

*Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People — Second Report —
Report review 2020–21: Examination of selected reports by the Commissioner for Children and Young People*
Resumed from 18 November 2021.

Motion

Hon JACKIE JARVIS: I move —

That the report be noted.

The second report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, *Report review 2020–21: Examination of selected reports by the Commissioner for Children and Young People*, was tabled in this place on 18 November 2021. I note that the chair of the committee, Robyn Clarke, overviewed a number of reports, together with her deputy and other members of the committee.

Today I wanted to focus on item 3, the commissioner's report on the decline in wellbeing for girls. It seems to be a theme today. Perhaps it is a slightly depressing time to be the mother of three daughters, having read through this report. I am particularly interested in the government's role versus where we stand on policy versus shining a light on matters. I note that this report comes out of a key finding of the commissioner's 2019 Speaking Out survey. That report identified that young females across WA rated their wellbeing less favourably than young men, particularly in the areas of mental health, self-perception, relationships, personal safety and experience of independence. As a result of this and troubled by these findings, the Commissioner for Children and Young People conducted a literature review of current evidence to further understand this, both in Australia and globally. This was published last August in a report entitled *Exploring the decline in wellbeing for Australian girls*. The findings will be used to develop a work program for the commissioner's office that will include analysis of relevant Speaking Out survey data. That is great. The government cannot always fix problems but we can certainly shine a light on them and then we can look at what public policy settings will allow us to act on that.

I want to note a number of points in the committee's report. A literature review found that from the age of 11, girls begin to have a lower health-related quality of life, with greater experiences of headaches, stress, tiredness, regular period pain and other menstrual symptoms that impact their daily activities. I find it extraordinary that in 2022, we are still talking about young girls suffering from symptoms such as this. As a sufferer of endometriosis, I certainly understand their pain but I wonder how much the medical profession perhaps pays heed to these concerns of young girls. I will not go through all the points or read the report verbatim; I just want to comment on some stuff. For young girls—that is, tween to teen girls—close friendships provide critical support but the emotional intensity of these friendships make them vulnerable to relationship breakdowns. Anyone who has been the mother of a teenage girl will know that. We know that there is a relationship between the exposure to media that objectifies girls and women and the internalising of beauty ideals, which lowers self-esteem, self-objectification, body surveillance, depression and eating disorders. Again, I am not sure how we address this access to media or how we as a state government can intervene in this regard. As I said, if we shine a light on these things, at least we have half a chance of trying to address these situations.

Interestingly, there were comments about girls continuing to experience everyday sexism through the chores they are assigned at home, the family rules about going out at night, expectations about what subjects they might do at school and perhaps warnings from their parents about sexual harassment on the street. Given what we heard during speeches on the previous motion, we obviously know that girls are much more susceptible to violence within their own homes.

We know that females appear to be more negatively affected by their technology use than males—things such as Snapchat and TikTok. See, I am so up with the young people! It is troubling. Again, we need to really think hard as a place where state legislation is enacted about how these findings might influence our public policy perceptions. I am glad to see that the Commissioner for Children and Young People will be following up the review of this literature finding by creating two advisory committees: one for girls in metropolitan areas and a mixed group in a regional area. It is hoped that the discussions from these groups will guide forums of larger groups of young women so we can identify how services and discussions can improve girls' wellbeing.

During an earlier motion, we talked about the vulnerability of women. I dislike talking about women in the context of being the weaker sex. If girls already feel that they are behind the eight ball and perhaps not as worthy of happiness or healthcare than their male counterparts, it is really important that we look at what we can do to address that.

The chair of the committee, Robyn Clarke, MLA, notes the following in the report, which I will read with your indulgence, chair —

One of the achievements of 2020–21 that stands out to the Committee is the administration of the second Speaking Out Survey, and we look forward to seeing the analysis of results over the next months.

The other piece of work that we regard as particularly important—the exploration of the decline in wellbeing for girls—emerged from the results of the first Speaking Out Survey. This is a great demonstration of the value of the survey, which can reveal insights that warrant further investigation. The wellbeing results for girls are alarming and we are hopeful that the follow-up activities to the literature review produce solutions that will make a difference.

I certainly wish the committee all the best in giving oversight to that work that is being done by the commissioner.

