

PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES



Committee on Children and Young People

Review of the 2007-2008 Annual Report of the Commission for Children and Young People

Transcript of Proceedings, Written Responses to Questions and
Minutes

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Membership and Staff

Chair Mr Robert Coombs MP, Member for Swansea (from 30 October 2008)

Deputy Chair Hon Kayee Griffin MLC (from 30 October 2008)

Members Ms Marie Andrews MP, Member for Gosford
Mr Stephen Cansdell MP, Member for Clarence
Mr Robert Furolo MP, Member for Lakemba (from 24 March 2009)
Hon Catherine Cusack MLC
Hon Fred Nile MLC

Former Members Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP, Member for Marrickville (Chair until 24 September 2008)
Dr Andrew McDonald MP, Member for Macquarie Fields (Deputy Chair until 24 September 2008)
Mr Geoff Corrigan MP, Member for Camden (Member from 24 September 2008 until 24 March 2009)

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Terms of Reference

The Committee on Children and Young People is constituted under Part 6 of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998. The functions of the Committee under the Commission for Children and Young People Act are set out in section 28 of the Act as follows:

- (1) The Parliamentary Joint Committee has the following functions under this Act:
 - (a) to monitor and review the exercise by the Commission of its functions,
 - (b) to report to both Houses of Parliament, with such comments as it thinks fit, on any matter appertaining to the Commission or connected with the exercise of its functions to which, in the opinion of the Joint Committee, the attention of Parliament should be directed,
 - (c) to examine each annual or other report of the Commission and report to both Houses of Parliament on any matter appearing in, or arising out of, any such report,
 - (d) to examine trends and changes in services and issues affecting children, and report to both Houses of Parliament any changes that the Joint Committee thinks desirable to the functions and procedures of the Commission,
 - (e) to inquire into any question in connection with the Committee's functions which is referred to it by both Houses of Parliament, and report to both Houses on that question.
- (2) Nothing in this Part authorises the Parliamentary Joint Committee to investigate a matter relating to particular conduct.
- (3) The Commission may, as soon as practicable after a report of the Parliamentary Joint Committee has been tabled in a House of Parliament, make and furnish to the Presiding Officer of that House a report in response to the report of the Committee. Section 26 applies to such a report.
- (4) A reference in this section to the Commission includes a reference to the Child Death Review Team.

Chair's Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present this report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Children and Young People, the first in my role as Chair. In doing so, the Committee fulfills its statutory duties under s 28 of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998* to examine each annual or other report of the Commission and report to both Houses of Parliament on any matter appearing in, or arising out of, any such report.

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge the notable contribution to the work of the Committee made by the previous Chair, Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP, and Deputy Chair, Dr Andrew McDonald MP. Due to the provisions of the Act, Ms Tebbutt's return to the Ministry as Deputy Premier, and Dr McDonald's appointment as Parliamentary Secretary for Health, meant that they could no longer continue as Members of the Committee. I know I speak for all Committee Members when I express my gratitude for their dedication and collegial approach to Committee work.

Throughout the reporting period, the Commission continued to play its role as the State's leading advocate for the rights and needs of children and young people. The Committee is pleased to note a number of important achievements of the Commission in the reporting period, including:

- conducting 237,486 background checks;
- publishing *Making the world work better for kids* on its website, to encourage debate on how best to protect children at work while promoting their wellbeing;
- delivering Child-safe Child-friendly training programs to groups such as youth services, family day care and child care centres, local councils, festival and events organisers, school photographers and national parks;
- disseminating the Commission's *Babysitting Guide*; and
- releasing the results of research into children and young people's experience of poverty and into support for Paid Parental Leave.

With respect to the participation of children and young people, the Committee is particularly pleased to note that the Commission has established a new Young People's Reference Group. The Reference Group's advice will be incorporated into the Commission's work, a practical means of promoting the participation of children and young people in decisions about issues that affect their lives.

During the reporting period, the most public examination of children and young people's issues was the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW under Justice James Wood. The Commission's submission to the Inquiry recommended a refocusing of the current system from viewing children's issues through the prism of child protection. It argued that the Department of Community Services ought to be freed up to do this vital work, with the remainder of the human services system more actively supporting vulnerable children in families under pressure.¹

Justice Wood reported under his Terms of Reference in March 2009, and his recommendations formed the basis of the *Children Legislation Amendment (Wood Inquiry Recommendations) Bill 2009*.

¹ Commission for Children and Young People, 2007-2008 *Annual Report*, Commissioner's Foreword.

Chair's Foreword

In his recent report, Justice Wood unequivocally stated that child protection is “the collective responsibility of the whole of Government and of the community”.² Committee Members agree with the Commission that this collective responsibility ought to be extended to encompass the wellbeing, rights and needs of every child and young person. The Committee looks forward to continuing to work with the Commission towards that very important goal.

Finally, I note that this is the last occasion on which the Committee will have heard from Ms Gillian Calvert in her role as Commissioner for Children and Young People. Ms Calvert was the State's inaugural Commissioner in 1999, but is ineligible for reappointment to a third term due to the specific provisions of the Act. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all Committee Members to wish Ms Calvert all the best in the future, and to thank her for her distinguished leadership of the Commission over the past ten years. Her legacy is an organisation whose role as advocate for children and young people is now emulated not only in other Australian jurisdictions, but in diverse parts of the world; and I would like to leave the last word to her:

What makes children work is the relationships that surround them, and I think probably what makes the Commission and the Committee work are the relationships between the Committee and the Commission, so opportunities to build and sustain those relationships is what I would encourage you to continue with the new Commissioner.³



Robert Coombs MP
Chair

² *Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW*, paragraph 10.4.

³ Gillian Calvert, Transcript of evidence, 15 April 2009, p 37.

Chapter One - Questions Answered Before Hearing

Responses from the Commissioner on the 2007-2008 Annual Report of the Commission for Children and Young People

Structure and staff

Question 1

The Wood Special Commission has recommended that working with children checks be extended to those who work directly or have regular access to children and young people in all human service agencies, and to volunteers in clearly identified high risk groups. How many staff are currently engaged in the background checking process, and what would you consider to be the likely resource implications of the proposed extension of working with children checks?

Response:

The recommendations in the Wood Special Commission report cover a broad range of additional people requiring the Working With Children background check. We have estimated that we would undertake around 37,000 more checks per year for the groups included in the Children Legislation Amendment (Wood Inquiry Recommendations) Bill 2009 currently before Parliament. The additional costs for these groups would be:

- *Volunteers in high risk groups*: namely those having extended unsupervised contact with children and young people - \$600,470
- *Adult household members*, aged 18 years and above of foster carers, family day carers and licensed home based carers - \$518,370
- *New units* administering the alternative mandatory scheme - \$10,240
- *Principal officers* of designated agencies providing out of home care and adoption services - \$3,070
- *Children's services licensees*: some of these will be checked already as they are also the authorised supervisor - \$179,200
- *Students* working with Department of Community Services officers - \$5,360.

We estimate the Commission will need around 10 additional staff to undertake this additional work.

We are currently estimating the number of contractors and self employed who have regular direct unsupervised contact with children.

Question 2

How many Commission staff are engaged in the Child Death Review Team (CDRT) secretariat? Are they fulltime with the CDRT, or do they also undertake other work within the Commission?

Response:

Two positions at Grade 7/8 and Grade 3/4 were transferred to the Commission when we became responsible for supporting the Child Death Review Team. There have been no subsequent budgetary enhancements. Rather than continue to have two people bear the whole burden of this distressing work, we now rotate and share the work between all our six

researchers. This is one way we manage our OH & S responsibilities to our staff. At various times the expertise of the communications and policy teams also support the Child Death Review Team.

Question 3

In 2007-08, the Commission brought the Policy, Communications and Community Development and Research Teams under the aegis of the “Director Influencing”. What was the reasoning behind this, and how was it carried out? What effect do you consider it has had upon the operations of the Commission? [Annual Report p. 49]

Response:

We wanted to strengthen senior management structure to release the Commissioner from direct supervision of middle managers. We retained consultants to help us streamline the accountabilities of our Directors and then revised their role statements.

The impact of the changes has been a strengthening of the links between our work in research, policy and community development to influence children’s well-being and a smoother transfer of research findings into policy development. Under the new structure, we also enjoy improved cross fertilisation of ideas throughout a project, with less need for management intervention.

Question 4

Could you please advise the Committee about the role and operation of the Commission’s Staff Management Committee? [Annual Report p. 6]

Response:

The Staff Management Committee is part of the Commission’s governance structure. Its role is to give staff a voice in the management activities that most affect them, like our human resources policies and procedures, our accommodation and equipment and the overall experience of working in the Commission.

The Staff Management Committee meets quarterly under the chairmanship of our Director Operations. Membership includes one manager, two staff members and a trainee. All staff are welcome to raise issues for the Staff Management Committee through the Chair or any member. The minutes of the Committee are available to all staff.

Question 5

The Office for Children’s Disability Action Plan Priorities for 2008–2009 encourages employees to identify as a person with a disability in the Office’s HRMIS database. Have any of the Commission’s employees so identified?

Response:

We provide EEO data collection forms to all new staff when they commence. None of the staff who have completed these forms have identified as a person with a disability.

