



MEDIA RELEASE

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Urgent reforms needed for Aboriginal families in the NSW child protection system

On the 12th anniversary of the Apology to the Stolen Generations, AbSec is drawing attention to the continuing disproportionate impact of government policy on Aboriginal children, families and communities by releasing its annual Report Card on the NSW child protection system.

The Report Card compiles new data released by the Productivity Commission, including the number of Aboriginal children in notifications, investigations, the provision of family support and experiences in out-of-home care (OOHC).

The figures demonstrate that significantly greater effort is needed to address the over-representation of Aboriginal children across the child protection system and meet the needs of Aboriginal children and families, with particular focus on prevention and early intervention to heal Aboriginal families and communities.

The Report Card complements the recent *Family is Culture* review, released in November 2019, which details the experiences of 1,144 Aboriginal children removed from their families between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016. The *Family is Culture* review highlights the need for significant reforms to systems and practice to meet the Government's responsibilities to Aboriginal children and young people, prioritising prevention and early intervention through Aboriginal community-led solutions, and improving transparency and accountability across the system.

"The Report Card shows that much more needs to be done," said Tim Ireland, CEO of AbSec. "Aboriginal children and young people in NSW are still nine times more likely to be in OOHC than their non-Indigenous peers. Aboriginal families continue to face the devastating consequences of being torn apart, with children at risk of losing their connections to kin, Country and culture."

Key findings include

- In 2019, 21,268 Aboriginal children reported at risk of significant harm — **a 33 per cent increase since 2015.**
- In 2019, 6,754 Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC – a 0.18 per cent decrease from 2018, and **an 8.8 per cent increase from 2015.**
- 13.4% of investment is directed to family support, a reduction of almost one per cent compared to last year, and more than four per cent compared to 2015.
- In 2019, 8,076 Aboriginal children in finalised investigations— a 27 per cent decrease since 2015.
- In 2019, 4,047 Aboriginal children in substantiations – a 13.7 per cent decrease since 2015.
- **5.4 per cent decrease** in the number of Aboriginal children placed with Aboriginal family/kin compared to 2015.

AbSec is calling for the NSW Government to join with Aboriginal communities to urgently act on the 125 recommendations provided by the *Family is Culture* report to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people.



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“The *Family Is Culture* review gave us a roadmap to improve the system for Aboriginal children. So far it has been met with silence from this Government,” Tim Ireland said. “The wounds caused by government policy will not heal without a clear commitment and urgent action to implement these reforms in partnership with Aboriginal peoples.”

“There is an urgent need for greater investment in family supports to respond effectively to families experiencing crisis, to keep children safe and to preserve families wherever possible,” said Tim Ireland.

“The NSW Government must commit to equitable investment through an Aboriginal commissioning framework across the child and family system. This means delivering on the Government’s commitment to direct 30 per cent of Targeted Earlier Interventions funding to Aboriginal families through Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and extending this approach across the whole system.”

There is also a need for greater transparency and analysis of the reason behind the contrasting trends regarding the number of Aboriginal children in notifications and investigations, and what this means for the safety, welfare and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people.

“The effects of the policies that characterised the Stolen Generations continue in the contemporary child protection system. AbSec’s goal in releasing this Report Card is to encourage transparency and accountability when it comes to how these systems continue to affect our children and families,” said Tim Ireland.

[Download the AbSec Report Card](#)

[Download the *The Family is Culture: Independent Review into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care in New South Wales*](#)

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