

Question on Notice
No. 14

Asked on 23 February 2021

MS A CAMM asked the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister Multicultural Affairs (HON L LINARD)—

QUESTION

Will the Minister advise, between 2018 and 2021 to date (reported separately) the number of children (a) known to child protection, (b) residing in Youth Residential Care Service (broken down by age) and (c) known to child safety who have refused to enter into care arrangements and therefore not admitted to Youth Residential Care Service?

ANSWER

- (a) The number of children known to the child protection system is a broad measure and includes any child in contact with the department at any point in the child protection continuum (intake, investigation and assessment or ongoing intervention) at any time during the year, where the child was identified as the subject child.

The number of children known to the child protection system during the year is as follows.

01 July 2017 to 30 June 2018	01 July 2018 to 30 June 2019	01 July 2019 to 30 June 2020
88,826	92,040	95,294

- (b) Data for the number of children in residential care by age group is in the below table.

Age group	As at 30 June 2018	As at 30 June 2019	As at 30 June 2020
0 to 4	9	4	16
5 to 9	81	87	159
10 to 14	371	455	500
15 to 17	353	405	461
Total	814	951	1,136

Reasons why children aged 0 to 9 years are placed in residential care can include:

- That a comprehensive assessment has been undertaken that indicates a child's needs are best met by a placement in residential care;
- They are one of a sibling group that would benefit from being placed together;
- The service model has been explicitly developed and approved for children under 12, for example Indigenous Community Residential care and Family Intervention Services (Safe Houses).

Increasing demand for the child protection system since 2018 has led to more children being placed in out-of-home care (OOHC) and in residential care as a result. In June 2020 there were 10,527 children in out-of-home care, an increase of 9.1 per cent on the previous year.

- (c) The information requested in relation to the number of children who have refused to enter into 'approved' care arrangements are not part of corporate data sets available each quarter and would require manual collection and collation from departmental systems. Obtaining this data would take valuable resources away from frontline service delivery.

The number of children refusing to enter into approved care arrangements, generally, is different from the number who refuse to enter a residential care service, and includes children who refuse temporary or longer term placement with families, either initially or after a period of time.

Both that number, and the numbers refusing to enter a residential care service can fluctuate. For example, a child may be placed in January, may reject placement in February, and may return in March; self-placement by a child may last several days, or months, or become permanent. On occasions, children absent themselves from a placement fully intending to return after a period, and sometimes it can be difficult to determine if they have refused or abandoned a care arrangement or placement, or intend to return. Their self placement might end because they are satisfactorily placed with a family or another care arrangement such as a residential care service.

When a young person refuses to remain in an approved arranged placement, the allocated Child Safety Officer and non-government worker actively engage with the young person to determine the reason for their refusal to live in the placement and plan for another alternative safe option if required.