

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Overrepresentation in Out-of-Home Care

Dr Joseph J. McDowall

Executive Director (Research)

CREATE Foundation

Visiting Fellow

School of Public Health and Social Work

Queensland University of Technology

What is Out-of-Home Care?

"Out-of-home care provides alternative accommodation for children and young people who are unable to live with their birth parents."

Vision

All children and young people with a care experience have the opportunity to reach their full potential

Mission

Creating a better life for children and young people in care.

CREATE does this through:

- **Connecting** children and young people to each other, CREATE and their Community.
- **Empowering** children and young people to build self-confidence, self-esteem, and skills that enable them to have a voice and be heard.
- **Changing** the care system, in consultation with children and young people, through advocacy to improve policies, practices and services, and increase community awareness.



Out-of-Home Care Services

<i>Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Unit</i>	<i>2012–13</i>	<i>2013–14</i>	<i>2014–15</i>	<i>2015–16</i>	<i>2016–17</i>
NSW	\$'000	820 159	843 490	927 288	1 044 505	1 135 516
VIC	\$'000	398 288	424 633	461 857	499 559	566 526
QLD	\$'000	440 672	442 927	464 147	503 377	524 975
WA	\$'000	227 701	238 616	256 155	255 121	262 785
SA	\$'000	167 232	189 888	229 366	308 933	399 038
TAS	\$'000	45 442	49 906	48 673	53 042	63 573
ACT	\$'000	32 619	35 226	35 725	37 206	42 491
NT	\$'000	81 800	87 308	104 293	113 314	124 755
Australia	\$'000	2 213 912	2 311 994	2 527 505	2 815 056	3 119 659

