

The Hon Kate WASHINGTON MP

FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES, AND DISABILITY INCLUSION

Question Number	Transcript Page #	Member	Question on Notice	Answer
1	4	The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE N-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I might move on to specific questions in relation to the recommendations. Recommendation 9.2, that was accepted, asks for all First Nations children up to the age of five coming into out-of-home care to be screened using the culturally adapted developmental screening tool known as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, the readiness assessment questionnaire. Do all Aboriginal children today under five entering care currently receive that? Simple yes or no.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: There's work being done with the health department in terms of—it's something that came out of the system review—ensuring that children in out-of-home care have access to all the health supports that they need. In terms of that particular recommendation, that work is underway with the health department.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: You accepted it in July last year, implying that it was done. You're now saying that it's work being done by Health and you're not sure if—</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: What we have already got in our HealthPathways agreement is that every child coming into the out-of-home care system undergoes screening already.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: My question was is that happening?</p> <p>The Hon. EMILY SUVAAL: Point of order—</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: That is an agreement that was already in place, and work that was already being done in terms of that particular assessment. I might ask Ms Dean to respond as to whether</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>All children entering out-of-home care (OOHC) are required to receive a health assessment within 30 days.</p> <p>The Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Talking About Raising Aboriginal Kids (ASQ-TRAK) is used by NSW Health in health assessment screenings of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care (OOHC) who are five and a half years of age and under.</p> <p>The NSW Ministry of Health (MOH) is responsible for the coordination of assessments for all children and young people in statutory OOHC, and holds data on the assessments it conducts.</p> <p>DCJ is working with the MOH on a data sharing agreement to supplement an existing Memorandum of Understanding This will deliver improved cross-agency oversight of health assessments, identification of health needs and increase engagement and coordination of health services for children and young people in statutory OOHC.</p>

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			that particular assessment is in place yet. LAUREN DEAN: Ms Maclaren-Jones, thanks for the question. In relation to the assessment, all children and young people entering out-of-home care require a health assessment within 30 days of entering. I'll have to take on notice whether that's the specific assessment that's included. I can come back to you this afternoon.	
2	8	Ms SUE HIGGINSON:	Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Would you be able to take on notice and provide to the Committee the actual reasons why the places where those eight children are currently in care—those arrangements and the care being provided—are not accreditable? Ms KATE WASHINGTON: What I can say is that the children that have recently been placed in more stable, safe placements have been sibling groups. And we've only been able to achieve that by standing up our own new residential care services, the Waratah Care Cottages—the Government stepping in to be a provider of residential care for the first time in 20 years. We have stood up our own cottages. That's allowed us to place some of the sibling groups that were in high-cost emergency arrangements and place them together. These were young children, siblings, who weren't together whilst they were in high-cost emergency arrangements and are now living in very home-like accommodation in our Waratah Care Cottages with full, wraparound therapeutic supports. Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Of the eight children, how many are Aboriginal children? Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will have to take that on notice.	Answered by Paul O'Rielly on page 43 of the transcript.
3	8	Ms SUE HIGGINSON:	Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Do you have—and take on notice if you need— how many Aboriginal children remain in accredited arrangements that are the high-cost arrangements? Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I haven't got it in front of me right now, but	I am advised: As at 5 March 2025: There were a total of 163 Aboriginal children and young people in accredited high-cost emergency arrangements (HCEAs), with

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			we'll be able to provide that to you this afternoon.	breakdown by arrangement type as follows: Individual Placement Arrangement - 96 Short Term Emergency Placement - 24 Interim care Model - 43
4	14	The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE N-JONES	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How much is being spent on those five cottages?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will have to defer to Mr O'Reilly on that.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Or I'm happy for you to take it on notice.</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: Yes, we can take it on notice and come back with a forecast because, again, only three of them have been established so far. We can come back with a forecast. The cost is being offset by, obviously, the reduction in emergency placements, which are far more expensive</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The forecast cost of operating each of the Waratah Care Cottages is between \$1.47 million and \$1.74 million per home per year. With an additional \$0.5 million per year in staffing costs for the operational team who provide program delivery across all Waratah Care Cottages (known as hub-related costs).</p> <p>This would equate to an estimated \$370,000 to \$435,000 per child per year, based on four children per home, plus \$0.5 million per year for hub-related costs.</p>
5	14	The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE N-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Moving back to the residential care homes that currently exist, I'm interested to find out what is the youngest age of a child who is currently in residential care.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Ms Maclaren-Jones, I'll have to take that on notice at this point. Just touching on the residential care questions, there has been an expansion of Intensive Therapeutic Care placements to respond to the need to have children no longer in ACAs or high-cost emergency arrangements. We've expanded that program, and we've also reduced the vacancy rate across all Intensive Therapeutic Care placements. When we came into government, the vacancy rate was as high as 47 per cent. We've halved that across the State, where it's now sitting at just 20 per cent. That reduction has allowed us to</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The youngest children in the Waratah Care Cottages are siblings aged six years.</p>

