

Questions on Notice

Q1. Can you update the Committee on the development of the new three-year Strategic Plan?

In 2020, the Advocate decided not to progress the next Strategic Plan while they were in an Acting role but oversaw the *Review of the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young people 2016-2019 (The Review)*. Upon being appointed to the role in December 2020, the Advocate made the development of the next Strategic Plan a priority for the Office.

Since that time, the Advocate has completed and tabled *The Review*, which has allowed them to identify strengths, weakness and gaps in the formation of the previous Strategic Plan to better inform the development of the subsequent plan. The Advocate is working toward completing the next Plan for presentation to Cabinet in late 2021.

In addition to learnings from *The Review*, the Office has canvassed learnings from state, national and international examples of recent government strategies to promote the needs and views of children and young people. This has included a review of different models and structures for a strategic plan; analysis of the differing focus or themes each plan addresses; and understanding ways to have the greatest input from children and young people into the Plan.

From these learnings, the Advocate decided the next Strategic Plan will be guided by a number of themes collected from ACYP's existing consultation data. Under each theme will be a number of objectives, each with a clear indicator to measure success and an identified source to track changes over the period of the Plan.

The Office is currently conducting a macro-analysis of ACYP's existing data, which includes consultation with over 32,000 children and young people across NSW, to formulate the key themes of the Plan. During the Review process for the previous Plan, the Advocate had a number of Departments reach out and express interest in being part of the next Plan. By going through our existing data, it will be easier for the Advocate to identify the most appropriate Departments, Agencies and NGOs to work with to progress the objectives and initiatives under the next Plan.

Once the Advocate has a Framework for the themes, objectives and indicators of the Strategic Plan, further work will be done to engage Government and non-Government stakeholders as well as feedback from children and young people themselves including through the NSW Youth Advisory Council.

The Advocate has proposed that the Strategic Plan is presented to Cabinet for approval in late 2021, for public launch in early 2022.

The Advocate looks forward to working with agencies across Government, and the non-Government Sector to develop a Plan for the benefit of children and young people in NSW.

Q2. Correspondence from the Advocate, dated 22 December 2020, indicated that when reviewing the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan, the ACYP contacted responsible agencies to check data relating to each indicator. It also noted that some agencies did not communicate adequately.

a. Which agencies did the ACYP contact?

When conducting the *Review of the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2016-2019*, (the Review) the Advocate identified the department or agency who had responsibility for each initiative and indicator. The Advocate then approached an Executive of each of these departments or agencies to request a contact person who could liaise with the Office over the course of the Review.

The Office collated all publicly available data for each indicator and initiative and the Advocate sent this to the relevant representative to request any amendments or additions to that information. The Advocate then incorporated this feedback and sent the representative a copy of the Draft Review to ensure they were advised of the manner in which the Office was presenting the information and provided a final opportunity for any feedback.

In the course of this Review, the Advocate reached out to the following agencies / departments:

1. Aboriginal Affairs within the Department of Premier and Cabinet
2. Aboriginal Programs within the Roads and Maritime Service
3. Housing and Homelessness within the Department of Communities and Justice
4. School Infrastructure NSW within the Department of Education
5. Create NSW within the Department of Premier and Cabinet
6. ChildStory within the Department of Communities and Justice
7. Multicultural NSW within the Department of Communities and Justice
8. Youth Justice within the Department of Communities and Justice
9. Assisted School Travel Program within the Department of Communities and Justice
10. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation within the Department of Education
11. Early Childhood Education within the Department of Education
12. Learning and Wellbeing within the Department of Education
13. NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA)
14. School Operations and Performance within the Department of Education
15. Child and Family within the Department of Communities and Justice
16. Community Services Statewide Services within the Department of Communities and Justice
17. Disability Services within the Department of Communities and Justice
18. Housing Statewide Services within the Department of Communities and Justice
19. Participation and Inclusion within the Department of Communities and Justice
20. Aboriginal Strategy and Outcomes within the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
21. Centre for Population Health within the Ministry of Health
22. Transformation Group within the Department of Premier and Cabinet
23. Mental Health Branch within the Ministry of Health
24. Office for Regional Youth within the Department of Regional NSW
25. Training Services NSW within the Department of Education

26. Trade, Tourism, Investment and Precincts within Treasury
27. Office of the Children's Guardian within the Department of Communities and Justice
28. State Insurance Regulatory Authority within the Department of Customer Service

b. Which agencies provided the information you sought?

