

**Source:** Barber, J. G., Delfabbro, P. H., & Cooper, L. (2000). Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. *Children Australia, 25*(3), 5–10.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
<p>To establish whether Aboriginal children in the alternative care system were more or less likely to be constrained by court orders, whether they had experienced shorter or longer periods in care, whether these factors were influenced by geographical location, and to examine the prevalence and frequency of parental visits that were built into the case plan.</p>	<p>This study is the first phase of a 3-year longitudinal study profiling Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children entering new out-of-home care placements over a 1-year period (May 1998 – April 1999) in South Australia. (Although this study is part of a longitudinal project, this particular study was cross-sectional in design.) The sample included 38 Aboriginal children (<math>M = 10</math> years, <math>SD = 3.61</math>; 53% female; 58% lived in metropolitan areas) and 198 non-Aboriginal children (<math>M = 10.91</math>, <math>SD = 3.39</math>; 48% female; 76% lived in metropolitan areas). Children referred for respite from a pre-existing placement, children under 4 years of age, children on detention orders, or those with placements of less than two weeks' duration were excluded.</p> <p>Data were collected from central agency records and interviews with caseworkers. Data covered health and wellbeing of children plus demographics, placement history, type of legal order, reason for placement, physical or ongoing problems, nature and frequency of offending behaviour, and degree of family contact planned.</p>	<p>Aboriginal children from metropolitan areas and non-Aboriginal children from rural areas had the longest histories of alternative care. Aboriginal children in metropolitan areas were least likely to be referred into care for reasons of emotional abuse or neglect, and were also the unhealthiest; together with rural non-Aboriginal children, they were most likely to be under a court order at the time of placement. Results are consistent with the proposition that metropolitan Aboriginal children and rural non-Aboriginal children are the most reliant on the formal alternative care system.</p> <p>The authors recommended a greater focus on family reunification for these groups of children.</p>	<p>The limitations of this study include the unequal group sizes and small sample of Aboriginal children, and the cross-sectional design that over-represents children who have been in care for longer periods. The effect of the amount of time in care may not be independent of the groups' probability of selection. However, this was the only Australian study identified that used statistical techniques to investigate the relationship between ethnicity (specifically Aboriginal children) and placement characteristics. Given the over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care, research of this nature continues to be a priority.</p> <p>There is little hard data on the extent to which child welfare professionals are doing everything in their power to expedite return of children to care of their birth families (which is the highest priority of the <i>South Australia Child Protection Act 1993</i>).</p> <p>In the US, the length of time in care has been one of the more consistently investigated racial differences. This has not been investigated in Australia to the same extent. However, the findings from this study indicate that this is an area for further attention.</p>

**Source:** CREATE Foundation. (2005). *Indigenous children and young people in care: Experiences of care and connections with culture*. Perth, WA: Author.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
<p>The aim of the report was to provide a forum for Indigenous children and young people to comment on their understanding of the care process, their care experiences and their connections to their families and culture.</p>	<p>The Western Australian Department of Community Development (DCD) commissioned the CREATE Foundation to undertake a qualitative interview process with a random selection of 13 of the 50 children and young people in care included in the audit of case files of Indigenous children in the care of the department (WA Department for Community Development 2004). Interviews were conducted by the CREATE project team in partnership with indigenous staff from the department.</p>	<p>The report extensively documented participants' responses, providing aggregate data and illustrative quotes for each item. However, there appeared to be limited synthesis of data; the total discussion in relation to themes emerging from the data read: "common themes around access to information; placement with kin; sibling placements; regular contact with birth parents and relatives; and cultural needs were apparent" (p. 26).</p> <p>Notable recommendations included the need for training of caseworkers, carers and residential workers about the value of connecting Indigenous children and young people to their culture. Furthermore, it was recommended that, where appropriate, Indigenous children and young people be provided with culturally appropriate counselling to help them deal with the trauma of being apprehended and continually separated from their birth parents and family.</p> <p>It was not always clear how the results from the children's interviews informed the recommendations that arose from the research. For example, recommendations 1 and 18, which related to policy issues (that is, the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and financial support for kinship carers), were not reported in children's responses. Nevertheless, the report did offer some important recommendations in relation to the importance of caseworkers, carers and residential workers recognising the value of children's and young people's views. Notably, it was recommended that caseworkers, carers and residential workers receive training in engaging Indigenous children and young people, in order to better understand and respond to their particular requirements.</p>	<p>A stated limitation of the report was that some DCD metropolitan officers' resistance to allowing the project group to speak with the children and young people negatively affected the project. This finding echoes similar problems encountered by researchers trying to access children and young people in South Australia. The problems encountered by the researchers are concerning, as it goes against a key tenet of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that states that children's views should be taken into account in any decision that is likely to affect their wellbeing or position in life.</p>

Western Australia Department for Community Development. (2004). *Indigenous Wards in Care Project*. Perth: Author.