Question 6

The Annual Report notes that as at 30 June 2008 women comprised 78 per cent of the Office for Children staff, compared with the government benchmark of 50 per cent; and that women from rural NSW and from a range of ethnic backgrounds are represented on the Commission’s advisory groups and committees [Annual Report p. 10]. Is this diversity also

the case with respect to the staff of the Commission? If not, does the Commission have any plans to address this?

Response:

We have a high level of diversity amongst our staff, with 11 per cent having a first language other than English at the end of 2007/08. We've engaged 11 more staff in 2008/09 and 27 per cent of them have a first language other than English.

As we are a city-based organisation, we cannot effectively employ rural workers.

Background checking

Question 7

According to the statistics in *Table 2: Working with Children Background Checks* of the Annual Report, there was an increase of almost 7,000 checks processed by the Commission in 2007/08. To what would you attribute this increase, and do you have expectations that it will be part of an ongoing trend? [Annual Report p. 59]

Response:

We have analysed patterns in demand for background checks, but have been unable to identify clear causes for the increase in checking. However we know that the other Approved Screening Agencies are not experiencing the same increase in demand. This suggests that the change is particular to our client group which is very broad and includes foster care, private education, religious organisations, as well as the child care and welfare sectors. The higher level of demand is continuing into 2008/09.

Question 8

In your response to the Committee's review of the 2006-07 Annual Report, you mentioned that you aimed to have *eCheck* operational in June 2008. The 2007-08 Annual Report notes that in June 2008, work towards developing an online background checking system was deferred so that proposed security arrangements could be considered. Is this the *eCheck* system, and if so, what is its current status? [Review p. 5; Annual Report p. 60]

Response:

The proposed on-line background checking system was called *eCheck*. We found we were unable to implement the required on-line security standards within our ageing database. We accordingly terminated the *eCheck* project. This project demonstrated that our Employment Screening System database needed updating so we submitted a business case for rebuilding this system and are now seeking funding from Government for this project. The new database, when built, will incorporate *eCheck*.

Question 9

The Public Sector Association expressed concerns to the Wood Special Commission that the length of time taken by the Commission to complete the Working with Children and the National Criminal Record Check delays the DoCS' recruitment process. What is the average time taken, and where do you consider might delays occur? Has the Commission received any other complaints about the time taken to conduct the checks? If so, from whom?

Response:

When we became aware of this concern, we immediately wrote to the Director-General of the Department of Community Services to set the record straight. There are some misconceptions about the time taken to get a check done. For about 70 per cent of our checks, we send the outcome to employers within two days of their request. Around 90 per

Questions Answered Before Hearing

cent of all checks we receive are completed in less than ten days. On many occasions, the delays that applicants experience relate to delays before the employer submits the check to us, or before they take action on the check outcome.

However there are some external factors that lead to delays in completing checks. When an applicant has a common name, it can take some weeks before CrimTrac and Police can determine whether records in that name actually belong to that applicant. When an applicant has a relevant record, it can take weeks for police, courts and employers to locate and supply the detailed information we need for estimating risk. Nevertheless we work hard to complete all checks quickly. We completed 199 risk estimates in 2007/08 and on average they took 57 days to complete. We keep employers and applicants informed throughout the risk estimate process, and they do not complain.

While we receive many enquiries from employers and applicants about the progress of their checks, we have not received formal complaints about the length of time taken to conduct checks.

Question 10

In your response to the Committee's review of the 2006-07 Annual Report, you noted that the revised audit program for Approved Screening Agencies was about to commence. What is the status of this program? [Review p. 6]

Response:

We commenced auditing the Approved Screening Agencies in 2008, with audits of the Department of Education and the Department of Arts, Sport and Recreation. We are currently auditing the Department of Health and re-auditing the Department of Education.

Raising awareness

Question 11

The Annual Report notes that during 2007/08, there were 321 public engagements on children's issues. Could you please advise the Committee as to the range of issues and the audiences involved in these engagements [Annual Report p. 55]

Response:

The Commission is regularly asked to give media comment and presentations on a range of issues at conferences, seminars, workshops, webinars, forums and special meetings. The audiences involved in these engagements are diverse and ranges from professionals across a range of disciplines to members of Rotary Clubs and the general public. Some of these in 2007/08, included:

- the keynote address at the *Where to from Here* Children's Participation Conference in Ireland;
- *Children's understanding of well-being* as part of the Australian Institute of Family Studies seminar series in Melbourne;
- *Communities and Change: research partnerships and collaborations in education and social work* as the after dinner speaker at a Faculty of Education and Social Work Conference Dinner, University of Sydney;
- *Cotton wool kids* at the NSW Injury Risk Management Research Centre seminar.

The Commissioner provided media comment on a wide range of issues to local, state and national radio, print and television outlets. These included in 2007/08 the experience of

children who work, child deaths, road safety, children with disabilities, staff to child ratios in child care and paid parental leave.

Question 12

According to the Annual Report website traffic to www.kids.nsw.gov.au increased by six per cent and the Commission's subscription list grew by 200 per cent. This is in contrast to reductions of 10 per cent in the Child-safe Child-friendly web pages that were downloaded compared to the previous year, and of 16 per cent in the key resource *Getting Started?* Do you have any explanation as to why these reductions have occurred? [Annual Report p. 55]

Response:

After several years of growth, downloads of Child-safe Child-friendly web resources have begun to decline. The resources are more than four years old, having been launched in late 2004. We are currently updating them. Visits may increase when we alert the community to new Child Safe Child Friendly materials.

Our subscription list provides information on children's issues and the Commission's activities. Subscribers receive a fortnightly electronic bulletin of news, events, and publications for kids and adults. This bulletin is proving to be a cost-effective means of disseminating information for kids and those who work with or care for them.

Participation

Question 13

Could you advise the Committee of the progress of the establishment of the new Young People's Reference Group, and elaborate on what you envisage as the role of the Group. [Annual Report p. 56]

Response:

The 2009 Young People's Reference Group held its first meeting in February, after two days of orientation in January. We sought interested young people from schools and youth organisations around NSW and were pleased to receive over 300 applications.

The Young People's Reference Group helps the Commission to see issues from the perspective of children. We seek their views about our broad directions, and about specific projects within these broad directions. We incorporate their advice and general feedback into the way we do our work including issues before government or the community and how to bring children's interests into the discussion. For example we recently sought the Group's advice to inform the Commission's response to the Standing Committee on Law and Justice's *Inquiry into Adoption by Same Sex Couples*. Following the Commissioner's appearance before the Committee, the Committee Chair asked for further advice from the Young People's Reference Group which we'll seek at their March meeting.

Another example is their involvement in the recruitment of the new Commissioner. Some of the members of the Group have provided advice on the recruitment criteria and the design of the advertisement. They will also be involved in the selection process itself.

The Group also helps us to increase community awareness of children's well-being. For example at the Armidale Autumn Festival on 21 March, a member of the Group who lives at Inverell is coming down to help staff the Commission's information stall which will have activities for kids aimed at letting them know about the Commission. It will also be an opportunity to seek kids' views about bullying to help us prepare our submission to the Legislative Council's General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2 Inquiry into Bullying of Children and Young People.

Question 14

The Annual Report notes that the Commission continued its joint research project with the Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, to explore the experience of young carers. Although the project is not due for completion until 2010, has the research revealed any trends or common experiences which might shape the Commission's current work?

Response:

We completed an interim project report in November 2008 covering the study progress over the period September 2007 - November 2008. To date our research has found that organisations, services and people generally fail to identify young people with caring responsibilities or may not be aware that young carers exist; that young carers are at risk of disconnecting from their education and can be at risk of poor mental health; and that services are more likely to address the needs of young carers if they involve young people, deliver services in a flexible way, take a case management and whole of family approach.

We also found that some young carers face particular problems. Indigenous young carers are wary of seeking help and those living in rural and remote areas experience geographic isolation including a relative lack of support services.

These findings reinforce and extend findings of previous research on young carers: the community needs to focus on identifying young carers, helping them to stay engaged with their education and helping them get the support services they need.

Child-safe Child-friendly organisations

Question 15

According to the Annual Report, nine Child-safe Child-friendly training programs were delivered by the Commission, and attended by 180 people. Could you please advise the Committee as to what types of organisations received this training, and what outcomes do you expect? [Annual Report p. 62]

Response:

The range of organisations attending Child-safe Child-friendly workshops during 2007/08 included youth services, children's services (family day care and child care centres), local councils, festival and events organisers, school photographers and national parks.

The outcomes we expect include greater awareness of Child-safe Child-friendly strategies and changes in organisational practice to reduce risks to children. We have already seen some organisations implement new child safe strategies following their training. For example the Commission has been working with the NSW Public Libraries to address Child-safe Child-friendly issues and concerns among public libraries and local councils.

The Commission helped public libraries to establish a working group to revise the Library Council of NSW Children's Policy Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries. To accompany this policy, we have also developed a Frequently Asked Questions document relating to public libraries and the Working With Children Check. Both documents will be shortly available on the NSW State Library website. To support this policy work and assist public libraries in implementing new work practices the Commission is also providing one metropolitan and two regional Child-safe Child-Friendly workshops for public library staff.

Question 16

The Annual Report notes the review and updating of the Commission's Child-safe Child-friendly training package and online resources was not completed, due to staffing changes. Could you please explain this to the Committee, and advise how the review and update are progressing? [Annual Report p. 62]

Response:

We retained a contractor in late 2008 to assist us with the review of these resources. Unfortunately the contractor became ill and was unable to continue with the project. We have re-assigned this work to internal staff and expect to complete the project in June 2009.

