How can we best protect Australian children?

Anglicare Conference, Sydney

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Building a better working world

Summary

The need for a new Child Protection solution in Australia

► In the last four years, child protection cases in the country have risen by 20%
► In 2015-16, 8.5 per 1000 children were subject to abuse substantiation, which is an increase from 7.4 in 2011–12
► Of all notifications, emotional abuse is the most common type of child maltreatment, followed by neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse
► Of all states, Northern Territory receives by far the highest rate of child protection services, followed by New South Wales, Victoria, Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania
► Despite, increasing government expenditure on child protection services, the cost of prevention and longer term implications of child abuse and neglect is considerably higher

Key challenges within the system

► Australian and State governments struggle to tackle some key issues within the system: data collection and consistency issues; increasing cost of child protection; lack of quality out-of-home care services; lack of early intervention services; silos between government departments, agencies and practitioners; shortage of skilled workforce; overall system failures; and lack of interagency cooperation

Current case management systems

► All the states and territory governments already have a case management system aimed at strengthening outcomes for children through an integrated and co-ordinated service delivery between Health services and interagency partners. However, some are looking to redesign or replace their existing system.

Child Protection issues are regularly hitting the headlines in Australia, with growing calls for system reform

Child protection cases up 20 per cent in four years

Source: Sydney Morning Herald, 16 March 2017

Child abused every 15 minutes in Australia; Abuse of aboriginal children top the massive child abuse

Source: news.com.au, 18 January 2017

South Australian child protection faces reform after inquiry reveals failures

Source: Australian Associated Press, 21 June 2016

Call for more support for parents as data shows one in 33 children in protective services

Source: The Guardian, 15 March 2017

The faulty child welfare system is the real issue behind our youth justice crisis

Source: The Conversation, 13 February 2017

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There are several risk factors for vulnerable children including poverty, mental health or addiction problems, and domestic violence

Knowledge of risk factors for child maltreatment can help identify children at risk and may represent opportunities for prevention.

Economic disadvantage and social exclusion
- ► Recent academic research shows an estimated 27.3% of child maltreatment was attributable to economic factors (with poverty and parental unemployment the strongest determinants)
- ► According to a CRC25 Australian Child Rights Progress Report, nearly 18% of children currently live in poverty in Australia. There is a strong correlation between families' socio-economic circumstances and prevalence of child abuse.

Parental substance abuse
- ► Parental alcohol and substance abuse are commonly associated with child protection issues
- ► A recent survey of Australian adults shows: 78% of respondents believe Australia has a problem with excess drinking or alcohol abuse; 92% of respondents believe that alcohol is linked to family and domestic violence; 21% of parents or guardians surveyed reported that their child has been harmed or put at risk of harm because of someone else's drinking.

Disabilities and mental health
- ► Children of parents with a disability (particularly intellectual and psychosocial disability) are subject to removal from their parents at a higher rate than the general population. Children of parents with mental health problems are at greater risk of developing mental health problems of their own
- ► Furthermore, children and young people with disability experience violence and abuse at approximately three times the rate of children without a disability

Domestic violence
- ► Children exposed to family violence are classified as experiencing 'emotional abuse' - the most commonly substantiated type of harm (39%) in child protection notifications across Australia.
- ► Police across Australia dealt with 239,846 domestic violence incidents in 2015
- ► Domestic violence puts children at high risk of experiencing physical abuse themselves, with rates of co-occurrence ranging from 45% to 70%.

