

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

*Fifth Report — Report review 2022: Examination of selected reports by the
Commissioner for Children and Young People — Tabling*

HON NEIL THOMSON (Mining and Pastoral) [10.15 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 *Report review 2022: Examination of selected reports by the Commissioner for Children and Young People*.

[See paper [2146](#).]

Hon NEIL THOMSON: The committee has reviewed the Commissioner for Children and Young People's annual report for 2021–22 and considered several other reports published by her office in the past year. Most of these were published in the period since January 2022, when Jacqueline McGowan-Jones took over the commissioner role from Colin Pettit.

Some of the work referenced has its origins in work begun by Mr Pettit. For example, the second Speaking Out Survey, which collected the views of around 16 500 year 4 to 12 students, was conducted in early 2021. A summary of the results was published at the end of 2021. In 2022, the commissioner's office continued to explore the data, revealing some startling findings around kids' views of their own safety. Further exploration of the data related to mental health mirrored findings from the first survey in 2019, showing that teenage girls are more likely than teenage boys to feel depressed and unhappy about themselves. The commissioner tackled this worrying trend by establishing a Girls' Wellbeing project to explore the reasons for the gap and gather views on how to improve girls' experiences.

The commissioner also received Lotterywest funding to extend the Speaking Out Survey to several groups that the mainstream survey could not cater for. These were students who are home schooled, students with special educational needs and students in remote communities. It is important to capture the views of these minority populations to provide the best possible understanding of what children and young people in this state are experiencing. Hopefully, funding will be available to do this in future years.

I also draw the attention of members to a very important section of the report—section 4, “Ongoing Issues”, particularly the reference to matters that were raised by the committee. It states —

On 18 November 2021, the Committee tabled a report detailing the history of a proposal to create a commissioner for Aboriginal children and young people. There have been calls for such a position since the creation of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. After consideration of the merits of such a proposal, this Committee recommended that a separate statutory position dedicated to the advocacy of Aboriginal children and young people be created to work alongside the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

I also bring to the attention of the house the other ongoing issue—the lack of decision on the oversight mechanism for the royal commission recommendations. Section 4.2 of the report states —

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse released its final report in December 2017. In his annual report in 2021, the then Commissioner Colin Pettit noted that 4 years of the 10-year implementation period had passed and progress had been slow. At our hearing with Commissioner McGowan-Jones in October 2022, Ms McGowan-Jones reported with some frustration that the Department of the Premier and Cabinet had stated ‘as late as this morning’ that it was ‘still reviewing policy settings’ regarding who within the WA government would have oversight of the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations. The Committee received an update from the Department of the Premier and Cabinet regarding progress on recommendations for which it is the lead agency and was told that ‘the Department continues to progress the development of a policy proposal for a model of independent oversight of child safe organisations responding to the recommendations of the Royal Commission, for consideration by Government’.

Finally, the commissioner told the committee that she had enjoyed her first months in what is her dream job. We have every confidence that she will continue to perform the role as well as she has in this first year.