The Speaking Out survey provides children and young people a voice through the survey but also through advisory groups, forums and personal visits of the commissioner and his staff as a key function. The report notes —

Of great importance also is the support provided to government agencies and organisations to adhere to the Child Safe standards and to ensure agencies are hearing complaints and involving children and young people in decision-making.

I absolutely commend the work of the committee in continuing this oversight for the Commissioner for Children and Young People. I wish the members of this joint committee all the best for the future in report reviews.

Hon PIERRE YANG: I rise today to echo the sentiments of Hon Jackie Jarvis on the report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People. I think it is very important that this house look at it closely. Although there are only a few pages in this report, it refers to a number of important documents that the committee looked at during the work that was carried out by the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People over the past year.

With your indulgence, Mr Chair, I wish to talk on a few things that I talked about in consideration of a previous report by this committee; I talked about the committee's terms of reference. Today I wish to very quickly refer to the terms of the commissioner. I think this is important in terms of my contributions on reports of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People. If people in the future look at the remarks I have made in relation to this committee and the reports produced by it, they will appreciate that I addressed not only the terms of reference of the committee but also acknowledged the role of the commissioner, who the committee actually provides the oversight role for. If I may, the role of the commissioner is actually set out under the Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006. Under that act, the commissioner is independent and reports to the Parliament of Western Australia. He or she is an advocate for all children and young people under 18 years of age in WA; must act in the best interests of children and young people; and is required to give priority to the interests and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and to those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged. He or she must also have regard to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child.

The current commissioner is Jacqueline McGowan-Jones. As we know, Mr Colin Pettit was the previous commissioner, and he served in that role from November 2015 to January 2022—a very long period of service to the state in the role of commissioner. I had the opportunity to have him come to a committee that I was part of in the last term of government and answer the questions of the committee. I found him to be a passionate advocate for Western Australian children and young people. As I have on a previous occasion, I want to thank him for his service and wish him all the very best in his future endeavours. I also want to add my best wishes to the current commissioner in her new role, since she took over in January 2022. She has had a distinguished career and vast experience of working in the public sector, the private sector and non-government sector organisations. We are well placed to have a capable commissioner advocating for the rights and interests of Western Australian children and young people.

Among the documents referred to in the second report, as we heard from Hon Jackie Jarvis, are the two Speaking Out surveys. The first one was tabled in January or February 2020, which was at the beginning of the pandemic. The second survey was commissioned by Mr Colin Pettit. As stated in the survey, which was published some time ago, he brought it forward to ensure that we have strong evidence to understand how children and young people are being impacted by COVID-19.

We are very fortunate to live in a progressive, modern state and community. Although children and young people are not yet able to exercise their democratic rights at the ballot box every three or four years, they have other ways of presenting their views to let people know how they feel, how they think and how they see the ways in which adults should look after our planet, and we have only one planet. That is just my comment along the way.

I want to address a particular aspect of one of the surveys referred to in the report. It is mentioned that more than three times the number of participants who participated in the first survey took part in the second; 16 532 children and young people were involved in this landmark survey. I think that is a magnificent achievement on the part of the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. I think it is very, very important. Let us not forget that in Western Australia we have 610 000 children and young people. Two of them are my children—just two!—but that means that almost a quarter of Western Australia's population are under the age of 18. That is a huge cohort, so it is very fitting that we have a commissioner to advocate on their behalf. It is also very fitting that we have

Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Pierre Yang; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Nick Goiran; Hon Klara Andric; Hon Martin Pritchard

the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People to provide that oversight role of looking after children and young people in Western Australia.

Both the commissioner and his office worked very hard in conducting these surveys, and the office actually does a lot of other work. I bring to members' attention a point on page 2 of the report, which states —

The CCYP has produced resources to assist organisations to become child safe (guidelines; self-assessment and review tool —

And other documents. These resources were downloaded 1 589 times, and I wish to commend the current and previous commissioners for their work.

