

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

REVIEW OF THE FUNCTIONS EXERCISED BY THE COMMISSIONER

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE
TAKEN AT PERTH
WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2016**

Members

**Ms L.L. Baker (Chair)
Hon Robyn McSweeney (Deputy Chair)
Ms E. Evangel
Hon Sally Talbot**

Hearing commenced at 10.27 am**Mr COLIN PETTIT****Commissioner for Children and Young People, examined:****Ms PATRICIA HEATH****Acting Director, Policy and Research, Commissioner for Children and Young People, examined:**

The CHAIR: On behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, thank you, commissioner and Trish Heath, for your appearance before us today. The purpose of this hearing is to assist the committee in its review of the exercise of the functions of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. At this stage, I would like to introduce myself and my deputy chair, Hon Robyn McSweeney, member for South West Region, and I have apologies from our two other members. This is a formal proceeding of the Parliament. It therefore commands the same respect given to proceedings in the house itself. Even though the committee is not asking you to provide evidence on oath or affirmation, it is important that you understand that deliberate misleading of the committee may be regarded as a contempt of Parliament. This is a public hearing and Hansard will make a transcript of the proceedings for the public record. If you refer to any documents during your evidence, it would assist Hansard if you could provide the full title for the record.

I have a quick five questions. Have you completed the “Details of Witness” form”?

The Witnesses: We have, thank you.

The CHAIR: Did you understand the notes at the bottom of the form?

The Witnesses: Yes.

The CHAIR: Did you receive and read the witness sheet?

The Witnesses: We have.

The CHAIR: Do you have any questions?

The Witnesses: No, thank you.

The CHAIR: Hello from all three of us and Hansard to you both. I just thought I would throw it open to you to fill us in on how Tuesday went. Tell us a bit about the report and walk us through the key issues.

Mr Pettit: Thank you, and it is great to be here again. Yesterday was terrific. We had almost 50 individuals and representatives from a whole range of agencies and not-for-profits attend the launch, including Minister Mitchell. We acknowledge your apologies on that particular event.

[10.30 am]

The release of “Speaking Out About Raising Concerns in Care”—we have a copy for each of you—is the traditional way that we report back children’s voices to the community in particular. However, you will see that the second issue there—the little booklet that Renée just had—was the response to the children and young people involved directly, so they receive a personal copy. It has been well received in terms of its easiness to read and its use of information. We just wanted to acknowledge the children and young people personally because they have put their voices and their stories on the line. It is not an easy time for particularly children in out-of-home care so we thought

it was important that they receive something quite unique and special. That probably gives you a snapshot of all of the findings and I am happy to walk through each of those findings.

There are a range of barriers that they—not all, but some—raised in terms of what limited them to raise a complaint or concern to a responsible adult. Most of it was around a lack of confidence. It was also around the fact that they did not know that they would be heard or followed through. They had experiences in the past where they raised issues and were not listened to. That quickly translated into, “I do not need to raise a complaint because no-one would take any notice.” There are a lot of those sorts of issues but for Aboriginal children and young people in particular it was around their shame of why should they raise a complaint because they would be shamed if they did and they should be able to manage it. We talked through that a lot.

The other thing that came out was that while many children understood that they had rights, many had not read their rights or had copies of their rights, even though they were probably given to them in processes by the system. In many instances, however, they had either forgotten them, lost them or did not know about them at all. We were very keen to make sure that that was a front-and-centre process for particularly child protection in making sure that when they have children come through their processes that one of the first things they do is ensure that they have rights and they understand those rights, even if that means that you have to revisit it several times.

The other thing that came out was that when children and young people had interaction with Judy Garsed, the custodian, they were really full of praise, but many of them did not know that she existed. Again, it was probably because they had been informed at a time when they were not comprehending and so it needs to be revisited quite regularly to ensure that children understand that they have someone who can be their advocate. I said custodian, but she is an advocate. They were, perhaps, the bigger findings through the whole document.

