

CHAPTER 4: DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES HEARINGS

4.1 Introduction

The Department of Human Services is responsible for the administration of four portfolios:

- Health;
- Housing;
- Community Services; and
- Mental Health.

4.2 Key budget themes for 2009-10

The Department of Human Services advised the Committee that the key budget considerations in human services focused on the management of, and strategic challenges faced in:¹⁴

- demand for services;
- timely access to, and impacts of disadvantage on the need for services;
- viability and productivity in publicly funded service providers;
- early intervention to influence healthy lifestyles and wellbeing outcomes; and
- responding to emerging health and social issues.

4.3 Key assumptions that have been used to develop the Department's projections for 2009-10

The Department of Human Services advised the Committee that its 2009-10 budget submission was broadly focused on delivering the Government's *Growing Victoria Together* visions. The Department identified the following areas as having particular influence on the development of its budget projections:¹⁵

- the Government's 2009-10 Budget priorities and public policy, including implementing the balance of election commitments;
- agreed outcomes for *Australian Industrial Relations Commission*, *Australian Fair Pay Commission* and Enterprise Bargaining Agreements for the Human Services Sector;
- the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) new framework for Federal Financial Relations, including significant increases in expected funding to Victoria for specific purpose and national partnership agreements;
- whole-of-government initiatives promoting the health and wellbeing of all Victorians; and
- service systems and administration over the forward estimates period within the provisions of The Department of Treasury and Finance *Departmental Funding Model*, which provides forward year escalation funding on a no-policy-change basis to provide departments with funding certainty and future spending capacity in the forward estimates budgets.

¹⁴ Department of Human Services, *Response to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee Budget Estimates Questionnaire*, May 2009, p.1

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.4

4.4 Major Expenditure Policy Shifts in the 2009-10 Budget

The Department advised the Committee that there have been no major expenditure policy shifts in 2009-10.¹⁶

4.5 Health Portfolio

4.5.1 Introduction

The Committee received evidence from Mr Daniel Andrews MP, Minister for Health, on 12 May 2009. The Minister provided an overview of his portfolio at the start of the hearing, assisted by Ms Fran Thorn, Secretary; Mr Alan Hall, Executive Director, Financial and Corporate Services; Mr Lance Wallace, Executive Director, Metropolitan Health and Aged Care Services; and Dr Chris Brook, Executive Director, Rural and Regional Health and Aged Care Services, Department of Human Services. The Committee thanks the Minister and accompanying officers for their attendance and assistance.

4.5.2 General comments

At the budget estimates hearing, the Committee raised various matters concerning the budget estimates for 2009-10 (see Volume Two for the transcript of proceedings). Transcripts of the budget estimates proceedings are also accessible on the Committee's website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/paec. Documents provided at the hearings of the budget estimates (see Section 4.5.4) are available on the Committee's website. Written answers to questions on notice should be submitted to the Committee by 22 June 2009. These answers will be considered by the Committee for inclusion in a further report.

4.5.3 Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing

Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing included a standard question on Federal Government grants and the following (page references refer to the transcript in Volume Two, Section 4.1):

Funding / Staffing issues

- ongoing operating costs of HealthSMART (pp.35-36); and
- recruitment and retention of health professional staff (pp.37-38).

Infrastructure initiatives

- Parkville Comprehensive Cancer Centre (pp.6-7);
- Bendigo Hospital redevelopment (pp.14-15);
- Box Hill Hospital redevelopment (pp.28-30); and
- Royal Children's Hospital project (pp.31-33).

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.15

Health protection and prevention

- H1N1 influenza (pp.19-20);
- immunisation coverage rates (pp.38-39); and
- proportion of spending on health prevention as opposed to treatment measures (pp.12-14).

Health programs, services and initiatives

- BreastScreen Victoria's rollout of digital technology (pp.11-12);
- *National Partnership on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes* (pp.22-23);
- *Nurse on Call* telephone help line (pp.24-25);
- improving access to dental care (pp.9-10);
- acute and sub-acute beds (pp.17-18);
- palliative care (pp.27-28); and
- transfer of major trauma patients to major trauma services (pp.30-31).

Ambulance services

- provision of ambulance services in country Victoria (pp.10-11);
- access to metropolitan and rural ambulance services (pp.34-35); and
- fatigue prevention in ambulance paramedics (pp.39-40).

