



The Director
General Purpose Standing Committee No. 3
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

8 March 2016

Re: Reparations for the Stolen Generations in New South Wales (Inquiry) – Questions on Notice

I wish to thank the Committee for the opportunity to appear at the inquiry on such an important matter and would like to reiterate our support for reparations to members of the Stolen Generations. While we support full reparations for the Stolen Generations, our focus has been on two specific aspects of reparations: guarantees against repetition and measures of rehabilitation, reflecting our mandate and focus on Aboriginal children and families, and the need to keep children safe at home with their family and culture.

AbSec has been advocating to the NSW Government our *Plan on the Page for Aboriginal children and young people* which we believe will contribute to a strong safety-net of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation that effectively meet the needs of Aboriginal children, families and communities through holistic and individually tailored Aboriginal child and family services across the state working towards safe communities and meeting the needs of vulnerable Aboriginal children and young people.

AbSec believes this approach to caring for Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities in the future will have greater impact on reducing removals of Aboriginal children from families.

Please find enclosed my response to Questions on Notice.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Ireland
Chief Executive Officer

Encl

Question: Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Is it possible to indicate how many Aboriginal children have been put into care with a non-Aboriginal family, a white family?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Could you give an estimate?

AbSec Response:

AbSec believes the publication and transparency of data by the Department of Family and Community Services in relation to Aboriginal children and young people in care can be utilised to better implement targeted supports and services for Aboriginal families and communities.

According to the most recent figures we have, as published by the AIHW for the 2013/14 period:

- Of the 6496 Aboriginal children reported in the OOHC system in NSW, 2220 were noted as living with non-Aboriginal people (approx. 34%). This includes both non-Aboriginal kinship and foster care placements.
- Our analysis suggests that the proportion of Aboriginal children placed with Aboriginal carers has steadily decreased over time, falling almost 10% since 2000/01, with an associated increase in both non-Aboriginal kinship and foster placements.

AbSec notes that our members and communities remain concerned about the placement of Aboriginal children. AbSec expect that FACS would have access to more “up-to-date” data, and that better transparency and sharing of this data (and other similar data relating to Aboriginal children and families) with AbSec would serve to build Aboriginal community confidence.

Question: The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I ask a question on that specifically because the Healing Foundation, which gave evidence before lunch, said that kids are fundamentally better when they stay at home with their families. Are you aware of any programs across the State or indeed the country that allow kids to stay at home or that provide the kind of support that they need? I am happy for you to take that question on notice?

AbSec Response:

AbSec believes there are not enough early intervention services in NSW available to support Aboriginal children, young people and families. Despite Aboriginal children and families being significantly over-represented in the statutory system, there is not proportionate funding targeted to supporting Aboriginal children and families. That is, despite identified need, Aboriginal services continue to be significantly under-funded.

There are some programs around the State that endeavour to support families to remain safely at home through targeted or universal/community-based supports. Broadly, such approaches work best when delivered early, and where communities are empowered to design, develop and implement (as well as evaluate) the services provided in their communities.

Currently the Department of Family and Community Services is reforming the *Targeted Earlier Intervention Programs*. Some of the programs being considered as part of this review are:

- Community Builders
- Families NSW
- Aboriginal Child Youth and Family Strategy
- Triple P
- Child Youth and Family Support
- Youth Hope
- Staying Home Leaving Violence
- Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Services
- Getting it Together

Aboriginal intensive family-based supports are also in place in some communities, in which Aboriginal workers support families at risk of having their children enter the statutory child protection system through a brief, high intensity home-based intervention. As noted above, these programs are often under-funded, preventing their ongoing development and continuous practice improvement. Other models such as Family Group Conferencing seek to empower families to make decisions, supported by an independent Aboriginal facilitator. While this might not result in children staying at home necessarily, it promotes Aboriginal decision making which may see Aboriginal children remain within extended kinship or community networks if they are unable to remain at home for a period of time.