

## Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People

### Media Release

**From:** Hon Dr S.E. Talbot, MLC, Chair  
**To:** ALL MEDIA (13 August 2020)

#### **FROM WORDS TO ACTION - FULFILLING THE OBLIGATION TO BE CHILD SAFE**

The Committee has today tabled the report of its inquiry into the monitoring and enforcing of child safe standards: *From Words to Action - Fulfilling the obligation to be child safe*.

The inquiry's starting points were the recommendations made by the Children's Commissioner on oversight of children's services in WA and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, specifically, the recommendations related to child safe standards and the provision of independent oversight.

Committee Chair Hon. Dr Sally Talbot said: "Early in the inquiry, the Committee formed the view that the two common factors leading to the creation of unsafe environments for children and young people were the failure by institutions to put the interests of children first and the failure by governing bodies to assess and monitor the capacity of institutions to give primacy to the interests of children.

"The report I have tabled today presents evidence on how governments and organisations in various jurisdictions have responded to the growing demand to keep children safe when accessing services outside of the home."

According to Dr Talbot several imperatives became apparent from a consideration of the evidence:

- fostering a commitment to cultural change and reform amongst government and non-government agencies delivering services to children and young people;
- supporting organisations to hear the voices of children and put their interests first;
- enabling organisations and the individuals who work in them to see the practical effects of becoming child safe;
- providing mechanisms for good faith information sharing, both to prevent child sexual abuse and to respond quickly to incidents and risks; and
- establishing the lived experience of children and young people at the centre of independent oversight to make sure systems are transparent and that people are empowered to make change.

"Despite the complexity of the task, the evidence is encouraging," Dr Talbot said. "There's reason to hope that the institutional failure to put the interests of children first will be rectified once organisations embed the National Child Safe Principles into the heart of their operations; and that the failure to effectively assess and monitor the capacity of institutions to put the interests of children first will be addressed when independent oversight renders systems transparent.

"In considering these matters, the report seeks to set out practical ways we can all shoulder the responsibility for determining how to radically improve the possibility that child abuse might be prevented," she added.

The report is available on the Committee's webpage, [www.parliament.wa.gov.au/jsccyp](http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/jsccyp) (under the 'Reports' tab).

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