister, you said, if I heard you correctly, that you have made no changes to the previous government's arrangements. My question is: if there is a reduction in the amount of money going to concession card holders, why will you not step in and meet the gap, as the previous government did?

Mr FOLEY — Because there is no gap. I am obviously — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Sorry, there is a \$31 million cut.

Mr FOLEY — No, there is no cut. It is an uncapped system whereby anyone who is eligible — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — So someone is going to miss out. What I am asking — —

Mr FOLEY — If I could finish my answer.

Ms WARD — If it is uncapped, there cannot be a gap.

The CHAIR — Order! Ms Ward! The minister is answering the member's question.

Mr FOLEY — This is a system that has flowed on directly from the arrangements that were in place from the former government at the state level. Eligible commonwealth entitlement gets you into the system. Entitlements then are uncapped at the Victorian level, for a whole range of supports and concessions. The commonwealth, through their changes, determined and narrowed the application of that eligibility status, not the Victorian government. Sadly, that saw many vulnerable Victorians taken off the various threshold levels that get you into the commonwealth pension system, thereby having an impact on Victoria's concession system.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — So my question is: why will you not step in and fill the gap?

Mr FOLEY — I reject the notion that there is a cut. Anyone who is eligible for the system gets the concession. It is an uncapped entitlement.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Minister, in addition to this 19 per cent cut in the money actually going to concession card holders, we have got a tripling of the tax on electricity, which the industry has said will flow through to power bills and we have got an increase in the fire services levy, all of which will drive up household costs, particularly for our aged cohort of society, so what is the budget providing to assist pensioners with the cost of living?

Mr FOLEY — In terms of the portfolio responsibilities that I have, there is a significant increase through the application of the 2013 national agreements signed by the former coalition government at the Victorian level, which will see a massive increase in Victoria's contribution to home and community care via the commonwealth partnership, with the commonwealth taking over responsibilities there and Victoria contributing over \$2.5 billion through the national disability insurance scheme. A substantial increase in investment in — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I am talking about the cost of living for individuals, Minister.

Ms SHING — The minister is answering your question.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — No, he is not. We are talking about how can a NDIS — —

Mr FOLEY — Over 105 000 Victorians will be eligible for the NDIS, and an even higher figure than that — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — No, that is disability, Minister. I am talking about aged pensioners.

Mr FOLEY — An even higher figure than that when it comes to people over 65 — and there is a whole range of pensioners, not just aged-care pensioners — who are entitled to a whole range of entitlements through the concession schemes that the Victorian government runs in an uncapped manner. Anyone is entitled to those arrangements in the portfolio responsibilities that I share with my friend Minister Mikakos between us in the Department of Health and Human Services, whether they be municipal rates. There is a whole range of different supports that once you are eligible, in eligibility terms determined by the commonwealth, you will get that support. So I reject the notion at the heart of your question that there is somehow a cut to their services.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — There is a decrease in that support; that is what I am asking. There is a decrease in that support, whether it is commonwealth or not, and you are not filling the gap. That is what I am asking you.

Minister, I might move on to budget paper 3, page 229. With respect to seniors programs and participation, there is a \$2 million cap between the expected outcome and the 16–17 target, and it refers in the note to this being a result of 'changes in the estimated carryover'. Can you explain what that is?

Mr FOLEY — Again I am happy to perhaps jointly with the national disability insurance authority provide a briefing to the committee, because this is a direct flow from the rollout of the 2013 national disability insurance scheme arrangements, whereby a whole range of responsibilities transferred to the commonwealth, amongst them this particular area, progressively, over the next few years, and a whole range of responsibilities transferred to the state — now when I say, 'transferred to the commonwealth', they transferred to the national disability insurance scheme and to the various other commonwealth delivery of the over-65 arrangements — continue to be paid for by the Victorian government and the Victorian taxpayer.

What you are reflecting on here is a consequence of the service delivery changes that flow through both aged and home and community care support and the client-driven individual packages arrangements for the over-65 members of our community and at the same time the substantial investments that the Victorian government makes in both that area and through the national disability insurance authority for people under 65. That is a direct area that flows from the 2013 intergovernmental agreements being delivered on and reflects a huge increase in overall community and different levels of governments' increasing support in that area.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Can you explain the estimated carryover? Is that where you are saying this is? That is what the explanation — —

The CHAIR — Order! Ms Pennicuik until 9.45 a.m.

Ms PENNICUIK — Good morning, Minister, Secretary, and everybody else that is here from the departments. Thank you for coming today. I know some of you have been here several times already, so thank you for coming again. All the time and effort that you put into coming to these hearings is much appreciated.

Minister, if I could just turn to the housing portfolio, I have been looking through the different announcements about housing. For example, on page 256 of budget paper 3, total social housing dwellings acquired during the year is 640, but there is also the 180 new units of crisis accommodation under the family violence package. Then there is the 130 new social housing properties, as a first stage leasing up to 100 privately owned dwellings. With all these figures, I just want you to comment on how they all interrelate. If you look at page 255, the total number of social housing dwellings will increase from 85 386 to 85 524, which is an increase of 138. I am just wondering how the 640 and the 138 all fit together and if you could explain that for the benefit of the committee and the general community.

Mr FOLEY — Thank you for that question. The whole area of investment in social housing is a major focus for this portfolio, and you cannot deal with the areas of social housing without understanding the context in which this has come from. As the family violence royal commission pointed to, between 2010 and 2014 over \$330 million was taken out of the Victorian system of social and community housing, over that period of time. As the 2015 Productivity Commission on the report of government services indicated, by the time you then add

further commonwealth reductions in this space over that same period of time, that figure rises in Victoria to over \$440 million.

We are coming from a very long way back when it comes to investment and support for community and social housing. As the Auditor-General has rightly pointed out in a number of reports, that then puts enormous pressure on not just those communities of the 165 000 excellent people who make up Victoria's public housing communities but it also places huge pressure on ageing assets — assets that are not perhaps as well configured as they should be to current demographic demand. So that is why we were very pleased that in this budget we could start to undo that damage. Just like any renovation process, by the time you do the consultation, the planning and the delivery, we get to a very sadly time-consuming but now underway process.

But as important as social housing delivery is and needs to be a central part of that equation, that is why one of the challenges that the family violence royal commission set us was a housing task force response to that. Whereas, yes, we need to build and deliver more social housing, we also need to reimagine the way in which we deliver those services of housing to not just women and children fleeing family violence but as one of the lenses of vulnerable people who seek access to crisis and transition housing and how that then works —

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Minister. You have been talking for more than three minutes now, and I understand everything you are saying. I do want to get to the reconciliation of the figures. If you add up the 640, the 180 and the 130, that is 950. That figure on the total increase is only 138, so I am just trying to get back to the nub of that discrepancy in the figures.

Mr FOLEY — I will ask, with the committee's indulgence, my friend the newly appointed director of housing, Mr Foa, for some support in terms of the specific details.

Ms PENNICUIK — That would be wonderful.

Mr FOLEY — But rest assured that there is an overall increase not just in the period that we are talking about but going forward for social housing units in Victoria as well as an increase in the mechanisms via which other forms of housing can be brought into this area.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Minister, if we could hear from Mr Foa then, and maybe the difference between public housing and social housing would be useful too, thank you.

Mr FOLEY — Even I can answer that one, because social housing is a broader term that encompasses both public housing and community housing.

Ms PENNICUIK — I understand that. I am just wondering about how many of these particular units and the numbers we have got here are going to be public, how many will be social and the discrepancy about those figures that I have just pointed to.