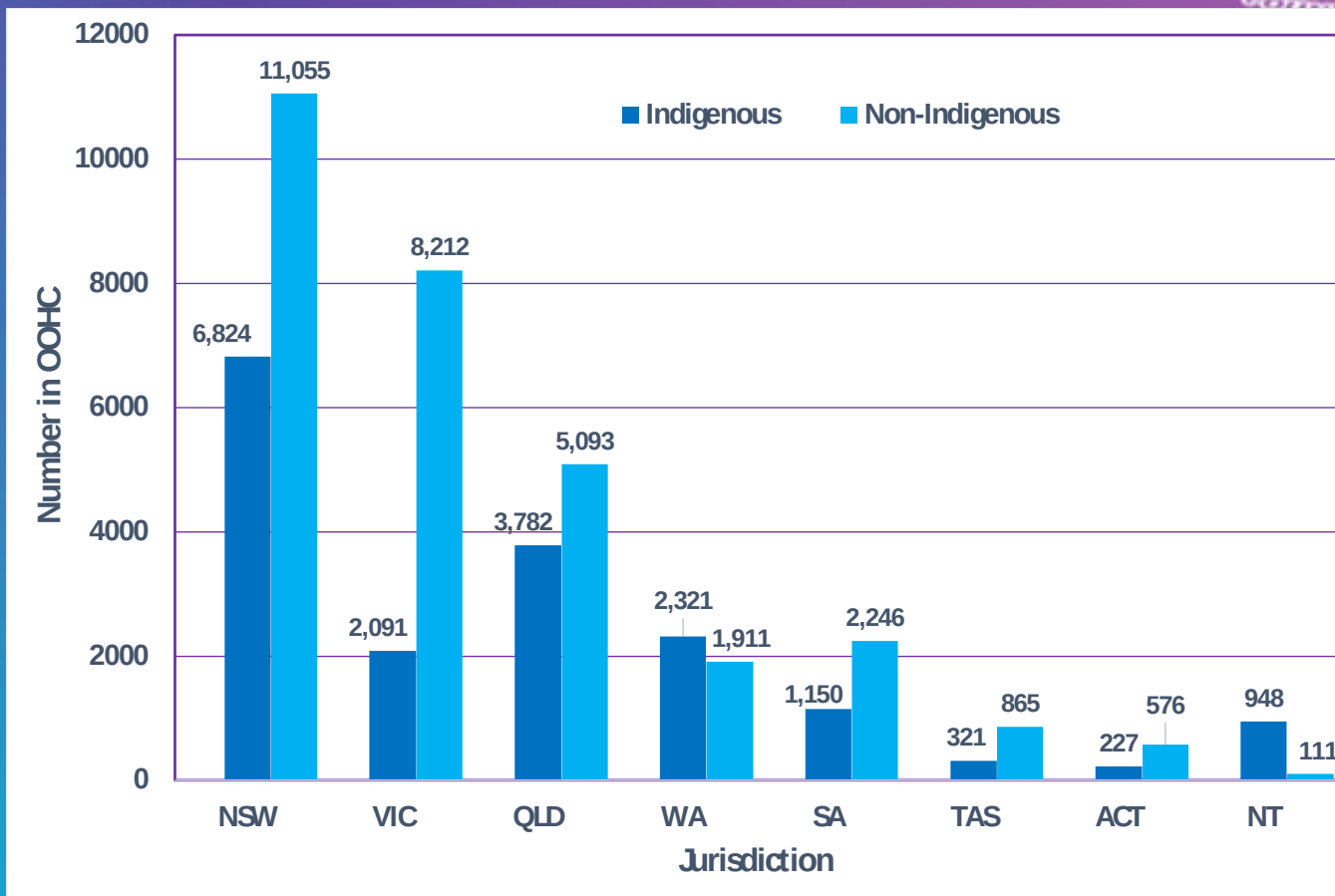
Australian OOHC

Key Statistics 2016 - 2017

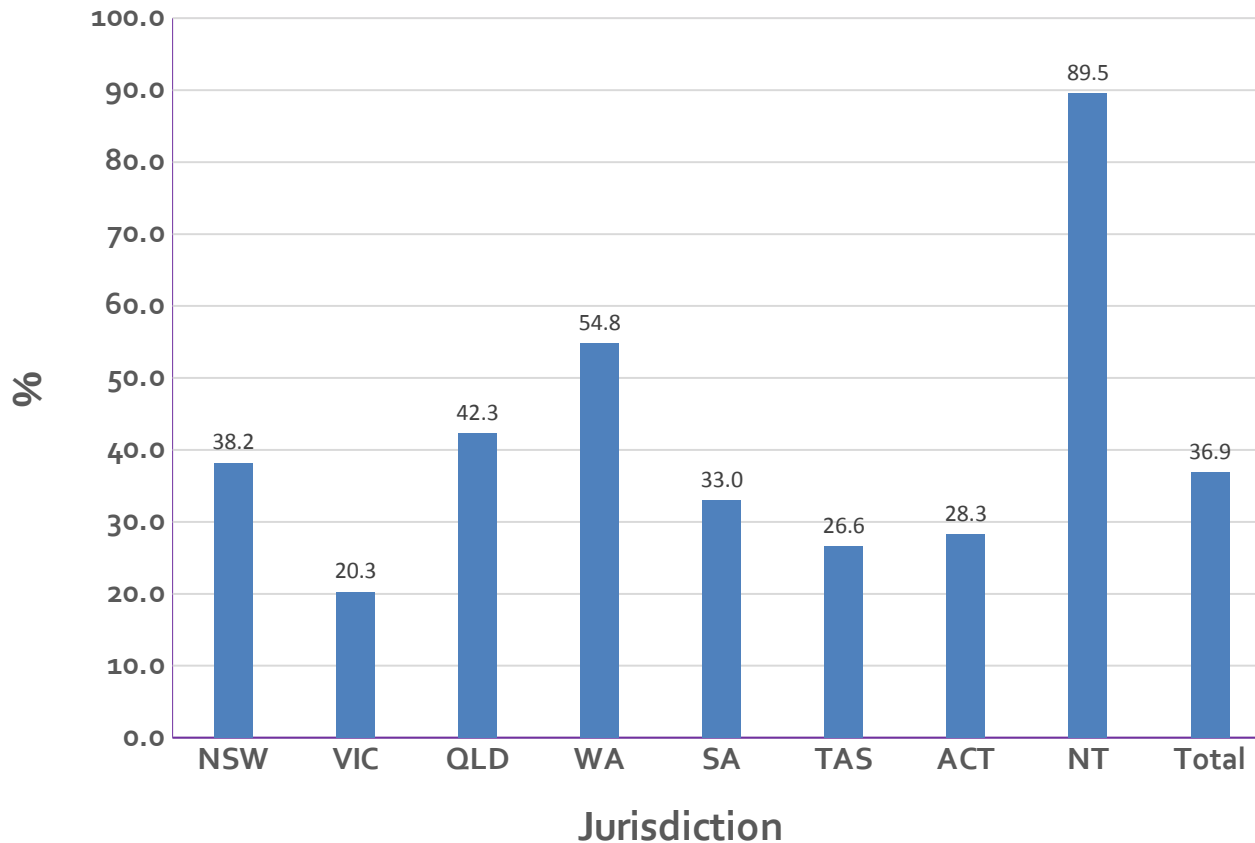
	Number	Number per 1000 children
Children admitted to out-of-home care	11557	2.1
Children discharged from out-of-home care	9854	1.8
Children in out-of-home care	47915	8.7
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	17664	58.7

