



Government of South Australia

Office of the Guardian
for Children and Young People

**Snapshot of South Australian Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Children and Young People in Care
and/or Youth Detention from the Report on
Government Services 2017**

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides a snapshot of data published in the Productivity Commission's *Report on Government Services 2017* (ROGS 2017).¹ It aims simply to make this information more accessible to those interested in the circumstances of vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander² children and young people in South Australia.

ROGS 2017 presents information about Aboriginal children and young people as clients of what it describes as **child protection services** and **youth justice services**. Both areas are relevant to the work of the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People.

Aboriginal children and young people in care

For those in care, the Guardian shares the South Australian Government's concern that Aboriginal children and young people are "alarmingly over-represented in the child protection system"³. This echoes Commissioner Nyland's recognition in her 2016 *Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report* that "Aboriginal children and families are vastly overrepresented in all parts of the South Australian child protection system"⁴.

Unless more is done, the situation of those in care is likely to worsen, as described for children in care in the recent *The Family Matters Report* -

*"There is strong reason to believe that the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC will continue to rise. Applying a theoretical model it is predicted from current trends that **the***

¹ Links are provided in the References section below to **Government of Australia 2017a**, Chapters 16 (child protections services) and **Government of Australia 2017b**, Chapter 17 (youth justice services).

² Community preference in South Australia is that the term Aboriginal is inclusive of Torres Strait Islander people, a usage we generally adopt in this report. The fuller description and the term Indigenous are used if quotations are given from other sources.

³ **Government of South Australia 2016** (page 9)

⁴ **Child Protection Systems Royal Commission 2016** (page 450)

population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care will almost triple in size by 2035, while the non-Indigenous population of children in OOHC will increase be less than two thirds.”⁵

Aboriginal children and young people and the youth justice system

The very high proportion of Aboriginal children and young people in the youth justice system possibly is even more concerning, with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare noting in its latest youth justice bulletin that, nationally –

“Indigenous young people aged 10–17 were ... 17 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be under supervision on an average day.”⁶

The most recent South Australian data available to the Guardian, as at June 2016, is that Aboriginal children and young people comprised 47.9% of all those detained in secure care⁷.

In the discussion that follows, it must be borne in mind that discussion of over-representation occurs in the context that Aboriginal children and young people comprise only about 4.5 per cent of the State’s child population⁸.

⁵ **Shlonsky A et al 2016** (SNAICC) (page 7)

⁶ **AIHW 2017** (page 8), noting that “supervision” incorporates children and young people experiencing either community based supervision or detention in a secure facility.

⁷ **Guardian for Children and Young People 2016** (data supplied by the Department of Families and Social Inclusion)

⁸ **Child Protection Systems Royal Commission 2016** (page 450)

CHARTS FOR CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

Chart 1 – Children aged 0-17 years on care and protection orders in South Australia at 30 June 2016 (n = 3,448)

Chart 2 – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal 0-17 year olds on care and protection orders, South Australia 2009-10 to 2015-16

Chart 3 – Disproportionality ratio – Aboriginal children in out of home care, South Australia 2009-10 to 2015-15

Chart 4 – Aboriginal children placed in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, South Australia as at 30 June 2016 (n = 1,073)

Chart 5 – Number of Aboriginal children in out of home care by placement type, South Australia 2012-13 to 2015-16

Chart 6 – Duration of stay by 0-17 year old Aboriginal children in continuous out of home care in South Australia at 30 June 2016 (n = 1,071)

Chart 7 - Rate per 1,000 children aged 0-17 years in OOHC, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, 2015-16

Chart 8 – Rate per 1,000 children of 0-17 year olds in at least one OOHC placement, SA 2006-07 to 2015-16, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal

Chart 9 – Number of Aboriginal children on guardianship or custody orders compared to non- Aboriginal children, South Australia 2009-10 to 2015-16.

CHARTS FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

Chart 10 – Daily average number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal 10-17 year olds in detention, 2014-15,

Chart 11 – Comparison: 2014-15 daily average rate per 100,000 of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal 10-17 year olds in detention

Chart 12 – Average rate per 100,000 young people of Aboriginal 10-17 year olds in detention, 2010-11 to 2014-15.

