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MEDIA RELEASE

Report on Government Services

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Koorie kids deserve better, says Commissioner for Aboriginal Children

From: Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Andrew Jackomos, PSM

Victoria's Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People has challenged the Andrews Government to act now to stop the alarming rise of Koorie children being taken into care away from family homes.

The latest national Report on Government Services revealed that Aboriginal babies and children in Victoria removed and living away from immediate family homes rose by 42% in just 12 months to 30 June 2013.

"Koorie babies and children are now placed in care away from their homes 12 times more often than other Victorian children," Commissioner Jackomos said.

"We should be deeply troubled by this. We know the best care is supported care at home, and kids thrive best in their own homes. We also know that Koorie children in care are more likely to be sexually abused and that many are on a pathway to the youth justice and the criminal justice system."

"Our challenge is to reduce the numbers and break this cycle through holistic responses developed in partnership with community that strengthen families, respond to the drivers of child protection and keep children safe and thriving."

The Productivity Commission report on services showed that, at June 30 2014, 62.7 per 1000 Aboriginal children were in out of home care compared to 5.1 for non-Aboriginal. In 2014, this represented 1308 Victorian Aboriginal children, against 922 one year before.

"We know how to reduce this overrepresentation. The solution is for Government to work wisely with trusted Aboriginal community leaders.

"I am expecting that with a new Government, and a promise of transparency and partnership, we will see an improvement in the safety and wellbeing of Victoria's Koorie babies and children.

Only through facts and true transparency can we together develop just responses to this very serious situation."

Mr Jackomos said there was also a far greater tendency to report Koorie babies and children. In Victoria, Aboriginal children were nearly 5 times more likely to be reported to child protection than non-Aboriginal.

"I welcome the State Government's Royal Commission into Family Violence as this is a major driver for the reporting of babies and children to Child Protection. But we are still challenged to find the best responses and solution. Far too often for Koorie children, we are seeing their subsequent removal from their families."

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