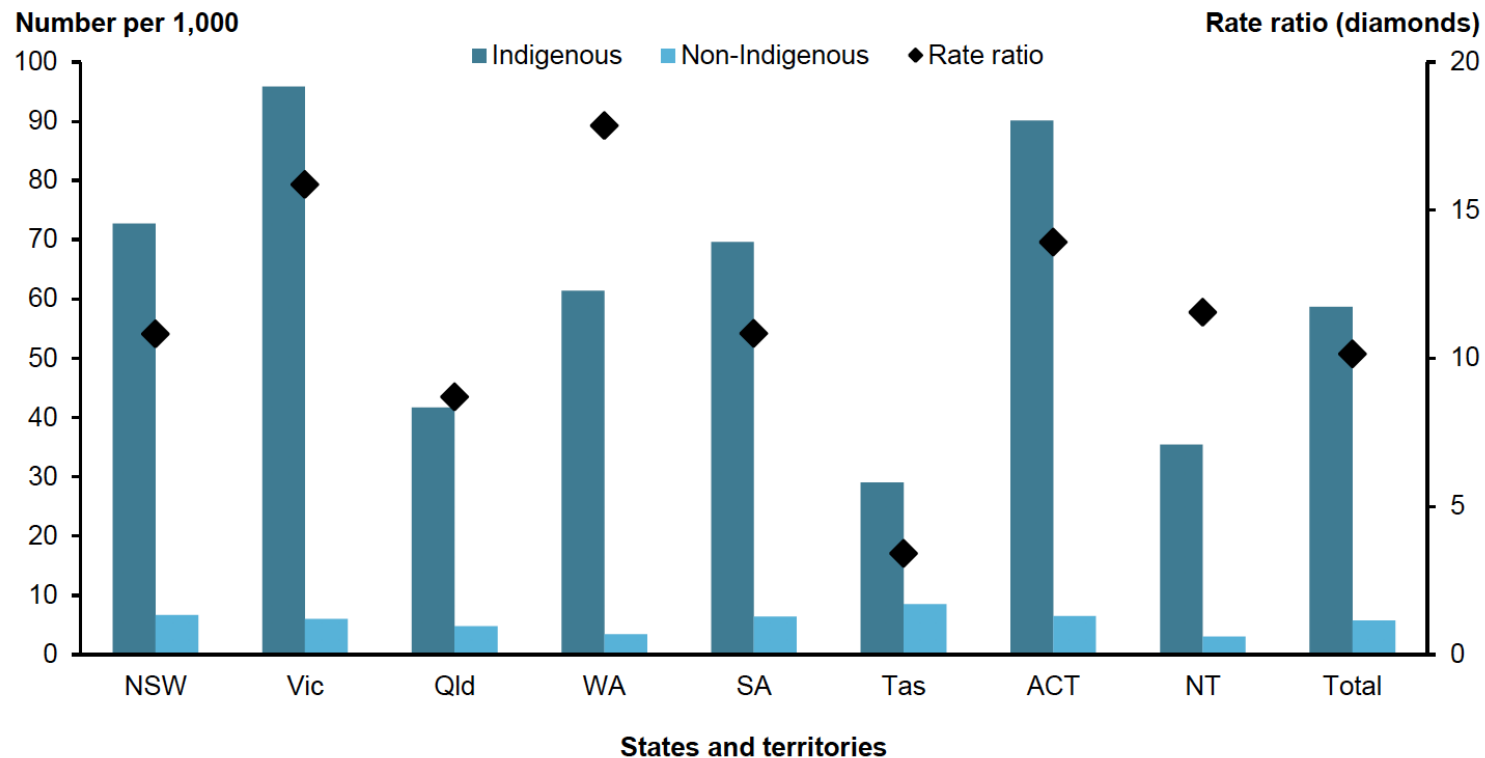
Note. Indigenous children are also over-represented in other areas related to child safety, including hospital admissions for injuries and assault, experiences of homelessness, and involvement in the youth justice system.

