

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

*Seventh Report — “Discussion Paper: In Their Own Voice:
The Participation of Children and Young People in Parliamentary Proceedings” — Tabling*

HON DR SALLY TALBOT (South West) [10.13 am]: I am directed to present the seventh report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People titled “Discussion Paper: In Their Own Voice: The Participation of Children and Young People in Parliamentary Proceedings”.

[See paper [4688](#).]

Hon Dr SALLY TALBOT: As Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, it is my pleasure to present this discussion paper, which arises from the proposition that hearing the voice of children and taking into account their views on matters that affect them is important and worthwhile.

This discussion paper acknowledges the rights of children to form and express their views on matters affecting them. This right is set out in article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the convention to which the Commissioner for Children and Young People is under a statutory obligation to have regard. It has been more than 30 years since Australia became a signatory to this convention, yet its provisions are still seen as controversial by some and realising article 12 in practice remains problematic.

Working with children and young people in a meaningful way is made more difficult if there are limited tools available to help organisations such as Parliament plan and engage in this type of participation. Although it is a matter for the Parliament to consider, the committee’s view is that the development of detailed guidance about how to engage with children safely and appropriately will help future parliamentary committees ascertain how and when to engage with children and young people.

The parliamentary system is one that strives to reflect the voices, interests and concerns of the entire population. Given that a quarter of the Western Australian population is under 18 years old, incorporating the views of children and young people on matters that affect them will help make the Parliament more representative and inclusive. In the committee’s view, better decisions will be made if children can have their say on decisions about what matters to them.

With the end of the fortieth Parliament in sight, the committee hopes that those in the next Parliament will use the information put forward in this discussion paper to start considering ways in which children and young people might be encouraged to participate in parliamentary proceedings. With other jurisdictions showing us the way, there is good reason to suggest that now is the time for this matter to be taken seriously by the forty-first Parliament of Western Australia.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their commitment to this issue and acknowledge the support of the committee’s advisers.

I commend the discussion paper to the house.