

The Senate

Community Affairs
Legislation Committee

Additional estimates 2013–14

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MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

44th Parliament

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 On 13 February 2014, the Senate referred the following documents to the committee for examination and report in relation to its portfolios:

- Particulars of proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2014 [Appropriation Bill (No. 3) 2013-2014];
- Particulars of certain proposed additional expenditure in respect of the year ending on 30 June 2014 [Appropriation Bill (No. 4) 2013-2014];
- Final budget outcome for 2012-2013; and
- Issues from the advances under the annual Appropriation Acts for 2012-2013.¹

1.2 The committee is responsible for the examination of the following portfolios:

- Health;
- Social Services; and
- Human Services.

1.3 The committee is required to report to the Senate on its consideration of 2013-2014 additional estimates on Tuesday 18 March 2014.²

Details of hearings

1.4 The committee considered the Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements (PAES) 2013-2014 for the Human Services portfolio, the Social Services portfolio, and the Health portfolio, at hearings from 26 February 2014 to 27 February 2014 (inclusive). The hearings were conducted in accordance with the agreed agenda outlined as follows:

- Wednesday 26 February 2014 – Health portfolio; and
- Thursday 27 February 2014 – Social Services portfolio and Human Services portfolio.

1.5 The committee heard evidence from the following Senators:

- Senator the Hon. Fiona Nash, Assistant Minister for Health (representing the Hon. Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Health);
- Senator the Hon. Mitch Fifield, Assistant Minister for Social Services (representing the Hon. Kevin Andrews MP, Minister for Social Services); and

1 Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, *Journals of the Senate*, No. 14, 13 February 2014, pp 485-486.

2 Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, *Journals of the Senate*, No. 6, 4 December 2013, p. 224.

- Senator the Hon. Marise Payne, Minister for Human Services.

1.6 Evidence was also provided by the following:

- Professor Jane Halton PSM, Secretary of the Department of Health;
- Mr Finn Pratt PSM, Secretary of the Department of Social Services;
- Ms Kathryn Campbell CSC, Secretary of the Department of Human Services; and
- officers representing the departments and agencies covered by the estimates before the committee.

1.7 The committee thanks the ministers, departmental secretaries and officers for their assistance and cooperation during the hearings.

Questions on Notice

1.8 In accordance with Standing Order 26, the date for submission to the committee of written answers to questions on notice or additional information relating to the expenditure is 24 April 2014.

1.9 Answers to questions taken on notice and tabled documents relating to the committee's hearings will be tabled in the Senate. Answers to questions on notice and additional information may be accessed via the committee's website.

Hansard transcripts

1.10 The committee discussed many of the expenditure proposals and information contained in the PAES. These discussions are detailed in the committee's *Hansard* transcripts of 26 February 2014 to 27 February 2014 (inclusive), copies of which will be tabled in the Senate. *Hansard* transcripts of the estimates proceedings are also accessible on the committee's website at http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_ca.

1.11 References to the *Hansard* transcript are to the proof *Hansard*; page numbers may vary between the proof and the official *Hansard* transcript.

Changes in the PAES

1.12 The committee notes that the Australian Government Ministry led by Prime Minister the Hon. Tony Abbott MP was sworn in on 18 September 2013 and, in addition to these ministerial changes, there have been significant changes in the portfolios oversighted by the committee.

Health portfolio

1.13 The Health portfolio has been restructured as follows:

- The Department of Health and Ageing has been renamed the Department of Health, with responsibility for aged care transferred to the new Department of Social Services;
- The Department of Health has acquired responsibility for the National Mental Health Commission, as well as sport and recreation policy, including three associated agencies: the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority;

the Australian Sports Commission; and the Australian Sports Foundation Limited; and

- A number of Indigenous health programmes and functions have been transferred to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC).

Social Services portfolio

1.14 The committee further notes that, under the Administrative Arrangements Order of 18 September 2013,³ the Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) portfolio has ceased to exist, with the creation of the new Social Services portfolio. Mr Pratt PSM previously explained the portfolio's restructured responsibilities to the committee:

[I]f I talk about what has left the previous FaHCSIA, it comes down to two main areas. One is Indigenous Affairs in its entirety and the other is the Office for Women. Those have both gone to the Prime Minister's department. In terms of social services, the contributing ex-departments, the FaHCS part of the old FaHCSIA—so, everything else from old FaHCSIA—we [have. From] the former Department of Health and Ageing, the ageing and aged care functions...From the former Department of Immigration and Citizenship we got multicultural affairs and settlement services. From the former DEEWR we picked up responsibilities in two main areas. One was the disability employment services and the other was the income support payments—Newstart allowance, parenting payment, et cetera. From the Department of Industry we picked up Austudy, and from the [DPMC] the responsibilities for not-for-profit volunteering and philanthropy.⁴

1.15 The Social Services portfolio now contains two administrative agencies: the Department of Social Services and the Department of Human Services.

3 Available at: http://www.dPMC.gov.au/parliamentary/docs/aaO_20130918.pdf (accessed 13 March 2014).

4 *Estimates Hansard*, 21 November 2013, pp 9-10.

Chapter 2

Health Portfolio

Department of Health

2.1 This chapter outlines key issues discussed during the 2013-2014 additional estimates hearings for the Health portfolio.

2.2 The committee heard evidence from the Health portfolio department on Wednesday 26 February 2014. Areas of the portfolio were called in the following order:

- Cross Portfolio/Corporate Matters;
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW);
- Private Health;
- Population Health;
- Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA);
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ);
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC);
- Australian National Preventive Health Agency (ANPHA);
- Office of the Gene Technology Regulator;
- Primary Care;
- Sport and Recreation;
- Office of Sport;
- Australian Sport Commission;
- Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority;
- Acute Care;
- Australian Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Authority;
- National Blood Authority;
- National Mental Health Commission;
- Health System Capacity and Quality;
- Health Workforce Capacity;
- Access to Medical Services;
- Access to Pharmaceutical Services;
- Rural Health; and
- Biosecurity and Emergency Response.

Cross Portfolio/Corporate Matters¹

2.3 Proceedings commenced with questions to Minister Nash regarding her former chief of staff, Mr Alistair Furnival, in the context of allegations that a conflict of interest existed between his duties in the Minister's office and involvement with the Australian Public Affairs lobby group. Senator Wong drew attention to the *Statement of Ministerial Standards*, asking Minister Nash about the appointment of Mr Furnival, the disclosure and management of any conflicts of interest and the circumstances of his resignation. The Minister informed the committee of undertakings that had been entered into at the commencement of Mr Furnival's role as her chief of staff, but did not disclose the contents of these undertakings. However, as no explicit request was made to table the document, a public interest immunity claim on the matter was not made. Other issues discussed included the timeliness in delisting Mr Furnival from the register of Australian Public Affairs' directors and the timing and reasoning behind Minister Nash's revised address to the Senate on 11 February 2014. Senator Parry later provided a statement to the committee in response to the questions regarding the sequence of events and procedural opportunities available for Senator Nash's response to the Senate on this day.²

2.4 Senator Faulkner questioned the Department on whether it informs itself of clients on the Commonwealth Register of Lobbyists, as well as that of the states and territories.³ Professor Halton advised her understanding that, as a matter of practice, it is not the responsibility of the Commonwealth to know who sees a state or territory minister, and whether they are on any registers, but undertook to take this on notice. Senator Faulkner emphasised the importance of the food labelling industry, in particular, being one where ministers from all jurisdictions needed to be involved.

