OUT-OF-HOME CARE

1,061 children in OoHC as at 30 June 2018 a 1% increase from 2016-17.

89% are Aboriginal children, of which only 34% were placed with Aboriginal carers.

Children with disabilities accounted for 12% of the total 1,061 children in OoHC.

NOTIFICATIONS

In 2017-18 the total notifications received by Territory Families was 24,743, an 11% increase from 2016-17.

80% related to Aboriginal children.

88% were received from professionals with the highest notifiers being police who accounted for 43% of all notifications.

As with previous years, neglect remains the most common notification category and accounted for 47% of all notifications.

INVESTIGATIONS

10,877 notifications proceeded to investigation a 18% increase from 2016-17

SUBSTANTIATIONS

2,110 notifications were substantiated a 5% decrease from 2016-17

Source: Territory Families 2017-18
Letter to Parliament

The Honourable Natasha Fyles MLA
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Parliament House
DARWIN NT 0801

Dear Minister

In accordance with section 43(1)(a) of the Children's Commissioner Act, I am pleased to provide you with the Annual report of the Northern Territory Children's Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

Ms Colleen Gwynne
Children's Commissioner
31 October 2018
Report Summary

This report covers the discrete functions and responsibilities of the Children's Commissioner.

**Snapshot**
Snapshot provides a general overview of the Office of the Children’s Commissioner (OCC) Northern Territory including staffing, key highlights, activities and major achievements of the year.

**Complaints**
A summary of the OCC complaint function is provided at Complaints, including an analysis of data with trends identified and how complaints have been dealt with in 2017-2018.

**Own Initiative Investigations**
Own Initiative Investigations provides a summary of the findings and recommendations of the two investigations conducted by the Commissioner in 2017-18.

**Monitoring**
Monitoring summarises the outcomes of case reviews relating to the care and protection of vulnerable children including young people leaving care, the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and harm and exploitation in care data and trends. This chapter also includes data relating to child protection notifications, investigations and substantiations.

**Looking Ahead**
The future priorities and issues that will be a focus of the OCC are set out in Looking Ahead, it provides an overview of the key principles to be promoted through the functions and powers under the Children’s Commissioner Act 2013.
## Contents

- Abbreviations ........................................................................ 8
- Explanatory Notes ................................................................. 10
- Message from the Commissioner ........................................... 12
- Snapshot .............................................................................. 14
  - The Commissioner ............................................................ 16
  - Office of the Commissioner ............................................... 17
  - Role and Functions of the Commissioner .......................... 18
  - Our Performance – The Year in Review ............................... 20
- Community Engagement ............................................................ 24
- Complaints Function ................................................................. 28
- Own Initiative Investigations .................................................... 40
- CAPCA Monitoring ................................................................ 44
  - Operational Data ................................................................ 44
  - Notifications, Investigations and Substantiations ............... 46
  - Monitoring Investigations of Harm and Exploitation of Children in Out-of-Home Care ............................................. 64
  - Out-of-Home Care Data .................................................... 80
  - Leaving Care Data ........................................................... 88
  - Review of Case Manager Contact with Children in Care .... 100
  - Aboriginal Child Placement Principle ............................... 102
- Looking Ahead ...................................................................... 108
- References ........................................................................... 112
- Figures ................................................................................. 113
- Tables ................................................................................... 115
## Abbreviations

### A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACCG</td>
<td>Australian Children’s Commissioners and Guardians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANZCCG</td>
<td>Australia and New Zealand Children’s Commissioners and Guardians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACPP</td>
<td>Aboriginal Child Placement Principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act</td>
<td><em>Children’s Commissioner Act 2013</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGD</td>
<td>Department of Attorney-General and Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIHW</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAPCA</td>
<td><em>Care and Protection of Children Act</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAT</td>
<td>Child Abuse Taskforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCIS</td>
<td>Community Care Information System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCYP</td>
<td>Commission for Children and Young People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDRPC</td>
<td>Child Deaths Review and Prevention Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Children’s Commissioner Northern Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Royal Commission</td>
<td>Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Royal Commission Sexual Abuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DoH</td>
<td>Department of Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSS</td>
<td>Department of Social Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>MLA Member of the Legislative Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>NGO Non-Government Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>NT Northern Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>NT Royal Commission Royal Commission and Board of Inquiry into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>OCC Office of the Children’s Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>OoHC Out-of-Home Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Reporting Year The period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>POC Placement of Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>PP Provisional Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>TF Territory Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>TILA Transition to Independent Living Allowance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>UN United Nations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Explanatory Notes

Use of the Term Aboriginal

The *Care and Protection of Children Act* Part 1.3, section 13 provides the following definition for the term Aboriginal:

a) a descendant of the Aboriginal people of Australia; or
b) a descendant of the Indigenous inhabitants of the Torres Strait Islands.

In accordance with the legislative definition, this report uses the terms Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal throughout this report except when quoting a document that specifically uses the term Indigenous. When making comparisons with national data where the term Indigenous may have been used we have substituted the term Aboriginal to ensure consistency.
Use of the Term Vulnerable Children

The term vulnerable child is defined in Section 7 of the Care and Protection of Children Act to include those who have been arrested or are on bail, on youth justice orders, on volatile substance abuse orders, those suffering from a mental illness, a mental disturbance, or a disability as well as those who have sought or are seeking child related services or are in the child protection system. In addition, a young person who has left the CEO's care is taken to be a vulnerable child.
I am pleased to present the tenth Annual Report as Children’s Commissioner of the Northern Territory (NT). This report has been prepared pursuant to section 43(1)(a) of the Children’s Commissioner Act 2013 (the Act).

The 2017-18 year has been one of significant change for the OCC and government agencies we work with, in particular Territory Families (TF), as well as the implementation of the whole-of-government reform agenda. The NT Government is implementing reforms to better support vulnerable children and young people and to deliver the recommendations of the Royal Commission and Board of Inquiry into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory (the NT Royal Commission). The NT Royal Commission found that there were a number of limitations in the structure, capacity and functions of the OCC that prevented effective oversight of the youth justice and child protection systems.

The NT Royal Commission recommended that the Act be repealed and new legislation enacted to establish the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP). The legislation is to include additional functions and powers to address identified limitations and to provide strong independent oversight for all children and young people in the NT, with a particular focus on children and young people in care or youth detention.

In line with the recommendations of the NT Royal Commission, during the reporting period the OCC commenced a restructure to better align our roles and functions to accommodate the future expansion of the OCC.

It is always important when implementing large reform and recommendations that we do not just look at the big reform but also fix the existing service delivery gaps.

Likewise, the government agencies and service providers who are responsible for determining steps to implement recommendations need to have a shared understanding regarding the context as to why the recommendation was made. This way there is a genuine investment to drive and achieve change, not just achieving on paper compliance.

Over the last year we have continued to shine a light on the experiences of vulnerable children. Our See Us. Hear Us. Know Us. Project saw young people hosting our Facebook page and telling their stories. Children and young people told us that photos used to represent them are often not a true representation and they are often portrayed in a negative way, subsequently we facilitated a photo competition as part of our campaign. This competition provided children and young people the opportunity to showcase their true self.

The OCC facilitated six photography workshops across the Northern Territory to coincide with school holidays.

This reporting period our team responded to 236 approaches and dealt with 92 complaints, which included two own initiative investigations.

One of the own initiative investigations highlighted that the sharing of confidential information regarding vulnerable children still represents a barrier to a holistic response despite previous amendments to the Care and Protection of Children Act (CAPCA) to allow for this in certain circumstances. The balance between the privacy rights of children and their families and the need for service providers to access information to protect children continues to be debated. The safety of the child must be the primary consideration for all service providers when making critical decisions regarding children and young people. The current legislative framework under the Information Act and the CAPCA creates confusion and a reluctance by individuals acting on behalf of government or government funded services to share information which often prevents timely interventions.

The provision of inadequate and ad-hoc services and support to the vulnerable children subject to these investigations, together with a culture of reporting and referrals with no or limited evidence of meaningful actions or outcomes and the failure to appropriately assess cumulative harm were also detailed as part of the findings.
The concept of a better information sharing framework has been mooted for many years and recently emerged in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Commonwealth Royal Commission) as an area for immediate reform. While the NT Government has argued that the need to protect children and keep them safe supersedes their right to privacy, there is still no real change in this area.

One of my functions is to monitor the administration of the CAPCA, in so far as it relates to vulnerable children. As in previous years the increase in child protection notifications to TF continues. The total number of notifications received by TF during 2017-18 was 24,743, an 11% increase from the previous year with 80% of the notifications relating to Aboriginal children. Of the total notifications only 44% were deemed to meet the threshold to proceed to investigation. TF undertook 10,877 investigations with 18% having an outcome of substantiated. Of concern is that nearly 500 children were the subject of a subsequent substantiation within 12 months. As reported in 2016-17 neglect remains the highest harm type for notifications and physical harm was the most prevalent for substantiated investigations.

As reported in the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) child protection data collection, Aboriginal children were around 7.1 times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be the subject of substantiated abuse or neglect nationally. Significantly the AIHW data analysed for the period 2007-08 to 2016-17 for children aged between 0-12 years (per 1,000 children) clearly shows that children in the NT have by far the highest child protection substantiation rate, which for 2016-17 was 33.7 compared to the second highest rate in Victoria of 12.4.

Aboriginal children in the NT represent 89% of the total children in Out-of-Home Care (OoHC), this is consistent with the 2016-17 reporting period. This is significantly higher than the national average which at 30 June 2017 was 58.7% per 1,000 children.

The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle (ACPP) stresses the importance of cultural continuity and requires an Aboriginal child to be placed with direct kin or an Aboriginal person in the child’s community or another Aboriginal person or failing this, with someone who is sensitive to the child’s needs and culture of the child’s community. The ACPP is legislated in Section 12 of the CAPCA.

As at 30 June 2018, 34% of Aboriginal children were placed with Aboriginal carers. This is a 2% increase on last year. Given the high number of Aboriginal children in OoHC, there needs to be a concerted effort to recruit more Aboriginal carers.

I note the NT Government’s investment of $4.2 million over four years to recruit and support Aboriginal foster and kinship carers.

This is a key recommendation from the NT Royal Commission and I look forward to seeing the outcomes of this initiative.

The protection of vulnerable children and young people is a complex area and is a shared responsibility across government agencies, non-government organisations, communities and families. A co-ordinated approach to child protection and youth justice system reform is vital together with an ongoing commitment to placing the best interests and needs of children at the centre of all decision making that impacts them.

I am continually awed by the resilience and resourcefulness of the vulnerable children and young people I meet throughout the NT. I also recognise the experience and dedication shown by staff working directly with highly vulnerable families and their children in a complex and challenging environment.

Finally, I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the small but dedicated team from my office for their professionalism and commitment throughout the year.

Ms Colleen Gwynne
Children’s Commissioner
31 October 2018
Snapshot
Our Vision

“Children and young people in the Northern Territory reach their full potential.”

Our Mission

To ensure the rights and best interests of children and young people are safeguarded and promoted.

Our Core Business

• Deal with and manage complaints
• Identify and address issues affecting vulnerable children
• Monitor development and reform of legislation and policy relevant to vulnerable children
• Contribute to improved decision making
• Community awareness and education

Our Key Principles

• Best interest of the child at the centre
• Culturally appropriate and responsive
• Shared service delivery and collaboration
• Evidence based best practice
• Early intervention and prevention
The Commissioner

Who is the Commissioner?

Colleen was appointed as the Children’s Commissioner in 2015.