The Advocate wishes to clarify the information provided in the letter dated 22 December 2020. On a secondary read, we appreciate that this information was presented in a manner that could cause some confusion. In the initial round of consultations when the Advocate requested a representative be identified to liaise with their team around the specific indicator/initiative through the course of the Review process, each agency responded to the request. This was also the case in the second round of consultations, when the Advocate send each representative the publically available data as it related to their initiative or indicator for amendments and approval.

c. Which agencies did not provide the required level of reporting?

1. We believe this is where the committee's confusion may have arisen, so we seek to clarify the process up to this point. Having heard back from a representative from each agency or department following the second round of consultations, the Advocate had the required level of information from each agency or department to complete the Review. However, out of an abundance of diligence, the Advocate sent each representative a draft version of the complete Review to allow for a final opportunity for any amendments. Some representatives took this opportunity to again confirm the data or to make amendments. There were however, some agencies that choose not to reconfirm or amend their data, as the information they had provided in the second round of consultations was sufficient and they had nothing further to contribute.

Q3. The Children and Young People's Experience of Disaster report in July 2020 makes a number of recommendations to improve the lives of children and young people in this area.

a. What mechanisms are in place to monitor the implementation of these recommendations?

The Advocate continues to work with a number of organisations to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made in ACYP's Disaster Report, alongside ACYP's broader work. For example, a representative of the Advocate sits on the UNICEF Drought Advisory Group and following their release of their recent *After the Disaster: Recovery for Australia's Children* Report, the Advocate will continue to partner with UNICEF to further explore how the recommendations from each report can be progressed. In addition, a representative of the Advocate sits on the State Recovery Communications Working Group convened by Resilience NSW, to ensure that the Government's messaging around disaster considers the needs of children and young people. Furthermore, representatives of the Advocate have been invited to speak at the forthcoming *Phoenix Conference*, convened by the Department of Education around the importance of including children and young people's perspectives in disaster recovery.

b. Have you received any feedback from relevant agencies about these recommendations?

Within the Disaster Report, the Advocate identified key departments, agencies or organisations which would be best placed to lead in the implementation of specific recommendations. Prior to the release of the Report, the Advocate sent a representative of each of those organisations a copy of the report to ensure that they were aware of what we were recommending and to see if they were best placed to implement the recommendations. With this Report also came an invitation to meet with the Advocate to provide feedback on the recommendations and broader report.

The Advocate received feedback from the following organisations either through a formal written response or through a meeting:

1. Local Government NSW
2. NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS)
3. Aboriginal Affairs NSW
4. Resilience NSW
5. Department of Education
6. Department Planning, Industry and Environment
7. Transport for NSW
8. Australian Business Roundtable
9. Australian Institute for Disaster Recovery
10. National Bushfire Recovery Agency
11. The Hon. David Littleproud - Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management.
12. The Hon. Dr Geoff Lee, MP - Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education
13. UNICEF
14. NSW Police Force – Youth Command

The majority of this feedback centred on, what the respective agencies were doing or planned to do to address the recommendations made in the Report. There were a number of agencies that requested further explanations as to why a recommendation had been made, in this case the Advocate's response, in line with their mandate, was that these recommendations reflected what they had heard directly from young people. A couple of agencies requested slight changes to the language so that the recommendations could be more easily operationalised, where this did not diminish the voice or experience of the young person, as recorded in the Report, these changes were made.

As some of these responses related to operational or business matters, the Advocate would be happy to share these with the committee in confidence.