Hon DAN CADDY: Firstly, for the benefit of Hansard, I want to speak to the second report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, *Report Review 2020–21: Examination of selected reports by the Commissioner for Children and Young People*, following on from Hon Pierre Yang and Hon Jackie Jarvis. I wholeheartedly endorse everything Hon Jackie Jarvis said, and as I go through this I will also briefly touch on the Speaking Out surveys—not just their results, but what they have led to. I acknowledge the members of that committee for the hard work they have done. I note that my colleagues have already acknowledged the chair of that committee, Robyn Clarke, MLA, the member for Murray–Wellington. The other members of that committee also deserve acknowledgement—my good friend the deputy chair, Hon Neil Thomson, MLC, and the other members, the new and incredible member for Albany, Rebecca Stephens, MLA, and my good friend and colleague Hon Ayor Makur Chuot. It would be remiss of me not to point out the hard work that is done by the committee officers, Dr Sarah Palmer, Ms Lucy Roberts and Ms Carmen Cummings.

I note as a bit of a segue here that the report was tabled on the same date, 18 November 2021, as the third report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, *The merits of appointing a commissioner for Aboriginal children and young people*. Although that is not covered in this report, I must say that I look forward to speaking to that report once it finds its way up the order of business in this place.

This report is the result of the committee's review of the activities of the Commissioner for Children and Young People during the 2020–21 period. It is worth noting that the report also covers and considers two other important reports that were tabled after that financial year. One of those reports was a comprehensive literature review of research here and overseas into the decline in the wellbeing of girls. Hon Jackie Jarvis spoke about that report in some detail. I probably will not do that; she has already said much of what I had wanted to say.

This second report of the committee is a critical report. Members in this place have spoken about it and would be well aware of the gender gaps that exist in society. The most obvious of these is the pay gap for men and women across the state and across many industries. This is before we even address the lopsided number of men to women on boards and in executive positions. I do not need to go into any more detail about this, because every member in this chamber would know exactly what I am referring to. It was the Commissioner for Children and Young People's Speaking Out survey, as mentioned in the report—the first such survey—that first identified the existence of a gender gap for teenagers. The teenage gender wellbeing gap, which is defined as the measurable difference in wellbeing between boys and girls during their teenage years, is what this survey got to. The report outlines some troubling issues being experienced by teenage girls. In part, it makes for pretty confrontational reading. My understanding from reading this report is that this has led to a similar survey, but this time with significantly higher numbers participating. I understand that the collation of data is complete and the report is awaiting publication.

This report was very much pushed by the Commissioner for Children and Young People at the time, Dr Colin Pettit. Members have heard me speak about Dr Pettit previously in this place. I again extend my thanks to him for the incredible job he did during his tenure as Commissioner for Children and Young People. I will come back to that a bit later. Later in the report there is a "Summary of performance". That is telling, because it says what a great job he did. I have previously spoken at length to reports from this committee and have acknowledged his role in that. I also want to recognise the incoming Commissioner for Children and Young People, Jacqueline McGowan-Jones. I look forward to catching up with her—as I am sure many of my colleagues in this place do too—tomorrow.

I want to take the opportunity in the time that I have left to outline the key functions of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People. The members of this committee, like my good friend Hon Ayor Makur Chuot, and those members who were on the previous iteration of this committee, such as Hon Donna Faragher, would be well versed in the functions and workings of this committee. However, those of us who have never had the fortune to serve on this committee may not realise the ambit of this committee. I will read in the committee's functions; they are outlined in the report and are very brief. These functions were agreed upon by both houses of Parliament, being that it is a joint committee. The functions are —

- i) monitor, review and report to Parliament on the exercise of the functions of the Commissioner for Children and Young People;

ii) examine Annual and other Reports of the Commissioner; and —

That is what we would expect. It continues with the third, and best, function —

iii) consult regularly with the Commissioner.

The third leg of this is critically important. The first two legs of this would not surprise anyone—to know that the committee and the members of the committee play a review and regulatory role. That is evident from the name of the committee. What is not so evident is that there is a genuine and real relationship between this committee and the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the commissioner—at that point himself, and now herself. There is constant and regular contact between the members of the committee and the commissioner’s office.

I said earlier that I have looked at part 5 of the chair’s foreword, “Summary of performance”. This is where the committee evaluates the job of the commissioner and the office of the commissioner. It is no surprise to me, and it should not be a surprise to anyone here, that the report states the following—I am again reflecting on the previous commissioner, Dr Colin Pettit, because of the timing of this report —

... the Commissioner continued to meet the requirements of the position and met or exceeded all performance targets.

