

41ST PARLIAMENT



Joint Standing Committee on the  
Commissioner for Children and Young People

Report 4

*ANNUAL REPORT 2021–2022*

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Presented by  
Mrs R.M.J. Clarke, MLA and Hon N. Thomson, MLC  
October 2022

## *Committee Members*

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Chair	Mrs R.M.J. Clarke, MLA Member for Murray-Wellington
Deputy Chair	Hon N. Thomson, MLC Member for Mining and Pastoral Region
Members	Ms R.S. Stephens, MLA Member for Albany
	Hon A. Makur Chuot, MLC Member for North Metropolitan Region

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**Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner  
for Children and Young People**

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**Annual Report 2021–2022**

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Report No. 4

Presented by

**Mrs R.M.J. Clarke, MLA and Hon N. Thomson, MLC**

Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council on  
20 October 2022



## Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present the Committee's second annual report for tabling. The Committee has had a productive year which included several welcomes and farewells. In September we finally settled our committee membership, welcoming the Hon. Ayor Makur Chuot MLC. She replaced the Hon. Klara Andric MLC, who had been serving on two joint committees which were meeting at the same time.

At the end of 2021 we farewelled the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Colin Pettit, and thanked him for his 6 years of distinguished service in the role. At the start of 2022 we held a briefing with the new commissioner, Jacqueline McGowan-Jones. Ms McGowan-Jones is the first Aboriginal person appointed to the position; while this provides a useful perspective on Indigenous issues, she is – like the commissioners before her – a commissioner for all children and young people in the state. We met with her again recently to hear about what the office has achieved in the past year.

In April the Committee launched an inquiry into ways to address food insecurity for children and young people affected by poverty. We are discovering that food insecurity is a multi-dimensional problem. It is not only about having money to buy healthy food, but about knowing what is healthy, where to find it and how to prepare it. It is about having access in our neighbourhoods to affordable healthy options, and about ensuring children are not disadvantaged in their schooling because they do not have enough to eat. We have heard that some children do not attend school because they do not have anything to take for lunch. We hope our inquiry will find a way to address these kinds of inequities.

Throughout this inquiry, we are endeavouring to uphold the right of all children and young people to have their voices heard and to participate in making decisions that affect them (as per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child). This has meant offering children and young people different ways to make a submission, such as sending us a video or a drawing. We also commissioned consultants to produce an easy English illustrated version of the inquiry's terms of reference for use by children and people with limited English. We are hopeful that these efforts will capture the views of at least some of the children and young people that are at the heart of this Committee's work.

I take this opportunity to thank my fellow Committee members for their contributions over the past year: Deputy Chair Hon. Neil Thomson MLC, Rebecca Stephens MLA and Hon. Ayor Makur Chuot MLC. Thank you also to our research staff for their support: principal research officer Sarah Palmer, and research officers Carmen Cummings and Lucy Roberts.



MRS R.M.J. CLARKE, MLA  
CHAIR



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# Chapter 1

## Committee activities

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### Introduction

The Committee's two most significant achievements during the course of this reporting period were:

- initiating an inquiry into food insecurity affecting children and young people experiencing poverty
- tabling a discussion paper on the merits of appointing a commissioner for Aboriginal children and young people.

The Committee held a hearing with the outgoing Commissioner for Children and Young People, Colin Pettit, and held a briefing to welcome the new commissioner, Jacqueline McGowan-Jones.

The Committee fulfilled its oversight function by examining selected reports produced by the office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP), including the activities outlined in the CCYP's annual report.

**Table 1.1: Summary of the activities of the Committee, 1 July 2021–30 June 2022**

Description	Activity
Briefings	4
Deliberative meetings	16
Formal evidence hearings	5
Witnesses appearing	11
Reports tabled	3
Report recommendations tabled	6

### Public hearings

Pursuant to Assembly Standing Order 264, the Committee has power to send for persons, papers and records. During the period 1 July 2021–30 June 2022, the Committee conducted 5 public hearings, taking evidence from 11 witnesses to assist with its investigations (see Table 1.2).

