

Reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care (plain English summary)

There are currently 47,000 children in Out of Home Care across Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children make up most of this number.

Out of Home Care is the care of children aged 0 – 17 years who are unable to live with their primary caregivers (usually parents). The Government makes this decision when they believe the child is not safe and healthy. They are given to other people for a short or long term stay. This affects children because they often do not have a stable upbringing. Aboriginal children can also lose connection to their culture.

Taking children away from their parents reminds Aboriginal people of similar Government actions from the past that are still traumatic. We need to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in Out of Home Care. We need to support the health and safety of children and their families so that children do not need to be put in Out of Home Care.

It is good that the Government are aiming to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in Out of Home Care but more needs to be done. There should be independent oversight and more funding to support families to become healthier.

Sadly, children who go into Out of Home Care are much more likely to end up in prison. Children who are sent to prison often have very poor outcomes in life. It is also very expensive to keep children in prison. Instead of spending lots of money on locking up children as young as 10, that money should be spent on services to support families to become healthier. Children can then grow up happy and healthy in their own families and communities. It is important that Aboriginal people are involved at every step.