Colleen’s understanding of the Northern Territory context has been developed by having more than 30 years’ experience in a range of portfolios across the Territory. She has worked in urban, rural and remote locations. Colleen has experience in the development of evidence based policy and practice, particularly in the area of public safety as it relates to vulnerable children and families and the broader community.

Colleen is committed to the principles of independence, impartiality and procedural fairness and believes in the importance of working collaboratively with service providers to achieve the best outcomes for our children and young people.

Colleen drives a clear philosophy and methodology when working through the unique and challenging characteristics of the Northern Territory. She believes we all have a moral obligation to protect our most vulnerable and a part to play in achieving the real and lasting change needed to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

Outside of Colleen’s role as Children’s Commissioner she is actively engaged in the community and mentors and supports young people through sport, using it as a vehicle to promote their physical, social and mental health and to provide pathways for them to thrive as individuals and future leaders.
Our People

Office of the Children’s Commissioner

Children’s Commissioner

Assistant Commissioner

Manager Monitoring & Investigations

Monitoring & Investigations Officer

Manager Monitoring & Investigations

Monitoring & Investigations Officer

Monitoring & Investigations Officer

Complaints Officer

Manager Strategy, Rights & Advice

Community Engagement & Education Officer

Strategy Officer

Business Manager 0.5 FTE

Office Manager
Role and Functions of the Commissioner

The Commissioner has responsibility for six core functions contained in the Act:

- Dealing with complaints about services provided to vulnerable children and monitoring service providers’ responses to any reports by the Commissioner. The Commissioner also has an ‘own initiative’ investigative capacity.
- Undertaking inquiries related to the care and protection of vulnerable children.
- Monitoring the implementation of any government decisions arising from an inquiry conducted by the Commissioner or any other inquiry relating to the care and protection of vulnerable children.
- Monitoring the response of Territory Families to allegations of the harm or exploitation of children while they are in OoHC.
- Promoting an understanding of and informing public discussion about the rights, interests and wellbeing of vulnerable children.
- Monitoring the administration of the Care and Protection of Children Act as far as it relates to vulnerable children.

The Commissioner is an independent statutory position established under provisions contained in the Children’s Commissioner Act.

The Commissioner promotes the interests of vulnerable children and represents their interests with government and the community.
The Commissioner undertakes a number of other tasks including:

- Providing information and advice to government and Ministers in matters pertaining to vulnerable children.
- Responding to issues involving national policy related to child protection and child wellbeing, either independently or in collaboration with Children’s Commissioners, Guardians, Advocates and Ombudsmen from other Australian jurisdictions.
Our Performance –
The Year in Review

Highlights and Achievements 2017-2018

During the reporting period the findings and recommendations for the NT Royal Commission and the Commonwealth Royal Commission were handed down. The OCC has commenced implementation of stage 1 of the recommendations from the NT Royal Commission. Stage 1 has included a funding allocation to increase the OCC’s capacity to monitor and audit the youth justice and child protection systems, and inspect detention and OoHC facilities. This has involved realigning the structure of the office together with the introduction of new roles to accommodate the expanded functions.

Other changes to the functions and responsibilities of the OCC saw the transfer of the secretariat and convenor roles of the NT Child Deaths Review and Prevention Committee to the NT Coroner’s Office. The OCC managed 236 approaches and 92 were deemed to be complaints in relation to vulnerable children across the Northern Territory. The complaints resulted in 27 referrals and 37 resolutions to the relevant service provider. A major component of the work undertaken in 2017-2018 by the OCC were two own initiative investigations, one was in relation to the services provided by a Territory Families authorised carer, identified as a result of harm or exploitation in care notifications and the other was in relation to the alleged sexual assault of a toddler.

The Community Engagement and Education role and function was embedded into daily business and the See Us. Hear Us. Know Us. Project commenced in 2017, which was designed in collaboration with young people across the NT. The campaign gave a platform for children and young people to have their voices heard, particularly those that have been or are part of the child protection or youth justice systems in the NT.
Royal Commissions

The NT Royal Commission was established on 1 August 2016. Following 54 days of formal public hearings, 214 witnesses, 1000 exhibits and 6,000 pages of transcript the final report was delivered on 17 November 2017. The report highlighted that the way the NT Government had been dealing with youth justice and child protection was not working and that substantial change was needed.

The final report included 142 findings and 227 recommendations to address the significant failings identified by the Royal Commission. Sixteen of the recommendations related directly to the OCC including legislative amendments to the Act and the establishment of a CCYP. The establishment of a CCYP will see the OCC functions significantly expand from vulnerable children to include all children and young people in the NT.

In addition to the NT Royal Commission, the Commonwealth Royal Commission also handed down its final report in December 2017 bringing to an end a five year inquiry.

The inquiry heard from over 7,981 survivors and received 1,344 written accounts, which resulted in 2,575 referrals being made to police. The final report comprised 17 volumes and included a total of 189 recommendations.

A number of the recommendations contained in both of the Commissioner's own initiative investigations conducted during 2017-2018 aligned with recommendations of the Royal Commissions.
Community Engagement

The Commissioner and staff of the OCC delivered or participated in over 54 presentations, events or forums. This included presentations to a number of service providers and children and young people on the role and functions of the OCC. Of significance was the Commissioner’s key speech at the special reconciliation week gathering at the Telegraph Station in Alice Springs. The Commissioner was honoured to be invited to this event by representatives of the Arrernte Nation supported by Lhere Artepe, Ampe-kenhe Ahelhe (Children’s Ground) and Akeyulerre.

Attendance at these events, functions and presentations are extremely valuable to the OCC as they provide an opportunity for us to learn first-hand from children and young people, practitioners, and government and community organisations about issues affecting vulnerable children and their families in the Northern Territory.

Engagement with Children and Young People

With the roll out of the See Us, Hear Us, Know Us, Project a range of activities occurred in 2017. This included the ‘Show us the real you!’ photo competition, photography workshops in Darwin and Katherine, young people hosting our Facebook page and engagement in community events.

A highlight was partnering with CREATE Foundation to enter a couch into the 2018 Couch Surfing Competition during NT Youth Week. The young people who raced the couch came in first place satisfying the Commissioner’s competitive spirit.
National Involvement

The Australian Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates Group (ACCG) expanded its reach in 2018, welcoming the New Zealand Commissioner for Children as a full member, the group is now known as the Australian and New Zealand Children’s Commissioners and Guardians group (ANZCCG).

The ANZCCG is a network for children and young people’s Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates across Australia and New Zealand. It meets twice yearly, and this year met in Melbourne in November 2017 and Perth in May 2018.

ANZCCG commissioned a report by the Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia titled “Assessing the Quality and Comprehensiveness of Child Protection Practice Frameworks” (Finan, S., Bromfield, L., Moore, T., & Arney, F. (2018)), the objective was to “develop a benchmarking tool identifying the core domains of child protection practice frameworks and a procedure for assessing the extent to which the approach within each component reflects good practice based on best available evidence.”

The group also produced a Joint Participation Paper which documented consistent themes emerging from consultations with children and young people across Australian jurisdictions between 2015 and 2018.

The ANZCCG identifies priorities to shape their work and direction as a group, they are: achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people; promoting children and young people’s engagement and participation; upholding the rights of children and young people in youth justice detention; improving the safety of children and young people in organisations; promoting children and young people’s safety and wellbeing; and ending violence against children and young people.

In May 2018, the Commissioner attended a Roundtable examining the extent to which Australia is progressing the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The roundtable was hosted by National Children’s Commissioner, Megan Mitchell.
As part of the See Us. Hear Us. Know Us. Project, the OCC hosted a photo competition titled ‘Show us the real you!’. The competition was a way for young people living in the NT to give us a glimpse of their world. Young people were encouraged to send in photos of them doing their favourite hobbies, engaging with their local community, volunteering, playing sport, exploring their favourite places, hanging out with friends or showing their culture.

There were over 70 entries submitted from children and young people across the NT. The competition was judged by a panel which included the Commissioner, photographer Clive Hyde, NT News Chief of Staff Jill Poulsen, NT Youth Roundtable Chairperson Alicia Kent and NT Police Officer Danniela Mattiuzzo. The five judges selected the top 30 photos to be printed and displayed in exhibitions across the NT and printed in the NT News. The top three were awarded prizes and the winner had an article printed in the NT News.
Winner: Christopher Dhumalwuy Gurruwiwi

2nd Place: John Guyula

3rd Place: Josh Maralungurra
Following on from the ‘Show us the real you!’ photo competition, young people requested photography lessons to learn more about taking photos. The OCC engaged two local photographers, one in Darwin and one in Katherine to run photography workshops for young people. More than 35 young people attended these workshops which ran from January to July 2018. The young people in Katherine did a story telling project about a week in the life of a Katherine young person, displaying photos of their everyday lives. Adjacent are some of the young people who participated in the workshops.

**Katherine Youth Beats** – The OCC attended the Katherine Youth Beats event during NT Youth Week. Young people and their families were photographed and the photos were printed for the families to take home. The OCC created a positive environment with the young people whilst also allowing for difficult conversations about their lives. Over 80 families attended the event in Katherine.

**Henbury Luncheon** – The OCC was a sponsor for the Henbury Luncheon supporting children and young people with a disability to engage in education.

**Midnight Basketball** – The OCC conducted consultations with young people at the Midnight Basketball program to hear what young people in Darwin and Palmerston thought about safety. The sessions were run in groups with over 80 young people in attendance. Some of the key themes that came from the consultations were:

- Young people felt safest when at home or around family.
- Young people felt unsafe when they were walking at night or alone.
- Young people would talk to family and/or friends when they felt unsafe.
Couch Surfing – The OCC and CREATE Foundation partnered to enter a couch into the 2018 Couch Surfing Competition during NT Youth Week. The event, run by Anglicare NT, aims to raise awareness about youth homelessness. This year was the first time the OCC and CREATE Foundation had partnered to enter a couch and the young people who raced the couch came in first place, just ahead of the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre team.

Kentish Youth Advisory Group – The OCC presented to the Kentish Lifelong Learning Youth Advisory Group about the functions of the office and the rights of children and young people in OoHC. The OCC engaged with young people in OoHC and spoke about some of the issues they might experience and how they can contact the OCC if they need to make a complaint.

Alice Springs Youth Action Group (YAG) – The OCC met with the Alice Springs YAG chairperson to discuss engagement opportunities with the OCC and young people living in Alice Springs. The OCC promoted the Alice Springs YAG events on OCC social media and maintains open communication with the YAG to ensure the voices of young people in Alice Springs are heard.

CREATE Foundation Amazing Race – The OCC participated in the CREATE Foundation Amazing Race where young people complete a scavenger hunt visiting services in Darwin City. The young consultants heard a presentation about the functions of the OCC and the support which can be provided to a young person in care. The young consultants then had to complete a matching game on the rights of children and young people in care.

NT Youth Roundtable – The OCC presented to the NT Youth Roundtable on the functions of the office and the See Us. Hear Us. Know Us. Project. The young people come from across the NT and are leaders in their communities. The OCC consulted with the young people about ideas for engagement moving into 2019.

Taminmin Girls Academy Opening – The Commissioner was delighted to attend the official opening of the Role Models and Leaders Girls Academy in Humpty Doo. Based at Taminmin College, this is an excellent program that seeks to support and empower Aboriginal girls to increase their attendance at school and boost engagement with their learning. It is the fifth Role Models and Leaders Academy established in the NT. So far, 300 girls across the NT have participated in the program.

Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations (UN) – The Commissioner and OCC staff attended the event hosted by the Australian Youth Representative to the UN, Amos Washington in Darwin. Amos consulted with several groups of young people during his visit to the NT to identify local issues that were important to them.
Complaints Function

One of the core functions of the OCC is its complaint mechanism. The power to deal with complaints is contained in section 10 (1)(a) of the Act. In order for the OCC to have jurisdiction to deal with a complaint it must relate to service provision to a vulnerable child or vulnerable children. Independent of government, the Children’s Commissioner has unique powers to gather evidence in relation to complaints made to the OCC. The Commissioner’s statutory remit allows her to request information from service providers to ensure the needs of vulnerable children and young people are being met.
Grounds for a Complaint

A complaint must be made on one or more of the following grounds:

1. a service provider failed to provide services for the child, as a vulnerable child; or
2. the required services provided for the child by the service provider failed to meet the standard that was reasonably expected.

Services and Service Providers

A service provider is clearly defined under the Act and can be a government or non-government organisation providing services or activities relating to the care or wellbeing of a vulnerable child. However, the Act specifically excludes a court from the definition of service provider and a complaint related to an act or an omission of a police officer.

When dealing with a complaint the Commissioner investigates the circumstances surrounding decisions made and services provided to vulnerable children and young people by service providers, including whether legislative, policy and practice standards were complied with in making the decision.

Her unique data and information gathering powers and power to access a child or young person to talk with them enable her to give children a voice and determine whether the outcome of the decision or service was in the best interests of the child.

Provisions for Making a Complaint

In accordance with section 20 of the Act a complaint can be made by a person who is or has been a vulnerable child or an adult acting on behalf of a vulnerable child. The Commissioner has the discretion to decline to deal with a complaint for a number of reasons contained in section 24 of the Act. A complaint can be made orally or in writing and, subject to all the required information being received by the OCC, the Commissioner must make a decision within 28 days of receiving the complaint as to whether or not to deal with the complaint.

Complaint Management Process

Parts 4 and 5 of the Act clearly set out the procedural requirements for processing a complaint. The complaint management process is clearly detailed in the Act and is illustrated in the following flowchart.
Figure 1: Complaint Management Process

- **Approach**

  - **Does it meet the Grounds of a Complaint (s.21)?**
    - **No**
    - **Yes**
      - **Assessment of Complaint (s.23)**
        - **Preliminary Inquiry can occur**
          - **No Further Action**
          - **Decline Complaint**
          - **Refer Complaint**
          - **Resolve Complaint**
          - **Investigate Complaint**
Approaches to the Office

When the Commissioner receives an approach, a determination is made as to whether or not the approach constitutes a complaint in accordance with the legislation.

In 2017-18, there were 236 approaches received by the Commissioner compared to 302 in the previous year, a 22% decrease, of these 144 were determined to be enquiries only and as such were not dealt with as a complaint, compared to 216 for 2016-17.

The Commissioner may determine that an approach does not proceed to a complaint if it falls outside the Commissioner’s jurisdiction or does not meet the grounds for a complaint. It was evident in 2017-18 that many complainants were unaware of the availability of complaint mechanisms offered by the relevant service provider. Once aware, many complainants opted to utilise those processes to resolve their matters directly with the relevant service provider.

The OCC has also embedded community engagement strategies in its day-to-day business to provide education and information about the role, functions and responsibilities of the OCC. This includes advice about the OCC’s own complaint mechanism and raising awareness around service providers’ complaint mechanisms.

All approaches are recorded and provide valuable information and assist in identifying systemic issues impacting on vulnerable children and young people.
Preliminary Inquiries

Section 23 (2) of the Act allows the Commissioner to make preliminary inquiries where required to determine how best to deal with a complaint and where it may be necessary to seek further information. These inquiries will indicate whether a complaint has substance, its issues and complexity and identify any discrete circumstances. The Commissioner may also utilise her statutory powers to gain access to further information where necessary.

The Act provides the Commissioner with a period of 28 days to make a decision on how the complaint will be dealt with, during which preliminary inquiries may be made. These inquiries can include: the review of relevant documentation, close-circuit television (CCTV), site inspections and speaking with the child and other parties.

Of the 92 complaints received by the Commissioner, 82 preliminary inquiries were conducted. This is an 86% increase compared to 44 the previous year.

This increase reflects the Commissioner’s focus on ensuring that decisions on the application of the complaint management process are well informed and evidence based.

Wherever possible, and when appropriate to do so, the OCC will speak with the child or young person who is the subject of the complaint, providing them an opportunity to share their story, experience and concerns. Giving vulnerable children and young people a voice ensures that any proposed course of action to resolve complaint issues is inclusive of the view of the child or young person.
Dealing with a Complaint

In accordance with section 23 of the Act the Commissioner has four options to deal with an approach that satisfies the grounds for a complaint, these are to:

1. investigate the complaint;
2. resolve the complaint without an investigation;
3. decline to deal with it; or
4. refer the complaint to another person or body.

Once the Commissioner has determined how the complaint will be dealt with, the complainant is informed of the decision. If the decision is to investigate, resolve or refer the complaint, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the relevant agency and service provider are also advised.

Complaints

In 2017-18 the Commissioner dealt with **92 complaints, involving 132 children.** This is a 7% increase in complaints from the 2016-17 reporting period, as well as a 4% increase in the number of children involved.

As part of the complaint management process, the Commissioner meets with Territory Families once per fortnight to discuss all child protection and youth justice complaints in order to ensure matters are dealt with efficiently and effectively.

Complaints received involving 132 children
How the Commissioner dealt with the complaints

Complaints Resolved by the Commissioner

In 2017-18, 36 complaint matters were dealt with by way of resolution (including 1 complaint received in the previous reporting period but actioned in this reporting period), this is an increase of 2 from the previous year.

When a complaint is forwarded to the service provider for resolution the Commissioner proposes a solution or course of action to resolve the matter in the best interests of the child. In these circumstances the service provider is not required to conduct an investigation. The Commissioner will continue to work with service providers following their acceptance of a resolution to negotiate proposed actions and ensure the best outcome for the child or young person who is the subject of the complaint.

Complaints Referred by the Commissioner

In 2017-18, 25 complaint matters were dealt with by way of referral (including 3 complaints received in the previous reporting period but actioned in this reporting period), this is a decrease of 11 from the previous year.

During the reporting period referrals were made to two service providers being Territory Families and the Department of Health (DoH).

In accordance with section 23(1)(ii) of the Act referrals made by the Commissioner require the relevant service provider to investigate the circumstances of the complaint and to provide the Commissioner with the result of the investigation. The Commissioner will then assess the investigation findings and action taken for resolving the matter, before determining to finalise the matter or not.
Complaints Investigated by the Commissioner

The Commissioner did not commence any investigations from complaints received in 2017-18. However, two own initiative investigations were conducted during the reporting period, which are detailed in the Own Initiative Investigations section.

Complaints Declined by the Commissioner

Section 24 of the Act defines the specific grounds for when the Commissioner may decline to deal with a complaint. The Commissioner may only decline to deal with a complaint if she is satisfied there is provision to do so, in 2017-18, 14 complaints were declined by the Commissioner; this is a decrease of 4 from 18 the previous year.

The most common reasons for the Commissioner determining not to deal with a complaint were that the complaint lacked substance, which in most cases was based on the findings of preliminary inquiries made by the Commissioner, the matter was before the courts, or the Commissioner did not have jurisdiction.

Complaint Decisions Undetermined by the Commissioner

21 complaints were under assessment at the end of the 2017-18 reporting period where the Commissioner had not yet made a decision on what course of action to take.

14 Complaints declined by Commissioner

21 Complaints received still under assessment
Children who were the Subject of a Complaint

Of the 132 children who were the subject of a complaint in 2017-18, 64% were Aboriginal, this is a decrease from 73% the previous year. Additionally, the majority of children were residing in OoHC (59%) or were in a youth justice facility (21%).

64% of all children the subject of a complaint were Aboriginal.
Complaint Trends

In 2017-18, the following complaint trends were evident:

- Separation of young people in youth detention from other young people, mainstream detention programs and activities.
- Access to Territory Families Central Intake Team for the purpose of child protection notifications.
- Inadequate child protection investigations including insufficient assessment of cumulative harm.
- Detention standards and conditions in youth justice facilities.
- The timeliness and accessibility of mental health assessments for young people in the youth justice system.
- Poor case management associated with the reunification of children and/or young people with family.
Own Initiative Investigations

Section 28 (2) of the Act provides the Commissioner with the power to investigate a matter on the Commissioner’s initiative only if satisfied that the matter may form a ground for making a complaint, irrespective of when the matter occurred and whether or not a complaint was made in relation to the matter.
Before commencing an own initiative investigation the Commissioner must notify each responsible service provider, and the Chief Executive Officer of each responsible Agency.

On completion of an own initiative investigation the Commissioner must prepare an investigation report in accordance with section 29 of the Act. The report includes findings and may recommend a responsible service provider or responsible Agency take specified actions within a nominated timeframe. If the Commissioner makes findings and/or recommends actions the service provider or Agency is afforded the opportunity to provide comment on the draft report before it is finalised.

The Commissioner may also give the responsible Minister a copy of the report if it is appropriate to do so.

During the reporting period, the Commissioner finalised two (2) significant own initiative investigations enabled by the Commissioner’s function contained in section 10(1)(a)(ii) of the Act, the investigations related to services provided by a Territory Families authorised carer and the alleged sexual assault of a toddler.

The own initiative investigation into the services provided by a Territory Families authorised carer included 10 children or young people that resided in this placement over a period spanning six (6) years. This investigation was comprised of a number of complaint issues and focused on systemic issues affecting children and young people in OoHC. The investigation included an analysis of:

- Territory Families carer assessment and reauthorisation process.
- Legislation, policy and operational procedures.
- Historical child protection notifications in relation to the carer and her biological children.
- Ten child protection investigations conducted by Territory Families.
- All relevant reports and information recorded on the Community Care Information System (CCIS).

In accordance with the Act, Territory Families were provided with an opportunity to respond prior to the report being finalised. Following the consultation with Territory Families 14 recommendations were made and a number of the recommendations are aligned to recommendations made in the out-of-home care component, volume 12, of the Commonwealth Royal Commission.

The investigation found that Territory Families had failed in their duty of care to provide the required care and protection to safeguard the children and young people that were placed with this carer from harm. This was primarily due to the children and young people being placed with a carer who had not been subject to a proper assessment process.

In addition, the child protection investigations were not conducted in accordance with policy and procedure. Subsequently, the risks regarding this carer were not accurately captured, this, combined with a lack of proper case management, left the children extremely vulnerable and resulted in further neglect and harm.

Monitoring of and reporting on the
recommendations made in the report is done by quarterly progress reports provided by Territory Families to the Commissioner.

The second own initiative investigation was in relation to the care and services provided to a toddler and her family, which included her parents and four (4) siblings, by a number of government agencies. The service providers included Territory Families, Northern Territory Police, Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Correctional Services and other service providers located in Tennant Creek.

The investigation included a review of all CCIS recorded information dating back to 2002, 52 child protection notifications and 26 child protection investigations, 150 recorded interactions with Northern Territory Police, school enrolment and attendance records, Department of Housing and Community Development tenancy records and medical records for the family. A total of 14 interviews were conducted utilising the Commissioner’s power contained in section 35(1)(b) of the Act.

