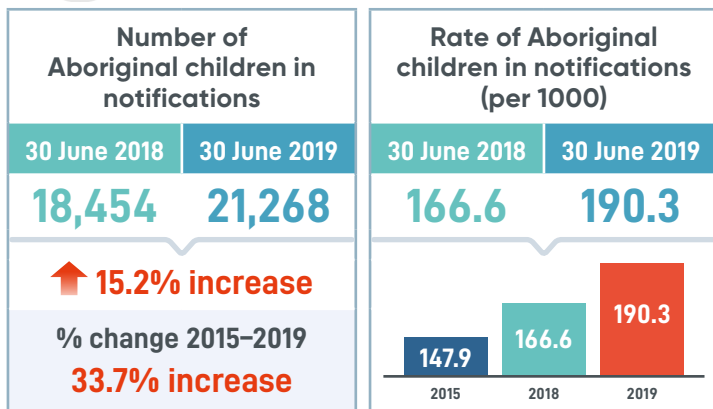


► Reporting period: 30 June 2019



### Aboriginal Children Reported at Risk of Significant Harm

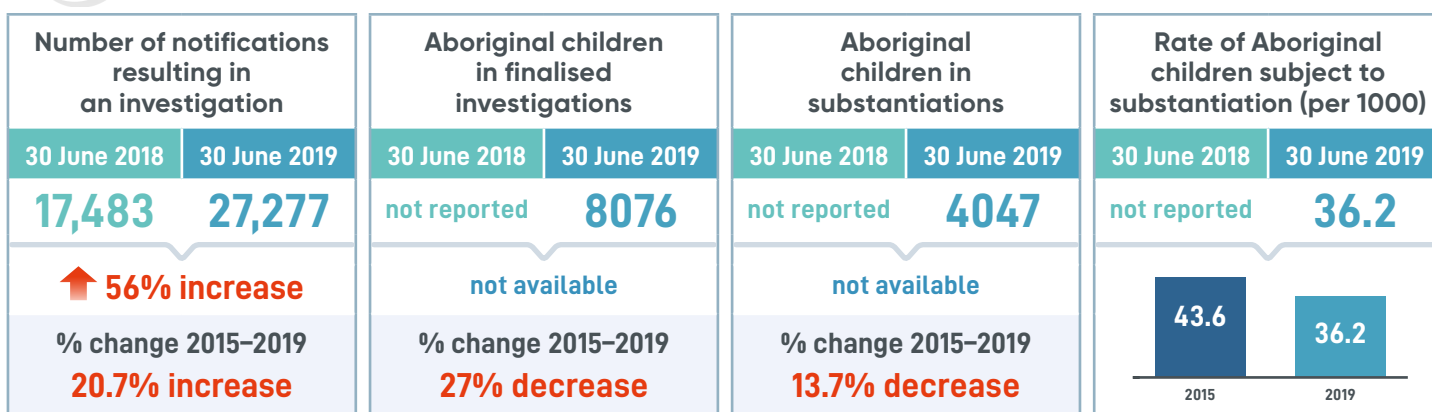


The number of Aboriginal children who are subject of a notification rose more than 15% in the last year, and has risen more than 33% compared to 2015. More than 190 Aboriginal children per 1000 were subject of a notification in 2018/19, up from 166.6 in 2017/18, and 147.5 in 2014/15.

This emphasises the important need for community-based prevention and early intervention supports to address the needs of families at risk of crisis. There remains a significant issue of equity, with Aboriginal children the subject of notifications at more than 5 times the rate of non-Indigenous children.



### Investigation and Substantiation



While the number of notifications continues to rise, the number of Aboriginal children in finalised investigations and substantiations appears to have fallen markedly. While data isn't available for last year, the number of Aboriginal children in finalised investigations has fallen by 27%, and the number of Aboriginal children in substantiations has fallen by 13.7%, compared to 2015. Similarly the proportion of notifications resulting in an investigation, while rising from last year, has generally fallen over the longer term with a growing proportion of notifications being "dealt with by other means".

Last year (2017/18) appears to have been a particular low point in both the number and proportion of investigations, although the limited data available for that year prevents further examination. The reason for these reductions is unclear. While there has been some recovery in 2018/19, this broader apparent reduction in the number of Aboriginal children in investigations and substantiations may contribute to the reduction of Aboriginal children entering care. Aboriginal families who were the subjects of notifications were more likely to be investigated than non-Aboriginal children (Aboriginal 50.2%, non-Aboriginal 38.3%).