Mr FOLEY — As I indicated, with the committee's indulgence I might seek the assistance in terms of specifics from the director of housing.

Mr FOA — Broadly at the start if I can just say that there is sometimes a lag with the disposal and acquisition numbers, so it is not simply a case of adding the new income into the existing, because the stock numbers float during a particular year, so if I can just caveat my comments with that opening remark. The 640 does include the family violence initiatives — they are not on top of the 640, so they are in the 640. We are also hoping to do some of the head leasing in this financial year, so that throws out the figures for next financial year.

In regard to which elements will be public housing, as in owned and managed by the director, or social housing broadly — managed by the broader sector — we are working with the housing associations to determine their participation in particularly the head leasing and the spot purchase programs.

Mr FOLEY — We are working through that through a recommended consultative process that the royal commission put to us, and I am pleased to say that the first meeting of that group was held yesterday, chaired by a council for homeless people person, and I am sure that on its very ambitious work plan that that group is setting itself these and other issues relating to the provision of more support in housing will be provided not just

to families seeking secure housing in the face of family violence but to all of the 32 000 people on the Victorian public housing waiting list.

Ms PENNICUIK — Thank you, Minister, I am glad you went to that. Even on the calculation of the 640 houses or housing properties, that is 50 people per property if you look at 32 000 on the waiting list, so there is still a great deal. I am appreciative of the work that is being done, but it is still a very large number there. You are saying there is an average time of 10.5 months for people on the waiting list. That is more a comment than a question.

If I could turn to the social housing advocacy and support program, which was cut a couple of years ago, not by your government, one of the outcomes of that has been an increase in evictions from about 185, which is a lot, in 2010–11 to 363 at the last figures for 2013–14. Your government has said that it would reinstate that program, which assists people who are falling behind to be able to avoid eviction. Could you say whether you are going to be reinstating that program?

Mr FOLEY — I thank you for that question. Our policy and platform arrangements that we took to the 2014 election did not make that commitment.

Ms PENNICUIK — Commitments have been made in public statements, though.

Mr FOLEY — There is a bit of a myth perpetrated by some that that was the case. Having said that, the SHASP program was an excellent program for its time in terms of how you go about supporting and grounding vulnerable tenants who are having difficulty paying various arrangements to sustain their tenancy in a whole range of areas, not just rent. Its disappearance was a great disappointment to many. How that set of issues gets dealt with and how we make sure that vulnerable tenants who are having difficulty maintaining their tenancy are dealt with is a very fraught issue but one which, through a more integrated approach of service delivery of all the arms of the Department of Health and Human Services support, together with the supports from civic communities right across the state for those vulnerable Victorians, reflects that.

Ms PENNICUIK — Minister, the last figures that I have show that jump from 185 evictions to 363. I do not know what the figure is for 15–16, but maybe the department has those. I would be very interested to know whether that number of evictions has gone up or down since 13–14 — so 14–15 and 15–16 — and what the government is doing about that in the absence of that program.

Mr FOLEY — I do not have those figures on hand, but I will undertake through the normal mechanisms of the committee to provide those to the secretariat. But in terms of how support for people seeking to maintain their tenancies in difficult circumstances for them personally or their families, as the case may be, this government believes that they have the same rights as other tenants covered by the Residential Tenancies Act. It was disappointing in that respect to see the more punitive proposal from the commonwealth in their most recent budget, seeking to link compulsory rent deductions only for public tenants. That is not a path that we intend to go down. We intend to go down a path of making sure that support for people having difficulty in sustaining their tenancies deals with the causes of why they are having difficulty maintaining their tenancies.

The CHAIR — Order! Ms Ward until 9.56 a.m.

Ms WARD — Thank you, Chair. Minister, I will go back to where we were before the clock cut you off, which was referring to rooming houses, back to budget paper 3, page 89, and the rooming house upgrade program. You were starting to tell us about how this money was going to be spent and how it would be invested in helping people who do have to, unfortunately, live in rooming houses.

Mr FOLEY — Thank you for that. The rooming house upgrade, 10 million, will seek to move away in the nominated properties from that same, inappropriate in 2016, shared and sometimes inappropriate for a whole range of reasons from personal safety through to just not meeting building standards — —

Ms WARD — If you could just explore a little bit what is deemed inappropriate.

Mr FOLEY — As a result of legislative changes and regulation changes following from 2010, 2013 and legislation this year, we will see requirements for all rooming houses to introduce really, really basic things like locks on doors, locks on bathrooms and making sure that there are cooking facilities for people in those areas. We need to make sure that when you are dealing with a group of people — not exclusively, but

disproportionately, who are represented in rooming houses as a legitimate, if it is done properly, form of housing for people who are coming from whether rough sleeping, whether it is exiting the justice and corrections system or any number of other pathways in and out — they are dealt with in what you would like to think is a respectful manner that makes sure that we assist them in the regulatory side, in the capital investment side, to start to rebuild their lives, as well as in the process of that having access, should they seek to avail themselves of it, to further support into more appropriate housing if that is what they are seeking.

As we have established, as was established for us through the family violence royal commission, whether it is a disproportionate number of women in particular seeking immediate refuge in crisis housing, sometimes — —

Ms WARD — Not when it is women with children.

Mr FOLEY — Absolutely. They have no choice in the current system other than to seek an immediate roof over their head, sometimes in inappropriate private-sector rooming houses. It is either that or a motel or the car or any number of other even worse options. So when we are confronted with those stark choices, this is a modest but a further investment in the capital side of that but understanding that these are for-profit sometimes and sometimes community sector-provided facilities, and there is also the leverage that we can bring through this investment to upgrade many of these facilities.

Ms WARD — How have you been informed in this? How have you come to these decisions? What is your own history and what is your knowledge of this area?

Mr FOLEY — I have the honour of representing an inner urban community that has a very large number of rooming houses and I have personal experience of many of them, but in the period 2009–10 I had the privilege of chairing the then government's Rooming House Standards Taskforce, which through extensive consultation and processes, and in direct engagement with people with lived experience of rooming houses, was well and truly aware of these issues. I was pleased to see that whilst it took time all of those recommendations in terms of standards, and particularly the standards for people who both operate and deliver the services of private-sector rooming houses, have now been delivered. It is also a question of not just the physical standards but the management standards of many of those facilities that we have most importantly now a fit and proper person test for those private-sector — —

Ms WARD — Minister, you have spoken about micro ways of helping people, such as with putting in locks, making sure that there are cooking areas and so on, but in terms of broader support for people who are living in rooming houses who are incredibly vulnerable, what is the government doing to help them in a broader sense, because obviously you do not want people staying in rooming houses forever.

Mr FOLEY — That might be my view of the world, and I suspect most people's views of the world, that this is not an appropriate long-term form of housing.

Ms WARD — Indeed.

Mr FOLEY — However, there are many people who quite legitimately, if it is a safe, accredited, registered rooming house, see that as a legitimate form of tenancy. Subject to a whole range of conditions, that is a position that should form part of the rich ecology of housing choices for us, but that does not mean that people should at the same time be exposed to badly run, unregistered and sometimes crooked arrangements where, in terms of the housing affordability problems that we have as a community, there is a market segment for this.

