

2018 Review of the Annual Report of the Advocate for Children and Young People and functions of the Childrens Guardian

Questions on Notice

1. During the reporting period you launched the first three-year whole of government strategic plan for Children and Young People. How has the plan progressed since its launch in July 2016?

Under the six themes of the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People - *Safe, Connect, Respect, Opportunity, Wellbeing, and Voice* - are six objectives, 42 initiatives and 30 indicators. ACYP has partial or full responsibility for five of the 42 initiatives. Processes are in place to monitor all initiatives and indicators, including those outside of ACYP's responsibility. In the period from July 2016 to June 2017, ACYP has actively progressed the following key initiatives for which it has responsibility:

- Developing "**Our Local**" – a website that will link children and young people to the extensive range of NSW services and opportunities and allow children and young people to provide feedback on services and facilities in their local area. This project is currently in the technical design phase.
- Developing a **Quality Assessors program** - "Child and Young People Inspectors" to train children and young people to review organisations on their capacity and effectiveness to engage with and be responsive to children and young people within their service provision. This program has been initiated and Youth Advisory Council members have been trained as Inspectors.
- **How to engage with children and young people** - Enhancing government and non-government service provider skills to proactively and respectfully engage with children and young people through targeted training. ACYP continues to promote child focused advocacy techniques with Government and non-government agencies.
- **Youth Advisory Groups** - Working with the Department of Family and Community Services to maximise benefits and establish strong links between existing and new youth advisory groups and networks, such as the NSW Youth Advisory Council and the Multicultural Youth Network. For example, on 7 April 2017 Multicultural NSW and ACYP partnered to present Ideation, an event at the Library of NSW with more than 100 young people from across NSW focused on improving inclusion in the State.
- **Children with Disability** - Working with the Department of Family and Community Services, the National Disability Insurance Agency and other key stakeholders to create indicators for the level of participation of children with disability. This project is currently in its planning phase.

Progress on other key initiatives, led by NSW Departments or authorities, will be reflected in a forthcoming update with contributions from all agencies as part of the monitoring of the Plan. For initiatives which are also Premier's Priorities, progress can be observed by the tracking tools on the Premier's Priorities website (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/premiers-priorities/>) under

the headings of “Creating jobs”; “Improving education results”, “Reducing youth homelessness”, “Tackling childhood obesity” and “Protecting our kids”.

2. In the Committee's 2017 Review of the Advocate for Children and Young People, the issue of violence against children was raised. At the hearing in April 2017 you mentioned you would be working with non-government agencies and government agencies to ensure the issue is highlighted. What did you do during the reporting period on this issue?

In June 2017, ACYP began targeted consultations with over 200 children and young people aged 10-18 years from seven schools in NSW and conducted general attitudinal polling amongst 1,000 NSW adults and 1,000 12-24yr olds. Young people suggested that they need their voices heard and for adults to take the issue of violence against children seriously.

Later that month an Advisory Group on Violence Against Children was formed. The Advisory Group, chaired by ACYP, is made up of senior representatives of NSW Government and non-government organisations including the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, the Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat, Life Without Barriers, People With Disability, Youth Action, YFoundations, Fams, Mission Australia, Multicultural NSW, Domestic Violence NSW, Department of Premier and Cabinet and Children's Hospital Network, Prof. Les White and the office of the Hon. Pru Goward MP.

Significant work has been undertaken since the end of the reporting period and further information on the current status of the campaign is publically available at www.nowandforever.com.au

3. As you know in November 2016 the Committee published its report, Sexualisation of Children and Young People, in which the Committee made a number of recommendations direction at the Advocate. In May 2017 the Government responded to the Committee's report. Can you provide an update on how you are responding to the Committee's recommendations?

From May 2017 – June 2017 within the reporting period:

- With regard to recommendation 1 (that ACYP monitor research into young people's use of and attitudes towards pornography) and recommendation 9 (that ACYP monitor research concerning the creation and distribution of sexts and pornography by minors), ACYP's policy advisors monitor research in these areas as a matter of course. In 2016, the Australian Institute of Family Studies was engaged to review what the available research tells us about the impacts of young people's exposure to and consumption of online pornography. Their research report, *The effects of pornography on children and young people: An evidence scan*, was released in 2017. The e-Safety Commissioner also commissioned a range of research on sexting and image based abuse in 2017 (<https://www.esafety.gov.au/image-based-abuse/about/research>).
- With regard to recommendation 2 (that ACYP continue to work with the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner and industry stakeholders to explore opportunities to reduce children and young people's exposure to pornography) and recommendation 10 (that ACYP work with the e-Safety Commissioner to investigate mechanisms for the reporting of inappropriate content exchanged on social media), ACYP spoke with the e-Safety Commissioner about the issues of children's access to online pornography, image based abuse and reporting mechanisms on the 5th of May 2017. We continue to engage with the e-Safety Commissioner on these issues and draw the Committee's attention to the Commissioner's iParent resource, where parents and others concerned with children's welfare can find a collection of materials to support conversations with children and young people about online pornography (<https://www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/iparent/online-risks/online-pornography>), as well as the Commissioner's reporting mechanisms for cyberbullying material (<https://www.esafety.gov.au/reportcyberbullying>), image based abuse (<https://www.esafety.gov.au/image-based-abuse/action/remove-images-video/report-to-us>) and illegal or offensive content (<https://www.esafety.gov.au/complaints-and-reporting/offensive-and-illegal-content-complaints/report-offensive-or-illegal-content>).
- With regard to recommendation 7 (that ACYP research and promote credible, age-appropriate, evidence-based websites and other materials in relation to children and young people), there is a 'Useful links and resources' section of ACYP's website which points visitors to other organisations' materials on topics such as education and employment, health and wellbeing, making a complaint and media and technology (<https://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/links/useful-links-and-resources>). We are currently undertaking an audit of the website and hope to provide a refreshed set of resources soon.

- With regard to recommendation 8 (that ACYP promote the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner online), the e-Safety Commissioner is listed within the 'media and technology' and 'making a complaint' categories of the 'useful links and resources' section of our site (<https://www.acyp.nsw.gov.au/links/media-and-technology>).
- ACYP also continued consultations with children and young people during this period in which social media and internet safety were often canvassed.