This investigation highlighted information sharing as a barrier to holistic service provision to vulnerable children and young people. It identified that the current legislative framework under the Information Act and the CAPCA creates confusion and reluctance by individuals, acting on behalf of government or government funded services, to share information which often prevents timely interventions. The investigation identified the need for increased governance and monitoring of child protection service delivery, a failure to appropriately assess cumulative harm and a culture of reporting and referrals with no or limited evidence of meaningful actions or outcomes.
Both Northern Territory Police and Territory Families were provided with the report for comment prior to it being finalised, both Departments accepted the recommendations. A total of 14 recommendations were made with eight (8) relevant to Territory Families, two (2) relevant to Northern Territory Police and four (4) recommendations for the Northern Territory Government. Six (6) of the recommendations directly aligned with recommendations of the NT Royal Commission. Quarterly reports are being provided to the OCC by the relevant Departments in relation to the progress and implementation of recommendations.

The 28 recommendations contained in both reports will continue to be monitored by the Commissioner via quarterly reports.
Monitoring — Operational Data

In addition to measuring our own outputs, section 10(1)(c) of the Act prescribes that one of the functions of the OCC is the responsibility to monitor the administration of the CAPCA insofar as it relates to vulnerable children.

This chapter contains an analysis of child protection and OoHC data provided by Territory Families on request of the OCC. It has been compiled using the Commissioner’s statutory powers to obtain data relating to the powers and obligations of Territory Families as contained in Chapter 2 of the CAPCA.

The continued increase in notifications and subsequent child protection investigations demonstrates the increased demand on child protection services and, with budget pressures across government, there is concern that thresholds for interventions and service delivery may be impacted.

In addition to the review of the statistical data referred to in this chapter, the Commissioner monitors the administration of the CAPCA through assessment and auditing of operational processes, considering regional and intra-jurisdictional differences and the ongoing monitoring of the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the child protection system.

The data analysed in this chapter relates to notifications, investigations and substantiated notifications by Territory Families. This year, specific information was sought in relation to the ACPP. The OCC process for reviewing the OoHC data includes auditing a sample of care plans for children who were under the care and protection of the CEO of Territory Families during the 2017-18 period.

The Commissioner acknowledges and thanks Territory Families and Anglicare’s Moving On Program for providing a large volume of statistical information for monitoring purposes.
Notifications, Investigations and Substantiations

Notifications are contacts made to Territory Families by any person who believes on reasonable grounds that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer harm or exploitation. Reporting child abuse or neglect is everyone’s responsibility. A notification can only involve one child. Where it is claimed that two children have been harmed, this is counted as two notifications, even if the children are from the one family. Where there are multiple notifications for the same child between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018, but relating to different events, these are counted as separate notifications. Not every notification proceeds to investigation.

Notifications are screened out when they are assessed as not meeting the threshold for investigation as there is insufficient information to suggest that the child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, harm.

If the notification is in relation to a child or young person in the care of the CEO it will proceed to either an investigation under section 84A of the CAPCA or an inquiry under section 83B of the CAPCA. The majority of notifications received by Territory Families in 2017-18 were screened out as the concerns did not meet the threshold for investigation. This equates to 13,866 (56%) notifications being screened out.

Investigations are the process where Territory Families obtain more detailed information about a child who is the subject of a notification received. Territory Families have a legislative responsibility in accordance with section 35 of the CAPCA to undertake an investigation to determine whether a child is in need of care and protection. The outcome of an investigation and risk assessment provides the basis for any ongoing intervention. An investigation includes sighting or interviewing the child where it is practical to do so. Territory Families Child Protection staff will use Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools, in conjunction with professional judgement and knowledge of legislation and care and protection policies and procedures, to facilitate decision-making at critical points in the child protection investigation process.
The principles underpinning a child protection investigation are:

- the best interests of the child are paramount, including protecting the child from harm;
- statutory powers should be exercised in a way that is open, fair and respects the rights of the child and their family;
- the family has the primary responsibility for the care, upbringing and development of a child. A child will only be removed from their family when there is no other reasonable way to ensure their safety;
- a strengths based approach is used; and
- a kinship group, representative organisation and Aboriginal community nominated by an Aboriginal child’s family, should be involved in making decisions about an Aboriginal child.

The aims of a child protection investigation are to:

- ensure the immediate and ongoing safety of the child;
- gather and assess information about what factors may have contributed to the harm having occurred;
- determine whether the reports of harm or exploitation made in a Child Protection Report can be substantiated;
- determine whether there is a likelihood of harm occurring in the future supported by completion of a Family Risk Assessment;
- determine what strengths/supports are present or available to reduce the likelihood of further harm occurring; and
- engage with the family to reduce risk to the child where the risk of harm or exploitation is assessed as ‘high’ or ‘very high’ risk upon completion of the Family Risk Assessment.

When a determination is made it is known as the ‘investigation outcome’ or ‘substantiation decision’. When making an outcome recommendation, a comprehensive assessment of the child and family’s circumstances must be considered.

The investigation outcome is recorded once all the relevant information has been gathered and assessed. The decision must focus on whether the child has experienced harm or exploitation, or is likely to suffer harm or exploitation, as defined in section 15 and section 16 of the CAPCA respectively. The harm type substantiated may be different to the harm reported.
Substantiations of notifications received during the current reporting year refer to child protection notifications made to Territory Families from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 that were investigated and finalised by 30 June 2018 and where it was concluded that there was reasonable cause to believe that the child had been, was being, or was likely to be, harmed or exploited. Substantiations may also include cases where there is no suitable caregiver, such as children who are not under the care of any person and are engaging in conduct likely to cause harm to themselves or others, or they have been abandoned or their parents are deceased.

This reporting period has seen an 18% increase in total investigations commenced in comparison to 2016-17. Comparatively, although this reporting period has seen an increase in notifications proceeding to investigation, the number of investigations that were substantiated has decreased by 4%.

It is a concern that the Territory Families prior practice of streamlining multiple investigations into one investigation may have had an impact resulting in a lower rate of substantiations. Effective from 1 July 2018, Territory Families have implemented new policy and procedures that will ensure any new concerns to be assessed in an open case will have an investigation outcome of substantiated or unsubstantiated recorded against them.
As detailed in previous reports there continues to be an increase in child protection notifications to Territory Families with an additional 2,430 notifications, an increase of 11%, received this reporting period. The 5 year analysis demonstrates a continued increase in notifications with a 91% increase from 2013-14 to 2017-18.

Figure 3: 5 Year Analysis - Number of Notifications, Investigations and Substantiations, 2013-14 to 2017-18

Source: Territory Families 2017-18
Figure 4: Total Notifications, Investigations and Substantiations by Harm or Exploitation Type.

Source: Territory Families 2017-18
Note: Caution should be exercised when analysing figures from the most recent year displayed as some child protection investigations from that year have not concluded and therefore are not represented in these numbers.
Of the total number of child protection notifications received by Territory Families neglect was the highest harm type at 47%. Notifications in relation to physical harm comprised 20% of all notifications, however they had the highest substantiation rate of 18% for this reporting period. Nationally for 2016-17 notifications in relation to neglect had the highest rate of substantiations (AIHW Child Protection Australia March 2018).

Of the 24,743 notifications made to Territory Families during 2017-18, 44% were assessed as meeting the threshold to progress to an investigation. Territory Families conducted 10,877 child protection investigations during the reporting period with 13% for emotional harm, 45% for neglect, 33% for physical abuse and 9% for sexual exploitation.

Table 1: How Notifications Received During 2017-18 Were Actioned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abuse/Neglect Type</th>
<th>Total Notifications Received</th>
<th>Investigations Commenced</th>
<th>Substantiated Notifications</th>
<th>Percentage of Children Subject to Substantiations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>19730</td>
<td>8932</td>
<td>1824</td>
<td>16.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>4856</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>9.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL FOR FINANCIAL YEAR</td>
<td>24743</td>
<td>10877</td>
<td>2110</td>
<td>14.61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Territory Families 2017-18
Notifications

Number of Notifications

In 2017-18 Territory Families received 24,743 notifications of potential harm and exploitation of children and young people. This represents an 11% increase of notifications from 2016-17 (2% higher than the 2015-16 to 2016-17 increase).

24,743 Notifications received

Figure 5: Number of Notifications, 2013-14 to 2017-18

Source: Territory Families 2017-18

This is a count of notifications not children, if a child has more than one notification, then each notification is counted where the subsequent notification relates to a different incident.
Notifications by Aboriginality

The AIHW Child Protection report published in March 2018 (data for the 2016-17 period) recorded that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 7 times as likely as non-Indigenous children to have received child protection services. This report also showed that, nationally, children from geographically remote areas were more likely to be the subject of a substantiation, or be in OoHC than those from major cities.

Of the 24,743 notifications received by Territory Families in 2017-18, 80% related to Aboriginal children despite Aboriginal children making up less than half of all children in the Northern Territory. This high percentage is generally consistent with numbers for the past five years. As shown in Figure 6, notifications relating to Aboriginal children have been growing at a significant rate. Since 2013-14, notifications for non-Aboriginal children have increased by 60%, however for the same period, notifications in relations to Aboriginal children have increased by 99%. In this reporting period, notifications for Aboriginal children have increased by 12% from 2016-17.
Figure 6: Number of Notifications by Aboriginality

Source: Territory Families 2017-18

80% of notifications are related to Aboriginal children
Source of Notifications

Since 2012-13 there has been an ongoing increase in the number of notifications originating from police. In 2012-13 police notifications amounted to 35% of all notifications. This reporting year police were responsible for 43% of all notifications. This is reflective of national trends where police are the main source of notifications.

Table 2 clearly demonstrates that professionals account for the majority (88%) of all notifications which is consistent with the previous reporting year. Mandatory reporting by professional personnel continues to mean that a significant portion of notifications are made by police, school personnel, hospitals and health centres.

The non-professional notifiers, consisting of the subject child, parents, relatives and friends saw a decrease of 13% from 2016-17. Reduced reporting most notably was by the subject child (-39%) followed by Friend/Neighbour (-29%).

Table 2: Number of Notifiers by Category, 2017-18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOTIFIER CATEGORIES</th>
<th>NO. OF NOTIFICATIONS RECEIVED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>10729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Personnel</td>
<td>4220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital/Health Centre</td>
<td>2772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Practitioner</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Health Personnel</td>
<td>851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Personnel</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departmental Officer</td>
<td>867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Government Organisation</td>
<td>1718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Professionals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject Child</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Guardian</td>
<td>738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Relative</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend/Neighbour</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>24743</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notifications made to Territory Families relating to possible harm or exploitation of a child are categorised as either sexual exploitation, physical, emotional or neglect. In 2017-18 notifications have increased across all harm types including sexual exploitation by 2%, physical 8%, emotional 13% and neglect 13%.

The 24,743 notifications made to Territory Families involved 11,937 children a similar number to last year’s reporting period. As in previous years, male and female are equally represented in the notifications.

As shown in Figure 7, neglect notifications continue to be the highest.
Figure 7: Total Number of Notifications by Harm or Exploitation Type, 2017-18

Source: Territory Families 2017-18
Notifications by Age of Child

As shown in Figure 8, children aged 10-14 constitute 31% of all notifications. This is consistent with the 2016-17 reporting period. Children aged 0-4 and 5-9 constitute 27% and 28% of notifications respectively and young people aged 15-17 make up the remaining 14%. Notably the number of notifications in relation to children aged 10-14, as depicted in the figure below, has increased by 11% from 2016-17.