The chair of the committee, Robyn Clarke, summed up beautifully not just the good work that the commissioner did, but also some of his future endeavours for the office. She said —

There are a broad range of ways that children and young people can be disadvantaged and/or vulnerable, and the CCYP endeavours to reach all of these groups, even if every group does not receive the same amount of attention ...

She said later, and this interests me —

Greater resourcing would enable the CCYP to better fulfil the function under section 20 of the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006* to ‘give priority to, and have special regard to, the needs of Aboriginal children and young people and Torres Strait Islander children and young people; and children and young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged’.

Members, this ties in with what will hopefully eventuate from the third report of the committee that I referred to earlier—namely, a commissioner specifically tasked with the responsibility for young Aboriginal people and children in this state.

This report is extremely positive. It reflects extremely well on the outgoing Commissioner for Children and Young People. It reflects extremely well on the office of the outgoing Commissioner for Children and Young People. It also speaks very well to the harmony between the committee and the commissioner.

Hon NICK GOIRAN: I rise to contribute to this second report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People. Before I do, on a procedural note, following up from my earlier remarks on the second report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Corruption and Crime Commission, I note, if I understand how this will work, that we will continue to debate this matter for another 29 or nearly 30 minutes and at the end of that there will be one minute and 40 seconds to continue this debate when we next resume. I reiterate that I would welcome the Standing Committee on Procedure and Privileges looking into this perhaps unintended consequence of what is otherwise a seemingly good arrangement.

With respect to the report before us, members will be aware that the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People has spent some time analysing some of the reports that were produced by the former Commissioner for Children and Young People. I want to take members to the committee’s examination of the commissioner’s annual report from the last financial year 2020–21. At page 3, under the heading “Prioritising the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people”, the committee tells us —

The Commissioner continues to urge the government to support and implement the recommendations from the 2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Mr Pettit noted 4 years of the 10-year implementation period had now passed and progress had been slow. He said the Royal Commission had revealed that children are not safe in a range of environments and this needed to be addressed with greater urgency across all states.

The source of that information is a transcript of evidence provided on 13 October 2021. Less than six months ago, the outgoing Commissioner for Children and Young People drew to the attention of the parliamentary committee that has responsibility for this area that he considers that the McGowan Labor government needs to be urged to support and implement the recommendations, and has expressed some concerns that the addressing of these recommendations needs greater urgency. I would like to think that notwithstanding the fact that this report, the second report, does not mandate a response from the government, someone from government will provide a response to these concerns by the outgoing commissioner. I look forward to that occurring, whether it is today or on the next occasion.

I also draw to members' attention that the commissioner has reported on the decline in wellbeing for girls. Some members have already touched on this particular point. It is perhaps timely that this would be raised, given the earlier motion resolved by the house. Page 3 of the committee's second report states the Commissioner for Children and Young People's office —

... conducted a literature review of current evidence to understand the reasons for the gap, published as *Exploring the decline in wellbeing for Australian girls* in August.

That is a reference to August last year. The committee goes on a little later to say —

Some of the detailed key findings include:

- There has been a significant decline in adolescent emotional wellbeing since 2012, particularly among girls, who are significantly more likely to have anxiety and depression, lower self-esteem and lower resilience.
- From 11 years of age girls begin to have lower health-related quality of life than boys with greater experiences of headaches, stress and tiredness. Regular period pain and other menstrual symptoms impact their daily activities.
- While girls are generally more engaged with school and do better academically than boys, their sense of belonging at school has decreased considerably since 2003 and girls are now much less likely than boys to feel like they belong at school.
- Female young people perceive a greater decline in the quality of their relationship with their parents as they transition from primary to high school (or through puberty). Close friendships provide critical support, but the emotional intensity of these friendships make them vulnerable to relationship breakdowns and the likelihood of greater distress.
- There is a direct relationship between exposure to media that objectifies girls and women and the internalising of beauty ideals, which can lead to low self-esteem, self-objectification, body surveillance, depression and eating disorders.
- Many girls continue to experience everyday sexism, including through the chores they are assigned at home, family rules about going out at night, expectations about doing maths and science, and being sexually harassed on the street.
- Children and young people are online almost constantly, and females appear to be more negatively affected by their technology use than males—including in mental health outcomes such as anxiety and depression.
- Many young people do not appear to have a good understanding of enthusiastic consent in intimate relationships. Over one-third (36.8%) of sexually active female Australian students have had unwanted sex.
- Female young people are less likely to feel safe at home, at school, in their community or on public transport.