Number of Children and Young People in OOHHC 30 June 2017



Per cent of Care Populations Indigenous





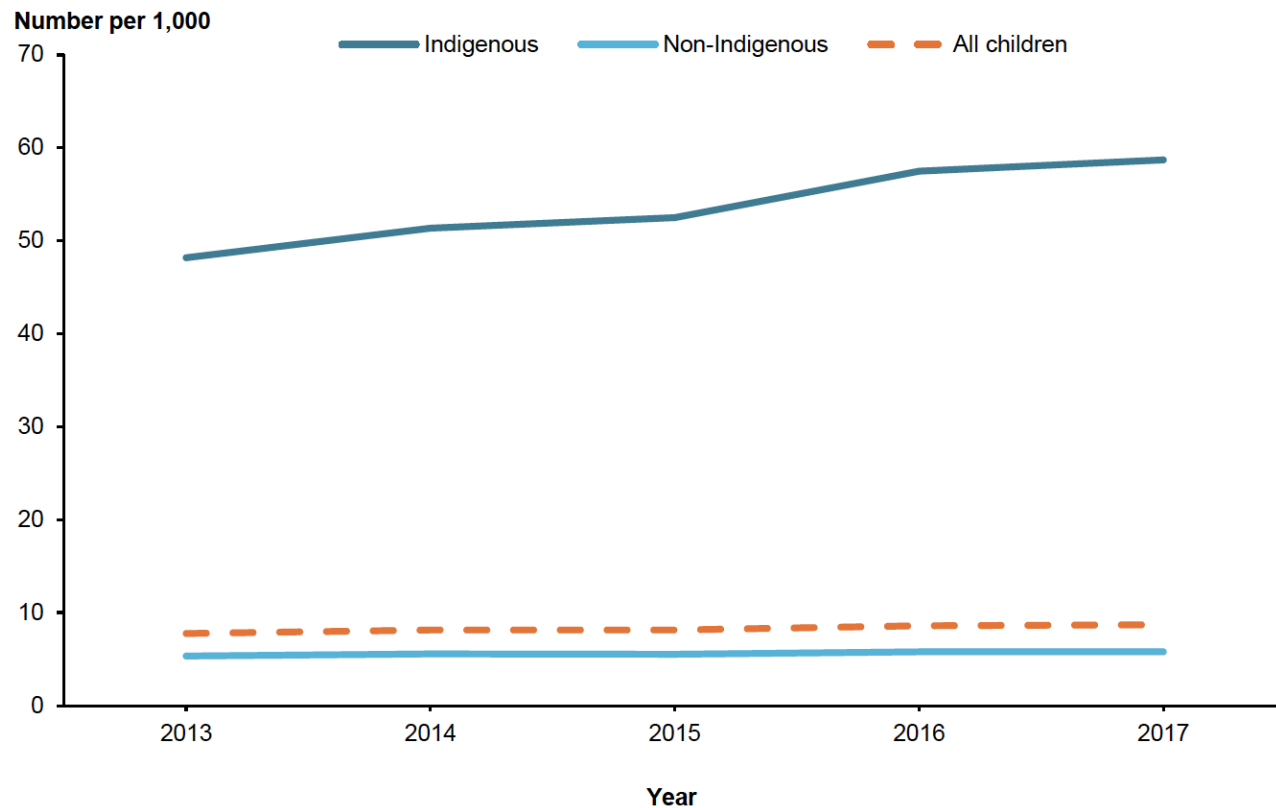
Note: See Appendix B: Technical notes for the methodology used to calculate rate and rate ratios.

