

41ST PARLIAMENT



Joint Standing Committee on the
Commissioner for Children and Young People

Report 10

Annual Report 2023–24

Presented by Mrs R.M.J. Clarke, MLA and Hon N. Thomson, MLC

November 2024

Committee Members

Chair	Mrs R.M.J. Clarke, MLA Member for Murray-Wellington
Deputy Chair	Hon N. Thomson, MLC Member for Mining and Pastoral Region
Members	Ms R.S. Stephens, MLA Member for Albany
	Hon A. Makur Chuot, MLC Member for North Metropolitan Region

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Chair's Foreword

This *Annual Report 2023-24* is the tenth report for the JSCCCYP of the 41st Parliament. The 2023–24 financial year was a busy year that saw the establishment and the bulk of the work done for the Committee's *Inquiry into support for children and young people who have been directly or indirectly exposed to trauma associated with migration to Australia due to humanitarian crises*. This inquiry has been an important one for the Committee, and involved several community consultations.

The Committee attended a consultation organised by the Edmund Rice Centre in Mirrabooka in April 2024, as well as consultations in the Mandurah region with the Multicultural Services Centre of WA and the Peel Multicultural Association in May 2024. At these consultations, the Committee sought the advice and input of community members into their perspectives of the issues impacting upon refugee and humanitarian migrant children and young people. We would like to thank the community members who made time to meet with us: their input and opinions are vitally important to inquiries such as these, and gave us valuable insight into their experiences and priorities.

The Committee would also like to thank all those who made submissions to our inquiry or who attended hearings. The input of academics, researchers, not-for-profit organisations, government agencies and others is vital to assisting the Committee to understand how best to address the issues and to develop findings and recommendations for government.

This Committee is very aware of our important role in amplifying the voices of the children and their representatives who speak with us. We hope that we can convey the concerns of the community to government through our reports.

The final report of this inquiry was tabled after the end of the 2023–24 financial year, in August 2024, and was titled *Pathways to Thriving: Enhancing support for humanitarian children and young people in Western Australia*. We look forward to receiving the Government's response to the report in November 2024.

In addition to the Committee's inquiry work, we continued with our oversight role of the Commissioner for Children and Young People and her office. The Committee met with the Commissioner in November 2023, and published a review report of some of the Commissioner's activities in April 2024.

The Committee would like to acknowledge the Commissioner's ongoing advocacy to highlight the needs and voices of children and young people. Her work is vital to ensuring that the issues impacting on children and young people are brought before government and policy-makers. We thank the Commissioner for her dedication to the role.

I take this opportunity to thank my fellow Committee members for their contributions over the past year: Deputy Chair Hon. Neil Thomson MLC, Rebecca Stephens MLA and Hon. Ayor Makur Chuot MLC. Thank you also to our research staff for their support during the 2023–24 year: principal research officer Naomi Sherrington, and research officer Lucy Roberts.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R Clarke', with a long, sweeping tail extending to the right.

MRS R.M.J. CLARKE, MLA
CHAIR

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Chapter 1

Committee Activities

Introduction

During the course of this reporting period (Table 1.1), the Committee:

- conducted 1 inquiry
- tabled 2 reports
- held 14 deliberative meetings
- took evidence from 34 witnesses at 14 hearings
- held 4 community consultation briefings
- conducted 1 investigative travel trip.

Table 1.1: Summary of the activities of the Committee, 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

Description	Activity
Briefings	4
Deliberative meetings	14
Hearings	14
Witnesses appearing	34
Reports tabled	2

Public Hearings

Pursuant to Assembly Standing Order 264, the Committee has power to send for persons, papers and records. During the period 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024, the Committee conducted 14 public hearings, taking evidence from 34 witnesses to assist with its investigations (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2: Public Hearings of the Committee, 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

Date	Witness	Position	Organisation
18 October 2023	Ms Gail Green	Board Chairperson	Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS)
	Dr Kwadwo Adusei-Asante	Academic and community worker	Edith Cowan University
8 November 2023	Amy Berson	General Manager	Edmund Rice Centre WA