**Source:** Delfabbro, P. H., Barber, J. G., & Cooper, L. (2002). The role of parental contact in substitute care. *Journal of Social Service Research, 28*(3), 19–40.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
<p>To examine the association between parental contact and the wellbeing and placement status of children in South Australian substitute care.</p>	<p>Total sample: <math>n = 235</math> (121 males, 114 females) South Australian foster children entering care over a 12-month period (May 1998 – April 1999). Mean age of 10.8 years.</p> <p>Excluded from the sample were children on detention orders, and children placed in supported accommodation or referred for family preservation services. Also excluded were children who were referred for respite from a continuing placement and those with placements expected to last less than two weeks.</p> <p>The authors identified that to support the hypothesis that parental contact enhances child adjustment it is necessary to show that (a) increases in family contact are associated with increases in child wellbeing and better family relationships, and (b) the quality of these family relationships is sufficient to enhance reunification, child development and adjustment.</p> <p>All of the children still involved in the substitute care system were followed-up at 4 months and 8 months. Referral records were monitored each week at a central referral agency and caseworkers were asked about which children were suitable for inclusion. Information was collected from central agency records, government databases and verified with caseworkers in interviews.</p> <p>Demographic information, reason for placement into care, whether the child had been diagnosed with a mental health problem, an abbreviated form of Boyle’s Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) measuring psychological functioning, and a checklist developed by Barber and Delfabbro measuring social adjustment were collected. Detailed information concerning family contact was also collected, along with caseworkers’ perceptions of family contact.</p>	<p>The study found that the frequency of at least one form of parental contact (telephone) was positively associated with reunification and negatively with the amount of time in care. The findings are consistent with previous research. However, during the 8-month study period, there were no significant changes in the frequency of contact or improvements in the quality of family relationships between children. The study also reported that, although the majority of caseworkers were favourably disposed towards family contact, approximately 15–20% believed that it was not beneficial and impacted negatively on the relationship between children and their parents.</p> <p>The paper also highlighted that family contact was less likely for children from rural areas, of Aboriginal background, and who scored higher on a measure of hyperactivity.</p> <p>Overall, the results indicated that the relationship between variations in family contact and other outcomes is not straightforward. The authors assert that “although a certain level of family contact is needed to achieve reunification, the relationship appears to be correlational rather than causative” (p. 37).</p>	<p>This was a well designed study. The strength of the longitudinal design was that it allowed the authors to examine variations of each type of family contact, both across and within time periods, and how this was perceived by social workers.</p> <p>The paper presented some of the first detailed Australian data on family contact. A limitation of the study identified by the authors is that the family contact measures may not have been sufficiently refined to assess the full complexity of family contact arrangements. Additionally, the eight-month follow-up period may not have been long enough to observe any systematic changes in family relationships. Nevertheless, the present study did include more refined measures than previously used in other studies. Moreover, periods of less than a year have been found to be highly predictive of long-term outcomes for children in care.</p>

**Source:** Delfabbro, P. H., Barber, J. G., & Cooper, L. (2003). Predictors of short-term reunification in South Australian substitute care. *Child Welfare*, 82(1), 27–51.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
<p>To examine the factors that contribute to short-term reunification (during the first four months) in South Australian foster care.</p>	<p>Total sample: <math>n = 235</math> (121 males, 114 females) South Australian foster children entering care over a 12-month period (May 1998 – April 1999). Mean age = 10.8 years.</p> <p>Excluded from the sample were children on detention orders, and children placed in supported accommodation or referred for family preservation services. Also excluded were children who were referred for respite from a continuing placement and those with placements expected to last less than 2 weeks.</p> <p>A total of 49 children were reunified with their birth families at the end of the 4-month period. The period of 4 months was chosen by the authors “as it appears to be the critical period during which reunifications occur, and that the variables thought to predict reunification in this period differ from those that lead to reunification in general or reunification when children have been in care for longer periods” (p. 32). The study used proportional hazard analyses and profile analysis of reunified children.</p>	<p>The analyses revealed that non-Aboriginal children and those placed because of parental incapacity were significantly more likely to go home, whereas neglected and Aboriginal children were significantly less likely to go home. Profile analysis conducted by the authors revealed the specific case characteristics or changes thought to have contributed to reunification in each case.</p>	<p>The study is well designed and addresses many of the limitations of the data.</p> <p>The authors comment that the results have a number of important implications for policy and practice. Firstly, providing ongoing support services to birthparents is very important. Secondly, it is also important to acknowledge that not all substance abuse or mental health problems necessarily preclude parents from resuming their role, and many responded well to treatments and the provision of social supports. Finally, the study provides insight into particular problems associated with meeting the needs of Aboriginal children. The authors assert that workers needs to continue their practice of trying to place Aboriginal children with Aboriginal caregivers and try to ensure that larger sibling groups either remain in frequent contact or in the same placement.</p>

