**Question on notice no. 2689**

**Senator David Shoebridge**: asked the Minister representing the Minister for Health and Aged Care on 27 September 2023—

With reference to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

1. The data for the Child Protection Australia 2021-22 report states the following "Due to issues with the recording of order status, Tasmanian data for care and protection orders should be interpreted with caution." What are these issues.
2. The report states "Tasmania data exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs. Tasmania is not able to include children in care where a financial payment was offered but was declined by the carer meaning Tasmania's data may be lower than would be the case if the counting rule was strictly applied." How long has this counting complication occurred.
3. The report states "Not all jurisdictions were able to provide data for all types of co-occurring abuse or neglect—some jurisdictions were able to report only primary and secondary types. Therefore the proportion of co-occurring abuse types may be understated." Which jurisdictions are not able to provide data for all types of co-occurring abuse or neglect; and, what reasons have they provided (if any) .
4. The report states "In Tasmania, delays in administrative processes can result in carers being maintained as approved in the system when they are no longer accepting child placements. For the purpose of reporting households exiting foster or relative/kinship care, if no termination date is recorded, a foster or relative/kinship carer household that has not had a placement in 12 months is considered to have exited." What reasons has the Tasmanian government given for these delays (if any) .
5. The report states "Services in Tasmania are provided under the title of Integrated Family Support Services and inclusion of some family support services as intensive rather than general may not be consistent with national definitions. Also Tasmanian data are compiled from aggregate data provided by Community Sector Organisations and as data are not validated figures should be interpreted with caution. Further, from 2018–19 data includes children referred to the Intensive Family Engagement Service." What are the reasons for the lack of consistency with national definitions; and, what is the implication of the reference to the Intensive Family Engagement Service in terms of data after 2018-19.
6. The report states "In Tasmania, the reliability of these data is affected by the proportion of children with an unknown Indigenous status at investigation." In what ways is the reliability of the data affected; and, to what extent does this failure to accurately record data impact figures for Indigenous children under care and protection orders in the state.
7. The report states "Due to changes in intake business rules and practice implemented during 2018–19, the proportion of contacts progressed to

notifications decreased in Tasmania." What were these changes; and, how would these changes impact the data.

8. The report states "Data reported for Tasmania aligns with the AIHW technical specifications except in the case of notifications received from departmental officers, which could also be classified in another category (for example, social worker) . Notifications from departmental officers were assigned to the category of 'departmental officer' regardless of whether the source of notification could be classified in other categories." How does this difference affect the data; and, what reasons has the Tasmanian government given for this difference.
9. The report states "Data for orders in Tasmania may not be comparable year to year due to issues with the recording of order status." What are these issues.
10. The report states "For Tasmania, data quality issues arising from inconsistent recording of placement types means numbers of children reported as being in residential, non-residential and other types of placements, should be interpreted with caution." What are these data quality issues; and, how long has this been a factor.
11. The report states "In Tasmania, the high number of carers whose Indigenous status is unknown may affect the identification of children placed with Indigenous caregivers." What information has the Tasmanian government provided on the number of carers whose Indigenous status is unknown; and, what reasons have the Tasmanian government provided to explain this lack of data.

**Answer —**

**Minister Butler** – The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

1. As part of the data collection process, custodians provide AIHW with contextual information regarding the data. During the Child Protection Australia (CPA) 2014-15 reporting cycle the Tasmanian Department of Communities (as currently known) indicated that this issue is due to "considerable lag". No further details were provided.
2. This issue was first reported to AIHW by Tasmanian Department of Communities for the data provision as a part of the Child Protection Collection (CPC) process 2014-15.
3. For CPA 2021-22 the ACT Community Services Directorate and the Tasmanian Department of Communities provided data for only primary and secondary abuse types. No information was provided as to the reasons for this.
4. No information has been provided regarding these delays.
5. As part of CPC 2018-19 the Tasmanian Department of Communities noted that their threshold for determining that a child has commenced intensive family support changed to include children who were referred to the Intensive Family Engagement Service (IFES). The implication was that the number of Tasmanian children included in this category increased from 1,654 in 2017-18 to 1,782 in 2018-19.
6. Department of Communities Tasmania advised that the increase in children of unknown indigenous status in 2017-18 report was due to it no longer being

cross-checked with data from other databases. The number of Tasmanian children receiving child protection services with unknown indigenous status increased from 328 in 2016-17 to 1,052 in 2017-18. In 2019 the Tasmanian Department of Communities advised they were undertaking data remediation of this issue. As of 2021-22 reporting there were Tasmanian children of unknown indigenous status was 195.

7. The Tasmanian Department of Communities advised that with the introduction of the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line during 2018–19, there were new intake business rules. The impact of this saw the number of notifications in Tasmania decrease from 7,924 in 2017-18 to 1,836 in 2019-20. This was concurrent with a decrease in the number of substantiations of notifications in Tasmania, from 767 in 2017-18 to 417 in 2019-20. There was no notable change in number of children in Tasmania on care and protection orders, in out-of-home care, or on third party orders across this same period (according to CPA 2021-22).
8. As part of CPC 2021-22 the Tasmanian Department of Communities noted that they classify all departmental officers as “departmental officers”, regardless of whether they are employed as other categories of notification source listed in Table S3.2, as a definitional matter. In 2021-22 there were just 11 notifications from “departmental officers” while there were 219 from “social workers” (as an example). No further information has been given.
9. Please refer to the answer to question 1 above. This footnote appears under trend data, whereas the one in question 1 appears under snapshot data. Both refer to the same issue.
10. The Tasmanian Department of Communities for the CPC 2018-19 report advised that there are some placements which are recorded as “there home-based care” in their systems when their guardian is a relative or kin. This may result in some overlap in the definitions between the “other home-based care” and the “relative/ kin” categories.
11. No further information has been provided regarding the source of uncertainty of carer indigenous status, nor regarding how many carers this applies to.