The Department of Communities was invited to a hearing primarily to discuss its response to the CCYP's review of residential care placement of children with harmful sexual behaviours. The Committee was keen to hear how the Department planned to address some of the recommendations of the review concerning information management systems and staff training. Members also asked about access to trauma-specific services for children in out-of-home care and support services for grandcarers.

In March, hearings with Valuing Children Initiative/Centrecare, Foodbank and public health nutritionist Associate Professor Christina Pollard helped shape the terms of reference for the Committee’s first inquiry into poverty and food insecurity.

**Table 1.2: Public hearings of the Committee, 1 July 2021–30 June 2022**

Date	Witness	Position	Organisation
13 October 2021	Colin Pettit	Commissioner for Children and Young People	Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People
	Natalie Hall	Director, Policy, Monitoring and Research	
27 October 2021	Mike Rowe	Director General	Department of Communities
	Rachael Green	Deputy Director General	
	Astrid Kalders	Executive Director, Specialised Care and Accommodation	
	Glenn Mace	Executive Director, Service Delivery, Community Services	
	Dr Kelly Thompson	Acting Director, Secure Care	
	Caron Irwin	Assistant Director General, Strategy and Partnerships	
16 March 2022	Adjunct Professor Tony Pietropiccolo	Director, Centrecare; Co-founder, Valuing Children Initiative	Centrecare; Valuing Children Initiative
23 March 2022	Dr Roslyn Giglia	Nutrition and Food Security Manager	Foodbank WA
23 March 2022	Associate Professor Christina Pollard	Academic and Public Health Nutritionist	Curtin University

## Briefings

In addition to formal hearings, the Committee is able to hold briefings for which there is no publicly available transcript. Briefings held during the reporting period were used to assist the Committee in its ongoing work and to inform the new inquiry (see Table 1.3).

Given the Committee’s interest in foster care, Dr Katrina Stratton MLA was invited to speak about her research into grandparent carers while employed at Wanslea<sup>1</sup> prior to being elected to Parliament. Dr Stratton led a 3-year study of grandparent carers (or grandcarers) aimed at understanding how their caring role impacted their lives – and hence those of the children in their care.

<sup>1</sup> A charity organisation which provides services to vulnerable children and families.

The Committee also conducted remote briefings with Helen Connolly, the South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People, and Natalie Lewis, Commissioner at the Queensland Family and Child Commission, to hear about their experiences and views in regard to establishing a commissioner for Aboriginal children and young people.

The new Commissioner for Children and Young People, Jacqueline McGowan-Jones, attended a briefing five weeks after beginning her role to introduce herself to the Committee and outline her plans. She will provide the Committee with an overview of her office's activities for the 2021–22 financial year in October.

In June two Committee members attended an on-site briefing with approximately 25 participants in the Neighbourhood Mothers' Program run by Isha Multicultural Women's Health Services in Mirrabooka. The women were from a range of ethnic backgrounds and Isha staff and two interpreters were on hand to assist those with limited English. The purpose of the briefing was to understand the challenges for newly arrived migrants and refugees in accessing and preparing healthy food for their children. It provided useful insights for the Committee's inquiry.

**Table 1.3: Briefings provided to the Committee, 1 July 2021–30 June 2022**

Date	Name	Position	Organisation
11 August 2021	Dr Katrina Stratton MLA	Former Manager of Research and Evaluation	Wanslea
27 October 2021	Helen Connolly	Commissioner for Children and Young People	Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People, South Australia
27 October 2021	Natalie Lewis	Commissioner	Queensland Family and Child Commission
16 February 2022	Jacqueline McGowan-Jones	Commissioner for Children and Young People	Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People
	Natalie Hall	Director of Policy, Monitoring and Research	
17 June 2022	Participants in the Neighbourhood Mothers' Program		Isha Multicultural Women's Health Services

## Reports tabled

The Committee tabled 3 reports during the period 1 July 2021–30 June 2022, one of which was the [Annual Report 2020–2021](#) (tabled 16 September 2021).

