



Australian Government

**Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare**

Child protection Australia 2017–18

Appendixes C to E

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
Canberra

Cat. no. CWS 65

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Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CP NMDS	Child Protection National Minimum Data Set
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
Qld	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
Tas	Tasmania
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

Symbols

0	zero
—	rounded to zero
..	not applicable
n.a.	not available
n.p.	not publishable because of small numbers, confidentiality or other concerns about the quality of the data

Appendix C: Policy and practice differences in states and territories

Action plans under the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* identify specific actions, responsibilities and timeframes for implementation. The second 3-year Action Plan (2012–2015) highlighted as an action, under the 'Enhancing the evidence base' national priority, a continued focus on improved consistency and quality of the national data (FaHCSIA 2012). Further expanding on the evidence base and developing progress targets continued to be a focus in the third action plan (2015–2018) (DSS 2015b).

The National Child Protection Data Collection is based on administrative data provided by state and territory departments responsible for child protection, according to a set of agreed technical specifications. The aggregation of jurisdictional data into a national collection assumes the technical specifications are followed and the same definitions are applied in all jurisdictions. However, different policies and practices in jurisdictions, largely predating the national collection, influence the collection of administrative data. Limited specificity in the technical specifications and different interpretation and application in data collection and reporting have had a further impact on national comparability.

The implementation of the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set (CP NMDS) for reporting from 2012–13 has reduced some of the different interpretation of the technical specifications. This was primarily achieved through the application by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) of nationally agreed rules and methods in the compilation and analysis of the data (AIHW 2014a). However, key policy and practice differences continue to have an impact on the comparability of the national child protection data, including differences in the:

- use of agency-defined and caller-defined approaches to recording notifications
- thresholds used for risk assessment practices
- treatment of multiple notifications and overlapping investigations
- treatment of cases for unborn children, abuse in care, non-familial maltreatment and where there is no suitable caregiver
- care and protection orders issued, particularly for interim and temporary orders
- scope of out-of-home care
- reporting types of out-of-home care placements.

Many of these differences relate to substantive jurisdictional legislation, policies and practices that may prevent consistency being achieved in the short term. Ongoing work is required to improve these identified national comparability issues.

C.1 Notifications, investigations and substantiations

Although specifications for notifications, investigations and substantiations have been agreed for national reporting, there are numerous and related differences in jurisdiction policy/practice that can influence the data reported. Differences in the initial count of notifications have a flow-on effect on other data, including the number of investigations, substantiations, and substantiations per child.

C.1.1 Initial assessment of reports made to departments

The national specifications for notifications specifically exclude reports about wider concerns about children or families that are classified as child concern reports. However, there are different policies and practices used by states and territories for assessing whether these reports are recorded as notifications, which can result in reporting of child concern reports as a notification. These differences are broadly grouped into 2 categories—caller-defined and agency-defined notifications—with some variations within these 2 categories that need to be better understood in order to accurately assess national data comparability issues.

Agency-defined versus caller-defined notifications

Notifications are agency-defined in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory (Figure C1). These jurisdictions undertake threshold assessment processes at the time a report is made, and a notification is recorded only when the information received suggests that a child needs care or protection. Note, as per the national definition of notifications, child concern reports are excluded. There are differences in the threshold assessment process used by these jurisdictions. For example, New South Wales and Queensland employ a ‘risk of significant harm’ (ROSH) threshold, while other jurisdictions assess risk of harm only (see further information in the following section ‘Threshold differences for risk assessment’).

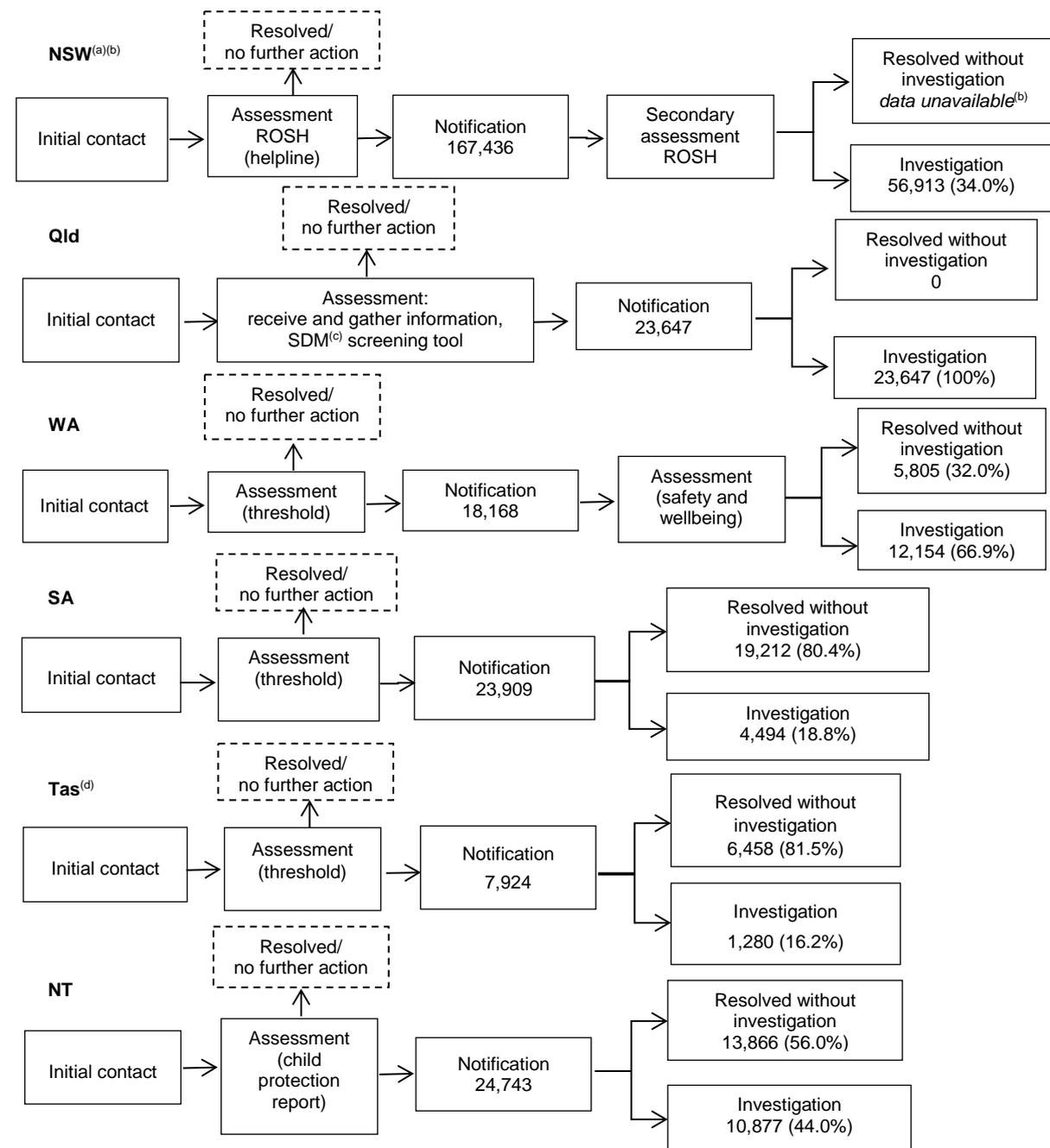
During 2015–16, the recording of notifications in Tasmania changed from caller-defined to agency-defined for local and national reporting purposes (Figure D1). In line with national specifications, child concern reports—as per section 17(2)(a) of the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* (Tas)—have been excluded from counts of notifications from February 2016. This resulted in a fall in the number of notifications recorded for Tasmania in 2015–16 compared with previous years with the change taking full effect from 2016–17.

In Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, notifications are caller-defined; that is, all initial contacts regarding concerns for children are recorded as notifications (Figure C2).

Caller-defined notifications are not comparable with agency-defined notifications due to the different assessment processes applied (that is, assessment occurs either before a notification is recorded in the case of agency-defined notifications, or after a notification is recorded in the case of caller-defined notifications). This may result in higher levels of notifications being recorded in jurisdictions where all reports, including those classified by other jurisdictions as child concern reports, are recorded as notifications.

The effect of this is evident when reporting on the number of notifications received and the type of action taken on them in the relevant reporting period. Table S5 shows that the percentage of notifications resolved without investigation was 63% across jurisdictions. However, this varied from 0% in Queensland (where the policy is to investigate all notifications) to 84% in the Australian Capital Territory. As per the national specifications, child concern reports are excluded from the count of notifications by jurisdictions with an agency-defined approach.

Figure C1: Agency-defined notifications, assessment and investigations 2017–18



(a) For 2017–18, NSW data for 'Investigations' and 'Dealt with by other means' are not comparable to data published previously. 'Investigations' counts changed to only include field assessments. All office-based assessments are now included in the category 'Dealt with by other means'.

(b) NSW has implemented a new client management system in 2017–18 and has provided limited data. NSW is working to improve quality and completeness of data for future reporting.

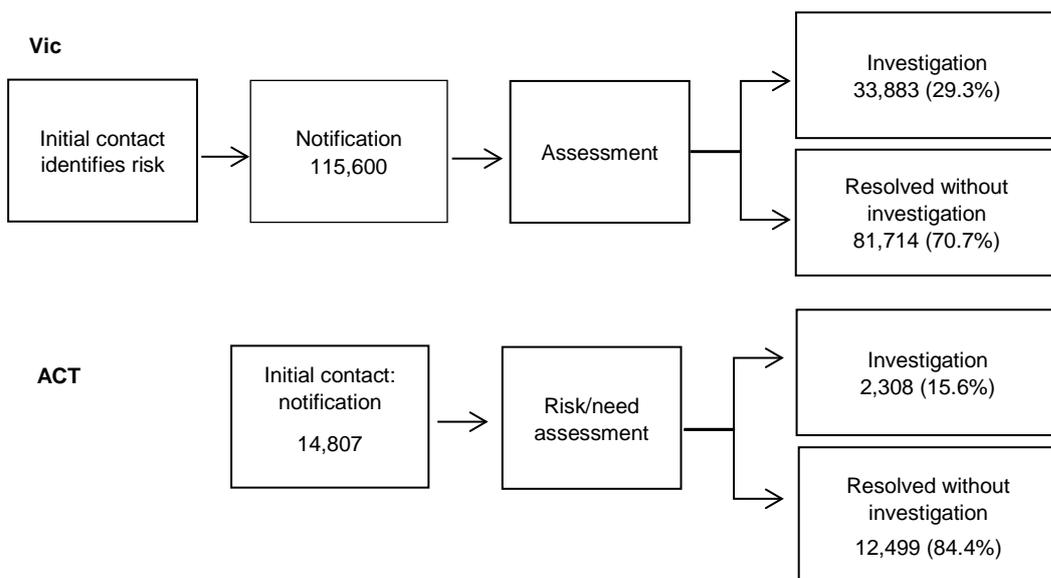
(c) SDM stands for Structured Decision Making.

