

CORRECTED VERSION

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Inquiry into the Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Restrictions on the Making of Protection Orders) Bill 2015

Melbourne — 19 June 2015

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Ms Deb Tsorbaris, chief executive officer, and

Ms Mary Kyrios, Senior Policy and Project Officer, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare.

The CHAIR — I declare open this public hearing of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Legal and Social Issues. This hearing is relation to the children, youth and families amendment bill. I welcome Ms Deb Tsorbaris, the chief executive officer of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, and Ms Mary Kyrios. Thank you both for being here. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the Constitution Act 1975 and is further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you give today is protected by law. However, any comment repeated outside this hearing may not be so protected. All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript in the next couple of days. We have allowed half an hour for this session. To ensure that there is sufficient time for questions, I ask you to keep your opening comments to between 5 and 10 minutes. Finally, I remind you that the inquiry is to obtain evidence in relation to the Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Restrictions on the Making of Protection Orders) Bill 2015 which is currently before the Parliament. I invite you to make your opening address.

Ms TSORBARIS — First of all, I am going to open by giving a few words about who we are as it makes it a bit more helpful when you are directing questions to us. I am Deb Tsorbaris from the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare. I am the CEO. This is Mary Kyrios, who is here to support me if there are any technical questions that you refer to me. She will be here to assist.

The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, or the centre as I will refer to it in my presentation, is a peak body established to improve the lives of vulnerable children and their families. The centre was established with support from the Victorian government's Community Support Fund in 2003. Other significant donors were The Ian Potter Foundation, The William Buckland Foundation and the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust. So we are a very well-supported organisation. The evolution of the centre marked a natural progression for CWAV, as most of you may know, from a peak body that was set up in 1912 to a centre of excellence with a wider reach of valued members, an extended scope to form a new partnerships and a renewed mission to serve vulnerable children and young people in families across Victoria. The centre and its hundreds of members represent early childhood, child, youth and family support services, and out-of-home care services including kinship care, foster care, residential care and services providing children with support moving on from care. The centre works with these organisations and those employed in child and family services to strengthen the quality and capacity of services. It does this through workforce development and learning, policy development, research and advocacy for children and families.

The centre's objects are affirming that each child and young person has the right to security, nurture and relationships of continuing family life; and that each family, however constituted, has the right to support and protection within society. The objects of the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare shall be: to provide a means by which organisations in the child, youth and family welfare sector can work together in their mutual interests and for the benefits of the people they serve; to promote leadership and excellence in child, youth and family services; to actively represent the interests of members to government and the community; to develop and influence policies in child, youth and family welfare; and to promote ongoing research and evaluation in child, youth and family welfare. These are amongst many others; I am not going to go through all of them for you.

We have a small secretariat and a couple of my staff are here today. We provide a wide range of services on behalf of the department but also for our members in program development and policy direction. We are often represented on high-level committees across the sector and within government to provide advice on behalf of the sector. We provide a whole range of other activities and forums and of course, when appropriate, we work within media circles to improve the understanding in the community of the needs of these children. That often benefits both ourselves and government in trying to do this important work.

This leads us to the permanent care reforms introduced last year. We would like to have acknowledged from the outset that child protection operates at the intersection of children's rights, parents' rights, siblings' rights, extended family members' rights, carers' rights, community values and the appropriate role of the state and courts. From our point of view it is really important to understand that at the outset. The matter of permanency planning for vulnerable children in particular triggers all of these rights, which in many ways relates in a highly contested space and may be a reason as to why we are all here today. From the centre's point of view, we think that a focus on early intervention for families that are caring for their children is a really important first premise. Getting to court is the last thing any of us want.

I am now going to give you a bit of background to the Child, Youth and Families (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Act 2014. I think it is important to talk about the history here. In 2014 DHS provided a confidential briefing on the proposed legislative amendments on stability planning and other matters to the centre and other community services organisations and members of the centre. The reforms were based on previous inquiries, such as the Cummins report and the stability and permanent care project report, and future directions of permanent care and adoption, which unfortunately we did not have access to in terms of these two reports. But it is important to say there is a long, long history of reports and inquiries that see a constant change and shift in legislation and service delivery that we all need to take notice of. Having said that, the issues for children in care are not new. They are well documented in Victoria and other jurisdictions nationally and internationally. However, these reports could provide the benchmark to measure future reforms.