The CHAIR: Can I ask you a question, Colin, before we progress with your further explanation? I think Robyn might want to ask a question as well. The issue of rights is a really interesting one. One of the things that I found about working in the rights area for a long period of time is that sometimes particularly young people, the vulnerable, will not actually relate to the word, let alone understand what it actually means for them. Was there discussion or do you think that part of the solution is making something that actually works for a child so that they understand what it is we are talking about?

Mr Pettit: I think that for some children that definitely was an issue that they raised. Overall, there was an issue around how do we use a variety of methods to ensure that children understand those rights, and then not just understand it but know how to enact them if they need to. That is something that we will be talking with child protection about. They have acknowledged it. It is about how we use a range of methods to ensure that children are comfortable with understanding their rights and then how to use those rights.

The CHAIR: It is kind a grown-up word really, all of it. Maybe I think it is just a grown-up word that is sometimes difficult, if you are coming from a place between a rock and a hard place, to find a connection with that word.

Mr Pettit: I think the important issue is around “point in time”. When these children are traumatised at all points of their life, it is about making sure that we do not try to overload them when they are at that pointy end of their crisis or trauma. How do we then, subsequently, when they are settled, continue to go back and revisit some of this information? That is something we will be working with the department on.

Ms Heath: There is an example in the report from one child who referred to the charter of rights. She said that when she had asked for something and they said, “Oh no, we can’t possibly do that for you”, she said, “Well, look, hang on, it is says here that you have to” and they did it. So it was a very good example of having something accessible to her. It can work if you present it in a way

that they can hear it and see it, and giving practical examples is important. As the commissioner said, at that point in time, at the right moment for that child, it is accessible to them when they have an issue. It is just a constant piece of work that you have keep up doing.

The CHAIR: It is about resourcing as well, I guess.

Mr Pettit: It is.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: You said that sometimes the children do not know what an advocate is. I guess that should be age appropriate as well.

Mr Pettit: Absolutely.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Even when I was minister, I used to think that sometimes the children did not know. When they came into care, they had a package given to them, but that is way down the list when you are just coming into care. When I was there—I have not been there for three years—they used to have posters of the charter of rights and they had it explained to them. The older children are very wise as to what that is, but the younger ones—when you look at the age of children in care, they are very young, some of the them. Then you have got the Aboriginal children who an advocate really does not mean terribly much to them. Perhaps we can think about changing that word “advocate”.

Mr Pettit: As the chair has said, adult language sometimes does get lost. When we think that many of these children come into out-of-home care at a very young age and then progress through, when they get to 13 or 14, we forget that we really need to revisit some of these things because they are now more mature, to have that conversation and say, “Do you understand your rights? Do you know there is an advocate? This is how you can get support” et cetera. It is that revisiting on a regular basis in a way that is meaningful to the young person.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: You said that some of the Aboriginal children do not speak up because of shame. To me, that would be because they are already placed with extended family and by speaking up in extended family, it is a double whammy.

Mr Pettit: There is that double whammy, and that was raised with us.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: I have always thought that relative care, in some cases, just should not be there because the dysfunction comes through from many generations. I am not talking about just Aboriginal families; there are many families who have generations of dysfunction, and, yet, we allow children to go back into that dysfunction. I sometimes think that perhaps we should have a different attitude than putting them back into dysfunction.

Mr Pettit: In discussing that issue with Aboriginal people, particularly in Broome, when there was a forum that we attended earlier in the year, they acknowledged that that can be a problem. But what they were saying to address that was there needs to be more support for the family that these children have been put into. There is an assumption that because you are a functioning family and we are putting a child into your care, then everything will be okay. There needs to be much more support for these families because we know that not only are they impoverished, but they often do not have the skills. It is a different look, from particularly the department, about placing children in those relative care locations. How do you support the relatives in a way that does not insult them but supports them to bring up these children in the way we want them to be brought up? It is a very complex issue, but there are some things that we can do to support relative care that we are probably not doing at the moment.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: I think so too.