(d) From February 2016, notifications in Tasmania finalised under section 17(2)(a) of the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* (Tas) were classified as a child concern report, and were excluded from counts of notifications for the purpose of national reporting. From 2016–17 onwards, counts for the number of notifications are not comparable to previous years.

Note: For some jurisdictions, the categories 'Resolved without investigation' and 'Investigation' do not sum to the total number of notifications as notifications in process have not been included in this figure.

Source: Table S5.

Figure C2: Caller-defined notifications, assessment and investigations 2017–18



Note: For some jurisdictions, the categories 'Resolved without investigation' and 'Investigation' do not sum to the total number of notifications as notifications in process have not been included in this figure.

Source: Table S5.

Threshold differences for risk assessment

'Threshold differences' have been acknowledged as having an impact on national data comparability. For example, *Child protection Australia 2017–18* includes the following statement:

Thresholds for what is substantiated vary—some jurisdictions substantiate the harm, or risk of harm, to the child, and others substantiate actions by parents, or incidents that might cause harm. In considering harm to the child, the focus of the child protection systems in many jurisdictions has shifted away from the actions of parents to the outcomes for the child.

The differences across jurisdictions and, in particular, how these affect the counts of notifications and substantiations, are difficult to identify and explain. All jurisdictions are required to assess the risk of harm and prioritise cases accordingly. Although there are tools to assist child protection staff to assess risk, there is a level of professional judgment applied by staff when assessing risk.

From the available information, it is difficult to assess what thresholds are being applied across jurisdictions and the impact on national reporting. What is clear is that there are differences in national reporting because of some key differences. For example, New South Wales and Queensland employ a risk of significant harm (ROSH) threshold to all child concern reports while others assess risk of harm only. The process used in New South Wales and Queensland screens out child concern reports but may also screen out reports that other jurisdictions, applying a lower threshold (for example, risk of harm), would include as a notification. While most jurisdictions substantiate harm in terms of the outcomes for the child, some jurisdictions substantiate the actions/inactions of the parents.

Differences also exist across jurisdictions for counts of investigations. For example, New South Wales in 2017–18, changed counts for investigation to include only field assessments, while all office-based assessments were counted as ‘dealt with by other means’. Data for New South Wales are therefore not comparable to previous years, and comparisons to other jurisdictions should be made with care.

There are also differences in the available responses that can be taken based on the information received as part of child concern reports, notifications or investigations. Within the child protection system, there is a layering of risk, with suitable programs in place to support families and protect children, depending on this risk. At any point in the child protection process, children and their families may be referred to family support services which may be used instead of, or as a complementary service to, a statutory child protection response. For example, a service may provide parenting and household skills development, therapeutic care and family reunification services.

C.1.2 Recording multiple notifications and overlapping investigations

Differences in the number of substantiations recorded per child may reflect how jurisdictions record information about events such as notifications, investigations and substantiations. Table S8 indicates that while most jurisdictions had 1–2 substantiations per child, the Australian Capital Territory, had higher proportions of children with 4 or more substantiations.

The national specifications indicate that:

Where there is more than 1 notification about the same ‘event’ involving a child, this is counted as 1 notification. Where there is more than 1 notification between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018, but relating to different events, these are counted as separate notifications.

Table C1 summarises the differences between states and territories in how incoming notifications and investigations that overlap with other cases (that is, notifications or investigations depending on the status of the preceding notification) are recorded.

Operational practices mean that if a new notification is received while another case is open:

- it is counted as a new notification (New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory)
- it is not separately recorded but is included as additional notes to be dealt with by open cases (Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania).

In the Northern Territory, subsequent reports of the same harm to a child are linked to an existing notification where there is an open child protection investigation. If a different harm type is reported, it is recorded as a new notification.

Table C1: Recording incoming notifications that overlap with other cases, states and territories

Jurisdiction	New notification recorded	Notification linked to open cases
NSW	✓	x
Vic	x	✓
Qld	x	✓
WA	✓	x
SA	x	✓
Tas	x	✓
ACT	✓	x
NT	✓	✓

✓ Indicates overlapping notifications are recorded as per the description for the relevant category.

x Indicates overlapping notifications are not recorded as per the description for the relevant category.

Although there is variation between states and territories in how overlapping cases are reported in the national data, 'on the ground' they would be treated as a single investigation. When multiple notifications are 'rolled up' into the same investigation but are recorded separately in the data, this will result in comparatively higher counts of notifications, investigations and substantiations. Conversely, linking new notifications to open cases has the effect of decreasing the number of notifications, investigations and substantiations recorded.

Analysis of the extent of the overlap was possible using CP NMDS data for all jurisdictions except New South Wales. Table C2 shows:

- in Victoria, all investigations (100%) are unique, with no evidence of any overlaps. There is a 1:1 ratio between notifications and investigations, indicating that a new investigation cannot be commenced until a previous investigation is completed
- the percentage of overlapping investigations in Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania is low (0.7%, 3.6% and 0.7%, respectively). The majority (99% or more) of investigations in these jurisdictions involved 1 or 2 notifications per investigation 'episode'
- the percentage of overlapping investigations is higher in South Australia (26%), the Australian Capital Territory (24%) and the Northern Territory (13%).

Table C2: Number of notifications per investigation ‘episode’, states and territories, 2017–18 (%)

Number of notifications per investigation ‘episode’	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Total
1	100.0	99.3	96.5	74.3	99.3	75.9	87.3	95.8
2	0.0	0.7	3.2	18.0	0.6	15.9	9.7	3.2
3	0.0	0.0	0.3	6.4	0.1	6.6	2.7	0.9
4	0.0	0.0	0.1	1.4	0.0	1.7	0.3	0.2
5+	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Notes

1. For the purpose of this analysis, proxy investigation ‘episodes’ were created: if the dates of investigations overlapped they were assigned to the same investigation ‘episode’ (overlapping investigation episode); if the dates did not overlap with any other investigations, they were deemed to be a unique investigation ‘episode’. Investigation ‘episodes’ were unable to be assigned for some records due to missing date information.
2. NSW data are not reported as CP NMDS data were not available.
3. Percentages in the table may not add to 100 as records with unknown investigation dates have been excluded.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018.

C.1.3 Treatment of notifications for unborn children

All jurisdictions, except South Australia and the Northern Territory, have legislation to support the prenatal reporting of children at risk; that is, reports can be made for pregnant women where there are concerns about their unborn children. In 2017–18, 750 children who were the subject of a child protection substantiation were unborn at the time of notification (Table S10). Differences in policy and practice across jurisdictions impact on the data relating to unborn children for notifications, investigations and substantiations.

The level of intervention and the timing of investigations for notifications for unborn children were examined using available CP NMDS data. Note that this excludes New South Wales and Victoria as CP NMDS data were not provided, and South Australia and the Northern Territory due to the lack of relevant legislation to support such reporting.

Victoria did not include unborn children in the CP NMDS data as they are not considered a child protection notification. Initial reports can be case managed on a voluntary basis or referred to other services/social support and a new report can be initiated after birth and investigated if necessary.

A majority (95%) of records where a child was unborn at the time of notification had a date of assessment decision made before their date of birth. However, there was variation in the level of intervention (that is, resolved without investigation or investigated) and when investigations occurred (that is, before or after birth).

Table C3 shows that of children who were the subject of a notification before birth:

- in Queensland, all cases (100%) were investigated
- in Western Australia, the majority of cases were investigated (89%)
- in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, the majority of cases were resolved without investigation (53% and 99%, respectively).

Table C3: Children who were unborn at the time of notification, by type of action, 2017–18 (%)

Type of action	Qld	WA	Tas	ACT	Total
Investigations finalised	74.3	67.5	30.3	0.9	58.5
Investigation closed—no outcome possible	14.2	6.2	2.3	0.0	9.3
<i>Total closed investigations</i>	<i>88.5</i>	<i>73.6</i>	<i>32.6</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>67.8</i>
Investigations in process	11.5	15.3	10.9	0.0	11.0
<i>Total investigations</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>89.0</i>	<i>43.4</i>	<i>0.9</i>	<i>78.8</i>
Notifications in process	0.0	0.4	3.2	0.0	0.3
Notifications resolved without investigation	0.0	10.6	53.4	99.1	20.9
<i>Total dealt with by other means</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>11.0</i>	<i>56.6</i>	<i>99.1</i>	<i>21.2</i>
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes

1. Children are counted only once in this table; if a child received more than 1 notification before birth, the notification recorded is for their highest level of intervention at the time of notification.
2. Some children who were unborn at the time of notification would have subsequently been born in the reporting period—see Table C4 for detail about the timing of investigations.
3. NSW data are not reported as CP NMDS data were not available. SA and the NT are excluded as legislation does not cover notifications for unborn children in these jurisdictions. Vic do not provide notifications relating to unborn children in the CP NMDS data.
4. Percentages in the table may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018.

