

Tasmania

Currently in Tasmania, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 3.4 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be in out-of-home care, and only 41.3 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kin or other Indigenous carers in 2017. These statistics – particularly the poor rate of placement with kin–demonstrate that Tasmania has a significant way to go to eliminate over-representation and improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.

There are, however, some promising developments. At present, the child protection system is in the process of being redesigned, with the Tasmanian Government investing \$51.2 million to better support families and children at risk. As part of this redesign, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre has seen greater commitment by the government to work collaboratively with ACCOs to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre has been granted increased funding to provide early supports to Aboriginal families at risk of having their children enter the child protection system. When an Aboriginal child is deemed at risk, the Department of Health and Human Services (the Department) has committed to contacting ACCOs at the earliest stage to ensure that families receive culturally safe, intensive supports. This is an important step in tackling issues early on. Nevertheless, greater investment is needed, as only 14.1 per cent of total real recurrent expenditure for child protection was spent on family and intensive family support services in 2016-17 in Tasmania.

Another concern voiced by community in relation to early intervention is the fact that on some occasions the Department took approximately eight weeks to investigate a notification that an Aboriginal child was at risk. This limits the family's and child's ability to receive the supports they need at the earliest possible stage to prevent issues escalating and the child being removed.

Finally, child safety staff at the Department are undergoing training on how to better support Aboriginal families, though it is too early at this stage to assess the impact of the trainings.