[10.40 am]

The CHAIR: I have a couple of questions or discussion points for you both. I am anticipating that some of the work priorities for the new Aboriginal engagement officer will be related to the results

of this piece of valuable research. Have you looked into that yet or got any further down the track with what the next step is?

Mr Pettit: Yes. Will Hayward is the person that we have engaged and he has hit the ground running. It would be no surprise that all of our reports have a crossover into his role. He has certainly been involved with the out-of-home care. He is involved with child safe, for example; he does a lot of presentations and is doing one, I think, next week in Kalgoorlie with the groups up there. We have engaged him in that process, but we are trying to focus more on how we support the voice of Aboriginal children from the previous commissioner's report. We know that there is a set of work there about building the leadership capacity of younger Aboriginal people to help them lead their community and use that voice to bring about change. That is the work that we are looking at and focusing on at the moment, particularly around how we can support them. Do we have great mentors? How do we support families to be stronger but have children's voice fairly central to that? That is the work he is doing. But in terms of all the other work we are doing, he layers across all of the work because, as we have seen, vulnerable children come up in all races, but in the Aboriginal group there is a much stronger representation than there needs to be in a whole range of areas.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: With the cadet program, I went up to one of the towns up north and asked one of the school principals whether he would run a cadet program and the answer was a flat out no. I have been around different parts of the state where they do work. They work for Aboriginal children—River Rangers and various other things. That is a really good organisation to tap into if you can get Aboriginal mentors into it. I do not even care if it is Aboriginal cadets; it would be something for the younger ones to grab hold of.

Mr Pettit: We are certainly seeing that around the state. It is not uniform, but certainly—I go back to Broome again—when we went to Broome Senior High School recently, they were using a range of Aboriginal mentors from the rangers themselves and they are trying to encourage them in. We also met with the Salvation Army, I think it was, who are running some things up there, but they are using rangers as well to help get, particularly, children and young people out of school hours to find different pathways. The Red Cross is also doing those sorts of things, but it is not a program that is uniform across the whole state. It is not necessarily funded that way. It is more whether groups think it is the most appropriate use of their funds at the time.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Yes. The government funds the cadets. The funding is there for the cadets, but it is getting the people to run it—that is the difficult thing.

Mr Pettit: That is right. Yes. I met two young Aboriginal people yesterday afternoon who have just joined the cadets. They are two boys who were in a modelling program. They had just joined the cadets and were very excited about it.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Yes, they get a bit of pride in themselves—all kids do when they join the cadets. But it is easier said than done, as we can see in Kalgoorlie at the moment.

Mr Pettit: It is.

The CHAIR: The thing that stood out for me at all points in this was the perspective that the committee, carrying through the report that we have done, ended up having. A lot of focus was around the system employing good trauma-informed practice. When you read through your comments and your quotes and the interpretation of that, it is directly about whether the system has taken that on board and how effective that taking on board has been, if it has. My suggestion from reading through this is that we have got a long way to go. That is just my feel of that. Did you want to continue, Colin?

Mr Pettit: I would agree with that comment. It is something that we have taken up with the director general directly. Subsequent to this report, they have been partners to this program and they have made a commitment, and it was reaffirmed yesterday, that they are going to use this to keep

informing their reform. Obviously, CREATE and ourselves will help them as much as possible, but we will also probably monitor how that change can be effected through the voice of children.

The CHAIR: This is the first time I have actually seen the commissioner report in alliance with the department. I would think my colleague would share my congratulations to you on achieving that, because that, I think, is a really great step forward for the commissioner's office. Clearly, it ties your work in integrally to the mainstream system, but it still holds you apart as being an independent voice, which is two big ticks for the role of the commissioner.

Mr Pettit: I must say that both CREATE and the department have been terrific in joining this, and we acknowledged that yesterday, around a partnership of making a difference. It was brave of the department to form this partnership, because they did not know what the outcome was going to be. They could have found some very difficult responses. There are some in there, and they have acknowledged those. But at least they are willing to have a look at what children and young people are saying and how we can move that forward. I also acknowledge the work of Jenni Perkins in establishing that prior to my starting, because I think it is a good piece of work and a better way of working where we collectively now have a role to see that improvement can happen.

