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# Guardian for Children and Young People’s report raises concerns about sex abuse

SA’s system for managing sex abuse allegations has worrying gaps and failings, the Guardian for Children says.

Matt Smith [Follow](#)

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Sometimes it can be hard to tell what’s really going on, but if you’ve seen warning signs of abuse, this is how to intervene.

Serious concerns have been raised about the safety of children in state care, a new report has found.

Guardian for Children and Young People, Penny Wright, said her office has identified troublesome gaps and

failings in the current system of managing allegations of sexual abuse of children and young people in care.

In the report, tabled in state parliament, Ms Wright said the gaps are hindering “the detection and prevention of peer-to-peer harmful sexual behaviours and abuse by others, such as community members, who are not associated with the care environment.”

Ms Wright, pictured, said her office does not receive all information concerning allegations of sexual abuse and does not have the staff resources necessary to fully monitor the scale and true nature of the problem.





Guardian for Children and Young People Penny Wright.

And just as concerning, she said, is that her office does not have the resources to recommend systems improvements and advocate for children who are alleged to have suffered sexual abuse in care.

In response, Child Protection Minister Rachel Sanderson said improving outcomes for the state’s most vulnerable children and young people remains a priority for the Government.

Ms Sanderson provided more than a dozen examples of where the Government had implemented changes to improve the child protection system from increasing the number of foster carers to Catholic Education scholarships and expanding permanency options for children and young people in care with a new policy on adoption.

Opposition child protection spokeswoman Katrine Hilyard said Ms Sanderson must immediately implement the recommendation from the 2014 Child Protection Systems Royal Commission for a community visitor scheme for children and young people in care.

“The report highlights ongoing targeted sexual exploitation of children and young people in care by adults, prompting the Guardian for Children and Young People to call on the Marshall Liberal Government to fund a visitor scheme.

“Despite this, a trial visitor scheme was wound up in September 2019 and no additional funding has been provided despite alarming numbers of children being abused in care.”

Ms Wright’s report said that on June 30 2020 there were 4,263 children and young people under the guardianship of the State through care and protection court orders in SA.



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