Sadly, that market segment has evolved. For instance, now we see increasing reports of overseas students being subject to this kind of inappropriate activity and, whilst we will make sure that the regulatory arrangements, which are a partnership between state and local government, are enforced, this is a modest support for us in the capital arrangements. But we do it — for instance, in one case I am aware of in my own community with St Kilda Community Housing — in partnership with that organisation on the basis that they bring other wraparound services particular to those vulnerable people, and invariably that will be issues around alcohol and drugs, mental health, family violence and a range of other vulnerabilities that affect people's income, affect people's lifestyle and make rooming houses an available but limited choice for them. So it is not just capital, you are quite right. It is also services and support for people to make sure that the inappropriate nature of rooming houses is dealt with in such a way as to make them appropriate, modern and of a standard that is now

legislated and regulated for, but brings with it the obligation that there should be further service support for those people who need it.

Ms SHING — Thanks, Minister, for your evidence this morning and for your presentation as well. I would like to deal with the issue of public sector aged care in Kew, if I may, and take you to budget paper 3, page 89, and in particular the line item ‘Modernisation of metropolitan Melbourne public sector residential aged care’. This is a pretty significant investment of funds. It is a big boost, and I think it may be something we have not seen in quite some time. What is the history of this specific investment in relation to the location and the timing of funding, and what is it designed to achieve as far as gaps and shortcomings in the public sector aged-care environment in this part of Melbourne?

Mr FOLEY — Thank you for the question. Public sector provision of aged care in Victoria has long been a stand-out compared to the rest of the nation. We well and truly punch above our weight compared with other jurisdictions, and I think we provide well over 10 per cent of aged-care facilities more generally. That is particularly the case in regional and rural Victoria where, with an odd difference, there has been largely a bipartisan position for some years that support for public sector provision of aged care in regional and rural communities is an important part of sustaining not just the people who seek those support and services in their own communities but the actual delivery of wider health services in those communities.

When it comes to metropolitan Melbourne, sadly, there is not the shared ground on a bipartisan position with this. Members might recall that in the run-up to the 2014 election the then government had a well and truly underway program of seeking to close and sell off some of the public sector aged care that was attached to health services in metropolitan Melbourne. That was on the back of 2013 commonwealth changes introducing a much wider market approach.

Ms SHING — How does that fit with commonwealth cuts to funding in the same space, Minister?

Mr FOLEY — Indeed, it was sad to note in the most recent federal budget further changes, building on last year’s changes, that will see further cuts to the support that health agencies can seek in rural and regional communities, as well as metropolitan areas, into this area.

Having said all of that, and within the time frame available to me, this is an initial and substantial contribution to delivering that 2014 election commitment to just modernise and bring up to standard public sector aged care around those vulnerable senior metropolitan Melbourne citizens who cannot afford the new market-based model that is now the dominant mechanism of delivery of aged care post the 2013 national changes.

Ms SHING — Thank you, Minister.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Continuing with aged care, budget paper 3, page 229 highlights a reduction of 8310 available bed days from both the budget last year and the expected outcome. The reason given in the footnote is that of ‘a number of places becoming temporarily unoperational’. What does that actually mean?

Mr FOLEY — I will seek, with your indulgence, further support from my colleagues, but as I understand it, as a result of a number of upgrades that are scheduled around the state and a number of different programs that are flowing, particularly about the ageing community and support for people to return home from residential care for a whole range of reasons, particularly in regional and rural communities, we have seen a shorter stay of time in some facilities; but at the same time we have also seen an uplift in investment programs for the investment of some facilities that have seen upgrades — I can think of a number off the top of my head — that have required the temporary relocation of senior citizens in some areas.

Mr D. O’BRIEN — I am happy to get the advice from the department, if you like. My next question may need to go to the department on notice, but could we get a list of where and why they were temporarily unavailable?

Mr FOLEY — In terms of specifics, just to be clear, so you are talking about BP3, page 229, down the bottom there, ‘Residential aged care’?

Mr D. O’BRIEN — Yes, that is it. That is the last one.

Mr FOLEY — And of course subject to all the normal protocols of the department, I will undertake, if it is acceptable to the member, to get those details. But perhaps I might ask Mr Wallace just to briefly address some of the substance at the higher level before we provide you with the more detailed follow-up on another occasion.

Mr WALLACE — Thank you, Minister. I do not have a lot more to add than what the minister has indicated, that when you are undertaking capital works there is some reconfiguration that is required and there are some temporary reductions. I understand that there are some issues at Melbourne Health in particular. But we will take the question on notice and provide the committee with the details.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Just following up from that, if you can flick over the page to aged support services at pages 230 and 231, there is no increase in respite for individuals provided with respite and support services or in the number of hours. I would have thought if there was a reduction in the availability of beds there would need to be an increase in respite.

Mr FOLEY — I would not have thought that the two necessarily flow. There is a whole range of reasons why individuals or their families might make decisions as to where people might be housed or looked after, as the case may be. I do not think the two automatically flow. But, again, with a bit of luck the detailed information that we have undertaken to provide to the member and the committee might cast some particular light on particular circumstances to highlight.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Rather than leave it to luck, Minister, maybe in what has been taken on notice we could get an explanation of what happens to anyone who is in a bed that has now become temporarily unavailable, that would be great. I am happy to move on.

Mr FOLEY — I am aware of some circumstances anecdotally — but that is probably not of great use — in nearby facilities where beds might become available, where there is enough scheduling coordination, particularly if a health service has multiple sites, and where there is the ability to forecast when the capital investment might be made that allows planning to shift people around. But, as you indicated, perhaps more detailed information might provide that further follow-up for you.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Thank you, Minister.

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, I refer you to budget paper 3, page 255. Has the department provided you with any modelling on the impact of changes to negative gearing on the housing market in Victoria if federal Labor is elected on 2 July?

Ms WARD — Sorry, where is this reference within the budget papers, Mr Smith? You talked about page 255, which is housing assistance.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That is exactly what the reference is. If you listened to the question — —

Ms WARD — That federal government policy?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — The impact on the housing market.

Mr T. SMITH — The impact of negative gearing on the housing market and the flow-on effects from negative gearing.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! The question has been asked; I am happy for the minister to answer it.

Mr FOLEY — Has the Department of Health and Human Services provided me as the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing with any advice on should a Shorten Labor government be elected at the next election what is the implication of a negative gearing change that would take effect in July 2016 on the measures in the housing assistance portfolio? If I understand the question.

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, we know that — —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Is that the question? Okay.

Mr FOLEY — I just wanted to be clear; thank you, Chair. While the specific answer to that very narrow question is no, in terms of the wider issue that you have referred to in terms of housing affordability, as I understand it, my friend the Treasurer, when he presented to this committee, talked about a whole range of issues as to the levers the state can bring to the issue of housing affordability, of which some are referred to here but in a very narrow sense.

I think I recall from reading the Treasurer's transcript that he indicated that he is chairing a whole-of-government task force, of which I have the privilege to be a part, that looks to everything as to how the private sector can deliver affordable homes and apartments, tools that can be brought to assist in that through the planning scheme, tools that can be brought to that through private sector rental through areas like consumer affairs and the Residential Tenancies Act, many of the tools available in this portfolio, some of which the honourable member has referred to here, all the way through to the homeless and rough sleeping. As I understand it, the Treasurer indicated that it is the government's intention that a statement along these lines covering that wide field would be delivered at a time to be resolved in 2016.

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, what I am getting at is: by abolishing negative gearing, you are going to put pressure on rents — —

Ms WARD — When you say 'you', you mean the federal opposition, Mr Smith?

Mr T. SMITH — I said federal Labor. By abolishing negative gearing you are going to put pressure on rents, which will have a flow-on effect to the social and community — —

Ms SHING — Trickle-down economics — is that where we are going?

Mr T. SMITH — That is exactly where I am going with this.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order!

Mr T. SMITH — What I am getting at, Minister, is: how does this budget reflect any potential changes to commonwealth policy which might provide a sudden spike in demand for social housing over the next 12 months?