![Figure 8: Number of Notifications by Age, 2013-14 to 2017-18](chart)

Source: Territory Families 2017-2018

A child is counted more than once if their birthday occurs between notifications, which results in the notification being recorded for both age groups. This also occurs where notifications are made about different types of abuse, for example the same child may show up in the ‘physical abuse’ and ‘emotional harm’ and sexual exploitation’ categories.
The Outcomes of Notifications

Out of the 24,743 notifications made in 2017-18, 13,866 (56%) of notifications were screened out. The percentage of screened out notifications was lower than in 2016-17 (59%). When a person makes a notification and it is screened in, an authorised officer within Territory Families determines the investigation priority based on an initial assessment of risk.

Urgency Ratings

The notifications that are screened in for further investigation by the Territory Families Central Intake Team are provided with a priority level based on the level of risk to the child and urgency of response required.

The urgency ratings are:

- Priority 1 – 24 hours
- Priority 2 – Within 3 days
- Priority 3 – Within 5 days
- Priority 4 – Within 10 days

As shown in Table 3, the required response times for Priority 1 investigations for children deemed most at risk were complied with in 97% of the cases. Both Priority 3 and Priority 4 saw a substantial decrease when compared to 2016-17, with compliance with response time in 9% and 12% of cases respectively as well as a minor decrease from 2016-17 in compliance with response times for Priority 2, from 91% to 89%.

Unallocated Investigations

For the purposes of this report, an unallocated investigation is where the notification has an outcome of 'proceed to investigation', but a Child Protection Case has not been created or an investigation has not commenced.

It is understandable that a small number of unallocated investigations exist in the system as a 24 hour time period is allowed to allocate them.

Table 3: Percentage of Investigations Commenced within the Required Time-Frame, 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>URGENCY RATING CATEGORY</th>
<th>UNRESOLVED CP REPORTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Priority 1 - 24 hours</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 2 - within 3 Days</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 3 - within 5 Days</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority 4 - within 10 Days</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Territory Families 2017-18
Investigations

Of the 24,743 notifications, 10,877 (44%) progressed to an investigation, an 18% increase from 2016-17.

Timelines of Investigations

Once a child protection investigation commences, Territory Families policy provides that it must be completed within 28 days.

During this reporting period 44% of notifications were investigated within the 28 day time period. 71% of investigations were completed within 62 days. The low compliance rate is of concern and the OCC will continue to monitor investigation timeframes.
**Figure 9:** Percentage of Investigations that were completed within the 28 day time frame

**Figure 10:** Percentage of Completed Investigation within 28 days and 62 days from 2013-14 to 2017-18

Source: Territory Families 2017-18

It is the Investigation End Date that determines inclusion in this table, not the Notification Received Date.
Substantiations

Figure 11: Investigations Substantiated by Harm Type

Source: Territory Families 2017-18

It is the Investigation end date that determines inclusion in this table, not the Notification Received Date. Table # details how many Investigations were finalised in a financial year, irrespective of when they were received.
Substantiations by Aboriginality

Of the total number of child protection investigations that were substantiated during 2017-18, 87% were for Aboriginal children. In recent years the rates of substantiations for Aboriginal children in the NT has been above the national average. In 2017-18, there were 2,063 substantiations relating to Aboriginal children compared to 1,990 in 2016-17, a 4% increase.

Repeat Substantiations

An indicator of how effectively a child protection system is ensuring the safety of children is the number of children who are subject to a further substantiation within a year of a substantiated notification relating to them. Nationally in 2016-17, 1 in 5 children and young people were the subject of more than one substantiation.

In the NT there were 490 individual children who were the subject of a substantiation during 2016-17 who were then the subject of a subsequent substantiation within 12 months.

Of the 490 children in the Northern Territory subject to multiple substantiations 91% were Aboriginal, and males were subject to a higher number of multiple substantiations than females. Compared to the 2016-17 reporting period there has been 29% increase in the number of children subject to more than one substantiation within 12 months.

Table 5: Children who were the subject of multiple substantiations within 12 months by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>NO. OF CHILDREN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>490</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Territory Families 2017-18
Monitoring Investigations of Harm and Exploitation of Children in Out-of-Home Care

This Chapter analyses data provided by Territory Families on the substantiated cases of harm and exploitation of children in the OoHC system, referred to as ‘harm and exploitation in care’.
Children and young people in OoHC have gone through significant troubling life experiences when they enter OoHC and are often suffering from trauma. Further harm and exploitation whilst in OoHC can exacerbate and compound that trauma.

The National Standards for OoHC (DSS, 2011) seek to drive improvements in the quality of care to children and young people in the OoHC system, and to influence change to ensure children in OoHC have the same opportunities as other children to reach their potential. These standards are a priority project under the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020.

On 15 December 2017 the Commonwealth Royal Commission presented a final report to the Governor General, the culmination of a five year inquiry. In relation to contemporary OoHC, it said:

“Given that tens of thousands of Australia’s children are in out-of-home care – and that many of these children are inherently vulnerable – it is critically important to reduce their exposure to further harm. Despite major reforms to out-of-home care in every state and territory in Australia, our work has identified persistent weaknesses and systemic failures....”

When children are taken into care, everything possible needs to be done to ensure that their care and protection needs are met and that the best interests of the child are always the primary consideration.

Legislated frameworks and policies for organisations providing services for children are of vital importance. The CAPCA provides the CEO of Territory Families' with the power to investigate allegations of harm and exploitation of children in OoHC. Those statutory provisions are supported by Territory Families Practice Framework and relevant policy and procedures in relation to responding to safety and wellbeing concerns for children in care.

Section 84C of the CAPCA requires the CEO of Territory Families to notify the Children’s Commissioner in all cases where a child protection investigation has substantiated allegations of harm and exploitation of a child in OoHC. In addition, section 10(1)(f) of the Act specifies that one of the functions of the Children’s Commissioner is to monitor the ways in which the CEO deals with suspected or potential harm and exploitation in care matters.
Cases of Harm and Exploitation of Children in Out-of-Home Care

For harm and exploitation to be substantiated, it must be assessed that the child has suffered, is suffering, or is likely to suffer, harm and exploitation in accordance with section 15 of the CAPCA.

On 30 June 2018 there were 1,061 children in OoHC, which represents an increase of 1% (12 children) from the 2016-17 reporting period. During the 2017-18 period 297 children entered OoHC, 83% of these children were Aboriginal. Of the total number of children in care as of 30 June 2018, 947 (89%) were Aboriginal and 111 (11%) were non-Aboriginal, which remains the same as the previous reporting period.

Between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2018 the CEO of Territory Families notified the Commissioner of 52 substantiated harm and exploitation in care cases. After 30 June 2018 the OCC was advised by Territory Families of 16 additional cases of harm and exploitation in care that were substantiated within the reporting period. The difference in Territory Families and OCC substantiated investigations data is due to Territory Families counting substantiations once a child protection investigation is outcomed. The OCC counts the number of section 84C notification letters received. Territory Families does not transmit a section 84C notification to the OCC until all documentation to support the investigation has been completed.

Of concern is that of the total 52 harm and exploitation in care cases that were investigated in 2017-18 only 5 (10%) were completed within the 28 days. This may also impact on notifications to the OCC regarding additional cases that were substantiated by TF during the reporting period but no section 84C notification has been received by the OCC.

Due to the fact that no formal notification or detail has been provided by TF to the OCC at the time of reporting the additional 16 cases were excluded from the analysis in this section.

The OCC conducted a 3 year trend analysis of children that were subject to multiple harm and exploitation in care reports that were substantiated. During 2015-16 there were 81 cases of harm and exploitation, involving 70 children in OoHC, of which 10 children were subjected to multiple cases of harm.

During 2016-17 there were 101 cases of harm and exploitation involving 80 children in OoHC. Of those children 17 were subject to multiple cases of harm or exploitation, this included 4 females that had been subject to harm and exploitation on 3 separate occasions.

During 2017-18 there was a reduction in the number of substantiated harm and exploitation of children in OoHC cases that reduced by 49 from 101 reported in 2016-17 to 52 cases in 2017-18.
**Figure 12**: Number of Substantiated Harm or Exploitation in Care Cases by Harm Type and Aboriginality, 2016-17 and 2017-18

- **Emotional**
  - 2016-17: 4 Aboriginal, 10 Non-Aboriginal
  - 2017-18: 3 Aboriginal, 14 Non-Aboriginal

- **Neglect**
  - 2016-17: 3 Aboriginal, 22 Non-Aboriginal
  - 2017-18: 3 Aboriginal, 10 Non-Aboriginal

- **Physical**
  - 2016-17: 2 Aboriginal, 11 Non-Aboriginal
  - 2017-18: 4 Aboriginal

- **Sexual**
  - 2016-17: 4 Aboriginal, 3 Non-Aboriginal
  - 2017-18: 4 Aboriginal

*Source: Territory Families as at 30 June 2018*
Types of Harm and Exploitation

As shown in Figure 13, of the 52 cases the most common form of substantiated harm and exploitation was physical at 18 (35%) of the total cases followed by 17 (33%) cases of emotional harm, 10 (19%) cases of neglect and 7 (13%) of cases relating to sexual exploitation. In the previous reporting period emotional harm was the most frequent form of harm and exploitation.

Of the total 17 cases of emotional harm 14 (82%) involved Aboriginal children and 3 (18%) non-Aboriginal children. All cases of neglect and physical harm involved Aboriginal children.

43% of sexual exploitation cases involved Aboriginal children and 57% involved non-Aboriginal children.

Further analysis of the 52 instances of substantiated harm and exploitation experienced by children in OoHC is as follows:

- Of the 52 cases, 45 (87%) involved Aboriginal children (comparable to the proportion of Aboriginal children in care) and 7 (13%) involved non-Aboriginal children.
- Of the 7 children who experienced multiple cases of harm and exploitation in care, 5 (75%) were Aboriginal children and 2 (25%) were non-Aboriginal.
- Foster care remains the most common placement type of children and young people who experienced harm and exploitation in OoHC. There was a 4% increase from 2016-17 to 35% of cases in 2017-18. This does not mean that the harm and exploitation was perpetrated by the carer as the incident that caused harm and exploitation may have occurred outside of the placement.
- Of the 52 children, 34 (65%) were female and 18 (35%) were male.
- The majority of cases 22 (42%) occurred in the 15-18 age group, 13 (27%) in the 10 - 14 age group, 8 (16%) in the 5-9 age group and 9 (18%) in the 0-4 age group.
- Of the total cases of harm and exploitation of children in OoHC, the child remained in the placement in 30 (58%) of the cases and was removed from the placement in 22 (42%).
Figure 13: Number of Children Removed from and Remaining in Placement

42% Removed from Placement
58% Remain in Placement

Source: Territory Families as at 30 June 2018
Harm by Placement Type

As indicated in Figure 14, harm and exploitation, 18 (35%), occurred most frequently for those children and young people who were residing in foster care, 11 (21%) cases in kinship care, 7 (14%) in home based care, 7 (13%) had self-placed, 8 (16%) in residential care, and 1 (2%) case in a family group home. Whilst the most frequent placement type for harm to a child in care was foster care as outlined earlier in this report this does not necessarily mean the harm occurred there.

This reporting period has seen an overall decrease in all categories of harm and exploitation of children in OoHC. There has been a reduction of 11 cases of harm and exploitation in foster care from those reported in 2016-17 (29 cases). There has been a reduction of 6 harm and exploitation in care reports where a child is self-placing.
A self-placing child or young person will generally have less involvement with professionals than a child in kinship or foster care and incidents of harm and exploitation are likely to be under reported.

Source: Territory Families as at 30 June 2018
Multiple Cases of Harm and Exploitation

One of the measures used by the Commissioner to monitor the quality of care provided to children in OoHC is whether there have been previous allegations of harm and exploitation in relation to that child.

