

APPENDIX B

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES AND FINANCIAL OPERATIONS

ANSWERS TO 2020-21 BUDGET ESTIMATES AND 2019-20 ANNUAL REPORT - QUESTIONS PRIOR TO HEARING (ROUND 1)

Commissioner for Children and Young People

Hon Alison Xamon MLC asked:

1) I refer to page 7:

- a) When is the Child Wellbeing Strategy expected to be completed; and
- b) Where will the Child Wellbeing Strategy be made available?

Answer (a and b):

In 2019 the Commissioner for Children and Young People released the *Improving the Odds for WA's Vulnerable Children and Young People* report. One of the key recommendations of the report was to establish a whole-of-government Child Wellbeing Strategy for WA. The Commissioner recommended that the Strategy:

- include whole-of-government targets to improve wellbeing outcomes, with the targets being long-term, extending beyond election cycles, and spanning individual agency responsibilities;
- be developed through wide consultation;
- include a resourced implementation framework with clear outcomes and timelines, as well as monitoring and reporting of progress on the outcomes; and
- should prioritise and strengthen investment for children, young people and families who are vulnerable.

The Commissioner is working with the WA Government to support the development of a Child Wellbeing Strategy for the State that meets this criteria. However, the Commissioner is not responsible for the delivery or coordination of this project, and as a result does not hold the information necessary to answer Questions 1(a)-(b).

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Hon Nick Goiran MLC asked:

- 1) I refer to p.27 of the annual report, where it states that the Commissioner continues to advocate for strong independent oversight of the child protection system, as recommended by Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and I ask:

- a) What specific oversight(s) is being advocated for

Answer:

The Commissioner for Children and Young People has advocated for the introduction of independent oversight mechanisms consistent with recommendations 6.10-6.11 and 12.5 of the Royal Commission's Final Report. These recommendations relate to independent oversight of Child Safe Standards and out-of-home care services.

- b) Further to a), how was this advocated for during the reporting period; and
c) On what dates was this advocated for?

Answer (b and c):

The introduction of independent oversight has been advocated for by successive Commissioners for Children and Young People:

- In October 2013 two written submissions to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse – one regarding child safe institutions, the other on the topic of preventing the sexual abuse of children in out-of-home care – were provided by the then Commissioner for Children and Young People.
- The *Oversight of Services for Children and Young People in Western Australia* report was released in November 2017.
- The Commissioner published *Comments on the recommendations in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report* on in June 2018.
- A written submission was provided to the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People's inquiry into the monitoring and enforcing of Child Safe Standards in March 2019.
- The *Improving the Odds for WA's Vulnerable Children and Young People* report was released in April 2019.

During the reporting period the Commissioner for Children and Young People and/or his representatives advocated for the introduction of the oversight mechanisms referred to in Answer 1(a) via the following means:

- Meeting with the consultants engaged by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet on 18 July 2019.

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- Oral testimony provided to Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People's inquiry into the monitoring and enforcing of Child Safe Standards on 25 September 2019 and 19 February 2020.
- Letter to the Director General of the Department of Communities, Ms Michelle Andrews sent 17 February 2020.
- Meetings of the Department of Communities Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse External Implementation Committee, attended 29 July 2019, 21 August 2019, 18 September 2019, 28 October 2019, 2 December 2019, 5 February 2020, 18 March 2020, 29 April 2020, 28 May 2020, and 10 June 2020.
- Meetings with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and Nous Consultants, attended 8 November 2019, 13 November 2019 and 19 November 2019.

A number of other meetings occurred between the Commissioner and key stakeholders during the reporting period in which the introduction of independent oversight mechanisms was discussed informally.

From 11-14 November 2019 representatives from the Commissioner's office travelled to New South Wales and Victoria, along with representatives of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, to meet with key officials from the New South Wales Office of the Children's Guardian and the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People. The purpose of these meetings was to inform the design and implementation of a future Western Australian oversight mechanism for the Child Safe Standards and out-of-home care. Representatives from the Commissioner's office were subsequently hosted by the Office of the Children's Guardian and the Commission for Children and Young People from 2-5 March 2020 in order to gain a more detailed operational understanding of key elements of their respective oversight mechanisms.

Following the reporting period the Commissioner provided the *Oversight of child safe standards and out-of-home care in WA* discussion paper to relevant State Government Ministers, the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People, the Leader of the Opposition and the Parliamentary Leader of the Greens WA. The discussion paper was publicly released 12 October 2020.

The Commissioner continues to regularly meet with key stakeholders, including the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia and the Western Australian Council of Social Service, to discuss the safety and welfare of children and young people across the State.

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