The need for stability for all children, but particularly children in care, is critical. Following the briefing we had with the Department of Human Services, as it was then, the centre members expressed some reservations regarding aspects of the proposed measures, given that they were significant in nature and as such would merit further consideration. I will touch on those briefly. They included the redress elements, no contact conditions on orders, issues around sibling relationships and keeping siblings together, and the needs of Aboriginal children. Some of those things were addressed during the course of the consultation with the Department of Human Services and found their way into the legislation.

The main issue for our members turned out to be — because we did not actually see the bill until it appeared in Parliament — the revocation of registration, which we had not been alerted to during the briefings, and we have continued to advocate for changes to the wording to better reflect the intent and purpose, which was to revoke registration where organisations gave back the services to the Department of Health and Human Services. Unfortunately the time frames following the bill did not allow for detailed analysis to enable any other issues to be addressed. Despite this, the centre supported the reforms to ensure that vulnerable children and young people would experience improved stability and outcomes in care and we provided in-principle support prior to seeing the bill. I think it is very important to give you that history.

The Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Restrictions on the Making of Protection Orders) Bill 2015 proposes to reinstate provisions that were removed in legislation passed last year in the Children, Youth and Families Amendment Act 2014. The provision relates to the powers of the Children's Court of Victoria to make a protection order based on reasonable steps taken by the secretary to provide the services necessary in the best interests of the child or to enable the child to remain in their parents' custody. We understand that Minister Mikakos is reinstating this provision following the Children's Court and legal stakeholders expressing a range of views, and they are best placed to comment on whether this new bill addresses their original concerns.

The role of the Children's Court, the Department of Health and Human Services and the sector are important elements of the child protection system, designed to ensure that children and young people's safety, wellbeing and best interests are met. Regular planning and discussion between all of these parties is critical and sometimes does not occur as often as it needs to. We hope the permanent care reforms align and drive more timely decisions to create a more stable and permanent environment for children and young people in either their parents' care or alternative care. At the centre we hope to continue to develop our new relationship with the Children's Court with the recent addition to our board of a now retired magistrate of the Children's Court, Greg Levine — I am sure he will not mind me telling you that — and with the new president, who has now started, when she gets an opportunity to meet with us. We have a very close relationship with the Children's Court, and we see that as important.

In terms of stability I want to also mention, because I did not mention it earlier — and I am sure the Department of Health and Human Services presented some of these things; or maybe they didn't — that for some of these children the drag of the drift on their lives is remarkable. It can be five, six or seven years. They are little children who could have 5 schools, 5 to 10 placements, 5 teachers, 5 caseworkers, 5 foster carers and 5 residential placements. So with this work in this area we will not get it perfect, but addressing it is important, and the work that the department has done, the previous government has done and the new government has done hopefully will lead to improvements for individual children.

Overall on the bill and the reforms, the legislation will be tested on its implementation, and we are encouraged that there will be a review six months following its implementation, in March 2016. How that occurs, whether there needs to be a longer period of time or whether it should start later, we will certainly be working closely

with the Department of Health and Human Services on that review. We look forward to contributing to the implementation and review of these reforms. At the centre we will be looking to see if it will improve stability for children in care, particularly Aboriginal children. If any of you have the opportunity to sit in the Children's Court and watch cases, we will be doing that as part of our interest in seeing how this works. It is a remarkable experience to actually sit there and listen to what is happening to these families and these children. It is probably the only way to do it.

We are encouraged also that there was fairly significant funding announced in this year's state budget. There is funding for Child FIRST and family services; early intervention services that target families before they reach crisis point and prevent them from entering the statutory child protection system and assist families to be reunited where they have been separated to ensure the child's safety; funding to remove barriers to permanent care by funding a team to undertake intensive case planning and support for children in care as they move to permanent care and enabling access to flexible funding to meet the costs of permanent care; and funding to improve the out-of-home care system and additional child protection workers to meet demand. As you can imagine, as a peak body excitement fills the air when there are more resources, and we will all work very hard to make sure we demonstrate the value of those resources in terms of outcomes for children.

