

**REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE**

**COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

**REVIEW OF THE 2008-09 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AND  
THE 2008 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHILD DEATH REVIEW  
TEAM**

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**At Sydney on Friday, 3 September 2010**

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**The Committee met at 9.30 a.m.**

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**PRESENT**

Mr R. D. Coombs (Chair)

Legislative Council

The Hon. J. G. Ajaka  
The Hon. K. F. Griffin  
Reverend the Hon. F. J. Nile

Legislative Assembly

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

**MEGAN MITCHELL**, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, affirmed and examined:

**CHAIR:** The Committee has received a detailed response from the Commission to its questions on notice relating to the 2008-09 Annual Report and the 2008 Annual Report of the Child Death Review Team. Commissioner, do you wish this response to be part of your evidence today and be made public?

**Ms MITCHELL:** Yes I do.

**CHAIR:** Before we proceed with any questions, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

**Ms MITCHELL:** Yes I would, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Before you do, there are two reports as we know it. Could you just give us some indication if you are going to deal with one first and then we ask questions, or are you going to deal with both of them?

**Ms MITCHELL:** I will just deal with both of them. I am very pleased to be here today before this Parliamentary Committee to speak about the activities of the Commission. I have already had the pleasure of meeting with some Committee Members since my recent appointment and I look forward to building our relationship and sharing ideas and information. In the meetings I have had with Members so far I have been extremely impressed by your commitment to the children of New South Wales and the communities they live in. I note that the Commission's governance arrangements through this Committee give much strength to the Commission's work.

I note that the Committee and the Commission have had and currently have a respectful and productive relationship and I welcome the opportunity to make a positive forward contribution to that arrangement. As Members are aware, I was not in the role of Commissioner or Convener of the Child Death Review Team for the period covered by today's hearing and, as such, if I need to I might seek your indulgence from time to time to call on other members of the staff of the Commission, or to take matters on notice if I cannot accommodate your issues.

The two Annual Reports are helpful in identifying the Commission's strong past achievements and what the current and future focus of the Commission's work and priorities needs to be. One area concerns the future of the Child Death Review Team. I wanted to let the Committee know that I have this week met with the New South Wales Ombudsman who has agreed that the full transfer of the team will take effect in November, after the tabling to Parliament of the 2009 Annual Report. I welcome the clarification around the transfer of the function and the Commission's staff and we are working hard to enable smooth transition of the data and other resources that support the team.

The Commission, of course, will continue to support the good work of the team which culminated in the 2008-09 release of the team's ground breaking report on child death trends over a 10 year period. The Ombudsman has also generously agreed that it is important that the Commissioner, as a member of that group into the future, continues to access and monitor the data that the team analyses and continues to take an advocacy role in terms of policy, system and program reforms to prevent deaths, including providing information and advice to this Committee on an ongoing basis, given the important role this Committee plays, focussing directly on the needs of children and young people.

The 2008-09 year was also a 10 year milestone for the Commission and a number of other significant achievements occurred. Many of those have laid the foundations for the important work

that continues today.

The Commission's submission to the Wood Inquiry into Child Protection Services in New South Wales led it to being part of an interagency unit established in March 2009 to develop the Government response to the report of the inquiry. The Commission expanded the Working With Children Check to cover those people not presently included in the Working With Children Check system as a direct result of that inquiry. This includes those who are in self-employed child related work and those who volunteer to work with disadvantaged children or vulnerable children, and adult household members and kin and foster carers.

More recently we have recommended through the review of the Commission's legislation that volunteers who work with children also be subject to the Working With Children Check. This would be consistent with developments in other states and territories. The Commission has also undertaken new activities to increase its auditing and monitoring functions around employer compliance with the Working With Children Check in line with recommendations by the New South Wales Auditor-General's report made earlier this year.

The Commission has been using its auditing powers to ask employers to provide documentary evidence of their activities in relation to the check. We are sending approximately 200 letters a week to child related employers to help them comply with their legal obligations. Our aim is to establish their registration status and ensure they are conducting Working With Children Checks on all relevant employees.

In addition, a number of key employment sectors have attended the Commission's education and training workshops throughout the period of the report and beyond, which aim to support their efforts to be child safe organisations. Enhancing the Commission's capacity to be an effective regulator and quality assurer of organisations that work with children is a critical component of our current and ongoing work. I am happy to expand on the Working With Children Check area when answering the Committee's questions, if needed.