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! Government members! Mr Smith has asked his question; the minister, to respond.

Mr FOLEY — Thank you. Budget paper 3 talks about this being the Victorian budget for the 16–17 financial year. There are a number of imponderables that the honourable member has raised, not the least of them being that, subject to the democratic processes that the Australian people are subjecting themselves to currently, the proposed changes you talk about will not be until the 17–18 financial year. Whilst I wish the Leader of the Opposition every success in his efforts to form government and deliver on all of his policies, we do not know yet whether that will be the case — we live in hope.

But we also take the view, as we understand the policy position — at least from media reporting, but not from advice from my department — that it is not, as the honourable member has perhaps cast it, abolishing negative gearing; it is in fact making sure that negative gearing is available for new home delivery, and I would have thought that that is a very good thing for the delivery of, in the responsibilities that the Treasurer has referred to, the issues around affordable new housing.

Mr T. SMITH — Thanks, Minister. I am aware of what federal Labor's policy is. I refer you to public housing again, and this time to your Premier's commitment to house Syrian refugees. Since that commitment how many Syrian refugees have been housed in Victoria within the public housing system?

Mr FOLEY — We proudly support the humanitarian efforts of Australia as a nation when it comes to housing and supporting refugees. We as a community have a very proud tradition of that. We very quickly after

the commonwealth made its commitment at an officer level offered that assistance. We have been very impressed with the amount of support we have got from communities and not-for-profit organisations who wish to assist us in that process.

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, we have only got 1 minute left.

Mr FOLEY — That process has taken some time to commence. I will seek particular support from the director of housing, but my understanding is that that program, sadly, at a commonwealth level has yet to really get underway and that if we have any Syrian refugees, it would be a small number. But we look to making sure that we do our bit to house those people in the most appropriate housing whenever we can as soon as we can.

Mr T. SMITH — So do we have a number?

Mr FOLEY — The director of housing has indicated that whilst there is a figure, he does not have it to hand, and he has undertaken through the normal processes of the committee to make sure that we respond to the committee on notice.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — Welcome, Minister. Thank you for coming this morning.

Mr FOLEY — Thank you for having me.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — No problem. It is certainly a broad portfolio, and it is probably no surprise that I would like to concentrate on disability. Before anything else, I want to commend you for being the minister to preside over the closure of the institution Colanda — our last institution. It has been a stain on our state's character for a long time, and it is a credit that we have finally been able to shut down the last institution, so thank you for that.

I would like to begin by asking some questions around the disability state plan, budget paper 3, page 84. This is in reference to the state plan that is clearly well underway in its development, since it will be introduced next year. I would like to commend the inclusion of the Changing Places program in that plan. That is an excellent initiative. I have been aware for many years of the advocacy around that program, and it is perhaps something we can even consider in our MP's offices in implementing.

I would like to particularly focus on the economic participation strategy in that plan, if you could provide some comments around the idea behind that strategy, particularly around the attraction and retention to the VPS, for example, and whether you are considering within this plan a target or a quota or whether it is more of a flexible participation strategy. And also in regard to this strategy, I wonder if there is room there for any recommendations for procurement from social enterprises which support many people with disabilities.

Mr FOLEY — Thank you, Dr Carling-Jenkins, and can I also thank you for your enduring interest in this whole policy space. It is something that we certainly appreciate as a government. The state disability plan is a legislative requirement, but it is also, frankly, a moral requirement on the wider Victorian community. Whilst the focus is on the national disability insurance scheme and its rollout, we should not forget that nearly half a million Victorians in the last census identified as having some level of disability that is of significant impact on their life. Whereas of course the NDIS through, if you like, the specialist focus it has will be dealing with about 105 000 of those people, there is still a substantial number of people who, in the wider community, seek to make the best possible life they can with a disability of some description.

We take the view that the state disability plan needs to complement the whole rollout of the NDIS, but it needs to be wider than that. There has been a substantial amount of consultation over the past 12 months through the various forums that the government has and that the disability sector has as to what some of the content of that might be. You are spot on to identify economic participation and, in the language that the sector I think quite rightly uses, the notion that people with a disability should have the opportunity to participate in an ordinary life just like everybody else. Sadly when it comes to international comparisons with other jurisdictions, we lag in Australia, let alone in Victoria, and when it comes to the aspects of economic participation in particular, you are very right to say that that needs to be the focus, one of the focuses, of how we do that.

Now, that needs to include but goes to more than just education and support and access to transport and indeed access to the Changing Places bathroom facilities that you have indicated that people with disability need. It goes to how we as a community need to change the notion about how we engage with people with disability for

their ability to participate in our community, and nowhere is the government more capable to show leadership in this than in its own backyard. Whilst there have been targets in years gone by, those targets, sadly, have not been met, and indeed over the course of the last state disability plan, the Victorian public sector went substantially backwards in the meeting of the numbers of people with disability that we engaged as an employer, and indeed levers that we bring to anything, as you indicated, procurement and funding models, give us many levers that have not been, in my view, adequately used to address that economic participation issue.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — There is a lot of opportunity, that is for sure.

Mr FOLEY — Absolutely. So we have, through the state services commission and a range of other bodies, now established moves whereby we intend to grow that number. I will be extremely keen, as I know you will be and many, many others, to make sure that a key part of the state disability plan reflects all of the issues that you addressed, but particularly mechanisms where we can make sure that people with disability get the opportunity for that ordinary life, for that same delivery of aspirations that the entire rest of the community has.

The jobs package that was announced by the Premier as part of the budget arrangements specifically seeks to make sure that employment for people with disability is not just in the public sector, but in the wider community it is also delivered. Whilst the government needs to show leadership, this should be an obligation on all of us, and I am particularly pleased that some of our larger corporates as well as local governments, and can I also say many, many smaller communities right around the state, have shown in this particular area, and economic participation is a key measure that we will be seeking to make sure allows people with disability to live that ordinary life as part of the next state disability plan.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — Thank you, Minister, for that comprehensive answer. I feel much more confident about that plan now.

May I direct your attention now back to the NDIS, and thank you for the outline earlier around the rollout of that in answer to Ms Ward's question. We are very excited that it will be starting in a few weeks time. You indicated in your answer some disappointment with the commonwealth, and I would like to unpack that a little bit further. That is in relation to budget paper 2, page 59 particularly, where the NDIS is listed as a specific fiscal risk. Given the state of commonwealth finances, which are not as healthy as Victoria's, there is a concern that the NDIS could be at risk of being downgraded, for example, so I am interested in your comments around that and perhaps around the contingency plan that you have in place in this area.

Mr FOLEY — Thank you, Dr Carling-Jenkins. I have the privilege of representing Victoria at the Disability Reform Council, which is the intergovernmental forum established on the back of the 2013 intergovernmental agreement to roll out the NDIS, and it is a very interesting and robust forum. It does not matter the colour of your political party; everyone is in there to make sure that they deliver for people with disabilities, including, can I say, at the commonwealth level. I do not for a moment doubt the bona fides of the federal minister, particularly this federal minister from Western Australia, when it comes to that.

What I do doubt, however, is the strategy that the commonwealth has brought to how it seeks to identify the risks that it sees. I do not deny for a moment that there are challenges, but I do not accept that an insurance-based model, where you know by the forecast of what you are signed up for, is going to deliver the number of people and the packages that have worked. The trials over the last three years that the NDIS has delivered show that it is on budget, it is on time and it has met the needs, not without its difficulties, but it has met the needs, of people in those areas.