Family breakdown
- ► Family breakdown, isolation and lack of support is a key risk factor when there is no one (extended family, friends, a partner or community support) to help with the demands of parenting
- ► In 2015, there were 48,517 divorces granted in Australia, an increase of 4.3% on 2014; divorces involving children represented almost half of all divorces granted. The number of children involved in divorces totalled 42,303 in 2015,
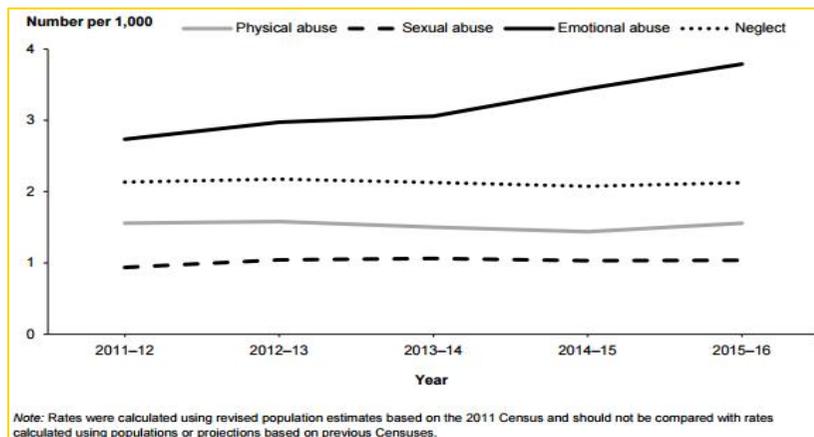
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Number of notifications and substantiations have risen over the past few years with emotional abuse accounting for most of the abuses

Number of notifications, investigations and substantiations
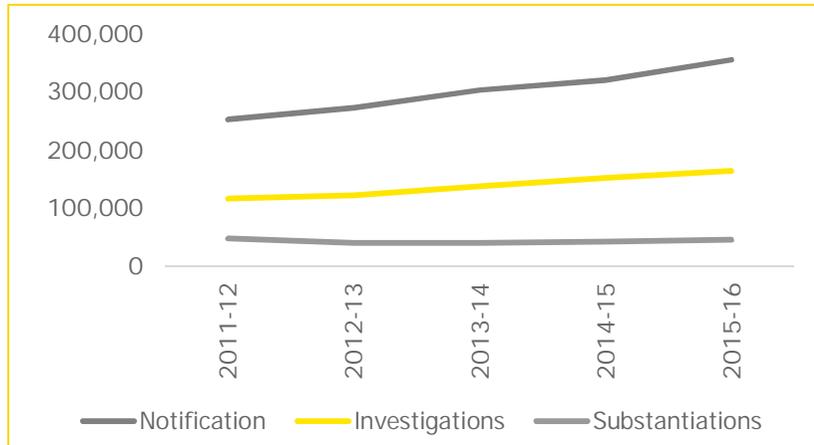
- ► The rate of children who were subject of notifications rose steadily from 34.0 per 1,000 children in 2010–11 to 42.0 per 1,000 in 2015–16, reflecting an increased focus on providing statutory responses to those who need intervention and protection.

- ► In 2015-16, 45,714 children were the subject of a substantiation, equating to 8.5 per 1000 children and an increase from 7.4 in 2011–12 reflecting impact of legislative changes, public awareness and inquiries into child protection processes.

Children who were the subject of child protection substantiations, by abuse type

Note: Rates were calculated using revised population estimates based on the 2011 Census and should not be compared with rates calculated using populations or projections based on previous Censuses.
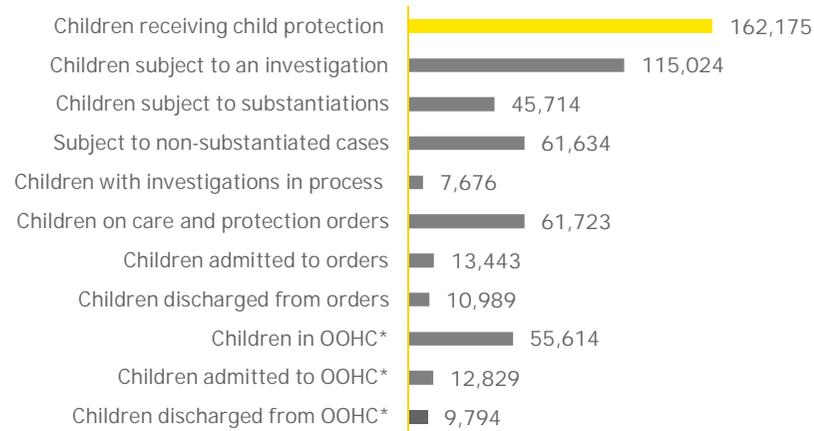
- ► Of all notifications, emotional abuse was the most common type of child maltreatment during 2015-16 (45% of all substantiations), followed by neglect (25%), physical abuse (18%) and sexual abuse (12%).

- ► Rates of emotional abuse have shown the greatest increase of all types of abuse or neglect (from 2.7 to 3.8 per 1,000 children) during 2010-11 to 2015-16.