**Source:** Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., & Richardson, N. (2005). *Enhancing out-of-home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people*. Melbourne: National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
<p>To investigate the barriers and promising strategies for the recruitment, assessment, training, support and retention of Indigenous carers and non-Indigenous carers of Indigenous children; and to explore the barriers and promising strategies for providing culturally appropriate services to Indigenous children in care.</p>	<p>Data were collected from multiple sources including:</p> <p>Interviews with professional stakeholders in every state and territory of Australia (<math>n = 80</math>) from relevant organisations such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• statutory care and protection departments;</li> <li>• Indigenous child care agencies; and</li> <li>• non-Indigenous out-of-home care agencies.</li> </ul> <p>Focus groups in two states (WA &amp; Qld) with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous carers;</li> <li>• non-Indigenous carers of Indigenous children and young people; and</li> <li>• Indigenous children and young people in care.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Overarching themes:</i> Differentiating kinship and foster care was not useful for Indigenous Australians: most carers are kith or kin to children and many are caring for multiple children and have dual roles of kinship and foster carer. Recruitment, assessment, training and support are intertwined. Discussion of the issues separately is an artificial distinction.</p> <p><i>Recruitment:</i> There are an insufficient number of Indigenous carers to meet demand. Some groups of children are particularly difficult to recruit carers for (children with a disability, involved in juvenile justice, requiring short-term care, or who have no kin). Material disadvantage and the mismatch between traditional child-rearing practices and the out-of-home care system represent barriers to recruitment. The commitment to community among Indigenous people is a strength for recruitment. Past government policies and practices represent both a barrier and strength for recruiting Indigenous carers.</p> <p><i>Assessment:</i> Assessment techniques and requirements prevent Indigenous people from becoming carers as they use an inappropriate communication style, fail to take into account culturally sensitive issues, fail to account for high rates of numeracy and literacy problems, are culturally inappropriate for some requirements, and fail to account for high rates of criminal records.</p> <p><i>Training:</i> When carers are adequately prepared they feel supported. In particular, carers wanted training about how to work with the department. Non-Indigenous carers of Indigenous children wanted training in Indigenous culture, and Indigenous carers (especially those who were part of the Stolen Generations) may also need cultural training.</p> <p><i>Support:</i> Carers reported that the best way to support them was to provide services to meet the needs of children. In addition, carers talked about the need for adequate and timely financial support, respectful relationships with the department, and practical and emotional support.</p> <p><i>Retention:</i> Once Indigenous people start caring, few drop out. However, carers are an ageing demographic and are having to stop for health reasons. Carers may also be temporarily unavailable for cultural reasons.</p>	<p>This was an exploratory study, and the wide scope, along with the number of sub-groups sampled, means that the findings can not be generalised. However, this was the first Australian study examining issues specific to Indigenous carers and, as such, represents an important first step in identifying issues requiring further research.</p>

**Source:** McHugh, M. (2002). *The costs of caring: A study of appropriate foster care payments for stable and adequate out-of-home care in Australia*. Haymarket, NSW: Association of Childrens Welfare Agencies.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
<p>The aim of the report was to focus specifically on aspects of the foster care payment system in Australia.</p>	<p>A national postal survey of representatives of government and non-government foster care service providers was employed to identify issues and concerns in relation to the ability of carers to meet the costs of caring for children in foster care.</p> <p>In addition, qualitative focus group interviews with carers were conducted. Separate focus groups were held with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers in the capital cities of most states, and a joint focus group of non-Indigenous carers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers was held in a remote town.</p>	<p>The report noted that the agencies and associations felt that the standard subsidy to meet the basic costs of care was inadequate. This was exacerbated by inconsistent departmental policies in relation to the reimbursement of carers, and caused high levels of stress for carers and non-government agency staff attempting to meet the needs of children. The focus group interviews with carers suggested that estimates of the costs of children based on children living with their families were not adequate to meet the needs of children in out-of-home care, as children in care tend to have more complex needs than children who have never lived in care (for example, heightened physical and mental health problems). Carers highlighted areas in the budgets where costs specific to fostering were not reflected. It was reported that few jurisdictions were reimbursing carers by way of standard subsidy payments at a level that would meet the basic, everyday costs associated with fostering. It was highlighted that a significant increase in the levels of subsidy payments for all children would be required if the issue of adequacy of payments was to be addressed and carers were to receive amounts closer to the “real” costs of fostering.</p> <p>Questionnaires provided to the focus groups suggested that Indigenous carers were more likely than non-Indigenous carers to live in either public or Aboriginal housing, were more likely to live with their own extended families, to foster sibling groups and to have more children in their care. From discussion with Indigenous carers, it was apparent that large and often struggling Indigenous families took on children, both related and unrelated. Often placements were informal and usually lacked any legal status; therefore it was difficult for carers to obtain financial assistance from the state/territory to meet the needs of these children. The lack of material resources among Indigenous carers was more obvious than with non-Indigenous carers in the study. 22 of the 43 Indigenous carers said the payments they received were inadequate to meet the costs of the children in their care. Many carers cited difficulties in finding appropriate housing and accessing health services and transport. Notably, it was also apparent that one of the most important conditions for a successful carer was positive and ongoing support from workers in agencies and associations and from small, self-support carer groups. This did not always appear to be possible for Indigenous carers, who were more likely to be geographically remote. Carers from the remote town also noted disadvantage in relation to caring for children with special needs.</p>	<p>The report provides a very good source of information on this important topic.</p>

