

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE
COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Sixth Report — “Annual Report 2019–2020” — Tabling

HON DR SALLY TALBOT (South West) [10.05 am]: I am directed to present the sixth report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People titled “Annual Report 2019–2020”.

[See paper [4482](#).]

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: The reporting period covered by this annual report includes the first several months of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated disruption that the virus and measures to contain its harmful effects brought to the daily lives of people throughout the world. Although Western Australia has successfully controlled the spread of COVID-19 in the community to date, the impact of the pandemic on the wellbeing of children and young people in this state has been significant. Importantly, the ongoing management of the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of the state’s recovery plan to mitigate the economic and social impacts of the pandemic are likely to remain the state’s highest priority for government and non-government agencies well into the future. The work of the Commissioner for Children and Young People has been substantially redirected to reflect these new priorities.

From the perspective of the oversight role played by the committee, it is worth noting that the work carried out by the commissioner in the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic focused closely on ensuring that children and young people have a voice about their experiences and used evidence gathered directly from children and young people as the basis for providing sound advice to government about how best to protect and advance the wellbeing of children and young people. It is of considerable significance that the themes identified by the commissioner in the responses of children and young people to the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic closely relate to the themes expressed during the commissioner’s inaugural “Speaking Out Survey 2019: The Views of WA Children and Young People on Their Wellbeing—a Summary Report”, which was tabled in Parliament in February 2020. The survey provides invaluable baseline data that tracks how children and young people are faring. As has been widely noted, this was the first representative sample of children and young people’s wellbeing undertaken in WA and it established a national benchmark. To gain maximum benefit from the richness of the information contained in the first “Speaking Out Survey”, the commissioner now plans to bring forward the next survey to early 2021. No doubt the possibility of having such detailed information about the views of children and young people on their health and wellbeing places WA in a unique position compared with other Australian states in being able to make informed decisions about how to deliver the best possible support and services to children and their families both immediately and into the future.

The other major issue with which the joint standing committee concerned itself during this reporting period was the implementation, monitoring and enforcement of child safe standards. The committee’s report on these matters, which focuses specifically on several recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, was tabled in August 2020. This annual report provides details of the months of work that the committee undertook to gather the evidence on which the report “From Words to Action: Fulfilling the Obligation to Be Child Safe” was based. I trust that the annual report will be of interest to those who understand the importance of the work carried by the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

In conclusion, I thank my fellow committee members Kyran O’Donnell, MLA; Hon Donna Faragher, MLC; and Jessica Stojkovski, MLA; as well as advisory officers Renée Gould and Michele Chiasson for their work during the fortieth Parliament. I commend the report to the house.