The last point raised is —

- Female young people are more likely to be sexually assaulted by a relative or family member, experience intimate partner violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault, and to be cyberbullied.

As I say, it is timely to consider those comments and findings that arise from work of the Commissioner for Children and Young People, particularly in light of the motion that we have just debated. All those items and assessments make for difficult reading, particularly for any father who has one or more daughters, but it should also be impactful for any Western Australian. As I say, it underscores the points that have been made by honourable members.

In the remaining time, I would also like to draw to the attention of members the fourth chapter of this report, which deals with the commissioner's review of the Department of Communities placement of children with harmful sexual behaviours in residential care settings. I will not spend too much time on this because there is a motion on the notice paper in my name dealing with this issue, but I am grateful that the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People has thought it important to highlight and provide a whole chapter to this important review. Members will know that in October 2020, the Minister for Child Protection asked the Commissioner for Children and Young People to review the department's policies in this area. This was after a major scandal was exposed because a teenage girl, whose pseudonym is Macie, had the courage to come forward and expose what was going on. In September last year, the commissioner tabled that report, the independent review. Page 5 of the committee's report states —

It found that Macie's placement in a residential care home with a child with a history of —
Harmful sexual behaviours —

was not unique or an isolated practice in WA. Many —
Department of Communities —

senior staff and managers acknowledged that children are at risk within residential care from the HSB or abusive behaviours of other young people.

Later in this report, the committee says —

During a hearing with the Committee, the CCYP's director of policy, monitoring and research said that while HSB was mentioned in the DoC's manuals the language and definitions were not consistent; guidance for staff needed to be clearer and more accessible. The manual did not compare favourably with equivalent manuals in other jurisdictions. The DoC needed to devote time and energy to fixing this.

That was in the transcript of evidence of 13 October last year by the Director of Policy, Monitoring and Research, Natalie Hall. The question remains: has the department done anything about this? Has the government done anything about this? Once again, I call on the government to provide a response. The Commissioner for Children and Young People says that the department needs to devote time and energy to fixing this. Has it devoted time and energy to it, and has it fixed it? At the moment, we do not know, but there is an opportunity for the government to provide a response and give us this information.

Hon KLARA ANDRIC: As a former member of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, I welcome the opportunity to speak on the *Report Review 2020–21: Examination of selected reports by the Commissioner for Children and Young People*, which was laid on the table of the Legislative Council on 18 November 2021. As mentioned in the chair's foreword, the committee reviewed the Commissioner for Children and Young People's 2021 activities and looked at two other reports tabled after the end of the financial year. As Hon Dan Caddy mentioned, key functions of the committee include the following —

- i) monitor, review and report to Parliament on the exercise of the functions of the Commissioner for Children and Young People;
- ii) examine annual and other reports of the Commissioner; and
- iii) consult regularly with the Commissioner.

I am pleased the commissioner's office has either completed or commenced all the main projects listed in its work plan and outlined in the annual report under the plan's three key platforms, including responses from hundreds of children and young people on the impact of COVID-19. Unsurprisingly, the responses indicated that there were negative impacts on children, but that they were not widespread. I am pleased to read in the report that COVID-19 impact monitoring will continue with the analysis of the *Speaking out survey 2021*, in which questions specifically relating to the pandemic were asked.

The second Speaking Out survey was performed with approximately 16 500 children and young people across all regions and three education sectors sharing their views. Fieldwork was expanded to the second half of 2021 to include children outside mainstream education and included students with special needs and in remote communities. I look forward to the publication of the reports on these cohorts which, to my understanding, are yet to be released; however, I am advised that they are due to be released sometime early next year.

