

40TH PARLIAMENT



Joint Standing Committee on the
Commissioner for Children and Young People

Report 3
ANNUAL REPORT 2017—18

Presented by
Hon Dr S.E. Talbot, MLC
November 2018

Committee Members

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Chair | Hon Dr S.E. Talbot, MLC Member for South West Region |
| Deputy Chair | Mr K. O'Donnell, MLA Member for Kalgoorlie |
| Members | Hon D.E.M. Faragher, MLC Member for East Metropolitan Region Mrs J.M.C. Stojkovski, MLA Member for Kingsley |

Committee Staff

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Principal Research Officer | Ms Renée Gould (until 20 April 2018) |
| A/Principal Research Officer | Mr Michael Burton (from 20 April until 31 August 2018) |

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**Joint Standing Committee on the
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People**

Annual Report 2017-18

Report No. 3

Presented by

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Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on 22 November 2018

Chair's Foreword

AS Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, it is my pleasure to present for tabling the Committee's second annual report in the 40th Parliament.

Pursuant to the functions of the Committee, we engaged regularly with the Commissioner for Children and Young people, Mr Colin Pettit, throughout the 2017-2018 reporting period. While this included the usual methods – public hearings, briefings, and a site visit to the Commissioner's office – we also hosted a briefing for members of Parliament by the Commissioner to discuss his *School and Learning Consultation: Technical Report*.

In addition to the members' briefing, we held a series of hearings with key education stakeholder groups to discuss the findings and recommendations contained within the Commissioner's report. A Committee report of the outcomes of these hearings was tabled after the reporting period.

During the reporting period, the Committee conducted preparatory work in anticipation of the State Government's response to the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*. The State Government announced its response in late June 2018 and we will continue to consider how this response may affect the role of the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

I would like to thank my fellow Committee members for their commitment and contribution over the year; I look forward to continuing our work. I would also like to acknowledge the valuable support of the Committee secretariat.



HON DR S.E. TALBOT, MLC
CHAIR

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Chapter 1

Committee Activities

Introduction

In the 2017-18 reporting period, the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People:

- met **16 times**, for a total of more than **29 hours**, with a Member attendance rate of **97 per cent**;
- held **14 hearings**, attended by a total of **25 persons**;
- met for **three briefings**, at which a total of **seven people** provided information;
- undertook site visits to the **Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People** and the **George Jones Child Advocacy Centre**;
- hosted a briefing for Members of Parliament by the Commissioner for Children and Young People attended by **24 Members**;
- considered **47 items** of incoming correspondence; and
- made **22 formal resolutions**.

Public Hearings

Pursuant to Legislative Assembly Standing Order 264, the Committee has power to send for persons, papers and records. During the period 1 July 2017 - 30 June 2018, the Committee conducted 13 public hearings, taking evidence from 24 witnesses to assist with its investigations. In addition, the Committee conducted one closed hearing at which Professor Leah Bromfield discussed a research report produced by the Australian Centre for Child Protection prior to its publication. Following the publication of the report, entitled *Assessing the Quality and Comprehensiveness of Child Protection Practice Frameworks*, the Committee resolved to publish the transcript of evidence taking during that hearing.

Chapter 1

Table 1.2 Public Hearings of the Committee, 1 July 2004 - 30 June 2005

| Date | Name | Position | Organisation |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--|--|
| 13 September 2017 | Mr Colin Pettit | Commissioner for Children and Young People | Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People |
| | Ms Patricia Heath | Director, Policy and Research | |
| 1 November 2017 | Dr Donna Cross | Professor, University of Western Australia | Telethon Kids Institute |
| 1 November 2017 | Professor Stephen Zubrick | Principal Research Fellow | Telethon Kids Institute |
| 8 November 2017 | Mr Grahame Searle | A/Director General | Department of Communities |
| | Ms Jackie Tang | Assistant Director General, Child Protection and Family Support | |
| 29 November 2017 | Mr Colin Pettit | Commissioner for Children and Young People | Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People |
| | Ms Patricia Heath | Director, Policy and Research | |
| 21 March 2018 | Mr Colin Pettit | Commissioner for Children and Young People | Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People |
| | Ms Patricia Heath | Director, Policy and Research | |
| 28 March 2018 | Mr Basil Hanna | Chief Executive Officer | Parkerville Children and Youth Care Inc. |
| | Mrs Amanda Paton | Clinical Psychologist; Director, Therapeutic and Advocacy Services | |
| 9 May 2018 | Mr Grahame Searle | A/Director General | Department of Communities |
| | Ms Jackie Tang | Assistant Director General, Child Protection and Family Support | |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|--|
| 16 May 2018 (originally a closed hearing) | Professor Leah Bromfield | Co-Director | Australian Centre for Child Protection |
| 13 June 2018 | Mrs Jenny Blair | Acting President | Western Australian Council of State School Organisations |
| | Ms Alex O'Neil | Communications and Research Officer | |
| 13 June 2018 | Mrs Siobhan Allen | Executive Director | Parents and Friends Federation of Western Australia |
| 27 June 2018 | Ms Sharyn O'Neill | Director General | Department of Education |
| | Mr Stephen Baxter | Acting Deputy Director General | |
| | Mr Lindsay Hale | Executive Director, Statewide Services | |
| | Mr Eamon Ryan | Executive Director, Professional Standards and Conduct | |
| 27 June 2018 | Mr Ron Gorman | Deputy Director | Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia |
| 27 June 2018 | Mrs Gabrielle Doyle | Director, Teaching and Learning | Catholic Education Western Australia |