In summary, we support this bill and hope that the reforms and funding will bring together change in order to make more timely decisions for children and their best interests. We hope that children's safety, wellbeing and best interests remain paramount in all decisions that we and the child protection system makes for them and that they are in stable placements, wherever that is with their parents, with kin or alternative care. We want children in care to be provided with timely services, which is not always the case now, to address the trauma that they have experienced in their families and to be provided with timely access to prevention and intervention services to ensure children are provided with the care and stability that allows them to meet their full potential. That is my 5 or 10-minute speech. Thank you.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Ms Tsorbaris, for that presentation and again for being here this morning. Could I take you to a couple of comments you made about the term 'drift' and the importance of stability? You also referred to the need for more timely decisions to give certainty. In that sort of context, can I get your feedback on the removal of the two-year time frame for decision-making. Going to your point about the intersection of so many different interests — those of the parents, the children, the state, the siblings and others — what is your view on the removal of the two-year time frame in the context of seeking timely decision-making? Also on the intersection of all those interests, in whose interests is the removal of that two-year time frame — the child, the parent or other stakeholders in the matrix you describe?

Ms TSORBARIS — Mary, would you like to answer? We did think about this while we were listening to the previous presenters.

Ms KYRIOS — I think currently the legislation has some time limits in section 170, and they are based on children's age and development. How I probably see this current bill changing that is that it drives practice a lot more, both by child protection and the Children's Court so that they are better aligned, so that there is not a drift in care or any delays in decision-making.

I think there are also lots of other provisions in legislation — other checks and balances as well — that ensure that decisions are made in children's best interests. There are the best interest principles that are designed not only for child protection but also for the Children's Court and the sector, and that makes us all responsible as the child protection system to make sure we make good decisions for children. I think that will drive decisions for the system and ensure that we are all working in partnership together to make sure that good decisions happen in a timely way, so we do not get that five years, five placements, five schools for the children.

Ms TSORBARIS — One hopes that a time frame does drive decision-making. We can talk two years, three years, but at the end of the day it does give much greater guidance to that, driving decisions — not just child protection, but the courts and the sector to try to get more timely decisions. It is important — and we are happy to provide more information about this — to understand the Victorian context within the globe. These are more moderate provisions than in most other jurisdictions. If we look at New South Wales, they are driving these decisions a lot harder; if you look overseas, they are driving these decisions even harder.

If you look at this in the spectrum of what the world is doing, these are much more moderate provisions than you would see in other places. Nonetheless we do want to see every stakeholder driving its agenda much harder

than we have been. Otherwise I do not know why we are all here, because really decisions around kids are drifting.

The CHAIR — Just to clarify for the record, when you say harder you mean more timely?

Ms TSORBARIS — More timely decision-making. Again, we have taken a child-centric focus in our presentation, because that from our point of view is important. As I said earlier, in such a contested space everybody has a view, but for these children, and some of them are very young, decisions are taking a very long time.

The CHAIR — I will just ask one brief follow-up. I think you may have heard the commissioner for children and young people talk about the 6-month review, and perhaps it will be useful to have a 12-month review, or a review at a subsequent time. Is that something that you would support as well?

Ms TSORBARIS — First of all, we do not know the scope of the review; we do not know what it is going to do. I think there would be a view that it is going to take a little bit of time to see what is going to eventuate in terms of all of our practice, not just the practice of the court. We would be providing advice in due course to the Department of Health and Human Services from our membership's perspective about whether we needed more time or whether we needed to delay the review and do it a bit later. Certainly, we are all focusing on it, so I am sure that many of us will be giving lots of advice about its scope, when it should start, when it should conclude, who should do it and how it should be done. We are not backward in coming forward in terms of providing that sort of advice, but we really do not know at this point what that advice will be.

Ms SPRINGLE — I have a question on this issue of time frames. Given that we heard from the department earlier that the vast majority of cases are dealt with within a 12-month to 2-year period, when we are getting to these cases that go beyond that, we are probably looking at highly traumatised children with very complex needs from very complex backgrounds.

Ms TSORBARIS — Yes.

Ms SPRINGLE — Given that and the fact that we know that the courts are overloaded and overworked and there are not enough resources there — we also know there is a lack of services on the whole, and the VAGO report from last month pointed that our quite clearly — I am curious to know what the evidence base around time limits and the use of a time limit as a mechanism for timely decision-making is. Is it based on an evidence base or is it just an assumption or what is that?

Ms TSORBARIS — I have not got it with me, but over the last 30 years there has been inquiry upon inquiry that gives us some evidence about what is happening for children in the existing court system and what we need to do. We had the Cummins inquiry, as you know. The previous government had a very substantial inquiry in this space and it made lots of recommendations. The changes to legislation mirrored the recommendations of the Cummins inquiry, which is why we have it.