Maternity services

- maternal health in rural and regional Victoria (pp.25-27);
- implementation of recommendations in relation to maternity services for *Rural Directions for a Better State of Health* report (pp.25-27); and
- closure of rural and regional obstetric units (pp.25-27).

Performance measures

- accuracy of performance data and targets in Acute Health Services output group (pp.8-9, pp.15-17 and pp.18-19);
- adjustment to the Health Protection output target, *Target population screened within specified timeframe for breast cancer* (pp.20-22);
- non-achievement of performance targets in Acute Health Services output group *Emergency patients transferred to ward within 8 hours* and *Semi-urgent (category 2) elective surgery patients admitted within 90 days* (pp.23-24); and
- hospital performance and activities reports (p.38).

4.5.4 Documents tabled at the budget estimates hearing

The Minister provided an introductory slide presentation at the budget estimates hearing. The slides are available on the Committee's website.

4.5.5 Questions taken on notice at the budget estimates hearing

A number of questions were taken on notice by the Minister at the budget estimates hearing (see Appendix 2 - Questions on Notice, and the transcript in Volume Two) relating to:

- Federal Government grants;
- rollout of additional ambulance services;
- ambulance service delivery in country Victoria;
- health protection advancement measures;
- *Rural Maternity Initiative* (RMI) update;
- performance monitoring framework and reporting of hospital performance data; and
- fatigue prevention in ambulance paramedics.

A written response by the Minister to the Committee on these questions is due by 22 June 2009 and will be considered for publication in a further report.

4.6 Housing Portfolio

4.6.1 Introduction

The Committee received evidence from the Hon. Richard Wynne MP, Minister for Housing, on 18 May 2009. The Minister provided an overview of his portfolio at the start of the hearing, assisted by Ms Fran Thorn, Secretary; Mr Alan Hall, Executive Director, Financial and Corporate Services; Ms Margaret Crawford, Executive Director, Housing and Community Building Division; and Mr Ken Downie, Director, Policy, Strategy and Communications Division, Department of Human Services. The Committee thanks the Minister and accompanying officers for their attendance and assistance.

4.6.2 General comments

At the budget estimates hearing, the Committee raised various matters concerning the budget estimates for 2009-10 (see Volume Two for the transcript of proceedings). Transcripts of the budget estimates proceedings are also accessible on the Committee's website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/paec. Documents provided at the hearings of the budget estimates (see Section 4.6.4) are available on the Committee's website. Written answers to questions on notice should be submitted to the Committee by 22 June 2009. These answers will be considered by the Committee for inclusion in a further report.

4.6.3 Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing

Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing included a standard question on Federal Government grants and the following (page references refer to the transcript in Volume Two, Section 4.2):

- availability of properties to Victoria's most vulnerable tenants (p.4);
- responding to the housing needs of bushfire victims (pp.4-5);
- average waiting time for public rental housing (pp.5-6);
- the *Homelessness National Partnership* (pp.6-8);

- strategy for acquisition and disposal of properties (pp.8-9);
- *Neighbourhood Renewal Program* – addressing the needs of the disadvantaged (pp.9-10);
- timeframe for delivery and breakdown of the 5,000 new social housing units (pp.10-11);
- *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing* (p.11); and
- clarification of the number of social housing properties (pp.11-12).

4.6.4 Documents tabled at the budget estimates hearing

The Minister provided an introductory slide presentation at the budget estimates hearing. The slides are available on the Committee's website.

4.6.5 Questions taken on notice at the budget estimates hearing

A number of questions were taken on notice by the Minister at the budget estimates hearing (see Appendix 2 - Questions on Notice, and the transcript in Volume Two) relating to:

- Federal Government grants;
- acquisition and disposal of properties strategy; and
- social housing property numbers.

A written response by the Minister to the Committee on these questions is due by 22 June 2009 and will be considered for publication in a further report.

4.7 Community Services Portfolio

4.7.1 Introduction

The Committee received evidence from Ms Lisa Neville MP on 19 May 2009. The Minister provided an overview of her portfolio at the start of the hearing, assisted by Ms Fran Thorn, Secretary; Mr Alan Hall, Executive Director, Financial and Corporate Services; Mr Paul McDonald, Executive Director, Children, Youth and Families; Mr Arthur Rogers, Executive Director, Disability Services, Department of Human Services; and Mr James MacIsaac, Executive Director, People and Communities, Department of Planning and Community Development. The Committee thanks the Minister and accompanying officers for their attendance and assistance.

