



MEDIA RELEASE

AbSec welcomes NSW Government's effective actions on Alternative Care Arrangements

Published Thursday, 5 September 2024

AbSec congratulates the Minns Labor Government and Minister for Families and Communities, Kate Washington, for their decisive action in greatly reducing the use of Alternative Care Arrangements (ACAs) and banning the use of unaccredited emergency accommodation for vulnerable children in New South Wales.

The NSW Government's announcement, made during Child Protection Week, build on significant progress in reducing the number of children in ACAs from 139 to 39 over the past ten months.

The recent devastating report by the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People exposed the neglect, trauma and sexual abuse experienced by children shunted into long stay ACA arrangements in hotels, motels and caravans tended to by a roster of often unaccredited carers.

Aboriginal children made up almost half of those placed in these arrangements, often following removal from family, culture, and community. Many Aboriginal children did not exit ACAs to other types of care placements but resorted to 'self-placing'.

John Leha, CEO of AbSec, stated, "Today's announcement is a long-overdue shift towards a care system that prioritises the wellbeing of children, especially Aboriginal children, who have been grossly overrepresented in unsafe ACA placements. No child should be left in environments that undermine their cultural safety and identity."

AbSec is particularly concerned about the high rate of self-placing among Aboriginal children. Self-placement is often a cry for help. Traumatized children choosing to reconnect with family and community rather than enduring another night in an unsafe environment where they cannot build trust or receive cultural and relational care from the latest person scheduled on their shift. The decision to self-place is not taken lightly by these children; it is often an act of survival, driven by a desire to escape the systemic neglect and isolation they experience in ACA settings.

“Self-placement exposes the reality that for many children, especially Aboriginal children, the so-called care system is failing. Rather than providing a nurturing environment, it has become something they feel they need to escape from,” Leha continued. “These children are seeking out connections to their culture, their family, and their identity because those are the very things that have been taken from them.”

While self-placement might seem like an empowered choice, it often leaves children vulnerable, without access to proper support systems and making them susceptible to further instability, exploitation, or harm.

To address this, AbSec stresses the importance of culturally-grounded, trauma-informed support for children who have been through the ACA system. It is not enough to simply remove children from unsafe placements. We must now investment in providing culturally informed, therapeutic care for each child who has experienced or is exiting an ACA for as long as that care is needed” said Leha.

“We must invest in the healing power of strengthening connections to culture, family and community for children who have experienced traumatic dislocation. AbSec stands ready to work with the NSW Government to transform the child protection and care system so that community can build responses that are grounded in culture, strengthen families and enable our children to grow and thrive.”



Please direct all media inquiries to the
AbSec Communications Team at media@absec.org.au

Carina Stokes
Manager,
Communications & Memberships
0493 165 759

Hannah Dunlop
Content Creator,
Communications & Memberships
0487 118 241