CHILD PROTECTIONS SERVICES

Child protection services for the purpose of ROGS 2017 are “services provided by State and Territory governments to promote family wellbeing and to protect children” (ROGS 2017, 16.1), and grouped within four program areas –

- family support services
- intensive family support services
- child protection services, and
- out-of-home care (OOHC) services.

Information from the ROGS 2017 allows us to say a number of things about Aboriginal children and young people who receive such services as they appear within the overall cohort of 0–17 year olds in care in South Australia.

Chart 1 - of the 3,448 children and young people on care and protection orders as at 30 June 2016, 1,119 (33 per cent) were Aboriginal and 2,250 (65 per cent) non-Aboriginal. 79 were recorded as “unknown” (source ROGS 2017, Table 16A.9).

Chart 1 - Children aged 0-17 years on care and protection orders in South Australia at 30 June 2016 (n = 3448)

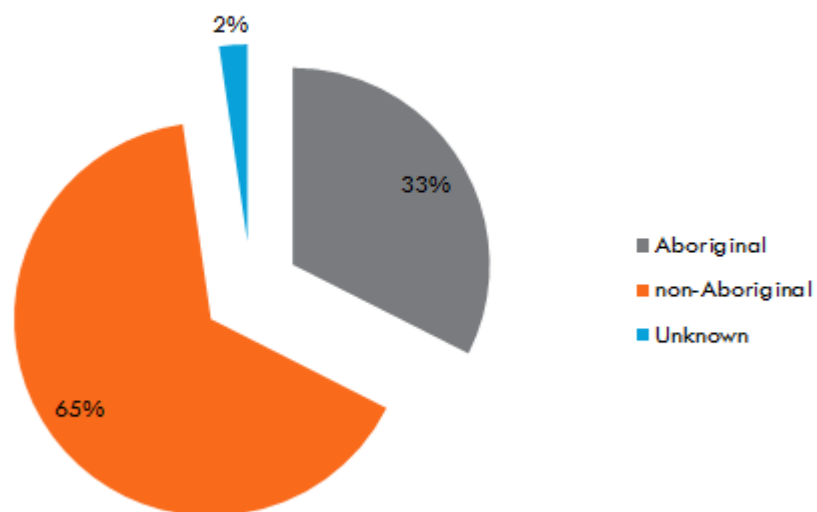


Chart 2 - the number of Aboriginal children and young people on care and protection orders continues to climb as an over-represented proportion of all those in care. The 2015/16 figures of Aboriginal compared to non-Aboriginal of 1,119 to 2,250 (with 79 unknown), compares with the 2009/10 figures of 631, 1,877 and 35 respectively (*source ROGS 2017, Table 16A.9*).