We have seen at the commonwealth level and in some areas of the media a campaign that suggests that, through the commonwealth's signing up in 2013 to where the risks are post-2019 for growth beyond the numbers that scheme is predicted to have, the commonwealth believe they are \$5 billion short. And as I say, I repeat, the evidence so far suggests that the scheme is on budget and on schedule, both dollars and numbers, so I am unaware of any modelling that says that there is a risk post-2019. The commonwealth maintains an argument, it pushes an argument. It does not push it at the Disability Reform Council and it does not push it at a formal level, but it appears from time to time in the media, and there has now been speculation that that is the case, supported by federal ministers, particularly finance and treasury ministers, that suggests that the commonwealth believe they are \$5 billion short.

We do not accept that. We accept what the NDIA's projections tell us. That is why we are very concerned about the governance changes that the commonwealth proposes, because we think that is an opportunity for the commonwealth, should it seek to act on a misunderstood notion of the risk that it is facing, to wind back and cap services that the NDIS would deliver, and that would be a repudiation of the 2013 intergovernmental agreement and it would be a direct repudiation of the bilateral agreement signed by this Prime Minister and this Premier on the same day that an agreement was signed with New South Wales.

Dr CARLING-JENKINS — Thank you, Minister. I have 5 seconds left, so I will just congratulate you on that answer, and I would be interested in some more detail at some stage around those governance changes being proposed.

Mr FOLEY — I will ensure that my department directly briefs you on the proposition that was put to us at the March 2016 Disability Reform Council.

The CHAIR — Excellent. If that could be done via the secretariat through to Dr Carling-Jenkins, that would be perfect.

Mr FOLEY — If I could, just to save Mr Smith the difficulties of having to wait, as of 31 March, 187 Syrian refugees have arrived in Australia. Only three families have come to Victoria, and none as yet are in public housing.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Minister.

Ms SHING — Thank you, Minister. I would like to take you back to public sector aged care, which is a pretty significant area given what we were discussing before the end of the last round and time got away from us around the commonwealth-state funding interface and the sell-off which has necessitated further state and territory investment in this particular area. Is this line item — and I will take you back to budget paper 3, page 89, around the modernisation of metropolitan Melbourne public sector residential aged care — the only support for this type of residential aged care in the budget, and if not, where else is it included and what other envelopes are there allocation for for aged-care funding? And if you could also give particular reference to regional Victoria as far as outputs and capital investment go.

Mr FOLEY — Thank you again. It is a wideranging question there, but if I could just very quickly address that issue that you started with, with the commonwealth's support and the gradual withdrawal of the commonwealth support for aged care more generally, the community will be aware that the aged-care funding instrument, as it is called, that underpins much of the public sector and indeed the wider private sector residential aged care was cut by \$1.2 billion over four years. It is hard to model exactly how that will impact on our state-delivered public sector aged care, but modelling by my department estimates that this will mean a \$403 million cut across the state, and that will have a particular disproportionate impact on rural and regional communities, given the importance that residential aged care plays to many of those health providers.

Ms SHING — Just to pick you up there in relation to the disproportionately harsh effect that will be felt in regional and rural areas, how do population growth and decentralisation affect the way in which that pressure will be placed on rural and regional parts of the system? We do have a spike in an ageing population sense, the demographic is changing, and I would extrapolate from that that the demand on aged care and aged-care residential services will correspondingly increase. Has there been modelling done on that?

Mr FOLEY — Well, the aged-care demographic grows for all sorts of reasons. We are living longer, we are living healthier and the model is also changing, quite rightly — ageing in place, living at home longer with wider support, hence the commonwealth taking over the over-65 modelling is very important in a seamless approach to that. That is why that aspect of living healthier and longer is important. But as we live healthier and longer and different health issues come into play, the importance, particularly with regional and rural communities, is that we are seeing, if we want those people to stay in their communities, or at least nearby in their communities, those services and facilities should be available in those particular areas. That is why we are seeing some of the multi-provider opportunities. I think it is about six or seven very small providers across the state in East Gippsland, in the north of the state, and in the Wimmera and the Mallee areas in particular there is a model of care there that has been disproportionately negatively affected by those commonwealth arrangements.

Excuse my colleague.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — He is getting an update on those Syrian refugee numbers, I think.

Ms SHING — Just-in-time logistics delivery, Minister.

Mr FOLEY — Perhaps it is 188 now, I am not sure.

Ms SHING — Maybe someone has got public housing from that cohort, Minister.

Mr FOLEY — If I could, before I was so rudely distracted — —

In short, the importance of making sure that public sector aged care in the regions through the health networks is part of those services is not just important for those people who are ageing in the surrounding communities. I would not call it a cross-subsidy, but it is part of the mix that goes into sustaining those regional and rural health services. To see any withdrawal, whether it is in the multi-provider model or the wider aged-care services in regional and rural communities from the commonwealth, just makes life that much harder for those aged-care services and those health services. I have been to many of them, including in recent times to the Boort community, which I can see was redeveloped by the former government.

Ms SHING — They do not like to talk about history here, Minister.

Mr FOLEY — I see just how important those facilities are to sustaining the financial viability of the acute services of the community health outreach services, because they are of such a scale that you cannot perhaps have one without the other in terms of shared services and cross support in those communities.

Ms SHING — What about wellbeing, Minister? One of the things which flows from living longer and living in a physically more healthy way is often related to mental health and wellbeing — it is something which overlaps with your other portfolio responsibilities — but how do we tackle that for people ageing, particularly again in rural and regional communities where isolation can then often be a compounding factor for mental health and wellbeing, and for isolation, depression and other mental health issues?

Mr FOLEY — By communities and, again, government being part of the community and partnering with those communities to make them age-friendly places. That is why we were very pleased to support Alzheimer's Australia Victoria in their program. If anyone get the opportunity, I would urge people to look at Beechworth as a best case practice whereby with the support of different levels of government — local, state and commonwealth — and with the support of communities that we are in a position to see that apply. Whilst it might be the direct responsibility of Minister Hennessy, I was pleased to see a \$200 million regional and rural fund established which allows us in this space, the aged-care allowance, to fund both those mental health and community participation and aged-care facilities in a capital sense to make sure that they stay up to the standard that communities increasingly rightly wish to see anywhere across the state. Whilst in the same department, Minister Hennessy has the majority of ministerial responsibility for those areas, but the fund that was established with the \$200 million in this budget will have a substantial impact on the areas that I have responsibility for in the aged-care sector.

Ms SHING — And to what extent will you have or retain oversight on the success and areas for improvement of the rollout of these particular initiatives?

Mr FOLEY — Through all the normal accountable mechanisms that I am sure this committee will hold me to the line on, but more importantly from the social licence of those communities that will make sure that we as a government, we as a community, continue make sure that those facilities are there and operating for. There are the forums of the Parliament, and the forums of community-based leadership in all of those services representing the diverse range of community participation that those community-based boards lead. We are in regular contact with all of them, and they are not backward in coming forward if they have a view that their interests are not being served by any level of government or community. That is why one of their major focuses at the moment is the reduction in support that they have received from the commonwealth. It is a particular focus for them at this time.

Ms SHING — In relation to the pace-setting models that Victoria has implemented, I presume that you are in regular discussion with your interstate and federal counterparts around what works and what does not work. It is a national issue for consideration and for tackling anything in innovative ways that are place specific.

