

Public hearing – 2024 review of the annual reports and other matters of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People and Office of the Children’s Guardian

24 April 2024

Questions on Notice (QoN) for witnesses - OACYP

Dr Amanda Cohn: I am interested in the role you have played with the adolescent mental health and suicide prevention interagency meetings and specifically about the initiatives being rolled out by the New South Wales Government to address suicide and self-harm. From your perspective, is that well distributed or representative? I am particularly thinking about rural and regional areas and LGBTQIA+ young people.

Yes, I have been attending suicide prevention interagency meetings, and I’m also on the **adolescent mental health steering committee** with NSW Health. As you may be aware the interagency meetings were established to consult on the [Strategic Framework for Suicide Prevention in NSW 2022- 2027](#).

My role was to ensure that the services provided could respond to a variety of children and young people experiencing mental distress – whether that be a young male in Sydney, or a rural student who identifies as LGBTQIA+. One issue young people repeatedly highlight is the need for peer-to-peer suicide prevention and mental health services. As part of the suicide prevention strategy, there are peer to peer suicide prevention services, in the form of [Safe Havens](#) across NSW. Young people tell us they would like longer hours and more places for 24/7 access to suicide prevention or mental health support. In order to ensure that young people with a diversity of lived experience of mental health experiences, and other experiences such as being from rural and regional areas or being LGBTQIA+ NSW Health have taken onboard advice from ACYP to include youth representatives in the consultation process.

Ms DONNA DAVIS: Page 13 of your annual report mentions the voices of LGBTQIA+ young people in New South Wales. We also have another committee inquiry happening into community mental health and best practices at the moment. I was wondering, following that focus, if there had been any feedback that either of you could enlighten us on.

Yes, I appeared at the hearing for the Inquiry into Equity, Accessibility and Appropriate Delivery of Outpatient and Community Mental Health Care in New South Wales on 22nd September 2023, to answer questions on ACYP’s submission.

ACYP’s LGBTQIA+ report was published in December 2022, and sent to key stakeholders including Minister for Youth and Mental Health, Minister for Health, the Minister for Education, the Minister for Communities and Justice, as well as non-government agencies such as ACON. Generally the

feedback was that this was a useful report, which highlighted experiences of LGBTQIA+ young people in schools, workplaces and their communities. We also used the findings from this report to feed into ACYP's submission on the Anti-Discrimination Act Review, and more recently for ACYP's submission into the Equality (LGBTIA+) Bill Inquiry, in particular removing exceptions for religious organisations to discriminate against LGBTQIA+ students and teachers.

The CHAIR: Has the cost of living and probably the upcoming winter—do the numbers that are incarcerated, or kids going into juvenile detention, increase with winter? What I'm alluding to is the cost of living. It's difficult. Are some of those kids that are incarcerated wanting to be because they get fed and they've got routine and they're kept warm? Do you think that reflects on the numbers in juvenile detention?

The varying levels of engagement the Office of the Advocate of Children and Young People (ACYP) have with children and young people in NSW identifies a variety of factors that may lead to contact with the youth justice system and/or incarceration. These factors, based on what children and young people with lived experience have told us, include disruptions to school through long and consecutive suspensions, time spent in the out-of-home-care system, experiences of neurodiversity or disability, experiences of maltreatment, neglect and abuse in childhood and socioeconomic status.

The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) publish crime statistics, including those about children and young people aged between 10 and 17 years on a quarterly basis.