



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 261

WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Minister for Children and Families, Hon Robyn Cahill OAM MLA:

Aboriginal Workforce, Advisory Structures and Carers

1. Who is the head of the Aboriginal Advisory Group?

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV) Aboriginal Advisory Group membership has not yet been finalised. Membership details will be published following completion of the appointment process.

2. The Department has established an Aboriginal Cultural Security Leadership Committee to embed Aboriginal voices in decision-making. Can the Minister provide the current membership of the committee?

Aboriginal Cultural Security Leadership Committee membership is still being finalised from within the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

3. What mechanisms ensure the committee has direct input into budget allocations?

While there is no formal mechanism for the Committee to provide direct input into DCF budget allocations, the Committee has a representative on DCF's Executive Leadership Board (ELB) and Finance Committee where financial and budget matters are discussed.

a. Please list the dates of opportunities for that input.

The DCF ELB and Finance Committee meets monthly.

4. The Department is pursuing workforce reforms to address staff shortages and attract Aboriginal personnel. What are the specific recruitment targets for the upcoming financial year?

There are no specific annual recruitment targets in place, however DCF's Workforce Strategy Implementation Plan 2025-2029 includes success measures providing a baseline of 24.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the DCF workforce and 12% in DCF leadership positions.

- a. **What budget measures are in place to ensure those targets are met?**

There are no specific budget measures in place.

- b. **If recruitment targets for Aboriginal personnel are not set as a number, in which document is the workforce target expressed, and how is progress against it measured?**

Recruitment, career progression and leadership development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is embedded in DCF's Workforce Strategy 2025-2029 (the Strategy). Documents to support the Strategy include the Special Measures Recruitment Plan 2026-2030 and the Workforce Strategy Implementation Plan 2025-2029 (the Implementation Plan).

The Implementation Plan includes success measures which provide a baseline of 24.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the DCF workforce and 12% in DCF leadership positions. The data is reviewed monthly by the Workforce Committee and Executive Leadership Board, with progress against the success measures to be reported annually.

5. **The answer to Written Question No. 139 of the 15th Assembly reported that, as at 31 March 2025, of 783 children in out-of-home care who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 177 (23 per cent) were placed with an Aboriginal carer household and 606 (77 per cent) with a non-Aboriginal carer household. What are the equivalent figures at the most recent reporting date?**

As of 30 June 2026, of the 764 children in out-of-home care (OOHC) who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 172 (23 per cent) were placed with an Aboriginal carer household and 592 (77 per cent) with a non-Aboriginal carer household.

Children in OOHC who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Time Period	31 March 2025	30 June 2026
Placed with Aboriginal carer household	177 (23%)	172 (23%)
Not placed with Aboriginal carer household	606 (77%)	592 (77%)
Total Aboriginal children in care	783	764

- a. What specific programs are funded in the 2026–27 Budget to increase the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal carers? Please list each program and the funding directed to it.**

In 2026-27, the carer services and support program provides \$2.7 million in grant funding to Aboriginal Carer Services (ACS) providers and Foster and Kinship Carers Association NT (FKANT) for carer recruitment, education, training, carer support, and recruitment and retention of Aboriginal carers.

- b. That answer also recorded that data provided for the Estimates Hearings reported 224 (29 per cent) of children placed with an Aboriginal carer as a key performance indicator and attributed the variance to children having multiple placements. Which basis — unique children by active placement, or placements — is used for the published key performance indicator?**

The 2025 Estimates Hearings Hansard records that as of 31 March 2026, DCF reported 27% of Aboriginal children in OOHC placed with an Aboriginal carer.

This was based on the percentage of the unique number of Aboriginal children in care as of 31 March 2026 who had at least one placement with Aboriginal carer during the reporting period. This accounts for children who had multiple placements and active placements within the reporting period.

Published annual reporting, aligned with national reporting, is based on the % of Aboriginal children currently in care who were placed with an Aboriginal carer in a placement that was active as at the reporting date. This approach provides a more accurate point-in-time measure.

- c. Please provide the current figure on both bases.**

As of 30 June 2026, 764 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were in OOHC:

- 25% of Aboriginal children in care had at least one placement with an Aboriginal carer during the reporting period 1 July to 30 June 2026.
- 23% of Aboriginal children in care were placed with an Aboriginal carer in a placement that was active as of 30 June 2026.

- d. Has the key performance indicator been reported on the same basis in each year it has been published? If the basis has changed, in which year and why?**

The intent of the KPI measure has not changed: to report the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC who are placed with an Aboriginal carer household.

- e. **Budget Paper No. 3 reports 27 per cent for 2025–26. That is a third figure alongside the 23 per cent in the answer to Written Question No. 139 and the 29 per cent provided to the Estimates Hearings. Please reconcile all three, stating for each the basis of calculation and the reporting date.**

Data provided for 31 March 2026 reported 27% based on the percentage of unique number of Aboriginal children in care as of 31 March 2026 who had at least one placement with Aboriginal carer during the reporting period. This is consistent with Budget Paper No.3 (BP3) estimated projections for 2025-26.

Written question 139 reported that 23% of Aboriginal children in care were placed with an Aboriginal carer in a placement that was active as of 31 March 2026 (point-in-time measure).

6. **Budget Paper No. 3 for 2026–27 reports the measure “Aboriginal children in out of home care placed with an Aboriginal carer” at 27 per cent for 2025–26 against a target of at least 35 per cent and retains the target of at least 35 per cent for 2026–27. Note 5 to that measure states: “The variation in 2025-26 is due to not capturing carers’ demographic information for purchased home-based care placements.”**

- a. **How many Aboriginal children were in purchased home-based care placements at 30 June 2026?**

There were 407 Aboriginal children in Purchased Home-Based Care (PHBC) placements as of 30 June 2026.

- b. **For how many children in out of home care is the carer's Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status not recorded?**

For the 764 Aboriginal children in care as of 30 June 2026, there were 222 children who had no Indigenous Status recorded for their current carers. This represented 29% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC.

Of the 407 Aboriginal children in PHBC, there were 102 who had no Indigenous Status recorded for the current carers.

- c. **Is the figure of 27 per cent calculated across all placements, or only across those for which carer demographic information is captured? Please state the numerator and the denominator.**

The numerator is total unique Aboriginal children in care placed with an Aboriginal carer (at least one carer in the household identifies as Aboriginal) in a placement that was active as of 30 June 2026.

The denominator is total unique Aboriginal children in care as of 30 June 2026.

The 27% reported in BP3 was the projected 2025-26 result based on monthly results available at the time.

The calculation included all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within the measure, including those whose carers did not have an Indigenous status recorded.

- d. If placements for which carer status is not recorded were counted as placements with a non-Aboriginal carer, what would the figure be?**

Placements where the carer's Indigenous status was not recorded were already included within the population used to calculate the reported result.

- e. On what date did the Department become aware that carer demographic information was not being captured for purchased home-based care placements, and what has been done since?**

A specific date that DCF became aware is unable to be identified.

Demographic information for some existing PHBC carers may be incomplete where records were established in legacy systems prior to migration to CARE. DCF is working with providers to update records and improve the completeness of carer demographic information in CARE.

- f. Do funding agreements or contracts with purchased home-based care providers require carer demographic information to be reported to the Department? If not, why not, and will they be amended?**

PHBC providers collect demographic information through their contractual arrangements with individual carers. This information is provided to DCF when new carers are engaged.

- g. How is the Territory's performance against the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle reported under Closing the Gap where this information is not captured?**

DCF contributes to a range of public reporting across Productivity Commission and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) which includes performance measures aligned to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.