Ms SPRINGLE — Some of them, yes.

Ms TSORBARIS — But prior to the Cummins inquiry we had inquiry after inquiry that actually indicated that we needed to continue to contemporise our legislation. That is the data source; that is the research source. Cummins is where you need to go if you want to look for that evidence.

Ms SPRINGLE — I have just one follow-up. You talked about checks and balances. Could you just outline what they are?

Ms KYRIOS — What I meant was that with the current legislation, section 170, it does not drive the practice. It gives some time lines, but the court orders are not aligned with them. I think what the current bill does is aligns the time lines with the court orders, so that once you get to the end of a court order there is a review about what the next court order should be and how that aligns with these reforms and permanency for children.

Ms SPRINGLE — Yes, great. Thank you for clarifying that.

Ms TSORBARIS — Could I just refer back to the comments about service delivery and what we need to corral around very vulnerable families who, if we do not support them, either cannot be reunified with their children or they lose their children to the system. One of the exciting prospects that we have with a bit more money through Child FIRST and family services is to work with those families that we call ‘heavy users of the system’, who are already on that tipping point of losing their children or us wanting to reunify them. The new money will mean we can identify those families earlier but actually work more intensively with them. So there are some opportunities now with the other reforms that sit around this legislation for the sector to provide advice to the government about how to use that money. We are in those conversations now.

The other thing I would say is that for many birth families, they do need access to drug and alcohol and mental health services. Again, as a sector we will be driving that very hard with government around the question: are those services being brought to bear? The courts are saying these families need them. Are they being brought to bear? Are they in the right place at the right time? Some of the reforms with this legislation mean that we can be very assertive about making sure those resources are brought to bear for birth families. This is not about just removing children. We see this as an opportunity to talk about those families that may lose children or not be able to be reunified. So from our point of view, we see those two lines of effort.

Ms PATTEN — It is very interesting and I am learning a lot. The concerns that have been raised with me are still about the time frames. I appreciate the drift and the notion of five schools, five foster families. The concerns that have been raised with me are about the time limits put on the court’s discretion for family reunification so that they are effectively prohibited from making family reunification orders after two years. Given some of the high needs of some of those very vulnerable families, particularly — as the VAGO report found — in rural areas and places like that, where those services just are not there, are you comfortable with that two-year restriction given to the courts in the 2014 bill?

Ms TSORBARIS — Let us just go back to the VAGO report. Are you talking about the Child FIRST and family services VAGO report; is that what you are referring to?

Ms PATTEN — Yes.

Ms TSORBARIS — We were very happy with those findings. They were followed up with resources beyond the demand quota of 10 per cent. So from our point of view we are celebrating a VAGO report that has responded with more resources than we were asking for as a sector, above 10 per cent, so we need to keep that in mind. We do not want to get into a situation where we are talking about not being able to respond to those things because I think we think we will be able to.

In terms of timeliness, I am not sure there is much else that we can say, because from our point of view we want to drive not only the practice of the court in child protection but our own practice. From where we sit, where we see what happens to birth families not getting decisions they need to have made, where carers cannot get decisions made and the child is sitting in this sort of no-man’s-land, I am not sure how we can do anything unless we set ourselves some parameters. There have always been parameters in this legislation. There have always been periods within which we have had to work.

We would have a view that we actually do need to hold ourselves accountable. None of us are perfect in this space. We would all make different decisions sometimes about particular cases, given what we are then faced with. But I do not know that we can make much more comment about the timeliness.

Ms KYRIOS — I think we just need to take it from a child’s perspective as well. If I was a five-year-old child and I began my care experience at five, how long do I need to wait before I am in a stable home, in a stable school, going to the same GP and the same dentist and having the same friends? How long do I have to wait before the adults around me make decisions? Is two years too short, or too long? I guess we will see that in the review and I think, like Deb said, we need to look at what other jurisdictions are doing, because they are having more stringent time lines than these ones. They are considered more moderate, in comparison.

I think for us in the centre we will be looking to see what is happening in other jurisdictions, what are the outcomes there, what is the research and evidence showing for children, and are we getting better outcomes. Also, for the review that will occur following the implementation, we will be keeping a close eye on it to see what are the unintended consequences, what are the themes that are coming out that maybe we did not anticipate or that we need to perhaps correct with a change in legislation or policy or practice.