2.5 Senator Seselja asked for particulars of the Department's staffing levels and meeting of efficiency dividend targets. Professor Halton provided a headcount of the Department from 30 June 2011 through to 31 January 2014, excluding former aged care staff from the data to account for recent machinery of government changes. The job reduction amount in that period roughly equated to a figure of 600 staff members, with the majority of those achieved through attrition. Professor Halton also confirmed the Department has not renewed contracts for the majority of its non-ongoing staff in that period.

Population Health⁴

2.6 Questions were asked in relation to the removal of the Department's health star rating website and Mr Furnival's involvement in the matter. Senator Wong took issue with the absence from the Estimates hearing of the officer who took the initial

1 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 6 - 13.

2 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 38.

3 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 36.

4 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 13 – 27.

call from Mr Furnival requesting the website be taken down.⁵ Professor Halton explained the decision behind the officer not to appear was taken out of concern for the welfare of the officer and reassured the committee that senior officers present had been sufficiently briefed to handle questions on the matter.⁶ Much of the subsequent discussion focussed on the precise wording of Mr Furnival's requests to the Department. The Department took a question on notice from Senator Wong as to the existence of any file notes detailing the relevant conversations, and the likelihood that these could be provided to the committee.⁷

2.7 The reasoning behind the government's decision to take down the website was also a subject of interest, with Senator Wong noting her understanding that the website was a multi-jurisdictional initiative.⁸ Professor Halton indicated that the Commonwealth-state relations in this regard are very complex⁹ and certain work had been delegated to the secretariat, which, alongside Minister Nash's view of requiring more education and information for people, gave the secretariat a clear understanding of the work it had to do.¹⁰

2.8 Senator Smith expressed his concern at a significant increase reported in HIV infection rates. Professor Baggoley related this to a 'composite of issues' and mentioned the AIDS 2014 conference in Melbourne as an important opportunity to help shed light on these. The Department conveyed there were five national strategies, including on blood borne virus and sexually transmitted infections, currently going through a process of being updated and at the beginning of a long period of consultation.¹¹

2.9 Senator McLucas enquired about the decision to cease funding to the Alcohol and other Drugs Advisory Council (ADCA), and particularly, whether Minister Nash had any meetings or briefings with the ADCA board or secretariat.¹² The Minister took this as a question on notice. She also noted that ADCA was not funded from 30 June 2013 as the previous government had not put funding arrangements in place, and cited duplication as her reason for the decision.¹³ A discussion was held as to how the National Drug Sector Information Service would be accommodated and Minister Nash acknowledged that there were no firm plans at this stage¹⁴ but that a review of drug

5 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 41 – 42.

6 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 41 – 42.

7 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 45.

8 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 49.

9 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 51.

10 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 50.

11 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 54.

12 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 55.

13 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 56.

14 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 58.

and alcohol organisations across the sector was currently taking place.¹⁵ Minister Nash took a question on notice from Senator McLucas as to whether and when the terms of reference for this review would be publicly released.¹⁶

2.10 The committee inquired into the status of the plain packaging of cigarettes initiative with the Department indicating that a post-implementation review is to commence by 1 December 2014.¹⁷ International attitudes and experiences were also canvassed, with particular mention made of New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Africa having an interest in the matter.¹⁸

2.11 The committee also discussed the following topics:

- (a) binge drinking, pregnancy warning labels and the National Alcohol Strategy;¹⁹
- (b) the National Diabetes Strategy and the appointment of the advisory committee;²⁰ and
- (c) the abolition of the advisory panel on infant formula and the current opportunities for complaints of a breach of the code.²¹

National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)²²

2.12 Senator Madigan directed questions to National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) on the process for identifying and managing any conflicts of interest in preparing the draft information paper on the evidence on wind farms and human health. NHMRC responded that there was a defined process and policy for the identification of conflicts and those deemed major resulted in exclusion in meetings on those issues. However, it pointed out a need to balance expertise in a specialised area and any interests that people may declare.²³ It also confirmed that further research would not be conducted by NHMRC officers, but in universities, medical research institutes and hospitals through an advertised process and with the use of peer review panels to do analysis on which research should be funded.²⁴ Further discussion was had regarding the conclusions drawn by the draft report and the growth of applications for project grants.²⁵

15 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 57 – 59.

16 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 60.

17 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 62.

18 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 62.

19 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 60 – 61.

20 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 63.

21 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 66.

22 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 68 – 72.

23 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 68.

24 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 69.

25 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 70 – 71.

Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA)²⁶

2.13 Senator Di Natale queried the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) on the lack of information he was able to access on levels of non-compliance and recall of products, especially in light of the Auditor-General's report in 2011–12 and a subsequent transparency review. The TGA confirmed that information on all compliance reviews and where products have been cancelled or removed from the register are available on their website.²⁷ The TGA took questions on notice as to the total number of products that had been reviewed and cancelled. However, it noted that an issue of concern for the TGA was the possibility of cancelled products reappearing on the shelves under a different name and it was looking at this alongside the overall regulation of complementary medicines.²⁸

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ)²⁹

2.14 Senator Whish-Wilson's asked about the COAG legislative and governance forum for food regulation and the agreement to extend the review period for the use of hemp for food until 30 June 2014. Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) explained the extension was to allow for, on the request of police ministers, further exploration on the potential for hemp foods to interfere with other drugs strategies, such as random roadside oral fluid drug testing.³⁰ The committee also discussed country of origin labelling for seafood in restaurants and standards for use of the term 'organic'.³¹

National Preventative Health Agency (NPHA)³²

2.15 Senator Moore had a discussion with the National Preventative Health Agency (NPHA) on the process for appointment of its advisory council. Professor Halton indicated that the 'standard practice' for such appointments, especially in relation to advice sought, was not yet established under the new government.³³ NPHA was asked for details on the progress of the prevention network with Medicare Locals and the committee heard that it had funding of \$5.17 million over three years from 2012 – 2015. It undertook to provide on notice a list of seven grants it had awarded using this funding and the terms and basis for which these were offered. NPHA noted a review looking into performance indicators and progress reports for grants issued to Medicare Locals, expected to be completed by the end of June 2015.³⁴ Senator Moore

26 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 72 – 75.

27 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 73.

28 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 74.

29 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 75 – 77.

30 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 75.

31 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 76 – 77.

32 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 77 – 80.

33 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 78.

