



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2023-2024

Mr Mark Parton MLA (Chair), Ms Jo Clay MLA (Deputy Chair),
Mr Michael Pettersson MLA

ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE DURING PUBLIC HEARINGS

Asked by **MS JO CLAY MLA** on 28 July 2023: **MINISTER STEPHEN-SMITH** took on notice the following question(s):

Ref: *Uncorrected Hansard Transcript* 28 July 2023 [pages 8-9]

In relation to:

Regarding child protection responses, can you provide:

- * a breakdown of the cases where emergency action was taken, including the primary cause of emotional abuse and psychological abuse?*
- * the frequency of reports of emotional abuse in the reports not appraised by child protection services?*

MS CLAY: So is your current review aimed at making sure that when people dismiss those 15,500 reports each year as not reaching the threshold — including for emotional and psychological abuse which we do recognise under the Act already, but I am concerned we are not actually dealing with it in the right way — are you making sure that the people who make that decision are making it correctly?

Ms Sabellico: Yes. That is all part of our end-to-end review of the system and the frameworks, as well as then the work on the Act in terms of looking at how do we better redefine some of those elements, that then also have a look at how we can actually get involved earlier and sooner, and work with our NGO sector to give more timely response rather than waiting for everything to come through the child protection door.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think the other thing that might be helpful, Ms Clay, if it would be on interested we could take on notice — I do not have the data in front of me, Ms Lopic might — of when you say that this is your sort of impression of the system, that psychological, emotional abuse is not necessarily meeting a threshold as easily. I think we could take on notice a breakdown of when—particularly when emergency action is taken and what then the primary cause of that is, because that is actually not what is reflected in the data.

It often is around exposure to domestic and family violence. Emotional abuse is quite a substantial reason for child abuse protection services to actually take action.

MS CLAY: That would be fantastic. If you could also include in that the frequency of emotional reported in the 15,500 not appraised—

Ms Stephen-Smith: I do not know if we will be able to gather that data and—

MS CLAY: If it is readily available, do. And if it is not, just an explanation as to why, that is fine.

MINISTER STEPHEN-SMITH: The answer to the Member's question is as follows: –

1. Breakdown by primary harm.

Table 1.a - Number of **Emergency Actions** by primary harm category 2022-23

Primary Harm Category Identified	Emergency Action (n)
Abuse - Emotional	19
Abuse - Neglect	19
Abuse - Physical	3
Abuse - Sexual	1
Abuse- Family Violence	4
Serious Persistent Conflict	1
(blank)	29
Total	76

Noting primary harm category is associated with the appraisal outcome rather than the Emergency Action order Table 1.b is also provided.

Table 1.b - Number of **appraisals with a statutory response outcome** by the identified primary harm category, 2022-23

Primary Harm Category Identified	Statutory Response Appraisal Outcome (n)
Blank	15
Abuse - Emotional	20
Abuse - Neglect	27
Abuse - Physical	9
Abuse - Sexual	1
Abuse- Family Violence	4
Serious Persistent Conflict	2
Total	78

2. Reports not appraised.

Of the 20,473 Child Concern Reports (CCR), 91 per cent did not have an appraisal commence. All CCR's are actioned with a first stage assessment. Actions are determined for each matter such as closure, for information, referral for service support or into other pathways for consideration. The data is not easy to extract as it would require a manual process to review each record to identify the assessed issue at this stage.

Approved for circulation to the Select Committee on Estimates 2023-2024

Signature:



Date:

15 / 8 / 23

By the Minister for Families and Community Services, Ms Stephen-Smith MLA