- ► Other types of abuse have remained fairly stable for six years from 2010-11 to 2015–16.

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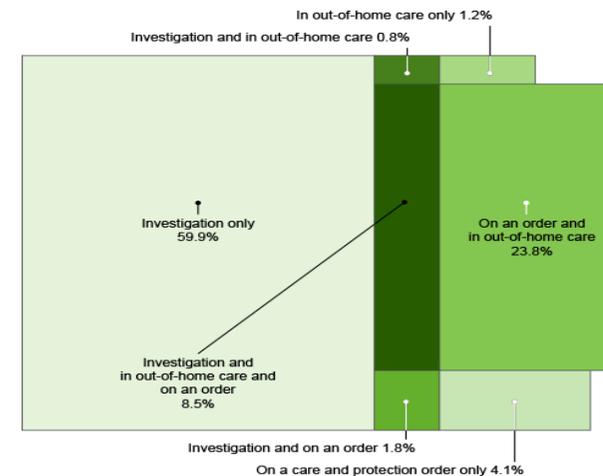# The number of children receiving child protection services has increased by 20% between 2012–13 and 2015–16…

Children receiving child protection services in Australia during 2015–16

Category	Value
Children receiving child protection	162,175
Children subject to an investigation	115,024
Children subject to substantiations	45,714
Subject to non-substantiated cases	61,634
Children with investigations in process	7,676
Children on care and protection orders	61,723
Children admitted to orders	13,443
Children discharged from orders	10,989
Children in OOHC*	55,614
Children admitted to OOHC*	12,829
Children discharged from OOHC*	9,794

► Over the last 5 years, the rate of children in substantiations, on care and protection orders and in out-of-home care have all increased steadily.

► In 2015-16, one in 33 children received child protection services, of which nearly 73% were repeat clients.

► Of children receiving child protection services in 2015–16, 21.4 per 1,000 were subject to investigation, 11.5 per 1,000 were on a care and protection order and 10.4 per 1,000 were in out-of-home care.

Children receiving child protection services by components of service received, 2015–16

► 60% of children receiving child protection services were the subject of an investigation only.

► Almost a quarter of children (24%) were both on an order and in out-of-home care.

► Nearly 9% of children were involved in all three components of the system.

In out-of-home care only 1.2%

Investigation and in out-of-home care 0.8%

Investigation only 59.9%

On an order and in out-of-home care 23.8%

Investigation and in out-of-home care and on an order 8.5%

Investigation and on an order 1.8%

On a care and protection order only 4.1%

Note: *OOHC denotes out-of-home care

...with increase being steady in New South Wales, Victoria and the Northern Territory

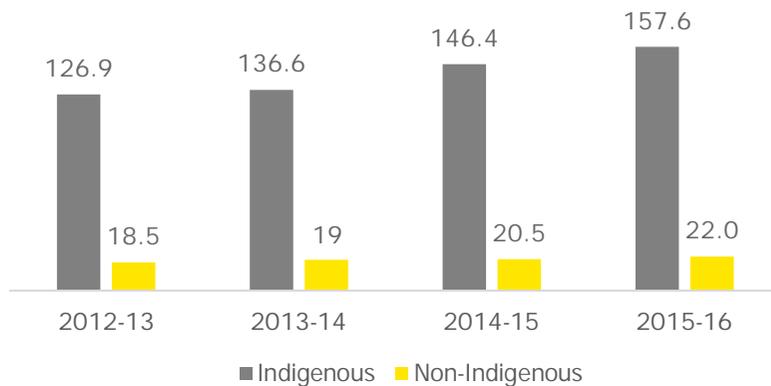| Children receiving child protection services by states and territories (number per 1,000)				
State/Territory	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	26.7	19.3	19.8	27.3
New South Wales (NSW)	29.1	31.7	35.0	37.6
Northern Territory (NT)	61.3	71.3	91.5	96.1
Queensland (QLD)	27.6	26.6	24.2	24.6
South Australia (SA)	17.9	19.8	17.6	17.2
Tasmania (TAS)	25.5	22.7	22.4	22.7
Victoria (VIC)	21.8	22.9	26.0	28.6
Western Australia (WA)	24.0	26.5	27.0	25.8
Australia (Total)	26.0	27.2	28.6	30.2

► The rate of children receiving child protection services in 2015–16 varied across jurisdictions, but with a total average across Australia of 30.2 per 1000 children

► NT had by far the highest rate of child protection services with 96.1 per 1000 children in 2015-16, due to increased cases of child abuse or neglect.