Of the 52 substantiated instances of children who suffered harm and exploitation in care in the 2017-18 period, 30 (58%) had a prior substantiation of harm and exploitation while in the care of the CEO.

During the 2017-18 reporting period, there were 14 cases, involving 7 children, who had each suffered multiple cases (2 or more instances) of harm and exploitation in OoHC. Of the 14 cases, 5 were neglect cases, 5 were cases of physical harm and 4 were sexual exploitation.

The figure above outlines the 14 cases involving 7 children and the person believed responsible. Analysis of the 14 cases of children with multiple reports revealed that foster carers were responsible on 3 occasions.

Source: Territory Families as at 30 June 2018
Figure 16: Multiple Harm and Exploitation in OoHC Cases 2015-16 to 2017-18

Source: Territory Families as at 30 June 2018
Figure 17: Harm and Exploitation in OoHC by Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-4 Years old</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 Years old</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 Years old</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-18 Years old</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Territory Families as at 30 June 2018
Investigations Commenced and Completed Within Required Time Frames

Territory Families has prescribed time frames in which it has to respond to reports about concerns for children, and has procedural expectations to complete these investigations within 28 days.

Of the 52 cases, 12 were outcomed as **Priority 1** requiring a 24 hour response, 34 cases were outcomed as **Priority 2** requiring a 72 hour response and 6 cases were given a **Priority 3** rating, requiring a 5 day response.

Of the 12 Priority 1 investigations, all (100%) were commenced within the required time frame, however only 1 of those investigations were completed within the 28 days. Of the 34 Priority 2 investigations all were commenced within the required period, however only 4 (12%) were completed within 28 days.

Of concern is that of the total 52 harm and exploitation in care cases that were investigated in 2017-18 only 5 (10%) were completed within the 28 days.

![Figure 18: Number of children Harm and Exploitation in OoHC by Priority Rating](source: Territory Families as at 30 June 2018)
Child Interviewed

Of the 52 cases of harm and exploitation in care, Territory Families case managers interviewed the children involved in 48 (92%) of the cases. In the remaining cases children were not interviewed for various reasons including refusing to be interviewed and/or unable to be located, or were determined to be too young.

**Figure 19**: Outcomes of Substantiated Harm and Exploitation in OoHC

- **Previous Reports Harm and Exploitation in OoHC**: 30
- **Child Interviewed**: 48
- **CAT Police Involved**: 29
- **Investigation Completed in 28 days**: 5
- **Unknown Placement Outcome**: 2
- **Removed from Placement**: 22
- **Remains in Placement**: 30

*Source: Territory Families as at 30 June 2018*
Person Believed to be Responsible Interviewed

Of the 41 known persons believed responsible for the harm and exploitation of the child, 39 (95%) were interviewed as part of the investigation. Similar to completing interviews with children, perpetrators may refuse to be interviewed, or may not be locatable.

The Child Abuse Task Force (CAT) or NT Police were either notified or involved in 29 (46%) of the 52 cases of harm and exploitation in care.

The most common perpetrators of exploitation and harm were identified as unknown persons. Unknown persons may be recorded where the identity of a perpetrator cannot be concretely determined during an investigation, but where there is sufficient evidence to show the child was negatively impacted or harmed.

Analysis demonstrates that a minority (13) of persons substantiated for harming and exploiting children are foster or residential carers, and that the majority of harm and exploitation is perpetrated by other people in their lives.

**Figure 20:** Person Responsible for Harm and Exploitation of Child in OoHC by Relationship

Source: Territory Families as at 30 June 2018
Conclusion

In the 2017-18 reporting period 52 children and young people of the total 1061 (5%) in care had been the subject of harm and exploitation in care. This is a 3% decrease on 2016-17, down from 8% on the previous year 2015-16.

2017-18 has seen a decrease in the number of cases where a child has self-placed (down from 13 in 2016-17 to 6 in 2017-18). However, it is important to recognise that children who are self-placing away from foster placements generally have limited contact with professionals and as a result the number of cases of harm and exploitation of a child in care who is self-placing is likely to be under reported. Additionally this could also result in the person believed responsible for the substantiated harm and exploitation being recorded as unknown.

The most common harm type in relation to reports of harm and exploitation in care in 2017-18 was physical harm (35%) followed by emotional harm (33%). A significant number of the cases substantiated for emotional harm involved children witnessing domestic violence. This reinforces the need to raise awareness regarding the significant and detrimental effects of domestic, family and sexual violence.

During 2016-17 there were 17 children subject to multiple cases of harm and exploitation, which decreased in the current period to 7 children. The OCC will continue to focus on instances of children who experience multiple cases of harm and exploitation in care through ongoing monitoring in 2018-19 to improve OoHC standards.

The decision to remove a child from their family and be placed in care is never an easy one for all those involved in the child protection system. Such a decision is only made on the basis that the child will be placed in a supportive and safe environment. The majority of children in care do receive appropriate levels of care and support from the family or carers with whom they are placed. However, any harm and exploitation of children or young people in care remains of significant concern to the OCC.
Care Plan Review

The OCC’s monitoring of the administration of the CAPCA for 2017-18 included reviews of a sample of care plans for children and young people in the care of the CEO of Territory Families. Under the CAPCA every child in the care of the CEO on a statutory order is required to have a clear, comprehensive and well-measured care plan. The key aim of the care plan review is to monitor compliance and to analyse and clarify trends with a focus on continuous improvement.
Five Year Trend OoHC

Figure 21 details the last 5 years of children in OoHC. From 30 June 2013 to 30 June 2018 there has been a significant increase of 41% (311) in the number of children in OoHC, from 750 children as at 30 June 2013 to 1,061 as at 30 June 2018.

The total number of children in the care of the CEO of Territory Families in 2017-18 increased by 1% (an increase of 12 children) compared to the same time in 2016-17.

Source: Annual Reports, Office of the Children’s Commissioner
Care Plan Guidelines

The care plan must set out decisions about daily care and control of the child, contact between the child and other persons, must reflect the overall objective of the child’s placement in care including the child’s views and wishes that must be taken into account.

In addition to being a legislative obligation, the care plan is a critical element of good child protection practice and is significantly important when the child is of an age where they can be consulted and contribute to their plan.

The document identifies the needs of the child across the following life domains:

- emotional and behavioural;
- health and development;
- family relationships and connections;
- culture and identity;
- education and or other education programs;
- life skills; and
- social relationships and leaving care.

The care plan should identify requirements to address the child’s individual needs and provide specific and measurable care plan goals. The goals must be realistically achievable with clear tasks, responsibilities and time frames.

The care plan is to be formulated in consultation with family members, including the child where appropriate, their carer, professionals who are involved to support the child and their family and for an Aboriginal child, an Aboriginal Community Worker.

Care plans are filed with an application to the court for a Protection Order or Permanent Care Order.
Review Process

Independent access to Territory Families client records held on the CCIS was provided to the OCC to conduct the review.

To ensure all relevant material was examined, hard copy files for 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 (2017-18) were also made available to reviewers at each of the selected regional Territory Families offices.

The cases that were reviewed were selected through a random sample of the total number (1,061) of children in the care of the CEO of Territory Families as at 30 June 2018. The total number of cases reviewed by the OCC was 108.

The regional comparison of cases was achieved using an equal 20% random sample from each of the Northern and Greater Darwin Regions. To improve representation from across regions, the total number of cases reviewed from Southern Region was a 20% sample from Alice Springs and a 50% sample from the Barkly.

The 2016-17 random sample of the total number of 1,049 children in the care of the CEO of Territory Families in that reporting period was compared with the 2017-18 random sample of the total number of 1,061 children in the care of the CEO of Territory Families. When cases were reviewed they were counted as compliant if a child had an authorised care plan on their hard copy file and/or CCIS.

A care plan is considered to be present if it has been approved on CCIS or finalised on CCIS within the 2017-18 review period or sighted in hardcopy.

Demographics of Sampled Children

| AGE            | 0-4 Years Old | 24 (23%) | Female | 51 (49%) | 5-9 Years Old | 37 (36%) | Male | 53 (51%) | 10-14 Years Old | 28 (27%) | Indigenous | 86 (83%) | 15-17 Years Old | 15 (14%) | Non-Indigenous | 18 (17%) |

Source: Office of the Children’s Commissioner CAPCA monitoring as at 30 June 2018
Findings

Of the 108 cases sampled, a total of 15 children (14%) were removed from the sample, this occurred if a child had been in care for less than six weeks or if the child entered care on a Temporary Placement Agreement or Provisional Protection which meant there was no legislated requirement for a care plan.

Eight cases were removed from the Southern region count including 3 Temporary Placement Arrangements, 3 cases where a care plan was not required because the child was in care for less than 6 weeks and 2 cases where the review questionnaire was incomplete.

A total of 17 cases were reviewed for Northern region after 4 were removed based on 2 cases of Parental Responsibility not with the CEO of Territory Families and the remaining 2 cases did not require a care plan based on the length of time in care.

Of the 42 children sampled in the Greater Darwin region 2 cases were removed based on the length of time in care being less than 6 weeks. Two per cent of Greater Darwin region cases did not have a care plan.

Figure 22: Regional Comparison – OoHC children with and without a care plan

Source: Office of the Children’s Commissioner CAPCA monitoring as at 30 June 2018
Of the 93 cases reviewed in 2017-18, 87% (81 children) had an authorised care plan, an increase of 5% from 2016-17 reporting period which had an 82% compliance rate.

In Northern region (Katherine), 59% of children did not have a care plan. This was the lowest level of compliance across regions. While this represents a 6% improvement on last year, down from 65% (11 cases), Northern region requires ongoing monitoring and assessment. The OCC hopes these figures highlight a need for work and improvement over the next 12 months.

Comparatively, 97% of cases had a current care plan in Southern Region and 98% in Greater Darwin.

**Quality of Care Planning**

In accordance with Territory Families procedure “Culture in Care Planning” a child or young person’s care plan should promote and maintain their connection to their cultural heritage and should be developed in consultation with the child’s family and extended family with a cultural connection.

The procedure also requires the development of a genogram. A genogram is a useful tool to gather information about a child or young person’s family and can represent a way to promote discussions about extended family members and support they may be able to provide.

The OCC reviewed files and CCIS records for 108 children who were in the care of the Territory Families CEO in 2017-18. 76% (70 children) had a genogram present on file.

There were instances where reference was made on file to the genogram, however it was not present and/or other instances where the genogram was present on a sibling’s case.

In 2016-17 when the records of 98 children were reviewed, only 57% of children had a genogram present. The outcome of this year’s monitoring represents a significant year-on-year improvement in this area. The improvement is fundamental to better outcomes for Aboriginal children and is aligned with best practice and the ACPP.
Figure 23 depicts the cases reviewed by region that had a genogram. There is only a slight variation in the presence of genograms across Territory Families regions for the current reporting period.

Figure 23: Genogram by Region 2017-18

Source: Office of the Children’s Commissioner CAPCA monitoring as at 30 June 2018
Out of the 93 children in the 2017-18 sample reviewed by the OCC, 86 were Aboriginal (92%).

Fifty eight of the children with CALD and ATSI background had the cultural component of their care plan completed. A child’s cultural support plan is an important information and planning tool that is tailored to a child’s individual needs and circumstances. Developing a cultural support plan is an important task that should be carried out in partnership with the child (when age and developmentally appropriate), the family and where possible, community Elders and local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander workers. Cultural care plans include relevant cultural information, activities and support that will maintain and support the child’s cultural identity.

