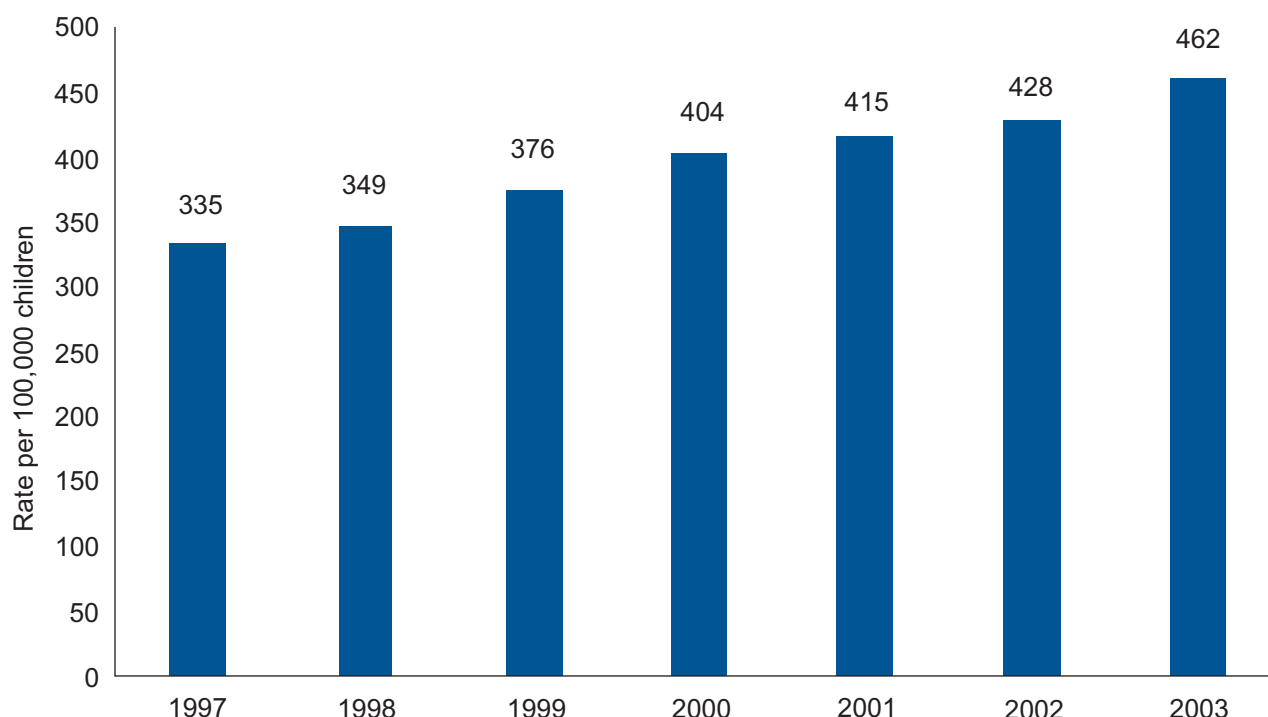


Children on care and protection orders in Australia

Child protection in Australia is the responsibility of community services departments in each state and territory. Following reports and investigation of child abuse or neglect, the community services department has the authority to apply to the relevant court to place the child on a care and protection order. Recourse to the court is usually a last resort used where other attempts at resolution have been exhausted, or where legal authorisation is required to remove the child into out-of-home care. Care and protection orders can involve transfer of legal guardianship to an authorised department or individual, as well as supervisory orders in which guardianship is not affected. Between 30 June 1997 and 30 June 2003 there was a substantial increase in the rate of children on care and protection orders. On 30 June 1997 the rate was 335 children per 100,000 persons aged 0-17 years; by 30 June 2003 the rate had climbed steadily to 462 per 100,000. All states and territories registered increases over the period. Several explanations have been put forward for the growth in rates of children on care and protection orders (see Kelly 2005). The increase in rates does not necessarily reflect increased abuse or neglect of children. Other contributing factors include increased community awareness of child abuse, a greater willingness to report it to authorities and legislative and definition changes.

Children on care and protection orders, rates per 100,000 children aged 0-17



NOTE: Rates were calculated by dividing the number of children on care and protection orders on June 30 of each year by ABS estimates of the Australian population aged 0-17 years valid for June 30 of each year. Nationwide figures for 2004 are not available.

SOURCE: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2005. *Child Protection in Australia 2003-04*. Canberra: AIHW (Child Welfare Series no. 36). Web version available at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10095>

REFERENCE: Kelly, S. 2005. Child protection data in Australia: Current issues and future improvement, paper presented at Families Matter: 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference. Melbourne, 9-11 February 2005. Web version available at <http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/afrc9/kelly.html>