► Since 2012–13, rates have increased steadily in NSW, Victoria and the NT, while other jurisdictions showed a fluctuating trend over the four-year period.

► In the latest year, rates rose in all states with the exception of WA and SA.

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Indigenous children are seven times more likely to have received child protection services than non-Indigenous children

Children receiving child protection services by community, (number per 1000)

- Indigenous
- Non-Indigenous

Breakdown of substantiated maltreatment types by community, 2015-16

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
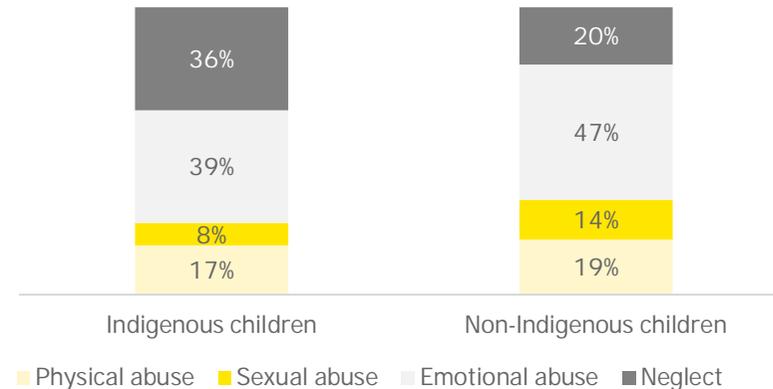
▶ Over the past four years, the rate of children receiving child protection services has increased for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children–from 126.9 to 157.6 per 1,000 and from 18.5 to 22.0 per 1,000, respectively.

▶ In 2015-16, 46,632 indigenous children received child protection services in general or were subjects of substantiated abuse or neglect, seven times more than non-indigenous children, and an increase of 8% over the last four years (36,656 indigenous children in 2012-13).

▶ On an average, indigenous children who received child protection services were slightly younger than non-indigenous children, with median ages of 7 and 8, respectively.

▶ The rate of indigenous child abuse has increased over the past few years with the rate of substantiation seven times higher compared to non-Indigenous children.

§ Total substantiations for indigenous children was 12,903 in 2015-16, an increase of 5.5% compared to 2012-13.

▶ Emotional abuse was the most common form of abuse for substantiated maltreatment of non-Indigenous children (47%), compared to 39% for indigenous children.

▶ Neglect formed over one-third of substantiated abuse among indigenous children in 2015-16, compared to only one-fifth for non-Indigenous children.
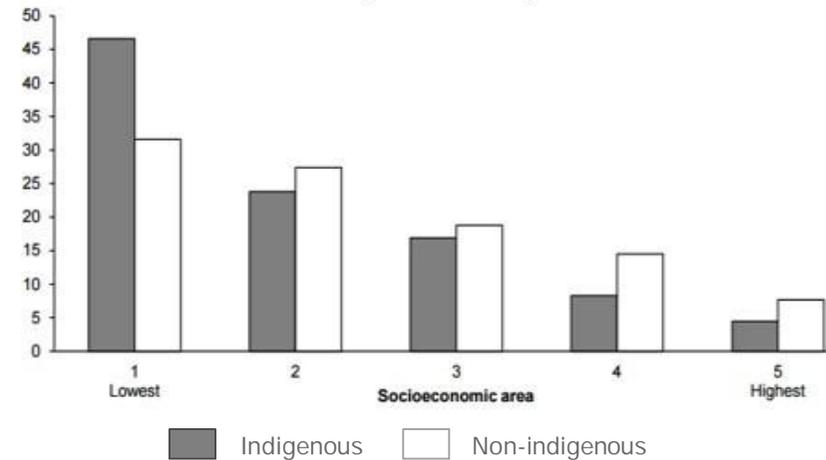
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Children in remote areas and the lowest socio-economic areas are more likely to be the subject of substantiations