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			continue to drive down the cohort of kids in high-cost emergency arrangements and to provide them with therapeutic placements—home-like placements—as opposed to hotels and motels.	
6	15	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p><i>[The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you have the average cost of the ITC?]</i></p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: We'll take that on notice and provide that this afternoon as well, I would say. But I can say that hotels and motels and unaccredited alternative care arrangements could cost upwards of \$2 million a child, which is an extraordinary outlay for the poorest outcomes. That was the system that we inherited, where there were more and more children being placed in these types of unaccredited emergency arrangements. We have been doing the work and, in a short space of time, have seen those numbers turn around by 94 per cent. This is a good-news story</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The contracted cost of a four bed Intensive Therapeutic Care Homes (ITCH), assuming four children and young people are in the home, is \$1,724,778.30 or \$431,195 per child. The average placement cost of ITCH in 2023/24 was \$644,376.</p>
7	19	Ms SUE HIGGINSON	<p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It might be something to take on notice, but how many Aboriginal children in the out-of-home care system have a case plan goal of restoration? I can take that up with Mr O'Reilly or Mr Tidball if that's—</p> <p><i>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: We'll take it on notice and hopefully give you the answer this afternoon, Ms Higginson</i></p>	<p>Answered by Paul O'Rielly on page 50 of the transcript.</p> <p>At 30 June 2024, 210 Aboriginal children and young people had a case plan goal of restoration, and 247 non-Aboriginal children and young people had a case plan goal of restoration.</p>
8	21	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Just in relation to Sherwood House—only because it was mentioned before—<i>have there been any critical incidents in the last four months at Sherwood House?</i></p> <p><i>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Not that I'm aware of, but we can take that on notice.</i></p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>In the last four months (10 November 2024 – 10 March 2025) there has been one critical incident within Sherwood House.</p>
9	22	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm aware of that, Minister. <i>I'm asking how much you have spent—your department has spent on your foster careers.</i> I'm aware of the other areas. I'm interested in your department. Ms KATE WASHINGTON: <i>I can take that on notice.</i></p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>In terms of carer recruitment, the emergency foster care project team was established with nine staff including a</p>

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				<p>manager, project officers, admin officer, psychologist and senior communications officer. The total cost is estimated at \$1,226,484 per annum. The proportion of team costs attributed to direct recruitment of carers is not able to be specified.</p> <p>DCJ re-entered the general foster care recruitment market in November 2024. The emergency foster care project team's remit has expanded to recruit general foster carers. A further \$302,488 has been committed for recruitment activities, including advertising and events.</p>
10	22	The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE N-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: <i>If you could also advise how many new DCJ foster carers have been recruited, and that's not the emergency one; it's additional.</i></p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: <i>Okay.</i></p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>From 11 November 2024, DCJ expanded its foster care recruitment program to include short term and long-term foster care.</p> <p>DCJ has achieved an additional nine new authorisations which can provide one or more of the following types of foster care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four households can provide long term care. - Six households can provide short term care. - Seven households can provide emergency care. - All nine households can provide respite care.
11	23	The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE N-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Disability housing properties is something I ask about at each estimates. I'm interested to know the number of properties that are currently in DCJ?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I believe that there are currently 800, but it might be 804.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That's okay. That was the</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Properties returned vacant to the Department of Communities and Justice and not suitable for continued use for disability services are put to temporary 'meanwhile use' for other NSW housing and residential support priorities, wherever possible.</p>

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			<p>number last time. In relation to the supplementary question, I got a further breakdown that said 721 properties were occupied for people with disability accommodation and services. Of the remaining properties, 40 were allocated for out-of-home care, 10 currently used for transitional housing, one currently used to deliver a philanthropic-funded program and two are being privately rented. The transitional housing, is that for people with disability or in out-of-home care?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: That's under the program. What we've ensured is that with any available stock that we've got, it is being used for government priorities. Right now, given that there's a housing and homelessness crisis, we did not want to see any of our housing sitting idle in that context. So we've ensured that when residents choose to leave the homes that they have been in, that stock is utilised either to help us in our goals</p> <p>in out-of-home care, as you mentioned, to find additional placements for children and young people or for temporary accommodation, which is under the responsibility of Minister Rose Jackson.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: It can be assumed that those 10 properties and the two privately rented ones are not for people with disability?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I would have to take that on notice</p>	<p>These are not used exclusively for people with disability.</p> <p>Of the total 804 properties in the disability portfolio, there are 715 currently being used for disability purposes.</p> <p>Of the remaining 89 properties, 58 are under 'meanwhile use'. Use of these properties includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 used for Out of Home Care • 10 used for transitional housing • One used to deliver a program supporting women exiting custody; and • Two used for private rental.
12	30	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'll be asking the acting commissioner this afternoon about the length of time that it takes. Minister, I might move to education plans—again, something I ask about quite often in estimates. The Ombudsman's report, recommendation 5, said that DCJ should report publicly on the number of school-age children who are in out-of-home care. I asked you last estimates. You advised last year that 70 per cent of young people in out-of-home care were enrolled. What are the figures for this year?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I'm really glad you asked this question, Ms Maclaren-Jones. When I came in as Minister, I was shocked to see that we did not have this data being shared from Education to out-of-</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The most recent Department of Education (DoE) school attendance data update is anticipated in April 2025. Once received, DCJ will complete analysis and linkage to OOHC data, to be completed by 30 June 2025.</p> <p>Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) caseworkers work with local school staff, carers and children to ensure personalised learning and support planning processes are administered for all school-aged children in out-of-home care</p>

