

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Edgington to the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Family and Sexual Violence:

Children with Substantiations Associated with Domestic or Family Violence

In 2022/23 Budget Paper 3, page 158, the KPI for the number of unique children with substantiations associated with domestic or family violence was 820 in 2021/22, the estimate for 2021/22 was 895, and the KPI in 2022/23 is 1 000. Note 10 on the same page states that the increase is due to “improved domestic and family violence practices through implementation of the Safe and Together model, as more people are reporting incidents due to ease of reporting. The department is also better able to identify where domestic violence is a factor through integration of the improved practices.”

1. Please provide a more detailed explanation of this note? Does this indicate that prior to the “improved practices” domestic violence against children was under-reported or under-substantiated?

Answer:

The Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (the Department) has invested in staff training and development through the implementation of the Safe and Together Model (‘the Model’) in assessing and working with domestic and family violence. The Model has increased workers understanding and identification of coercive control and how a perpetrator’s pattern of behaviours over time is understood from a domestic and family violence (DFV) standpoint and how it impacts on children and family functioning.

This improved awareness and skills in identifying perpetrator patterns of coercive control has brought greater depth to child protection assessment that in turn, has resulted in DFV being identified as the cause of the child abuse concern.

As an example, in the past, an investigation may have been substantiated for neglect in the absence of a DFV report. However, there is now an improved understanding of assessing coercive control and other factors that impact on a non-offending parent’s ability to parent appropriately, enabling identifying the ‘root cause’ of neglect.

The Department continues to provide training in the Safe and Together Model across the Department, to partner agencies and to non-government service providers. Participation in this training will see a growing awareness of coercive control, assessments using a greater understanding of perpetrator-pattern behaviour, which will support better outcomes for children and families.