Mr FOLEY — Yes, I am. Unsurprisingly Victoria is a bit of an outlier here. We, compared to other jurisdictions, are increasing our funding in this space. I understand that New South Wales, perhaps the most directly comparable jurisdiction, is consciously exiting much of this space. We are clear that there needs to be — —

We get the notion that post the 2013 commonwealth changes and leadership in this area that the private sector should rightly take the lead in a market-based system for the provision of aged-care services. We all support that notion for people who are capable of participating in a market. There are some Victorians who are not capable for all sorts of economic, locational, geographic —

Ms SHING — And personal circumstances.

Mr FOLEY — and vulnerability circumstances who are not able to participate in that market system. It is the role of government, and it is a role of this government in particular, to look after those unable to participate in the market.

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, if I could turn again to the refugees and the commitment the Premier gave in February. There is a waiting list of 32 000. Only 222, I think, new social housing dwellings will be built between this financial year and the new financial year. You have indicated that there will be many more refugees coming to Victoria — it has only just started — so I am wondering how are these people equitably put into the queue, where do they go in the queue and what effect will that have on people currently in the queue waiting for social housing here in Victoria?

Mr FOLEY — The difficulty in your question is that you assume that it is only public housing that is going to be the basis for the meeting of this need. I can assure you that we are having no shortage of interest from church, faith-based organisations, community organisations, regional and rural communities — —

Mr T. SMITH — But what is your government's plan?

The CHAIR — Order! Mr Smith, the minister is answering the question.

Mr T. SMITH — I mean, the Premier spent most of February grandstanding on this issue, so what is your plan? What is your plan?

Mr FOLEY — Our plan is part of a whole-of-government response to deal with the multiple needs of severely traumatised people who are fleeing for their lives.

Mr T. SMITH — The Premier made statements on all manner of subjects — —

The CHAIR — Order, Mr Smith!

Mr FOLEY — It is to make sure that they get all the support they need, just like wave after wave of communities from right around the world have made Victoria the most successful multicultural vibrant place on earth.

Mr T. SMITH — I am not disputing the benefits of multiculturalism, Minister. I am simply making the point that you are relying on church groups to house these refugees, not the state.

Mr FOLEY — No.

Mr T. SMITH — We want to know what your plan is. The Premier made a huge song and dance about this in February. What is your plan?

Mr FOLEY — Again, I think you have chosen to misinterpret or misunderstand what I said. The Premier indicated that we, as a Victorian government, and more importantly as a Victorian community, will make sure that we support these traumatised people into our community. Now because the commonwealth determines, rightly so, the criteria and the processes for people coming in under the humanitarian scheme, unsurprisingly many of these Syrian refugees who are going through the system have family links with Victoria already. And unsurprisingly, those communities and those families are working with us for those communities to house those people. We will do our bit in terms of private-sector support, particularly for rental, to assist those people to be

housed in, nearby, with or as close as we possibly can to their families and their communities to make their transition to be as productive, fantastic citizens of this country and this state as we can make them.

Mr T. SMITH — So you guarantee no impact on the public housing waiting list?

Mr FOLEY — I am not being — —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — When did you care about the public housing waiting list?

The CHAIR — Order, Mr Dimopoulos!

Mr FOLEY — As I indicated earlier when it came to the issue of public housing, when we have seen \$331 million taken out of public and social housing from 2010 to 2014 at the state level —

Mr T. SMITH — No, I am asking about refugees, the social housing waiting list — —

The CHAIR — Order, Mr Smith!

Mr FOLEY — and then as we have seen another 100 million taken out of commonwealth monies — —

Mr T. SMITH — And will you guarantee that there will be no impact on it, Minister? That is what I am asking you.

Mr FOLEY — With the greatest of respect, if you let me answer the question, you have misconstrued the notion of how refugee settlement is dealt with in this state. As we indicated, the Syrian community in Victoria is an active partner with all levels of government in how we deal with that issue. We reject the notion that somehow or another a refugee fleeing for their life, fleeing with their family for a better opportunity in life, is somehow or another a less deserving person, a less deserving family.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — That is not the point.

Mr T. SMITH — It is a simple question around equity, Minister.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Could the minister just explain how they will be accommodated.

Mr FOLEY — We take the view that they will be housed in the most appropriate circumstances.

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, I am simply asking about how they will be accommodated and in terms of the equity with those already on the list.

Ms WARD — How about you let the minister respond to your question.

Mr T. SMITH — He is not answering the question.

The CHAIR — Order, Mr Smith!

Mr FOLEY — Those families, those people coming from one end of the earth, from a war-torn ravaged community, to one of the most successful multicultural places on earth will be housed —

Mr T. SMITH — We understand all that. We are not disputing — —

Mr FOLEY — in partnership with the Syrian community, with all of the partners that we bring, with faith-based and just general not-for-profit organisations, and can I say from a whole range of other private-sector citizens who have indicated support to make sure that they make the transition into our community as successfully as they possibly can, whilst recognising that we deal with the trauma and the difficulties that they have endured, particularly the children of those families who have witnessed presumably unspeakable horrors.

Mr T. SMITH — We are not disputing that there is a shocking war going on in the Middle East. I am not disputing that fact with you, Minister. I want to know what your plan is with regard to how this state is going to accommodate these people.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Particularly in the area of public housing.

Ms WARD — They have to actually arrive, Mr Smith.

Mr FOLEY — We will house those people under our obligations with the commonwealth in partnership with a substantial Syrian community that is already here, with faith-based organisations, with community-based organisations, but disproportionately in private-sector rental but not exclusively in private-sector rental support. And that is why as part of that, elsewhere in this fantastic budget that is getting on with it, there is a specific allocation of \$18 million in this budget to assist. I am sure that some of that arrangement will be to assist those organisations who are literally working hand in glove with the Syrian community and the government to make those people's transition into Australian life as seamless as possible.

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, if we could move on. How many office of housing tenants earn above \$100 000 per annum?

Mr FOLEY — The 162 000 Victorian public housing tenants are some of the best people that you would want to meet in a very long day's walk. They represent the best of our community.

Mr T. SMITH — Minister, we are not disputing that — a very simple question.

Mr FOLEY — And in terms of their economic position, I am aware that something like 93 per cent of Victorian public tenants are on fixed commonwealth benefits — 92 or 93 per cent. I am pretty sure that none of those people on fixed commonwealth benefits are on over \$100 000 a year. Disproportionately our public sector tenants represent vulnerable arrangements.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Minister, we have got a limited time. It is a fairly straightforward question. I appreciate you might not know it, so if you do not, can we get it on notice?

Mr FOLEY — I am setting the context.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — No, we have only got a limited amount of time, Minister, so if we could — —

Mr Dimopoulos interjected.

The CHAIR — Order, Mr Dimopoulos!

Mr FOLEY — I thank you for your guidance, but public housing tenants are not well-off people — —

Mr T. SMITH — It was a really simple question, so if you do not know the answer, could we have it on notice please?

Mr FOLEY — Should there be substance to the honourable member's question, I will undertake through the normal processes of the committee to answer the honourable member's question on notice. But let me conclude by saying: if the suggestion is that in some way or another Victorian public tenants are living the high life, I think the honourable member needs to get out a bit more.

Ms WARD — I think that would be very good advice, Minister.

Mr T. SMITH — Thank you for your advice, Minister — —

Mr FOLEY — Having said that, Victorian public tenants are fine people — —

Mr T. SMITH — I have asked my question and you have not answered it, so can we move on to Mr O'Brien now.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Thank you, Minister. On BP3, page 247, regarding the NDIS, there are people on the disability support register, many of whom will have to wait until 2019 to receive support under the NDIS. Why are you not transitioning all those on the waiting list first, regardless of where they live, which would be a much fairer outcome?