34 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 78 – 79.

also inquired into the release of the draft paper on alcohol advertising and key recommendations to free-to-air television bodies.³⁵

Office of the Gene Technology Regulator³⁶

2.16 The Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) emphasised that its function and role related to risk assessment and management of risk to public health and human health and the environment, but noted its lack of jurisdiction to take decisions based on economic and trade related issues. Senator Siewert followed with questions on monitoring trials, coexistence, swathing and individual licence conditions, several of which were taken on notice.³⁷

Primary Care³⁸

2.17 Senator McLucas had questions into the processes for review of Medicare Locals, the Chief Allied Health Officer, practice incentive payments and GP super clinics. With regard to Medicare Locals, the Department advised that submissions were invited from a select group but that unsolicited responses were also accepted.³⁹ Several follow up questions relating to the publication of submissions and the Deloitte audit of Medicare Locals were taken on notice by Minister Nash and her Department.⁴⁰ The Department confirmed the terms of reference for the audit were made public by the Minister in a press release dated 16 December 2013.⁴¹ Senator Smith had a discussion with the Department on concerns raised by the Wheatbelt GP Network and the ceasing of funding for allied health services by south-west Western Australian Medicare Locals from 1 July 2014.⁴²

2.18 The committee requested Minister Nash to consider continuing the long standing practice of providing updates on the GP super clinics through a table populated by the Department for estimates. Minister Nash agreed to take this on notice.⁴³ Senator Seselja asked for updates on the construction of GP super clinics across the country, and the Department indicated it would take these questions on notice.⁴⁴

2.19 A final discussion occurred around the practice incentive payments for teaching, and the Department informed the committee that consideration of the

35 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 79

36 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 80 – 82.

37 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 81 – 82.

38 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 82 – 90.

39 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 82

40 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 83 – 85.

41 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 85

42 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 85

43 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 87

44 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 87.

government's election commitment to double these payments was currently underway.⁴⁵

Australian Sports Commission (ASC)⁴⁶

2.20 Senator Lundy invited the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) to give the committee an update on the Sport Leadership Grants and Scholarship for Women program. The ASC advised it is currently undertaking a review to understand what its future budgetary requirements were in response to a question about whether it intended to continue this program in 2014 – 2015.⁴⁷ It took several questions on notice related to details about current grants and the future of grants.⁴⁸ The ASC drew attention to the recent release of the ASC mandatory sports governance principles which apply to the seven largest funded sports and efforts to increase equal gender representation and diversity across sports boards.⁴⁹ The committee heard of the ASC's new approach to high performance sports, through its *Winning Edge* program, and changes to the way the Australian Institute of Sport operates now as an investor in sports and a provider of key services.⁵⁰

Office for Sport⁵¹

2.21 The Office of Sport was questioned on changes to the sporting communities grants program by Senator Farrell, with particular reference to the reversal of some of these grants.⁵² The committee heard that of nine projects announced in the pre-election fiscal outlook, five of them were reversed in MYEFO.⁵³

Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA)⁵⁴

2.22 Senator Farrell had questions for the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) on an investigation by the Australian Federal Police and Deloitte that concluded information leaks from ASADA had not occurred. ASADA gave evidence as to the independent involvement of Garry Downes and Mick Palmer into its investigations.⁵⁵ The committee heard the investigation phase of Operation Cobia into

45 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 89.

46 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 90 – 93.

47 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 90

48 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 91

49 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 91 – 92.

50 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 93.

51 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 93 – 95.

52 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 93.

53 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 94.

54 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 95.

55 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 96.

the AFL and the NRL had been completed and the next steps were to review the evidence and form briefs.⁵⁶

Acute Care⁵⁷

2.23 The Department provided the committee with an update on the progress of the public dental national partnership agreement.⁵⁸

2.24 Senator McLucas inquired into the latest figures on organ donation, and four consecutive years of growth in deceased donation and transplantation were reported by the Department.⁵⁹ The Living Donors program was also discussed, and in particular, efforts to communicate the existence of the program more broadly to employers and the community.⁶⁰ The Department took a question on notice on whether a particular advertising campaign existed.⁶¹

2.25 Senator Brown asked questions in relation to the Child Dental Benefits Schedule including the eligibility criteria, communications strategies and administrative arrangements between the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services to manage the schedule.⁶²

2.26 Senator Whish-Wilson and Senator Peris asked for information relating to updates and progress of specific hospitals, respectively, the Mersey Community Hospital in Tasmania, and Palmerston Hospital and Darwin Hospital in the Northern Territory, most of which were taken on notice by the Department.⁶³ With regard to the Palmerston Hospital, the committee was told the change of government in the Northern Territory has also resulted in a different direction for the project but negotiations are still underway to provide further detail.⁶⁴

National Blood Authority (NBA)⁶⁵

2.27 The National Blood Authority (NBA) informed the committee of a return of \$85 million to the budget which could be partly attributed to a dramatic reduction in the demand for fresh blood. The committee heard blood donations were still necessary, but the key message was better handling was increasing the utility of

56 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 96.

57 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 97 – 108.

58 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 97.

59 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 99.

60 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 100.

61 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 100.

62 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 103 – 104.

63 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 105 – 107.

64 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 106

65 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 102 – 108.

these.⁶⁶ Senator Seselja also inquired into comprehensive care arrangements for treatment of bleeding disorders, such as haemophilia.⁶⁷

Mental Health⁶⁸

2.28 Senator McLucas requested an update on headspace, including future funding and the evaluation of the headspace model which commenced in January 2013 and is expected to conclude in May 2015.⁶⁹ The Department also confirmed a \$5 million commitment had been made for the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre to deliver a comprehensive new e-mental health platform connecting young people to online resources.⁷⁰

2.29 Senator McLucas made some enquiries into the National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, and was informed that discussions with Orygen on the delivery of that commitment had commenced, but that funding was yet to be endorsed.⁷¹ Another topic of interest to the committee related to gaps highlighted by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in dealing effectively with adult survivors of childhood trauma. Senator Wright requested further detail on what plans, if any, existed for the government and Department to respond to the gaps highlighted by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in dealing effectively with adult survivors of childhood trauma.⁷² Professor Baggoley described the training general practitioner's received in mental health and undertook to provide further specific detail.⁷³ The Department also took questions on notice for any work it has performed to integrate care for those who have drug and alcohol dependencies in the context of childhood trauma.⁷⁴

National Mental Health Commission (NMHC)⁷⁵

2.30 Senator Wright led questions on the National Mental Health Commission's review, and in particular, plans for engagement with the mental health sector and the process for inviting and publishing submissions.⁷⁶ Senator McLucas supplemented this with a question on how the terms of reference for the review were established.⁷⁷

66 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 102

67 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 103

68 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 113 – 119.

69 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 115

70 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 115

71 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 115

72 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 117

73 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 118

74 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 118

75 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 109 – 113.

76 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 109

77 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 109.