Another interest for the Committee has been the Commission's role as a driver in the development of Child Friendly Built Environments in New South Wales. Following on from two parliamentary inquiries the built environment is a current and ongoing priority for the Commission.

In the 2008-09 reporting period the Commission produced 12 publications, including *built4kids: A Good Practice Guide to Creating Child Friendly Built Environments*. It also released its report of its consultations with kids about this topic. Earlier this year Jan McClelland, as Acting Commissioner, outlined the progress of that project to Parliament and I am happy also to follow up with further details on answering the Committee's questions on notice if needed.

Linked to the built environment is the Commission's work on the middle years of childhood and in 2008-09 the Commission put forward the views of children in its submission to the Committee's Inquiry into Children and Young People Aged 9 to 14. The Committee has clearly articulated in its report on the middle years a strong leadership role for the Commission in this area, particularly in promoting a whole of Government response to the middle years of childhood. This was reiterated by Committee Members in Parliament when the report was tabled in 2009 and I welcome the Committee's continuing interest, support and advocacy in this area. I also look forward to the opportunity this presents for the Commission and the Committee to continue working together to develop new knowledge about this critical and poorly understood area of children's development.

Our submission to the inquiry was one of 24 submissions to formal inquiries prepared by the Commission in the 2008-09 reporting period, the majority of which included the views of children and young people. Seeking the views of children and young people and communicating them back to Government and other stakeholders continues to be a key Commission priority.

As members are aware, in the last 12 months the Commission has experienced an intense period of review of its structure, operations, focus and legislative framework and given the list of questions that the Committee has provided on notice, it is clear that the members are very interested not only in what the Commission has achieved previously, but also the ways we are meeting our commitments and our forward agenda. The Commission is currently in the process of a new strategic planning cycle which will help to clarify our future directions, building on existing commitments and determining where our resources are best targeted to meet stakeholders' expectations. Many of you have already provided input to that process and I thank you for that.

The Committee's questions provide a good opportunity for me to indicate the Commission's progress in building on its past achievements. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make an opening statement.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much for that. We might then go to a question session and I note that there are quite a number of questions here that we have circulated amongst the members. In all likelihood we will not get through all of those questions but I would ask from the outset whether or not you would be happy to receive those questions at a later time?

**Ms MITCHELL:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** They would probably go through the same sort of acknowledgement and procedures as questions on notice.

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

**Ms MITCHELL:** In the medium term, I am thinking that would be the next three years as a medium term.

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms MITCHELL:** From my analysis of what the Commission is involved in at the moment, there is quite a lot of unfinished business that needs to be dealt with, in particular in the area of the built environment where we are working with partners to review the efficacy of the *built4kids* document and resource material and forming additional partnerships with planners and local councils, and in particular embedding the practice of consulting with kids in the planning and design of public spaces. That is an area where we are continuing to implement the recommendations of the inquiry into the built environment and I think that will take us probably another 18 months to complete the recommendations that have been set for the Commission to undertake.

In terms of the middle years inquiry, there is quite a lot of work that could take us into both the medium and longer term, in particular undertaking research on the developmental, social, emotional and physical issues around the middle years and producing publications that help inform understanding about children in that area. We are also committed to working with the Department of Community Services within Human Services on a pilot program for integrated interventions for that group and we are also building a picture of New South Wales children. We hope to have a first publication early next year, which will have a focus on the middle years, profiling their demographics, their characteristics and promoting their understanding of the middle years. Those are some of the medium term priorities in those two areas.

We are also very keen to review and revamp our capacities in engaging with children and young people, including for that middle years group, which is potentially a group that we have not engaged with as much as other groups and so we are wanting to look at what are the contemporary methods of engaging kids and helping them to participate in decision making and in research.

Obviously a key part of our work going forward will be implementing the recommendations of the legislative review of the Commission and while we can anticipate some of that, it is a matter for the Government to make some decisions about where it wants to go in that area and obviously we will be implementing those changes. Regardless of that, we need to continue to implement the Auditor-General's recommendations from its report earlier this year, to streamline the check and to better regulate the check and child safe organisations and we will continue to do that, regardless of what decision the Government makes on the future of the Working With Children Check system.