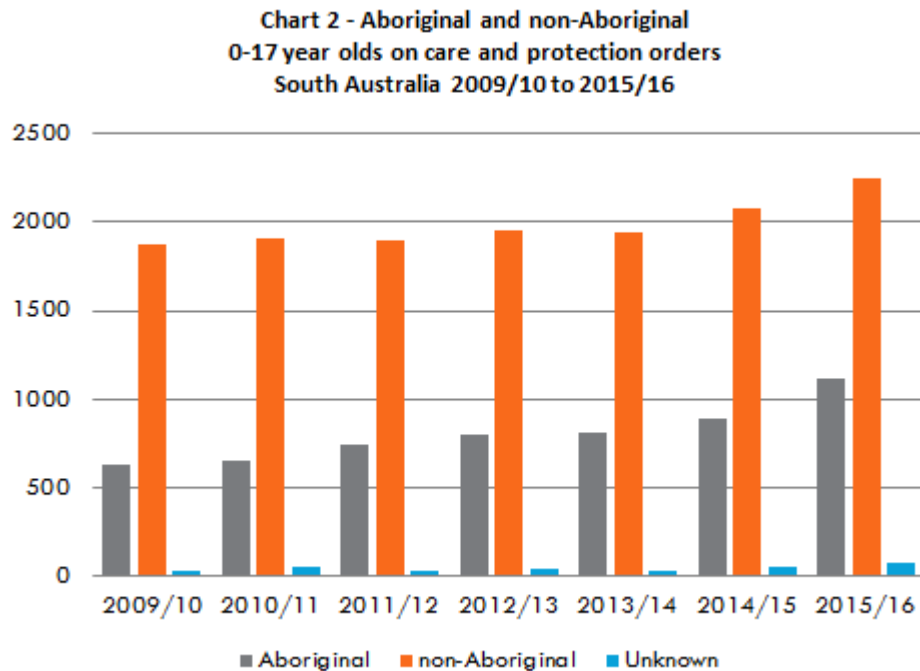
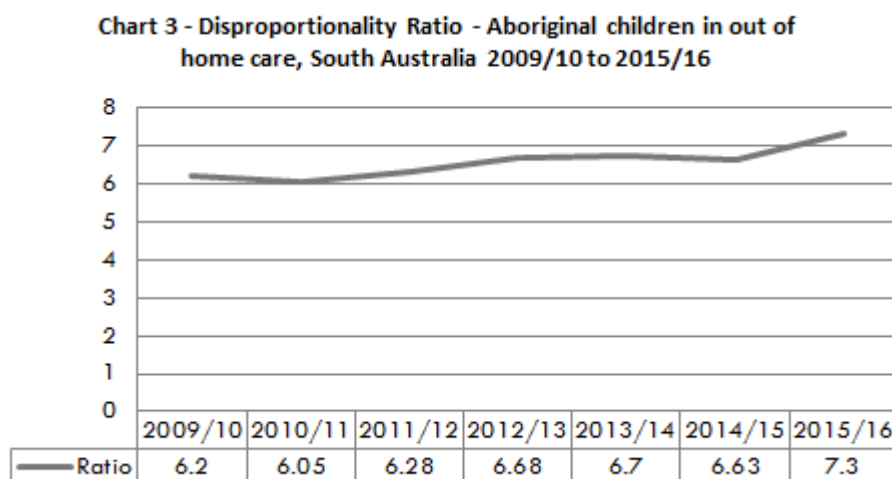


Chart 3 – the 2015/16 disproportionality ratio* between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people in out of home care was 7.3, an increase from a ratio of 6.2 in 2009/10 (*source ROGS 2017, Table 16A.8*).



*The disproportionality ratio is calculated by dividing the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care with their proportion in the overall SA child population.

Chart 4 - only 62 per cent of Aboriginal children and young people in care had been placed in accordance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle as at 30 June 2016 (source ROGS 2017, Table 16A.23).

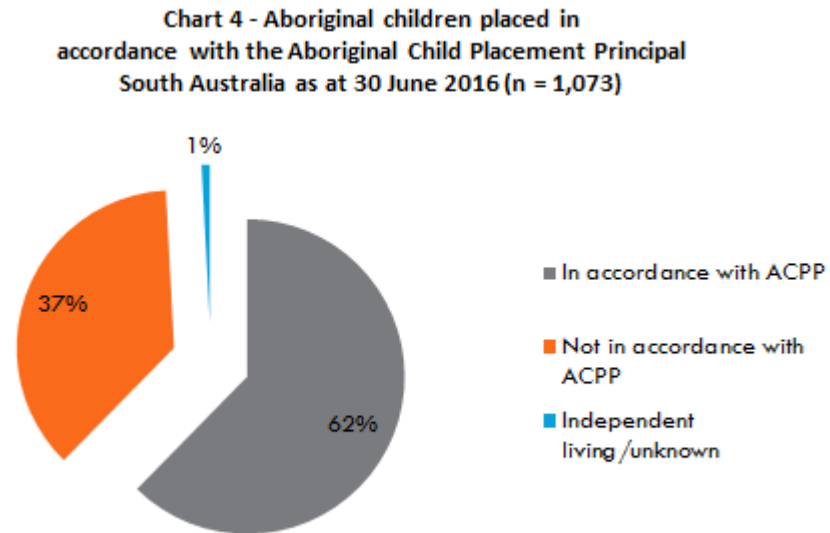


Chart 5 - the number of Aboriginal children and young people in residential care grew from 100 in 2012/13 to 192 in 2015/16. In 2015/16, other Aboriginal children and young people were placed in foster care (313 individuals), relative or kinship care (559), and independent living (9) (source ROGS 2017, Table 16A.18).