The CHAIR: I mean, quite frankly, what was the option? That they would stand outside and say, "No, go and report on us"? They could not do that. I think logic would dictate for a CEO or a director general that they would be stupid to not get involved.

Mr Pettit: You would hope they would not.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I have one question about page 9 and the little picture at the bottom. I probably should not put this on *Hansard*, but I am going to anyway. It says, "Stay Out!! Top secret". It looks like it is addressed by someone called Mischin. I wondered if that might be the Attorney General. Sorry, I was just reading it and it occurred to me. *Hansard* might want to take that out; I will leave that with you! I thought that was very funny.

Ms Heath: I think it is part of another word. It is a secret mission.

The CHAIR: Yes, I thought it was a top secret mission. But given that it is quite separate to the "top secret" bit, I thought maybe the Attorney General had nothing to do so he was drawing on the wall.

Moving right along—no offence meant to the Attorney General, of course; it just seemed to me too obvious to not raise it with you. I will move now to the committee's report, "Everyone's Business". We are in the position of the government having announced a delay to its response to our report. As the chair, I find that pretty —

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Frustrating.

The CHAIR: Yes, pretty frustrating. That would be an understatement. Have you had any response or feedback in relation to your correspondence with the Attorney over your response to the report?

Mr Pettit: No, I have not had any written response, but I have met with the Attorney. At that stage—this was probably two weeks ago—he was still considering the report. We did unpack the correspondence that we had sent to him in response to the eight recommendations.

The CHAIR: Great. And was his response favourable, do you think? I know it is an impression.

Mr Pettit: The impression I had was positive, but he did say that he was waiting for the right process to happen.

The CHAIR: Okay; all right; well, that is interesting.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Government is full of process.

The CHAIR: I am not sure what that means, actually.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: It never did me any good. I used to say, "Put process out the way!"

The CHAIR: I think we only need reports from education, child protection and someone else.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: That is a process in itself.

The CHAIR: Yes; all right; enough said. Particularly in relation to the Minister for Education and the Department of Education's protective behaviours education in schools, have you had a chance to follow up with the minister involved with that? Can you tell us a bit about what you found?

[10.50 am]

Mr Pettit: Absolutely. I met with both Minister Collier and the director general, Sharyn O'Neill, separately on recommendation two in particular. Ms O'Neill had already indicated that they had taken steps to include your recommendation into next year's annual report and would have that information. I then followed up with Minister Collier saying that this is a terrific reaction. However, Ms O'Neill's annual report covers only government schools; it does not cover the non-government schools. I have recommended verbally to Minister Collier and then written to him to say that this should extend to the DES annual report. When I met with Minister Collier he was quite supportive of that notion and was going to have a conversation about it.

The CHAIR: That is really outstanding. I doubt whether DES will be at all resistant. They were such a joy to have giving evidence that I am sure they would accept that.

Mr Pettit: They will find it more difficult to gather the information.

The CHAIR: Yes, of course.

Mr Pettit: I have yet to meet with the director general of DES but that is the next step.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Just on that, I made a speech in Parliament about a month ago on grooming and what grooming was. You could have heard a pin drop when I was speaking. They were looking like this, looking rather aghast. I do not think a lot of them understood what grooming was.

Mr Pettit: I did read that.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: I think a few of their jaws dropped.

The CHAIR: Just pursuing again some issues, and if you have anything you want to raise specifically with us, I will give you time to do that, Colin.

You talked about your education and outreach roles. How has that work been developing? We are interested, of course, in the online portal issue and anything you found out about how that might be progressed, if indeed it is.

