

Data summary

Report on Government Services 2022

The Productivity Commission has released its annual *Report on Government Services* (ROGS).¹ ROGS provides comparative data across jurisdictions for the purposes of service improvement. Below are relevant findings for the child and family services sector. Unless otherwise stated, data is for 2020-21.

Overview

While much of the data included in the Report on Government Services can also be found in the yearly reports from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), the real value of the annual ROGS is in its reporting of expenditure and the cost of services.

Australia's total recurrent expenditure on the full range of child protection services shows an increase of 6.2 per cent in 2020-21 compared to the previous reporting period.

In Victoria, real recurrent expenditure on intensive family services has increased by \$48,568,000 since 2017-18. While this is positive, the funds spent on intensive family services as a proportion of total expenditure has not changed significantly in the last few years.

Nationally, in the area of youth justice, it is pleasing to see that the average daily rate of detention and community-based supervision of young people (aged 10-17 years) was the lowest for the seven years of reported data.

Despite some pleasing trends apparent in national youth justice data, it is to Australia's shame that in 2020-21, 467 children in community-based supervision and 444 children in detention were 10-13 years old. In both community-based supervision and detention, more than half of children aged 10-13 years were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Centre has joined with many others in calling for the age of criminal responsibility to be raised to at least 14 years so these children can be supported in the community instead of being caught up in a system that leads to poor outcomes.

Overall, the ROGS data has been impacted by COVID-19 in a number of ways, including in respect of actual performance, and the collection and processing of data. There were no significant changes to child protection data resulting from COVID-19, however in the youth justice area there was a marked reduction in the number of youth justice group conferences in Victoria.

While the rate of children receiving intensive family services in Victoria has reportedly decreased since the arrival of COVID-19, this trend needs to be interpreted with caution, as the report notes that there have been data collection issues and numbers are likely to have been under-reported.

Child protection services

National data

- ◆ Australia's total recurrent expenditure on family support services, intensive family support services, protective intervention services, and care services (out-of-home care and other supported placements) was \$7.5 billion in 2020-21 (a real increase of 6.2 per cent from 2019-20) of which care services accounted for more than half (60.3 per cent, or \$4.5 billion).
- ◆ Nationally in 2020-21, the cost per child receiving intensive family support services was \$8932 (down from \$10,178 in 2018-19).¹
- ◆ The following number of children aged 0-17 years received protective intervention services and out-of-home care services in Australia during 2020-21:
 - 293 585 children were the subject of *notifications* (51.9 per 1000 children)
 - 49 690 children were the subject of a *substantiation* (8.8 per 1000 children)
 - 61 743 children were on *care and protection orders* at 30 June 2021 (10.9 per 1000 children)
 - 46 212 children were in *out-of-home care* at 30 June 2021 (8.2 per 1000 children) with a further 10 115 children in *other supported placements*.
- ◆ At 30 June 2021, the proportion of children in out-of-home care who were placed with relatives or kin was 53.7 per cent, with the proportion similar for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (53.5 per cent) and non-Indigenous children (53.9 per cent).
- ◆ Nationally at 30 June 2021, 63.8 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were placed either with relatives/kin (54.3 per cent) or with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-based carers (9.5 per cent).
- ◆ At 30 June 2021, 91.1 per cent of children in out-of-home care were in home-based care (96.9 per cent for children aged less than 12 years, and 80.8 per cent for children aged 12-17 years). Proportions were similar for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and non-Indigenous children.
- ◆ The proportion of substantiations that occurred within 3 and 12 months of a *decision not to substantiate* in 2019-20 was under 8 per cent and 17 per cent respectively in all jurisdictions. The proportion of substantiations that occurred within 3 and 12 months of a *prior substantiation* in 2019-20 was under 11 per cent and 24 per cent respectively in all jurisdictions.
- ◆ 87.2 per cent of children who left out-of-home care to a permanency arrangement in 2019-20 did not return to out-of-home care in the following 12 months (an increase from 86.2 per cent in 2018-19).

Victorian data

- ◆ In 2020-21, Victoria spent:
 - \$412,168,000 on protective intervention services (up from \$340,597,000 in 2019-20)
 - \$853,253,000 on care services (up from \$805,339,000 in 2019-20)
 - \$193,619,000 on intensive family support services (up from \$161,523,000 in 2019-20)

¹ Low or decreasing cost per child receiving support services can suggest more efficient services but could also indicate lower quality and should be considered together with the results for other indicators.

