

11:50AM Tuesday Mar 17, 2015 28588 online now Do you know more about a story?

Real Estate Cars Jobs Dating Newsletters Fairfax Media Network

# Aboriginal children's commissioner reviews 1000 cases in out-of-home care

March 16, 2015 - 11:53PM

14 reading now

[Read later](#)**Benjamin Preiss**

State Political Reporter for The Age

[View more articles from Benjamin Preiss](#)[Follow Benjamin on Twitter](#)[Follow Benjamin on Google+](#)[Email Benjamin](#)[Email article](#)[Print](#)[Reprints & permissions](#)

Victoria's Commissioner for Aboriginal Children Andrew Jackomos is reviewing all cases of Aboriginal children living in out-of-home care. *Photo: Justin McManus*

Victoria's commissioner for Aboriginal children is reviewing at least 1000 individual cases of children in out-of-home care amid a steep increase in those living away from their parents.

When the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Andrew Jackomos, committed to reviewing every case in 2013, the number of children stood at 1000.

However, Mr Jackomos estimated that figure could reach 1500 by June this year.

"Those 1000 Aboriginal babies and children across the state are dispersed," he said. "We should know each one of those children."

Mr Jackomos said the vast majority of children placed in care had come from families where there was male-perpetrated family violence as well as "drugs and alcohol in the background".

"If we can address family violence we'll make improvements on decreasing the numbers of kids in out-of-home care and the numbers of kids who grow up in youth justice and the adult prison system."

Mr Jackomos stressed that the "great majority" of Victoria's Aboriginal children lived in healthy, safe and nurturing homes with loving parents. And regions with strong Aboriginal "community infrastructure" had made good progress, he said.

However, he believed more could be done to keep families together.

Children are placed in out-of-home care if there are concerns that they are at risk of harm.

So far Taskforce 1000 has assessed 250 cases through "area panels" that move throughout the state. The panels have visited Melbourne's western suburbs, Dandenong, Latrobe Valley, Mildura and Swan Hill.

Mr Jackomos said many of the children in care are grandchildren of Aboriginal people who were removed from their families.

The area panels include a range of professionals, including representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Education Department, Aboriginal communities, health workers, police, Indigenous education officers and community sector groups.

Each case is presented to the panel, which then reviews the child's history and how their life can be improved. The children's identities are anonymous to all but the case managers.

"There may be community members who may not know the individual but may know the general clan group. One of the first points of presentation is where is the child from? Who's their clan? Who's their mob?"

Mr Jackomos said the majority of cases considered so far had resulted in "better outcomes" and many of the children were reconnecting with their families.

About 60 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in Victoria were living with kin by June last year.

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency has welcomed Taskforce 1000, citing deep concerns about the growing number of Aboriginal children spending long periods in out-of-home care.

The agency's policy and planning director, Nigel D'Souza, said there was a lack of funding available to families for kinship care arrangements. "It's very difficult for them when they do take on the extra child," he said.

The agency wants Aboriginal children to be placed with kin if they cannot live with their parents. Those in out-of-home care should be placed with Aboriginal families when possible and reunited with their own families at the earliest opportunity, the agency said.

Mr Jackomos said the cases of Indigenous children in care should be managed by "suitably skilled and resourced Aboriginal community organisations", a view shared by welfare agency Berry Street.

Berry Street public policy director Julian Pocock said Aboriginal agencies should be supported to make decisions about what was best for the children in care.

### Recommended



**Bali nine: Myuran Sukumaran captures Joko Widodo in an...**

*World*



**How often should we shower? Much less often than you...**

*Life & Style*



**Bendigo Buddhist prayer room accidentally burned down...**

*Victoria*



**Clarkson is a k@#b, says May**

*Daily Life*



**Hilarious plea from the children of hipster parents**

*Essential Baby*

### Promoted Stories



**Worst things to do in bed with her**

*MadameNoire*



**Paris Jackson hospitalised after suicide attempt**

*Entertaining Kids*



**Selling Houses Australia renovation flops at auction**

*Domain News*



**Mel B Banned From Australia TV - Did She Get Caught?**

*Hollywood Take*



**'I Killed Them All': American Millionaire Admits to...**

*Billionaires Australia*

Recommended by

[Email article](#)   [Print](#)   [Reprints & permissions](#)