The NMHC gave evidence of the review focussing on showing that action was being taken on lengthy consultations that have occurred over the past two years.⁷⁸ The submissions are intended to cover efficiency, effectiveness, gaps in services, duplication and red tape.⁷⁹ The committee heard of changes to the terms of reference following the change of government and the processes of consultation between the NMHC, the Department and the Minister's Office.⁸⁰ The NMHC informed that no public forums were being undertaken as part of the review, and instead targeted consultations were being set up.⁸¹ The NMHC accepted a question on notice to provide a list of 28 Commonwealth entities that have been spoken with.⁸² Minister Nash took some questions on notice about outcomes from the government's consideration of the terms of five mental health commissioners which expired on 31 December 2013.⁸³

Health System Capacity and Quality⁸⁴

2.31 The committee requested an update on the e-Health review and how many records have been created. The Department confirmed there were over 1.4 million consumers and the initiative was being promoted through Medicare Locals and state hospitals, noting continued growth through the latter channel.⁸⁵ Senator Moore asked for a breakdown of the data across states and month-by-month since inception, which was taken on notice by the Department.⁸⁶ Also taken on notice were several questions relating to the PCEHR review and future funding.⁸⁷

2.32 A discussion also occurred under this outcome of regional cancer centres that had been established, funding and the timing for the remaining centres to become operational.⁸⁸ The Department confirmed an evaluation was underway of these centres and undertook to provide a copy of the terms of reference to Senator Moore.⁸⁹

78 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 109.

79 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 109.

80 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 110.

81 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 111.

82 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 112.

83 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 111 – 112.

84 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 119 – 123.

85 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 119 – 120.

86 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 121.

87 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 121.

88 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 123.

89 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 125.

Health Workforce Capacity⁹⁰

2.33 Senator Di Natale inquired into the Commonwealth Medical Internships initiative and asked for an explanation as to why, despite an election promise to deliver 100 new medical internships, the government had only offered 76. The Department indicated the commitment was actually for up to 100 places, and it would depend on numerous factors including affordability and capacity of hospitals as to how many were actually offered.⁹¹

2.34 Senator McLucas then questioned whether the Department was aware of an issue involving the Queensland Department of Health implementing changes that could result in a number of doctors, particularly in rural areas, moving from the public hospital system. Professor Halton replied she was aware but there was no role for the Commonwealth in developing contingency plans, as the states are the managers of the hospital financing and industrial relations systems.⁹²

2.35 A discussion followed about the potential for an increase in medical schools, and Minister Nash agreed to accept questions on notice regarding whether the Coalition had committed to fund additional medical schools.⁹³ Professor Halton provided quite a detailed overview and history of the process by which additional medical school proposals are assessed by the Department.⁹⁴

2.36 Senator McLucas posed a series of questions to Minister Nash on whether she had met with certain organisations, to which the Minister agreed to take these on notice.⁹⁵

Access to Medical Services⁹⁶

2.37 Senator McLucas asked the Department to update the committee about work on the impact of a Medicare co-payment.⁹⁷ There was also some discussion about visits to the GP, and its proportional cost for the government compared to other specialist services and hospitalisation. Professor Halton was also asked about whether the Department shares the data it collects and analysis with Treasury, to which she replied it may from time to time on an "as required" basis.⁹⁸

90 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 127 – 133.

91 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 127.

92 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 129.

93 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 131.

94 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 132.

95 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 132.

96 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 134 – 136.

97 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 134.

98 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 135.

Access to Pharmaceutical Services⁹⁹

2.38 Senator Di Natale requested information on the Life Saving Drugs Program and in particular, guidelines for assessing whether a drug demonstrated substantial life assessment. The Department described the process for how a submission is assessed and then provided to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee consisting of 18 members from a range of fields, for the purpose of bringing balance to the assessment.¹⁰⁰ The Department indicated that the review of the Life Saving Drugs Program was awaiting decision as to whether it would proceed.¹⁰¹

2.39 A discussion occurred around which applications were currently pending or due for PBAC consideration, with the drugs Ivacaftor and Soliris receiving a specific mention.¹⁰² Companies will be advised of outcomes in relation to their application in the week following the 11 March 2014.

2.40 Senator Di Natale expressed concern in the cap of 20 home medicines reviews per month per provider. Professor Halton attributed this to an exponential growth in the program and the fact this was not an open-ended budget.¹⁰³ The Department confirmed that it was limiting the number that a pharmacist can claim and determining that only section 90 accredited pharmacists could put claims in, rather than excluding pharmacists per se as was the suggestion put to it by Senator Di Natale.¹⁰⁴ The Department agreed to take on notice the cap that was agreed to when the agreement was first negotiated for the program.¹⁰⁵

Rural Health¹⁰⁶

2.41 Some general questions were asked about rural health programs by Senator McLucas, and the Department agreed to provide a list of all programs ongoing in Rural and Regional Health Australia and how much funding was being committed for these in the next financial year and forward years.¹⁰⁷

Biosecurity and Emergency Response¹⁰⁸

2.42 Senator Di Natale requested an update on the progress with response to antimicrobial resistance.¹⁰⁹ Professor Halton agreed to make the terms of reference

99 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, pp 136 – 142.

100 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 137.

101 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 137.

102 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 138.

103 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 140.

104 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 141.

105 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 141.

106 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 142.

107 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 142.

108 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 144.

109 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 142.

publicly available however could not put a timetable on the development of the strategy as talks with the government had still not commenced.¹¹⁰ She expressed the Department was taking this issue very seriously, mentioning it was a global problem.¹¹¹

2.43 Minister Nash responded to an earlier question of Senator McLucas to confirm that the Public Health Association, Heart Foundation and Choice had all met with her officer and advisors.¹¹²

110 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 145.

111 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 145.

112 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 26 February 2014, p. 148.

Chapter 3

Social Services Portfolio

Department of Social Services

3.1 This chapter outlines key issues discussed during the 2013-2014 additional estimates hearings for the Department of Social Services Portfolio.

3.2 The committee heard evidence from the department on Thursday 27 February 2014. Areas of the portfolio were called in the following order:

- Cross Portfolio/Corporate Matters;
- Seniors;
- Disability and Carers;
- National Disability Insurance Agency;
- Aged Care and Population Ageing;
- Aged Care Pricing Commissioner;
- Housing and Homelessness;
- Families;
- Australian Institute of Family Studies;
- Disability Employment Services and Working Age and Student Payments;
- Women;
- Community Capability and the Vulnerable;
- Settlement Services; and
- Multicultural Affairs.

*Cross Portfolio/Corporate Matters*¹

3.3 Proceedings commenced with Senator Moore leading an inquiry into the welfare reform review (the McClure Review) with questions regarding the terms of reference, membership of the McClure review team and approaches to consultation. The Department Secretary, Mr Pratt confirmed that draft terms of reference have not yet been publicly released. He described four pillars for reform around building individual and family capabilities, engaging with business, building community capacity and a simpler and sustainable income support system. Mr Pratt told the committee that the focus of the review at this stage was on working-age payments,

1 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 4 – 21.

rather than the aged pension or the family tax benefit.² A number of less substantial payments, such as the Disability Support Pension (DSP), might be considered depending on its impact on workforce participation. Mr Pratt outlined some other processes underway that could potentially interact with the McClure review, including the government's Commission of Audit.