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			<p>home care, because one of the critical ways to ensure children thrive is to ensure that they are engaging with their schooling and furthering their education. Current figures in terms of access to education—Mr O'Reilly has the exact figures in front of him.</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: In the 2023 school year there were 12,215 school-age children under PR to the Minister, and 70.5 per cent of those were enrolled in government schools.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That was the figure I gave you. I'm interested in this year's figure.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I can add to that. It's not due until February. We got the data last month, so our team in DCJ are just analysing those results at the moment.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Perfect. I'm happy for you to take that figure on notice.</p> <p>This would probably be the same, but how many children have education plans in place that are currently in out-of-home care?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: The expectation is every single child in out-of-home care is engaging with some form of schooling.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm aware of that but I'm interested in the number of young people in care that have an education plan. I would expect that's data that the department should be sharing.</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: We'll come back to you on that.</p>	<p>enrolled in NSW Government schools, who hold children's Education Plans. These are recorded on an individual level within a child's file, therefore data is not able to be extracted.</p>
13	31	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I refer to supplementary question 49 from budget estimates—and this is actually from 2023—in relation to the exits from out-of-home care to homelessness services. I also asked about it last year and was advised that the departments are working towards transparency.</p> <p>I'm interested to know what has been done in relation to better oversight of young people who have left out-of-home care and are going into homelessness, particularly the ones who are still under the age of 18.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: It's a really important cohort to ensure that</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>DCJ works with young people before and after they leave care to provide support for safe and stable housing. A personalised Leaving Care Plan and After Care Financial Plan is developed to cater for their after care needs, including housing accommodation.</p> <p>Young people who have left care are able to seek help and</p>

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			<p>we have got visibility on and caring for. It is also one for which it is very difficult to have that visibility. But I might hand to Ms Dean in terms of the progress that we've made in ensuring that those children have the supports that they need.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm interested to know, do you have that data? I'm happy to talk more broadly this afternoon, but are you actually getting that data from Minister Jackson in relation to it, or is anyone actually monitoring the number of young people presenting to SHS who are under the age of 18 who have come from out-of-home care?</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: If I can assist, Minister, my recollection is this is a subsequent report by the Ombudsman?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: Correct.</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: There was a protocol for data collection, certainly, in respect of specialist homelessness services, which was instituted. I could take on notice a more granular response but a data capture protocol was implemented, and we can come back to you on that.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I can add to that. There has been a dashboard that has been developed. We've actually consulted with the NSW Ombudsman. It's being led by Homes NSW but there's obviously an intersection with child and family. In terms of the data, it's likely to be released in April or May this year.</p>	<p>advice post 18 from DCJ or their OOHC agency, through the Care Leavers Line, and can be referred to a DCJ funded specialist aftercare service.</p> <p>The Dashboard referred to is primarily focussed on monitoring children 12-15 years in OOHC who present alone to Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS), so that an appropriate child protection response can be provided.</p> <p>Data and insights from the dashboard will be used to provide regular information to the NSW Ombudsman. Data for the 2024-25 financial year will be published in late 2025.</p>
14	31	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: The other thing was in relation to the mandatory arrangements for SHS to report young people who are obviously under 18 to DCJ or that they've got a minor who is presenting to SHS.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Sorry, what's the question?</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: It is in regard to reporting by an SHS or any youth service that a young person is presenting who is under the age of 18.</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: I believe that that is a component of what we've just covered in responding to that previous question, but we might</p>	<p>Answered by Anne Campbell on page 31 of the transcript.</p>

