



AnglicareWA
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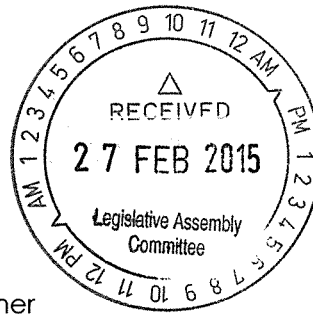
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24 February 2015

Ms Renee Gould
Principal Research Officer
Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner
for Children and Young People
Level 1
11 Harvest Terrace
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Ms Gould

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE FUNCTIONS EXERCISED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Thank you for the invitation to provide feedback on the proposed addition of a child abuse complaints function to the responsibilities of the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Although it would be Anglicare WA's preference that the Commissioner have a role in investigating the substance of individual complaints that are received, we are broadly supportive of the proposed functions, in particular the opportunity to provide an avenue for people to more easily raise concerns about child abuse in our community.

More specifically we would submit the following feedback.

(1) The manner in which the Commissioner's proposed child abuse complaints support function should operate.

- Anglicare WA support the proposed role of education and outreach programs for children and young people focussing on how to disclose any child abuse that occurs while they are in the care of a government agency or other service provider. Anglicare WA strongly encourages the collaborative development and delivery of programs with the CREATE Foundation in order to achieve this objective effectively.
- Our long history of service provision to children and young people has demonstrated that with appropriate, empowering support in the form of a child friendly advocate, children and young people are able to access complaints systems more effectively. Anglicare WA submits that the Commissioner's receiving of complaints and subsequent referral to the relevant investigative authorities should involve child and youth-friendly support mechanisms, to assist the children and young people through what might often be experienced as a highly bureaucratic and alienating process.
- Anglicare WA encourages the use of suitable child and youth friendly support persons to advocate on behalf of children and young people through the complaints process, and to follow up with children and young people on the outcomes of their complaint.

- More generally, Anglicare WA strongly suggests that an advocacy function for children and young people in care could also fit within the mandate of the Commissioner. The current location of this advocate within the Department for Child Protection and Family Support is not in the best interest of children in the care of that Department.
- Regarding the function of monitoring the way in which government agencies deal with complaints of child abuse, Anglicare WA believes that this function requires more clarity. We strongly support that the function should include the Commissioner being able to submit formal recommendations to Government Departments where it is identified that complaints processes require improvement.
- The monitoring function of the Commissioner should also involve an expectation that the Commissioner will act upon any concerns that are identified as a result of complaints process monitoring. This should include the ability to require certain actions following the identification of repeated or systemic failures to protect children and young people.

(2) The impact the proposed child abuse complaints support function may have on the Commissioner's existing functions.

- Anglicare WA appreciates that the proposed child abuse complaints support function will require additional resourcing and that there is a risk that it will detract from the Commissioner's other functions. However, we think that the opportunity for independent oversight by the Commissioner's office of Departmental complaint processes will safeguard children's rights and is overall a very positive development.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry. Further information on the content of our submission can be obtained by contacting Tunya Petridis, Children's Consultant on 9263 2080.

Yours sincerely



Mr Ian Carter AM
Chief Executive Officer