Children subject to substantiations by remoteness area, 2015–16 (rate per 1,000)
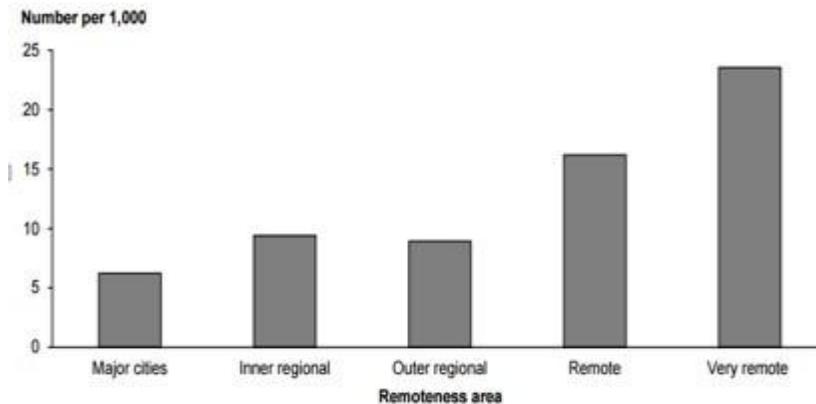
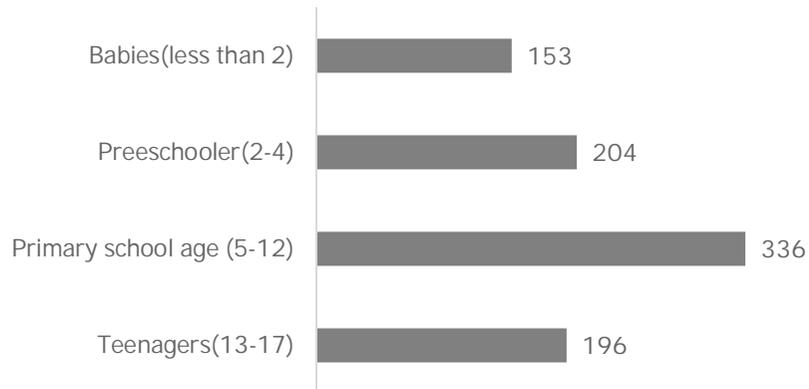### Children subject to substantiations, by socioeconomic area and indigenous status, 2015-16 (%)

► There is lack of proper services and programs in remote communities to address the wellbeing and concerns of children and young people.

§ Children from geographically remote areas were four times more likely than those in major cities to be the subject of a substantiation (23.5 per 1,000 compared with 6.2 respectively)

§ Significant numbers of indigenous children in very remote areas are experiencing issues such as inadequate housing, poor nutrition, grief and loss, trauma, alcohol and substance abuse and violence.

► Children who were subject to substantiations were also more likely to come from the lowest socioeconomic areas (36% in the lowest socioeconomic area compared with 7% in the highest).

§ Indigenous children are far more likely to be from the lowest socioeconomic areas i.e. 47%, compared with 32% for non-Indigenous children.
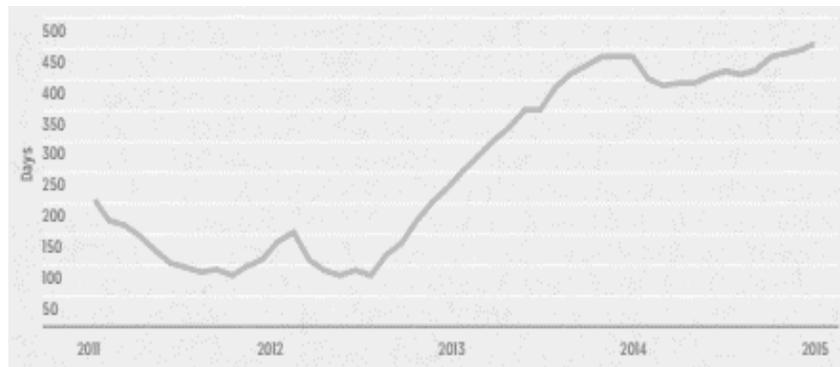
Children suffering immigration detention face serious issues such as self harm and sexual assaults

Age of children in detention by age, 2014

Age group	Number
Babies(less than 2)	153
Preeschooler(2-4)	204
Primary school age (5-12)	336
Teenagers(13-17)	196

### Average number of days held in immigration detention facilities

► According to the Department of Immigration and the Parliamentary Library, there were 1,773 child detentions at the end of August 2013.