3.4 The committee heard the review team is being led by three core public figures – Patrick McLure, Wesley Aird and Sally Sinclair – supported by a team of 14 departmental officers. The Department confirmed no formal consultation process had been established, but that approximately thirty consultations had taken place by invitation only³, to help start framing the thinking of the McClure review team.⁴ The organisations consulted included a mixture of business, peak community organisations, academics and specialists.⁵ On whether consumers of these welfare payments would be approached, Mr Pratt suggested that at the moment the McClure review is largely internal to government but this would be considered if it became a public process.⁶ Other topics discussed included the cost of the McClure review, and whether the standard principles of indexation and maintaining welfare parity with cost of living changes have been taken into account.⁷ In response to a question about whether people on current payments would be 'worse off'⁸ as a result of the review, Minister Fifield described the objective as being to support people into work and ensure our welfare system is on a sustainable footing; 'the objective is not to be punitive'.⁹

3.5 Senator Siewert asked whether there had been any discussions by the Department and the government on increasing the retirement age. Mr Pratt acknowledged that the aged pension is an area the Department engages in an ongoing dialogue with the government.¹⁰

3.6 Senator Seselja asked whether the Department intended to remain based in Tuggeranong in southern Canberra. The Department replied it had received nine proposals for accommodation, which were currently being considered, with a decision expected to be taken prior to the budget.¹¹

2 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 8.

3 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 10.

4 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 9.

5 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 10.

6 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 10.

7 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 11.

8 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 14.

9 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 14.

10 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 13.

11 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 14.

3.7 Senator Seselja inquired about costs incurred by the failure to have the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 passed last year. The Department estimated delayed revenue was in the vicinity of \$1 billion.¹²

3.8 Senator Seselja also asked what measures the Department had taken to meet its target of reducing staff by approximately 250 to 300 employees by the end of the 2013 – 2014 financial year. The Department informed the committee that it still needed to reduce staffing levels by 150 employees to meet that target and had approached the government for additional funds to manage those staff reductions. However, Mr Pratt warned that the complex machinery of government changes meant it was difficult to neatly compare the movement in headcount between the former Department of Families, Communities, Housing and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the new Department of Social Services.¹³ The Department confirmed it had engaged significantly fewer contractors and non-ongoing staff.¹⁴

3.9 Senator McLucas was told that a total of 1,221 people from the former Department of Health and Ageing had transferred to the Department of Social Services. The Department explained it had policy responsibility for dementia under the Aged Care portfolio, while the Department of Health retained core responsibility for palliative care. Senator McLucas inquired about formal arrangements for collaboration between DSS and Health, particularly on clinical issues. DSS responded it intended to have a formal discussion between senior staff shortly.¹⁵ Minister Fifield acknowledged there are shared interests for these two policy areas with Minister Dutton, and discussed measures his office took to ensure proper consultation occurred.¹⁶ Senator McLucas also inquired into the total cost the machinery of government changes for Aged Care, and to what extent this might impact on services delivered.¹⁷ Mr Pratt confirmed that the costs are primarily incurred by the corporate part of the Department and did not expect any impact on actual servicing.¹⁸

3.10 Senator Moore requested an update on the grants management system (FOFMS), and was informed that most grants would be updated on the system by 1 July 2014, including those within the aged care, settlement services and multicultural affairs portfolios.¹⁹

12 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 28.

13 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 16.

14 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 17.

15 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 18.

16 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 19.

17 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 19.

18 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 19.

19 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 20 – 21.

Seniors²⁰

3.11 Senator Brown requested information from the Department on what material had been covered in its meetings with the Commission of Audit, especially in relation to the aged pension. Mr Pratt responded that much of the discussions fell into the realm of deliberative matters, but indicated that consideration had been given to efficiency proposals, removing duplication, and Commonwealth-state arrangements.²¹ Without referring to any specific payments or programs, the Department indicated it had provided information on expenditure, participation, recipients of supports and assistance.²² The Department took on notice a question of how many people access the age pension broken down by age bracket, gender and state and territory.²³ Senator Moore also expressed interest in accessing information on the mobility of age pension recipients.²⁴

3.12 Senator Siewert inquired into the boundaries between the age pension and the disability support pension (DSP)²⁵, and in particular the issue of ineligibility for the DSP for people developing a condition, such as deafblindness, over the age of 65.²⁶ The Department indicated any overlap in payments could now be more effectively handled as responsibility for both was now held by DSS. The Department's priority is to ensure a new departmental structure consistent with its outcomes to enable better analysis of cross-payment issues.²⁷ The committee raised concerns about an apparently lower level of support offered by states to recipients of the age pension, as opposed to the DSP.²⁸

Disability and Carers²⁹

3.13 The Department told the committee that there are currently no new grant funding rounds open within the disability and carers area³⁰, or anywhere else in the

20 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 21 – 28.

21 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 22.

22 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 22.

23 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 23.

24 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 24.

25 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 23.

26 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 28.

27 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 25.

28 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 26.

29 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 29 – 30.

30 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 29.

Department³¹. It did confirm the Department's website as the central source of information relating to current grants, and those funded in the previous two years.³²

National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)³³

3.14 Senator McLucas asked questions of the Department and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) relating to changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) since the election. The Deputy Secretary, Ms Wilson confirmed that no changes had occurred to the policy parameters of the scheme, but that continuous improvements were being implemented as a result of trial site experiences.³⁴ The Group Manager, Dr Hartland noted there had been a focus on quality, Tier 2 and workforce and sector development.³⁵ Minister Fifield confirmed there had been no changes to the budget or funding envelope position.³⁶

3.15 The committee heard that COAG had requested the COAG Ministerial Council on Disability Reform to report back in March 2014 on a range of issues, and cost drivers in particular.³⁷ Ms Wilson spoke about the importance of getting good individualised data and the CEO of the NDIA, Mr Bowen, commented on a number of changes as a result of a review of the process and operating guidelines.³⁸

3.16 A discussion occurred about differences in first and second quarter results, and Senator McLucas asked Minister Fifield whether envisaged a cap on supports, to which he replied he did not.³⁹ Minister Fifield also explained the role of the NDIS Board as his prime source of advice on whether milestones could be achieved.⁴⁰ Senator Smith made reference to a reduction in some of the higher costs of packages from 30 per cent to 15 per cent and the fall in cost of individual average plans from \$46,290 to \$40,466 between first and second quarter results. Mr Bowen stated he would not draw too many conclusions on the variations as they were more likely a factor of the phasing schedule.⁴¹

3.17 Mr Bowen noted some changes implemented since 6 January 2014 included the use of section 55 notices to speed up access, and the holding of NDIS readiness

31 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 29.

32 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 29.

33 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 30 – 47.