Out of the 41 children with care plans in the Greater Darwin region, 53% (22 children) of children of CALD and ATSI backgrounds had the cultural component of the care plan completed.

Out of the 33 children with care plans in the Southern Region, 90% (30 children) of children of CALD and ATSI backgrounds had the cultural component of the care plan completed. The OCC commends the Southern region for this compliance rate.

Out of the 7 children with care plans in the Northern Region, 85% (6 children) of children of CALD and ATSI backgrounds had the cultural component of the care plan completed.

---

**Figure 24**: Care plan cultural compliance

Source: Office of the Children’s Commissioner CAPCA monitoring as at 30 June 2018
Leaving Care Plan Review

Section 71 of the CAPCA requires that a young person’s care plan is updated prior to leaving care. The planning for the young person’s transition from care commences when they reach the age of fifteen and must be updated every six months as part of the care plan review process. Planning should involve the young person, their Case Manager, their Carer, family members, service providers, and other significant people identified by the young person.

The leaving care planning process applies to young people regardless of placement type. It also applies to young people in the CEO’s care who are in detention. The process requires that the caseworker considers the independent living support needs of the young person, this involves considering the individualised needs and requirements of the young person’s life including health, accommodation, education and employment, legal matters, identity and culture, income access, identity documentation and support networks.

Standard 13 of the National Standards for OoHC requires young people in care who are 15 and older to have a plan in place in preparation for transition out of care. It is important that transition planning is initiated by the young person’s case manager at this age in order to allow adequate time to respond to the challenges of sourcing suitable accommodation, support networks, reconnecting with natural family, applying for and securing Centrelink benefits and/or employment opportunities and applying for adult guardianship orders for young people with significant disabilities.

Section 68 of the CAPCA defines a young person who has left the CEO’s care as someone who is between 15 and 25 years of age and was last in the care of the CEO for a continuous period of at least 6 months.
Review Process 2017-18

Of the total 108 cases reviewed by the OCC in 2017-18, there were 17 children (16%) aged 15 or over in OoHC who required a Leaving Care Plan in accordance with the CAPCA. Of the 17 cases sampled, 65% (11 young people) had the Leaving Care or Transition from care section of their Care Plan completed. This is a substantial improvement on 2016-17 where 47% of cases reviewed did not have a Leaving Care Plan in place.

Key aspects of transition support for young people who require a Leaving Care Plan were identified for compliance as at 30 June 2018. This included those previously reviewed and those determined by the OCC as areas of future focus.

Of the 17 young people’s cases analysed, 59% were 15 years of age (10), 23% (4) were 16 years of age and 18% (3) were 17 years of age. 53% (9) were female and 47% (8) were male. 65% (11) were Aboriginal and 35% (6 cases) were non-Aboriginal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>15 Years Old</th>
<th>16 Years Old</th>
<th>17 Years Old</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>Non-Indigenous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 (59%)</td>
<td>4 (23%)</td>
<td>3 (18%)</td>
<td>9 (53%)</td>
<td>8 (47%)</td>
<td>11 (65%)</td>
<td>6 (35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Office of the Children’s Commissioner CAPCA monitoring as at 30 June 2018
Of the Leaving Care Plans reviewed, **5 cases** clearly documented in case notes or the Leaving Care Plan that support from Territory Families was available until the young person was 25 years of age. Of the remaining 12 it was unclear in CCIS notes or the care plan as to whether they had been made aware of their ability to access support from TF up to age 25.

In 2017-18 **71%** (12) of young people had participated in the planning process, this is a significant improvement on the 2016-17 reporting period where only **40%** had participated in the process.

Accommodation and financial support are significant components of the Leaving Care Plan, of the plans reviewed by the OCC, **77%** (13) had accommodation identified and practical and/or financial support had been provided to establish and maintain that accommodation. This is a **34%** increase from the 2016-17 review and given that this is a critical element of leaving care for a young person the OCC notes this significant improvement.

Where the young person is 17 years old or in supported semi-independent living arrangements they should be made aware of the Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA). In **18%** (3) of cases, there was evidence on file that the young person had been made aware. Territory Families must continue efforts to make improvements in this area.

29% of the Leaving Care Plans reviewed had been linked with health or wellbeing services to support them when they exit care (e.g. Adult Mental Health services or Office of the Public Guardian).

An important aspect for young people leaving care is that they are linked to resources and services available to support their transition process. The OCC undertook an analysis of this component and found that for 2017-18, **53%** had been linked to CREATE Foundation. A more detailed analysis of leaving care support is outlined later in this chapter.

Young people have told the OCC of the difficulties they experience if they do not have access to their identity documents such as birth certificates and Medicare cards.

As detailed in figure 25, the review showed that **94%** (16) of young people had an active Medicare card noting that **47%** (8) of young people (or their carer) were in possession of their Medicare card. This is an improvement on 2016-17 where only **36%** of young people had a copy of their card. **59%** (10) of the total files reviewed had a birth certificate.
Figure 25: 15-17 Year Olds linked to Resources and Services for Transition

- Made aware of ability to access support from TF until 25 years old: 29%
- Information on FOI processes provided prior to leaving care: 82%
- Support to maintain/re-establish family links: 88%
- Linked into educational and training opportunities or aware how to access them: 41%
- Young people between 16-17 years old, who have access to an income: 6%
- The young person or their carer in possession of a copy of the birth certificate: 59%
- Original birth certificate on file: 47%
- Young person or carer is in possession of Medicare card: 94%
- Has an active Medicare card: 53%
- Linked with Anglicare NT ‘Moving On’ program: 29%
- Linked with health or wellbeing services to support after exiting care (e.g. Adult Mental Health services or Office of the Public Guardian): 18%
- If 17 years old or in supported semi-independent living/appropriate accommodation arrangements made and aware of TILA: 18%
- Accommodation been identified and practical and/or financial support been provided to establish and maintain that accommodation: 77%
- The young person participated in the planning process: 71%
- The Leaving Care or Transition From Care section of the young person’s Care Plan been completed: 65%

Source: Office of the Children’s Commissioner CAPCA monitoring as at 30 June 2018
Leaving Care Support

The OCC review of 17 Leaving Care Plans identified that only 18% (3) of young people had been linked with the Anglicare NT OoHC - Moving On Program. Given this low rate the OCC decided to undertake an analysis of the Moving on Program data to better understand who was accessing this service and why.

Anglicare NT OoHC - Moving On is an After Care Support and Brokerage service for young people, the service is aimed at young people between 16 – 25 years old and they can assist with:

- information and referrals;
- accommodation advice;
- brokerage assistance;
- access to health and legal services; and
- support for education, training and employment.

Figures 26 and 27 represent the total number of clients who accessed services during 2016-17 and 2017-18.

As in previous years the total number of clients accessing services has increased. There has been a 14.1% increase in clients for 2017-18 from 2016-17. Specifically there has been a 5% increase for both the 17 year old and 20–24 year old age groups. Comparatively there has been a decrease of 5% for 16 year olds.
Figure 26:Distinct Client by Age Group – Total Clients 140

Figure 27:Distinct Client by Age Group - Total Clients 163

Source: Anglicare NT Moving On Program Data

*Age groups represented in supplied data are from 16 to 29 years. Data for the 25-29 age group was unable to be separated.
As shown in the following graphs female clients are still the largest cohort seeking Moving On support services however in 2017/18 there was a 4.2% increase in males seeking support.

**Figure 28**: 2016/17 Number of Distinct Clients by Gender

Female: 64%
Male: 36%

**Figure 29**: 2017/18 Number of Distinct Clients by Gender

Female: 60%
Male: 40%

Source: Anglicare NT Moving On Program Data
In 2017/18 Aboriginal clients represented 80% of young people seeking services, an increase of 6% from 2016/17.

**Figure 30:** 2016/17 Number of Distinct Clients by Aboriginal Status

**Figure 31:** 2017/18 Number of Distinct Clients by Aboriginal Status

Source: Anglicare NT Moving On Program Data
A number of clients required several support periods during 2017/18. Clients that required more than one period of support increased by 10.4% in 2017/18 in comparison to 2016/17. The number of support periods are detailed below for 2016/17 and 2017/18.

**Figure 32: 2016/17 Number of Support Periods by Distinct Client**

- 1 support period only: 67%
- 2 support periods: 22%
- 3 support periods: 8%
- 4 support periods: 3%
- 5 support periods: 0%

**Figure 33: 2017/18 Number of Support Periods by Distinct Client**

- 1 support period only: 56%
- 2 support periods: 33%
- 3 support periods: 9%
- 4 support periods: 2%
- 5 support periods: 0%

Source: Anglicare NT Moving On Program Data
In addition to an increase in periods of support, clients also required longer periods of support during 2017/18 which saw a 6.8% increase. By far the majority of clients were provided services for a 2 to 14 week period.

Figure 34: 2016/17 Length of Support

Figure 35: 2017/18 Length of Support from beginning of Support Period

Source: Anglicare NT Moving On Program Data
The main reason clients sought support was as a result of transitioning from foster care or a residential placement, however during 2017/18 support for financial difficulties jumped markedly by 11.3%.

**Figure 36**: 2016/17 Reasons for Seeking Assistance

Source: Anglicare NT Moving On Program Data
Figure 37: 2017/18 Support Periods – Reasons for Seeking Assistance

Source: Anglicare NT Moving On Program Data
Monitoring Face-to-Face Contact with Children in Care

The OCC reviewed the frequency of face-to-face contact between Territory Families Case Managers and children in care. When a child is in the care of the CEO of Territory Families, the Agency is responsible for ensuring their safety and wellbeing. Territory Families’ procedure “monitoring the wellbeing of children in care” prescribes that, at a minimum, the Case Manager must have face-to-face contact with each child in care at least once a month.
If a Case Manager or Territory Families representative cannot have contact with a child monthly, they must arrange for a third-party to do so. If third-party face-to-face contact occurs in lieu of face-to-face contact with the Case Manager, the next monthly contact must involve the Case Manager.

All contact or attempted contact with a child to monitor their safety and wellbeing must be recorded in CCIS as a service event including a progress note which details the purpose, location, who was present and the outcome.

The sample of 108 files randomly generated for the care plan review, was used to assess the frequency of face-to-face contact with children in the care of the CEO of Territory Families.

The review process involved assessing the number of children that had face-to-face contact with their Territory Families Case Manager in May and June 2018.

**Figure 38**: 5 Year Trend Analysis - Territory Families Monthly and Bi-Monthly Face-to-Face Contact with Children in OoHC

One hundred and eight cases of children in OoHC were reviewed in 2017-18 for monthly and bi-monthly face-to-face contact with Territory Families or a third party. As detailed in the 5 year trend analysis this reporting period Territory Families has achieved the highest rate of compliance, 84% with face-to-face contact with a child in the care of the CEO.
Aboriginal Child Placement Principle

The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle stresses the importance of cultural continuity and requires a child to be placed with direct kin or, failing this, with someone who speaks their language and shares their culture, rather than a member of another Aboriginal group, or a non-Aboriginal person.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over represented in OoHC and the child protection system. The reasons for this are complex and are connected to past policies, poverty, intergenerational trauma and discrimination which have all contributed to the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care, as have cultural differences in child rearing practices and family structure (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission [HREOC], 1997; SNAICC, 2016a; Titterton, 2017).

Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory represent 89% of the total children in OoHC, this is consistent with the 2016-17 reporting period. This is significantly higher than the national average which at 30 June 2017 was 58.7% per 1,000 children. The ACPP is legislated in section 12 of the CAPCA and states:

- Kinship groups, representative organisations and communities of Aboriginal people have a major role, through self-determination, in promoting the wellbeing of Aboriginal children.