Chapter 1

15 November 2023	Jacqueline McGowan-Jones	Commissioner for Children and Young People	Commissioner for Children and Young People
	Dawn Fitzgerald	Director – Policy, Monitoring and Research	
	Rachel Roy	Executive Manager	
21 February 2024	Prof Jaya Dantas	Professor of International Health	Curtin University of Technology
13 March 2024	Ramdas Sankaran OAM Michele Cohen	CEO Community Services Manager	Multicultural Services Centre of WA
20 March 2024	Dr Stephane Shepherd	Professor of Forensic Psychology and Criminology	Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University
8 May 2024	James Jegasothy	Executive Director	Office of Multicultural Interests
	Dr Liza Beinart	Acting State Director WA	Australian Red Cross
	Dr Kerriann Larsen	Team Lead MSP WA	
15 May 2024	Milanna Heberle	A/Deputy Director General, Student Achievement	Department of Education
	Judith King	Assistant Executive Director, Professional Capability	
	Lynette Dean Spread	Deputy Principal, Thornlie Primary School	
	Emma Walker	Principal, Lynwood Senior High School	
	Raechelle Lee	Executive Director, Strategy and Policy	
	Pam Moss	Director, Public Schools Planning	
	Dr Laura Allison	Chief Psychologist	
Melanie Postmus	Head of Learning Area, English as an Additional Language or Dialect and Intensive English Centre		

12 June 2024	Clinical Associate Professor Dr Sarah Cherian Dr Raylene Lewis Bizunesh Kebede Terri Barrett	Clinical Lead Senior Clinical Psychologist Clinical Nurse Manager, Community Refugee Health Team Nurse Director, Child and Adolescent Community Health	Refugee Health Service
	Superintendent Sharon Bird Dr Umneea Khan Inspector Tammy Mottolini Snr Sergeant Matt Sharp	Divisional Superintendent, Community Engagement Division Strategic Advisor, Community Engagement Division Inspector, Community Engagement Division Youth Diversion Manager, Community Engagement Division	Western Australia Police Force
19 June 2024	Mike Rowe Dr Eduardo Farate Glenn Mace Emma Ferguson Amanda Dickson	Director General Principal Policy and Planning Officer, Cultural Diversity Executive Director, Service Delivery Regional Executive Director, North Metropolitan A/General Manager, Specialist Child Protection Unit	Department of Communities

Briefings

In addition to the formal hearings, the Committee held a community consultation briefing with the Edmund Rice Centre of WA. The briefing was used to gain information in relation to the Committee's inquiry (Table 1.3). The Committee also held 3 briefings during its investigative travel to Mandurah, which are detailed below.

Table 1.3: Briefings provided to the Committees, 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

Date	Name	Position	Organisation
17 April 2024 Community Consultation	David Bui	Lynwood Coordinator	Edmund Rice Centre
	Zoya Amjad	Youth Worker	
	Shristi Sharma Lamsal	Youth Coach Assistant	
	Lueth Dengdit	Snr Youth Programs coordinator	
	Melissa Craig	Youth Programs Assistant	
	Coney Bosco Aber	Youth Programs Coordinator	
	Abulfazi Ataie	Youth Programs Coordinator	
	Abdiwahab Hillow	Youth Programs Coordinator	
	Ta Ma Pa Lay Htoo	Youth Programs Assistant	
	Jordan Iley	Manager of Youth Services	
	Sophie Strahan	Youth Programs Assistant	
	Roya Manyang	Youth Program Admin/Coach	
	Victoria Mayuen	Youth Program Coordinator	
	Christina Ward	ERCWA	
	Sabine Hecht	English teacher	
	Jim van der Zalm	Coordinator of English	
	Karen Wilson	ERCWA	
	Julie Ioppolo	English teacher assistant	
	Ana Tzvetkov	Multicultural Community Worker ERCWA	
	Tsigereda Fisssha (Rose)	Women's Program Coordinator Admin	
Catherine Aftera	Generalist Casework Volunteer Coordinator		
Daffodil Sawmei	Volunteer Admin Support Community Service Team		
Kazim Moien	Project Officer		
Stephanie Mannion	Admin Community Services		
And additional community members			