Table C4 shows variation in the timing of investigations for children who were unborn at notification:

- In Queensland, half (55%) of investigations were commenced and completed before the birth. Almost a quarter (23%) of investigations were commenced and completed after birth, 19% of investigations were commenced before birth and completed after birth, and 3% were commenced before birth and still ongoing at the end of the period.
- In Western Australia, three-quarters (71%) of investigations were commenced before birth and completed after birth. Almost one-quarter (23%) of investigations were commenced and completed before birth. The remaining 5% were commenced and completed after birth.
- In Tasmania, 30% of investigations were commenced and completed before birth. Over one-third (36%) of investigations were commenced before birth and completed after birth. Around 26% of investigations were commenced and completed after the child was born, and 8% were commenced before birth and still ongoing at the end of the period.
- In the Australian Capital Territory, legislation does not allow for investigations to commence before the child's birth. A code for escalation at birth is included within the territory's system indicating children who will require further assessment when they are born—hospital alerts facilitate this process.

Table C4: Children who were the subject of a notification while unborn whose cases were investigated, by investigation timing, 2017–18 (%)

Investigation timing	Qld	WA	Tas	ACT	Total
Commenced and completed before birth	55.0	23.3	30.2	0.0	42.5
Commenced before birth, completed after birth	18.7	71.2	36.0	0.0	38.1
Commenced before birth and still ongoing at the end of the period	2.9	0.0	8.1	0.0	2.1
Commenced and completed after birth	23.4	5.5	25.6	100.0	17.3

Notes

1. NSW data are not reported as CP NMDS data were not available. SA and the NT are excluded as legislation does not cover notifications for unborn children in these jurisdictions. Vic do not provide notifications relating to unborn children in the CP NMDS data.
2. Percentages in the table may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018.

New South Wales has indicated that notifications can be received and recorded for children before they are born and these are assigned a high priority, for follow-up within 72 hours. This generally involves assessment of the mother's connection to the health system; child protection would generally be involved after birth if required.

In jurisdictions where notifications for unborn children can be investigated (Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania) pre-birth involvement usually consists of intensive work with the mother/family in an attempt to build support and divert the case away from child protection after the child is born. In Queensland, pre-birth work (including investigations where required) can only be undertaken with the consent of the mother.

Most children (92%) received only 1 notification while unborn (Table C5). In the Australian Capital Territory, higher proportions of children with more than 1 notification were recorded—this may be influenced by the territory's practice of recording all notifications separately, rather than linking notifications (as noted previously in Section C.1.2) and to only investigate after birth.

Table C5: Number of notifications received while unborn, per child, states and territories, 2017–18 (%)

Number of notifications	Qld	WA	Tas	ACT	Total
1	96.2	94.3	87.8	64.1	91.5
2	3.7	5.3	11.3	19.9	6.6
3	0.1	0.3	0.9	8.2	1.1
4	0.0	0.1	0.0	4.3	0.5
5+	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5	0.4

Notes

1. NSW data are not reported as CP NMDS data were not available. SA and the NT are excluded as legislation does not cover notifications for unborn children in these jurisdictions. Vic do not provide notifications relating to unborn children in the CP NMDS data.
2. Percentages in the table may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018.

C.1.4 Notifications relating to abuse in care, no suitable caregiver and extra-familial maltreatment

The national definitions do not specify whether cases of abuse in care, no suitable caregiver and extra-familial maltreatment should be included or excluded from national reporting. Jurisdictional differences relating to the recording of these events may influence national reporting on notifications, investigations and substantiations. Further information on these differences is provided in the following sections. This is limited to policy/practice differences as notifications relating to these events are not able to be separately identified in the national data.

Abuse in care

Cases of alleged abuse for children in out-of-home care are included in the data for notifications and substantiations for all jurisdictions, except Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. In these jurisdictions, although cases of alleged abuse in care are not included in the data, these cases are treated very seriously and assessed via a separate process. For example, in Victoria, this process includes assessment of the suitability of the carer, the performance of the agency that made the placement and its continued registration as a care provider.

Other jurisdictions may also have a separate, parallel process that is undertaken to review the standard of care provided.

In Queensland, the *Child Protection Act 1999* (section 122) defines the standards of care to be provided to a child placed in care. Ongoing monitoring is undertaken to ensure the carer meets these standards of care. Where it is indicated that the standards of care may not have been met for a child, a standards of care review is undertaken. Where it is indicated the child has experienced harm or it is suspected that they have experienced harm, a Harm Report is made and a notification can be recorded. Prior to 8 July 2013, these cases were recorded as Matters of Concern.

In the Northern Territory, all 'concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children in care' are reported and recorded as a child protection report and referred to an Internal Review Unit for a coordinated response. All matters that meet the definition of harm in the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* (NT) are substantiated. This process was introduced in 2014–15 to ensure that all concerns about children in care are recorded and responded to appropriately.

No suitable caregiver

Cases where there is 'no suitable caregiver' (that is, no suitable parent or other legal guardian) can include situations where a child's parent(s) have died, been incapacitated due to illness/injury or are otherwise unavailable (for example, due to being imprisoned). Table C6 provides an overview of the variation in recording these cases.

Table C6: Recording of cases involving ‘no suitable caregiver’, states and territories

Jurisdiction	Notification and substantiated neglect recorded	Notification and dealt with by other means recorded
NSW	✓	x
Vic	✓	x
Qld	✓	x
WA
SA	✓	x
Tas	✓	x
ACT	✓	✓
NT

✓ Indicates the notification and investigation outcome are recorded as per the description for the relevant category.

x Indicates the notification and investigation outcome are not recorded as per the description for the relevant category.

.. Not applicable (cases of no suitable caregiver are not included in the data for notifications).

All jurisdictions, except Western Australia and the Northern Territory, include cases of ‘no suitable caregiver’ in the data for notifications. However, the subsequent reporting of these cases differs, for example:

- New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania report these cases as substantiated neglect
- in Queensland, cases of ‘no suitable caregiver’ are reported as substantiated neglect if no other harm type was identified during the investigation and assessment
- from 2015–16, in Western Australia, cases where the primary concern is ‘no suitable caregiver’ are outside the scope of national reporting. From 2017–18, cases of ‘no suitable caregiver’ where there is no associated physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect are excluded from national reporting
- in the Australian Capital Territory:
 - if the parent/guardian is unable to be found, the notification is recorded as neglect
 - if the parent/guardian is deceased, the notification is recorded as ‘dealt with by other means’
 - a notification is not recorded in some situations requiring substitute care. For example, a Youth Justice client using a diversionary program might be referred to another service without recording a notification.

Extra-familial maltreatment

In the Australian Institute of Family Studies 2008 data comparability report (AIFS: Holzer & Bromfield 2008), extra-familial maltreatment was defined as abuse perpetrated by someone other than a family member. It was noted that extra-familial maltreatment is not within the mandate of most jurisdictions' child protection system unless a child's parents are not acting to protect the child; however, some jurisdictions had policies and practices relating to the reporting of these matters. Table C7 provides a broad overview of the recording of extra-familial maltreatment:

- In New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania, some extra-familial matters are included in the national counts of notifications, investigations and substantiations. No distinction is made as to whether a matter relates to an intra- or extra-familial matter.
- In Victoria, extra-familial maltreatment is recorded only where it concerns abuse of children in care; where this is the case, this information is recorded as an incident report in case notes and quality of care data base as the Victorian information system does not enable new reports to be recorded in relation to an already 'open' case. The recording of case notes for abuse of children in care has no bearing on the data provided for national reporting purposes.
- In Queensland, practice is, for children in scope of Queensland's policy 'Responding to concerns about the standards of care', to record a harm report in relation to extra-familial abuse if the alleged person responsible is either the carer, an adult household member who is not the carer, or a staff member of a care service.
- In South Australia, extra-familial maltreatment is included in the count of notifications, but is not typically investigated—instead it is recorded as dealt with by other means. A small number of extra-familial maltreatment cases may be counted in the investigation phase, most likely in the preliminary stages of an investigation. Where extra-familial maltreatment is determined, it would then be referred to the South Australia Police.
- In the Australian Capital Territory, extra-familial matters are included in the count of notifications and are counted:
 - in investigations where a joint investigation is conducted with ACT Policing or where the police decline involvement due to lack of evidence
 - as dealt with by other means if the matter was referred solely to the police.
- In the Northern Territory, extra-familial matters may be included in data provided for national reporting purposes. Generally, extra-familial matters are referred to the Northern Territory Police. However, extra-familial matters may be referred to the joint Child Abuse Taskforce (Territory Families and the Northern Territory Police) and may therefore be registered as a child protection notification—in which case, it would be included in data provided for national reporting purposes.

Table C7: Recording of cases involving ‘extra-familial maltreatment’, states and territories

Jurisdiction	Recorded in notifications, substantiations (not differentiated)	Recorded in notifications, excluded from investigations (dealt with by other means)	Recorded in notifications, investigated subject to conditions	Recorded in notifications, investigations, substantiations only where concerns relate to abuse in care	Recorded as case notes only where concerns relate to abuse in care
NSW	✓	x	x	x	x
Vic	x	x	x	x	✓
Qld	x	x	x	✓	x
WA	✓	x	x	x	x
SA	x	✓	x	x	x
Tas	✓	x	x	x	x
ACT	x	✓	✓	x	x
NT	x	x	✓	x	x

✓ Indicates the notification and investigation are recorded as per the description for the relevant category.

x Indicates the notification and investigation are not recorded as per the description for the relevant category.

C.2 Care and protection orders issued

Interim and temporary orders generally cover the provision of a limited period of supervision and/or placement of a child. Parental responsibility under these orders may reside with the parents or with the department responsible for child protection. Unfinalised orders (such as, applications to the court for care and protection orders) are also included in this category, unless another finalised order is in place.

Interim and temporary orders accounted for 63% of the orders issued across jurisdictions during 2017–18 (Table S20). However, the percentage of interim and temporary orders issued across jurisdictions ranged from 42% to 83%. The variation in the number and types of orders issued reflects court processes, different legislation and variation in the orders utilised across jurisdictions.