Mr FOLEY — Well, the management of the transition arrangements were the subject of that intergovernmental agreement that I indicated, the framework of which was established under the former government. In terms of the details — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — No, under the former government we were going to tackle the waiting list first not by geographic region, so why have you chosen to do it that way?

Mr FOLEY — No, I think the honourable member, being new to the Parliament in a comparative sense at that time, might well be not 100 per cent correct in his proposal. Then in 2015 the intergovernmental agreement dealt with, in both Victoria and New South Wales, the rollout, which is this model, and that was an agreed position between the Prime Minister of Australia and the premiers of Victoria and New South Wales. The Victorian government is investing substantial amounts as to how those particularly vulnerable groups, particularly young people, as I indicated in my earlier presentation, but also the most vulnerable people on the early childhood register and the most vulnerable groups on the disability support register, regardless of where they are in Victoria, will transition in the rollout.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — But surely all those on the list are deserving of support —

Mr FOLEY — Of course they are all deserving of support, and that is what they will get as the Victorian government invests a more than doubling — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — But not those in those areas that are not going to be — —

The CHAIR — Order! Mr Dimopoulos until 10.50 a.m.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Minister, I will pick up on Mr O'Brien's line of questioning, BP3, page 78, and the line item about transitioning to the NDIS. Before I ask you my specific question I just want to put on the record the audacity of those on that side of politics who argue about transitioning with a party that actually established and invented the NDIS. But nonetheless, I just wanted to get a sense from you about the detail of the criteria that are being applied in the transition, and particularly young people, those who are in the most need. Understanding that there is a staged transition, what are the criteria that apply?

Mr FOLEY — Thank you, Mr Dimopoulos. I would like to think that the whole NDIS project, despite the odd outbreak of differences, is largely a bipartisan project and I think the record reflects that, can I say. I have always approached it on that basis and will continue to do so. That is not to say that there are not legitimate areas to have debates around, and I am sure we will.

Having said that, the rollout framework that we have in place is the one that was agreed with the commonwealth and it is the one that meets many of the competing demands as the resources roll out in a financial way and as the capability of a market-led system needs to be able to be established in regions across the state as we open up the system to a much wider range of services as well as a much wider range of people.

That is why a particular focus has been placed beyond the geographic rollout to make sure that people, whether it is in ECIS — the early childhood intervention support — or the disability support register, that there are opportunities for particular vulnerable groups to be treated as a priority group regardless of where they live, and that is a commitment over and above the bilateral arrangements we are making as a state.

So you are right in pointing to the item in the budget that you have identified. That is part of the \$160.3 million investment to better support people with disabilities. We will fund \$45.3 million over three years for some 398 support packages under the Futures for Young Adults program for young people in those areas before the NDIS rolls out in their area. That is specifically targeting school leavers in areas that are not identified for the NDIS trial in the first or second year of the scheme, so the next two years before the rollout might get there, so as to ensure that as they transition from a system where they have support that they continue to have support until the NDIS arrives. We do not want to establish a system where vulnerable young people fall through the gaps, because we know what happens. We know that they will fall into a process whereby a lack of support means those economic participation opportunities that Dr Carling-Jenkins referred to do not occur. They do not get the support in housing, they do not get the support in personal care or whatever it might be, and they disproportionately have all sorts of unfortunate barriers to their participation in life.

So we want to make sure that the packages that are rolled out through this program, regardless of where you are in the state before the NDIS rolls out, that people have support for and are able to participate in social networks and meaningful activities, and we think that that will support approximately 1300 young people to build those skills and connections necessary to achieve those social and economic goals before the NDIS rolls out. That is in addition as over the next two years about half of the state will be covered anyway. So if you are in those areas — starting in north-east metro, then the central highlands then the Loddon area over the next 12 months and then beyond that in subsequent areas of the state — you will be picked up, but this will provide additional assistance to 1300 young people leaving school who would be currently supported through different mechanisms that the states and communities — —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Thank you, Minister. So contrary to the line of questioning that Mr O'Brien was pursuing, it is not just a place-based staged approach; it is priority based as well.

Mr FOLEY — Indeed. It is largely place based, let us not gild the lily.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — But there is an overlay.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — We are not dealing with the waiting list first. That is the question.

Mr FOLEY — But by the same token, for targeted communities and for targeted high-needs groups who are particularly vulnerable, we want to make sure that that is there. It is my understanding in terms of the discussions that led to the 2015 bilateral agreements that that particular model was the preference of the commonwealth.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Minister, I think you said that as part of the drivers for the staging the market needs to be capable of taking over the system essentially. Is that one of the drivers of the rollout? Localised markets?

Mr FOLEY — It gets to the philosophical and economic underpinning of the whole national disability insurance scheme. So we are moving away from a block government-funded support system that is rationed for all sorts of reasons — largely through the fickle nature of government funding at a commonwealth, state and local level — to a system based on an insurance-based model that says if the demand is there and if you are eligible, you get the service, you get the support. The truth is that if it is simply based — as the Productivity Commission found in its report — on existing models, it will not happen, so we need to open up the system to a much wider range of support participation if we are going to change that funding to individual demands.

As it was put to me by one family in regional and rural Victoria, there is not much of a market in Birchip for the provision of support services for specialist disability. So there might well be a continuing role as we transition for state-provided services. That is why, unlike some other jurisdictions, we have been very clear that we will not be exiting the system at all. We are taking the view that we are a partner in the system from here onwards, but we will not be exiting a direct provision of service whilst we identify that there are thin markets, to use the jargon, particularly in regional and rural communities, but not exclusively, and particularly until such time as other factors — about quality, about standards and about support for people with disabilities. We are moving to a market system with much wider opportunities for people to choose services. They need to be supported, because what we are talking about —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — And that is the other side of the relationship, is it not, not just a provider but — —

Mr FOLEY — is that people are moving from a cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach to a system that empowers them —

Mr DIMOPOULOS — The client.

Mr FOLEY — to make decisions themselves about their lives. That is a massive change philosophically and personally, and that is why support for those people needs to be critical, not just personal support but also advocacy support, because you cannot enforce your rights as a consumer in a market-based system unless you are aware of those rights, so support for advocacy is particularly important.

That was why we were very clear in funding a \$10 million package late last year around advocacy and support. We felt we had to because not only had there been cuts to advocacy disability support services at the commonwealth level in the previous budget but the support from the commonwealth was a little patchy in how

it went around its sector transition support. For instance, when the NDIS was rolled out in western Sydney, a \$20 million package of support was provided for a range of transition measures. So far in Victoria — all of Victoria — we have seen \$400 000 in support from the commonwealth for this arrangement. We see there is an obligation on us as partners in that system to move into that space to make sure that those informed consumers — wherever they are; thin or thick markets — are able to make appropriate choices and to make sure that the role of the state as a provider of services reflects that change in reality.

Mr DIMOPOULOS — Minister, thank you. In the short time left — perhaps you could take it on notice. In response to another question — I cannot recall which — you were talking about the shortfall in commonwealth funding. We do not have time now, but could you explain that further on notice, because I did not quite get the full gamut of it?

Mr FOLEY — Absolutely. It is not without its complications, but essentially — —

The CHAIR — Order! Mr O'Brien until 11.00 a.m.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Minister, I just want to continue on the NDIS rollout issue. Given that everyone on the DSR has been approved for support packages, does that not indicate they are in great need and therefore should they not be the ones that get the NDIS first?