**CHAIR:** Regarding your future work, and I think this Committee is recognised as a proactive one, taking into account of course the 9-14 years old report, the Kids in the Built Environment et cetera, in analysing and setting a future direction do you feel that the Committee can in any way assist in recognising those goals? It is a two-way street here and we would be very open to any suggestion that you might make in relation to us giving assistance to realising that direction. Secondly, I suppose, and it will probably come out of the review that is currently being undertaken in relation to performance indicators, do you think that there will be a requirement to revisit those indicators and make appropriate amendments?

**Ms MITCHELL:** In terms of our annual reporting or in terms of the indicators in the built environment?

**CHAIR:** We are talking about overall performance.

**Ms MITCHELL:** At the moment our Annual Report reflects a results-based accountability approach, so it has planned results, some intermediate results and some results, that is how it is structured. While I think there is some good information in there, I do believe as part of the strategic planning that we are doing now that it would be appropriate, and the Committee's suggestion is welcome, that we review the indicators that we have in place and that we could have in place and we build a more robust accountability framework through the annual report. We will look at, as the Committee suggested, other reports that might be considered to be best practice and also that of other commissions around the country and potentially overseas as well, to see how we can build better and more robust accountability indicators.

**CHAIR:** With the Child Death Review Team transfer of functions, what does that actually mean physically to the Commission? Does that mean that you will lose people, that you will lose resources, or will they stay within the group? How is that transfer actually going to take place, in anticipation of it happening?

**Ms MITCHELL:** In anticipation of the transfer we have not sought to fill positions as they have become vacant. In fact, while resources and positions will transfer to the Ombudsman, people will not and that has been agreed with the Ombudsman. We will relinquish \$220,000 of salaries to the Ombudsman for that purpose and I understand that the Ombudsman has an agreement with the Government to augment that as well in order to do the functions.

**CHAIR:** In future hearings it will be the responsibility of the Ombudsman to answer any questions and outline future directions of the Child Death Review Team?

**Ms MITCHELL:** The Ombudsman has a preference to report to only one Committee and that was the import of my comment previously. If that is the case, I would seek to continue to provide this Committee with information as a member of that team, because I think it is really critical information for the welfare of children for this Committee to be aware of and assess against other information that it has in front of it.

**CHAIR:** I agree with that, but the point I am trying to get to is it will be the responsibility of the Ombudsman, will it not, and please correct me if I am wrong, to prepare papers in relation to

annual reports and the like in relation to CDRT responsibilities?

**Ms MITCHELL:** Yes, that is right. That is correct.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** Just following on from the last comments of the Chair, I am sure that the Committee would certainly want to be able to still access information in relation to trends because of the effect it does have on the rest of the work of the Commission and obviously the oversight role that this Committee plays. I hope that when the transfer does take place that obviously that information is going to be able to come to this Committee via yourself. That is just a comment. My question would be, and this is a future thing, if you, as Commissioner, impart that information to this Committee what sort of process would there be for us - it is probably very much up in the air at the moment because this Committee would obviously want a process to be able to go back and get further information or question some of the trends and so on with the Child Death Review Team, so I suppose that really is not a question that can be answered at the moment. Could I go on to the participation of children and young people within the Commission? What has been the impact on the Commission to date of bringing the Youth Advisory Council under the auspices of the Commission?

**Ms MITCHELL:** I will have a go at this but I might have to defer to my colleagues. My understanding is that the support for the Youth Advisory Council, being within the Commission, was only for a period and in fact at this juncture supporting the Youth Advisory Council is now again one of the functions of Communities NSW. So while there was a brief time where that was a function of the Commission and the Commission worked with that council, and I believe one of the things that it worked closely with that council on was around youth homelessness, including conducting a forum on youth homelessness, that function is now with Communities NSW. The impact has been the ability to establish a relationship with it and I think that is a good thing and I really think that the Commission should have a relationship with the Youth Advisory Council in some way, noting that that council is the Minister's council.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** Does the Commission have a representative on that council?