Mr Pettit: Obviously, until we find out the resources that could come to put in a process that was perhaps thought of in terms of those two recommendations, it is a bit difficult for us to really progress too far. However, we have done quite a bit of work on trying to establish our own website within our existing resources and we have started to develop particularly around child safe organisations first and from that work we have built on some information that is going out through our portal or through our website. Added to that, we have now talked to New South Wales who have just released a whole range of booklets for parents and children in this space. We are looking at how we might use some of those resources in a way that we do not have to reinvent, so it is a cost effective way of doing that. I am meeting with the producers of those at the next national meeting in November, so we are hoping that we can at least capture some of that information and bring that back. Further to that, we are also looking at how we might use some of the information we had from out-of-home care and others to develop simple information that can go up on our website. All of that is within our capacity, but to get to where you want in the recommendations, we would require further resourcing. That is where we are at. We will just keep pushing along as much we can and put as much information out as we can. Added to that, I have been invited to join the government's Centre for Parenting Excellence and I will sit on their steering committee. That has the capacity to

do some of these things where the portal is out for parents and a whole range of information. That is in early days and I am sure the new Minister for Communities will announce that in the near future. There is some work that we think we can help support in that space that will add to the recommendations.

The CHAIR: Given that this is our last chance to have a hearing with you because our committee will finish soon, I am really interested in knowing if you think that that is something that you would be putting up in your budget submission next time it goes in. I know how fraught that is having done many of them myself as a public servant. Would you be thinking that you might be able to find a way of asking for extra resources around that?

Mr Pettit: There are two parts to that question. First we are waiting to see what the government response will be and see whether in fact they wish to invest in this, maybe not through this commission or maybe through some other organisations or through us. We will wait for that. The second element is, yes, we will certainly be looking at how to improve our communication strategies and that may form part of our budget submission.

The CHAIR: That is good, thank you.

On another issue, you talked about the consultation you are completing around juvenile justice. I am just wanting a bit of an update on how that is going. Are you still on track? Was it an April release? No, the release was this year.

Mr Pettit: Yes. We are hopeful to have juvenile justice released by the end of this year. But again we have formed a collaboration with the Department of Corrective Services and juvenile justice. We are in the process with them to make sure that they are comfortable with the document and also that their processes are not ignored in terms of getting the whole thing finished. They had to get signed off through a chain and once that sign-off is done then we will go through to publication, which I hope will be later this year. It is a significant piece of work and very positive in many ways around how the children see themselves in this role, but they are very constructive about how things can be better for them, particularly around supporting families and making sure that they are supported in different ways.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: So you interviewed the children in the places they are in?

Mr Pettit: We had also almost 100 children and young people interviewed from Banksia Hill right through to places in Kununurra, Bunbury and Kalgoorlie. We have completed all those. The report is in its penultimate draft, I suppose, and now with the department to have a look at how they perceive it and what actions they would take and what statements they might make and then it will come back to us to finalise it.

The CHAIR: One of the programs that used to run out of corrective services was the multi-systemic therapy program. I am looking at Trish because I think you were probably around when that was running. Do you remember that, Robyn?

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: No. I was on the juvenile justice board. We were big into restorative justice at the time.

The CHAIR: And this was part of restorative justice. I think we were in government. I think we brought it in—anyway, you got rid of it!

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: And the wheel turns.

The CHAIR: Yes. It is a program of best practice universally around juvenile justice issues. Did the issue of bringing together all the various stakeholders who influence a child's life and journey into the justice system and through that to bring them together to support family at the front end to try to keep them out, the restorative justice angle, was that something you might discuss in your report?

Ms Heath: I think with this report first up, one of the things we have done with both this project and the out-of-home care project is our first foray into doing projects much more in collaboration with government departments. We have drawn a couple of lines in the sand with some of the reports to ease that process. Firstly, I think the method that we used in terms of interviewing children and young people has produced a huge amount of very rich data, which is what has delayed both of these projects a little bit, particularly with the youth justice one because it was asking much more broadly about issues, about how children end up in the justice system, what do they see as the solutions. The out-of-home care one was a little more discreet; it was just about raising concerns, although we did get lots of other stuff too. We have a huge amount of data from 94 young people all currently engaged with the youth justice system. Families are the thing that has come out of it. It is “the” thing that contributes to them ending up in the system and there are a number of nuances to that. What we have agreed with the department is that these reports will present what the children told us. The work around the policy and the directives will come in a separate place, because I do not know that it is reasonable to expect us to necessarily agree and that may compromise the commissioner’s independence in having to do that.