Question 17

The Annual Report notes that targeted support for employers in the disability sector was to be provided, as part of the Child-safe Child-friendly program. [Annual Report p. 9] Has this occurred, and if so, what does the Commission perceive to be the results?

Response:

The Commission is working in partnership with the NSW Branch of the National Disability Service to support disability sector employers. To date we have delivered three regional and three metropolitan workshops attended by over 140 people from 67 disability services. We are helping to develop a best practice guide to help disability services implement Child-safe Child-friendly strategies that work for their clients. The guide will include case studies relevant to this sector. We are also consulting with kids with disabilities to find ways to increase their participation in decision-making that affects them.

We expect to see changes in policy, procedures and practice within the disability sector. We also anticipate that the sector will find better ways for children with a disability to contribute their views about their well-being.

Children at work**Question 18**

How is the Commission's analysis of the results of Wave Two of the *Children at Work* research progressing? Have any trends or anomalies been discovered so far? [Annual Report p. 50]

Response:

We have completed our analysis of Wave Two. Our main finding was the important role that family and family-owned business provide in transitioning from the home into the world of work. We found that young people's attitude to work is strongly influenced by their peers and by role modelling by their families. We also found that many young people who wanted to work failed to do so. They cited lack of transport, lack of jobs or lack of help to find work as the reasons for not getting work. We are currently drafting an *Ask The Children* on the Wave Two research.

Question 19

How has the Commission publicised its *Babysitting Guide*? Is the Commission monitoring the impact of the *Guide*, and, if so, what has been the response? [Annual Report p. 50]

Response:

We publicised the *Babysitting Guide* extensively. We wrote to all school principals in NSW enclosing copies of the Guide and an article for their newsletters. We also informed child care centres, young people who have asked to be on our mailing lists, and on-line youth networks. In addition we successfully used the media to extend public interest, with radio

Questions Answered Before Hearing

discussions and newspaper articles about the new Guide. All subscribers to our on-line bulletin were alerted. We promoted it at our Easter Show stall in April 2008. We give copies of the Guide to children whenever we distribute information at consultations, community events and youth forums and we refer to the Guide regularly in presentations, letters and submissions.

The Guide is one of the most popular downloads on the Commission's website. It had been downloaded nearly 13,000 times by the end of February 2009.

Question 20

How has the Commission progressed its framework for regulating the conditions of children's employment?

Response:

In December 2008, the Commission published a paper on our website to encourage debate on how best to protect children at work while promoting their wellbeing. The paper recommends a consistent system of laws to regulate work where children may need specific protection, including setting a minimum age and limiting working hours.

We are seeking to involve the National Industrial Relations Ministerial Council in these issues. The Commissioner and Professor Stewart have met with the NSW Minister for Industrial Relations, the NSW Minister for Youth, the Victorian Minister for Industrial Relations and the Victorian Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development. A meeting is being arranged with the South Australian Minister for Industrial Relations. The proposed discussions with the Queensland Minister for Industrial Relations have been delayed until after the Queensland election.

Children's understanding of poverty

Question 21

What was the outcome of the application made to the Australian Research Council for a Discovery Project Grant to examine children's lived experience of poverty? If successful, how is this project progressing? [Annual Report p. 51]

Response:

Unfortunately our application was not successful. We will pursue other funding options for this research.

Monitoring well-being

Question 22

The Annual Report notes that the Commission began developing a monitoring framework based on the well-being research, but that this could not be completed due to the high staffing needs of the Trends in Child Death research study. Now that the research study has been completed, what progress has been made on developing the monitoring framework? [Annual Report p. 52]

Response:

We have developed our monitoring framework to cover key outcomes:

- Being healthy;
- Being safe;

- Having the (material) things I need;
- Being loved and cared for;
- Doing things I like to do;
- Being a good person;
- Having a say;
- Being praised for what I accomplish;
- Being happy with who I am.

The next step is to work out how to measure outcomes in these areas. Developing these new measures will rely primarily on collaboration with the various federal and state organisations that have responsibility for collecting data on children.

The Built Environment

Question 23

What is the progress to date of the trial of the Commission's Child-friendly Community Indicators for the built environment, and what is the anticipated release date of the final version? [Annual Report p. 51]

Response:

The pilot group has trialled the indicators, and given us feedback on their experience. In response to their feedback we have made some changes to the indicators and are now seeking comments on these changes from the pilot group. We anticipate releasing the agreed indicators in May 2009.

Estimates of Risk

Question 24

The Annual Report notes that the Commission had trained all Approved Screening Agencies in *A Workplace and Applicant Risk Estimate (AWARE)* and that they were required to implement AWARE from the end of 2007. How are you monitoring compliance with this? [Annual Report p. 60]

Response:

We are monitoring compliance with all our requirements, including the requirement to operate AWARE, through our annual Approved Screening Agency audit program. We also receive quarterly data from all the Approved Screening Agencies that confirm they are using AWARE to estimate risk.

Question 25

Improvements to the Commission's processing of Relevant Employment Proceedings based on advice from a child protection expert are foreshadowed in the Annual Report. Are you in receipt of this advice, and have the improvements been implemented? [Annual Report p. 60]

Response:

We received the expert's advice in June 2008. She recommended that we provide clearer information to help employers record and report Relevant Employment Proceedings, and that we enhance Class or Kind Agreements with employers. We are currently negotiating new Class or Kind Agreements for two key employers, and we have retained the same expert to help us develop the clearer information to employers.

Environmental issues

Question 26

In your response to the Committee's review of the Commission's 2006-07 Annual Report, you mentioned that environmental issues would be one of the new projects for research development. Has the Commission undertaken any such project, and, if so, what has it involved? [Review p. 1]

Response:

The Commission started its environmental sustainability project in February 2009. This project aims to highlight the impacts on children and young people from climate change including inter-generational issues and to increase kids' participation in decisions about climate change and environmental sustainability.

Our initial focus is on building our own knowledge of environmental issues, preparing a discussion paper on the impacts of climate change and environmental sustainability on children and young people and identifying opportunities to increase kids' participation on environmental issues. We plan to work collaboratively with other agencies so we can support their existing activities in influencing the community on environmental sustainability and raise awareness of children and young people's issues.

Chapter Two - Transcript of Proceedings

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

REVIEW OF THE 2007-08 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE 2007 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAM

—
At Sydney on Wednesday 15 April 2009

—
The Committee met at 10.45 a.m.

—
PRESENT

Mr R. D. Coombs (Chair)

Legislative Council

The Hon. C. E. Cusack
The Hon. K. F. Griffin
Reverend the Hon. F. J. Nile

Legislative Assembly

Ms M. T. Andrews
Mr S. R. Cansdell
Mr R. A. Furolo

CHAIR: I now declare open the public hearing in relation to the review of the 2007-08 Annual Report of the Commission for Children and Young People, the 2007 Annual Report of the Child Death Review Team and the Child Death Review Team report: Trends in Child Deaths in New South Wales 1996-2005. The Committee welcomes the Commissioner, Ms Gillian Calvert, and Professor Heather Jeffery, Chair of International Maternal and Child Health, University of Sydney. Thank you very much for joining us today. It is a function of the Committee on Children and Young People to examine each annual report of the Commission and report to Parliament in accordance with part 6 section 28 (1) (c) of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998. I note that the first part of today's hearing will relate to the reports of the Child Death Review Team.

HEATHER ELIZABETH JEFFERY, Professor, International Maternal and Child Health, School of Public Health, University of Sydney, and

GILLIAN ELIZABETH CALVERT, Commissioner for Children and Young People, level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: The Commissioner will be very familiar with the Committee's procedure. Professor Jeffery, I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and also a brochure entitled "Information for Witnesses appearing before Parliamentary Committees". Is that correct?

Professor JEFFERY: That is correct.

CHAIR: The Committee has received a detailed response from the Commission to its Questions on Notice relating to the 2007-08 Annual Report, the 2007 annual report of the Child Death Review Team and the Child Death Review Team's report: Trends in Child Deaths in New South Wales 1996-2005. Commissioner, do you wish this response to form part of your evidence today and be made public?

Ms CALVERT: Yes.

CHAIR: Professor Jeffery, you have also provided a response to the Committee's questions on the 2007 Annual Report of the Child Death Review Team and the Child Death Review Team's report: Trends in Child Deaths in New South Wales 1996-2005. Do you wish this response to form part of your evidence today and be made public?

Professor JEFFERY: Yes, thanks.

CHAIR: Does either of you want to make any comment before we start with questions?

Ms CALVERT: I would like to make an opening statement. I have to say that it is with mixed emotions that I appear before you today as the New South Wales Commissioner for Children and Young People and the convenor of the New South Wales Child Death Review Team. There is some sadness in undertaking what is likely to be my final appearance before the Committee. However, it is also with great pride when I look back at what the Commission has achieved for children and young people in New South Wales over the past

10 years. In particular, I have appreciated the role of the Parliamentary Joint Committee in the Commissioner's work and value the positive relationship that I think we share.