Source: Table S43.

Figure 5.4: Children in out-of-home care, by Indigenous status, states and territories (rate and rate ratio)

Rate of Indigenous Children and Young People in OOHC

- Indigenous **10 X** more likely to be brought into OOHC than non-Indigenous;
- In major Metropolitan areas, rate **15 X** higher.



Source: Table S62.

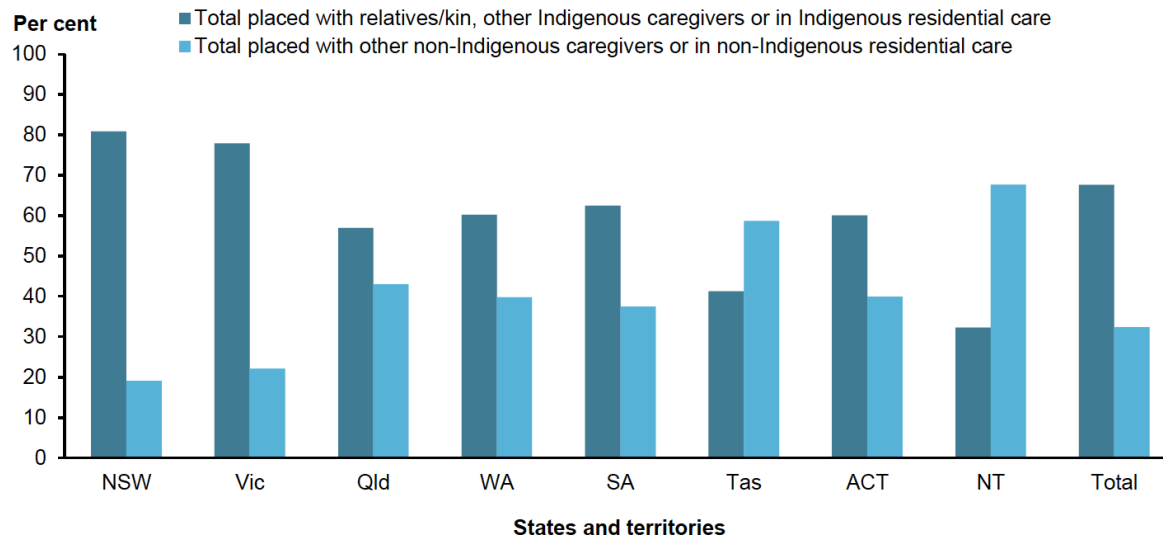
Figure 5.10: Children in out-of-home care, by Indigenous status, 30 June 2013 to 30 June 2017 (rate)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle



The principle has the following order of preference for the placement of Indigenous children:

- with the child's extended family and kinship networks;
- within the child's Indigenous community;
- with other Indigenous people;
- Alternative non-Indigenous carer (after extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and/or organisations).



Notes

1. Aggregate data were provided for NSW and the NT.
2. NSW data exclude children and young people on 'Guardianship Orders' (finalised third-party parental responsibility orders: non out-of-home care funded).
3. WA data exclude children on third-party parental responsibility orders and from 2015–16 includes children placed in boarding schools.
4. Tas data exclude children not under care and protection orders placed with relatives for whom a financial contribution is made under the Supported Extended Family or Relatives Allowance programs. A high number of carers whose Indigenous status is unknown may affect the identification of children placed in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.
5. Out-of-home care data for the ACT includes some young people 18 years and over whose carers receive a full carer payment. This is generally to facilitate completion of schooling without change to the placement.

Source: Table S45.

