

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JUSTICE STANDING COMMITTEE

Fourth Report — Annual report 2022–23 — Tabling

DR D.J. HONEY (Cottesloe) [10.14 am]: I present for tabling the fourth report of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee, *Annual report 2022–23*.

[See paper [2448](#).]

Dr D.J. HONEY: After exploring several potential inquiry topics, the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee resolved to commence an inquiry titled “An inquiry into the options available to survivors of institutional child sexual abuse in Western Australia who are seeking justice”. This inquiry has dominated our work in the second half of the year. The report I have just presented refers to the period when we were choosing the topic, so it is a brief report, but I wish to discuss some of the background to the report and the work that we are doing.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was a five-year inquiry and it submitted its final report on 15 December 2017. Western Australia was one of the first states to implement a response to the royal commission’s recommendations to provide justice for abuse survivors. One of the key measures was the removal of the statute of limitations that prevented many survivors undertaking civil legal action to seek compensation from offenders and/or institutions. The committee formed the view that it was timely to review our state’s response to the royal commission recommendations and whether improvements could be made to better serve justice for abuse survivors. The inquiry is anticipated to be finalised by the fourth quarter of next year. Whilst there is still much work to do, it is already very clear that there are reasonable changes that can be made that will further improve outcomes for abuse survivors.

In order to allow the government sufficient time to develop a response to our inquiry during this Parliament, we are intending to issue an interim report by the end of the year. This interim report will focus on some key areas and recommendations that are aimed to improve timely resolution of claims for compensation for historic child sexual abuse. Given the age of many victims of historic child sexual abuse, it is critically important that these recommendations are given urgent consideration by the government.

I also thank my fellow committee members for their good company and good work during the year. I have said in this place before how much I value the work we do on committees because otherwise we know members as just members of the other house or of a particular electorate, but in a committee we get to know the person and understand a bit about their background. We are extremely fortunate that there is extensive collective experience on the committee related to the topic of the inquiry and this has greatly facilitated our ability to focus on key issues and identify appropriate witnesses.

I am particularly grateful for the input of committee member Hon Dave Kelly, who is in the chamber now and who has considerable knowledge on the inquiry topic through a long period of advocacy for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. On behalf of the committee, I especially thank our hardworking staff, Dr Alan Charlton and Dr Sam Hutchinson, for their excellent guidance, research and facilitation of the inquiry. They have been exemplary in their handling of a very complex inquiry topic.

I commend the report to the house.

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean) [10.18 am]: I rise to make a few comments following on from the member for Cottesloe’s comments in his role as Chair of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee in handing down the committee’s fourth report, *Annual report 2022–23*. I want to begin by thanking some of the organisations that have taken the time to put submissions to the inquiry, specifically those organisations that represent and in some cases are made up of survivors of child sexual abuse. In particular, Survivors of Child Abuse and Tuart Place, which are both organisations located here in Western Australia; Survivors and Mates Support Network, which is an organisation based in New South Wales; Beyond Abuse: Advocacy Support Justice, which is a Tasmanian organisation; and Care Leavers Australasia Network, otherwise known as CLAN, not to be confused with a local organisation here of the same name; and Care Leavers Australasia Network, which has representation in Australia and New Zealand. All those organisations took the time and effort to make submissions to the inquiry on behalf of survivors. Given the nature of the work they do, they work under trying circumstances, but they do a fabulous job providing a vehicle for the voices of survivors to be heard. I thank them for their submissions. I assure them that those submissions will be fully considered.

As the chair indicated, the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee is looking to deliver an interim report this year. The committee decided to do an interim report because of the urgency in addressing some of the issues raised with the committee. I was really proud to be a part of the Labor government that decided to lift the statute of limitations so that survivors can make claims for compensation for sexual abuse in the civil courts—a recommendation that came from the federal royal commission. The Labor government moved quickly in 2018 to lift the statute of limitations to allow victims to make civil court claims, which they had previously been denied. It has been five years since the statute of limitations was lifted. The experience of survivors in the civil process

has been difficult. As the member for Cottesloe, the chair of the committee, indicated, it appears that some relatively straightforward changes can be made so that this process is easier for victims, many of whom are getting on in age and have suffered greatly for many years.

I thank the members of the committee, particularly the chair, for the work done to date. I thank the staff, whom the chair has already mentioned. I look forward to the first part of this report being delivered this year. I encourage the Attorney General and other members of cabinet to pay close attention to the recommendations that will be made in the hope that swift action can be taken to make the necessary changes. In the same way that the government responded quickly to the royal commission's initial recommendations, I hope the government similarly responds when the report is handed down.

DR K. STRATTON (Nedlands) [10.22 am]: I, too, wish to add a few comments about the annual report of the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee. As members have heard, an inquiry is currently underway and those findings and recommendations will be delivered in due course, but I take this early opportunity to thank in particular, as the member for Bassendean has, all the survivors who have shared with us their stories of abuse and survival and their experiences, many of them very challenging, in seeking justice from not only the various institutions that were supposed to care for them, but also other legal and justice processes. In particular, I thank Tuart Place. I had the privilege of serving on the board of Tuart Place for many years. It is a fairly unique board in not-for-profit terms in that it is comprised of people with lived experience or those who have been participants of Tuart Place, and those from the more traditional model, if you like, who have professional experience. In some ways, I was there in both capacities because both my grandfather and my husband have lived experience of out-of-home care. I am well aware of the impact that a care experience has on all aspects of a person's life.

Tuart Place was founded by a dedicated group of care leavers, led by former child migrant Laurie Humphreys, an ex-resident of Bindoon Orphanage. His dream and vision was for a place at which care leavers would be safe and welcome and where they could drop in to find no wrong door and have their particular needs met. He has since passed away. The services at Tuart Place are diverse and include counselling and support groups, life skills, computer skills, records and family tracing support and social activities and events. Tuart Place has gone from strength to strength and is well respected in the sector. It was an honour to sit in this gallery with a group of survivors from Tuart Place when, in 2018, the Premier delivered an apology on behalf of the state government to those who had been sexually abused while in institutional care. At that time, we joined the National Redress Scheme. I know how very important and powerful that experience was. It has been really important to all members of the committee that we have centred and respected the survivor voice in our inquiry.

I thank the chair of Tuart Place, John Ryall; the vice-chair, Dale Lynch; director Dr Pip White; clinical manager and senior therapist, Susy Vaughan; and social worker Jan Newman, all of whom provided the committee with comprehensive submissions and evidence. I add my thanks to the chair, the member for Cottesloe, Dr David Honey, for his sensitive leadership on what is indeed a complex issue; committee members and committee staff for working on such a difficult and at times emotional topic; and, again, the survivors for their generosity as we again consider ways forward to achieve justice for all and, ultimately, as is the aim of many survivors when they participate in these processes, ensure that these things do not happen to others.