Table S20 shows that 54% of orders issued in 2017–18 were issued in Victoria, with the majority (12,791 or 65%) of these being interim and temporary orders. While other jurisdictions, such as South Australia and the Northern Territory, had high proportions of interim and temporary orders reported, the numbers were much lower (around 4,300 in South Australia and around 1,800 in the Northern Territory).

This variability was noted for the first time in 2014–15 due to a change in reporting for Victoria—previously, a large number of children were recorded as being in out-of-home care but were not recorded as being on an order, which is inconsistent with the state’s process.

In Victoria, interim orders are usually ‘interim accommodation orders’, which allow the child to be placed in care. These orders are usually for 3 weeks duration and are then subject to review and possible extension by the court. Each return to the court is counted as a new order for Victoria.

This is substantially different from the recording of these orders in other jurisdictions. For example, in the Australian Capital Territory, if a temporary order is issued by the court with specific conditions and is later extended with the same conditions, it is not counted as a new

order issued. A new order is counted if different conditions are applied and/or when a final order is issued.

C.3 Scope and classifications of out-of-home care

The national definition of out-of-home care is quite broad and focused on the funding of placements:

Out-of-home care is overnight care for children aged 0–17 years, where the state or territory makes a financial payment or where a financial payment has been offered but has been declined by the carer.

South Australia has previously indicated that out-of-home care data include only children for whom a financial contribution is made (this excludes cases where financial payment was offered and declined).

Western Australia has indicated that children who are in unpaid placements (such as, hospital, other medical, unapproved placements, youth justice) would be deemed to be 'in care' for local reporting. However, these children are excluded from the national collection due to the funding specification.

Tasmania has indicated that out-of-home care data exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs.

Out-of-home care data for the ACT includes some young people 18 years and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to facilitate completion of schooling without change to the placement.

Victoria has excluded children on third-party parental responsibility orders from national out-of-home care reporting from 2017–18. This decision was made to align with internal reporting and to reflect that children on third-party parental responsibility orders are considered to be in permanent care arrangements.

Most jurisdictions have noted that the out-of-home care data they report include situations where children are placed with relatives/kin as an emergency placement. In these situations, jurisdictions have provisions to enable the placement of children with carers before the completion of the formal assessment/approval process. Funding for the placement may be provided retrospectively in these situations.

These differences between states and territories highlight the data comparability issues across jurisdictions. Work is ongoing to revise the definition of out-of-home care for future reporting.

C.3.1 Children on third-party parental responsibility orders

Third-party parental orders transfer all duties, powers, responsibilities and authority parents are entitled to by law, to a nominated person(s) considered appropriate by the court. The nominated person may be an individual, such as a relative, or an officer of the state or territory department responsible for child protection.

Analysis of the living arrangements recorded for children on third-party parental responsibility orders in the 2014–15 CP NMDS (AIHW 2016b; Appendix F) indicated that the living arrangements recorded for children on third-party parental responsibility orders varied between jurisdictions. This excludes New South Wales and Western Australia, as living arrangement data are not available—children on third-party parental responsibility

orders are not classified as being in out-of-home care in these jurisdictions. The Northern Territory has advised that third-party parental responsibility orders are now an available order type applicable for national reporting.

Prior to the 2015–16 collection, the AIHW and jurisdictions discussed the differences in reporting for children on third-party parental responsibility orders in the out-of-home care data. It was noted that the level of case management and funding for these children varied compared with children in care on other types of orders, and that this also varies across jurisdictions. Some continue to provide case management (perhaps to a lesser extent) but not funding; others continue to provide funding but not case management.

In the 2015–16 CP NMDS, a new category to separately record living arrangements for children on third-party parental responsibility orders was introduced to help improve data comparability for reporting living arrangements of these children across jurisdictions. The ability to identify third-party parental care placements was identified as key to building evidence around permanency planning for children in out-of-home care.

From 2016–17, the third-party parental responsibility category in the CP NMDS was expanded to three categories which indicates the child's placement type before their third-party parental placement. This additional disaggregation enabled children on third-party parental responsibility orders to be included in specific measures of children placed with relatives/kin for reporting.

The introduction of these separate categories for third-party parental care has resulted in a fall in the number of children recorded as being in foster, relative/kinship care, and other home-based care in some jurisdictions. For this reason, caution should be exercised when comparing the number of children on these placement types from 2015–16 onwards.

Due to differences in underlying policy/practice and system constraints, not all jurisdictions have been able to utilise these categories and there is still variability in the living arrangements recorded for these children. The living arrangement of children on third-party orders at 30 June 2018 shows Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory have successfully adopted the use of the new third party living arrangement categories, and Victoria has partially implemented the third party categories (Table C8).

Table C8: Children on finalised third-party parental responsibility orders by living arrangement, states and territories, 30 June 2018 (%)

Living arrangement	Vic	Qld	SA	Tas	ACT	Total
Parents	0.0	0.1	0.0	1.7	0.0	0.1
Relatives/kin who are not reimbursed	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0
<i>Total family care</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.1</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>2.2</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.1</i>
Foster care	1.3	13.1	51.8	0.0	0.0	6.6
Relatives/kin who are reimbursed	29.1	82.8	41.6	0.0	0.0	44.6
Third-party parental care—foster carer	0.0	0.0	0.0	42.7	42.2	2.7
Third-party parental care—relative/kinship	0.0	0.0	0.0	46.6	54.6	3.1
Third-party parental care—other/unknown	69.6	0.0	0.0	4.7	0.0	41.2
Other home-based care	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Total home-based care</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>95.9</i>	<i>93.4</i>	<i>94.0</i>	<i>97.8</i>	<i>98.2</i>
Residential care	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Family group home	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Independent living	0.0	0.1	0.0	2.6	0.0	0.1
Other/unknown	0.0	3.7	6.6	1.3	2.2	1.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes

1. NSW and WA are excluded as living arrangement data are not available.
2. Percentages in the table may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2017.

To further improve comparability between states for 2017–18, some records in Victoria and all records in South Australia, for children on third-party orders with a living arrangement of foster care or relative/kinship care at 30 June 2018 had their living arrangement recoded to their respective third-party—foster care or third-party—relative/kinship care living arrangement (see Table C9). All other living arrangements for children on third-party parental responsibility orders were classified as third-party parental care—other/unknown.

Table C9: Children on finalised third-party parental responsibility orders, by living arrangement (recoded), states and territories, 30 June 2018 (%)

Living arrangement (recoded)	Vic	Qld	SA	Tas	ACT	Total
Parents	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Relatives/kin who are not reimbursed	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Total family care</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.1</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>
Foster care	0.0	13.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.1
Relatives/kin who are reimbursed	0.0	82.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	26.1
Third-party parental care—foster carer	1.3	0.0	51.8	42.7	42.2	5.1
Third-party parental care—relative/kinship	29.1	0.0	41.6	46.6	55.6	21.6
Third-party parental care—other/unknown	69.6	0.0	6.6	10.8	2.2	41.8
Other home-based care	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Total home-based care</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>95.9</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>100.0</i>	<i>98.7</i>
Residential care	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Family group home	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Independent living	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other/unknown	0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes

1. NSW and WA are excluded, as living arrangement data are not available.
2. Percentages in the table may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: AIHW Child Protection Collection 2018.

After applying the recode, the living arrangements for children on third-party parental responsibility orders for children at 30 June 2018 are shown in Table C9:

- Most children (70%) in Victoria were recorded as being placed in ‘Other/Unknown’ third-party parental care, while some were recorded as being placed in third-party parental care with relatives/kin (29%). Only a small percentage (1%) was recorded as being in a third-party parental care with a former foster carer. Before 2014–15, most children in permanent care placements were recorded as being in foster care.
- Living arrangements of children on third-party orders in Queensland were not recoded. In Queensland, the majority of these children (83%) were recorded as being placed with relatives/kin who are reimbursed. Thirteen per cent (13%) were recorded as being in foster care and 4% in ‘Other/Unknown’ living arrangements.
- In South Australia, over half of these children (52%) were recorded as being in third-party parental care with a former foster carer, and 42% were recorded in third-party parental care with relatives/kin. Almost 7% were recorded in the ‘Other/unknown’ third party parental care.
- In Tasmania, 47% were recorded in third-party parental care with relatives/kin, followed by 43% in third-party parental care with a former foster carer, and 11% in ‘Other/Unknown’ third-party living arrangements.

- In the Australian Capital Territory, 56% were recorded as being third-party parental care with relatives/kin, followed by 42% in third-party parental care with a former foster carer. Before 2015–16, the Australian Capital Territory reported the living arrangement for children on third-party orders where the carer was originally a foster carer as ‘other home-based care’ and all placements with kin were counted in the relative/kinship count.

The AIHW will continue to work with jurisdictions to improve the consistency of reporting living arrangements for children on third-party parental responsibility orders.

C.3.2 Recording types of placement

Differences in the reporting of placement types across jurisdictions limit comparisons that can be made about the use of out-of-home care across jurisdictions. Table S36 shows the number of children in out-of-home care, by type of placement at 30 June 2018. The following differences in the type of placement reported for children have been identified:

- Children placed with a relative/kin who is also fully registered to provide foster care for other children:
 - in Victoria and the Northern Territory, they are usually reported as being in foster care
 - in all other state and jurisdictions they are reported as being placed with relatives/kin.
- For the Northern Territory ‘Other home-based care’ includes children placed with family day care providers.
- The ‘Other/unknown’ category for out-of-home care placements includes living arrangements not otherwise classified by 1 of the other categories, such as boarding schools, hospitals, hotels/motels and the defence forces. It also includes unknown placement types.
- Children under third-party parental responsibility orders/permanent placements may be reported as living in several different out-of-home care placement types (for example, foster care, relative/kinship care, other home-based care and, from 2015–16, also in third-party care; see Section C.3.1) or they may not be considered to be in out-of-home care.
- For Victoria, children on third party orders are excluded from out-of-home care reporting in 2017–18. A few children in a third party living arrangement are included in table S37 and is a reflection that the child’s third party living arrangement has not been closed, or updated, since the order expired.