The Committee and the Commission have always had a productive relationship, which I believe comes from our common and genuine desire to improve the lives of our younger citizens, and providing this level of representation for children and young people has resulted in significant benefits in their lives. But the changes we make for our kids also bring great benefits to the broader community and help make our society a stronger and healthier place for all our members across all our generations. I think the Parliamentary Joint Committee's own commitment to children and young people and its efforts to help bring kids' issues into Parliament is a key element to this process, and being provided with this level of direct political representation sends a strong message that children and young people are valued as citizens and should be consulted about the decisions that will affect them. It means that the public do not see Committee Members as being faceless and invisible but as people who are taking on an important and purposeful role in representing children as citizens in our democracy.

I have seen the Parliamentary Joint Committee grow over the last 10 years and become more confident about bringing kids into the consultation process—for example, as a result of your work such as your current Inquiry into Children and Young People Aged 9 to 14 Years. Our approach to kids' participation in New South Wales is leading the way both nationally and internationally, and other States, the Commonwealth Government and many countries are now adopting the participation practices that we developed and fine-tuned in New South Wales. It was with great pleasure that I attended the Commonwealth Government's 2020 Summit in Canberra last year and saw this take place at the national level. The event was preceded by the Youth 2020 Summit where, for the first time, young people were invited to make significant contribution at that level. I think these opportunities help to promote community understanding that children and young people need to be acknowledged and encouraged to participate as full community members of a truly democratic society. When the community sees this process happen in positive and meaningful ways, such as through Parliamentary Joint Committees, it recognises and values the mechanisms that enable this to happen.

I hope that the Committee Members continue to consolidate this best practice approach with the next Commissioner. The new Commissioner is fortunate indeed to inherit a Committee that combines stability from its long-term members with the freshness of those with new ideas. In particular, I would like to acknowledge and personally thank long-term Committee Members Marie Andrews, Steve Cansdell, Catherine Cusack, Reverend Nile and Kayee Griffin for their support and commitment to the Commission's work over many years, their willingness to stay with the Committee and to provide it with the continuity and commitment that has enabled it to make an important contribution to Parliament. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the Committee's Chairs—David Campbell, who gave us a good early start with the commitment to bipartisan support to work with the Commission in promoting children's wellbeing; Barbara Perry, who brought a commitment to the built environment that is reflected in our work over the past five years; and Carmel Tebbutt, who brought a strong commitment to children's wellbeing, powerfully demonstrated by her bringing children directly into the work of the Committee when they appeared before the Committee's current Inquiry. I am confident that the new Commissioner and the new Chair, Robert Coombs, will continue this tradition of fostering a strong and productive relationship for the benefit of children.

The Commission has always welcomed the scrutiny of the Parliamentary Joint Committee. It is a valued mechanism that we use to hold ourselves accountable for the

decisions that we make and the work we have done in the last 10 years to bring about positive changes for children and young people. Over the past decade, with all the decisions we have made, the Commission has been guided by the governing principles contained in our legislation. In our work with others, the Commission promotes the spirit of that legislation to encourage the ethos that any decisions concerning children and young people should be made with children and young people in mind. The recent decision to move the Child Death Review Team was therefore disappointing.

In the last 10 years the work of the Team and the support of the Commission has produced good outcomes. Together the Team and the Commission formed a valuable partnership across the continuum of New South Wales children's lives from birth through to death. The Commission has been able to take the Team's recommendations and work with community groups, government agencies and others to bring about change for children and young people where it was needed. I think this is well demonstrated with the release of the Team's groundbreaking report covering the 10-year period from 1996 to 2005. The Commission draws on the Team's research to inform and help opinion leaders, organisations and the wider community to take action to support children and young people's overall development and wellbeing. It is a holistic and integrated approach to our work and to children's wellbeing that follows similar principles being implemented in the United Kingdom. The recent decision signifies a worrying shift in thinking away from that whole-of-child approach to children's issues. The decision in my view does not keep the wellbeing of all children in the front of our minds as seen by the fact that this Joint Parliamentary Committee on children will no longer oversight the Child Death Review Team. Despite this setback for children, I am sure the Commission will continue to perform and build upon its role as the peak advocate for all children in New South Wales.

There is still great pride when I look back at what the Commission and those who have worked with us have achieved over the last 10 years to improve children's lives. In that time I have seen a greater acceptance that children are capable of giving meaning to their world and actions, and therefore the right of kids to have a say in decisions that affect them. Kids are increasingly understood to be active and are increasingly given a seat at the table. I have also seen a greater appreciation of the importance of the early years for children. Accompanying this has been an increasing emphasis on promoting wellbeing to improve the quality of children's lives and to prevent problems in later life from intervening earlier. There is also greater understanding of the importance of relationships to children and the need for us as a country to support families and workers to enable and maintain those relationships as illustrated through solid community support through the introduction of paid parental leave. There have been particular areas where we are keeping children in mind where previously we had not—the work we have done and are doing, for example, on the built environment and on children in work. Importantly, we have seen an acceptance of the need for people in organisations who work with children to take action to reduce harm to them, either through the 2 million checks we have done or through our Child-safe - Child-friendly Program's emphasis on reducing risks in organisations. These are all changes in areas that children have told us in so many of our consultations, our research work and our listening, are the things that make them grow and develop, that promote their wellbeing and are important to them.

I said before that there is great pride when I look back at what the Commission has achieved over the last 10 years. It has been an honour and a privilege to have been the first Commissioner for Children and Young People in New South Wales, but I do not see this point as the end of the journey but rather an opportunity for the Commission to look to the

future with a feeling of renewal and a new sense of purpose in what it can still achieve. I hope you share with me that great excitement and anticipation about the future of both the Commission and the Parliamentary Joint Committee and that together the Commission and the Parliamentary Joint Committee continue to improve the lives of children and young people in New South Wales.

(In the first part of the proceedings the Commissioner and Professor Jeffery answered questions relating to reports of the Child Death Review Team. The transcript from this part of the proceedings is available in the Committee's Report entitled Review of Child Death Review Team Reports: 2007 Annual Report and Trends in Child Deaths in New South Wales 1996-2005)

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

CHAIR: I reconvene the hearing. The Committee first will turn to considering the 2007-08 Annual Report of the Commission and will then put questions to Commissioner Calvert on the Committee's Inquiry into Children and Young People 9 to 14 Years in New South Wales.

GILLIAN ELIZABETH CALVERT, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, on former affirmation:

CHAIR: Commissioner, would you like to make any initial comments? The answer to that being no from Commissioner Calvert, I will commence questions. We have put aside an hour for questions, and I will commence by noting that the annual report shows that six consultants were engaged during 2007-08 to provide specialist management advice at a cost of \$19,833. In what kind of work were the consultants engaged? How will the advice be utilised by the Commission?

Ms CALVERT: Generally we employ consultants when we need additional expertise that we do not hold on staff. We are a small organisation so it is impossible for us to hold the range of expertise that we need to draw on to complete our work. The consultants reports inform us in our work, whether that is in the corporate service or business service areas or whether it is in relation to policy and so on. In terms of breaking down what the six consultants were doing, I will take that on notice and provide that to the Committee.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. In 2006-07 the Commission had 43.7 full-time filled positions out of an establishment of 44.3. In 2007-08 there are 38.8 filled positions out of an establishment of 41.9. Could you explain to the Committee the reduction in numbers? Was that part of the restructure mentioned on page 49 of the Annual Report?

Ms CALVERT: It was not part of the restructure. The reduction in positions was not a reduction in actual positions. Rather, it was a reduction in the positions that we had filled. Staff changeover occurs for a whole range of reasons. At the end of June, that is what the number happened to be. At the end of this financial year we will be back up to our usual 42, 43, 44 equivalent full-time positions [EFTs].

CHAIR: In your answer to the Committee's question about the additional work proposed by the Wood Inquiry you note and estimate that the Commission will need approximately 10 additional staff to undertake this additional work. What are you doing about the funding implications of this proposal?

Ms CALVERT: We have let the Government know what the funding requirements are for us to implement the additional checks they require us to make under the changes in the legislation. I anticipate that we will be given a positive result when the Appropriation Bill is brought forward to Parliament.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Is that mostly to the volunteer area?

Ms CALVERT: The checks are in relation to volunteers for at-risk and disadvantaged young people mentoring, volunteers who provide personal care for children with disabilities. It is also the adult household members of family day carers, and foster carers, as well as subgroups such as children's services licensees and the child wellbeing units that have been established. The list is set out in the Act.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: What is the actual requirement resource-wise in order to undertake those additional responsibilities?

Ms CALVERT: It is \$1.3 million.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: It is important to get those things on the record, thank you.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Commissioner, could you please explain to the Committee the role of the position that is designated as "Director—Influencing"?

Ms CALVERT: Yes, I can. There are two Directors in the organisation. We have tried to have a flat hierarchy because we are a small organisation and flat hierarchies work best. The Director of Influencing is responsible for that area of work where we are trying to influence positive outcomes for children. He is responsible for the policy, research, community development and communication activity that the Commission undertakes. All of those things are the tools that we used to try to influence the decisions of others so that we get a positive outcome for children and young people.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: How have the views of the staff management committee fed into the decision-making processes of the Commission?

Ms CALVERT: The staff management committee provides advice on a range of issues. Really I guess it is a way of providing a staff voice. It is an additional way of giving staff a voice in the management of the Commission. Staff have a voice through the normal reporting hierarchies; they also have a voice through the staff committee, but we also set up a staff management committee to provide a particular and specific place where staff and management could jointly work on issues to do with the running of the Commission.

