

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATION

Forty-fourth Report — “Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019” — Tabling

HON DR SALLY TALBOT (South West) [10.08 am]: I am directed to present the forty-fourth report of the Standing Committee on Legislation entitled “Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019”.

[See paper [4188](#).]

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: The report I have just tabled advises the house of the committee’s findings and recommendations regarding the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019. The bill implements some recommendations from the 2017 “Statutory Review of the Children and Community Services Act 2004”, progresses some recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and provides stronger powers for enforcing compliance with the act. The policy of the bill includes to work more closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and community-controlled organisations to better implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle, and build stronger connections for children in care. The committee is of the view that the bill effects positive changes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families; however, the committee respects stakeholder views that the bill falls short of fully implementing the placement principle.

The bill also aims to contribute to protecting children from harm by requiring ministers of religion to report child sexual abuse. Although this will likely contribute to child safety, the committee notes that it fails to fully implement the royal commission’s recommendation that, at a minimum, five groups of individuals become mandatory reporters. The report also canvasses opposition the committee heard to the clause providing that ministers of religion will not be exempt from mandatory reporting on the basis that information was disclosed during religious confession.

The committee has made findings and recommendations to improve the operation of the act. I commend the report to the house.