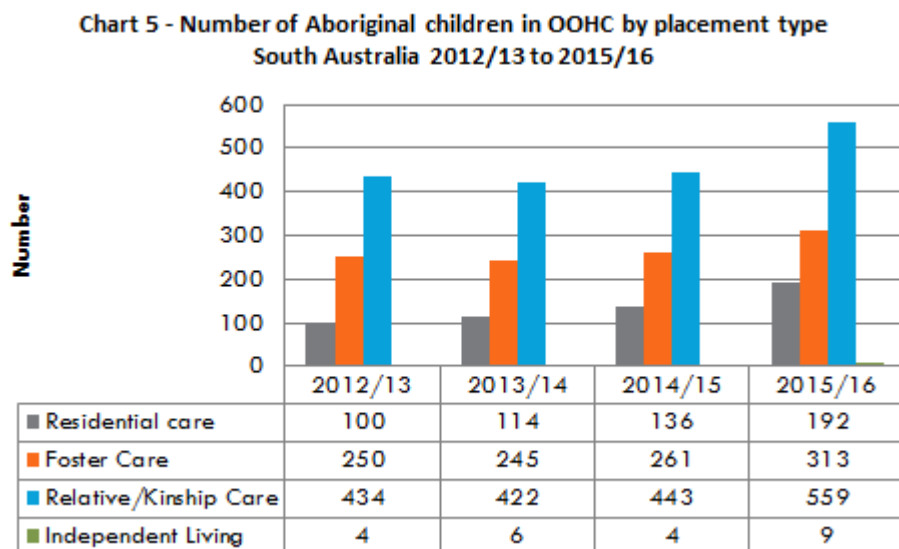


Chart 6 - of the 1,071 Aboriginal children and young people recorded as being in continuous out of home care as at 30 June 2016, 446 had been in this situation for five or more years (source ROGS 2017, Table 16A.20).

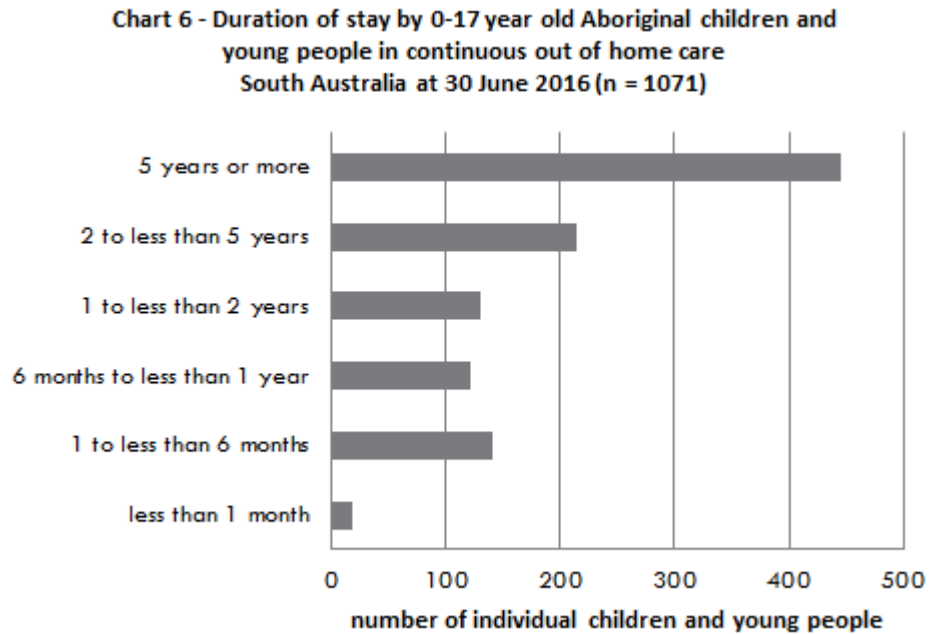


Chart 7 - the rate per 1,000 of Aboriginal children and young people in out of home care continued to far exceed that of non-Aboriginal. In 2015/16 the comparison was 65.7 to 6.1 per thousand (source ROGS 2017, Table 16A.17).