**Ms MITCHELL:** No, but we also obviously have a committee of young people. The Commission has another committee of young people called the Children and Young People's Reference Group and it has a number of young people of various ages on that as well.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** Given that there is the Youth Advisory Group, the Young People's Reference Group, Kids Advisory Panel and so on, is that sufficiently representative, in your opinion, or perhaps the Commission's, in terms of dealing with some of these issues, remembering the work that is already going on with the built environment and also the middle years, or the outcome of the middle years inquiry? Are those groups sufficiently representative of, say, marginal groups, and that is: children and young people with a disability, rural and regional young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and children from culturally and linguistically diverse communities? Do you think that those three groups can cover all of that, or is there a need for some other specialist groups, perhaps committees that may need to be formed to look at specific areas?

**Ms MITCHELL:** I do not know the composition of the Youth Advisory Council in detail but while the reference group has young people from around the State, so from rural areas, and there is a level of diversity of experience and background, I would have to agree with you that those 12 young people do not represent a sufficient diversity of interests and neither could 12 young people, I think, of children and young people across the State. In all of the projects that the Commission does we will need to ask children about their experiences and their views from diverse communities. This is an area for reviewing and revamping our consultation strategies and we will do that as part of our ongoing program of work, in the built environment and the middle years in particular. We will seek to build access to a range of kids from a range of communities and we will document how we will do

that as well, so that you can be assured at the end of the day that that has happened.

**The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN:** In your opening address you spoke about the built environment and councils that the Commission was working with. Which councils is the Commission working with on the built environment at the moment? The question can go on notice.

**Ms MITCHELL:** We will take it on notice and I will get back to you on the detail of that partnership, but I think there are other opportunities as well through the Committee that this Committee recommended be established. We have now got that process in train to form other partnerships with other councils and I think there was quite a lot of appetite for that at the round table that the Committee sponsored. So I think there are many other opportunities, especially in areas where there might be more diverse kids from diverse backgrounds and I would be very supportive of that.

**Rev. The Hon. FRED NILE:** Following up that area in question, as you know your Commission now has responsibilities for this extended age group not just up to 18 but to 25, and particularly representation of young people. What impact is that having on the Commission and its work focus?

**Ms MITCHELL:** Well again, this is another area where for a brief period we had responsibility for youth policy and now that function has transferred back into Communities NSW, so in fact at the moment unless the legislative review recommends something different, we remain focussed on 0-18 years old, so it has not had an impact yet. If that review recommends a change to 0-25 or 0-21, then we would obviously need to think through the resourcing implications and where we target resources. All the other commissions across Australia have a focus on 0-18. The reason is because they are the most vulnerable children and young people who do not have other ways of organising and having representation.

**Rev. The Hon. FRED NILE:** You are happy to keep the Commission's focus on that age group up to 18?

**Ms MITCHELL:** Yes, I am.

**Rev. The Hon. FRED NILE:** I note too that in the background material that you have an involvement with the Child Injury Prevention Reference Group and it is apparently chaired by you or someone on the Commission. Are there any other interagency groups that the Commission chairs or is responsible for, or is it particularly the Child Injury Prevention Reference Group?

**Ms MITCHELL:** We do chair that group. We will also chair the steering group on the built environment. We are just about to establish that one as well. The extent to which the middle years work might involve interagency work, there might be a capacity there to chair a group moving forward as well. We are certainly participating on groups to do with the middle years, along with the Department of Human Services. We are participating on a range of other groups but those two, I think, are the main ones that we chair.

**Rev. The Hon. FRED NILE:** Do you personally chair those groups, or do you allocate them to staff members?

**Ms MITCHELL:** No, I will chair them. If there are other groups that I do not know about we will let you know.

**Rev. The Hon. FRED NILE:** You will take that on notice?

**Ms MITCHELL:** Yes, okay, thank you.

**The Hon. John AJAKA:** Can I ask you the money questions? I know that certain aspects are now leaving your Commission and, for example, going to the Ombudsman and of course with that goes money. At the end of the day when you become positioned do you consider that your Commission is sufficiently resourced to meet the targets you want to meet, to meet the short-term goals?

