



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 263

WRITTEN QUESTION

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

Children in Care: Safety and Reunification

1. How many children experienced abuse while in care in 2025–26?
 - a. How is the Department working to reduce this?
 - b. If the Department does not record a category of abuse occurring while a child is in care, please provide the number of substantiated notifications in 2025–26 in which the child was in the care of the Chief Executive Officer at the time of the incident, and state the record type from which that figure is drawn.
2. How does the Department monitor how many families are failing to meet child protection requirements because of circumstances beyond their control — in general, and specifically:
 - a. through homelessness; and
 - b. through being on the public housing waiting list?
 - c. If the Department does not monitor that, what record would show a family unable to meet a requirement for reasons beyond its control, and where is it held?
3. How many families involved with the Department were awaiting access to other essential services, specifically:
 - a. rehabilitation;
 - b. disability;
 - c. mental health; and
 - d. other support services?
 - e. If waiting for another service is not recorded against a family's child protection record, please state which agency holds each

record, whether the two can be linked, and what would be required to link them.

4. What guidance is provided to staff on distinguishing child safety concerns from issues arising primarily from poverty, housing stress, disability or remoteness?
5. What service gaps were identified in remote communities in 2025–26, and what action was taken to address them?
 - a. Please list by community, with the action taken.
6. What supports were available to families where housing stress, financial hardship or service access challenges affected child wellbeing?
7. What guidance, training materials or operational instructions are in place for caseworkers regarding placement decisions involving Aboriginal children?
8. How does the Department assess the consistency of its child protection policies and practices with Closing the Gap commitments on shared decision-making and Aboriginal participation?
 - a. How many partnerships are strategic, and how many are decision-making?
 - b. Where a figure for an individual region, service or category is too small to report, please provide the Territory-wide total.
9. How many children were reunified with their families in 2025–26?
10. What are the most common barriers to successful reunification the Department has identified?
11. What work was undertaken to address service access barriers that may affect reunification outcomes?
12. Budget Paper No. 3 for 2026–27 reports children entering out of home care at 159 for 2025–26 against a target of no more than 150, attributing the variation to “children entering care on provisional and temporary protection orders”, and reports children exiting out of home care at 190 against a target of at least 180. Both targets are unchanged for 2026–27.
 - a. How many children entered care on a provisional or temporary protection order in each of the three years to 2025–26, and how many of those orders were subsequently confirmed, revoked or allowed to lapse?

- b. Of the 190 children who exited care in 2025–26, how many exited to reunification with family, how many to permanent care orders, how many aged out, and how many exited to another arrangement?
- c. How many children who exited care in each of the three years to 2025–26 re-entered care within twelve months?
- d. Where a figure in any category is too small to report, please provide the Territory-wide total.