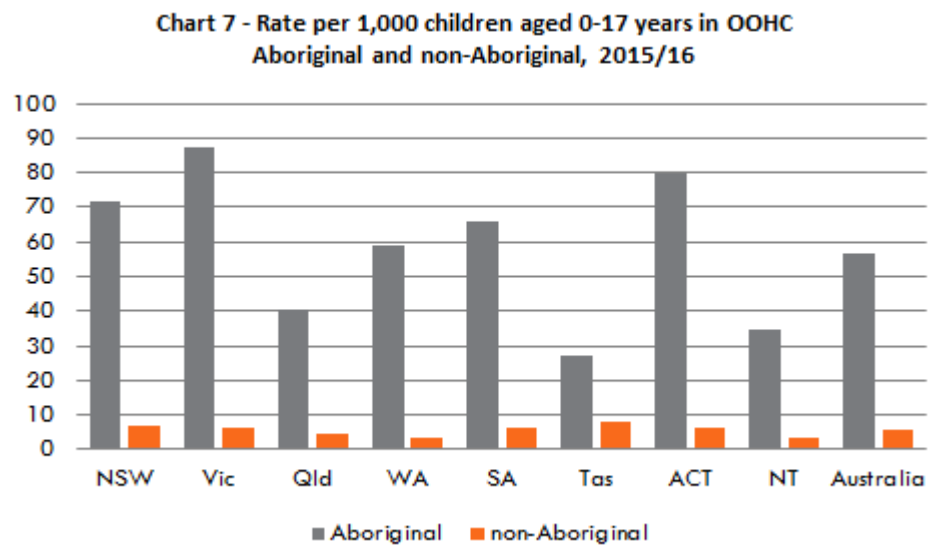


Chart 8 – the increased rate per 1,000 for 0-17 year old Aboriginal children and young people in at least one OOHC placement compared to non-Aboriginal children and young people demonstrates a distinct and increasing disparity in the years since 2006-07 (source ROGS 2017, Table 16A.17).

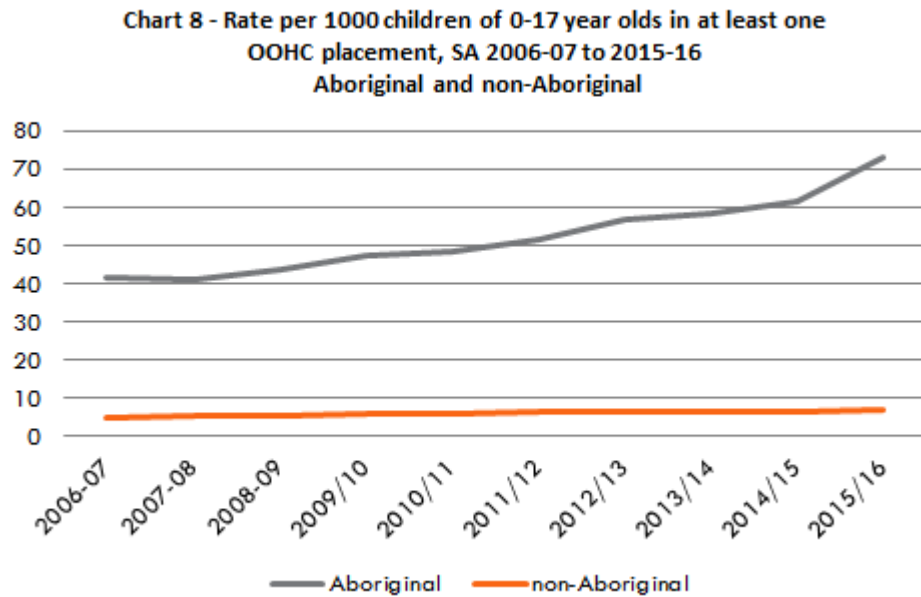
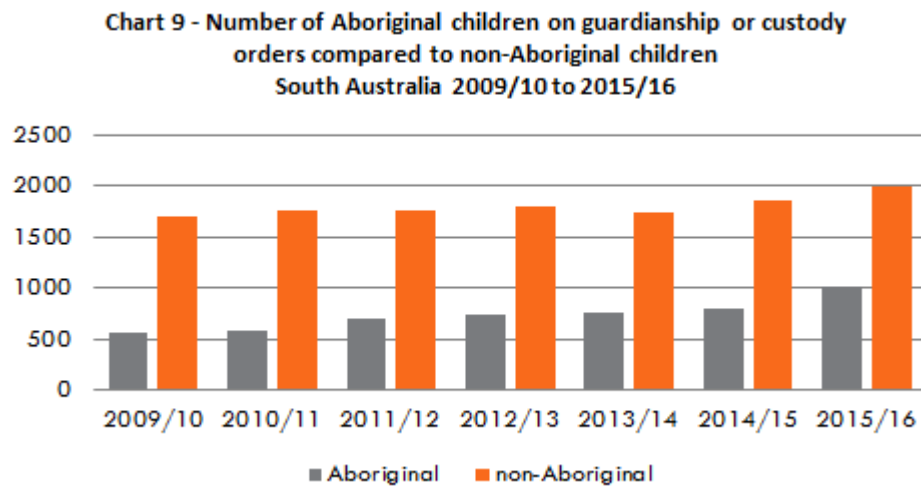