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			<p>take that on notice.</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: I can add to that. I've got the most recent data. It has actually improved from last year. In terms of children under the parental responsibility of the Minister, there were 66 children that fell into that particular category. The previous year, it was 75. In terms of where those children are coming from, the largest proportion are from relative and kinship care. If there are issues in those SHS services where NGOs are concerned about those children and young people under parental responsibility, they get escalated to the deputy secretary in the Child Protection and Permanency area.</p>	
15	32	The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE N-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE-JONES: Thank you, Minister. We'll look forward to seeing the next data. In response to questions on notice at the last estimates, it was provided that in the 2022-23 year, 137,129 children had ROSH reports closed due to competing priorities. That was from the March 2024 estimates.</p> <p>Can you provide the updated data now?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: It's not at my fingertips, but we can either provide it to you later or take it on notice.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Refer to QTON#15, 25, 26 Table.</p> <p>Reports that are 'closed due to competing priorities' are still reviewed and assessed. During this process caseworkers may also engage with the family directly or via other funded services or supports.</p>
16	33-34	The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE N-JONES:	<p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: From the questions on notice from 4 September, the last hearing, in relation to how many children were recommended by the panel to enter care versus the number that were returned to parents, 337 Aboriginal children were recommended to enter care and only 161 were returned to family. Where did the other 344 of the 842 Aboriginal children discussed at the MAC panels go? What is happening in terms of the number of these children?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: That is a good question, Ms Higginson, and we will endeavour to answer that this afternoon or take it on notice.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The detail of 161 Aboriginal children returning to family is incorrect.</p> <p>The response to the question taken on notice on 4 September 2024 was: Of all the 842 Aboriginal children presented and discussed at Safeguarding Decision Making for Aboriginal Children (SDMAC) panels, 161 Aboriginal children were discussed at more than one SDMAC panel.</p> <p>Following SDMAC panels engagements:</p>

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 337 Aboriginal children entered OOHC 505 Aboriginal children did not enter OOHC <p>The 161 Aboriginal children that were returned to a SDMAC panel required further discussion including, practice advice, cultural support and guidance in decision making.</p>
17	38	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Following on from this morning, in relation to the \$7.1 million for the disability taskforce, the Minister indicated that there are 19 full-time staff. That would work out to be around \$370,000 per person, so I'm assuming that there is an underspend.</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: Over two years.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Has there been an underspend in that \$7.1 million?</p> <p>ANNE CAMPBELL: No, because it includes, as I said earlier today, 19 FTE across TCO and DCJ. But we also organised consultations. There are opex costs, we call it in government language, which are the on costs.</p> <p>I'm happy to provide on notice the average across that, but I think it's much less than what you've just said.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The 2024/25 budget provided \$7.1 million over two years for the Disability Reform Taskforce to respond to recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission and support the NSW Government's engagement in national disability reforms. This includes the design of foundational supports and changes to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.</p> <p>The funding provides for 19 full time equivalent employees in The Cabinet Office and the Department of Communities. Salaries are in line with each agency's relevant employee grades and payrates. Costs include associated corporate services and operating expenses.</p>
18	38	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Moving to residential care, the average placement costs have been previously provided by DCJ for the high-cost emergency accommodation across the residential care categories. But it only included ACA, the individual placement arrangements, the special out-of-home care and the short-term emergency placement, but not the Interim Care Model. Was there a reason for that?</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: I don't know if there was a reason for that omission or not, but we can find out for you.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Average costs were not provided as Interim Care Model (ICM) is a contracted service type and not a fee-for-service arrangement like ACA, IPA, STEP and special out-of-home care.</p> <p>The contracted costs for of a four-bed ICM, assuming four children and young people are in the home, is \$1,286,391 or \$321,598 per child. Average placement cost of ICM in 2023/24</p>

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				was \$416,479.
19	39	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: So what's the youngest you would take?</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: I'm not sure what the policy is off the top of my head—the youngest we would take. But, again, these are judgement-based decisions about trying to keep kids together wherever we can. For newborns, we would normally go for emergency foster care instead. Then there's a consideration about the importance of that compared with the importance of keeping siblings together—balancing all of that.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: <i>If you could take on notice what the policy is about the youngest age. I'm obviously interested if you've got three-year-olds, eight-year-olds and 10-year-olds with 15-year-olds or 16-year-olds that are from different families, and how that mix—</i></p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: <i>Yes</i>, you might recall earlier today I was talking about the matching process. That's really important, which is why we sometimes carry vacancies in ITC and most likely will in DCJ resicare as well—a small amount of vacancies—because we won't be matching children where there's not an appropriate match. An extreme age difference, when the kids are not related, would be inappropriate. There are safeguards in the decision-making to make sure that we don't put kids at risk.</p>	Answered by Paul O'Rielly on page 39-40 of the transcript.
20	40	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you have an average age or the youngest age of a young person currently in—</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: <i>ITC is for 12 and up.</i></p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: <i>So there isn't anyone under 12?</i></p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: <i>There could be some under 12. Sometimes they are approved by exception. Particularly if they are in a small house with only their siblings, they could be approved with different approval</i></p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive Therapeutic Care (ITC): 6 children • Intensive Therapeutic Care Significant Disability (ITC-SD): 15 children

