



Thursday, 11th May 2017

Deaths of ACT children and young people remain stable

The ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee's fifth annual report was tabled in the ACT Legislative Assembly today by the Minister for Disability, Children and Youth, Rachel Stephen-Smith.

Committee Chair, Margaret Carmody said "the report provided data on the deaths of 155 children and young people over the period January 2012 - December 2016".

"For those children and young people who normally live in the ACT, there are around 24 deaths each year. Between 2012 and 2016, the number of children and young people who died each year has been relatively stable."

Given the relatively small numbers in the annual records and to ensure the privacy of the child or young person and their family, analysis is based on the aggregation of five years of data.

As outlined in previous reports, the large majority of ACT children and young people who died in the previous five years were infants less than one year of age, with the main causes of death being extreme prematurity and other medical causes. Unascertained deaths of children under the age of one continue to present a challenge and Ms Carmody said "that there is a continued need to support new parents particularly to understand safe sleeping behaviours".

The report highlights that around one in eight ACT children and young people who died in the last five years were known to child protection. Ms Carmody said that "the Committee is dedicated to reducing the number of preventable deaths of ACT children and young people and that there remains a critical need for Government and related support services to improve the systems and culture for sharing information in the interests of protecting the most vulnerable children".

The report highlights that younger children are the most vulnerable. Ms Carmody said that "the whole community has a role to play in supporting families in crisis and I would encourage people to consider their own role in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children".

The Committee will continue to identify areas that can be improved to avoid preventable deaths. The next report will focus on the deaths of children aged between 0-3 years, to identify potential system improvements.

Ms Carmody concluded "The death of every child or young person is a tragedy and I would like to extend 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 annual report can be found on the Committee's website at www.childdeathcommittee.act.gov.au.

STATEMENT ENDS

For further comment:

Ms Margaret Carmody, Chair ACT Children and Young People Committee: