



1 December 2021

Media Statement

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) Annual Report for the 2020-2021 year has been tabled today in Parliament by Attorney-General Hon Selena Uibo MLA. The annual report outlines the work of the OCC over the 20/21 financial year, highlighting reform progress and issues experienced by children across the Northern Territory.

This year the OCC engaged with over 1500 children and young people across the Territory and used their voices as the centre for submissions to Government on subjects including education, mental health, living with disability, youth justice and legislation.

Across the 2020/2021 the number of children being held in detention in the NT has steadily risen, including an increase in the number of younger children under 14 years old. More information relating to the detention of children in the NT is available in the OCC 2021 monitoring report.

This year saw an increase of 147% in the number of matters dealt with by the OCC, with the majority relating to children living in out-of-home care. Whilst there is some evidence that the new child protection framework is improving practice in how notifications of harm are being assessed by Territory Families, Housing and Communities; the number of children experiencing numerous episodes of harm is concerning. A common theme amongst all our work was the lack of a therapeutic model of care in places where young people were living in institutionalised settings.

Four years on from the Royal Commission into the Detention and Protection of Children and Young People (2017) and several key recommendations relating to OCC functions to independently and effectively monitor places where children are held are yet to be implemented.

The OCC has also produced a child-friendly version of the 2020-21 Annual Report, for young people to easily access information on our work and functions. The full report will be available on www.occ.nt.gov.au shortly.

Quotes from A/ Children's Commissioner, Sally Sievers:

"Children have told us they want schools and communities that are inclusive, safe, and tailored for NT kids. They are hopeful for their futures, but kids living in the cities and towns think they have more opportunities than those living remote. All children in the Territory deserve the same chance to thrive."

"The OCC remains greatly concerned about the NT Government's youth justice reforms moving away from evidence based best practice, resulting in younger children being incarcerated and greater numbers of children in detention. The ongoing negative impacts this could have on our children and community safety are significant."

"Cumulative harm, particularly through the impact of domestic and family violence, continues to be a major concern with increasing numbers of children in the Territory experiencing multiple child protection substantiations of harm."

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