



Inquiry into annual and financial reports 2024–2025

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Ms Chiaka Barry MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Redirected to: Minister for Children, Youth and Families

Reference: HCSD

Hearing: 12 November 2025

In relation to: Child welfare - out of home care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Question received: 19 November 2025

Answer Due: 28 November 2025

1. I note the reduction in out of home care days used, and hope this is a reflection of actual trends on the ground, not just kids being turned away and not supported. Can you provide some context to these numbers, what has changed on the ground that has resulted in this reduction?
2. If these changes are sustained, are you expecting further significant reductions in out of home care days being used this financial year?
3. Can you talk me through the work of the Children, Youth and Families Panel, how does it work in practice in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth?
 - a. What are the practical measures are being implemented because of the work of the Children, Youth and Families Panel?

Mr Michael Pettersson MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. The reduction in out of home care days can be attributed to two key factors:
 1. A decrease in the overall number of children and young people entering out of home care; and
 2. For those who do enter care, they are in care for shorter periods before they are safely restored to their families.

These outcomes reflect the early success of the significant reforms implemented by Children, Youth and Families (CYF) over recent years, and demonstrate our commitment to delivering the *Next Steps for Our Kids Strategy 2022–2030*. The reform program is centred on shifting to a family services model that provides earlier, more targeted support. This approach is designed to strengthen families, improve outcomes, and where safe and appropriate avoid the need for a statutory child protection intervention.

2. As the CYF division continues to strengthen its focus on preservation and restoration services for children, young people and their families, one of the expected outcomes of the reform is a gradual decline in the number of out of home care days used over the coming years.

This is a significant reform program, and there is only one year of post-implementation data available. Also noting that the ACT is a small jurisdiction and, as a result, year on year results can fluctuate significantly, it is too early to determine whether the recent reduction represents a sustained trend. There will be close monitoring of the changes over the next several years to better assess the impact and effectiveness of the CYF reform program.

3. The Children, Youth and Families Preferred Providers (Panel) is a group of non-government organisations, including an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO). These organisations support people involved with, or are at risk of becoming involved with, the ACT's child protection system. As part of the wider CYF reform program a commitment has been made to transfer some existing services to ACCOs.

Under the *Next Steps for Our Kids Strategy*, a funding target was set based on the current proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people engaged with statutory child protection services.

- The aim is for up to 30 per cent of all child protection out of home care and support services to be delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children currently represent 30 per cent of the total population of children in out of home care. This would mean that all First Nations families involved in statutory out of home care would be case managed by ACCOs (achieving this will also depend on individual family preferences).

Some of the Preferred Providers commenced in November 2024 and the roll out of services will continue into 2026. More Preferred Providers will be brought on as the system matures.

There are several practical outcomes/measures already being seen through the Preferred Providers including:

- Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation (Yerrabi Yurwang) is currently the only ACCO in the ACT that holds Care and Protection Organisation registration. As a Preferred Provider, Yerrabi Yurwang delivers Sustaining Families services – intensive family support, preservation and restoration services – to families with children aged 0-17 years engaged with, or at risk of engagement with statutory services.
- The Preferred Provider Panel Deeds were executed with 12 providers in September 2024. The Panel Deeds include clauses that clearly set out the Territory's expectations for how they work with and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and carers.
- The CYF division and providers continue to work together to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and carers engaged with out of home care services receive culturally safe support which prioritises meeting their cultural needs and adheres to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people – placement principles.
- The ACT Aboriginal Children's Forum (AACF) has been established, and is co-chaired by Yerrabi Yurwang and the Health and Community Service Directorate. It brings together ACCOs, Preferred Providers, other service providers and ACT Government staff who work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. The AACF has a practical focus to build the capability all preferred providers to:
 - Ensure policies and practice guidelines focus on keeping children with families, kin and culture and embed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people – placement principles.
 - Ensure active efforts are made to support for restoration and/or ongoing contact with family when children and young people are in out of home care.
 - Contribute to the reform of the child and family services system to address systemic racism and build culturally sensitive practice within mainstream services.
 - Review tools used to monitor and ensure the cultural needs of children and young people in out of home care are prioritised and met.
- CYF commissioned artwork by young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who attend the Young Women's Group and Young Men's Group at Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation. This artwork will feature on resources for young people to help explain what supports are available when they are leaving care, many of these supports will be delivered by Preferred Providers. The artwork is a visual reminder of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family deep connection with family, community and culture.

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Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature: 

Date: 4.12.25

By the Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Mr Michael Pettersson MLA