Jurisdictions have also indicated that there may be variability regarding whether data include children who are in unapproved placements; that is, where children under the care of the department for child protection have absconded from care and are classified as ‘self-placed’. In these situations, the preceding out-of-home care placement may remain ‘open’ or be ‘closed’ and a new living arrangement recorded.

Appendix D: Recent state and territory policy changes

This section outlines the major child protection policy changes that have occurred in recent years. The various child protection authorities in the states and territories have provided this information.

New South Wales

The New South Wales Government has committed \$2.03 billion in 2017–18 to protect and support New South Wales' most vulnerable children, young people and families—a 8.7% increase on 2016–17 in real terms. The funding supports a significant reform agenda that will help improve the lives of vulnerable children and families, with a 7.8% increase in spending per child in the State.

Their Futures Matter

The NSW Government launched an ambitious reform agenda in November 2016 called—Their Futures Matter (TFM). The TFM is a landmark reform of the NSW Government to deliver improved outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and their families.

Enlisting whole-of-government accountability, the vision is to create a coordinated service system that delivers evidence-based, wraparound supports for children and families to transform their life outcomes. This vision will be realised under whole-of-government investment to deliver:

- A Smart System—the work brings together data, evidence and investment to build an integrated and accountable service system.
- One Connected Response—the approach will provide a whole-of-government response that gives vulnerable children, young people and their families access to services they need.
- Needs Based Supports—the services will be designed and delivered in consideration of their needs and aspirations, informed by the risks to their wellbeing and futures.

One component of the TFM reform is the Access System Redesign (ASR) of the child and family service system, which aspires to significantly improve life outcomes for current and future generations of children and families, and to ensure that every child has a safe, permanent and loving home.

TFM has a mandate to lead the redesign of the access system, together with multiple partners across government agencies, the non-government sector, children, young people, families and communities. It aims to deliver a multi-agency and evidence-based system that enables children, young people and families in NSW to access the right supports at the right time.

This vision means long-term reform which will require a paradigm shift in the way the system organises and delivers supports to assist children, young people and families achieve and maintain optimum wellbeing. For vulnerable children, young people and families, timely access to services and support is essential to address child wellbeing or safety concerns. The system needs to give families a pathway to early support when they need it, both early in life and early in need, and must intervene to protect children identified to be at risk of significant harm.

The ASR is being undertaken in three distinct phases:

1. High level design (August – December 2018)

The first stage of high level design was completed in December 2018. To inform the redesign, early work focused on reviewing the research evidence and convening stakeholder workshops to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current system. This resulted in the release of:

- a discussion paper that is open for public comment until 29 March 2019. The paper—Moving the system from crisis to early help: connecting children, young people and families to the right support at the right time—seeks views on what guiding principles should underpin the access system redesign, eight key system elements identified for further development and the necessary enablers to support a well-functioning access system
- an evidence review. The review consolidates the available academic and grey literature into a report that sets the evidence base for our proposed design elements and system enablers, as featured in the discussion paper.

Both reports can be accessed from the TFM website

www.theirfuturesmatter.nsw.gov.au/implementing-the-reform/one-connected-response/access-system-redesign/have-your-say.

2. Detailed design (January – June 2019)

Over the six months to June 2019, ASR in collaboration with multi-agency partners, children, families and communities are tasked with designing the future access system, including the preparation of detailed options and models for reform.

3. Implementation (Post June 2019)

Dependent on Cabinet approval on the proposed changes and operating model for the future access system, the third stage—implementation—is scheduled to start from July 2019.

To achieve the TFM vision, a number of key initiatives are being delivered to transform the service system including:

- Access System Redesign

As noted above, TFM program is in the early stages of a large-scale reform of the child and family access system. This reform has a strong focus on reorienting the system to better support children and families access supports and services they need at the earliest possible opportunity. As described above, the approach to ASR details the areas of focus for the proposed reforms. While it is too early to provide evidence in relation to trials or evaluations, the published evidence review sets the basis for the system elements that form the focus of development in this current stage of detailed design.

- Futures Planning & Support (FP&S)

The Futures Planning & Support (FP&S) Pilot Program is being implemented on the Mid North Coast (MNC) District and Service Provision is expected to begin in July 2019. An additional pilot location will follow in late 2019 in the Western Districts. The FP&S Pilot seeks to address issues faced by young people (17–25) who are exiting or have exited Out of Home Care (OOHC).

The cost to young people who have been in OOHC is significant with research showing disproportionately poor social and economic outcome and high rates of intergenerational disadvantage and engagement with FACS. The FP&S pilot seeks to address and reduce risk factors influencing young people by offering flexible, culturally appropriate and proactive

supports, which place the client at the centre of the service. It is anticipated the increased support for young people who have been in OOHC will contribute to reduced rates of child protection intervention and entry to OOHC for the children of care leavers.

- Family preservation and restoration services – Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect and Functional Family Therapy through Child Welfare

TFM has committed to providing 900 places per year for intensive family preservation and restoration services—Multisystemic Therapy for Child Abuse and Neglect (MST-CAN®) and Functional Family Therapy – Child Welfare (FFT-CW®)—aimed at keeping families together. Half of these 900 places will be for Aboriginal children and their families.

Service delivery commenced on 1 August 2017 and there are currently six MST-CAN® and 18 FFT-CW® teams operating in over 15 priority locations in NSW. More information about the locations and the models is available at

https://www.theirfuturesmatter.nsw.gov.au/implementing-the-reform/needs-based-supports/evidence-based-programs/family-preservation-and-restoration-programs?SQ_VARIATION_576204=0

and

[Initiatives commissioned by Their Futures Matter](#)

Permanency Support Program

An important step towards *Their Futures Matter* is the Permanency Support Program (PSP), a series of changes from October 2017 to shift from a 'placement-based' service system to a child- and family-centred service system that focuses on individual need, helping families to change and achieving permanency for children and young people soon after they come to the attention of the child protection system.

In the new system, every child or young person will have a case plan with a goal for permanency within two years of entering care.

Case plans will be focused on working with families to keep children at home, or find a stable and secure option through guardianship or open adoption (unless the child is Aboriginal).

Under the PSP, the New South Wales Government has changed how it funds non-government partners. New performance based contracts support intensive work with children, families and carers to achieve a safe and stable home for vulnerable kids.

As part of this reform, new contracts for care of the most vulnerable young people will be introduced in 2018. This will require providers to deliver therapeutic care for young people aged over 12 who are unable to live with their family or carers.

- The PSP has four main components:
 - **Permanency and early intervention principles built into casework:** In the new system, a child or young person will have a case plan with a goal for permanency within two years of entering care. There will be a number of funding packages and targeted support packages that can be mixed and matched to suit a child or young person's individual needs and achieve case plan goals.
 - **Working intensively with birth parents and families to support change:** By reducing the number of children in out-of-home care, funds can be re-invested in the delivery of family strengthening and prevention services to strengthen the capacity of

families to care for their children. This will create a stronger and more innovative service system in the longer term.

- **Foster carer recruitment, support and retention:** A new carer recruitment and retention strategy with new providers will be introduced in 2018. It aims to address shortages, and recruit foster, kinship and relative carers who would like to support restoration, or become adoptive parents (unless the child or young person is Aboriginal).
- **Intensive Therapeutic Care system reform:** The government will keep a strong focus on recovery from trauma through an Intensive Therapeutic Care system for children over 12 years who have been assessed as requiring intensive therapy. Intensive Therapeutic Care will be introduced to replace residential care.

Their Futures Matter and the Permanency Support Program builds on the success of early reforms including Safe Home for Life reforms and the transition of children in out-of-home care to non-government organisations.

The Safe Home for Life reforms, introduced in 2014, strengthened the child protection system through legislative change, new policy and practice and a redesign of how technology is used in child protection. Permanency placement principles and Guardianship orders were introduced for the first time and there was a renewed focus on open adoption. In 2017–18, 140 children were adopted from out-of-home care, by far the highest number of any state. New South Wales also has over 2,500 guardians and over 95% of Australia's out-of-home care open adoptions.

The NSW Practice Framework

Launched in September 2017, the NSW Practice Framework brings together practice approaches, reforms and priorities to guide FACS child protection work across systems, policies and practice. The Framework aims to improve the quality of FACS child protection practice to generate the best outcomes for children and families across NSW and has delivered over 30,000 hours training to caseworkers.

Commissioning

Close to 58% of children in out-of-home care are managed by non-government organisations. The transfer of children began in 2012 in recognition of the fact that non-government organisations are more flexible and closer to the community, allowing them to implement reform and innovative service models more quickly than government agencies.

Targeted earlier intervention

The reform of targeted earlier intervention (TEI) programs to develop a Service system that is flexible, locally responsive, evidence-based, adaptive and client-centred continued in 2017–18. A result of significant collaboration, the Targeted Earlier Intervention Outcomes Framework was developed to set out how FACS and TEI services will work together to measure the effectiveness of programs, show the contribution services make to client outcomes, and build the evidence base for what works to enable continuous service delivery improvement.

Under the Families NSW and Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy, 30,981 families were supported. This strategy aims to provide children with the best start in life by providing support to families in the early years of a child's development, are underpinned by evidence that interventions at this early stage have ongoing positive impacts.

Victoria

Victoria's legislative foundation for child protection is provided by the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*, the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (which is the framework legislation for services for all children) and the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2012*, which established an independent commission for children and young people.

The Children, Youth and Families Act, which commenced operation in April 2007, provides a unifying framework for:

- family and placement services that community service organisations deliver
- child protection services that the Department of Health and Human Services delivers
- decision making by the Children's Court.

The Act explicitly places children's best interests at the heart of all decision making and service delivery.

The Commission for Children and Young People Act established an independent commission to promote continuous improvement and innovation in policies and practices relating to the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people, and of young people generally, and in the provision of out-of-home care services for children.

The Department of Health and Human Services works in partnership with community service organisations and Aboriginal services to strengthen support services for vulnerable families. Strong focus is given to keeping Aboriginal children connected to their culture and community.