Some examples of issues that they have come up with are how we can make the Commission more environmentally sustainable. They have also raised issues such as glare and heat from windows. We have also discussed how to improve staff health, specifically

how to reduce smoking by staff. We have also asked them to review some of our policies and procedures, such as the grievance policy, flexible working hour agreements, and so on. It relies on staff volunteering and managers volunteering to sit on the committee. We have not had enough staff volunteers to form a quorum this year, although we continue to call for volunteers to sit on the staff management committee.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In your answers to the Committee's question on e-Checks, we note that you have terminated the e-Check project and have submitted a business case for rebuilding the system. You are now seeking funding from the Government for this project which, when built, will incorporate e-Check. How is the project progressing?

Ms CALVERT: We are awaiting advice regarding funding. That also will hopefully be positively received and will be included in the Appropriation Bill. We have requested approximately \$1.5 million.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: If approval is given in terms of that funding, how long would it take for that system to be up and running?

Ms CALVERT: We estimate that it will take between two and three years by the time we have designed the system, then built a system, then tested the system, and then implemented the system.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: It is very much a long-term project?

Ms CALVERT: It is a long-term, significant project for the Commission to undertake—extremely significant.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Commissioner, according to the Annual Report, 84 per cent of preferred applicants who have been assessed by the Commission as high risk were not employed. In the Commission's experience, what are the likely circumstances surrounding the fact that 16 per cent of those assessed as high risk were nonetheless employed?

Ms CALVERT: Based on our past research, the sorts of reasons employers give for employing people who have a high risk are things like "There is no-one else available" or they are in a remote area and so they have less choice from which to select. They also will say that they changed the parameters of the position and the conditions under which that person works, so that is a neat way of reducing the risk of that person. For example, they might increase the supervision levels imposed on that person.

They also frequently will employ someone on a short-term contract, and when that contract is up, they will let them go and not continue the employment. While they might have been employed at the time that they made a request for a Working With Children Check, in some cases when we ring them up to check whether they have been formally employed, we find out that it was a short-term contract and it has not been renewed. While it says 16 per cent were employed, some of them would have only been employed for a short period of time and would not have had their contract extended. They are the sorts of range of circumstances in which that 16 per cent would be employed.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: And they were employed in an area where they were involved with children?

Ms CALVERT: In unsupervised contact with children, yes. You have to remember that those who have criminal convictions are already excluded. They are already banned under our prohibited employment part of the Working With Children Check. So we are not talking about people with convictions for sex offences or for murder or for very serious violent offences against children, unless they have been through another process that has enabled them to be exempt from the operation of the banning. Very serious offenders would already have been banned, so we are talking about the next layer, if you like.

In New South Wales we provide that information on those people to the employer along with the level of risk that we assess around the position and an assessment of the level of control that organisation has over the risks. Then the employer makes the decision about whether or not to employ and, in doing that, also makes a decision about the level of risk they are willing to bear.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Have you ever exercised any pressure by saying in your opinion someone should not be employed in a role?

Ms CALVERT: We discuss with employers the ways in which the risk might express itself with a particular person in that position and in that organisation, and we have certainly discussed with them ways in which they might improve their risk management strategies so that they reduce the risk not only for that person but, importantly, for all the other potential—

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: But you cannot veto the employment?

Ms CALVERT: No.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: Is there any record of offending for that 16 per cent that are assessed as high risk in those positions?

Ms CALVERT: Offending after they have been appointed?

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: Are there any records of the 16 per cent offending in the time they are employed in the high-risk areas?

Ms CALVERT: We certainly would not keep those records. Anecdotally we have not heard of any but that is not to say that they could have. We looked at doing a research project where we thought about following through the outcome of people who had gone through a Working With Children Check and whether or not they subsequently offended. With such small numbers it would take such a long period of time that it is not really worth it for us. The other thing we do know is that a lot of people who offend do not have records. In fact most people who offend do not have records. Basing your risk management strategy on the fact that an individual has a record is a risky risk management strategy. You are much better off assuming in a sense that everybody has the potential to harm a child and therefore the way you design your position and the way you manage risk in your organisation is what really makes the difference. Because you are not only capturing those that we know about—and in some ways they are the easy ones because we know they have a record—but it is the ones who do not have a record, the majority who do not have a record, who go on to offend that I think are the ones we really should be worried about. That is why we are trying to really focus on Child-safe Child-friendly programs.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Would that include that any person should not be alone with a child in a room?

Ms CALVERT: No, with some people it is important to have one-on-one conversations with children. It is very important to children that they be touched, cuddled and hugged and looked after. It is about what can the organisation do to have some rules around that and how do they monitor that? How do we recognise if someone is stepping over the boundary? We encourage organisations to think through what the rules might be. For example, it might be entirely appropriate for a teacher to cuddle a child and to soothe them but if an information technology person does it, you would probably ask why that is happening. It is about being alert to those sorts of things and having a conversation in your organisation about that. We certainly do that in our own organisation. In the Commission we talk about those things and reflect on those things. We have got tools in place to have staff reflect on how they are going to manage risk before they go out and do work directly with children themselves.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: I understand the importance of the policy you are advocating but given that there is such a lack of clarity in so many workplaces at the moment, the presumption that everyone is an offender is having a debilitating effect on some professions. For example, males in primary school teaching. What can we do to give greater clarity, rather than telling people to be alert and aware, because it is not clear as to what they need to do to protect themselves? It is impacting on our workforce and that affects the children as well.

Ms CALVERT: We do not go out publicly and say assume everybody is an offender because I do not think that is helpful. It is in thinking about how we design our risk protocols that we talk about that. In fact in our documents and publications we quite clearly talk about how important it is that children are hugged, touched and that close intimate contact is an essential part of children's well being. We try and talk quite a lot about that and then go on to talk about ways in which we can do that appropriately. Asking very clear questions around that I think has been one of the things that has helped.

In relation to males entering teaching and childcare it is much more complex than the idea of you will be called a child molester if you hug a kid. I do not think that is the primary reason why men are not going into teaching; there are other strong forces to do with the fact that it is a low-paid job compared to some of the other things that men can get, it is not a high status job, it is seen as women's work and so on. All of those sorts of things have contributed to that. In fact the decline of men in teaching preceded this whole discussion around safety in relation to children.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: On the issue of people who are convicted, do you get records of people who have been charged with offences but not convicted? The group that I am particularly interested in are people who are not convicted because they are found to be insane at the time, or whatever the modern terminology is. We had a case in our region—I do not wish to reflect on the individual involved—but in that case the individual had served 10 years in prison in Victoria but because she was at the Governor's pleasure she was not convicted because she was found to be insane at the time that she kidnapped a baby and attempted to murder it. There was no record of that in her working with young people's check and therefore she has been working for the Department of Juvenile Justice in our region for some time. Is there a gap in your system?

Ms CALVERT: I am happy to take the details of that case outside of this conversation to give you specifics if that would help you?

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: It is more that it might be revealing a gap?

Ms CALVERT: The definition of a conviction is broader than what is normally thought to be a conviction. So whether they are captured by the prohibition element is one aspect. We get a much broader range of charges and convictions with a background check than we do with the prohibition. So we do get charges and we should get, as I understand it, guilty or not guilty or no conviction by reason of insanity. We would get those results. Even though the legislation talks about conviction and charge, they are quite encompassing notions of charge and conviction.

Could I also say that one of the issues that might come up—because you said they were from Victoria—is that Victoria will not provide us with charges. That is a decision that government has made. Under the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] we have been working to put in place a regime of exchange of information between the different States and Territories across Australia and we anticipate a 12-month trial commencing at the beginning of 2010 before it is more completely rolled out. Victoria has quite clearly indicated its decision not to exchange information on charges.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Is Victoria the only State?

Ms CALVERT: Yes. It is the only State that will not exchange information on charges.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: What reason does Victoria give for that?

Ms CALVERT: The reason given is that, as it has not yet been heard by a court, it is therefore prejudicial.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Moving to the issue of Child-safe Child-friendly organisations. With respect to the Commission's future plans as set out in the Annual Report, what practical ways does the Commission intend to support out of school hours care?

Ms CALVERT: In relation to Child-safe Child-friendly, we have been discussing with the Network of Community Activities about working together on an out of hours school care Child-safe Child-friendly program. We are discussing with them the program they want to put in place to try and make their services safer for children. One of the things they have indicated to us is that they want to be licensed to run our training program on being child-friendly, which we would certainly try and make happen because that then provides them with an ongoing source of training for all of their services around Child-safe Child-friendly. That training program leads the organisation through a process of identification as to what the risks are in the specific setting of their organisation and then developing a plan for how they might address those risks. It is a catalyst for helping an organisation to start the process of trying to think about ways in which it can reduce risk. There may be other things we can do with the Network of Community Activities based on other activities we have done with organisations such as the public libraries in New South Wales, where we have helped them develop policies to implement as part of their Child-safe Child-friendly activity as well.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In your Annual Report you talk about the target of 80 per cent of checks completed in two days not being achieved. It seems the reason for the

delay is the time spent waiting on the Crimtrac police crosschecks. Do you consider that can be improved or should the two-day target perhaps be revised to a more achievable timeframe?

