



MEDIA RELEASE

## **Urgent action demanded on alternative care arrangements**

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AbSec, the leading voice in Aboriginal child protection, has issued a scathing critique of the NSW Government's management of alternative care arrangements (ACAs), following a disturbing interim report by the Advocate for Children and Young People.

AbSec is calling for an immediate end to ACAs and significant reform that involves greater management by Aboriginal communities.

The report uncovers severe neglect, sexual assault and exposure to rampant drug use among children placed in ACAs, predominantly operated by for-profit entities.

AbSec CEO John Leha expressed both outrage and a lack of surprise.

"This report only confirms what we have long known—that ACAs are neither safe nor healthy for children.

"Over 60 per cent of children in these arrangements are Aboriginal, with some as young as four years old.

"This situation is intolerable and reminiscent of the darkest times of the Stolen Generations."

Mr Leha criticised the NSW Government's recent decision to review the state's foster care system, calling it inadequate.

"We do not need another round of inquiries that lead nowhere – we need action.

"We need immediate steps to protect our children and to implement the Advocate's recommendation to end ACAs."

The report also highlights the financial inefficiencies associated with ACAs, noting the staggering cost of \$965,000 per child per year, with some children remaining in these placements for over 600 days.

"It's outrageous that such vast sums are wasted on enriching private firms, rather than nurturing our children," Mr Leha said.

"This is especially the case when they use unaccredited labour hire staff who have no understanding of Aboriginal culture and often lack basic childcare skills.

"If these resources were directed towards community-based solutions, we could make significant, positive impacts on the lives of our children."

AbSec proposes a clear solution.

"The time for ACAs has passed. We must turn to solutions designed, led and managed by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations," Mr Leha said.

"Our communities know best how to care for our children, with respect for our culture and their wellbeing at the heart of every decision."



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