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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Number of Aboriginal children and young people in care worsens as SA set to fall short on Closing the Gap target**

A new report released by the Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People states that just over one in every 11 Aboriginal children in SA is living in state care.

According to data provided by the *Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2021*, the number of Aboriginal children in care is so high that this group now makes up 36.7% of all children in care, despite making up approximately 5% of the total population of children and young people aged 0-17 in the state.

With the present trend of young Aboriginal people being removed from their birth parents, SA will fail to meet the [Closing the Gap Target](#) to ensure Aboriginal children are not overrepresented in the child protection system.

“The Closing the Gap Target requires a 45% reduction in the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and young people in care by 2031 but if we continue with this rate of removals, we will sadly fail,” Guardian for Children and Young People and Training Centre Visitor, Penny Wright said.

“Without significant reforms and investment in culturally safe family support and early intervention, South Australia has no chance of meeting its target under the Closing the Gap agreement and another generation of Aboriginal people will grow up disconnected from their family and culture,” Ms Wright said.

On the other hand, SA is well on its way to meeting the Closing the Gap Target of a 30% reduction of Aboriginal children and young people in detention by 2031.

While Aboriginal children and young people are 22 times more likely to be in detention than non-Aboriginal children and young people, this figure is trending downwards, with Ms Wright calling for SA to implement a more ambitious target.

“It is very encouraging to see fewer Aboriginal children coming into detention. That’s why we should aim even higher, especially when we consider the significant cost of detention, at 32 times more each day than community supervision. When you realise that almost all the children and young people held in detention in SA have not been convicted but are on remand, it’s clear this cost would be much better spent on culturally safe early intervention and more diversion and development programs,” Ms Wright said.

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