► According to Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), as of 31 March 2014, the majority of children in detention were primary-school aged, followed by preschool aged children and teenagers.

► The commission's inquiry report identified assaults and self-harm incidents in the detention centres from January 2013 to March 2014. These incidents include:
   § 233 assaults involving children
   § 207 incidents of actual self-harm
   § 436 incidents of threatened self-harm
   § 33 incidents of reported sexual assault

► As at 31 January 2016, the average time spent by children in detention facilities was 457 days, causing prolonged deterioration of mental and emotional health, and an adverse impact on development.

► As of June 2015, indigenous children were 26 times more likely to be in juvenile detention, due to over-reliance on criminal justice approaches for resolving issues.

► In response to the immigration detention issue, the country has an obligation under the 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' to ensure alternative care, special protection and assistance for asylum seekers and unaccompanied children.

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Government expenditure on child protection, out-of-home care, family support and intensive family support services has increased at a CAGR of 2% from 2011-12 to 2015-16...

Government real recurrent expenditure by type of service (A$ million)

Legend: ■ Child protection services ■ Out-of-home care services ■ Intensive family support services ■ Family support services
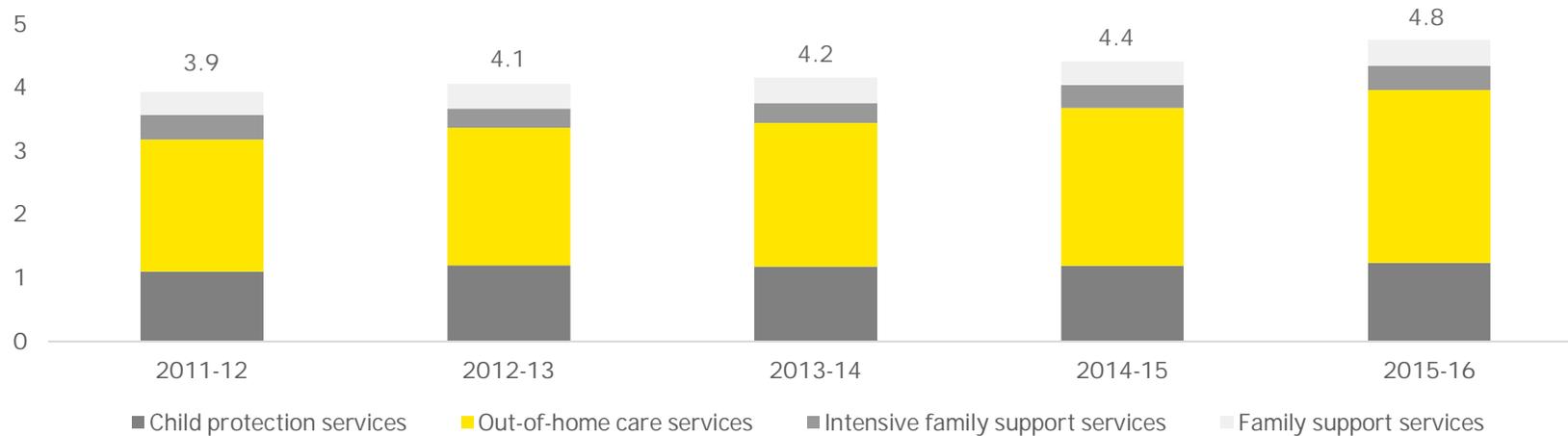
► The government contributes directly to child abuse prevention through its child protection budget and programs funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS).

► For 2015-16, respective governments allocated A$4.8 billion to child protection, out-of-home care, family support and intensive family support services an increase of 7.7% (A$341.2 million) year-on-year.

► Real expenditure per child rose from A$765.93 in 2011-12 to A$883.09 in 2015/16.

► Of all the categories, out-of-home care services accounted for the majority of expenditure (57%), followed by child protection services (26%), Family support services (9%), Intensive family support services (8%).

► By state, NSW accounts for the largest share of expenditure (32%), followed by Victoria, Queensland, WA, SA, NT, Tasmania and ACT.