- In particular, a kinship group, representative organisation or community of Aboriginal people nominated by an Aboriginal child’s family should be able to participate in the making of a decision involving the child.

An Aboriginal child should, as far as practicable, be placed with a person in the following order of priority:

- a member of the child’s family;

- an Aboriginal person in the child’s community in accordance with local community practice;

- any other Aboriginal person; or

- a person who: is not an Aboriginal person; but in the CEO’s opinion, is sensitive to the child’s needs and capable of promoting the child’s ongoing affiliation with the culture of the child’s community (and, if possible, ongoing contact with the child’s family).

In addition, an Aboriginal child should, as far as practicable, be placed in close proximity to the child’s family and community. It is also a requirement that family must be involved and consulted on every decision when a placement is required for the child.

The OCC recognises the Northern Territory Government’s investment of $4.2 million over four years to recruit and support Aboriginal foster and kinship carers. This is a key recommendation from the NT Royal Commission. The funding is allocated specifically to fund Aboriginal controlled organisations across the Northern Territory to increase their capacity to identify family or other suitable Aboriginal carers for children, and to provide them with culturally appropriate support. The OCC will continue to monitor compliance with the ACPP.

In 2017-18, there continues to be the ongoing challenge for TF to respond to these requirements in a context where there are significantly fewer available Aboriginal foster and kinship carers.
### Table 6: Number of Foster Places of Care (POC) as at 30 June 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPROVAL CARE TYPE</th>
<th>ABORIGINAL STATUS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF POC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Foster Care</td>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Foster Care</td>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Kinship Care</td>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>533</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Each POC may have one or more Carers. A place of care is indicated as having an Aboriginal Status of Aboriginal if at least one of the carers is identified as being Aboriginal.*

Children in Out-of-Home Care are Aboriginal

Source: Territory Families 2017-18
The number of Places of Care that exited during the period commencing from 1 July 2017 to and including 30 June 2018 is 90.

The number of new Places of Care registered during the period commencing from 1 July 2017 to and including 30 June 2018 is 136.

**Figure 39:** Number of Children OoHC Placement Type including Kinship Care

Source: Territory Families 2017-18
As depicted in the Figure 40 of the 947 Aboriginal children in OoHC, 448 have had multiple placements during the reporting period. This is of concern as it equates to nearly 50% of Aboriginal children and young people in care.

**Figure 40:** Number of Aboriginal Children with Multiple Placements In 2017-18

- Single Placements: 506 (53%)
- Multiple Placements: 448 (47%)

**Figure 41:** Aboriginal child by Age Group with an Aboriginal Placement

- Total: 143 (32%), 140 (31%)
- 0 to 4: 107 (24%)
- 5 to 9: 58 (13%)
- 10 to 14: 65 (15%)
- 15 to 17: 82 (20%)

Source: Territory Families 2017-18

**Source:** Territory Families 2017-18
Figure 42: Total Number of Aboriginal Children in OoHC by Type of Placement

- Indigenous Relative/Kin: 624
- Other Indigenous Caregiver: 261
- Indigenous children placed with Non-Indigenous Residential Care: 59
- Other Non-Indigenous Caregiver: 0

Source: Territory Families 2017-18
Looking Ahead

We have set our priorities for the OCC this year, which are aligned to our Strategic Plan 2017-19 and Business Plan 2018-19. The identified priorities have also been aligned to the new structure and functions of the OCC and fall under the two overarching outputs of Monitoring and Investigations and Strategy, Rights and Advice.
Monitoring and Investigations

The NT Royal Commission recommended the establishment of a significantly expanded Commission for Children and Young People to replace the current structure and remit of the OCC. It recommended the expansion of the existing office and the addition of functions and powers including jurisdiction for oversight of all children and young people in the Northern Territory.

In June 2018 work began on the implementation of the OCC specific recommendations and stage one of the implementation of the NT Royal Commission recommendations is well under way. The OCC will have an expanded role in the monitoring and auditing of youth justice facilities and Out-of-Home Care facilities. This will include the development and implementation of a new monitoring and auditing framework for the OCC.

Part of our considerations in relation to the expansion of the OCC monitoring and auditing functions was the ratification, by the Australian Government on 21 December 2017 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). Significant work has commenced at the national level to explore what implementation of OPCAT in Australia will look like. The Commonwealth Ombudsman’s Office was appointed as the OPCAT National Preventative Coordinator and this function formally commenced on 1 July 2018. The implementation of the OPCAT compliance framework will occur over a three year period.

OPCAT will provide an independent National Preventative Mechanism for places of detention, adding an additional layer of protection for the special needs and interests of young people in detention.

In light of the developments regarding the Australia-wide implementation of OPCAT, one of the OCC’s priorities this year will be to align our monitoring and auditing framework in relation to youth justice facilities with OPCAT domains.
The underlying objective when conducting monitoring and auditing activities is to achieve better outcomes for children and young people detained in youth justice facilities and residing in OoHC placements through constructive feedback and collaboration.

Our monitoring activities for the coming year will take a broad and systemic approach, and will have a strong focus on capturing the voices of children and young people. Over this year we will ensure that our monitoring and auditing framework and activities support the whole-of-government reform agenda.

We will do this by:

- Developing and implementing the monitoring and auditing governance framework and schedule of activities.
- Undertaking inspections of the youth justice detention facilities in Darwin and Alice Springs. Identifying and supporting best practice solutions to issues that need to be addressed through recommendations to the relevant Agency, provider or government.
- Investigating the quality of child protection case management arising from complaints to the Commissioner.
- Monitoring the OCC complaint mechanism process to inform and shape the strategic work of the office. This will enable the OCC to continue to identify and focus on key themes and issues. We will ensure that we are proposing workable, evidence based solutions to those issues.
- Conducting an audit of a sample set of child protection notifications that were unsubstantiated and screened out at intake in the 2018-19 period. This will allow for an insight into the application of the legislative definition of harm and the practice threshold for screening in a notification to proceed to a child protection investigation.
- Helping to build capability within child protection, including contracted care providers, to deliver excellent services for children and young people in care by highlighting areas for improvement.
Strategy, Rights and Advice

“Pretty much all the honest truth telling there is in the world is done by children.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes

A quote by poet and author Oliver Wendell Holmes that demonstrates what is to be gained by including the voices of children in our work. Children and young people have the capacity to offer such a unique and valuable insight into, not only the services we work to improve, but the community in which we live. It should not be aspirational to include the voices of children and young people but should instead be a fundamental part of any work that impacts them, inclusion must be more than tokenistic and must be worthy of the effort required by the children and young people to participate. This is particularly important when dealing with those who are over-serviced and at times over-consulted without any clear direction as to the use of that information or knock on effects.

In 2017-18 the OCC played an increased role in community education as detailed in this report, the See Us. Hear Us. Know Us. Project had great uptake and a priority for 2018-19 will be the evaluation of the project. The evaluation will help shape future community engagement activities and provide learnings for those activities as to what is effective and what is not.

The OCC is committed to expanding its reach in 2018-19 to ensure as many Territorians as possible are aware of the role of the office but also to ensure that the voices and experiences of those outside of the regional hubs are captured.

We aim to improve child wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people by influencing others. To have impact, our advice must be seen as credible and be valued by our stakeholders.

We intend to:

• Provide advice to agencies on child-centred policy, legislation and services for children.
• Evaluate the See Us. Hear Us. Know Us. Project to inform the development and implementation of a new campaign.
• Continue to listen to and share the voices, views and opinions of vulnerable children and young people.
• Promote a public health approach to children, young people and families in the Northern Territory.
• Promote early intervention and prevention initiatives to improve the lives of Aboriginal people with a focus on the empowerment and capacity building of Aboriginal families, communities and Aboriginal-controlled organisations.
• Continue to promote and advocate for the best interests of the child and families to be the focus of all work, reform and practice relating to vulnerable children.

The Royal Commission and Board of Inquiry into the Protection and Detention of children in the Northern Territory has provided 227 recommendations that will improve the child protection and youth justice systems however we cannot just rely on this generational change, we must all put children and families at the centre of everything we do. The OCC will play a critical part in the Whole-of-Government reform while concurrently undertaking robust oversight of services to children and young people.
References


## Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Complaint Management Process</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Domestic Circumstances of Vulnerable Children who were the subject of a Complaint in 2017-18</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>5 Year Analysis - Number of Notifications, Investigations and Substantiations, 2013-14 to 2017-18</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Total Notifications, Investigations and Substantiations by Harm or Exploitation Type</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Number of Notifications, 2013-14 to 2017-18</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Number of Notifications by Aboriginality</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Total Number of Notifications by Harm or Exploitation Type, 2017-18</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Number of Notifications by Age, 2013-14 to 2017-18</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td>Percentage of Investigations that were completed within the 28 day time frame</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>Percentage of Completed Investigation within 28 days and 62 days from 2013-14 to 2017-18</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td>Investigations Substantiated by Harm Type</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12</td>
<td>Number of substantiated harm or exploitation in Care Cases by harm Type and Aboriginality, 2016-17 and 2017-18</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td>Number of Children Removed from and Remaining in Placement</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14</td>
<td>Number of Harm and Exploitation in Care Cases by Placement Type</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 15</td>
<td>Children with multiple cases of harm and exploitation in OoHC by Person Believed Responsible 2017-18</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 16</td>
<td>Multiple Harm and Exploitation in OoHC Cases 2015-16 to 2017-18</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 17</td>
<td>Harm and Exploitation in OoHC by Age Group</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 18</td>
<td>Number of children Harm and Exploitation in OoHC by Priority Rating</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 19</td>
<td>Outcomes of Substantiated Harm and Exploitation in OoHC</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 20</td>
<td>Person Responsible for Harm and Exploitation of Child in OoHC by Relationship</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 21</td>
<td>Trend – Total Children in OoHC 30 June 2013 to 30 June 2018</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Regional Comparison – OoHC children with and without a care plan</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Genogram by Region 2017-18</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Care plan cultural compliance</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>15-17 Year Olds linked to Resources and Services for Transition</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Distinct Client by Age Group – Total Clients 140</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Distinct Client by Age Group - Total Clients 163</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>2016/17 Number of Distinct Clients by Gender</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>2017/18 Number of Distinct Clients by Gender</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>2016/17 Number of Distinct Clients by Aboriginal Status</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>2017/18 Number of Distinct Clients by Aboriginal Status</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>2016/17 Number of Support Periods by Distinct Client</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>2017/18 Number of Support Periods by Distinct Client</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>2016/17 Length of Support</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>2017/18 Length of Support from beginning of Support Period</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>2016/17 Reasons for Seeking Assistance</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>5 Year Trend Analysis - Territory Families Monthly and Bi-Monthly Face-to-Face Contact with Children in OoHC</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Number of Children OoHC Placement Type including Kinship Care</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Number of Aboriginal Children with Multiple Placements in 2017-18</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Aboriginal child by Age Group with an Aboriginal Placement</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Total Number of Aboriginal Children in OoHC by Type of Placement</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>How Notifications Received During 2017-18 Were Actioned</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Number of Notifiers by Category, 2017-18</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Percentage of Investigations Commenced within the Required Time-Frame, 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Unallocated Child Protection investigations at 30 June 2018 by Urgency Rating</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Children who were the subject of multiple substantiations within 12 months by Gender</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>Number of Foster Places of Care (POC) as at 30 June 2018</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>