### RECOMMENDATION

- DCJ should prioritise the fulfilment of all commitments made regarding supports to Aboriginal children, families, communities and community organisations, including the establishment of a state-wide network of holistic Aboriginal community controlled organisations, realising commitment to invest 30% early intervention funding for Aboriginal families and organisations, full implementation of the Aboriginal Case Management Policy, the transition of Aboriginal children in OOH to Aboriginal services, and equitable investment directed to Aboriginal children and families through Aboriginal organisations.



## Preserving Aboriginal Families

Number of Aboriginal children commencing an intensive family support service		Proportion of investment in general or intensive family support	
30 June 2018	30 June 2019	30 June 2018	30 June 2019
3379	3265	14.3	13.4
<p>↓ <b>3.4% decrease</b></p> <p>% change 2015–2019 <b>5.8% increase</b></p>		<p>↓ <b>0.9% decrease</b></p> <p>% change 2015–2019 <b>4.3% decrease</b></p>	

In 2018/19, 3265 Aboriginal children commenced an intensive family support service – 3% less than last year. Despite a stated intent to improve access to family support services for Aboriginal children in recent years, the number of Aboriginal children commencing such services in 2019 has only increased by 180 compared to 2015. Over the same period, relative investment in general and intensive family supports has continued to fall – for every dollar invested in child protection services, now only 13 cents is invested in supporting families. The proportion of this investment directed to Aboriginal-led approaches is unknown.



## Aboriginal Children in Out-of-home Care

Number of Aboriginal children entering OOH		Number of Aboriginal children in OOH		Rate of Aboriginal children in OOH (per 1000)		Proportion of Aboriginal children placed with Aboriginal family/kin	
30 June 2018	30 June 2019	30 June 2018	30 June 2019	30 June 2018	30 June 2019	30 June 2018	30 June 2019
817	928	6766	6754	60.8	60.2	35.9%	35.6%
<p>↑ <b>13.6% increase</b></p> <p>% change 2015–2019 <b>30% decrease</b></p>		<p>↓ <b>0.2% decrease</b></p> <p>% change 2015–2019 <b>8.1% increase</b></p>				<p>↓ <b>0.3% decrease</b></p> <p>% change 2015–2019 <b>5.4% decrease</b></p>	
Proportion of Aboriginal children with documented case plan		<p>Two in five children in out of home care in NSW are Aboriginal. The number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care in NSW was generally the same in 2019 as it was in 2018, however has increased by 8.8% since 2015. At the same time, the proportion of Aboriginal children entering care has fallen 30% since 2015. Aboriginal children continue to be over-represented in out-of-home care, being more than 9 times more likely to be in out-of-home care. The proportion of Aboriginal children being placed with Aboriginal family or kin continues to fall, down 0.3% compared to 2018, and down more than 5% since 2015. However, over the last 5 years the proportion of Aboriginal children with a documents case plan increased slightly to 80.9%. This increase is positive. However, an Aboriginal community-led audit of case plans could complement this data by shining a light on the quality of these plans. However, 1 in 5 Aboriginal children who require a case plan do not have one.</p>					
30 June 2018	30 June 2019						
not reported	80.9%						
<p>not available</p> <p>% change 2015–2019 <b>3.9% increase</b></p>							

Source: Data compiled from Productivity Commission (2020) *Report on Government Services*, supplemented by Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing (2019) *Child Protection Australian Report 2017-18*.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Further data regarding the reduction in the number of Aboriginal children in investigations and substantiations, and entries into out-of-home care, is needed, particularly in the context of rising notifications.
- ▶ There is an urgent need for greater investment in family supports to respond effectively to families experiencing crisis, keeping children safe and preserving families wherever possible. A significantly greater proportion of this investment should be directed towards Aboriginal families, in alignment with the greater need.
- ▶ DCJ should partner with AbSec and Aboriginal organisations to improve processes for engaging Aboriginal families to locate family placement wherever possible. The recent Family Is Culture report identified a number of challenges in this area, and it is important that these recommendations (and the broader recommendations from the Report) are implemented in partnership with Aboriginal communities.