[11.00 am]

The CHAIR: Very good answer.

Ms Heath: So that was our decision initially.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Well you can only put down what you hear.

Ms Heath: Nobody is going to dispute what the kid said. There may well be disputes about how we think this needs to go forward. We certainly think that there is a lot of work to be done in the space of families. The information they gave us was very nuanced; a lot of it was that the families were already involved in criminal activity themselves. So it is about separating yourself out from that. It is exactly what you were saying before about how these are kids coming from families who are not in a good space themselves. There are a lot of intergenerational issues going on there and a lot of work is needed. It is certainly multi-systemic and comprehensive and it needs to be well case-managed and absolutely resourced. Dealing with those issues is complex and it needs to be a complex solution.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Yes, we know they have got low levels of education, we know they have been abused and we know their brothers and fathers are criminals. You can go through every single one and it would be a rare one that you would find that did not come from dysfunction.

Ms Heath: It did not matter whether they were Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. It is exactly what you were saying.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: It is across the board.

Ms Heath: It is the same profile.

Mr Pettit: Just further to that, when I have done regional visits we have met with as many magistrates as we can around the processes that they are obliged to follow. The outcome is that many of them are frustrated that they do not have that element that you described where there are a number of resources that are already available to these particular young people that do not seem to connect. We have been talking to police in particular and others about how we might support that to happen into the future. We are looking at a project into the future around children through the legal process—not so much the legal process, but how they are supported with all the other agencies. The government has a range of tools available for these children and young people and they enter into their life at certain points, but they rarely connect with each other. We are trying to find out how to help that happen and that will form the basis, as much as anything else, of the ATSI project moving forward as well—how do we connect those groups?

The CHAIR: That is fantastic. It is very helpful, thank you. What about the engagement in education project? How is that one tracking? That is the April —

Mr Pettit: The project is going extremely well. We have had a bit over 1 400 children and young people so far complete consultations with us. We have another approximately 25 schools to go in the next three weeks and then we have drawn a line in the sand and said that we cannot keep going back more and more because schools are getting very busy at this time of year, as you would know. We are hopeful that we will have all that information collected by the end of November and then we will be writing the report and working with our reference group, which includes all three sectors, and have the report available, hopefully, in April next year.

The CHAIR: I wish I was here to see it next year. That is great.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: You will see it.

The CHAIR: Yes, I know, but I do not know if I will be on the committee. That is really good. You mentioned earlier your website. Is it going well? Have you had any info back on that?

Mr Pettit: Yes. We track our data in and out. It spikes according to programs. For example, the out-of-home care report attracted something like 1 500 hits yesterday. We know that when we have events, it spikes, like most other websites, but it tracks on a fairly even keel in between those times and it is getting a lot of attention. We do get a lot of downloads on information that has been available for three or four years and people continually come back and look for more.

The CHAIR: That is good, so it has been a successful rebuild at the moment.

Mr Pettit: It has been. At the moment the feedback has been really positive.

The CHAIR: Good, but it has the capacity to bolt more stuff onto it, which is great.

We are getting near the end of the questions that we wanted to fill in. Obviously, we are about to write our final report, which is your annual report—it is a weird process really. We wanted to put a line under a number of issues so that we can comment on them. I think I have just about covered all of them. One of the things I am really interested in hearing from you, Colin, or Trish is about Professor Jane Burns' thinker-in-residence time over here. What exactly do you hope comes out of that given it is an issue that we have discussed many times previously and with many other members in the community from Donna Cross's work. We are really keen to what angle you think —