Chart 9 – in 2009-10, 568 Aboriginal children and young people were on guardianship or custody orders compared to 1,711 non-Aboriginal. In 2015-16 the respective numbers were 1011 and 1994. This means that the proportion of Aboriginal children and young people has increased from approximately one third to a half of the number of their non-Aboriginal peers (source ROGS 2017, Table 16A.8).



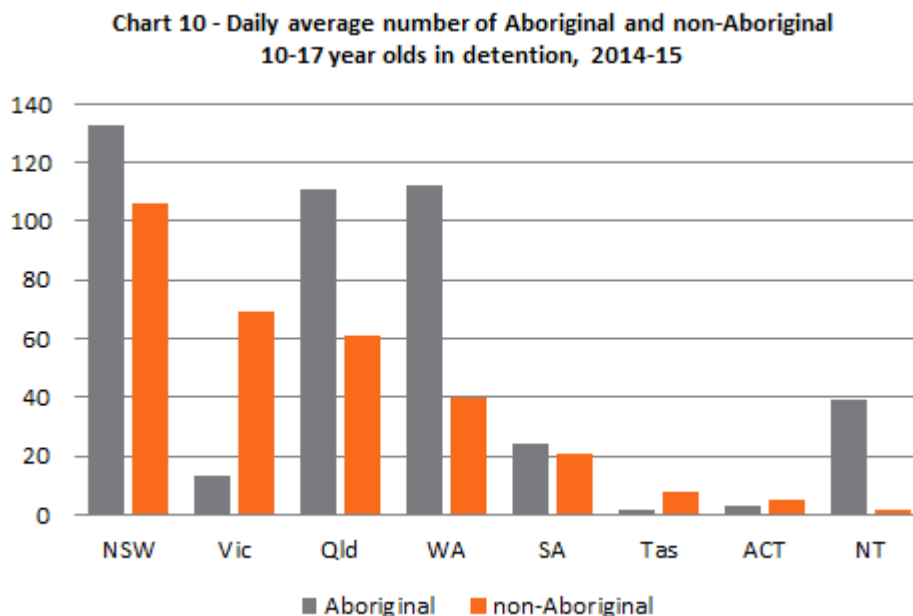
YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICES

The *Report on Government Services 2017* reports on “services provided by statutory youth justice agencies that are responsible for the supervision and case management of young people who have committed or allegedly committed an offence; in particular, community-based supervision, detention-based supervision and group conferencing” (ROGS 2017, 17.1).

As noted earlier, at June 2016, Aboriginal children and young people comprised 47.9% of all those in secure care⁹, while they only make up some 4.5 per cent of that age cohort in South Australia.

ROGS 2017 information allows us to say several things about Aboriginal children and young people who are subject to youth justice services in South Australia.

Chart 10 – the daily average number of Aboriginal 10-17 year olds in detention in South Australia in 2014-15 was higher than that of non- Aboriginal 10-17 year olds (24 to 21 individuals) (*source ROGS 2017, Table 17A.9*).