Ms CALVERT: Two things cause the delays—one is getting our results back from Crimtrac. The second occurs when we get a record and we need to conduct a risk estimate, we then have to go and source the primary records so we can get the information on which to conduct our risk estimate. I do not think there is much we can do to speed up Crimtrac. They continually review their procedures and processes and they are continuing to improve their service.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: What is the average time for reply? Do they do it within two days?

Ms CALVERT: Yes. The two days really reflects their results, if you like, rather than our result because we are dependent on their records. We have explored things like real-time exchange. At the moment we batch—we batch at the end of the day and get the results back the next day or the day after that. With real time you would be able to submit the name straight away and get a result straight away. That may speed things up within the two-day timeframe; so rather than getting it back in two days you might get it back in two hours, but we will still have that percentage of people who have records and we have to clarify whether they are the person they say they are and that is what causes the longer time frame.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: That cancels the 20 per cent, do you think?

Ms CALVERT: Yes.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: In 2007-08 the Commission made a submission to the Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services in Public Hospitals in New South Wales. Can you explain to the Committee the focus and aim of the submission, and whether the Commission intends to follow up on it?

Ms CALVERT: The focus of the Commission's submission to the Garling Report, if I could use that shorthand phrase—

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Yes. I believe that is probably a better term.

Ms CALVERT: I guess we wanted to give a couple of messages. One was the notion that children's health is different to adult health and adult focus on health; for children it is about health whereas for adults it is often about disease management and that the health system is focusing a lot more on disease management than it is on promoting health. So we were really arguing for Garling, I guess reminding the Garling Inquiry that in relation to children's health needs it is probably in that health promotion, healthy area that the bulk of children's needs are. However, when we look at those children who have diseases and who need the disease management side of the system, which is a much smaller percentage of children, then there are some things that are important to children, one of which is access to their parents to be able to care for them. So we raised the issue about parents having paid leave in order to care for their children appropriately, particularly as we are moving away from hospital-based care into home-based care. But to do that where you have both parents working without also providing parents with the means to care for those children actually places those kids' health or recovery at some risk.

I guess we tried to think about what we have heard from children and young people about health over our time and to convey that to the Garling Inquiry. We raised as well the issue of the nature of those disease management services or health services and what children and young people have told us make them accessible and useful services for them. We also provided advice on that. In relation to what has happened subsequent to the tabling of the report, I have already had some discussions with the Minister for Health's office and I am going to be meeting with some senior officials within the Department of Health to talk about the proposal for a NSW Kids model that Garling has proposed.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Can you be more specific about that recommendation? Can you describe the recommendation?

Ms CALVERT: The Garling report recommended that the children's hospitals and children's health should come under one management structure. At the moment there is the Children's Hospital at Westmead, which is its own Area Health Service, and then there are two other tertiary hospitals, one at John Hunter and one at Sydney Children's Hospital, that are run through the Area Health Services. The argument that Garling put forward was that for a population of our size in New South Wales we probably can only support one tertiary service. Garling then recommended that a thing called NSW Kids be created and that kids health come under that one management structure so that the children's hospitals would come under the one management structure. You may have different sites for the delivery of the service but it would be under one management structure, and other bits of the health system should also come across to NSW Kids, like mental health, population health and so on.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: To be clear, in terms of your recommendations to the Inquiry you would see them being implemented through that new—

Ms CALVERT: The discussion around children's services would certainly be implemented through that recommendation, and also the balance between disease management and promoting health in children would probably be more effectively addressed if you had one health service for kids. At the moment kids not only have to compete against adults within the Area Health Service funding; the health promotion aspect has to compete against the disease management model, and that is a big ask, whereas if you had it all under the one kids hierarchy or one kids management you would probably get a better balance between those two things.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: It would have a separate budget item.

Ms CALVERT: Yes, well, they are some of the finetuning details that we probably need to talk with Health about. You can quite easily see how you could bring the tertiary children's hospitals under that one management structure but when you are talking about local hospitals where you have a kids ward, you do not want that ward run by NSW Kids management; you want it run by the hospital within the Area Health Service. So those sorts of relationships need to be sorted out and there are ways in which you can do that, and I think that is what needs to be explored.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: I think your recommendation that parents be facilitated to engage more completely is something that parents would welcome as well as

children, and it is probably not necessarily a resource issue. I am just eager that that framework be in place for that idea to be pursued.

Ms CALVERT: It is not a resource issue for Health. It is probably a resource issue for employers in that you need to be able to give parents—and this is not a new idea—a children's sick leave. We have sick leave for ourselves but we do not make provision for sick leave if your children are sick. If you have kids who are ill then you have to use your own sick leave or so on at the moment. What we were saying is that part of providing health care for kids is for Health to advocate for a form of children's sick leave for parents.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: It is really for carers though.

Ms CALVERT: Yes.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Parental leave.

Ms CALVERT: Yes, it is a specific parental leave when your children are sick.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: I was thinking more in a practical way that, having spent a lot of time in hospital with a sick one, it would be nice just to have a comfortable chair to sleep in. That would make a huge difference to parents.

Ms CALVERT: Yes, and certainly those sorts of things around what your children's ward looks like is something that NSW Kids could certainly address. I know that there has been quite a bit of discussion in Health about whether or not there are separate kids wards or they are in general wards. There is now much more of an acceptance that you need to have kids wards and I know the Department of Health is looking much more closely at the guidelines that the Royal College of Physicians released around children in hospital.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: The Commission joined an international collaborative research project to investigate systems where young people with chronic conditions will have more say in their health management. The collaboration was awarded funding from the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. The Annual Report notes that the Commission will attend a second roundtable discussion to identify the research trajectory for the future work of the collaboration. This will involve preparing and submitting at least one grant application in 2008. How has this collaboration project progressed?

Ms CALVERT: We are not the chief investigators of that collaboration so we tend to be in an advisory role, a reference group role. We will provide advice on specific issues where we have expertise like kids participation and we then in a sense sit on the steering group of that committee, so it is quite a high level. The actual work is done by the chief investigators.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Which is the lead agency?

Ms CALVERT: That is the University of Sydney. Professor Gwyneth Llewellyn, who is the Dean of Health Sciences, is the one we have the most contact with and who is the lead—I think it is called the chief investigator or lead investigator.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: Is there any progress on the project?

Ms CALVERT: Yes. They have done some quite interesting things in terms of seeking children's views but also in relation to providing advice and information around management of chronic health care. I certainly constantly get emails flashing up around newsletters and bulletins and so on where they are trying to bring the profession along at the same time as they are doing the actual research.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: Turning to the Wood Special Commission of Inquiry, in March the Commission made a submission to the Wood Inquiry into Child Protection Services. Can you advise the Committee as to the substance of the Commission's submission and to what extent you feel it impacted on the Inquiry's recommendations?

Ms CALVERT: The submission we put in was done collaboratively with Professor Cashmore and Professor Scott. We took in a sense a fairly high level view of the system and recommended that we needed to rebalance the system away from focusing all our energy on and seeing all of children's issues as needing to fall into a child protection frame, and argued that we needed to free up the Department of Community Services [DoCS] to do the work that it is uniquely able to do, and that required the rest of the human services system to take a much more active role in supporting vulnerable children within struggling families. So there was a series of recommendations to the Commonwealth Government about the role it could play in doing that, for example, the role of Centrelink being much more proactive in identifying and supporting struggling families.

We also made a number of recommendations at the State level for that to happen, one being the establishment of units within organisations that staff could turn to for advice about how to respond to vulnerable children in struggling families, rather than just shifting it all on to DoCS. There are also recommendations regarding the reshaping of services for adults so that they stop seeing just the adult as their client but also see the children of that adult as part of their client and the need to provide services. So there was a range of recommendations which did have as their main focus the freeing up of DoCS in order to allow them to get on with their very important work and that therefore meant other agencies have to step in and start pulling their weight a lot more and start taking up their responsibilities to children. We also made recommendations around children in out-of-home care and how we might improve those sorts of services.

I think in fact our submission was quite influential in the final report that Justice Wood brought down. Certainly Adele Horin made that comment in a piece that she wrote about the Wood Special Commission of Inquiry; in her view, the submission by the three of us had been quite influential in shaping the final work of Justice Wood.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: In your submission to the Wood Special Commission you recommended that drug, alcohol, mental health, disability and housing services should develop and trial an intervention plan that also meets the needs of the children of locked clients. Can you elaborate on that?

Ms CALVERT: One of the things that we know when we look at the children who are referred to DoCS is that there are high levels of domestic violence, alcohol and drug use and mental health. We are not alone in that in New South Wales. That is common across the whole of Australia and in fact in developed OECD countries. What has happened is that agencies have been under pressure and the way they have dealt with that pressure is to say that our client is only the person who presents with the problem and so they do not pay

attention to the children. So what they do is then just refer the child to the Department of Community Services and what we were saying is that you have a responsibility to provide services to that child as well as to that adult and you cannot just continue to shift risk on to DoCS, that you need to take responsibility for your contribution to that child's outcomes and to share responsibility for that child's outcomes.

That means that mental health and drug and alcohol services need to change the way they operate. They need to think about not only providing a service to the adult but also to the child. They need to think about child services. If you look at drug or alcohol services, for example, there are very few family-based treatment centres or rehabilitation centres. We think there needs to be a lot more of those sorts of services because a lot of people who go into those rehabilitation services have children. So, you need to account for the children in the way you deliver your service to the adult.