34 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 30.

35 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 30.

36 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 31.

37 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 31.

38 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 31.

39 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 32.

40 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 32.

41 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 34.

workshops to assist people in considering plan options prior to their individual meeting.⁴² In response to a high number of access requests being driven by people whose support needs are best met in another system, further detail around eligibility and the determination of 'reasonable' and 'necessary' has been added to the operational guidelines.⁴³ Mr Bowen mentioned work around establishing an evidence base for what leads to good outcomes, and research projects underway.⁴⁴

3.18 A key aspect of the successful delivery of the NDIS will be to manage and meet the public's expectations in terms of adequate supports for participants while keeping scheme costs under control. Senator Smith asked about any 'expectation gaps' within the community. Mr Bowen cited the gap was a function of behaviour driven by how people previously had to access disability services but that attitudes are slowly changing.⁴⁵

3.19 Further topics of discussion included the need for mainstream housing efforts to continue outside of the NDIS,⁴⁶ discrepancies in numbers found in the bilateral agreements and the Scheme Actuary's analysis,⁴⁷ and support available for people deemed ineligible for the NDIS.⁴⁸ Senator Siewert inquired into progress being made in WA, and Dr Hartland confirmed the intergovernmental agreements were close to finalisation for the establishment of the trial later this year.⁴⁹ Senator Seselja had questions in relation to the ACT trial site. The committee was informed it would be based on learnings from other trial sites, including the best way to bring people into the scheme, whether by age, provider or another denominator.⁵⁰

3.20 Senator Moore inquired into what reviews had been commissioned by the government, DSS or NDIA. Mr Bowen discussed the Boston Consulting Group review on efficient delivery of the core and critical functions of the NDIA. A Board initiated capability review by Mr Jeff Whalan, Dr Jeff Harmer and Mr Peter Anston, had delivered its completed report to the Board for consideration.⁵¹ He also noted a review on mitigation strategies around full scheme transition that was soon to commence.⁵² Ms Wilson made reference to the independent KPMG review

42 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 34.

43 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 35.

44 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 35.

45 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 35 – 36.

46 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 37.

47 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 37.

48 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 38.

49 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 39.

50 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 39.

51 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 42.

52 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 40.

commissioned by the Department to look at cost drivers and plan completion, as well as work on readiness for the next trials⁵³. The Department and the NDIA took several questions on notice related to funding and terms of reference for these reviews.⁵⁴

3.21 Senator Smith asked for clarification of statements made by parliamentarians in the media with reference to the privatisation of NDIS. Minister Fifield made a distinction between service delivery, which was always designed to be fulfilled by not-for-profit organisations and private organisations, and administrative functions, some of which is already being outsourced.⁵⁵ However, he declared there were no plans or intentions to privatise or sell the scheme as there was "nothing to sell".⁵⁶

3.22 The committee also discussed the variance in numbers in the bilateral agreements and those in the actuarial analysis in the second quarterly report, with South Australia accounting for the majority of these figures.⁵⁷ Dr Hartland emphasised that the re-estimate of trial sites does not affect full scheme costs, but average costs still do need to be watched and managed closely.⁵⁸

Aged Care and Population Ageing⁵⁹

3.23 The committee inquired into the reallocation of the \$1.1 billion Aged Care Workforce Supplement. Mr Pratt indicated the Department was looking at a range of options to advise the government on how the money could be disbursed in terms of its election commitments, and receiving input from a variety of stakeholders.⁶⁰ The Department informed the committee of transitional arrangements in place to maintain the supplement for providers who had signed up, with an allocation of approximately \$5 million.⁶¹ Senator Smith also asked about the conditions for receiving the supplement, and was told that in theory all providers of residential care, home care, HACC and the National Respite for Carers program would have been eligible. Despite this, the Department noted that only 15 out of roughly 1000 providers had made the required commitments.⁶²

3.24 Senator McLucas then inquired into the progress made on updating the imminent changes to Medicare on 1 July 2014. The Department noted the three main

53 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 41.

54 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 42.

55 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 43.

56 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 43.

57 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 45.

58 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 45.

59 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 47 – 62.

60 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 47.

61 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 49.

62 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 53.

changes occurring are to the financing arrangements for both home care and residential care, legislative change focussing on subordinate legislation and the means testing arrangements.⁶³ The Department noted that the primary ways these changes would be communicated was through the MyAged Care website and the contact centre.⁶⁴

3.25 Senator Peris directed some questions on funding for aged care in the Northern Territory. The Department undertook to provide Senator Peris with information on financial contributions made over the past four years, applications to establish or build new aged care facilities, and numbers of aged care patients in hospital due to shortages in adequate facilities.⁶⁵

3.26 The committee had a discussion on the new Home Support Program, which it was told was a consolidation of the National Respite for Carers Program, day therapy centres, assistance with care, housing for the aged and the Commonwealth HACC programs into a single program from 1 July 2015.⁶⁶ Consumer directed care was still observed as a critical focus driving the program.⁶⁷

3.27 The committee inquired into the government's progress in fulfilling its election commitment to develop a high level steering committee in agreement with the aged care sector to work on priorities for further reform and the red tape reduction agenda.⁶⁸ Minister Fifield indicated the announcement on membership of the steering committee was forthcoming, but it was broadly representative, including of consumer groups.⁶⁹ The committee heard the funding for this group was provided as part of the *Living Longer. Living Better* package and not the workforce supplement.⁷⁰

3.28 The final session in this outcome concerned the Torres Strait aged care master plan.⁷¹ The Department informed the committee the tender for a consultant for the master plan had been set up. Some discussion also occurred around the relocation of the Star of the Sea, an aged care facility located on Thursday Island.⁷²

63 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 51.

64 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 51.

65 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 53 – 54.

66 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 56.

67 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 57.

68 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 57.

69 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 57.

70 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 58.

71 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 60.

72 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 61.

Housing and Homelessness⁷³

3.29 The Department confirmed that a transitional National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPA) was in place until the end of June 2014, but it was classified as a terminating initiative as it had not received ongoing funding.⁷⁴ A decision had still not been taken by the government as to its future.⁷⁵ Senator McLucas also inquired about any discussions or negotiations that had taken place between Minister Fifield and his state and territory counterparts to extend the funding under the NPA.⁷⁶ There was a discussion about the commitment of both opposition and government parties to addressing homelessness.⁷⁷ The Department indicated the government does not favour a target based approach to homelessness but rather one that is broader than social and low income housing, and based on mapping the supply.⁷⁸

3.30 The committee raised concerns about the delay in processing applications for the National Rental Affordability Scheme and discussed consultations informing potential changes to the scheme.⁷⁹ The National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) was also mentioned and the Department outlined the areas the Minister was interested in addressing, including the failure of the NAHA to deliver a growth in the supply of dwellings.⁸⁰

3.31 Senator McLucas asked about what formal processes there are for a state, territory or Commonwealth minister to raise issues around housing and homelessness. Mr Pratt suggested an exceptional meeting could be organised. The Department also addressed concerns about engaging with the housing and homelessness sector with reference to a new Social Services Ministerial Advisory Council.⁸¹ The committee was informed that to avoid duplication, the government had decided the Commonwealth would no longer be participating in the National Regulatory Council or contributing funding for its establishment.⁸²

73 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 62 – 75.