⁹ *Guardian for Children and Young People 2016* – which draws on more recent youth justice data than that generally reported in ROGS 2017 from reporting year 2014/15.

Chart 11 – the daily average rate per 100,000 of Aboriginal 10-17 year olds in detention in South Australia in 2014/15 was 347 compared to 13.9 non-Aboriginal detainees (a factor of almost 25) (source ROGS 2017, Table 17A.9).

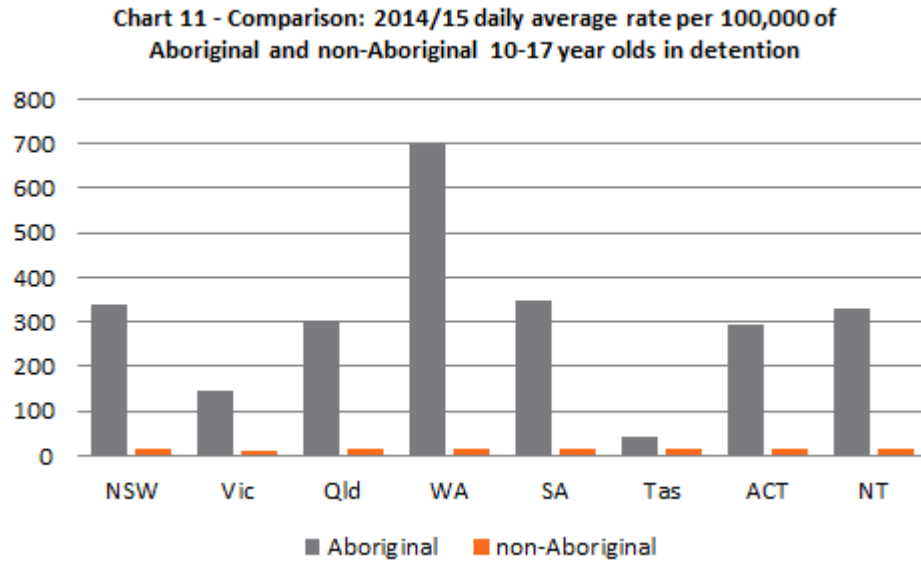
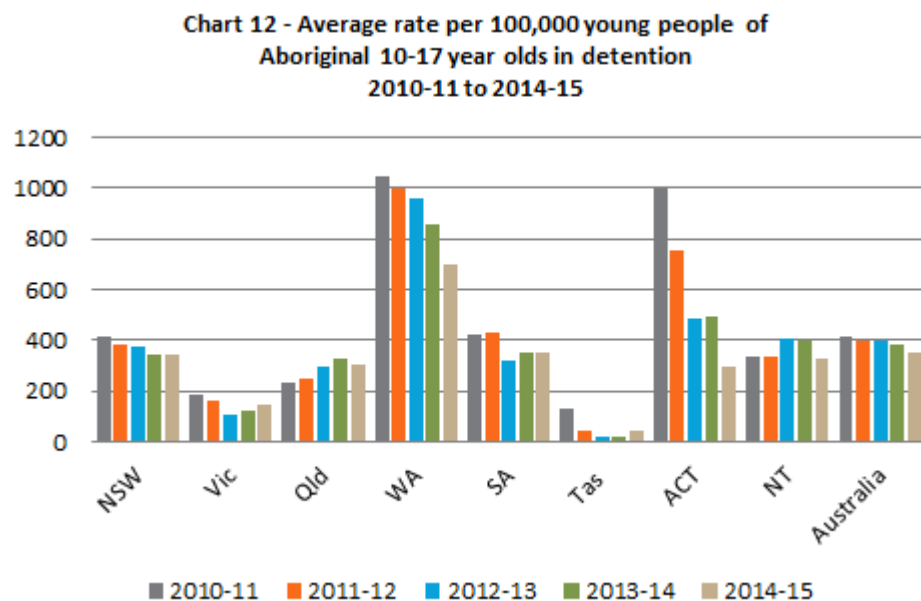


Chart 12 – the average rate of detention of Aboriginal 10-17 year olds in South Australia per 100,000 young people declined from 418.7 in 2010/11 to 347 in 2014/15. (source ROGS 2017, Table 17A.11).



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