

SA NEWS

# Aboriginal children in SA 32 times more likely to end up in detention

**Aboriginal children and young people make up less than five per cent of SA's total child population but new figures show they are majorly over-represented in care and youth detention systems.**

Rebecca DiGirolamo, The Advertiser

Subscriber only | May 13, 2020 10:01pm

The “worsening” proportion of South Australian Aboriginal children in care and detention – 32 times more likely than non-Aboriginal kids – has been described as “appalling” and a “failure” of the system.

An annual report highlighting the state of Aboriginal children in care and in youth justice by Guardian for Children and Young People and Training Centre Visitor Penny Wright was tabled in state parliament yesterday.

Ms Wright said an Aboriginal child in SA was 32 times more likely to end up in youth detention than a child who was not Aboriginal.

“Aboriginal children and young people make up less than five per cent of the state’s total population of children ... yet they make up one third of those in care, and 60 per cent of those detained,” she said. “This is appalling.”

SA Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People April Lawrie said many Aboriginal children were being “unnecessarily removed” from home and placed with non-Aboriginal care providers.

She said the report highlighted the “failure of the Child Protection system’s” adherence to, and application of, placing Aboriginal children in the care of family and community or those with the same cultural background.

Opposition spokeswoman Jayne Stinson said the rate of Aboriginal children in care and detention was “a source of horrible shame” for SA and was “simply not good enough”.

Child Protection Minister Rachel Sanderson said the government was working with Aboriginal services and communities to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children and youth in care.

Human Services Minister Michelle Lensink said the number of Aboriginal youth in detention had declined to a five-year low and work was being done to connect youth in detention to culture and community, education and employment.

Government initiatives to specifically reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care include a \$2.2 million intensive family support program run by an Aboriginal community-

controlled organisation in Adelaide’s West.

The report’s key findings included:

- 34 per cent of children in care are Aboriginal
- Aboriginal children in care increased from 49/1000 SA children in 2014/15 to 76.7/1000 in 2018/19
- This compares with an increase of non-Aboriginal children in care from 5.6/1000 to 7.4/1000 over the same period
- 48 per cent of those Aboriginal children in care are not living with carers of the same cultural background.
- in 2018/19 there were 22.3 Aboriginal youth aged 10-17 /1000 young people in detention compared to 0.7/1000 for non-Aboriginal youth



SA Guardian for Children and Young People Penny Wright.

are Aboriginal, despite the number of Aboriginal children being detained at its lowest since 2014-15.



📷 April Lawrie, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People. Picture: Tricia Watkinson