**Ms MITCHELL:** The Commission has 58.4 staff. 22.4 of these are currently conducting the Working With Children Checks. We have also a number of vacancies at the moment as we are in the middle of a staff freeze as well and we are also pending the result of the legislative review, so at present I would say we do not have the full complement of resources that we need to do all the work that we need to do to the quality that we would like. As I said, we are in the middle of a strategic planning exercise and part of that exercise is to allocate resources to functions. I would be in a better position to answer that question when we finish that exercise and we also know where the legislative review is taking us, because clearly if there is a massive change to the Working With Children Check system and the regulation of it, we will need to think about the resources required to develop new systems, retrain staff, build new regulatory models, build new business rules, do research into new risk assessments, et cetera, and all of that is a bit of an unknown. We are trying to anticipate that at the moment and are doing quite a lot of work, modelling what that would involve and I would like to take the opportunity to come back to the Committee when we have a strong view of the resourcing implications and what our current structure and resource needs are to meet that challenge.

**The Hon. John AJAKA:** Keeping that in mind, what would assist me and, I believe, the rest of the Committee, is when this occurs it would be easier for me if you said in the simplest terms, "John, we need to do project X. We are unable to do it because we have a shortfall in our budget of half a million dollars". We can then look at what the project is, the importance of that project, can that half a million dollars be found, as opposed to the would you like more money type question, which means absolutely nothing because the short answer would always be: Yes please.

The other side of the coin may be that we really should not be dealing with projects A, B and C any more. The amount of money going into them cannot justify the ultimate result. If we took that money and put it in these other projects, that would give us a far better outcome. That is the type of basic information I would like when you are ready to convey that. That would be most helpful.

**Ms MITCHELL:** Okay.

**The Hon. JOHN AJAKA:** Can I go to another area, and this comes from listening to the television? Lately there has been a lot of talk about increasing mental health problems with young people and it is always very scary when you hear that, and then you hear some of the factors being mobile phone in their bedrooms, computers in their bedrooms and all of these other weird and wonderful aspects. Is the Commission looking at the aspect of mental health? Is it just something where we are hearing there is an increase and in fact it does not exist, or is it in fact increasing?

**Ms MITCHELL:** In the work on the middle years, the Commission is and will be looking at issues to do with mental health. It is certainly active with partners in that area in terms of gathering information about the reality and the perception of mental health issues for young people. There is quite a lot of evidence to suggest that the complexity of the contemporary world is at least highlighting that mental health is an issue for young people and it is an issue earlier in their lives and I think it is something that we really should be keeping a very strong handle on.

I was reading a report on homeless men the other day and that report indicated very high levels of mental health problems that manifested themselves quite young in their lives for them to get to that point. I do think there is probably a lot there in terms of people who experience mental health problems early in life which is either not detected or not treated or addressed and then the



trajectory of those young people into adulthood is not a particularly positive one. I think it is a real issue. The extent to which it is, I think, is where the Commission can do some work with partners who have the expertise in this area. Certainly as part of our project on the middle years these will be a focus on that.

**The Hon. John AJAKA:** I cannot remember the exact name of the Commission that Stepan chairs, I think it is the Community Relations Commission, but is much work being done by your Commission in relation to the area of multiculturalism, ethnic affairs and the issues being faced by children from differing backgrounds and whether any certain groups feel that they are being singled out, or vilified, or finding it very, very difficult to adjust because of their very different culture?

**Ms MITCHELL:** My answer would be I do not think that the Commission is doing much in that area.

**The Hon. John AJAKA:** Is that a yes we are not or a yes we are?

**Ms MITCHELL:** Yes we are not. Personally I think it is an area where we have to do a lot more, as part of that engagement strategy I was talking about reviewing and renewing. We need to get much better at connecting into those communities. I think that some relevant work will be in the picture of New South Wales children. There will be some information in there that will help us understand and profile the diverse communities of young people. The next challenge is to get to those young people and to hear what they have to say about their lives and their perception of their lives. I do think they will be very different. They will face particular challenges that we need to understand better. It is a priority for me, so we will seek to advise you further on how we have managed to do more in that area.

**The Hon. John AJAKA:** If you can check with Stepan and his Commission, maybe there could be a very good synergy between the two Commissions because they may have already done quite a bit of the work, but they are focussing generally whereas you are focussing on that specific area of young people.

**Ms MITCHELL:** Yes.

**Ms ANDREWS:** Commissioner, I think we all recognise that governments and society as a whole have done quite a lot to help young children with disabilities but could you outline to the Committee what programs the Commission has implemented or is planning to implement relating to children with a disability?

