

MEDIA RELEASE

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Better data needed for Tasmanian Out-of-Home Care System

The Commissioner for Children and Young People has called for greater transparency on the release of her latest out-of-home care report, [Monitoring Report No. 2: Key Data on Tasmania's Out-Of-Home Care System, 2020-2021](#).

“Despite significant public interest in the Tasmanian out-of-home care system, there is a concerning lack of transparency regarding its operation,” Ms McLean said.

“As part of my broader monitoring activities, I have the great privilege of meeting with and listening to the views of children and young people with a care experience, and the many individuals who work tirelessly to support them.

“However, effective monitoring also requires access to accurate and timely data on our out-of-home care system.

“While national reporting bodies publish some Tasmanian data on our out-of-home care system, the system remains largely opaque. This limits effective system oversight and raises questions about how our government is meeting its financial and social obligations to care for our most vulnerable children.”

Ms McLean said she had encountered several issues in writing and releasing this report which covers data for the reporting period 2020-2021.

“These included lengthy delays in receiving data from the data custodian, formerly the Department of Communities and now the Department for Education, Children and Young People.

“There were also lengthy delays in obtaining permission from the data custodian to publish previously unpublished data. In addition, unforeseen issues with the quality of the data required time to resolve.”

Ms McLean remains committed to improving the transparency of Tasmania's out-of-home care system and she has commenced work to publish an updated report on data for 2022.

“Without a clear picture of how the out-of-home care system is functioning and how children and young people who come into care are faring, it is not possible to accurately identify how the



system can be improved – nor can the safety of children in care be guaranteed,” said Ms McLean.

“While the lack of transparency is of great concern, this by no means detracts from the excellent work being performed by many committed people in the system, including carers, departmental staff and many others.”

The report describes some of the key characteristics of the Tasmanian Out-of-Home Care system and provides data about the experiences of children and young people in care for 2020-2021.

Key data insights include:

- On 30 June 2021, there were 1077 children in the Tasmanian Out-of-Home Care system. This means that Tasmania had the third highest rate of children in care among all Australian states and territories for this period.
- There is an increasing and persistent over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Tasmania’s out-of-home care system, posing a significant challenge to Tasmania meeting its commitment to reduce the rate of over-representation under the Closing the Gap Agreement.
- Pleasingly, there has been a dramatic decrease in the proportion of children and young people in care with an unknown Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status. However, the lack of available and detailed data about the placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care means that it is not possible to determine the extent to which children are being placed in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.
- There is a lack of detailed data about the care experience of children and young people with disability. Data indicate that at least one in every five children living in care in Tasmania has a ‘stated disability’. However, issues with data quality mean that the true extent of children with disability in the system is unknown.
- There were fewer active foster care households in 2020-2021. Any decline in the total number of foster care households is a concern, particularly as Tasmania had the second largest proportion of foster care households with five or more children in care during this period nationally.
- Expenditure data indicates a fall in investment in the out-of-home system.

Accurate data about the numbers of children and young people in care for whom individualised care planning has taken place, and the numbers of children who have been visited within appropriate timeframes is not available. This needs to be addressed urgently.

“Supporting children to participate and to have a say in matters that affect them contributes to their safety in out-of-home care.”

The report can be viewed at <https://ccyp.me/DataReport2OOHC>