Ms MARIE ANDREWS: I want to place on record my appreciation and thanks for everything you have done as our first Commissioner for Children and Young People in this State and for the wonderful work you have done on behalf of children and young people in New South Wales. My question is about the built environment. From the Commission's perspective, what recommendations from the Inquiry into Children, Young People and the Built Environment do you consider remain relevant and a priority?

Ms CALVERT: We are in the process of finalising a document that I hope to release in the next month looking at community indicators for a child friendly environment. I think that remains an important work because that gives people in local government a tool they can use to think about child friendliness. That same project that developed community indicators also set up, in a sense, a support group of like-minded people in local councils who are working on the development of child friendly built environments. I think that remains another important piece of work because it is the people-change aspect of the project and I think that is what is going to give us the different results.

In relation to the outstanding recommendations arising from the Parliamentary Committee's report on the built environment, we think there are probably two recommendations, one of which I have alluded to—recommendation 4 about promoting the use of child friendly community indicators with the Minister, which is relevant for the Minister for Local Government, which is very handy given that she was the Chair of that Committee that made that recommendation. The second recommendation that supports that is amending the planning legislation to incorporate child friendly planning, which is relevant for the Minister for Planning. So they would be the two things that we would see as being important because they build on that work we have already done around child friendly community indicators and the network of people who are committed to trying to build and create child friendly environments.

Ms MARIE ANDREWS: Have you any other comment or recommendation to make to the Committee in relation to the built environment report?

Ms CALVERT: I think we were somewhat hampered in our ability to implement the recommendations because we did not get the separate funding that the Committee recommended. So, we were able to do some of the things that we thought were important, but we were unable to do all of the things the Committee identified, for that reason.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: In September 2007 you attended a European Network of Ombudspersons for Children [ENOC] meeting in Spain as a representative of the Asia Pacific Association of Children's Commissioners [APACC] and visited the children's commissions in

Northern Ireland and England. Could you advise the Committee of any practices or policy initiatives at the Commission that have arisen from these travel opportunities?

Ms CALVERT: Yes. One of the immediate things that comes to mind is the recruitment process for my replacement. The Republic of Ireland has produced a book where they evaluated the way in which they recruited their first Commissioner, Emily Logan. When we looked at how the recruitment should proceed for my replacement, I contacted that Commissioner and other Commissioners I also had contact with, to seek their views on ways in which you can include children in recruitment. That certainly has informed our recruitment process. The advertisement that was placed that we used is based on the advertisement that the Republic of Ireland used in recruiting their first Commissioner. So, it is a very immediate practical example.

Other ways in which it has helped us is in relation to child friendly impact statements or children's impact statements; the Scottish Commissioner has done quite a lot of work in that area. So, we have had ongoing dialogue around the use of children's impact statements. That may come up in the 9 to 14 years Inquiry discussion that we have. So, I guess, apart from practical things like using advertisements or their experience, it is really about also being able, I guess, to use them as sounding boards for ideas and for discussion as well.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: In April 2008 you attended the Australia 2020 Summit as part of the strengthening community, supporting families and social inclusion discussion stream. Could you please tell the Committee about your experiences at the Summit and whether and in what way you consider it has influenced your work as Commissioner?

Ms CALVERT: It was a very interesting couple of days. There were some really good things about it. What I initiated prior to the Summit was a network of children's advocates who were attending the Summit across the various working groups. We had email contact and discussion about the issues and what people thought should be raised within the Summit. We then also continued that contact throughout the Summit so that we could support each other and provide feedback to each other. Some of the things that came up in the groups arose partly from our email contact. For example, children's television channels was one of the things we talked about, and there have been some recent indications that that looks like getting funded.

So, it certainly was an opportunity to build alliances around children's issues and to advocate for children. One of the things that I think did not work was that there was no formal opportunity for cross-fertilisation between the various working groups. So you have got in your working group and you stayed in that working group for the two days that you were there. At times I actually wanted the creative people or the governance people to come and help me deal with the issue that I was dealing with rather than the familiar faces that were in my group. So, I think there was a missed opportunity for cross-fertilisation and for the introduction of new ideas.

Having said that, I think it was a worthwhile process and a worthwhile experience. One of the things that helped me was that it gave me a greater sense of what the national landscape looked like, and that has been useful in working out how to advocate on particular issues. I was in the group that was around skills and capability, if you like, in employment. It really helped me to understand the players and where they were coming from in that area, which has helped me then to progress things like paid parental leave, school-to-work

transition and so on because I have a much better understanding of the players, their thinking and the way they operate.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: Before I ask my final question, I offer my congratulations. You have been an excellent Commissioner and a great advocate of children and young people.

Ms CALVERT: Thank you.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: What do you see as the major issues with which the Commission will have to deal in the medium term, say the next two to three years? In what areas relating to children and young people do you envisage the Commission will have to most concentrate its resources?

Ms CALVERT: The Commission is in the middle of a three-year strategic plan and that strategic plan is finishing off some projects and beginning some new projects—so, finishing off things like the built environment, mobile phones, children at work. These are a number of projects that we are winding down. At the same time there are other projects that we are trying to grow and develop. I think there is further work that needs doing on children at work and the notion of a national regulation of children's work. I think there are still, depending on what happens with the Commonwealth budget, issues to do with paid parental leave that may need to be pursued.

I think in terms of children as a group and the issues facing the new Commissioner, there are probably three that I would raise. One is a much greater appreciation and use of information technology, social networking sites and the role they play in children's lives. I think that is an area that the new Commissioner probably needs to get a handle on. I think there is also an issue arising around poverty and budget allocations to children. We do not know enough about children's experience of poverty, and with the increasing effects of the global financial crisis I anticipate more children moving into poverty. We need to understand how children experience poverty so that we can design policies and programs that respond to that. Most programs around poverty look at adults and families and not around children. So, we need to focus on children.

Connected to that is the potential for disinvestment in children in the face of the global financial crisis. I think we are seeing that with the debate around paid parental leave in that it is not getting the priority that it should partly because it is about children. Adding to that disinvestment in children is the power of the baby boomers to lobby for what they want. I think that unless we have a very powerful voice for children in that debate around the allocation of funding and budgets and investments in children, we will see it skewing away from children into other areas. So, I think that is certainly an area that the new Commissioner needs to pay attention to as well, that whole sort of investment in children.

I think the third area that we really need to get a handle on is getting a voice for children at the federal level and at the international level because a lot of the issues facing children are in fact now at the national and global levels; they are not necessarily at the State level. I guess I am talking about an Australian Children's Commissioner. And that leads into probably the fourth and final area that I identify as being critical for children that the new Commissioner is going to have to deal with, and that is the issue of the environment and sustainability. The voice of children and the impact on children I think are different to the impacts on adults. We need really strong representation of children's interests in that debate and in how we as a country respond to that.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: Have you any concerns or disappointments that you take with you?

Ms CALVERT: I am disappointed about the decision relating to the Child Death Review Team. I think that was not a decision made with children in mind. I feel disappointed about that. You can look back on the 10 years and think, "If only I had done that" or, "If only I had paid more attention to that." I think it is inevitable that you have some regrets when you leave a position, but I have to say overall I feel incredible pride at the work that the Commission has done and the work the staff have done alongside me in making the gains we have made because I do think New South Wales is a better place for children and young people as a result of the Commission having been around for 10 years.

CHAIR: From the point of view of the statutory role of the Commission, would there be any suggestions that you could make to the incoming Commissioner on how they might best fulfil their role or make any changes to ensure that the role of Commissioner is carried out?

Ms CALVERT: I think the challenge for the Commissioner is being able to be an advocate for children and at the same time maintain relationships with those people that you want to advocate to. I think that is really the challenge that all commissioners face and when I talk with commissioners both in Australia and overseas that is what all of us identify as being the challenge. To be able to say to somebody, "I do not like that decision", or "I think that decision is wrong", or "I think that is not in the best interests of children", and to argue and lobby for that and the next day go back and still continue to have a positive relationship with that person and organisation is the challenge.

I think the other challenge is to recognise that your role as Commissioner is really one step removed, that you are not able to force people to do things—that is the role of democracy through the electoral process, whereas your role is to try to persuade or convince them and I guess shape their behaviour so that there are good outcomes for children. Thinking about how you do that in a way that value adds to those people's and organisations' tasks is a challenge as well that we all, as Commissioners, discuss.

CHAIR: My Committee colleagues wanted me to address what we can do better to fulfil our statutory role. Do you have any suggestions for us?

Ms CALVERT: I think I should take that one on notice. I do think that, as I said in my opening statement, what has been really valuable about this Committee is that we have had long-term people who have stuck with the Committee, which has provided a continuity, capacity and opportunity to build relationships that I think have enabled us to work effectively together. I also think that having new blood is equally as important because it is a different point of view and it keeps us on our toes. I probably have to quote children when I say what has been the thing that has made it work is the relationships. What makes children work is the relationships that surround them and I think probably what makes the Commission and the Committee work are the relationships between the Committee and the Commission, so opportunities to build and sustain those relationships is what I would encourage you to continue with the new Commissioner.

CHAIR: You are going to be around for a little while—we do not know how long it will take to select a replacement—but on behalf of the Committee I thank you very much for

your work. I know that has been said a couple of times, but I think it is important to emphasise it. We have some 14 questions in relation to the Inquiry into Children and Young People 9 to 14 Years of Age. As we are out of time, could I suggest that we put these questions to you on notice and you might respond to us in written form?