Mr FOLEY — Of course being eligible for the disability support register means that you have qualified for state support. The whole difficulty, as the Productivity Commission pointed to, in the broken nature of dysfunctional and disjointed delivery of service across both the state, the commonwealth and local levels for people with disability is the underpinning reason as to why we want to change that system. That is why when you go to the Hunter region in New South Wales or the Barwon region in Victoria, the single greatest achievement over those three years has been that there is no waiting list. There is no DSR or equivalent in those areas.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — But is that not a good thing, so why not eliminate it from the start?

Mr FOLEY — Because, as I think I attempted perhaps inadequately in my earlier answer, it was to make sure that our friends at the commonwealth, who are the ones who indicated a preference for this and who are our partners in this, are delivering a service that we can all sign up to. The agreed position with the commonwealth was that would be a place-based geographic rollout via, in Victoria's circumstances, local government areas so as to make sure that as we open the system up the choices and the choice of control, the philosophical basis of the system is delivered in a planned way and that the move to a new market system can be dealt with appropriately. Whilst recognising —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I appreciate the commonwealth position, Minister —

Mr FOLEY — if I could —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — but even we are at odds with it, and Mary Wooldridge actually committed to addressing the waiting list first, so why will you not do that?

Mr FOLEY — Whilst, as I indicated in answer to Mr Dimopoulos's question, the Victorian government, over and above those obligations that it had signed on with the commonwealth, partnership with the commonwealth, takes the view that there are people who are particularly vulnerable and who perhaps cannot wait for that geographic rollout to reach them. That is why, whether it be young people transitioning out of school, who currently have one level of support — the numbers that we have there — together with other areas of other communities that we will be supporting, and at the same time this government takes — —

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay, we have had that answer, Minister. I have heard that answer.

Mr FOLEY — But your question was the same question rephrased, fundamentally, so it is unsurprising it has got the same answer.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Anyway, can I move on, because we do have limited time. Can I turn now to BP3, page 235, which lists the 'Small rural available bed days' under aged care. There is a reduction in small rural service bed days of 5057, and the explanation there is that there is a reduction because two residential aged-care

services have been consolidated into one new facility. Can you tell us where that is, what those communities are that are affected and why it is that that leads to a reduction of bed numbers?

Mr FOLEY — So if I understand, BP3, page 235, right at the bottom there?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Right at the bottom, yes.

Mr FOLEY — 'Small rural ... days':

The lower 2016-17 target reflects the planned reduction in beds for two residential aged care services being consolidated into one new facility.

I will seek some advice from my colleagues here at the table. I would imagine it might well be a reflection again of, as you close a facility to seek to rebuild it with a partner that there is a transitional arrangement.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — This is not temporary.

Mr FOLEY — But having said that, I am not necessarily saying that is the case. I might have to take that particular question on notice and undertake to get the honourable member a direct answer through the normal processes of the committee.

Ms PEAKE — Minister, the only thing that I can add is that in a number of these situations they are vacant beds that are being closed, so it is not that there are people affected that there is not the demand in that community. But I am happy to take the question on notice to furnish more detail.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Thank you; that would be good. As I said, if we could get where it is and what the situation actually is.

Mr FOLEY — Which particular two.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Yes, thank you.

Mr T. SMITH — My question is actually to the secretary, Minister. In a response to a question on notice in the upper house on 22 March the Special Minister of State — and this is referring to the IT breach of the minister's Twitter account earlier this year — said:

... secretary of DHHS to coordinate a review into IT security following the discovery of this security breach on the 12th of January.

I am just wondering: what did your investigation uncover with regards to the security breach of the minister's Twitter account, and could you provide the committee with a copy of that investigation?

Ms SHING — Do we have a budget paper reference here?

Mr T. SMITH — BP5, page 102.

Ms PEAKE — Mr Smith, I am happy to follow that up out of session and provide any detail I can.

Mr T. SMITH — So you have not undertaken an investigation?

Ms PEAKE — I am happy to take the question on notice and provide you with any detail I can.

Mr T. SMITH — But, Secretary, the Special Minister of State has provided in writing — —

Ms WARD — Is this about income from transactions, Mr Smith?

The CHAIR — Order!

Ms PEAKE — I do not have the information in front of me, Mr Smith.

The CHAIR — Order! Mr Smith, I do not think it would be fair to expect that the secretary of the department would have this information readily at hand, given the fact that she is accompanying the Minister

for Housing, Disability and Ageing. The secretary has indicated that she is happy to provide you with what information she can provide you on notice.

Mr T. SMITH — Chair, with respect, the minister's Twitter account was hacked and it liked porn sites, and the Special Minister of State has, in an answer to the Leader of the Opposition in the upper house, said:

Following the review, advice was provided to the minister's office on extra security measures for mobile and IT devices. These measures were undertaken in full by the Minister's office in response to the advice.

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! Given the size of the portfolio and the Department of Health and Human Services, I do not realistically think that it is fair to expect that the secretary of that department — —

Mr T. SMITH — It is a very serious matter, Chair — —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order, Ms Shing! Given the size of the budget, which is I think about \$14 billion, I do not think it is fair and reasonable to expect that the secretary will have that information readily at hand. The secretary has been very — —

Mr T. SMITH — The minister's Twitter account was hacked — —

The CHAIR — Order! The secretary — —

Mr T. SMITH — and ended up liking hardcore porn sites.

The CHAIR — Mr Smith, it would seem to me you are trying to run down the clock. If you have run out of questions — —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! The secretary has answered the question. She has indicated she is willing to provide what information she can to you on notice. There are 2½ minutes left, Mr Smith. If you do not have another question of the witness, perhaps you might like to pass to Mr O'Brien.

Ms PEAKE — I can make one further comment to the committee, which is I have just been advised that actually it is DPC who support ministers, so hence not being top of mind for me, but I am very happy to take the question on notice.

Mr T. SMITH — I think the Special Minister of State should amend his — —

The CHAIR — Mr Smith, you may have thought of asking that question of the secretary — —

Members interjecting.

The CHAIR — Order! Government members! Mr O'Brien, do you have a question?

Mr D. O'BRIEN — I do. Secretary, another question where I am seeking some data, and again I am very happy for this to be taken on notice, and we are similar to the DPC yesterday: can you please provide the committee with the number of DHHS staff, including in ministerial offices, who reported incidents of bullying that have been reported to your HR, but also including, of those how many bullying incidents were due to gender-based bullying?

Ms PEAKE — Certainly; very happy to take that on notice.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — And if we could get that breakdown on gender base as well, with respect to percentages.

Ms PEAKE — Certainly. Of course the committee would understand there are going to be privacy issues that would be involved in any such allegation or any such complaint, but I am happy to take the question on notice and see if there is information we can furnish.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Okay. Thank you very much.

The CHAIR — I think it is important that any information is de-identified.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Of course. We are only looking in — —

Ms SHING — To the extent that a response can be provided.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — Yes, okay. At BP3, page 255, there is — as you mentioned earlier — 130 new dwellings for family violence emergency situations. Is it correct that there are only 92 new dwellings being built to cater for the wider public housing waiting list of over 32 000 people? Sorry — to the minister.

Mr FOLEY — So BP3, 255, 'Housing assistance'.

Mr D. O'BRIEN — As we said before, there is a 222 increase in dwellings, but 130 of those are going to family violence situations.

Mr FOLEY — You have misunderstood the whole package whereby the family violence public housing, social housing units are — —

The CHAIR — Order! I would like to thank the witnesses for their attendance: the Minister for Housing, Disability and Ageing, the Honourable Martin Foley, MP; Ms Peake; Mr Wallace; Mr Foa; and Ms Falkingham. The committee will follow up on any questions taken on notice in writing. A written response should be provided within 14 calendar days of that request.

Witnesses withdrew.