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			<p>mechanisms. That's possible, but the policy position, generally, is 12.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Can you just take on notice if there is, and how many are under 12?</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: Yes, absolutely. Just again, they are individual decisions based on family connection, if they are approved.</p>	
21	40	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Just in relation to ITC, I came across on the website four different types: ITC significant disability therapeutic care, the supported independent living, the therapeutic sibling option placement and then the therapeutic home-based care. Could you explain the difference between the four?</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: I can try, certainly, but some of this I might need to take on notice. ITTC, that's a transitional care model for children who need a particularly intensive kind of therapeutic service before they return to an ITC or somewhere else, but that is a very small program. There are less than 30 places across the State and they're distributed in different locations in four-bedroom houses. There is disability ITC, which I mentioned earlier, and therapeutic home-based care, where we are providing services in the home with children and carers</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>An overview of the different service types can be found at https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/documents/service-providers/out-of-home-care-and-permanency-support-program/itc-icm-and-sil/ITC-Fact-sheet-explaining-ITC-service-system-and-types.pdf</p>

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22	40	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p><i>[PAUL O'REILLY: I can try, certainly, but some of this I might need to take on notice. ITTC, that's a transitional care model for children who need a particularly intensive kind of therapeutic service before they return to an ITC or somewhere else, but that is a very small program. There are less than 30 places across the State and they're distributed in different locations in four-bedroom houses. There is disability ITC, which I mentioned earlier, and therapeutic home-based care, where we are providing services in the home with children and carers.]</i></p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: With that one, do they have rostered staff?</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: I might come back to you, just for completeness, about the range of scenarios where therapeutic home-based care is provided because there would be a range. We'll take that on notice.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Therapeutic Home Based Care is a carer-based placement.</p> <p>An overview of the different service types can be found at https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/documents/service-providers/out-of-home-care-and-permanency-support-program/itc-icm-and-sil/ITC-Fact-sheet-explaining-ITC-service-system-and-types.pdf</p>
23	40	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I might move on to ROSH reports. Looking at the dashboard data, which I know comes up to, I think, September last year, it says that during that quarter 9,639 children needed a response within 24 hours. I'm interested to know how many received a response within 24 hours.</p> <p>MICHAEL TIDBALL: We would need to take that on notice.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The dashboard data mentioned is not current and relates to the 2023/24 rather than Q1 2024/25.</p> <p>Of the 47,941 ROSH reports allocated a response priority: 25% (or 12,104) were assigned by the Helpline as response priority: within 24 hours</p> <p>The actual time to respond to these reports is set out in QTON #23, 24 Table.</p> <p>46.5% (or 5,624 reports) of the 12,104 reports with assigned priority of <24 hours were responded to within 24 hours. A</p>

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				further 10,384 reports were responded to within 24 hours even though they had a response priority of within 72 hours (7,160 reports) or a response priority of within 10 days (3,224).
24	40	The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE N-JONES:	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I assume you'll need to do the same for the 29,544 children that required a response within 72 hours. MICHAEL TIDBALL: Yes, happy to take that on notice.	I am advised: Refer to QTON#23.
25	41	The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE N-JONES:	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: In answer to a supplementary question put in last year in regard to the number of reports that were closed due to competing priorities, the combined figure for the Central Coast-Hunter district was 26,466 reports closed due to competing priorities, which is quite high. In this dashboard it actually has it broken down: Central Coast, I think, 7,500, and the Hunter, I think, is 18,000. But it is quite high. So I'm just interested to know— MICHAEL TIDBALL: I understand the question. I think we would like to give it a considered response, if we may. If I can take that on notice?	I am advised: Refer to QTON#15, 25, 26. Table Reports that are 'closed due to competing priorities' are still reviewed and assessed. During this process caseworkers may also engage with the family directly or via other funded services or supports.
26	41	The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE N-JONES:	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: That would be good. The other one is in relation to the south-west. They had 14,000, and the reason I'm asking is that if you look at the staff vacancy rates in some of these areas, particularly for the Hunter, they weren't that high, and yet they're still not able to get to the ROSH reports. Is it about staffing allocation? Is there something more that's happening? LAUREN DEAN: If I could attempt to answer? Thank you for the question. There's a few things that happen. Largely we sit in a space where essentially we have a supply and demand issue. So we shouldn't work on the basis that we take all of the ROSH reports coming in with the allocation or available caseworkers that we have and work on a	I am advised: Refer to QTON#15, 25, 26. Table