Although front-end child protection demand has exhibited real growth in recent years, the enhanced availability of diversionary services, especially through referrals to Child FIRST (Child and Family Information, Referral and Support Teams) and The Orange Door, has meant that the number of children subject to court orders has remained relatively stable.

The *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* was substantially amended in March 2016 to explicitly promote the achievement of permanency planning objectives (family preservation, family reunification, adoption, permanent care, long-term out-of-home care) for children in need of protection. The amendments included a new range of protection orders and changes to case planning requirements, and included stronger timelines consistent with the achievement of those objectives than had existed previously.

The impact of these significant amendments was subject to an inquiry by the Commission for Children and Young People. This inquiry made many recommendations, including that a further study be undertaken into the impact of the amendments. This study is being led by the University of Melbourne in partnership with the department, and with support from the universities of Sydney and of New South Wales. A final report is due in June 2020.

Consistent with the government and departmental policies regarding self-determination, the gradual transfer of responsibility for Aboriginal children and young people on protection orders from community service organisations and the department to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations has commenced.

Additionally Victoria is implementing a range of recommendations arising from recent inquiries conducted by the Commission for Children and Young people which include improving compliance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and cultural support planning. The department's 'roadmap for reform' is in the process of implementing area-based and pro-active service provision of all community services to local communities, and this will have an impact on the future role and scope of the child protection program which currently performs many tasks more appropriate to secondary rather than

tertiary/statutory services. This strategy incorporates responses to a wide range of recommendations made by Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Queensland

Queensland is progressing a 10-year reform program—*Supporting Families Changing Futures*—for its family support and child protection system. Supporting Families Changing Futures is focused on delivering the right services at the right time to support families and keep children safely at home.

In 2017–18, Queensland completed its fourth year of implementing the Supporting Families Changing Futures reform program. A progress report, the *Supporting Families Changing Futures 2018 Update*, was released on 7 September 2018 outlining achievements, upcoming actions, and strategic direction for the reforms. Recent achievements include:

- commencement on 1 July 2017 of mandatory reporting by early child education and care professionals
- implementation of additional services to meet the growing and complex needs of families and children, especially the impacts of 'ice' and domestic and family violence
- opening new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing services to make it easier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to access culturally responsive support to improve their social, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing, and build their capacity to safely care for their children
- transferring the recruitment, training and support for foster and kinship carers to the non-government sector to strengthen support for carers
- implementing a trauma-based therapeutic framework to improve the quality of care provided to children and young people in residential care.

In recognition of the need to work fundamentally different and to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system, the Queensland Government released *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037* in collaboration with Family Matters in May 2017. This release was accompanied by the first three-year action plan, *Changing Tracks*, to implement this strategy. The action plan builds on existing initiatives and includes new actions guided by Elders, community leaders, community run organisations, peak bodies and relevant government agencies. Recent achievements include:

- establishing the Empowering Families Innovation Grants program and funding new initiatives aimed at reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system
- commencing implementation of the First 1000 Days Australia initiative to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children the best start in life
- implementing the New Parent Infant Network social benefit bond program to safely reunify children in care with their families
- establishing the Queensland First Children and Families Board to guide and oversee the implementation of the *Our Way* strategy and to reaffirm the Government's commitment to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples participation in, and greater control over, decisions that affect their children.

On 26 October 2017, the *Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2017* was passed in the Legislative Assembly and assented to on 10 November 2017. This follows a comprehensive review of the *Child Protection Act 1999* and extensive public consultation. Through these

consultations, it was found that while Queensland's child protection legislation was generally operating well, priority amendments and opportunities for legislative reform were identified.

Changes to the *Child Protection Act 1999* commenced in stages throughout 2018.

The amendments:

- promote positive long-term outcomes for children in the child protection system through timely decision making and decisive action towards either reunification with family or alternative long-term care
- promote the safe care and connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their families, communities and cultures
- introduce a new permanency care order to provide a child or young person in long-term care with more stable and secure family arrangements
- introduce a legal requirement for transition planning to commence from 15 years of age and the extension of support eligibility up to the age of 25 for young people who have been in care
- provide a contemporary information sharing regime for the child protection and family support system, which is focused on children's safety and wellbeing, and
- support the implementation of other key reforms under the Supporting Families Changing Futures program and address identified legislative issues.

Western Australia

In 2017, internal restructuring of the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, its amalgamation with the Department of Communities and wider Machinery of Government changes occurred to enable a more integrated, whole-of-government approach to be taken to policy and service design.

In 2018, significant progress was made against priority reform areas through new initiatives and projects and a number of these have been implemented or are currently being developed.

There is overwhelming support across the government and community services sector for a strategy to reduce the numbers of children entering out-of-home care, particularly Aboriginal children. The over-representation of Aboriginal children and families in all areas of the child protection system will continue to be an area of particular focus in Western Australia (WA).

The Aboriginal Services and Practice Framework 2016–2018 has been integral to the work underpinning the child protection reforms within WA to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and families. Options are currently being explored in regard to a future framework which will incorporate current projects and strategies and reflect the State Government's focus on integrated service design.

Planning for an Aboriginal Advisory Panel commenced in 2018. The panel will convene in 2019 to provide cultural and expert advice to inform government decisions affecting Aboriginal children, families and communities. Twenty Aboriginal members across WA have been recruited for the panel from a variety of backgrounds and experience.

Development of the Early Years Initiative commenced in 2018 and is an unprecedented ten-year partnership between the State Government and non-government organisations which aims to bring together stakeholders and enable local communities to achieve better learning and developmental outcomes for children from early pregnancy to four years old.

The Early Years Initiative will support four low-income communities across WA which have been selected to participate due to high levels of early childhood vulnerability. The selection will include communities in remote and regional areas. The initiative aims to find local solutions to local issues through community engagement, empowerment and capacity building. The Early Years Initiative Board is progressing selection of the four priority communities and work to establish the initiative will continue through 2019.

In 2018, the State Government allocated \$110 million over five years for the Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy, a coordinated response by Communities, other state government agencies and the community services sector to divert children from the child protection system and prevent them from entering out-of-home care. Some services will prioritise Aboriginal families as a means of addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care.

The strategy re-aligns resources to deliver intensive, effective and coordinated support services designed to meet the needs of at-risk families and their children. Service contracts have been awarded for intensive case management and practical in-home support aimed at supporting families who are most vulnerable to their children coming into care, require support for reunification or to improve family wellbeing and to keep children safe at home.

These contracts have more than trebled the number of community service organisations delivering earlier intervention support services. Over 60 per cent of the population in regional WA will now have access to these services for the first time.

In late 2018, the Family Care Support Service commenced. In contrast to the Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy's preventative and diversionary focus, the Family Care Support Service provides support for family carers where there is a risk of children being moved to non-family care arrangements. Intensive in-home practical support is provided to stabilise and maintain family care arrangements and Aboriginal children and their family carers are prioritised. The service includes supporting children and young people to remain connected to country, family, culture and community.

At the June 2018 Community Services Ministers meeting, Ministers agreed to implement active efforts in jurisdictions to comply with the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles developed by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC).

Adherence to the five elements of the principle will be fundamental to the Department of Communities future direction for out-of-home care reform. These principles will be applied as part of the review of permanency planning policy and practice guidance. A strong focus of this review is on improving permanency outcomes for Aboriginal children and families, and sub-projects are progressing to implement recommendations for policy change, improving family engagement and participation in decision-making, and cultural support planning.

In 2017, the State Government introduced a comprehensive package of reforms called the Stopping Family and Domestic Violence Policy to support victims of family and domestic violence. Progress towards these reforms in 2018 has included:

- planning for provision of culturally appropriate support services to Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse women and children
- development of a service model for an additional residential facility for male perpetrators, planned to open in 2019–20, and planning for two new women's refuges
- extension of financial counselling services and the Hardship Utilities Grants Scheme to support family and domestic violence victims.

In addition, the *Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment (Family Violence) Bill 2018* has been developed to enable victims of family and domestic violence to make choices regarding their tenancy arrangements in public and private housing. This will enable people to remove themselves from a tenancy agreement, or make an application to the Magistrates Court to have a perpetrator removed from a tenancy agreement. The bill is anticipated to pass into law in 2019.

The 10 Year Strategy for Reducing Family and Domestic Violence in Western Australia will identify governance, outcome measures, sector and community consultation and opportunities to align reform agendas, and will build on the current initiatives to enable a more integrated across-government approach to service delivery. A family and domestic violence policy consortium has been convened comprising representatives from government, community sector services, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and academia to develop a comprehensive project plan for the development of the 10 Year Strategy.

Target 120 is a \$20.5 million initiative which aims to improve community safety by working with at risk young people and their families to provide early intervention and diversion from the justice system. The multi-agency program will target up to 300 young people and their families to ensure that services and support are provided to tackle the factors that increase a young person's likelihood of offending, such as substance abuse, domestic violence, poor school attendance and mental health issues. Target 120 will be trialled in Bunbury in 2019 and rolled out to multiple locations across WA over the next four years.

An Action Plan for At Risk Youth is currently being developed which will define how the newly merged Department of Communities will work alongside young people, families, communities and agencies to improve outcomes for at risk youth. The plan will define a number of strategic actions relating to the delivery of services, funding of services, new initiatives and approaches, and agency collaboration. The plan relates to children in out-of-home care and transitioning to adulthood with complex needs and all youth at risk. Currently the plan is scheduled for release in mid-2019.

South Australia

During 2017–18 reform of the child protection system in South Australia in response to recommendations of the Nyland [Child Protection Systems Royal Commission](#) report [The life they deserve](#) continued. The focus has been to build the foundation supporting whole of system change whilst delivering immediate priority reforms.

Progress on implementation of the 256 recommendations from *The life they deserve* report is detailed in the [Child protection a fresh start progress report June 2018](#). The Appendix of the *fresh start* report contains detail specific to each recommendation.

Legislative reforms

New legislation, the [Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017](#) incorporating many of the recommendations contained in *The life they deserve* has been fully implemented. Phase 1 implementation occurred in February 2018 and phase 2 in October 2018.

