

# 'Appalling' rate of Aboriginal kids in care

REBECCA DIGIROLAMO

THE "worsening" proportion of Aboriginal children and young people in care and detention in South Australia has been described as "appalling" and a "failure".

An annual report highlighting the state of Aboriginal children in care and in youth justice by Penny Wright, the Guardian for Children and Young People, was tabled in State Parliament yesterday.

Ms Wright, pictured, said an Aboriginal child in SA was 32 times more likely to end up in



youth detention than a child who was not Aboriginal. "Aboriginal children and young people make up less than 5 per cent of the state's total population of children ... yet they make up one third of those in care and 60 per cent of those detained," she said. "This is appalling." Latest official figures released this month show numbers of children in care

continue to rise with a record 4270 on March 31 compared with 4167 on January 31.

SA Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, April Lawrie, said many Aboriginal children were being "unnecessarily removed" from home and placed with non-Aboriginal carers.

She said the report highlighted the "failure" of the child protection system's adherence to the principle of placing Aboriginal children with family and community of the same cultural background.

Opposition spokeswoman

Jayne Stinson said the rate of Aboriginal children in care and detention was "a source of horrible shame" and was "simply not good enough".

Child Protection Minister Rachel Sanderson said the Government was working to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care. Human Services Minister Michelle Lensink said the number of Aboriginal young people in detention had declined to a five-year low and work was being done to connect youths with their community.