**Ms MITCHELL:** I am going to need to take that one on notice. I know that there was some previous work done in this area but I am not particularly familiar with it, so I will provide that information.

**Ms ANDREWS:** Can you also tell us if you are planning to implement further programs in that area?

**Ms MITCHELL:** In terms of the future plans what I am hoping to do is, as I mentioned, link those sorts of issues into the ongoing commitments we have, in particular the built environment, and you can imagine there is a critical link there for kids with disabilities being able to access the built environment, but also in terms of the middle years— very much trying to link the ongoing commitments we have with a focus on vulnerable kids, including those with disabilities.

**Ms ANDREWS:** The Committee notes that the Commission's Annual Report is now available on the web site as a PDF download. Is the Commission considering providing a PDF alternative file type that might be more accessible for blind or visually impaired persons?

**Ms MITCHELL:** We will examine that. I think that is a very reasonable suggestion and I think if we are an accessible organisation our information should be accessible to everybody who would like to look at it.

**Ms ANDREWS:** Will the Commission advocate the use of a child impact statement by departments in the development of whole of Government policies and programs as recommended by the Joint Standing Committee in its report *Children and Young People Aged 9-14 Years in New South Wales: The Missing Middle?*

**Ms MITCHELL:** Thank you for that question. There has been quite a lot of debate about whether a standalone child impact statement is an appropriate approach or whether another approach might be to embed the culture of considering children's issues in the design of policies and programs and I think that debate is yet to be resolved. I am very happy to take the notion to Government, noting that there may be other ways of achieving the same end.

**Mr CANSDELL:** Commissioner, it seems that the Working With Children Check is consuming a major part of your budget, 22-odd people if we concentrate on that. Does the Commission work in cooperation with other agencies or do you believe that this really should be moved away from the Commission for Children and Young People so you can focus on more relevant projects and research into problems that our youth are facing?

**Ms MITCHELL:** Thank you for that question.

**Mr CANSDELL:** I am happy for you to take it on notice.

**Ms MITCHELL:** I think I can answer that question. There are still several agencies conducting Working With Children Checks, including the Commission. In fact the Commission's work on operating the Working With Children Check, those folk that do that, the 22 people you spoke about, actually now already report directly to Communities NSW, so that separation has started to occur. Because of the past relationship with those people doing the check it is still a very close relationship on a day-to-day basis and will be for some time, especially as the check changes and reforms itself. So I agree with you that the way of the future, regardless of how the check looks and feels, is a screening agency that operates that check, located somewhere within Government. At the moment it is within Communities NSW and possibly with some of those other screening agencies in some of the other departments also amalgamated within that check to create efficiencies, that would in fact free up the Commission to focus more on the policy, advocacy, research and regulatory work to do with the check and child safe organisations more generally.

**Mr CANSDELL:** It was brought up a few times around the table over the last couple of years that families with disadvantaged children, disabilities, multicultural issues, these are things I think the Commission would be far better concentrating on, rather than doing the policing and checking and people's status.

**Ms MITCHELL:** Yes.

**The Hon. John AJAKA:** Commissioner, going back to the built environment and the cooperation of councils, it would be good from our perspective, and I hope it would not happen, if you find that you are not receiving the appropriate cooperation from councils that you let us know. When we look at the built environment and I think we mentioned it at the round table, you have this situation for example just in my own area where you will have a little park that is never used by anybody, there are no resources there whatsoever and if you move along there is an absolutely fabulous large park that is also not being used by anyone because there are no resources, and yet people will hop in their cars and drive kilometres away to find something. Councils, from my perspective, are not doing enough to properly resource a fundamental area. They seem to be focussing on leaving existing small parks that do not seem to be achieving anything for the youth of

today. If you could focus on that as well and get back to us on that it would be really helpful.

**Ms MITCHELL:** I am happy to do so. One of the benefits of the new committee that this Committee has recommended be established around the built environment is that it will have on it representation of the Local Government and Shires Association and they seem to have a lot of goodwill towards this project and so I think that would be a great inroad into the councils of New South Wales.

**CHAIR:** Should we have any further questions, as I have already indicated, I suggest that we put these questions to you on notice and you might respond to us in written form.

**(The witness withdrew)**

**The Committee adjourned at 10.19 a.m.**