

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

C014

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE
(Of which some notice has been given)

Thursday, 5 December 2013

Hon Robin Chapple to the Minister for Child Protection.

With regard to the proposed funding cuts to four women's refuges or safe houses in the Kimberley and Pilbara, I ask:

1. What is the basis for the occupancy rates used by the Director-General of the Department of Child Protection and Family Services (DPCFS) to calculate the reduction in funding for each of the four services?
2. Apart from occupancy rates, what other factors are taken into account when calculating the funding for each refuge or safe house located in a remote area? Are the added complexities, including road conditions, distances between centres and communities, cultural considerations, etcetera factored in?
3. Will the Minister please explain exactly how a reduction in funding for safe houses in Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Wyndham and Roebourne will 'support better outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic violence' in these centres, as per his answer to a question on 21 November 2013?
4. On what basis was the Onslow women's shelter referred to - in a letter dated 3 October 2013 from DPCFS to the Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre - as one of the services on which they based their costings to run a safe house, when it had shut down 18 months earlier, and Police in Onslow now drive women and children to Karratha when they need to access crisis accommodation and support services?
5. Why is it that only Aboriginal women's refuge and safe house services are affected by the proposed cuts?

I thank the Hon. Member for some notice of this question.

1. The Department utilised data from the National Specialist Homelessness Services (NSHS) which records information on clients they assist, as well as accessing other sources of information to identify the utilisation of services.



The NSHS data is submitted directly by services to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). AIHW generates agency reports based on the data submitted by the services and these reports are provided by AIHW to each service as well as DCPFS and any other relevant funding body.

On behalf of states and territories the AIHW collects data from approximately 1500 agencies across Australia.

2. The Department used multiple information sources included but not limited to:
 - the Women's Council for Family and Domestic Violence Services WA report for the initial mapping and scoping of services across Western Australia;
 - Bed Count Registry;
 - Specialist Homelessness Services Data Collection;
 - Services Reviews;
 - Service Contracting Progress Reports; and
 - Consultation with the relevant country Departmental districts.

Location and nuances of the region have informed the revised service delivery model so women receive both a centre based service and an outreach service if they are not wanting to access the Safe House. Many women and children because of their location are currently unable to access the centre based service. Provision of an alternative model including outreach will achieve this.

3. Currently services provide only a centre-based Safe House service which is staffed 24/7 even when the service is empty. An outreach focused model will provide support services to women after they leave the Safe House and also to women that may never access the accommodation provided by the Safe House.

The Safe House component of the service will still operate and be available during business hours and at night but it will only be staffed when women and children are actually staying in the Safe House. During business hours workers from the Safe House will provide an outreach service instead of remaining in the Safe House, even when empty.

The Safe House will also be provided with brokerage funding that can be flexibly utilised to buy or access other services to assist women and children to meet their needs. This funding can be used for a broad range of needs including travel to leave the region, food, alternative accommodation, costs associated with the needs of accompanying children and medical needs. Brokerage funding is discretionary and can be used flexibly to deliver better outcomes for women and children.

4. I am advised that in the letter dated 3 October 2013 to the Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre mention was made of comparable Safe House funding across Western Australia. The Onslow service was only one of a number of comparable safe houses considered to assist in determining the funding level.



5. The four Safe Houses affected by the revised service delivery model have been identified as having a high vacancy rate and a low number of clients assisted. Clients stay for short periods of time and do not receive case management or outreach services. The four Safe Houses have showed consistent occupancy rates of below 30%.

The services are not Aboriginal specific. Like most services around Western Australia they are funded to provide service to all women and children in need.

Approved -
Muller, *Muller*