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...but the costs of prevention and longer term implications of child abuse and neglect is considerably higher

According to Pegasus Economics' conservative estimates, the economic burden of child abuse costs A$6.8 billion to the Federal, State and Territory Governments in Australia. Considering the broader definition of childhood trauma, the economic cost may be as high as A$9.1 billion.

Cost of child abuse (NZ Billion)
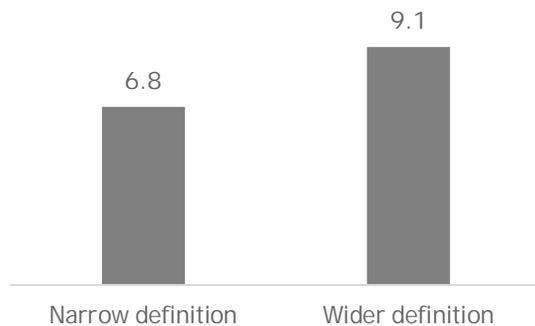
Note: Narrow definition includes child sexual, emotional and physical abuse only; while, Wider (ASCA) definition includes all childhood trauma

Weighted average cost to the budget from childhood trauma

Type of issue	Annual cost per person (A$)	Number of child abuse victims	Weight	Weighted annual cost per person (A$)
Depression (mental illness)	7,687	3,516,700	0.43	3,304.87
Eating disorder (obesity)	6,042	2,400,000	0.29	1,772.76
Suicide and attempted suicide	5,281	2,614	0.00	3.64
Alcohol abuse	4,984	2,260,000	0.28	1,377.03
Average	7,525			6,458

► The actual cost of child abuse and trauma overruns is considerably higher than the A$4.8 billion spent on child protection, reflecting the huge costs of prevention and long-term implications (including additional costs to society stemming from educational failures, premature death and low workforce participation, which may reduce the productive potential of society and lead to lower GDP).

► Pegasus Economics estimated that the impact of child abuse (sexual, emotional and physical) on an estimated 3.7 million adults is at least $6.8 billion annually. In the population of adult survivors of childhood trauma more broadly (i.e. a figure of 5 million adults) this estimate rises to $9.1 billion.

► Pegasus concluded that four cost categories - alcohol abuse, anxiety/depression, obesity and suicide/attempted suicide - were representative (yet conservative) of the budgetary costs flowing from childhood trauma.

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Federal and State governments needs to tackle a number of key challenges to improve the overall system

Data collection and consistency issues
- ► There is insufficient data on child abuse and the under-reporting of crime, especially by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD); children with disability; and LGBT due to fear and neglect.
- ► The data collected about both the incident and the individuals involved is not uniform across states and territories.

Increasing cost of child protection
- ► The cost of child protection in Australia is as high as A$6.8 billion annually or A$6,458 per person, which includes high government expenditure and loss of tax revenues.
- ► Resultantly, federal, state and territory governments are initiating revenue measures and expenditure cuts to restore the budget position.

Lack of quality out-of-home care services
- ► The number of children in out-of-home care has increased by 17% in 2015-16 y-o-y; however, the quality of services like health, safety, culture and community, emotional development and learning and achieving is lacking in out-of-home care.

Lack of early intervention services
- ► Practitioners fail to record, share, understand and take action on matters of child abuse in a timely manner, leading to delayed response times.
- ► Children's experience of domestic and family violence is not collected independently of the adult's experience.

Boundaries between government departments, agencies and practitioners
- ► Silos exist between state governments, departments, practitioners & NGOs across Australia which are not working in tandem and are looking to transition to a sustainable service system.
- ► There is a need to ensure that service providers are accountable for a consistent set of standards to drive improvements and have responsibility for reporting on child and family outcomes.

Shortage of skilled workforce
- ► Recruiting and retaining a skilled workforce (including reviewing organisational structures, operating models, job design, specialist roles and supporting staff) is difficult
- ► Child protection agencies face a challenge in providing staff with the tools necessary to perform their respective roles (e.g., information systems).

