



Tuesday, 17 November 2015

Number of deaths decreasing, but Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children still over represented

The ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee's (CYPDRC, the committee) fourth annual report was tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly today by the Minister for Children and Young People, Mick Gentleman.

Among the key findings of the report are the general decline in overall incidence of death and the overrepresentation of Indigenous children and young people among those who've died. The persistence of intentional self harm as a leading non-medically related cause of death is also a key finding.

Dr Penny Gregory, Chair of the CYPDRC, said that "the report includes information on the deaths of 155 children and young people under the age of 18 recorded on the Committee's register over the period July 2010 - June 2015.

"Overall, we've observed a moderate decline in the number of deaths of children and young people though this is likely to be stabilising.

"The key messages coming out of the report are:

- The data indicates that the rate of deaths where co-sleeping is a factor has dropped dramatically. It's a sign that the community has heard the message there.
- Given the opportunities for incidental risk, the committee encourages parents and guardians as well as the broader community to be vigilant about children: keep watch, lock pool gates, keep button batteries out of reach for instance. Be aware of the environment of where you live and where you visit.
- Look for signs and be aware of the children and young people you interact with. Understand how you can support them.

"It is good news to see some of the lowest annual rates of death on record in these last couple of years.

"There is, however, a stark over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in a number of areas which is a continuing and disheartening feature of the report.

"In line with previous years and national trends, the ratio of deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people was one in every 13 deaths where, given the population we'd actually expect to see one death of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child in 55 deaths.

"The numbers around vulnerable young people also seem to be stable, though with such low numbers, it is hard to distinguish trends from the normal fluctuations over time. With events unfolding in Queensland around the death of Tialeigh Palmer, we are reminded that we need to be alert when working with and caring for our community's most vulnerable residents.

"Last year's report saw the number of suicides becoming great enough to be reported for the first time and this year that remained the case, with suicide being a leading non-medical cause of death for young people.



“The take-aways from this year’s report are to be vigilant and watchful around our children and young people; look for signs and be aware of how you can support them to continue to be safe, well and happy.

“The devastation caused by the death of a child or young person is harrowing and I offer the Committee’s sincere condolences to the families, friends and communities who knew and loved the children and young people whose deaths are reported on.

The report can be found at: www.childdeathcommittee.act.gov.au.

Dr Gregory is available for further comment on the contact details below.

Key findings:

- The overall trend of the number of child and young person deaths has been declining over recent years in the ACT.
- Children and young people between the ages of 4 and 14 are far less likely to die than at other ages. It is not yet clear whether it is due to protective factors during these years or risks that are present at earlier and later ages.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are significantly overrepresented in the number of deaths occurring in the ACT.
- Death caused by intentional self harm and suicide is a concern for the committee.

Background Information on the report

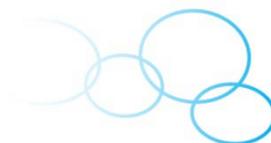
This report examines the deaths of all children and young people who died in the ACT as well as children and young people who usually reside in the ACT but who died elsewhere in the period July 2010 to June 2015, with particular reference to July 2014 to June 2015. Chapter 2 provides an overview of all deaths.

Section 727S of the Act requires the ACTCYPDRC to report on the following information about the deaths of children and young people included on its register:

- total number of deaths
- age
- sex
- whether, within three years before his or her death, the child or young person, or a sibling of the child or young person, ‘was the subject of a report the director-general decided, under section 360(5), was a child protection report’
- any identified patterns or trends, both generally and also in relation to the child protection reports under section 360(5) of the Act.

The ACTCYPDRC is dedicated to respecting the child, young person and their family’s right to privacy. Under section 727S(3) of the Act, the committee must not disclose the identity of a child or young person who has died or allow the identity of a child or young person to be established.

As with previous years, the decision has been taken to review the incidence of death over a five-year period. This is largely in response to the small number of deaths that occur in the jurisdiction each year. Conducting and reporting on analyses over a five-year period brings a level of stability to the data allowing for generalisations to the broader population. It also minimises the risk of breaching the confidentiality requirements stipulated in the Act whereby the committee must not reveal the identity or make possible the identification of any individual. Although greater rigour may be generated through the analysis of aggregate data, there are limitations and as such caution must be exercised when interpreting results



In terms of numbers of deaths: (where • is <5 deaths)

	10 years	5 years	1 year
All deaths	383	155	29
ACT residents only	271	117	25
External residents	97	38	•
Current Coronial cases	7	7	•
No data	15	-	-
Total incl in analysis	383	111	22

Background Information on the committee

The ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee is established under the Children and Young People Act 2008 to work towards reducing the number of deaths of ACT children and young people. The committee reports to the Minister for Children and Young People.

The legislation sets out the requirement for the committee members to have experience and expertise in a number of different areas, including paediatrics, education, social work, child safety products and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

The committee aims to find out what can be learnt from a child's or young person's death to help prevent similar deaths from happening in the future.

To assist with this aim, we keep a register of all the deaths of ACT children and young people who die before they turn 18, and use the information on the register to learn more about why children and young people die in the ACT.

We can make recommendations about changes to legislation, policies, practices and services to both government and non-government organisations.

The committee does not investigate or determine the cause of death of a particular child or young person. We do not place blame or seek to identify underperformance.

The committee provides its annual report to the Minister for Children and Young People and the ACT Legislative Assembly on the deaths of children and young people in the ACT.

We also issue reports and fact sheets on different topics to help raise awareness or to spread prevention messages in the community.