Ms TSORBARIS — I suppose our job as a peak body is to have the community understand that there are 7500 of these children in care every night and they are not really a very visible group of people in our community. So our obligation is to make sure that the voices of those children come through. If they were sitting here, they would say, ‘Why didn’t they do something sooner?’. That would be their catchcry. So from our perspective we just all need to work harder and faster and make good and sound decisions based on all of the information we have in front of us.

Ms SYMES — Thanks for being here today. In relation to the bill that is before the Parliament at the moment, can you provide an example of how the courts can use section 276 — I do not know if ‘common’ is the right word, but a common or practical example that you see? Can you tell us why it is important to have this authority? In closing, are you worried about the current bill not passing the Parliament?

Ms KYRIOS — I am not sure I am going to answer your question exactly, because I do not exactly know how the courts will always apply it. They have so many other considerations that they need to weigh up and it is about where they put the most weight within the legislation. We talked about the best interests principles before and there are very many of those, so it is about what weighting you put on all of those. Depending on the weighting they might put on this particular section, it could have the effect where they might not put in a protection order. If you look at it from the child’s perspective, that could mean another delay in making final decisions for children.

The other side of it means that maybe the Children’s Court think there is a service that should be involved that has not been involved yet, or that the child or family are waiting for involvement with, so it might drive that a little bit harder if they do not make the protection order. The other side of it for members of the centre is that it might mean that some of their resources have their uses directed by the Children’s Court and is that always the best thing for them? I do not know. I think either way you need to balance out what are the positives and the negatives and which outweighs which; what is the risk analysis there?

Ms TSORBARIS — In terms of the changes to the bill that have been negotiated with the current government, it is really for the Children’s Court and the government to work that through. From our point of view, not unlike my colleague Andrew Jackomos, we have got to a position with this where we want to get to a point where we can look at what is working, so what reforms are working, is the legislation working, are the new dollars starting to work in the best interests of children? Once we start getting into that space, then we will be able to see what we were unable to know before these changes occurred.

We are presently in conversation with the department of human services around ensuring that everybody understands this legislation. From our perspective, and that is why I have Mary working for me, there has been quite a bit of misinformation about this legislation as well, because it is actually quite complex to get your head around what it really means. We have been working quite hard to make sure that the things that are true and factual are being talked about and the things that are not so are not, or that we are trying to rectify that, because it can become a very heated space.

What happens in that situation, and people forget, is that children and birth families and carers start to panic, and I think it is really important that we do not make it more difficult for them. So from our point of view we are spending a lot of time making sure that people understand the changes and that whatever happens beyond the work of this committee we will continue to take that responsibility really seriously, because the people in this space — the carers, and I know you meet with carers and you meet with birth families in your constituencies — are under a lot of pressure, so we need to make sure that in this environment, with this stuff, that we are all a bit clearer.

Mrs PEULICH — I have three questions, if I may. You mentioned that there was a tipping point for families which may precede the child being placed into care. What are the contributing factors in your experience and from the research that you have seen or the empirical evidence that is available that are existing at that point in time?

Ms TSORBARIS — Mary is an ex-child protection worker, so I might get Mary to give a bit of an overview.

Ms KYRIOS — I think Andrew explained it really nicely before when he talked about some of it is about socio-economic status, some of it is about intergenerational abuse — going from family to family, not having the right resources — —

Mrs PEULICH — Are these underlying causes and drivers?

Ms KYRIOS — I guess from my experience there are families that have different characteristics that might make them more vulnerable, so that might be substance abuse issues, alcohol issues, drug issues, mental health issues, and if those are not being addressed and they are not accessing the right services, then they might impact on their parenting. You talked about family violence before. These are family characteristics that coexist in many families, so you will need to put in intensive services to try and address those so they do not perpetuate in future generations.

Mrs PEULICH — Is that information, is that understanding being captured by the current royal commission, do you think, so they can better inform the recommendations that they make about programs and services that are needed and when they are needed?

Ms TSORABARIS — In the family violence royal commission? Certainly in our submission to the royal commission we have presented all of that information, so the relationship between child protection issues or the need for the children and family violence and the service system, we have certainly captured that in our submission.

Mrs PEULICH — I guess my concern is that it is very hard to make recommendations about what is working well if we do not have an understanding as to the complexities and what sort of programs need to exist to make sure that children can continue to maximise their opportunities to be raised by their natural or biological family or families.