4.7.2 General comments

At the budget estimates hearing, the Committee raised various matters concerning the budget estimates for 2009-10 (see Volume Two for the transcript of proceedings). Transcripts of the budget estimates proceedings are also accessible on the Committee's website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/paec. Documents provided at the hearings of the budget estimates (see Section 4.7.4) are available on the Committee's website. Written answers to questions on notice should be submitted to the Committee by 22 June 2009. These answers will be considered by the Committee for inclusion in a further report.

4.7.3 Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing

Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing included a standard question on Federal Government grants and the following (page references refer to the transcript in Volume Two, Section 4.3):

Bushfire recovery

- bushfire funding and grants (pp.4 and 7-10); and
- bushfire recovery case managers (pp.7-10).

Financial issues and budget incentives

- pricing review for out-of-home disability services (pp.6-7);
- indexation for the disability sector (pp.11-13); and
- concessions for essential utilities (pp.18-19).

Disability services

- young people with high-care needs (pp.10-11 and 14);
- funding for disability services (pp.14-15); and
- funding of non-government disability sector (pp.15-16).

Children's services

- funding for children placed in out-of-home care (pp.13-14);
- the number of staff who have direct contact with children (pp.17-18); and
- children in crisis outside of office hours (pp.19-20).

Other

- progress on the *Autism State Plan* (pp.16-17).

4.7.4 Documents tabled at the budget estimates hearing

The Minister provided an introductory slide presentation at the budget estimates hearing. The slides are available on the Committee's website.

4.7.5 Questions taken on notice at the budget estimates hearing

A number of questions were taken on notice by the Minister at the budget estimates hearing (see Appendix 2 - Questions on Notice, and the transcript in Volume Two).

- Federal Government grants;
- Federal Government funding for disability services;
- funding to the non-government disability sector;
- cost comparison of non-government against government supported accommodation;

- Department of Human Services child protection staff that have or will have direct contact with children; and
- Victorian Public Service staff breakdown by sector.

A written response by the Minister to the Committee on these questions is due by 22 June 2009 and will be considered for publication in a further report.

4.8 Mental Health Portfolio

4.8.1 Introduction

The Committee received evidence from Ms Lisa Neville MP on 19 May 2009. The Minister provided an overview of her portfolio at the start of the hearing, assisted by Ms Fran Thorn, Secretary; Mr Alan Hall, Executive Director, Financial and Corporate Services; and Ms Gill Callister, Executive Director, Mental Health and Drugs, Department of Human Services. The Committee thanks the Minister and accompanying officers for their attendance and assistance.

4.8.2 General comments

At the budget estimates hearing, the Committee raised various matters concerning the budget estimates for 2009-10 (see Volume Two for the transcript of proceedings). Transcripts of the budget estimates proceedings are also accessible on the Committee's website at www.parliament.vic.gov.au/paec. Documents provided at the hearings of the budget estimates (see Section 4.8.4) are available on the Committee's website. Written answers to questions on notice should be submitted to the Committee by 22 June 2009. These answers will be considered by the Committee for inclusion in a further report.

4.8.3 Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing

Key matters raised at the budget estimates hearing included a standard question on Federal Government grants and the following (page references refer to the transcript in Volume Two, Section 4.4):

- availability of interpreter services to assist people accessing mental health services (pp.3-4);
- mental health services for children and young people (pp.4-5);
- improving access to mental health services and strengthening the crisis assessment and treatment (CAT) service (pp.5-6);
- mental health capital works programs (pp.6-7); and
- ice and amphetamines strategy (pp.7-8).

4.8.4 Documents tabled at the budget estimates hearing

The Minister provided an introductory slide presentation at the budget estimates hearing. The slides are available on the Committee's website.

4.8.5 Questions taken on notice at the budget estimates hearing

A number of questions were taken on notice by the Minister at the budget estimates hearing (see Appendix 2 - Questions on Notice, and the transcript in Volume Two) relating to:

- Federal Government grants; and
- program expenditure.

A written response by the Minister to the Committee on these questions is due by 22 June 2009 and will be considered for publication in a further report.