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			<p>premise where we would be able to see everybody. We know that we sit in a space where the child protection system does have a supply and demand issue where we are seeing a year-on-year increase of ROSH reports. That really then sits in the space around what does the department do in regard to delivering our best child protection service. But also, from a broader reform agenda, we need to determine, for instance, early intervention, family preservation and a range of other things that need to be available to us to be able to see as many children and young people reported at ROSH.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Could I get the update for the last year, the 2023-24 figures based on that same breakdown by district?</p> <p>LAUREN DEAN: Yes, of course. We can supply that</p>	
27	44	Ms SUE HIGGINSON:	<p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: How many Aboriginal community controlled mechanisms have been set up as part of the case management policy? BIANCA JARRETT: AbSec have been funded under Strong Families, Our Way to establish 15 Aboriginal community controlled mechanisms. I believe three are currently operational, but there are another several that will be operational imminently. I can provide you some more specific information on notice.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>AbSec has been funded under Strong Families, Our Way to establish 15 Aboriginal community-controlled mechanisms. Currently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 are in the planning and formation stage. • Three have been established, of which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ two are fully operational ○ one is partially operational, pending administrative requirements. <p>Additionally, AbSec is engaging with more than 30 communities across seven DCJ districts to scope potential expansion of Strong Families, Our Way.</p>

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28	52	Ms SUE HIGGINSON:	<p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: What are the numbers of children that were removed without a warrant, though?</p> <p>LAUREN DEAN: I'd have to come back to you. As I understand it, the total entry into care number for 2023-24 was 1,767 children. I don't have the Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal breakdown, though, in that cohort, so I can take that on notice.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Refer to QTON# Q28, 29 Table</p>
29	52-53	Ms SUE HIGGINSON:	<p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: I think one of the points that keeps being made to me is if the removal without warrant is supposed to be an exception to the normal practice, then what actions are DCJ taking to enforce that requirement that it is only in an emergency?</p> <p>LAUREN DEAN: In response to that, I'm obviously reiterating what Minister Washington said this morning. We know we still have a lot more work to do. The things that we're doing though obviously are the SDMAC panels. They've been established in all districts. You did ask for some updated numbers. I think we have those. Ms Jarrett might help me with those. While she's looking for those, in addition to the SDMAC panels, obviously we're working hard to understand the impact of Active Efforts. I would say that we're still immature in relation to really enhancing the Active Efforts requirements. So making sure that we do avoid the use of emergency powers. The SDMAC panels are due for review as well in coming months. We're keen to understand whether they are still early enough in the process. If they're too late in the process, what the community representation looks like and how we can help ensure that we are still working to avoid the use of emergency removals. I note that it is highly likely there will still need to be some emergency removals throughout the course of time, and that's because there are some situations where children and young people are at immediate risk who are unable to stay at home.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: If I can get the district breakdowns, that would be great.</p> <p>BIANCA JARRETT: It's only from July to September 2024. We'll get the next quarter data at the end of this month. From July to September</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Refer to QTON# Q28, 29 Table</p>

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			2024, 129 Aboriginal children and young people completed a SDMAC panel. But we can take that on notice and get you more fulsome data from the previous year as well.	
30	14	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: What are the qualifications for the staff there?</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: They are similar to other therapeutic care qualifications, but we can come back with something more detailed later.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Children and young people in Waratah Care Cottages are supported by a team of skilled workers. The Manager Client Services and House Manager are directly employed by the Department of Communities and Justice and are required to hold tertiary level qualifications in a relevant discipline. Each shift in the home has both Residential Care Workers and a Shift Mentor.</p> <p>Residential Care Workers hold a minimum Certificate IV qualification in Community Services, Social Work, Social Welfare, Psychology, Nursing or Mental Health or relevant field. The Shift Mentor must hold a minimum Diploma level qualification in Community Services, Social Work, Social Welfare, Psychology, Nursing or Mental Health.</p>
31	15	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: How many cases have there been of the transfer of Aboriginal children from the department to ACCOs?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: As you would well know, this is a really complex area, but it is incredibly important to ensure that Aboriginal children and young people are getting access to the cultural supports and services that they need for their wellbeing that can be provided through Aboriginal community controlled organisations. There has been a rather—I don't want to say, "significant increase". There has been an increase in the number of children transitioning just recently. I don't know if I can put my hands on it now, but the department has been doing a lot of work to try to assist in the process, understanding that there are ACCOs—</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Between 1 July 2022 and 28 February 2025, there have been a total of 283 transfers from DCJ to ACCOs. Of these, 89 transfers occurred in the last 12 months.</p>

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			<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: They are DCJ, not NGO? I'm asking about DCJ transfers, not NGO, so just confirming it's DCJ you're referring to?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Apologies—our transfers to ACCOs? I'll have to come back to you with that figure.</p>	
32	28	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES:	<p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Back to the disability properties, in relation to the 40 that are currently used for out-of-home care, are five of those the Waratah cottages?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: I will just have to check. I know that certainly the Waratah Care Cottages have come from our disability housing portfolio and have been repurposed to serve the new purpose of supporting these young children.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Is it your intention that the remaining 35 will become residential group homes run by the department?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: We don't run any group homes. I'm sorry, I don't understand the question.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is it your intention that the remaining 35 will become more cottages?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: At this stage, no. Those other ones that you refer to are being used for a purpose already with out-of-home care to provide safe, stable placements for children.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Who's running those cottages or homes?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: They would be with various NGO providers.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And they're all for young people with disability in out-of-home care?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: They are for children in out-of-home care.</p> <p>The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And just the two properties are currently for private rental?</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>Refer to QTON#11. The five Waratah Cottages are included in the number of properties being used for out-of-home care.</p> <p>Two properties are under temporary 'meanwhile use' arrangements for private rental.</p>