The new Act enshrines principles for early decision-making supporting permanency and stability, increases focus on listening to and acting on the voices of children and carers, strengthens family group conferencing provisions and emphasises safe and nurturing placements.

The Act provides the legal framework to drive reform. Along with the *Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016*, it delivers a comprehensive and coordinated oversight and accountability system for child protection.

New functions and obligations for the Minister for Child Protection and the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection are included in the Act. Further supports for young people transitioning to adulthood are also included.

The Act passed after amendments made as a direct result of ongoing feedback from child protection and child wellbeing sectors.

Additional key changes included:

- the inclusion of a parliamentary declaration recognising the importance of children and young people in South Australia
- increased voice and involvement for children and young people in decision-making
- increased rights for carers, including the ability to apply to the South Australian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (SACAT) for review of certain decisions of the Chief Executive
- establishment of a Child and Young Person's Visitor Scheme
- ability for the Chief Executive to convene a family group conference
- powers for the Chief Executive to direct parents to undergo drug and alcohol assessments and parenting capacity assessments
- a requirement for the Minister to arrange assistance for eligible care leavers, including the provision of education and training services and assistance finding accommodation, employment and accessing legal and support services
- the requirement for those employed in licensed residential facilities, both government and non-government, to undergo psychological assessment of a kind determined by the Chief Executive.

Other legislative changes include:

Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016

This Act defines a new working with children checks system for people working or volunteering with children in South Australia. Key parts include an ongoing monitoring system and moving from three-yearly to five-yearly checks. Importantly, checks will also be transferable between different jobs and volunteer positions.

Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016

This Act covers the statutory independent oversight and advocacy bodies, including the Guardian for Children and Young People, the Child Death and Serious Injury Review Committee (CDSIRC), the Commissioner for Children and Young People and the new Child Development Council.

Public Sector (Data Sharing) Act 2016

This Act provides for the sharing of data between public sector agencies, the Commonwealth, other States and Territories, local government and other entities (such as universities and non-government organisations) and provides protections relating to the sharing of data. The Act also established the Office for Data Analytics to coordinate data sharing across government and other entities, and to undertake data analytics work on public sector data.

Other major initiatives

Early Intervention

A key priority of the new Act is earlier intervention where children and young people are identified as being at risk, and for government and key partners to promote and assist in the development of co-ordinated strategies for early intervention in cases where children and young people may be at risk of harm.

The Early Intervention Research Directorate (EIRD) was established as one of the responses to *The life they deserve*. The EIRD is growing the evidence base about the services children and families need, when and where they need them, and which services are most likely to work in local communities and contexts. EIRD applies data systematically to support South Australia's service planning and uses the best evidence to guide decisions about prevention and early intervention for child abuse and neglect. EIRD has a specific focus on addressing the disproportionate number of Aboriginal children in the child protection system.

This work will be used to make improvements to how early interventions are commissioned and provided to ensure the best service possible for children, young people and families.

Aboriginal families and communities

Improving services and outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities across the state remains a priority for the Government of South Australia.

This has included:

- recruitment of the Director, Aboriginal Practice and placing Principal Aboriginal Consultants in all service delivery directorates
- inclusion of Family Group Conferencing in the new *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*
- establishment of the Aboriginal Family Scoping Unit
- shared support of the Aboriginal workforce through meaningful engagement and consultation, such as the State Wide Aboriginal Network (SWAN) and SA Senior Aboriginal Leaders Committee
- commitment to 10% Aboriginal employment across the workforce in departmental recruitment and retention strategies
- development of a Cultural Capabilities Framework and reviewing procedures to streamline the sources of internal cultural advice to the agency.

This work will be supported by the development of an Out of Home Care Strategy and refreshed implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle as detailed in the new *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*.

Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People

To promote the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children in this State, the Government has appointed a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People. This Commissioner with functions to improve the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people is a fundamental element of successful reform.

A key priority of this role is to ensure the voices of Aboriginal people informs the system and is embedded in all ongoing decision-making, policy and practice that affects Aboriginal children and communities.

Foster care payments extended until age 21

From 1 January 2019, the Government of South Australia is extending the payments available for foster and kinship carers until the young person in their care reaches 21 years of age.

This financial commitment will provide stability by assisting young people to stay in home-based care beyond 18 years of age. It is supported by a range of initiatives to better support young people's educational, employment and health needs as they transition to adulthood.

Multidisciplinary approach to recruitment

The Government of South Australia is working to create a skilled workforce, where staff are supported to make decisions using their professional judgment. The Department for Child Protection is changing its recruitment process to accept an expanded range of qualifications. This aims to reduce vacancies and improve outcomes for children and young people. Employees can now have degree level qualifications in a broader range of relevant disciplines in addition to social work, such as health and human services.

National partnerships

Family Matters

As part of national efforts to improve outcomes for Aboriginal children, the Department for Child Protection is a signatory to the Family Matters Statement of Commitment.

This commitment requires that the department work in accordance with the campaign's key principles:

- Applying a child-focused approach
- Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children
- Protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's right to live in culture
- Pursuing evidence-based responses
- Supporting, healing and strengthening families
- Challenging systemic racism and inequities.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

The Government of South Australia is committed to taking action to reduce the risk of institutional child sexual abuse and better support victims and survivors. The government is working to bring together the findings from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse with previous royal commissions and inquiries to develop a holistic, evidence-based strategy for reform.

The Royal Commission delivered 409 recommendations, of which 199 have been accepted or accepted in principle by the Government of South Australia to action. Details of the Government's response are in the [Government of South Australia's 2018 Annual Report](#).

The Department for Child Protection will be coordinating the annual progress reports for the next five years. This work provides an opportunity for alignment with the Nyland Royal Commission response, and will complement the overarching program of reform underway in the South Australian child protection and child wellbeing systems.

Tasmania

Tasmania is delivering an integrated solution for child wellbeing and safety as system, with an additional investment of over \$20.5 million.

Early intervention is central to the Strong Families - Safe Kids Implementation Plan 2016–2020, demonstrated by initiatives such as:

- the implementation of a new, state wide advice and referral service
- embedding an amplified wellbeing paradigm into child and family practice
- strengthening the partnership and collaborative approach to interventions across child safety services, other Government agencies and community services
- providing further investment in assertive family support that can help keep at risk children safely with their families.

In turn, this enhanced focus on strength and resilience will allow child safety teams to provide a more targeted, team-based response to child safety concerns.

The Strong Families, Safe Kids redesign continued to meet key deliverables during 2017–18 with the appointment of additional staff into frontline Child Safety Services. These positions are focused on building capacity, providing expert advice and oversight on practice issues and creating critical linkages between health practitioners and child safety practitioners. Work to develop another key element of the redesign, establishment of the Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line, progressed with the finalisation of the operational model for a new front door to the child safety system. The Advice and Referral Line is focused on early interventions through facilitating appropriate and timely support to ensure the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children.

Four non-government providers were engaged by Children and Youth Services to trial Intensive Family Engagement Services (IFES). Referrals commenced in February 2018. IFES aims to prevent the imminent separation of children from their primary caregivers, by focusing on improving family functioning and skills. IFES is more intensive (up to 15 to 20 hours per week for approximately 12–20 weeks), specialised and capable of addressing higher level, more complex issues than existing family support services.

Central to the early intervention approach is the promotion of child and youth wellbeing. The Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework was released in June 2018 and provides a contemporary and accessible definition of child wellbeing to ensure that everyone, in all parts of Tasmania's service and support system as well as in the broader community, has a strong, common understanding of child and youth wellbeing.

This is the first step in work that will help education the Tasmanian community about the definition, importance and strategies for building wellbeing.

The *Strategic Plan for Out of Home Care in Tasmania* (released in March 2017 in response to the Commissioner for Children and Young People's report *Children and Young People in Out of Home Care in Tasmania*) continued to provide a strong foundation for substantial work occurring in out of home care during the period.

The Strategic Plan outlines a positive way forward that, with sustained long-term effort, will contribute to the delivery of better outcomes for children and young people requiring short, medium or long-term care away from home. It continues previous work to reform the out of home care system that had focused on specialised care services—sibling group care, residential care, therapeutic services and special care packages for children with an extra-ordinary need for care.

The Strategic Plan articulates five key strategies that form the basis of improvement to the out of home care system. They are reflective of the prevailing themes contained within previous inquiries and reports into both the child safety and out of home care systems and align with national standards and efforts. They are:

- leading an accountable system
- defining and delivering quality care
- building the out of home care system
- delivering a safe out of home care system
- improving outcomes for children and young people in out of home care.

A Child Advocate was appointed in June 2018 to further support children in out of home care. The Child Advocate hears directly from young people about their experiences in Out of Home Care and advocates to ensure those children are getting everything they need and deserve.

The Serious Event Review Team was formally established in 2018 to undertake reviews of cases where a child/client has died or suffered a serious injury and has been involved in the Children and Youth Services (CYS) system in the last three years.

The Serious Events Review Committee (SERC), comprising senior staff from Tasmanian Government agencies and the CYS Executive, has also been established. The role of SERC is to identify themes and common issues across child death and serious injury review reports; consider recommendations arising from reviews; and make recommendations to CYS to improve the quality and safety of services to children and their families.

The out-of-home care foundations project continued in 2017–18, focusing on the quality, standard and accountability of out-of-home care provided in Tasmania. During the reporting period, an Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in Out of Home Care Tasmania was drafted and consultation sessions with service providers, carers and children with an out-of-home care experience identified the key components of an effective family based care system.

The investment of \$7.5 million saw planning commence to support young people in out of home care including extending the provision of out of home care supports from 18 up to 21 years, additional incentives to support education outcomes, and planning for the new initiative to extend support payments to foster/kinship carers whilst the young people in their care are engaged in education between the ages of 18 up to 21 years.