Mr Pettit: We are excited. Jane will be here on Sunday and it goes all of next week. As we said before, we are doing it a little bit differently this year. We had one week and then we will reflect on that week with all of our partners and see what we can build that is specific to each one of the partners when Jane returns in March next year. We are pretty excited about the model, as are our partners. We have asked Jane to pick up two areas that are growing really strongly in the community. One is around the appropriate use of social media and its misuse, but, more importantly, around mental health and how that interacts with social media. We are very excited that those two issues are front and centre to just about everything that comes out in our conversations with particularly children and young people. They acknowledge mental health as a growing problem for them. They acknowledge that social media is a great tool but also a problem for them and for their parents. We are expecting Jane will have something like 14 activities this week; we are going to keep her busy. In each activity there will be a reflection from each of those groups to say, when she comes back next time, what could we target that would better identify issues for their particular sector. That ranges from the Mental Health Commission, to education, to health, to child protection and then in the not-for-profit sector it is Rio Tinto, YACWA and others. Each one of those will have a different request, we expect, following that in March next year. The one thing we are excited about is that we have not really pushed the parent meeting, just yet—that will be highlighted next week—but we already have 350 people booked in. People know what it is about and they have come without us really promoting heavily about that issue. We are excited by that. We are also excited that when Jane comes back, we have built in with Rio a parents'

session in the Geraldton region in March next year. We would expect about 150 parents in that area, on previous information, so that is really exciting. The other exciting thing that we are trialling with Jane's work this year is that in the past, while we have tried to get out to regions it has been very difficult. We are both streaming and recording many of Jane's sessions, and we have already had, at the last count, 20 organisations from around the state going to tap in to some of that streaming live, which means that we can extend our audience and our impact on a range of people. It is a different model. We will get some things wrong, but I think it is going to make a bit of a difference, particularly by tailoring more explicitly the second week when she comes back to each and every one who is a partner of our particular approach.

The CHAIR: I think it is going to be so exciting. Both of us are an apology for dinner, but not through choice, let me tell you.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: I am in Albany—sorry.

Mr Pettit: I understand.

The CHAIR: And I have a fundraising dinner for me that night, so I am sorry but, you know, I want to be here next year so that takes precedence.

That is the formal set of questions that we wanted to follow up. In closing, I want to say thank you to both of you. Colin, it has been a journey over four years waiting for your arrival, acknowledging the work of other children's commissioners, acting and in other capacities. I feel so much more confident that we have someone in place who is going to deliver for the Commissioner for Children and Young People and for the role. I am really looking forward to the outcomes from your tenure in this job. Trish, you are amazing, as you always are. Thank you for being there as a thread through the whole of the four years; it has been really outstanding. I am sure that no-one has heard from Karen since she disappeared into justice but my heart is with her too, of course—I think I saw her the other day actually. Thank you to both of you. Thanks to the commissioner's office for being so kind to the committee and working so closely with us on many issues that we have raised.

Mr Pettit: Thank you.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: I just echo what you said. I think it is wonderful to have you on board, Colin, and Trish, as usual. As the chair said, you have been the thread the whole time and it has been lovely to have that. Colin, you are doing an absolutely fabulous job. The children's commission office is doing a wonderful job.

Mr Pettit: It is the team, yes.

Hon ROBYN McSWEENEY: Keep up the good work. It is all for the betterment of our children. I think all organisations want the best for children but it is just that sometimes they have a bit of a different philosophy between each section.

Mr Pettit: Thank you to both of you for your kind words. It is a privileged position and we need to make sure that we make a difference. Working with the team that I have got is just amazing.

The CHAIR: Thank you so much. Now I need to read the closing statement. Thank you for your evidence before the committee today. A transcript of the hearing will be forwarded to you for the correction of minor errors. Any such corrections must be made and the transcript returned within 10 days from the date of the letter attached to the transcript. If the transcript is not returned within this period, it will be deemed to be correct. New material cannot be added via these corrections and the sense of your evidence cannot be altered. Should you wish to provide additional information or elaborate on particular points, please include a supplementary submission for the committee's consideration when you return your corrected transcript of evidence.

Hearing concluded at 11.11 am
