

**Public Accounts and Estimates Committee**  
**Inquiry into the 2021-22 Budget Estimates**  
**18 June 2021**

**PORTFOLIO: CHILD PROTECTION**

**Witnesses:**

- Hon Luke Donnellan MP
- Mr Ben Rimmer
- Mr Argiri Alisandratos
- Ms Janine Toomey
- Mr Andrew Minack

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**QUESTION 1**

**Can I get figures for care placements overall, foster care placements, residential care placements and kinship care placements— identifying how many of those are First Nations children?**

**Mr Hibbins:** On page 204, Budget Paper 3, the actuals of daily numbers of children in care placements overall: can I get figures for care placements overall, foster care placements, residential care placement and kinship care placements – how many of those are First Nations Children?... Can I get the breakdown of that – on notice – if possible for just those individual –

**Mr Donnellan:** I will not have them based on Indigenous; I will have just broadly base figures obviously on kinship, foster, permanent and other things.

*BE Hearing Transcript, p 6*

**Name of Committee member asking questions: Mr Hibbins**

**RESPONSE**

**Answer:**

The daily average number of children in care in 2020-21 year-to-date as at 31 May 2021 is:

Type of care	Aboriginal children	All children	% of Aboriginal
Foster care	432	1,635	26%
Kinship care	1,953	6,949	28%
Residential care	99	456	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,484</b>	<b>9,040</b>	<b>27%</b>

## QUESTION 2

**Have any Victorian community services organisations on the register of community services been advised that their insurance coverage will be affected or notified that their insurance cover will cease that you are aware of?**

**And if there are any that are unable to get insurance, if you become aware in the future, is there a plan to provide any sort of support?**

**Mr Newbury:** ... I know there has been some media recently about insurance companies refusing to cover schools and churches for historic abuse, and it has been reported that organisations in the community sector are being left without insurance cover. Have any Victorian community services organisations on the register of community services been advised that their insurance coverage will be affected or notified that their insurance cover will cease that you are aware of?

**Mr Donnellan:** Not that I am aware of. Just bear with me. I will ask officials just to confirm. Not that we are aware of, no.

**Mr Newbury:** Could I take it on notice if there is?

**Mr Donnellan:** We are happy to take it on notice, yes.

**Mr Newbury:** And if there are any that are unable to get insurance, if you become aware in the future, is there a plan to provide any sort of support?

**Mr Donnellan:** Look, can I come back to you on that? There are allocations within my portfolio for the payout of claims and the like. There is an allocation, but it is managed by justice. So can we come back to you on that?

**Mr Newbury:** I am just looking at BP3, page 46, which is 'Maintaining the foundations of the children and families system', and then on 48, the subsection 'additional funding for the settlement of civil claims for historical institutional'. Do you know, or can you take it on notice, how much that specific subsection is in terms of value, of the total amount on page 46?

**Mr Donnellan:** The total amount? I can—

**Mr Newbury:** No, the total amount is on page 46, but I am saying the subsection on page 48, that dot point I read out, does not break that bigger amount down into each of the dot points.

**Mr Donnellan:** I think we do have figures. Sorry, bear with me. In the 2020–21 budget \$20.8 million has been allocated in 2020–21 to manage and settle civil claims of compensation for abuse suffered by former wards of the state.

***BE Hearing Transcript, pp. 6-7***

**Name of Committee member asking questions: Mr Newbury**

## RESPONSE

### Answer:

1. The department is not aware of any funded agencies that have had their insurance revoked or denied.
2. The vast majority of agencies funded to deliver recurring services by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing are insured under the Victorian Managed Insurance Agency (VMIA) Community Services Organisations Insurance Program which is funded by the department and as a result are not at risk of being denied insurance on the open market.

### QUESTION 3

**What is the total amount allocated under the child protection outputs specifically for Indigenous children?**

**Mr O'Brien:** ... Can I perhaps just get in another data question? I am happy for you to take it on notice if you do not have it. What is the total amount allocated under the child protection outputs specifically for Indigenous children?

**Mr Donnellan:** I probably will not have a figure for that specifically. I am happy to take that on notice.

**Mr O'Brien:** Well, probably to answer the question better, is that figure available? Is it calculable or not?

**Mr Donnellan:** We could give it a go for you.

*BE Hearing Transcript, p. 12*

**Name of Committee member asking question: Mr O'Brien**

### RESPONSE

**Answer:**

Total funding to ACCOs under the Child Protection & Family Services output was \$117.9 million in 2020-21. This figure does not include services delivered to Aboriginal children and families internally by the department or by mainstream providers.

## QUESTION 4

Can you provide how the department's performance will be measured when it comes to a few issues:

1. reducing the number of Indigenous children in out-of-home care;
2. reunifying Indigenous children with their families where safe; and,
3. measuring the responsiveness of the department to support young Indigenous and children and keep them safe in Victoria

**Mr O'Brien:** ... So just I wonder whether you can provide how the department's performance will be measured when it comes to a few issues: one, reducing the number of Indigenous children in out-of-home care; two, reunifying Indigenous children with their families where safe; and, three, measuring the responsiveness of the department to support young Indigenous and children and keep them safe in Victoria—which is, with a minute ago, a lot of questions. I am happy for you to take them on notice, but I guess what we are looking for is: what will success look like? How will we actually know that you have made a difference?

**Mr Donnellan:** I am happy to take that on notice, but I will say that the Australian institute of health report also found that we have the lowest rate of entries into out-of-home care across the board, including Indigenous children, at 6.3 per thousand compared to the national average of 8.1 per thousand.

*BE Hearing Transcript, p. 13*

Name of Committee member asking questions: Mr O'Brien

## RESPONSE

**Answer:**

Victoria has signed the Closing the Gap National Agreement which now includes a target to reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal children in Care by 45 per cent by 2031. The current Closing the Gap National Agreement was established in July 2020 and Victoria's performance is monitored by the Department of Premier and Cabinet in conjunction with the Aboriginal Executive Council.

The department's performance in reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care including through reunification to their families is supported through a range of nation leading initiatives:

- Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program, which transfers delegation of Aboriginal on a final protection order from the Secretary to an authorised Aboriginal agency. A recent evaluation of ACAC found that Aboriginal children within the ACAC program are being reunified with their parent/s faster.
- The Aboriginal Family Preservation and Reunification Response is a new initiative that uses contemporary, evidence-based approaches to support families to remain together safely and prevent children entering care, in addition to providing intensive reunification support so that children in care can safely return home. The expansion of the model in 2021-22 will enable

an Aboriginal-led Response to operate in all 17 departmental areas, supported by an Aboriginal-led implementation and operating model. At present, Aboriginal children and families account for a third of all referrals into the program.

There are two BP3 measures that relate to supporting Aboriginal children and young people and keeping them safe:

- Number of family services cases provided to Aboriginal families
- Proportion of Aboriginal children placed with relatives/kin, other Aboriginal carers or in Aboriginal residential care

The 2020-21 expected outcomes meet the targets set.

