

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

Second Report — “Talking to the Experts: Responding to recommendations made by the Commissioner for Children and Young People in the School and Learning Consultation: Technical Report” — Tabling

HON DR SALLY TALBOT (South West) [10.10 am]: I am directed to present the second report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People titled “Talking to the Experts”.

[See paper 1788.]

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: Children and young people comprise approximately 23 per cent of our population. Western Australia’s nearly 600 000 children and young people are not able to participate in our democracy in the conventional manner. For this reason, our Commissioner for Children and Young People, Mr Colin Pettit, works closely with children and young people, their families, the community and the government to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of future generations.

Between July and November 2016, Commissioner Pettit and his team undertook a large-scale consultation with Western Australian students, canvassing the views of 1 812 school students across the state. By giving students the opportunity to express their views on their education, the commissioner demonstrated that the views of our children and young people on a matter that affects them the most would be given serious consideration and taken into account.

Having listened to these students, in January 2018, Commissioner Pettit produced a technical report associated with his school and learning consultation, complete with seven findings and 14 recommendations on how governing authorities might improve student engagement in our schools. The commissioner’s recommendations have addressed identified problems and, although it is likely relevant government agencies will take positive action to address these recommendations, there is no statutory requirement for a response from the government.

Regarding it as an important document for enhancing education policy and practice into the future, in June 2018, the committee sought responses to the technical report from several key education stakeholder groups. These responses were at once an endorsement of the consultation and an acknowledgement that although Western Australia boasts a largely excellent education system, there is also room for improvement. The committee’s interest in promoting the consultation also led it to host a briefing on the report by Commissioner Pettit for all members of Parliament in June 2018.

The report I table today includes two recommendations. The government of Western Australia should examine what changes to policy and practice arise from the commissioner’s findings and recommendations and explore the most effective way to implement these changes. It also should work with the commissioner to determine how best to enable the school and learning consultation process to be repeated with appropriate frequency for producing useful research-based insights into the future.

Thanks to Commissioner Pettit and his team, we have heard the voices of our students. By taking heed of the commissioner’s findings and recommendations, we will show our students that their voices are valued, and demonstrate our ongoing commitment to a society in which they are also healthy and safe.