74 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 62.

75 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 63.

76 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 65.

77 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 66 – 67.

78 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 69.

79 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 70.

80 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 71.

81 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 73.

82 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 73.

Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)⁸³

3.32 Senator Brown inquired into the forced adoption support services scoping study and was informed that the report was near finalisation.⁸⁴ Dr Higgins gave a comprehensive overview of the methodology employed, which included workshops and inviting written submissions. Professor Hayes noted the AIFS was currently undertaking 54 studies and undertook to provide the committee with a list of the projects it was involved in.⁸⁵ Specific mention was made of the Australian Temperament Project, Pathways of Care, Beyond 18, Footprints in Time and Family Pathways.

Families⁸⁶

3.33 The first discussion under this outcome focussed on the Department's role in the drought assistance efforts through the Family Support Program and Targeted Community Care Program which has funding of up to \$10.7 million for the provision of services to 4,000 to 5,000 people through existing providers.⁸⁷ Senator Brown requested information on any contracts that had been entered into, but was told there were none.⁸⁸ Senator Siewert sought clarification on the division of responsibilities between the Department of Social Services, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Human Services.⁸⁹

3.34 The committee asked about the review of the current paid parental scheme and its expected completion date, which was confirmed to be near finalisation.⁹⁰ The current budgeted expenses for paid parental leave were noted as \$1.579 billion for 2013 – 2014, but the Department could not provide the figure for how much the new scheme was expected to cost.⁹¹ The Department indicated the government was still considering some key parameters of the scheme, including the definition of base salary and replacement wage⁹² and work around costing the scheme and drafting legislation were currently taking place.⁹³ Senator Smith asked about whether businesses had expressed concerns about the administration and operation of the

83 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 75 – 78.

84 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 76.

85 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 77.

86 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 78 – 93.

87 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 79.

88 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 80.

89 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 81.

90 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 81.

91 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 82.

92 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 82.

93 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 83.

current scheme.⁹⁴ Minister Fifield confirmed the government's commitment to deliver the scheme by the same date and within the same scope as what it promised at the election.⁹⁵

3.35 Senator Brown sought information on new funding agreements under the Family Support Program. The Department indicated the initial work was focussed on reducing red tape in all grant funding programs, leading to a process of re-negotiating agreements.⁹⁶ The new agreements would be for a longer term of five years.⁹⁷

3.36 Senator Siewert inquired into the business reallocation of disability management services process. The Department noted the outcomes of the star rating system for service providers were announced on 28 November 2013 and the complete transition was to take place on 3 March 2014. The committee heard that 8,000 people were impacted by the process, and the changes to their provider were communicated to them through a letter at the end of January.⁹⁸ The Department confirmed that around 15 per cent of contracts were re-allocated around the country to high performing providers.⁹⁹

Women¹⁰⁰

3.37 Senator Moore led the discussion by inquiring into the current arrangements for the sharing of policy responsibility between the Office for Women and the Department of Social Services, particularly the second action plan for women. The Department emphasised that Minister Andrews and Minister Cash were approaching this in a collaborative way, but the Office for Women was taking a leading role in some of the high-level women's issues more broadly speaking.¹⁰¹ The Department explained the relationship between the first action plan and the second action plan, which it expected would be ready by June 2014.¹⁰² The second action plan was intended to set future directions and priorities by building on the work of the first action plan.¹⁰³ The committee heard of international experiences relating to violence against women, and how Australia had participated in roundtable discussions on this

94 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 84.

95 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 85.

96 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 85.

97 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 86.

98 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 89.

99 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 90.

100 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 93 – 99.

101 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 93.

102 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 94.

103 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 94.

topic.¹⁰⁴ An evaluation of the framework was being developed for the 12 years of the national plan.¹⁰⁵

3.38 The final part of the discussion related to one-off grants for respectful relationships and community action, and the ongoing responsibility of the Department for education programs within schools.¹⁰⁶ The Department also emphasised the Commonwealth did not hand money over to a particular state but rather funded national initiatives of value to most or all jurisdictions.¹⁰⁷

Community Capability and the Vulnerable¹⁰⁸

3.39 Senator Seselja inquired into applications the Department had received for exemption from the ATM limit measure, and specifically, how much staff time was being dedicated to considering these applications. The Department informed the committee it had received 3,500 applications and there were seven staff members currently assessing these.¹⁰⁹ It could not indicate the rationale behind the majority of these exemption applications but did discuss the legislative grounds which they may be based on.¹¹⁰ Senator Seselja also made reference later in the outcome to an online *Guardian* story regarding comments made by the director of an ATM operator which indicated a misunderstanding of a ministerial directive.¹¹¹ The Department declined to comment on this case specifically, or any others when pressed, but confirmed the process of responding to reports of potential non-compliance was ongoing.¹¹²

3.40 Senator Stephens requested an update on the National Secretariats Funding Program. The Department noted that this program was being considered in terms of a grant reform process currently underway. The main features of this reform included the reduction of red tape, longer term agreements with organisations, simpler arrangements, one contract per organisation and reduced reporting requirements for organisations.¹¹³

104 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 96 – 97.

105 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 99.

106 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 97.

107 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 99.

108 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 100 – 111.

109 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 101.

110 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 101 – 102.

111 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 110.

112 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 111.

113 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 103.

3.41 The committee sought information on the re-establishment of Community Business Partnerships. The Department indicated that this would occur by the end of March 2014.¹¹⁴

3.42 Senator Siewert focussed attention on the government's proposed abolition of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and asked for detailed information on stakeholders that had been consulted on any future processes to transfer its functions.¹¹⁵ The Department noted the government's intention to create the National Centre for Excellence which would have an educational, support and broad research function rather than a regulatory one.¹¹⁶ Senator Smith questioned the purpose of a register of charities, to which the Department responded it was to allow the public to determine the bona fides of a charity.¹¹⁷ The Department noted the importance of balancing regulation with reducing the imposition on organisations, in light of a discussion about the ABC's *7.30 Report* about Care4Kids.¹¹⁸

3.43 The committee then heard about the evaluation of place-based income management, currently being undertaken by Deloitte Access Economics.¹¹⁹ The final report for the longer term Northern Territory evaluation is expected in June 2014.¹²⁰

Settlement Services and Multicultural Affairs¹²¹

3.44 Senator Moore inquired into the date for when new settlement grant applications would open. The Department responded that any such grants were currently being considered in the reform process.¹²² The Humanitarian Settlement Services program, however, was to continue as it was a procured arrangement rather than a grant. An allocation of \$105 million had been given to this program, which includes the Complex Case Support program for entrants requiring specialised services.¹²³ The committee heard this was to be reduced to \$81.7 million for the following year, to reflect the new government reverting to a program accepting a lower number of humanitarian entrants, than what was committed to by the previous government in its final year.¹²⁴

114 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 101.

