



THE SENATE
SENATE FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into access to legal assistance
Public Hearing – Monday 4 April 2016
Question Taken on Notice – Department of Social Services

1. HANSARD, Page 28

Senator PERIS: A lot of the evidence contains information about juveniles being held on remand and not being released because they are children out of home care. Is the Commonwealth doing anything to address these issues?

Ms Quinn: I think that may be a question better directed to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. I do not mean to sound like I am not trying to be helpful; it is just that, within the confines of this program, other than doing what we can to assist our providers and giving them the maximum flexibility they can to assist the people most in need, there is a limited amount that we are able to do in the space that you are talking about. ...

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has indicated that this question is better directed to DSS.

Answer:

State and territory governments have statutory responsibility for the care and protection of children in their state or territory. Furthermore each state and territory has its own youth justice legislation, policies and practices.

The Commonwealth Government is working in partnership with states and territories and the community sector under the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* (National Framework) to improve the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children. The National Framework is being implemented through a series of three-year action plans. All Australian governments and the community sector recently reaffirmed their commitment to protecting Australia's children through the launch of the *Third Action Plan 2015-2018* (Third Action Plan) of the National Framework in December 2015.

One of the key strategies under the Third Action Plan is to better support young people in out-of-home-care (Strategy 2) as they transition to independent living. Strategy 2 recognises that some groups, including young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, can have complex and ongoing needs. A key goal of this strategy is to ensure that services and programmes are culturally and appropriate for young people by engaging with them on issues they consider important. Under Strategy 2, the Commonwealth Government will work with relevant jurisdictions to trial ways of

improving support to young people as they transition from out-of-home care, including better utilisation of available data, and delivering intensive case management and wrap-around services linking to education, health and housing.

The Third Action Plan also includes a 'cross-cutting focus area' which identifies that sustained attention will be given to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to reduce the number needing child protection services. This strategy will include the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group which will provide advice and expertise on the implementation of actions and strategies, and report to the National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children on progress and outcomes, to ensure a sustained focus on results.

More information on the National Framework and the three action plans can be found at www.dss.gov.au.