



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 271

WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Minister for Child Protection, Hon Robyn Cahill OAM MLA:

Out of Home Care: Costs and Kinship Care

1. How many children are currently in purchased home-based care?
 - a. If length of stay in purchased home-based care is not compiled, in which system is placement start and end date recorded, and in what format?
2. What is the average length of stay in purchased home-based care?
3. What is the Government's plan to transition children into foster, kinship or other stable long-term care arrangements?
4. Is there commitment in this budget to an independent monitoring mechanism for child removal, identified by the Productivity Commission as critical to closing the gap?
 - a. How much has been allocated for the coming 12 months, and for ensuing years?
5. Demographic information for some children in purchased home-based care is unknown. How many children does this affect, and why does the Department not hold this information?
 - a. Where a figure is too small to report, please provide the Territory-wide total.
6. Please provide a cost comparison of the current delivery models of out-of-home care for a 5-year-old child with no complexity issues, comparing purchased home-based care with placement with an authorised departmental carer:
 - a. annual cost; and
 - b. weekly cost.

7. The answer to Written Question No. 139 of the 15th Assembly reported 783 children in out-of-home care identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander as at 31 March 2025. Across the out-of-home care budget:
- a. How many children are currently in care across the Northern Territory, and how many identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?
 - b. How many are placed with purchased home-based carers, and what is the total annualised cost of those placements?
 - c. How many are placed with authorised departmental carers, and what is the total cost of that stream?
 - d. Please state whether each figure counts unique children by active placement or counts placements.
 - e. If the cost of a placement is not recorded against the individual placement, at what level is it recorded — provider contract, region, or care type?
 - f. Where a figure for an individual region, service or category is too small to report, please provide the Territory-wide total.
8. The answer to Written Question No. 593 of the 14th Assembly recorded that from the 2023-24 budget \$34.9 million went to purchased home based care, \$4.1 million to kinship care services, \$8.3 million to foster care services and \$1.1 million to the Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT. The same answer recorded that as at 31 May 2023 there were 359 children in purchased home-based care at an average total cost of \$255 per child per day, 219 children in kinship care and 385 in foster care. The answer to Written Question No. 730 recorded that in 2024-25 \$40.2 million was apportioned to purchased home based care, and that at 31 March 2024 there were 390 children in purchased home-based care and 58 children living with kinship carers.
- a. Please provide the same figures for 2025-26 and 2026-27 — the amount budgeted for purchased home-based care, for kinship care services and for foster care services, stated separately.
 - b. Written Question No. 593 reported kinship care services and foster care services as separate amounts. Written Question No. 730 reported a single combined figure for "Kinship and Foster Carer Allowances". On what date, and on whose decision, did the Department stop reporting those two amounts separately?
 - c. The number of children living with kinship carers is recorded as 219 at 31 May 2023 and 58 at 31 March 2024. Is that fall correct as reported? If it is, what caused it. If the two figures are counted

on different bases, please state each basis and provide both figures on a consistent basis for each year since 2022-23.

- d. Over the same period the number of children in purchased home-based care is recorded as rising from 359 to 390. What is the current number, and the current average total cost per child per day?
 - e. Written Question No. 593 quoted the 2018-19 Transforming Out of Home Care report that "purchased home-based care will be phased-out in preference for family/kin and foster care". Is that commitment still Government policy? If it is, by what date is the phase-out to be complete. If it is not, on what date and by what decision was it abandoned?
 - f. Has the Department modelled the cost of expanding kinship care in place of purchased home-based care? If so, can that modelling be provided?
 - g. How does the Department reconcile the difference between those two funding streams with the rates of harm recorded in each?
9. The Department states that maintaining an Aboriginal child's connection to family and culture is a central priority in out-of-home care.
- a. How is this implemented in practice across the regions?
 - b. What specific funding is allocated in this budget to Aboriginal carer services?
10. Please provide a breakdown of the full-time equivalent staffing assigned to the Carer Services Team in each regional office, as a table.
11. What specific financial and programmatic resources is the Department providing for carer training in this budget cycle?
12. On compliance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle in remote areas:
- a. Which remote areas or communities are currently not covered by an Aboriginal carer services contract?
 - b. What targeted strategies, cultural mapping or community outreach is the Department using in those areas to identify and support kinship carers to become authorised carers?