115 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 105.

116 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 104.

117 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 107.

118 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 107 – 108.

119 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 108 – 109.

120 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 109.

121 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 111 – 117.

122 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 111.

123 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 112.

124 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 113.

3.45 Senator Smith made inquiries about the progress of the National Settlement Framework and interactions with migrant resource centres.¹²⁵ The Department clarified that the government may fund programs run out of migrant resource centres, rather than the organisation per se.¹²⁶

3.46 The final part of the outcome covered questions on the Building Multicultural Communities Program and the reduction of the original allocation for the program by \$11.5 million in the MYEFO.¹²⁷ Senator Moore requested clarification on decisions to cut funding to organisations who did not return paperwork in time, and how such decisions were communicated.¹²⁸ The Department took a question on notice about whether a month turnaround to return paperwork was standard practice in terms of funding streams.¹²⁹ The Department also agreed to provide the committee with information on arrangements for the management of grants through the newly established program office.¹³⁰

125 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 114.

126 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 114.

127 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 115.

128 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 115.

129 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 116.

130 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 117.

Chapter 4

Human Services Portfolio

Department of Human Services

4.1 This chapter contains key issues discussed during the 2013-2014 additional estimates hearings for the Human Services portfolio.

4.2 The committee heard evidence from the Human Services portfolio on Thursday 27 February 2014. Areas of the portfolio were called in the following order:

- Australian Hearing Services;
- Corporate; and
- Services to the Community.

Australian Hearing Services¹

4.3 Senator Cameron inquired into the level of awareness around consultations of the National Acoustic Laboratories and Australian Hearing Services being privatised.² There was some debate about the veracity of such claims, with Minister Payne indicating she was not aware of these discussions.³

Corporate⁴

4.4 Senator Siewert requested an explanation of the role of the Customer First system. The Department explained it was a new computer system that manages the front end of interactions that staff have with customers who walk into a Centrelink office.⁵ Senator Siewert followed up with questions on whether data on the system could be shared between departments⁶ and was told this may be possible under legislative requirements.⁷ The Department was also questioned about the propensity for the system to experience technical difficulties⁸ as well as on the KPMG review of service delivery reform.⁹

4.5 The committee then discussed the newly announced Interim Farm Household Allowance in regard to drought relief for farmers. Senator Cameron asked for detail

1 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 118 – 121.

2 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 119.

3 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 119.

4 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 121 – 132.

5 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 122.

6 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 121.

7 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 122.

8 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 123 – 124.

9 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 124.

around the eligibility requirements and asset test for access to this payment.¹⁰ The Department stated the assets test was higher now, allowing a farmer to own assets of up to \$2.5 million as opposed to \$1.3 million previously¹¹, however it declined to comment on the policy behind the eligibility requirements, suggesting such questions be directed towards the Department of Agriculture.¹²

4.6 Senator Cameron and Senator Seselja both inquired into staffing levels of the Department, and Ms Campbell noted a redundancy bill of some \$35 million existed, which the Department was currently discussing with the government.¹³

4.7 Senator Seselja engaged in a comprehensive discussion with Ms Campbell regarding the status of meeting savings proposals the Department had received.¹⁴

4.8 Senator Cameron inquired about correspondence between the Department of Human Services and the NSW Attorney-General's Department in regards to payments relating to the bushfires in the Blue Mountains.¹⁵

4.9 The Department informed the committee that seven of the programs within the Pharmacy Agreement 5 were no longer being provided as of 12 February 2014 and agreed to provide a list of these on notice.¹⁶

Services to the Community¹⁷

4.10 Senator Siewert inquired into disaster relief payments, specifically in relation to people of Morwell who are on some form of income support and whether a process existed to take their situations into account.¹⁸ The Department responded that Morwell posed a "difficult situation"¹⁹ and discussed arrangements it had made to maintain a smaller staff presence there and reduce the amount of contact necessary for clients to make.²⁰ The Department took a question on notice regarding how this impacted on obligations recipients had to report regularly to Job Services Australia.²¹

4.11 Senator Siewert asked questions on customer wait times, acknowledging it was a continuing challenge for the Department.²² Ms Campbell replied strong

10 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 125.

11 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 125.

12 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 126.

13 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 128.

14 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 128.

15 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 131.

16 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 131.

17 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 132 – 138.

18 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 133.

19 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 133.

20 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 134.

21 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 134.

22 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 135.

encouragement was being provided to the public to access its online services, but there were situations where the problem may be more complex and require a face to face or telephone discussion.²³ Mr Rimmer spoke of the Departments attempts to address such challenges within Centrelink call centre performance through five main ways. These include the use of mobile phone apps, place-in-queue technology, reducing the need for people to call, increasing call centre efficiency and adjusting resources through the smart-centre approach.²⁴

4.12 There was a brief discussion about whether an increase in calls could be attributed to any recent government indications of reforming eligibility requirements for certain payments.²⁵

4.13 Senator Cameron asked some final questions on the process by which people moved from Newstart to the Disability Support Pension.²⁶ The Department referred to a series of checks and balances in place to ensure people had a pathway into employment and jobs.²⁷

Senator Dean Smith

Chair

23 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 135.

24 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, pp 135 – 136.

25 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 137.

26 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 137.

27 *Proof Estimates Hansard*, 27 February 2014, p. 137.

Appendix 1

Departments and agencies under the Committee's oversight¹

Social Services Portfolio

- Department of Social Services (DSS)
- Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)

Health Portfolio

- Department of Health
- Australian National Preventive Health Agency (ANPHA)
- Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA)
- Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA)
- Australian Organ and Tissue Donation and Transplantation Authority
- Cancer Australia
- Independent Hospital Pricing Authority
- National Blood Authority
- National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)
- National Health Performance Authority
- Private Health Insurance Ombudsman
- Professional Services Review Scheme

Human Services Portfolio

- Department of Human Services (DHS)

1 This document has been prepared based on the Department of Finance's *Chart of 108 Agencies under the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 (FMA Act)* as at 1 November 2013, <http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/flipchart/docs/FMACACFlipchart.pdf>

Appendix 2

Commonwealth Authorities and Companies under the Committee's oversight¹

Department of Social Services

- National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)

Health and Ageing Portfolio

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand
- Health Workforce Australia
- Private Health Insurance Administration Council
- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care
- Australian Sports Commission (Australian Institute of Sport)

Human Services Portfolio

- Australian Hearing Services (Australian Hearing)

1 This document has been prepared based on the Department of Finance's *Chart of 85 bodies under the Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997 (CAC Act)* as at 1 November 2013, <http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/flipchart/docs/FMACACFlipchart.pdf>

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¹ Hansard page numbers referred to in this appendix are based on proof Hansards. Page numbers may vary slightly in the final official Hansard transcripts.

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