The [Report Review 2020–21: Examination of selected reports by the Commissioner for Children and Young People](#) (tabled 18 November 2021) considered the work and performance of the CCYP for that year. The report found that the Commissioner had ensured the views and issues of children were being heard, but whether they are acted upon is often not within the Commissioner's control.

The Committee's report on [\*The merits of appointing a commissioner for Aboriginal children and young people\*](#) (tabled 18 November 2021) reviewed the numerous calls made over the past 20 years for a separate statutory position dedicated to the advocacy of Aboriginal children and young people to work alongside the CCYP. The report considered the continued disadvantage of WA's Aboriginal children and young people in many areas and recommended a dedicated position be established here, similar to those that now exist in other states.

## **Other activities**

### **Establishment of inquiry**

On 7 April 2022 the Committee launched its [\*Inquiry into the most effective ways for Western Australia to address food insecurity for children and young people affected by poverty\*](#).

The inquiry was founded on the understanding that there is a link between poverty and poor nutrition and that poor nutrition leads to ongoing physical, mental, social and learning problems.

The Committee recognises that addressing poverty is key to improving food security for children and young people; however, there remains an imperative to ensure children in need can address their immediate hunger. To this end the Committee resolved to explore the effectiveness of food relief in providing healthy food to children and young people, while also recognising that this should be an emergency response rather than an ongoing solution. Food literacy programs which educate children and families about sourcing and preparing healthy food have potential to provide more permanent solutions, and are being investigated as part of the inquiry. Other models for tackling food insecurity, such as meals provided within schools, are also being explored.

The inquiry was advertised in The West Australian and through 5 social media posts across Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Given the importance of including children's voices in research that concerns them, the Committee has taken extra measures to encourage children and young people to contribute. Consultants were engaged to produce an easy English version of the terms of reference and children and young people have been provided with a range of ways to make a submission. Submissions from children and young people remain open until 25 November 2022.

The Committee was also keen to hear about the experiences of vulnerable populations such as refugees and newly arrived migrants, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The terms of reference were translated into 7 languages to assist families from different cultural backgrounds, and a version of the easy English booklet was created for adults with limited English. The Committee publicised that it accepts submissions in any language, as well as videos and voice recordings.

An advertisement aimed at engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the inquiry will be aired on Indigenous radio stations across the state in the second half of the year.

## Chapter 2

### Financial Statement

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The Committee does not have its own formal budget and is funded out of the budget of the Legislative Assembly. Approval for major expenditures is required on a case-by-case basis and is entirely at the discretion of the Speaker.

The Committee's expenditure for the financial year 1 July 2021–30 June 2022 (in accordance with Standing Order 276) is detailed below:

**Table 2.1: Expenditure items of the Committee, 1 July 2021–30 June 2022**

Expenditure Item	Amount (\$)
Consultants	7000
Client catering	200
Staff/member amenities	200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7400</b>

Notes:

- Figures rounded to nearest \$100.
- Salaries of committee staff are not included.
- Costs of shared administrative expenses, including lease costs for committee accommodation, not included.



MRS R.M.J. CLARKE, MLA  
CHAIR



# Appendix One

## Committee's functions and powers

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The following was agreed by concurrence between the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council on 26 May 2021, establishing the Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People:

1. Pursuant to section 51 of the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006*, a Joint Standing Committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People be appointed by the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council.
2. The Joint Standing Committee shall comprise 2 members appointed by the Legislative Assembly and 2 members appointed by the Legislative Council.
3. It is the function of the Joint Standing Committee to —
  - i. monitor, review and report to Parliament on the exercise of the functions of the Commissioner for Children and Young People;
  - ii. examine Annual and other Reports of the Commissioner; and
  - iii. consult regularly with the Commissioner.
4. A report of the Joint Standing Committee will be presented to the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council by members of the Joint Standing Committee nominated by it for that purpose.
5. The Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly relating to Standing and Select Committees will be followed as far as they can be applied.



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