1 May 2024 Community consultations (Mandurah)	Virginia Pitts Suswatiningsih Purtomo Esteffany Amaya	SETS Case Manager	Multicultural Services Centre of WA
	Virginia Pitts Catherine Amaechi Jane Christi Emma Goff		Peel Multicultural Association
	Jessica Roberts-Tindall Hereripene Williams	Acting Coordinator, Youth Development Team Leader for Youth Programs	City of Mandurah Youth workers

Investigative Travel

Table 1.4: Summary of Committee travel, 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

Date	Description	Attendees	Cost
1 May 2024	1-day investigative travel to Mandurah	3 Members and 1 staff	\$65

Reports Tabled

The Committee tabled 2 reports during the period 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024.

- *Annual Report 2022-23*, tabled on 16 November 2023
- *Report Review 2023: Examination of selected reports by the Commissioner for Children and Young People*, tabled on 18 April 2024.

Inquiry Activities

The primary focus of the Committee's efforts during the financial year was the *Inquiry into support for children and young people who have been directly or indirectly exposed to trauma associated with migration to Australia due to humanitarian crises*. The report for this inquiry is due to be tabled on 15 August 2024, and will be titled *Pathways to Thriving: Enhancing support for humanitarian children and young people in Western Australia*. The Government's response to the report is expected in November 2024.

While the report of the inquiry had not yet been completed and tabled at the end of the financial year, the inquiry identified several themes which are likely to appear in the final report. These include:

- the absence of adequate data and research on refugee and humanitarian children and young people living in Western Australia, paired with the belief by experts that almost all such children have experienced trauma.
- that exposure to trauma can have a profound impact upon children's physical and mental health which can continue until adulthood. Yet this impact is not a certainty, as appropriate supports can enable such children to thrive.

- an inability to access appropriate supports at the relevant time can compound the effect of trauma and negatively impact on life outcomes. Timely intervention is therefore crucial for preventing negative outcomes.
- Western Australia lacks adequate and dedicated support services for refugee and humanitarian children and young people. This is partly due to the mistaken belief that children are resilient and can easily adapt, and that addressing parents' needs will flow on to address children's needs.

The inquiry has reinforced the Committee's view that there needs to be a greater emphasis within government on the needs of children and young people in our community. While the Commissioner for Children and Young People is an important advocate for their needs and opinions, there is a need for a Minister to be tasked with the implementation and oversight of policy in relation to children and young people. Currently, policy responsibility for the issues relevant to children and young people is spread across multiple ministers and government agencies, resulting in fragmentation. This fragmentation runs the risk of gaps in coverage, duplication, and potential policy incoherence.

Based on the Committee's research for two inquiries over the course of this Parliament, the Committee is of the opinion that a Minister should be appointed with responsibility for overseeing all aspects of children's wellbeing and the policies that impact them.

The Committee also remains of the opinion that the government of Western Australia should prioritise the development and implementation of a child wellbeing strategy, to address the long-term needs of children and young people, and their families, in this state.

The final report of the inquiry will address these and other issues relevant to the wellbeing of refugee and humanitarian migrant children and young people. The Committee looks forward to the government response to the final report, which will be due in November 2024.

Chapter 2

Financial Statement

The Committee does not have its own formal budget and is funded out of the budget of the Legislative Assembly. Approval for major expenditures is required on a case-by-case basis and is entirely at the discretion of the Speaker.

The Committee's expenditure for the financial year 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024 (in accordance with Standing Order 276) is detailed below:

Table 2.1: Expenditure items of the Committee, 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

Expenditure Item	Amount (\$)
Advertising	3,081
Consultants	270
Travel	65
Protocol	323
Printing	3,687
Staff/member amenities	12
TOTAL	7,438

Notes:

- Figures rounded off to nearest dollar.
- Salaries of committee staff are not included.
- Costs of shared administrative expenses, including lease costs for committee accommodation, not included.



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CHAIR



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