

2024 review of the annual reports and other matters of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People

Questions on Notice

Dr AMANDA COHN: (P13) I'm really interested in the requests you've had to say no to, but also some of the examples you alluded to where a request was made and you've had to negotiate a much smaller scope of response because of your capacity. I'd be keen to have those examples.

Response: Please refer to response provided to Further Supplementary Question 3.

Ms DONNA DAVIS: (P13) I note that the office receives \$2.7 million in funding for 19.4 full-time employees and \$745,000 for operational expenses. It would be really good to understand what that operational funding is being used for. How is it being spent?

Response: Please refer to response provided to Further Supplementary Question 2.

The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: (P14) When is the next tracking report due?

Response: The next tracking report is due for release in February 2025.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: (P17) My colleague asked earlier about the 19.4 FTE team members that support your work. Is the Committee able to get a breakdown of what those roles are in terms of their levels and how they operate, just for the purposes of consistency?

Response: Please refer to response provided to Further Supplementary Question 2.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: (P17) You mentioned that the participants on the YAC got paid at the government rate. Do you know offhand what that is or could you provide that on notice?

Response: Members of the Youth Advisory Council are remunerated in accordance with the Government Rate, which is currently a daily fee of \$220 for Members and \$350 for the Chair. If Members or the Chair attend meetings or events that are less than a day, they are remunerated at the half day rate of \$110 for Members and \$175 for the Chair.

Remuneration for the Youth Advisory Council is incorporated in Employment Related Expenditure (ERE) Budget.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: (P17) Is Octopus the polling company you use?

Response: The annual Youth Week and Strategic Plan Tracking Survey are undertaken by SecNewgate. The Octopus Group is the research panel that SecNewgate engages to source participants for their surveys.

Zoë Robinson: (P17) Every year, we pick two to focus on. Hopes for the future is what we're doing right now. I will take on notice the second one.

Response: The two pillars that ACYP are focusing on for 2024 are Hope for the Future and Love, Connection and Safety.

The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: (P17) In terms of the polling that is done, what checks are in place to ensure that it is done in a way that is accessible to children and young people, or is contemporary, for example, and in a language that they understand? The reason I'm asking this is that I'm trying to understand what mechanisms are in place to avoid there being a selection bias in the work you do, if you like?

Response: As discussed in the Public Hearing, whilst the polling conducted by SEC Newgate covers a broad cross-section of children and young people, there will be some smaller groups, whose views may not be well represented due to the limited reach of the research panel used to source survey participants. This is true of all research conducted via research panels and the polling conducted by SEC Newgate is in line with industry standards in terms of coverage and representation. This is where the qualitative work conducted by the participation team is critical in understanding children and young people's experience. However, in our engagement with SEC Newgate for our annual Youth Week and Strategic Plan Surveys, significant time and consideration is given to develop the survey questions in a manner and language that is accessible. Questions are designed to be easily understandable to participants of all ages and backgrounds, by using succinct and simple language as much as possible and providing instructions for participants on how to answer questions. Some questions which ask about sensitive topics are only asked of participants aged 16 years or above, or set as non-mandatory.

Furthermore, SEC Newgate has in place stringent mechanisms for its sampling approach to avoid selection bias. The sample design uses quota targets set in the sample to be representative of the NSW population in terms of gender, age, and location. As an additional check, the sample is weighted to match ABS Census population statistics for gender, age and location (Greater Sydney and regional NSW).

Ms LYNDA VOLTZ: (P18) Well, the one I looked at, yes. Given that's where a third of the population of the State lives; you're not picking up those voices. I'm just wondering how you balance that out with some of the core areas where we're having huge problems in representation. For example, if you look at boys high schools like Birrong, Punchbowl and Canterbury, where they're only at half capacity, how are you engaging those voices?

Response: In the latest poll (Youth Week 2024), 228 participants (21% of the sample) were sourced from Western and South-Western Sydney, in the same poll for 2023 there were 251 participants (25%) sourced from Western and South Western Sydney. The quota targets and weighting applied to the survey sample distinguish between Greater Sydney and Regional NSW.

In regards to the representative nature of the Youth Advisory Council, please see a summary of the demographic information for the 2023-2024 Council, which includes two members from Western Sydney, attached. As with all ACYP events we try to ensure that we have around 35% of participants from regional NSW, in line with the demographic breakdown across the metro-regional split in NSW.

Ms LYNDA VOLTZ: (P18) I was more raising it in regard to the survey because you were stating, "How do we not skew it where we're concentrating on refugee communities?" How are you ensuring—for example, the special inquiry you did, there were nine males, nine females. It is my understanding that there were a hundred in that temporary accommodation at the time, and four of them in metropolitan Sydney. If you took that for the hundred, is that similar to what the breakdown would be across New South Wales? Would most of them come from regional rather than from metropolitan Sydney, or is that just the way it panned out on the inquiry.

Response: In the 2024 Youth Week Poll we wanted to understand the views of refugees and migrants, so boosted the sample to include an additional 100 migrants (defined as having been born overseas). Due to the over-sampling of migrants, SEC Newgate weighted the proportion of this cohort to match the proportion representative of ABS population statistics.

For the Special Inquiry, ACYP's Special Inquiry team reached out to DCJ, NGO and ACA providers and caseworkers across NSW to discuss arranging for children and young people to participate in private hearings, as well as to other stakeholders. Some organisations declined to participate. Where the child or young person was aged under 18 years, a pre-hearing meeting was then arranged between them and an independent social worker supporting the ACYP team, where the social worker would assess the young person's ability and willingness to be involved and seek their consent. As ACYP took a trauma-informed approach, centering around respecting the young person's often traumatic experience of being in an ACA, there were some instances where the social worker didn't think the young person should be involved or the young person declined to be involved. As a result the sample of young people who spoke to the Advocate was not representative of the regional and metropolitan breakdown of the more than 100 young people in ACAs.

	Age	Gender	Suburb	Region	Electorate	Enrolled at	LOTE	Refugee or Migrant	Disability	ASTI	YJJ	OOHC	LGBTQI A+
	15	Female	Koonawarra	Illawarra/ Shoalhaven	Shell Harbour	Public School							Yes
Resigned	16	Female	Auburn	Metropolitan Sydney - Western	Auburn	Public School	Yes						
	16	Female	Binjura	South East & Tablelands	Monaro	Private Faith School	Yes	Yes					Yes
	17	Male	Mosman	Metropolitan Sydney - Northern	North Shore	Public School						Yes	
	17	Male	Lismore / Caniaba	North Coast	Lismore	Private Independent School							
	18	Male	Walgett	Far West	Barwon	Private Independent School				Yes			
	18	Non-binary/ male	St Clair	Metropolitan Sydney - Western	Badgery's Creek	Private Faith School					Yes	Yes	Yes
Resigned	18	Female	Dubbo	Central West and Orana	Dubbo	Private Independent School				Yes			
	19	Female	Alambie Heights	Metropolitan Sydney - Northern	Wakehurst	Vocational Education			Yes - Autism				Yes
	20	Female	Liverpool	Metropolitan Sydney - South Western	Liverpool	University	Yes						
	22	Female	Mayfield	Hunter	Newcastle	University							
	22	Male	Mount Druitt	Metropolitan Sydney - Western	Mount Druitt	University	Yes	Yes					
	22	Male	Wollongong, previously Orange	Illawarra/ Shoalhaven (grew up in Far West)	Wollongong	University	Yes						
	19	Female	Galston, previously Cherrybrook	Metropolitan Sydney - North West	Berowra	University	Yes						