I am pleased that the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People has continued to work to support and understand the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable children in Western Australia, with targeted projects in Aboriginal communities as well as young people affected by mental health issues, abuse, poverty, detention and disabilities. In consultation with the Ministerial Taskforce into Public Mental Health Services for Infants, Children and Adolescents aged 0–18 years in Western Australia, the Commissioner for Children and Young People was able to share with the task force information to assist it and respond to some of the key early findings. A key early finding in the commissioner's *Speaking out survey 2019*, and one that stood out for me, was that young females in WA rated their wellbeing less favourably than young males, and it was picked up across multiple areas, including mental health, self-perception, relationships, personal safety and experiences of independence. The report advises that this trend is consistent with international data, which shows a decline in the emotional wellbeing of young people, specifically young women, with an even further widening of the gender wellbeing gap. The reasons for this trend prompted the Commissioner for Children and Young People's office to conduct a review of current evidence to gauge a better understanding for the reasons behind the growing wellbeing gap between young females and young males. The findings were published in August as *Exploring the decline in wellbeing for Australian girls*. The data will be used to develop a work program for the commissioner's office and will include relevant Speaking Out data.

The report includes areas such as mental health, general health, engagement in schools, relationships, equity, social media, identity, body image, sexual health and feeling and being safe.

The second report of the JSCCCYP was extensive; however, I will mention some of the key findings on page 3. In particular, it states —

There has been a significant decline in adolescent emotional wellbeing since 2012, particularly among girls, who are significantly more likely to have anxiety and depression, lower self-esteem and lower resilience.

...

While girls are generally more engaged with school and do better academically than boys, their sense of belonging at school has decreased considerably since 2003 and girls are now much less likely than boys to feel like they belong at school.

Female young people perceive a greater decline in the quality of their relationship with their parents as they transition from primary to high school (or through puberty). Close friendships provide critical support, but the emotional intensity of these friendships make them vulnerable to relationship breakdowns and the likelihood of greater distress.

As the mother of a 15-year-old, I can attest to the importance of relationships and that is noted in this report. Particularly for children and adolescents and those who are going through puberty, it is a difficult time and is often a very challenging period emotionally for young children. The report notes also —

There is a direct relationship between exposure to media that objectifies girls and women and the internalising of beauty ideals, which can lead to low self-esteem, self-objectification, body surveillance, depression and eating disorders.

Many girls continue to experience everyday sexism, including through the chores they are assigned at home, family rules about going out at night, expectations about doing maths and science, and being sexually harassed on the street.

It notes further —

Children and young people are online almost constantly, —

Just as a side note, my 15-year-old often listens to proceedings in this house and listens in after school, so if she is right now, I note that this is not just something that her mother is constantly telling her! It continues —

and females appear to be more negatively affected by their technology use than males—including in mental health outcomes such as anxiety and depression.

...

Female young people are less likely to feel safe at home, at school, in their community or on public transport.

...

The report highlights that many female children and young people experience inequality as a normal aspect of their everyday lives, and it has long-lasting impacts on their self-esteem, mental health and overall wellbeing.

I take this opportunity to outline some of the comparisons between the 2019 and 2020 Speaking Out Survey statistics, which have been published. The key statistics outlined from the surveys are that student ratings of their overall physical health in 2021 are far less favourable when compared with the data for 2019. More students rate their life as the worst possible, especially in high school. More students have found parents, online counselling and telephone helplines helpful for emotional health support. I believe all these findings are important to ensure that our children, youth and young people in Western Australia are provided with the services they require for support. I take this opportunity to thank the joint standing committee and congratulate the new Commissioner for Children and Young People, Jacqueline McGowan-Jones, on her appointment. I, too, look forward to meeting her tomorrow. It is extremely important to recognise the commissioner's role in advocating for children and young people in WA and investigating, advising and reporting independently to Parliament about any issues that concern children and young people and how integral it is in the ongoing commitment of the joint standing committee to understand the needs of children, listen to their voices and put their interests first.

Hon MARTIN PRITCHARD: I want to make some brief comments with regard to the second report, *Report Review 2020–21: Examination of selected reports by the Commissioner for Children and Young People*. Before I do, I commend many of my colleagues—many strong women and men on my side of the house—for making comments in, I think, reaction to a challenge that was put out by the opposition that many backbenchers on the government's side were not making contributions during committee reports. It is lovely to see strong women and men on my side of the

chamber who have responded positively to that, with most of them now making very good contributions. I might suggest that the same challenge be put out to the opposition benches. Hon Nick Goiran is very, very confident and often makes very, very good contributions but very few others on the opposition benches do.

