

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

Fifth Report — “From Words to Action: Fulfilling the Obligation to be Child Safe” — Tabling

HON DR SALLY TALBOT (South West) [10.02 am]: I am directed to present for tabling the fifth report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People titled “From Words to Action: Fulfilling the Obligation to be Child Safe”.

[See paper [4092](#).]

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 report of the committee’s inquiry into the monitoring and enforcing of child safe standards. Established in November 2018, the inquiry’s starting points were the recommendations made in the final report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People’s 2017 report titled “Oversight of Services for Children and Young People in Western Australia”. In considering these two reports, the committee has focused specifically on recommendations related to child safe standards and the provision of independent oversight. The state government has accepted every relevant recommendation of the royal commission, and planning for the implementation of the national child safe principles and oversight provisions is underway. Everyone working towards its implementation acknowledges the complexity of the task, and this is certainly borne out by the evidence that informed this inquiry.

Early in the inquiry, the committee formed the view that the common factors leading to the creation of unsafe environments for children and young people were the failures by institutions to put the interests of children first, and by governing bodies to assess and monitor the capacity of institutions to give primacy to the interests of children. The report I am tabling presents the evidence gathered by the committee in Western Australia and in interstate and overseas jurisdictions about how governments and organisations have responded to the growing demand to keep children safe when accessing services outside of the home. Several imperatives become apparent from a consideration of this evidence. These include: fostering a commitment to cultural change and reform amongst government and non-government agencies; supporting organisations as they learn to hear the voices of children and put their interests first; enabling organisations to see the practical effects of becoming child safe; providing active encouragement to engage in good faith information sharing; and putting the lived experience of children and young people at the centre of independent oversight.

The committee has made 65 findings and 19 recommendations to assist and guide those in the government and non-government sectors as our state proceeds with the implementation of child safe standards and the provision of independent oversight. Despite the complexity of the task, the evidence is encouraging. There is 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.

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