

The Hon Kate Washington MP

Minister for Families and Communities
Minister for Disability Inclusion



Ref: ACYP01052023

Ms Helen Minnican
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

By email:
LAClerk@parliament.nsw.gov.au
childrenyoungpeople@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Minnican,

Re: Response to 2022 review of the annual reports and other matters of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People.

I am advised that the Parliament has not yet received a response to the recommendations contained within the report of the Committee on Children and Young People titled: 2022 Review of the annual reports and other matters of the Advocate for Children and Young People (the Advocate) and the Office of the Children's Guardian, dated October 2022.

This is despite the Advocate providing the former government with relevant information to be shared with Parliament.

I provide that information to the Parliament now.

Recommendation 1: That in light of evidence provided to the inquiry and other research available in the public domain regarding the growing trend of school students using e-cigarettes or 'vapes', the Committee write to the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People and request the Advocate for Children and Young People, through ongoing consultations, to collect information relating to this matter and report back on findings to the 2023 public hearing.

I am informed that the Advocate is currently undertaking consultations with young people about their experiences of vaping. I understand these findings will be shared with the Committee when the project is concluded.

Recommendation 2: That the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People provides data on the number of children and young people it consults with each year in its annual reporting.

I am informed that this is the standard practice for the Advocate's annual reports, however in the 2022 Annual Report, there was an oversight where only the cumulative total for the office was listed.

I understand that in the Advocate's Annual Reports moving forward the annual total will be included as standard.

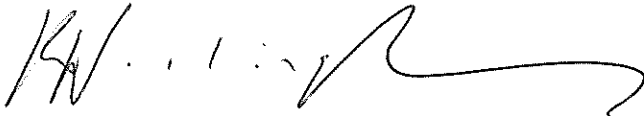
Recommendation 3: That the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People consider evaluating the Our Local online platform and, if appropriate, developing a similar resource.

I am informed that the Department of Customer Service conducted a review of Our Local. This review concluded that young people were unlikely to use a platform such as Our Local, as similar resources exist. As a result, I understand Our Local was decommissioned in November 2021.

I note the Advocate provided a response to the former Minister responding to each of these recommendations. I have attached that correspondence for reference, and regret the delay in sharing this information with the Parliament.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Advocate to improve the lives of children and young people across NSW.

Sincerely,



Kate Washington MP
Minister for Families and Communities
Minister for Disability Inclusion

2 May 2023

Encl.

The Hon Natasha McLaren-Jones MLC
Minister for Families and Communities
52 Martin Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

13 December 2022

Via: office@maclaren-jones.minister.nsw.gov.au

Dear Minister,

Re: File ref: D22/57728 - Report No. 5/57 of the Committee on Children and Young People 2022 review of the annual reports and other matters of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People and the Office of the Children's Guardian dated October 2022.

Following advice from our Committee Manager, I am advised that this response must be from or in coordination with your office.

Please find my response to the findings and recommendations in the Committee Report as follows;

Concerning finding 1, I am pleased to hear that the Committee is satisfied that my Office is continuing to meet its functions and guiding principles under our enabling legislation.

With regard to recommendation 1, vaping continues to be an issue that we hear about in our consultations. We are currently in conversation with NSW Health to undertake consultations around this important topic in early 2023. We would be happy to share these findings with the Committee and your Office at the appropriate time.

Concerning finding 2, built within the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024*, is the commitment to publish annual tracking reports. My Office is currently in the process of completing the first progress report, which I would be happy to send to the Committee and your Office upon completion.

I note recommendation 2, suggesting the inclusion of our consultation numbers within our annual report. This is normal practice within our reporting, however, there was an oversight in our 2020-2021 Annual report which only noted the cumulative total, since the Office commenced. I have ensured the total for the 12 month reporting period is included in our 2021-2022 Annual Report, which will be the practice moving forward.

In response to recommendation 3, Our Local was a resource called for by children and young people and as the platform become more known, was seeing increasing usage. Unfortunately, the resources and cost to develop and maintain a platform such as this falls

outside my current resourcing. The platform was placed into hibernation in 2020 as a result of insufficient funding.

As part of the NSW Government's One CX initiative, the Department of Customer Service (DCS) conducted a review of the Our Local platform. In this review, a conclusion was made that young people were unlikely to use a platform such as Our Local to seek information on community events and government services available to them. In this research it was highlighted that the current Ask Izzy platform adequately meets these needs for the community.

Following this review a decision was made that the platform would not receive future funding. The Our Local platform was formally decommissioned in November 2021. Further information on the DCS review can be obtained from the department upon request.

I extend my thanks to your Office for the opportunity to respond, and to the Committee for their findings and recommendations and for the important role you both take in conducting oversight of my Office and supporting our work.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact me on 9248 0976 or at zoe.robinson@acyp.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,



Zoë Robinson

Advocate for Children and Young People
Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People