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A New Response is Required – OOHC

Diversion, Permanency & Reducing Placement

The focus of the future service system is for:

- *Early intervention through strengthening families*

- *Focussing on child centred supports*

- *Reducing placement services over time*

Inflow

Strengthening Families
Child-centred support

Increases over time

Placement Services

Reduces over time

Outflow

CYP on long term orders

Year 1   Year 2   Year 3   Year 4   Year 5

Future contacts will reflect a reinvestment approach

Inflow/future demand will be channelled earlier through non-placement services

Placement outflow will be channelled through non-placement services to reduce likelihood of CYP re-entering OOHC

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Continuum of Care

OOHC Service System Framework		
Wrap around services		
Placement Prevention	**Child Centred**	**Permanence and Placement arrangements**

Service Models	► Placement Prevention
	► Intensive Family Support
	► Child/Parent Interaction
	► Restoration
	► Intensive family Preservation
		► Therapeutic Support
		► Health Pathway
		► Education Pathway
		► Needs assessment
			► Foster Care (includes)
			  • Relative/Kinship Care
			  • Family Group settings
			► Therapeutic Residential Care (includes)
			  • Supported Independent Living
			  • Secure Care Short Term, Long Term and Respite, Adoption and Guardianship

Gvt Agency	► Child Protection Case Plan ► Ongoing monitoring of Safety	► Defines initial care plan goal and direction (Maintain, Restore, Rel/Kin, LT Care) ► Completes SMT – Child needs ► Reviews and client outcomes assessment	► Stable and LT Case Management Transferred to NGOs ► Monitor Reviews and individual outcomes
Care Providers	► NGOs work with Gvt to support agreed case plan goals		► NGOs have case management and work with Gvt to deliver new ► Undertake reviews of Case plans and Individual outcomes
Other Agencies	► Including access to general and specialist services from Health, Education, Adolescent Mental Health and Justice.		
Regul-atory	► The role of the Regulator. ► The investigative role of the Ombudsman and other agencies.		

Individualised Case Plans driven by identified case plan directions, needs assessment and co-ordinated support services
Quality outcomes focussed on Safety, Permanency, Wellbeing, Culture

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A child's journey under our system design

Child Description	Initial Case Plan Direction	Case Co-ordination + Placement	Case Plan	In Care

CHILD JOURNEY

- Age group?
- Aboriginal?
- New entry?
- Transfer?

Maintain

Relative/ Kin

Restore/Adopt/ Guardianship

Long Term Orders

At Home

Relative/ Kin

Foster Care

Residential Care

Child Assessment Tool

Low
Medium
High

Complex

Cultural Care

Services

Specific child needs

Over 15 family reconnection

Support

EXIT

DE-ESCALATION

TRANSFER

CONTINUITY

Regular Review of Case Plan and services provided or when unplanned change occurs

SERVICE COST

Aboriginal child[1]

Non Aboriginal child

$ Initial Case Plan Direction packages

$ Baseline Placement Cost OOHC

OR

Baseline Case Co-ordination (At home)

$ Child Needs 3 packages

Exception support for Complex

$ Loading

Separate package

= $ Service cost per child

1: A specific pathway is available for Aboriginal children with tailored packages

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Proposed system design workflow

Case Management Transfer criteria aligned to case plan goal requirements	OOHC funded placement must be aligned to a court order	No voluntary OOHC

Inputs

Court Orders	CAT	Casework

Cost Components

Initial Case Plan Direction Packages	**+**	Baseline Package	**+**	Child Needs Package	**+**	Other Specialist Packages
Maintain		**Foster Care** FC, SFGH		**Low needs**		**Complex needs (exception supports)**
Relative/ Kinship		**Aboriginal Foster Care** FC, SFGH		**Medium needs**		**Cultural Plan**
Restore/ Adopt/ Guardianship		**Residential Care** RC, SIL, SA		**High needs**		**15+ years old reconnect**
Long Term Care		**Interim Intensive Therapeutic Care**				**Other SP 1**
		Case Coordination*				**Other SP 2**

► Case Plan goal packages are mutually exclusive	► Baseline packages are mutually exclusive	► Child needs packages are mutually exclusive
► Case Plan goal packages are time limited (see over)	► Case coordination – includes at home, guardianship and post adoption support – Court order may not be required for a case co-ordination package	► Packages are determined by CAT score except for under 2's where expected to be Foster Care and low needs
► Review timeframes are defined (see over)		

► SP Packages may be variable price

► Decisions will made by after Case Plan development

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