

16/12/2024

Mrs Helen Dalton, MP
Chair, Committee on Children and Young People
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via: childrenyoungpeople@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Chair,

Re: Report No. 1158 of the Committee on Children and Young People - 2024 review of the annual reports and other matters of the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People and the Office of the Children's Guardian.

I write to thank the Committee for allowing me the opportunity to appear before you in March and July 2024 to discuss the functions and activities of my office. I appreciate the time the Committee has taken to consider the matters raised and the findings and recommendations made within this Report.

I wanted to provide a formal response to the recommendations made as they relate to the work of my office. I understand the Minister will provide a government response and I acknowledge there are recommendations made around legislative reform that are directed to the Government and will defer to the Minister on these matters. I will continue to work closely with the Minister as they consider these matters.

Concerning recommendation 8: That, in future annual reports, the Advocate for Children and Young People provides more detail on its sources of funding, including from state and federal governments, and how that funding is spent.

I am supportive of this recommendation. I note that my Office has been having ongoing conversations with NSW Treasury and the Department of Communities and Justice around adequately resourcing my office and my obligations around providing detailed financial statements in my Annual Report. It is my understanding that my budget is audited and recorded as part of the larger Department financial statements but am happy to provide the Committee with a more detailed account of my expenditure. Additionally, I would bring to the Committee's attention that the Commonwealth funding my office currently receives for the Recovery Youth Support Service in the Northern Rivers concludes in March 2025, however I can provide a breakdown of these fundings sources in annual reports moving forward.

Concerning recommendation 9: That the Advocate for Children and Young People include data about diversity in its reporting, including in annual reports, that includes cultural diversity and the percentage of children and young people from regional, rural and remote areas, and other marginalised and underrepresented groups.

I am supportive of this recommendation. I appreciate that my enabling legislation requires me to 'consult with children and young people from a broad range of backgrounds and age groups

throughout the State.' In each of my projects, my office works to ensure we cover a diverse representation of geography, demography and views. I acknowledge there may be instances where I undertake a project focused on a particular issue (such as Vaping) or cohort (such as Refugee and Migrant) which may require a more targeted approach and limit diversity in some respects. Where appropriate and possible, we collect demographic information from children and young people and can provide this information in future reports.

Concerning recommendation 10: That, in future annual reports, the Advocate for Children and Young People consider including data from its new tracking mechanism monitoring the implementation of recommendations to stakeholders.

I am supportive of this recommendation. Developing a tracking mechanism that monitors the implementation of recommendations to stakeholder has been a challenge for my office both due to resourcing and legislative mandates. As my terms comes to an end, I have asked my office to consider how I can best publish this information in a transparent and useful manner. While my office is still working to develop an appropriate system for this, I commit to this data forming a part of my next and future Annual Reports.

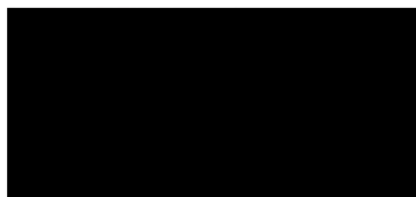
Concerning recommendation 11: That the NSW Government consider amending section 21 (3) of the Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014 so that all 12 members of the Youth Advisory Council are persons under the age of 25 years.

I will defer to the Minister around amending section 21(3) of the Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014. I will note however that it has been common practice to ensure all 12 members of the Youth Advisory Council are under the age of 25 at the time of appointment.

I extend my thanks to the Committee for the opportunity to respond to these recommendations and for the critical role that you take in conducting oversight of my office. I look forward to continuing to work with the Committee to support the children and young people of NSW.

If you would like to discuss any of these matters further, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours sincerely,



Zoë Robinson
Advocate for Children and Young People
Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People

CC: [Redacted]
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