Figure 5.5: Indigenous children in out-of-home care, by relationship of carer, states and territories, 30 June 2017 (%)

Reasons for Admission to OOHC

Emotional Abuse	48%
-----------------	-----

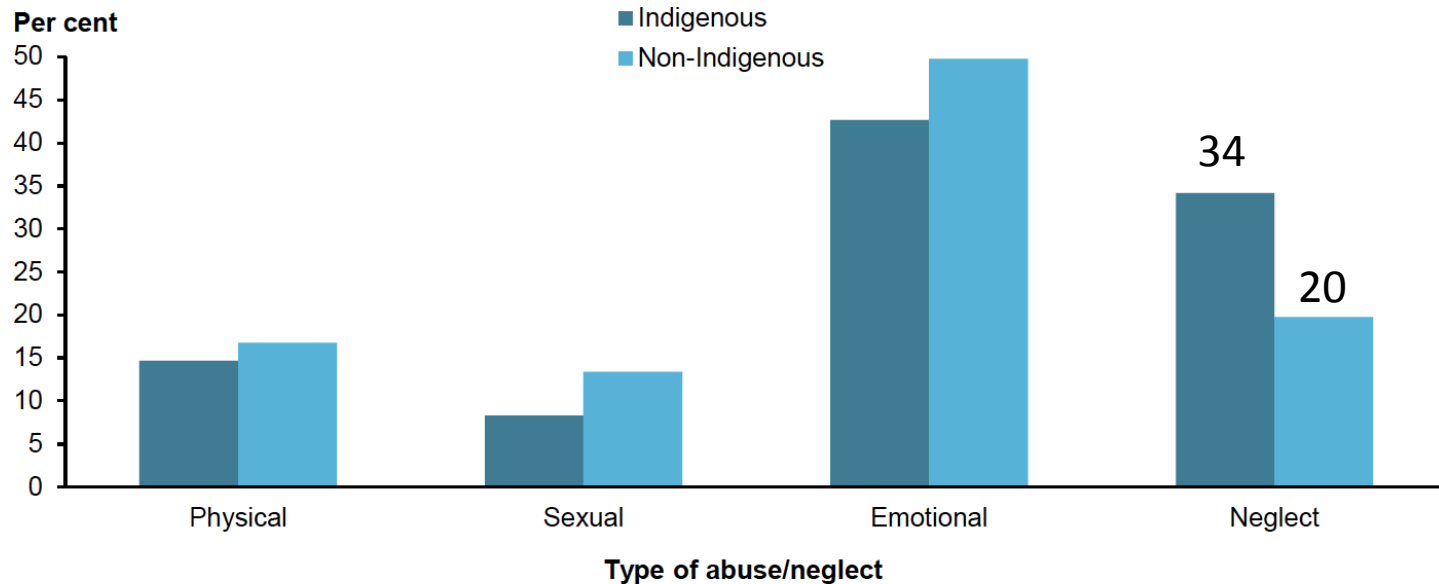
(Verbal violence, put-downs, fear inducing, isolation etc.)

Neglect	24%
---------	-----

Physical Abuse	16%
----------------	-----

Sexual Abuse	12%
--------------	-----

Indigenous vs. Non-Indigenous Abuse and Neglect



Note: For each child, the type of abuse/neglect reported is the type identified for their first substantiation in the year. Where multiple types of abuse were reported in the same substantiation, the data reflect the abuse type that is most likely to place the child at risk, or be most severe in the short term.

Source: Table S14.

Figure 3.8: Children who were the subjects of substantiations of notifications received during 2016–17, by Indigenous status and type of abuse (%)

Why Disproportionate Indigenous Representation?

- The legacy of past policies of forced removal;
- intergenerational effects of previous separations from family and culture;
- a higher likelihood of living in the lowest socioeconomic areas;
- perceptions arising from cultural differences in child-rearing practices;
- drug and alcohol abuse and family violence might also be contributing factors.

What can be done?

The Gap is widening!