- \$282,653,000 on family support services (up from \$238,607,000 in 2019-20).
- ◆ Of the \$853,253,000 spent on care services, residential care accounted for 45.95 per cent. This percentage has gradually increased over the last four years, up from 43.41 per cent in 2017-18).
- ◆ The cost per child receiving intensive family support services was \$13,360 or 11.1 per cent of total expenditure (up from \$9,841 in 2019-20).² Provision of generic family support services accounted for 16.2 per cent of total expenditure. The provision of out-of-home care and other supported placement services accounted for 49 per cent of total expenditure.
- ◆ Real recurrent expenditure on intensive family services has increased by \$48,568,000 since 2017-18.
- ◆ 82,678 children were subject to *notifications*. Of these, 6,908 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- ◆ 29,582 children were subject to *finalised investigations*. Of these, 3,729 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- ◆ 16,130 children were subject to *substantiations*. Of these, 2,184 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- ◆ 14,898 children were on care and protection orders at 30 June 2021. Of these, 3,453 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- ◆ 9,146 children were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2021. Of these, 2,572 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- ◆ 9,602 children commenced intensive family support services, of whom 1,017 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- ◆ 12,841 children were the subject of a substantiation while in care, of whom 227 were the subject of a *substantiation* and the person responsible was living in the household providing out-of-home care.
- ◆ Among children exiting care in 2020-21, 1,695 had one placement, 660 had two placements, 238 had three placements, 275 had four to five placements, 137 had six to ten placements and 28 had 11 or more placements.
- ◆ At 30 June 2021, 279 children were in continuous out-of-home care for less than one month and 1,869 were in continuous out-of-home care for five years or more.
- ◆ 5,887 (99.1 per cent) children aged under 12 years in out-of-home care were in a home-based placement at 30 June 2021, of whom 1,796 (99.4 per cent) were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- ◆ 2,776 (86.7 per cent) children aged 12-17 years in out-of-home care were in a home-based placement at 30 June 2021, of whom 683 (89.2 per cent) were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- ◆ At 30 June 2021:
 - 445 children were in residential care, of whom 86 were Aboriginal
 - 1,554 children were in foster care, of whom 439 were Aboriginal
 - 6,931 children were in relative/kinship care, of whom 2,103 were Aboriginal
 - 178 were in other home-based care, of whom 27 were Aboriginal

² Victoria experienced data collection system issues in 2020-21 that are likely to have resulted in under-reporting of the number of children receiving an intensive family support service. Therefore, the cost per child receiving an intensive family support service is likely to be overstated and should be interpreted with caution.

- 34 were in independent living, of whom five were Aboriginal
- Four were in other or unknown placements, of whom two were Aboriginal.
- ◆ Of Aboriginal children in care:
 - 39.8 per cent were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relative/kin
 - 39.4 per cent were non-Indigenous relative/kin
 - 1.4 per cent were other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carer
 - 16.1 per cent were non-Indigenous carer
 - 3.4 per cent were residential care or family group home.
- ◆ In 2019-20, 3,181 children exited care to a permanency arrangement, of whom 634 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Of the total number of children exiting care to a permanency arrangement, 83.7 per cent did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months (82.6 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children).

Youth justice services

National data

- ◆ Total recurrent expenditure on detention-based supervision, community-based supervision and group conferencing was \$1.1 billion nationally in 2020-21 (up from \$1 billion in 2019-20). Detention-based supervision accounted for 64.6 per cent, or \$723.9 million, of this expenditure (up from 58.1 per cent, or \$584.5 million in 2019-20).
- ◆ On an average day during 2020-21, 81.6 per cent of young people under youth justice supervision were supervised in the community (down from 85.3 per cent in 2019-20). The remainder were in detention.
- ◆ In Australia in 2020-21, the average cost per day per young person subject to detention-based supervision was \$2518 (compared with \$247 per day for community-based supervision), an increase of 34 per cent from 2019-20 (\$1883). This national increase was driven by both an increase in expenditure and decrease in the average daily number of young people in detention.
- ◆ Centre utilisation (which is based on the number of all young people in detention centres as a proportion of the number of permanently funded beds) decreased in most jurisdictions and nationally between 2019-20 and 2020-21, and is at its lowest level in the seven years of reported data.
- ◆ The average daily detention rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people was 18 times the rate of their non-Aboriginal peers in 2020-21. The rate for community-based supervision was 16 times the rate of their non-Aboriginal peers.
- ◆ The average cost per concluded group conference was \$6094. Nationally in 2020-21, 93.5 per cent of all concluded group conferences resulted in an agreement, a result broadly consistent since 2014-15.
- ◆ In 2020-21, 21 young people were reported as injured in custody due to a serious assault and 356 young people were reported as injured in custody due to an assault (excluding serious assaults).
- ◆ Nationally in 2020-21 (excluding WA), 30 incidents of self-harm or attempted suicide requiring hospitalisation and a further 270 incidents of self-harm or attempted suicide not requiring hospitalisation were reported.

- ◆ Nationally, 55 per cent of young people aged 10-16 years at time of release from sentenced supervision in 2018-19 returned within 12 months, a decrease of almost 4 percentage points on the previous year.

Impact of COVID-19

In Victoria in 2020-21, there was a significant reduction in the number of youth justice group conferences due to COVID-19.

The full report can be found here:

<https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services>

ⁱ Data in this summary sheet is largely included verbatim from the report. Please refer to the report when interpreting data.

Source: Productivity Commission 2022, *Report on Government Services 2022*, Productivity Commission, Melbourne.