Secondly, you have spoken a lot about how we all need to be accountable, and I could not agree more. Coming from a communist regime, I have this inherent distrust of states and agencies. Whether or not this change proceeds, could you perhaps tease out what sort of indicators we should be looking at as evidence of improvement or success that in actual fact this change in machinery is working? What are the indicators that we should be looking for, we should actually be setting up apart from just attending court? Will it be fewer children? The number of kids who have orders extended? How long it takes for them to get a final decision? Are there other indicators that you would suggest we should be looking at.

Ms KYRIOS — I think there is a continuum of things that we need to be looking at from the beginning of children entering the child protection system right to the end, because these permanent care reforms are really looking at the pointier end where they are entrenched in the child protection system, so we would really like to see Child FIRST diverting families from the child protection system, that once they are entering the child protection system that we are targeting in a timely way services to address the issues that brought them to the attention of child protection. That the children who have experienced abuse and neglect are getting the right services to address their trauma so that they can reach their full potential. I think we will be looking at a lot of different things. The implementation group that the department is setting up will certainly be having some input, whether they will be KPIs they will be looking at — —

Mrs PEULICH — Indicators.

Ms KYRIOS — Or indicators that they will be looking at. We would be looking at what led to this review. So one was Cummins. He said children are taking five years to get to permanent care order and that is not good enough and things need to change, so we would be looking at that as one of those indicators. But I am sure there are going to be lots more indicators. So it might be looking at the continuum not just at the pointier end. I do not know whether you want to add anything, Deb?

Ms TSORBARIS — I think one of the issues that has come up during the course of all of these conversations last year and this year has been about separation of siblings. It is a good example of what Mary talks about. Often it is not really considered, even within the court context. Kids are separated quite a lot for all sorts of reasons, and I am sure my colleagues who are presenting next week will talk about it further, but we should not be waiting until a court order is issued to be talking about keeping siblings together. That seems to be what we do in this world. At the moment we are examining what do the policy guides say and what do the

practice guides say? What is the culture of our service delivery that is meaning that children are being separated? We have older siblings who would be very happy to care for their younger siblings. There is the moral and ethical side of this but also an economic side. We could argue forever about changing the legislation around siblings or we could get on with it and start to change the way we currently operate in a child protection and community services space.

We do not want to delay this. We want this to move forward, because we think there are some things we can all do outside of the legislative framework that would improve things for children, and the siblings one is just one example. We would love to have it in legislation, but from our point of view there are other things we should be doing much earlier.

I did not answer your question. I am really sorry.

Mrs PEULICH — Just on the last point, you mentioned looking at what other jurisdictions are doing. Are you looking at other international jurisdictions?

Ms KYRIOS — Yes, mainly the UK and USA, because they have quite well-documented policies and legislation.

Mrs PEULICH — The reason why I am throwing that in is that obviously we have a growing multicultural component, where the experiences and views of family are very different and the views about accessing services outside the family are very different. There may be a distrust of social workers, psychiatrists and the authorities, so it is not just the Anglo-speaking world but it is others, so we actually need to understand those nuances. For example, Islamic communities have a very strong sense of family. They are concerned about the potential radicalisation of their young people — obviously it is not children, it is young people, but nonetheless some of them are children. With those who are of adult age, their parents are excluded from the dialogue, when in actual fact their families are the ones who can actually impact the most on them. These are things that are embedded in their cultures, so we need to inform ourselves not only about the Anglo-speaking world.

Ms KYRIOS — Absolutely.

Ms TSORBARIS — It is important to acknowledge that the work that has happened in other jurisdictions informed this legislation, so we know that the previous government did look across the globe at the types of legislation that could be implemented when this was brought to the house last year. So we will be looking at whether there are any changes or any new things we want to bring to bear in that review period. But certainly, as has been said earlier, from our understanding this is quite moderate legislation, and again, the changes that Minister Mikakos wants to bring back into the act are moderate. From our observation, that is not a bad place to land.

On a final note, though, from our point of view all of this is going to require really good governance and an improved, cooperative planning process between the courts, the Department of Health and Human Services and ourselves to make sure that these children do get what they need. That is what we are looking for too.

The CHAIR — Ms Tsorbaris and Ms Kyrios, the committee thanks you both for your evidence today and for your preparedness to respond to the questions from the committee, and we thank you for appearing before us at relatively short notice.

Committee adjourned.