Briefings

In addition to gathering evidence during the formal hearings, the Committee conducted a number of informal briefings. The briefings were used to gain information in relation to the Committee's inquiries as well as other matters (Table 1.3).

Chapter 1

Table 1.3 Briefings provided to the Committees, 1 July 2017 - 30 June 2018

| Date | Name | Position | Organisation |
|-----------------|----------------------|--|--|
| 4 July 2017 | Mr Colin Pettit | Commissioner for Children and Young People | Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People |
| | Ms Patricia Heath | Director, Policy and Research | |
| | Mr Darren Gillespie | Director, Communication and Engagement | |
| | Ms Caroline Brasnett | Manager Corporate Services | |
| 23 October 2017 | Dr Basil Hanna | Chief Executive Officer | Parkerville Children and Youth Care Inc. |
| | Ms Amanda Paton | Director Therapeutic Services | |
| 16 May 2018 | Judge Andrew Becroft | Children's Commissioner of New Zealand | Office of the Children's Commissioner of New Zealand |

Parliamentary briefing

On 14 June 2018 the Committee hosted a briefing for Members of Parliament by the Commissioner for Children and Young People on his *School and Learning Consultation: Technical Report*. The Commissioner, Mr Colin Pettit, was accompanied by Ms Marketa Reeves, Senior Policy Officer in his Office. Commissioner Pettit provided the 24 Members in attendance with an overview of his *School and Learning Consultation* process. This overview gave context to the 7 findings and 14 recommendations contained within the *Technical Report*.

Work in progress

In the reporting period, the Committee convened two separate hearings attended by executive officers of the newly-established Department of Communities, to inform itself as to how the restructuring of various government agencies within that Department might affect government services to children and young people. This remains an ongoing area of interest to the Committee.

On 27 June 2018, the Government of Western Australia announced its response to the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*. In considering this response, the Committee noted the following commentary in respect of recommendations pertaining to ‘child safe institutions’:

Recommendations on institutional child safety also include that an independent oversight body be responsible for monitoring and enforcing the [proposed] Child Safe Standards. Consideration of how independent oversight could be implemented in Western Australia will be carried out in the remainder of 2018. The State Government will take into account Western Australia’s existing frameworks that exceed the proposed Child Safe Standards.¹

The Committee is currently considering how this undertaking might impact upon the exercise of the functions of the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

The Committee also noted the June 2018 publication by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet of a discussion paper entitled *An office for advocacy and accountability in Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia*. The discussion paper canvasses the possibility of implementing some significant changes in regard to the operations of various accountability agencies, including the Commissioner for Children and Young People. The Committee will continue to monitor developments in this area.

Following the publication of his forthcoming 2017-2018 Annual Report, the Committee will convene a public hearing with the Commissioner for Children and Young People to examine that report. The Committee intends to establish this review hearing as an annual activity.

¹ Department of the Premier and Cabinet, *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse – Response by Minister McGurk on Behalf of the Government of Western Australia*, June 2018, p 28.

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 2017 - 30 June 2018 (in accordance with Standing Order 276) is detailed below:

Table 2.1 Expenditure items of the Committee, 1 July 2017 - 30 June 2018

| Expenditure Item | \$ |
|----------------------------|------------|
| Staff and Member amenities | 795 |
| Taxis | 25 |
| TOTAL | 820 |

Note that salaries of committee staff are not included, nor are the costs of shared administrative expenses, including lease costs for committee accommodation.



HON DR S.E. TALBOT, MLC
CHAIR



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