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			Ms KATE WASHINGTON: You asked me about those before and I said I would take that on notice.	
33	34	Ms SUE HIGGINSON:	<p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Is the Government providing residential care to any Aboriginal children now in New South Wales?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Yes.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Have you got an idea of the number? Is that something you could get to me?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Yes, absolutely. Is it on the dashboard?</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: It probably is. I'm also wondering what the current cost is as well.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Certainly the number is currently and publicly available on the dashboard. In terms of cost, we could get an estimate to you on that.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The NSW Government currently provide two forms of residential care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average cost for a child in the Sherwood Program in 2023/24 was \$750,326. • The forecast cost of operating Waratah Care Cottages equate to an estimated \$370k-\$435k per child per year based on 4 children residing in each home (plus the \$0.5m/year for hub related costs).
34	34-35	Ms SUE HIGGINSON:	<p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: How many of the newly recruited family time workers and caseworkers since September 2024 are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: In terms of the family time workers, I'm not sure.</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: We're still wrapping up the recruitment. We're not finished yet.</p> <p>Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Right, so it's not finished. Is it looking like there are—</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: There's a mix of people.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: There is good news in terms of the family group conferencing.</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: Aboriginal facilitators?</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: Yes.</p> <p>PAUL O'REILLY: Yes. I don't have the numbers, but, yes, there has been.</p> <p>Ms KATE WASHINGTON: As I last saw, the people on the panel, I think 46 per cent are Aboriginal.</p>	<p>I am advised:</p> <p>The Department of Communities and Justice is currently in the process of making offers in the first round of recruitment for family time workers. Of the 13 family time team leaders recruited, four are Aboriginal.</p>

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			PAUL O'REILLY: We can check that. Ms KATE WASHINGTON: We can confirm that a bit later. I think that's what I saw. Certainly a high proportion of those workers are Aboriginal and are able to support important conversations with Aboriginal families.	
35	41	The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE N-JONES:	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: I'm interested in contract variations, and this relates to PSPs. How many contracts have been varied in the last 12 months with NGOs? ANNE CAMPBELL: I think we'll take that on notice.	I am advised: In the last 12 months (20 March 2024 to 19 March 2025) there have been 80 PSP contract revisions.
36	49	The Hon. NATASHA MACLARE N-JONES:	The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: Do you have a policy around time frame for the urgency of category 1 and 2? KATHRYN MCKENZIE: We do. I'm happy to provide that information, yes. The Hon. NATASHA MACLAREN-JONES: And then also if there has been a delay or an extension in that period of time that you haven't been able to get to. KATHRYN MCKENZIE: Sure, happy to do that.	I am advised: The Ageing and Disability Commission (ADC) Helpline has internal guidelines to assist staff to prioritise responses to reports. All reports are based on risk and urgency. ADC assess the information to determine what action to take. Urgent matters are assessed as a priority 1 or priority 2. Priority 1: Cases that require action or a response as a priority with the response timeframe being one business day and these cases are actioned first. Priority 2: Cases that require action or a response with the response timeframe being two to four business days. The ADC is responding to priority 1 cases within one business day. The response to priority 2 matters can be delayed at times.

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Attachment QTON#15, 25, 26 Table

Number of ROSH reports closed due to competing priorities by district, 2022-23 to 2023-24

District	2022-23		2023-24	
	Number	% of NSW total	Number	% of NSW total
Central Coast	7,509	5.5%	8,035	5.1%
Far West	1,328	1.0%	1,567	1.0%
Hunter	18,957	13.8%	19,734	12.4%
Illawarra Shoalhaven	5,763	4.2%	8,650	5.4%
Mid North Coast	9,355	6.8%	11,414	7.2%
Murrumbidgee	11,350	8.3%	13,691	8.6%
Nepean Blue Mountains	11,396	8.3%	13,114	8.3%
New England	10,620	7.7%	12,003	7.6%
Northern NSW	5,507	4.0%	7,527	4.7%
Northern Sydney	5,848	4.3%	6,153	3.9%
South Eastern Sydney	6,068	4.4%	6,188	3.9%
South Western Sydney	14,770	10.8%	19,523	12.3%
Southern NSW	4,254	3.1%	5,169	3.3%
Sydney	5,398	3.9%	5,458	3.4%
Western NSW	9,169	6.7%	9,174	5.8%
Western Sydney	9,820	7.2%	11,323	7.1%
Statewide Services	17	0.0%	72	0.0%
Total	137,129	100.0%	158,795	100.0%

Note: Competing priorities refer to reports which were reviewed and assessed at the Community Services Centre (CSC) but closed due to competing priorities prior to a face-to-face assessment by a DCJ caseworker.