In making comments about this report, if multiple people make comments, they often follow the same ground, and I am going to follow the same ground a little bit as well. We had a motion earlier this morning on which many speakers wanted to speak so I did not get an opportunity to make a contribution. It was a very good motion moved by Hon Sandra Carr with regard to *See What You Made Me Do: Power, Control and Domestic Abuse*. As other members indicated, this report seems to tie in quite well with that. I want to particularly refer to Hon Wilson Tucker, who made the comment, “If you come from a privileged background, you often do not recognise the challenges that others do.” I think this report goes very much into that with regard to the challenges that women face and often men do not. We can often forget that because, as I said, in this place there are many strong-willed and confident women who take up seats in this house. As I said, the men may not understand or fully comprehend the challenges that they have gone through to get to this place.

The report is quite concerning because it deals with and recognises the challenges that particularly young women face. A number of the dot points in the report have been commented on before, but I want to go through them because it really challenged me to see that we do not seem to have made a lot of progress on the lot of young women, particularly with regard to sexual harassment and such.

Just looking at the report, one dot point states —

- Many girls continue to experience everyday sexism, including through the chores they are assigned at home, family rules about going out at night, expectations about doing maths and science, and being sexually harassed on the street.

I have turned my mind to that particularly because I have two daughters who are grown confident women in their own right and probably know how to deal with many of the issues that they face on a daily basis, but I have two grandchildren, one four years of age and the other seven months of age. As I said, I would have hoped that we would have made progress on the challenges that they will face. It will not be long before they face the same challenges. Looking further on, a dot points states —

- Many young people do not appear to have a good understanding of enthusiastic consent in intimate relationships. Over one-third ... of ... active female Australian students have had unwanted sex.

We have a long way to go in that regard. It is a good thing that this committee is turning its mind to it and, as one of the other members indicated, giving them a voice about their concerns. As I said, I hope that we turn our minds to those concerns. Another dot point states —

- Female young people are less likely to feel safe at home, at school, in their community or on public transport.

These are the dreadful things that young people are telling us through this committee. It continues —

- Female young people are more likely to be sexually assaulted by a relative or family member, experience intimate partner violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault, and to be cyberbullied.

The last one bit of that worries me the most. Through my children, and I presume soon my grandchildren, I know that young people tend to spend a lot of time on their phones and the internet. Cyberbullying is one of the things that I did not have to face when I was young, but young people of today do have to face it.

I am not going to go too much into this report. As I said, many of the people on my side of the chamber have made comments that I would only be repeating. I will not go into it any further. I will give other people an opportunity to speak. But I want to reiterate the challenge issued by the opposition that people on the government side of the chamber have taken up. I hope to hear more opposition members make some comments on committee reports into the future.

Hon PIERRE YANG: Thank you, chair, for the opportunity to speak on the second report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, *Report Review 2020–21: Examination of selected reports by the Commissioner for Children and Young People*. Before I get into the substantive part of my second contribution today, I want to echo what Hon Nick Goiran said when we were on the previous report and add my thanks to the Acting Clerk and his team for adding an extra line to clarify how much debate a report has for a particular day. I think that is very helpful for our future preparations for Wednesday’s consideration of committee reports. Mr Chair, given that we have only a very short time, I take this opportunity to give you a shout-out for your contribution in the last motion about educating young children, which was moved by Hon Sandra Carr, and what you mentioned about your son and boys and girls in school. We can all learn from your leadership in the sense that no-one chose to be born into a male body or a female body or the body of a person of European, Asian, African or

Hon Jackie Jarvis; Hon Pierre Yang; Hon Dan Caddy; Hon Nick Goiran; Hon Klara Andric; Hon Martin Pritchard

American heritage. We are born the way we are; we did not choose. It is important that we ensure that we judge and regard people based on their behaviour rather than their gender, cultural background or any other criteria for which they had no choice. It is wonderful, chair, to hear your story. We can all learn a few things from you.

Turning to the second report, I was talking about the resources that were provided to the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Consideration of report adjourned, pursuant to standing orders.

Progress reported and leave granted to sit again, pursuant to standing orders.