Amendments to the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* in 2013 reflected the Tasmanian Government's response to the recommendations of the Legislative Amendment Review Reference Committee (LARRC), established by the previous government to advise on the Principal Act. The committee provided a detailed report on the need for amendments to some 21 areas of the Act including detailed advice on the preferred policy direction to support the amendments. The amendments are aimed at a less adversarial way of working with families, which aligns and supports the Signs of Safety approach.

Extensive work was undertaken for proclamation of the third round of legislative amendments relating to the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Amendment Act 2013* on 28 February 2018.

The key changes of the 28 February 2018 amendments included increased flexibility and safeguards to ensure that decisions made about children and young people by the Court are based on reasonable grounds and in the child or young person's best interests. This ensures

that provisions within the Act better reflect and support the strengthened Objects and Principles of the Act, which were introduced as part of the amendments proclaimed in 2016.

Australian Capital Territory

The A Step Up for Our Kids—Out of Home Care Strategy 2015–2020 (the Strategy) is a five-year reform program for the child protection and out of home care system. It provides the strategic direction to ensure children and young people are at the centre of decision-making and have every chance to grow and develop in a safe, supportive and stable home environment. The Strategy strives to deliver a therapeutic trauma-informed system of care through three key domains:

- Strengthening high-risk families
- Creating a continuum of care
- Strengthening accountability and ensuring a high-functioning care system.

A Step Up for Our Kids represents a significant collaboration between government and the community. This major funding initiative reflects the Community Services Directorate's priority to provide better and earlier support to children, young people and their families. A strong emphasis is placed on preventing children and young people entering care by providing intensive family preservation services and/or reuniting them with their birth parents. In the ACT, Uniting delivers intensive services to families who have children at risk of entering care, or who have entered care. These services are aimed at keeping families together, and providing parents with the tools they need to sustain a safe home environment for their children. All referrals for this service are made by Child and Youth Protection Services.

A key focus for the ACT Government is addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children involved with the child protection system. A number of initiatives have been implemented to address over-representation including:

- The 'Our Booris, Our Way' Review. The Review is look into the circumstances of each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and young person involved in the child protection system, including those in out of home care. The Review has a focus on systemic improvements needed to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering care; improve their experience and outcomes while in care; and where appropriate, exit children from care.
- Family Group Conferencing model for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families at risk of ongoing involvement with the child protection system. Family Group Conferencing aims to divert families away from Children's Court processes and ensure all members of a child's family are contacted and encouraged to be involved in the decision-making process about their child's situation, and to keep their children safe, strong and connected to family and culture.
- Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation, in partnership with OzChild, are undertaking a twelve-month trial of Functional Family Therapy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families at risk of ongoing involvement with the child protection system. The aim of the trial is to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering, or remaining in out of home care, through interventions that strengthen families and communities.

Northern Territory

On 8 September 2016, the Northern Territory Government announced changes to improve service delivery for families. This included the creation of Territory Families as a Government agency with responsibility for the portfolios of care and protection, youth justice, youth affairs, multicultural affairs, seniors, and senior and pensioner concessions, domestic and family violence, gender equity and diversity, and children's policy.

These frontline and advocacy portfolios were consolidated into one agency to enable a focus on a whole-of-life approach to supporting families. Territory Families' establishment has created an opportunity to deliver holistic services that result in positive outcomes across the breadth of social issues that impact on Territory families.

Throughout 2016–17, Territory Families staff have worked to build a new agency focused on delivering systemic improvements to the portfolios and programs for which we are responsible. This has included establishing many of the foundations necessary for any new agency. A key priority has been the development of a new organisational structure to best reflect the responsibilities of the agency, and a regional service delivery framework that supports local decision-making, backed by a global budget model.

Operational improvements are focused on support for children and their families through the delivery of a diverse, yet connected, range of frontline services that focus on more than statutory intervention. The aim is to place child protection and youth justice services within a broader framework of programs for prevention and early intervention, and provide better support for families when they need it.

This has occurred in the context of responding to shortcomings within our systems, including those identified by the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

On 26 July 2016 the Commonwealth Government announced the establishment of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory (the Royal Commission). The Royal Commission was established in response to concerns about the treatment of children and young people in the child protection and youth justice systems in the Northern Territory.

The first public hearings for the Royal Commission were held in Darwin on 11–13 October 2016. On 31 March 2017, the Royal Commission handed down an interim report, which identified key themes of the Royal Commission, however did not put forward any recommendations or findings.

Throughout 2016–17, Territory Families worked with non-government organisations to develop a new model of early intervention services and to reform the family support service system. The purpose of the family support system reform is to shift away from an approach of crisis management to one of providing early support for children and their families.

As part of the family support system reform, new ongoing funding was committed to establish an alternative referral pathway to connect families to family and parenting support services at the community level without direct involvement in the statutory child protection system. This pathway is one aspect of a suite of services and frameworks to be developed over a phased approach to invoke meaningful change for children and families early on by ensuring they have access to the appropriate advice and assistance before harm occurs.

In February 2017, the Northern Territory Government signed the Family Matters Statement of Commitment developed by the Secretariat for National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care. This statement commits to the intent to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander peoples and their organisations to deliver better responses to children and families within the child protection system. The Statement of Commitment commits Territory Families to six core principles that will guide the improvement and reform of the child protection system.

In recognition of the valuable role of Aboriginal organisations in delivering services to Aboriginal families, Territory Families began working with non-government organisations to plan the transition of out-of-home care services to the non-government sector, with a primary focus on increasing the involvement of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in the provision of care. Territory Families engaged the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory to design and deliver an out-of-home care system where more Aboriginal children are cared for by Aboriginal carers, and where connection to culture and identity is strengthened. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Childcare has also joined this partnership with a specific focus on the Central Australia region.

Territory Families also commenced work to introduce an out of home care auditing and accreditation system to ensure all residential care facilities are providing quality care outcomes for each young person in their care, are responsive to local needs and that Aboriginal organisations and other non-government organisations with relevant experience and expertise in the Northern Territory are not disadvantaged.

On 26 May 2017, the Northern Territory Charter of Rights for Foster and Kinship Carers was launched as part of Territory Families' commitment to improving its partnership with foster and kinship carers. The Charter was developed in consultation with foster and kinship carers and other key stakeholders, and solidifies recognition of the valuable role that foster and kinship carers play in ensuring children are safe and protected from harm.

Appendix E: Inquiries into child protection services

Various inquiries into child protection services have been conducted in a number of jurisdictions in recent years. These include:

- New South Wales—Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW (Wood 2008)
- New South Wales—Keep them safe? A special report to Parliament under s31 of the Ombudsman Act 1974. Report tabled in Parliament on 30 August 2011 (New South Wales Ombudsman 2011)
- New South Wales—Responding to child sexual assault in Aboriginal communities report, December 2012 (New South Wales Ombudsman 2012)
- New South Wales—Review of the NSW child protection system—are things improving? Special report to Parliament. April 2014 (New South Wales Ombudsman 2014)
- New South Wales—Inquiry into Child Protection established by the Parliament of New South Wales Legislative Council General Purpose Standing Committee no. 2 on 12 May 2016
- New South Wales—Independent Review of Out of Home Care in New South Wales, report to NSW Cabinet (David Tune AO PSM 2016; New South Wales Government 2016)
- Victoria—Report of the Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry 2012 (State Government of Victoria 2012)
- Victoria—In the child’s best interests: inquiry into compliance with the intent of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principal in Victoria (Victorian Commission for Children and Young People 2015)
- Victoria—Always was, always will be, Koori children. Systemic inquiry into services provided to Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care in Victoria (Victorian Commissioner for Children and Young People 2016)
- Victoria—Safe and Wanted: an inquiry into the implementation of permanency arrangements (Victorian Commissioner for Children and Young People 2017)
- Victoria—...As a good parent would... Inquiry into the adequacy of the provision of residential care services to Victorian children and young people who have been subject to sexual abuse or sexual exploitation whilst residing in residential care (Victorian Commission for Children and Young People 2015)
- Queensland—Protecting children: an inquiry into the abuse of children in foster care (Crime and Misconduct Commission 2004)
- Queensland—Taking responsibility: a roadmap for Queensland child protection (Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry 2013)
- South Australia—Children in state care: commission of inquiry (Mullighan 2008a)
- South Australia—Children on Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) lands: commission of inquiry (Mullighan 2008b)
- South Australia—Inquest into the death of Chloe Lee Valentine (South Australia State Coroner 2015)

- South Australia—The life they deserve: Child Protection Systems Royal Commission report (Child Protection Systems Royal Commission 2016)
- South Australia—Final report of the select committee on statutory child protection and care in South Australia (Parliament of South Australia 2017)
- Tasmania—Report on child protection services in Tasmania (Jacob & Fanning 2006)
- Tasmania—Inquiry into the circumstances of a 12 year old child under guardianship of the Secretary: final report (Commissioner for Children Tasmania 2010)
- Tasmania—Select Committee on Child Protection: final report (Parliament of Tasmania 2011)
- Tasmania—Report of the Auditor General, no. 2 of 2011–2012, Children in out-of-home care (Tasmanian Audit Office 2011)
- Tasmania—Redesign of child protection services Tasmania: strong families—safe kids (Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services 2016a)
- Tasmania—Strong families—safe kids: implementation plan 2016–2020 (Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services 2016b)
- Australian Capital Territory—The Territory as a parent: a review of the safety of children in care in the ACT and of ACT Child Protection management (Commissioner for Public Administration 2004a)
- Australian Capital Territory—The Territory’s children: ensuring safety and quality care for children and young people. Report on the audit and case review (Commissioner for Public Administration 2004b)
- Northern Territory—Growing them strong, together: promoting the safety and wellbeing of the Northern Territory’s children. Report of the Board of Inquiry into the child protection system in the Northern Territory 2010 (Northern Territory Government 2010).
- Australia—Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse final report (Royal Commission 2017).

These inquiries generate much media interest, both locally and nationally, which heightens public interest, reinforces the need to protect children and may, in turn, affect the willingness of the general public to report suspected instances of child abuse. They also can potentially affect the reported data, as departments often respond to inquiries by introducing new policies and practices, or modifying existing one.