Source: ChildStory - CIW Annual data

Attachment QTON#23, 24 Table

Table 1: ROSH reports by final response priority, and whether they were responded to, 2023-24

Final Response priority	Responded				Not Responded					Total
	Allocate to field assessment and field assessment commenced	Review existing open case or link the report to a field assessment (Timeframe not applicable)	Sub-Total	% of Responded	Allocate to field assessment but field assessment not commenced yet	Triage decision pending or to close	No triage, closed at Helpline	Sub-Total	% of Not Responded	
<24 Hours	12,104	4,976	17,080	46.6%	1,170	18,403	17	19,590	53.4%	36,670
<72 Hours	22,919	14,619	37,538	32.9%	2,556	73,837	62	76,455	67.1%	113,993
<10 Days	9,907	8,621	18,528	21.5%	1,126	66,488	16	67,630	78.5%	86,158
Not Applicable – CYP added at field assessment	1,727	47	1,774	100.0%	0	0	0	0	0.0%	1,774
Blank	1,284	562	1,846	22.4%	141	6,203	61	6,405	77.6%	8,251
Grand Total	47,941	28,825	76,766	31.1%	4,993	164,931	156	170,080	68.9%	246,846

Table 2a: ROSH reports whose field assessment commenced by final response priority, and response time (Number), 2023-24

Final Response priority	Response Time					Total	Total (%)	% of Responded within
	<24 Hours	24 hours to <72 Hours	72 hours to <10 days	10 days or more	Not Applicable			
<24 Hours	5,624	1,287	2,539	2,652	2	12,104	25.2%	46.5%
<72 Hours	7,160	1,809	5,538	8,411	1	22,919	47.8%	39.1%
<10 Days	3,224	531	2,304	3,846	2	9,907	20.7%	61.2%
Not Applicable – CYP added at field assessment	0	0	0	0	1,727	1,727	3.6%	Not Applicable
Blank	265	62	319	638	0	1,284	2.7%	Not Applicable
Grand Total	16,273	3,689	10,700	15,547	1,732	47,941	100.0%	

Table 2b: ROSH reports whose field assessment commenced by final response priority, and response time (Percentage), 2023-24

Final Response priority	Response Time					Total
	<24 Hours	24 hours to <72 Hours	72 hours to <10 days	10 days or more	Not Applicable	
<24 Hours	46.5%	10.6%	21.0%	21.9%	0.0%	100.0%
<72 Hours	31.2%	7.9%	24.2%	36.7%	0.0%	100.0%
<10 Days	32.5%	5.4%	23.3%	38.8%	0.0%	100.0%
Not Applicable – CYP added at field assessment	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Blank	20.6%	4.8%	24.8%	49.7%	0.0%	100.0%
Grand Total	33.9%	7.7%	22.3%	32.4%	3.6%	100.0%

Notes:

1. Response time is calculated by the time between assigned transfer date from Helpline and the date when field assessment commenced. For example, ROSH reports will be counted as being responded with 24
2. <24 hours also includes ROSH who has been linked to an existing field assessment (field assessment commenced date earlier than transfer date)
3. ROSH Reports are counted as 'responded within timeframe' if response time is within the corresponding final response priority. For example, ROSH reports whose response priority are less than 72 hours were

Source: ChildStory - Annual data

Attachment QTON#28,29 Table

Children and young people (CYP) who were removed without a warrant by district and Aboriginality, 2023-24

District	Aboriginal	Non-Aboriginal	Total
Western Sydney District	20	45	65
South Western Sydney District	16	38	54
Illawarra Shoalhaven District	21	12	33
Nepean Blue Mountains District	20	12	32
Central Coast District	10	19	29
Murrumbidgee District	n.p.	<5	22
Hunter District	6	13	19
Mid North Coast District	9	7	16
South Eastern Sydney District	8	6	14
Northern NSW District	6	6	12
Southern NSW District	<5	n.p.	12
New England District	5	5	10
Western NSW District	7	0	7
Northern Sydney District	<5	0	<5
Sydney District	0	<5	<5
Grand Total	152	177	329

Notes:

- 1. The data include removals under removal order type S43 (1), S43(2), and S43(3), which refer to removal of children and young persons without warrant.
- 2. The data for non-Aboriginal child and young people also includes children and young people with Aboriginality status 'Not Stated' or blank.
- 3. The District reflects where the child/young person's case plan is held on their legal order start date during the year.
- 4. Cells with small values (<5) are suppressed to maintain client confidentiality. Other values are labelled as 'n.p.' (not published) when a suppressed value could otherwise be calculated.

Source: ChildStory - CIW Annual Data