Ms CALVERT: I would be happy to do that.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I move accordingly.

Motion agreed to.

CHAIR: We also need a composite resolution to say that and that the Committee publish the Commissioner's responses on its website as part of her evidence to the Inquiry.

The Hon. CATHERINE CUSACK: I move accordingly.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I second the motion.

Motion agreed to.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 12.53 p.m.)

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Chapter Three - Questions Answered After Hearing

Question 1

There has been a fairly substantial decline in the number of asthma deaths; do you have any explanation for that? The percentage of asthma deaths is increasing in metropolitan areas. What are the issues for metropolitan areas? (Question of Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, Transcript p.13)

Response:

We cannot be sure why asthma-related deaths are declining but we do know that the decline reflects an overall reduction in the prevalence of reported asthma, as well as emergency department visits and hospitalisations for asthma in children and young people between 1993 and 2002.

A wide range of factors can trigger airway constriction in people with asthma, including irritants such as environmental tobacco smoke and outdoor air pollutants, and allergens such as house dust mites and pollen. The most common triggers for acute severe episodes of asthma in children are viral infections. As there was no change in the prevalence of viral infections during the period we looked at, nor any of the other triggers mentioned, it is unlikely that this would be an explanation for the decline in asthma-related deaths.

The results of a 2004 study⁴ suggest that the improvements that were made over our study period in asthma treatment, management and education are yet to have any impact.

The asthma-related death rate is decreasing in all geographic areas. The decrease is greater outside major cities (56 per cent in major cities compared with 85 per cent in other areas). The increased percentage of deaths in major cities arises from this greater decline in non-metropolitan areas, rather than from any increased rate in the cities.

Answers continued over page.

⁴ Belessis, Y., Dixon, S., Thomsen, A., Duffy, B., Rawlinson, W., Henry, R. L., & Morton, J. (2004). Risk factors for an intensive care unit admission in children with asthma. *Paediatric Pulmonology* 2004; 37: 201–209.

Question 2

The Annual Report shows that six consultants were engaged during 2007-08 to provide specialist management advice at a cost of \$19,833. In what kind of work were the consultants engaged? How will the advice be utilised by the Commission? (Question of Mr Robert Coombs MP, Transcript p. 16)

Response:

The Commission engaged the following consultants in 2007-08:

Consultant	Amount	Nature of the consultancy	Utilising the advice
Paradigm Play	\$2,000.00	Facilitating an experts forum on climate change	Used to develop environmental sustainability project
Paradigm Play	\$937.00	Expenses associated with the climate change forum	Used to develop environmental sustainability project
University of Sheffield	\$476.16	Provision of expert commentary on research paper.	Improved our paper on Children and Poverty
TeKnowledge IT Consulting	\$3,500.00	Services associated with the functional requirements and design of eCheck.	Used to guide development of eCheck.
Sage Consulting	\$5,120.00	Specialist IT advice on software integration.	Used to improve IT links with Police and CrimTrac for the Working With Children Check.
Carolyn Quinn Consultancy	\$7,800.00	Advice on operating Relevant Employment Proceedings for the Working With Children Check	Used to guide improvements in the operations of the Working With Children Check.

Question 3

What can [the Committee] do better to fulfil our statutory role? Do you have any suggestions for us? (Question of Mr Robert Coombs MP, Transcript p. 26)

Response:

As I said at the hearing on 15 April, I believe that the Committee's approach could already be described as "best practice", so I do not have many suggestions for the Committee.

I have appreciated the fact that, in recent years, the Committee has included both newer members with fresh and interesting approaches, and some longer-established members who have had time to absorb and reflect on a great deal of information about children's lives. I hope that this mix of experience will continue.

Perhaps you could continue to explore ways to hear directly from children and young people. This may mean developing ways of operating which are different from the traditional methods used by Parliamentary Committees, as they were developed to take evidence from adults in quite formal ways.

Appendix 1 - Committee Minutes

Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee on Children and Young People (No 17)

Friday 28 November 2008 at 10:00 a.m.

Parliament House

Members Present

Mr Robert Coombs MP (Chair); Hon Kayee Griffin MLC (Deputy Chair); Ms Marie Andrews MP; Mr Geoff Corrigan MP.

In Attendance

Mr Mel Keenan (Committee Manager), Ms Jo Alley (Senior Committee Officer), Ms Cheryl Samuels (Research Officer), Ms Jacqui Isles (Committee Officer)

The Chair opened the meeting at 10.20 a.m.

5. Terms of Reference for the 2007-08 Annual Report of the Commission for Children and Young People and the 2007 Annual Report of the Child Death Review Team

The Chair noted that the Secretariat was preparing Briefing Notes and Questions on Notice for both these Reports.

Moved Mr Geoff Corrigan MP, seconded Hon Kayee Griffin MLC:

‘That in relation to the review of the 2007-08 Annual Report of the Commission for Children and Young People and of the 2007 Annual Report of the Child Death Review Team:

(a) The Committee’s report shall consist of:

- The questions on notice to the Commissioner;
- The corrected transcript of the evidence given by the Commissioner during the public hearing;
- Answers to the questions on notice, not provided during the hearing by the Commissioner but taken on notice;
- Relevant information (that is not confidential) as provided by the Commissioner in response to matters taken on notice during the hearing.

(b) The report, so comprised, be adopted as the report of the Committee and that it be signed by the Chair and presented to the House, together with the minutes of evidence;

(c) The Chair and Committee Manager be permitted to correct stylistic, typographical and grammatical errors.

The Chair closed the meeting at 10.50 a.m.



Chair



Committee Manager

**Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee on Children and Young People
(No. 18)**

Wednesday 18 February 2009 at 12:00 p.m.

Waratah Room, Parliament House

Members Present

Mr Robert Coombs MP (Chair), Hon Kayee Griffin MLC (Deputy Chair), Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Mr Geoff Corrigan MP, Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, Hon Fred Nile MLC.

In Attendance

Mr Mel Keenan (Committee Manager), Ms Jo Alley, Ms Cheryl Samuels, Ms Jacqui Isles, Mr John Miller.

The Chair opened the meeting at 12.07 p.m.

Apologies

Ms Marie Andrews MP

5. 2007-08 Annual Report of the Commission for Children and Young People

Draft Questions on Notice

Moved Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, seconded Hon Fred Nile MLC:

'That the draft Questions on Notice on the 2007-2008 Annual Report of the Commission for Children and Young People be adopted forwarded to the Commissioner for her response'.

The Chair closed the meeting at 12.41 p.m.



Chair



Committee Manager

Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee On Children And Young People

Wednesday 15 April 2009 at 10.00 a.m. (No 21)

Room 814/815, Parliament House.

Members Present

Mr Robert Coombs MP (Chair)
Hon Kayee Griffin MLC (Deputy Chair)
Mr Steve Cansdell MP
Mr Robert Furolo MP

Ms Marie Andrews MP
Hon Catherine Cusack MLC
Rev the Hon Fred Nile MLC

In Attendance

Mr Mel Keenan, Ms Jo Alley, Ms Cheryl Samuels, Ms Jacqui Isles, Mr John Miller, Ms Caesi Egan (work experience student).

The Chair opened the meeting at 10.07 a.m.

4.3 Review of the 2007-2008 Annual Report of the Commission for Children and Young People

At 11.49 a.m. the Chair re-opened the hearing.

Ms Calvert resumed giving evidence.

Evidence concluded, Ms Calvert withdrew.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Furolo, seconded by Ms Andrews:

'That the transcript of the witnesses' evidence, after making corrections for recording inaccuracy, and the answers to any questions taken on notice in the course of the hearing, be published on the Committee's website.'

The Chair closed the public hearing at 12.50 p.m.



Chair



Committee Manager

Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee On Children And Young People

Tuesday 12 May 2009 at 1.30 p.m. (No 22)
Waratah Room, Parliament House.

Members Present

Mr Robert Coombs MP (Chair)
Hon Kayee Griffin MLC (Deputy Chair)
Mr Robert Furolo MP

Ms Marie Andrews MP
Rev the Hon Fred Nile MLC

In Attendance

Mr Mel Keenan, Ms Jo Alley, Ms Cheryl Samuels, Ms Jacqui Isles, Mr John Miller, Ms Michelle Kroesche (volunteer).

The Chair opened the meeting at 1.31 p.m.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Cansdell and Ms Cusack.

4. Consideration of Chair's Draft - Review of the 2007-08 Annual Report of the Commission for Children and Young People; Review of the 2007 Annual Report of the Child Death Review Team and the Child Death Review Team Report: Trends in Child Deaths in New South Wales 1996-2005

Consideration of Chair's Draft Report

The Committee considered the reports *in globo*.

Adoption of Report

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Furolo, seconded by Reverend Nile:

- i) 'That the draft reports be the Reports of the Committee and that they be signed by the Chair and presented to the House'.
- ii) 'That the Chair and the Secretariat be permitted to correct stylistic, typographical and grammatical errors'.

Publication of the Report

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Griffin, seconded by Reverend Nile:

'That, once tabled, the Reports be placed on the Committee's website'.

The Chair closed the meeting at 1.50 p.m.



Chair



Committee Manager