An outline of National Standards for out-of-home care

A Priority Project under the National Framework
for Protecting Australia's Children 2009 – 2020



JULY 2011

National Standards for out-of-home care

Standard 1: Stability and Security

Standard 2: Participate in decisions

Standard 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Standard 4: Individualised plan

Standard 5: Health needs

Standard 6: Education and early childhood

Standard 7: Education, training, and/or employment

Standard 8: Social and/or recreational

Standard 9: Connection with family

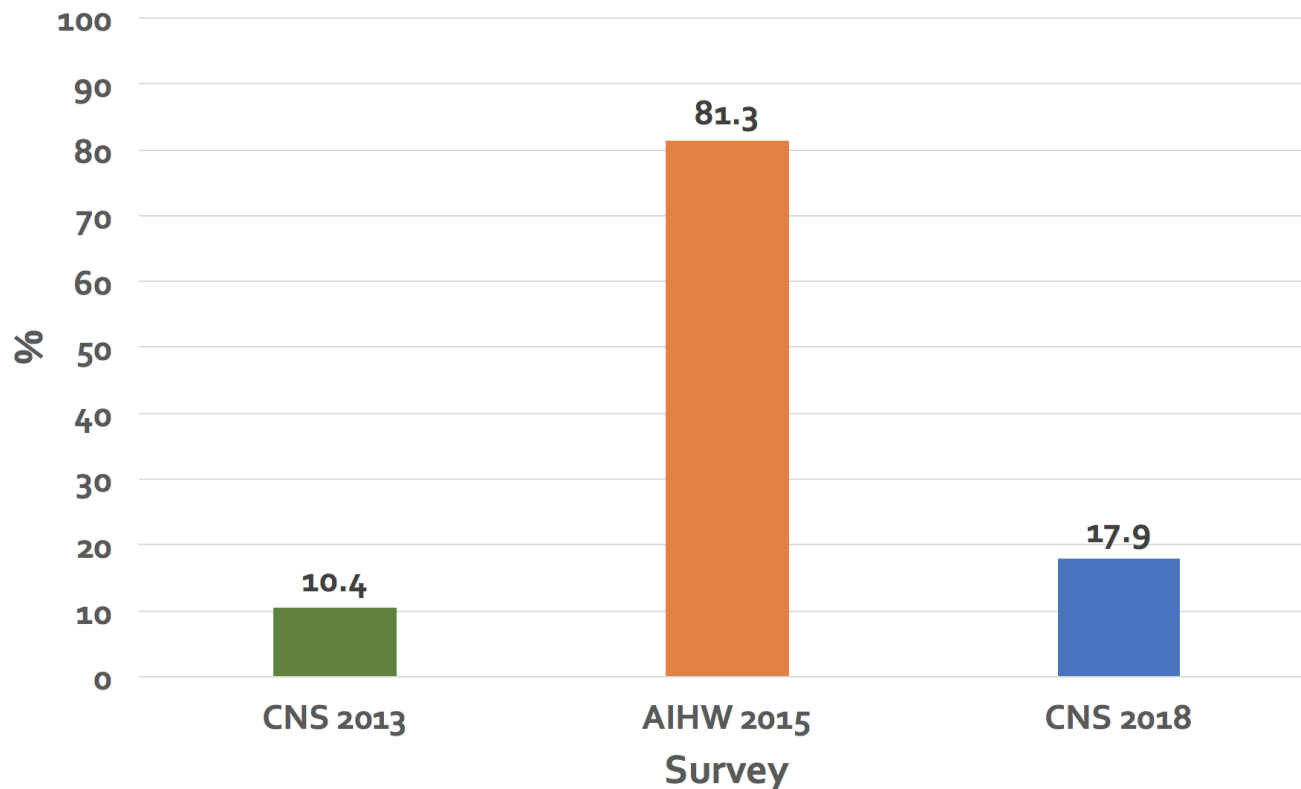
Standard 10: Identity development

Standard 11: Significant others

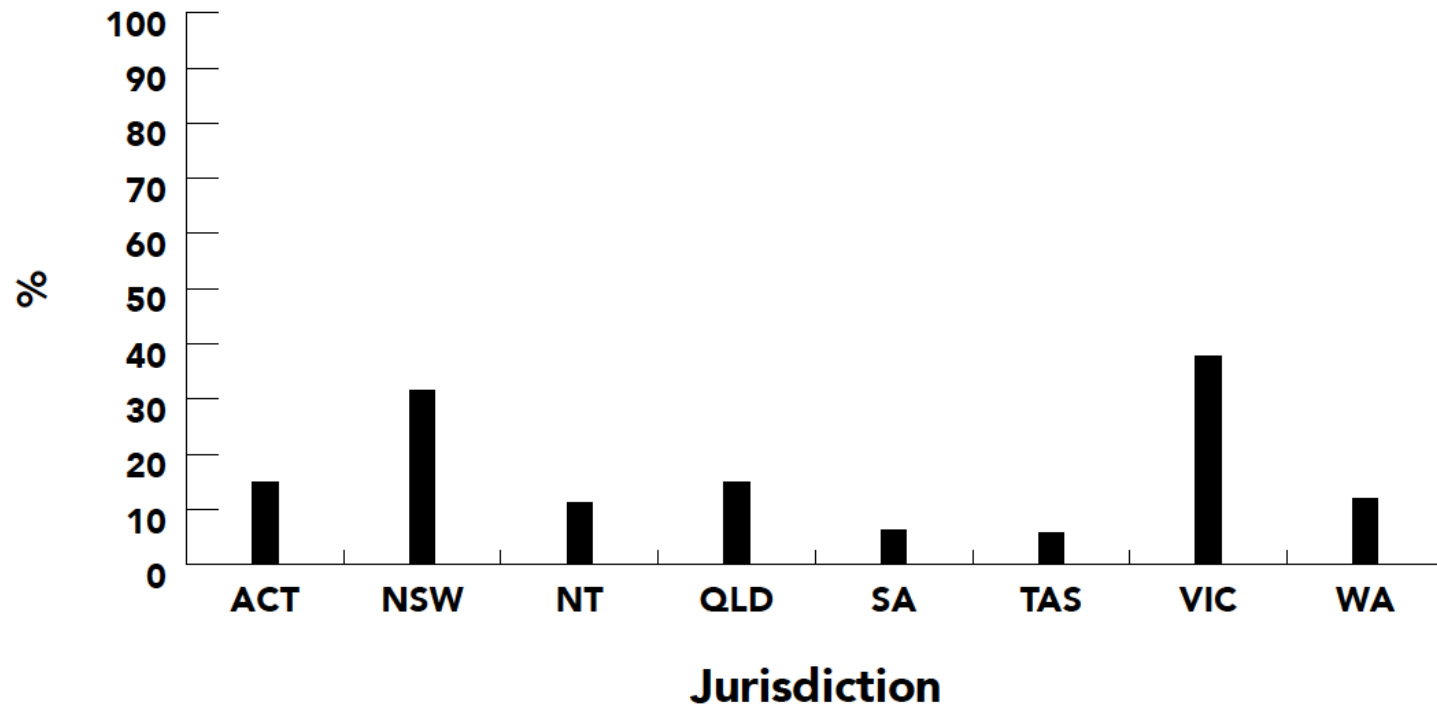
Standard 12: Carers


Standard 13: Transition from care planning

Indicator 10.1: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people who have a current Cultural Support Plan.



Proportion of Indigenous Children and Young People Who were Aware of Having a Cultural Support Plan (n = 374)





“Plans are worthless;
planning is everything.”

Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1957

Other Possible Initiatives

- 1. Indigenous communities, including children and young people, must participate in finding solutions;*
- 2. Training of caseworkers must emphasise cultural sensitivity;*
- 3. Early intervention models (e.g., Shared Family Care) should be supported.*

Sources

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2018). *Child protection Australia 2016–17*. Child Welfare series no. 68. Cat. No. CWS 63. Canberra: AIHW.

HREOC (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission). (1997). *Bringing them home. Report of the national inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families*. Sydney: HREOC.

McDowall, J. J. (2018). *Out-of-home care in Australia: Children and young people's views after five years of National Standards*. Sydney: CREATE Foundation.