**Source:** McHugh, M., McNab, J., Smyth, C., Chalmers, J., Siminski, P., & Saunders, P. (2004). *The availability of foster carers*. Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
<p>The aim of the report was to examine the issue of the availability of foster carers within New South Wales, and issues relating to the recruitment, support and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander foster carers.</p>	<p>The authors conducted two focus groups and an interview with workers from the Aboriginal Statewide Foster Carer Support Service and an Aboriginal children's service providing out-of-home care. A carer survey was employed to obtain information from foster care families on their socio-demographic characteristics and fostering experience. However, due to the small numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers who completed surveys, no separate analysis was conducted on these groups.</p>	<p>Discussion of the findings in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers tended to focus on the views of the Aboriginal workers rather than views of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers expressed during focus groups. According to the workers, word-of-mouth referrals from existing carers or through others in the local community was successful in attracting carers.</p> <p>Indigenous stakeholders gave a number of reasons to explain why Indigenous people foster, including contributing to community and reasons associated with the prevention of another Stolen Generation. Both the Aboriginal Statewide Foster Carer Support Service and the agency representatives noted that ongoing support for carers was crucial in the retention of carers, preventing burn-out and loss of carers.</p> <p>It was also highlighted that more rigorous and professional approaches being taken in assessing and training all carers could be intimidating to some Indigenous families, who were then reluctant to become involved in fostering. According to an Indigenous agency worker, Indigenous carers often attend ongoing training sessions; however, some carers were not comfortable with accessing mainstream training sessions, and accessing training sessions for all Indigenous carers is difficult (many female carers did not have access to a car, or have the financial capacity to meet childcare costs to attend training). It was noted that childcare was provided by the agency and a small fee paid to carers for attending to assist Indigenous carers to attend training sessions.</p>	<p>The report provides a good indication of the issues surrounding the availability of foster carers in NSW.</p>

**Source:** McMahon, A., & Reck, L. (2003). Well-being for Indigenous foster children: Alternative considerations for practice research. *Children Australia*, 28(2), 19–24.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
<p>The aim of the paper was to review current assessment processes and alternative options for the assessment of the wellbeing of Indigenous foster children.</p>	<p>The report was a policy analysis that identified current “status indicators” in statutory data and conducted a critical comparison of their suitability for measuring the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.</p>	<p>The current child assessment process involves the use of “status indicators”, with those used for the assessment of Indigenous children including more detailed requirements arising from the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle (ACPP). “Status indicators” seem to serve an administrative purpose rather than to measure a child’s wellbeing and functioning. The authors indicated that there is insufficient research on wellbeing indicators for children in out-of-home care, particularly for Indigenous children in care. The authors suggested developing wellbeing indicators specific to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in care; using the ACPP to ensure Indigenous children are placed with families or communities with better measures of wellbeing than those they are removed from; and developing a valid, user-friendly, comparable measure of child wellbeing for welfare agency use.</p> <p>A search of literature carried out by McMahon and Reck of indicators used to assess children’s wellbeing suggested that the main emphasis was on indicators of health, educational progress and social development. The authors argued that these ignored those factors that prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander commentators contend are important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when addressing their children’s wellbeing. Specifically, the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should include cultural and spiritual dimensions as well as physical, emotional and social status. These should be considered in holistic terms in relation to the wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child’s community. Furthermore, the authors also noted a view expressed by some Indigenous commentators that a lack of an economic base underlies social disintegration within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; as such it is also important to consider housing, employment and other economic indicators of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child’s community when assessing their wellbeing. The authors identified the need for further research into the development of general wellbeing indicators for children in foster care. There also needs to be further research to identify wellbeing indicators that address specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concerns for children in care.</p>	<p>A very important paper on the issue of wellbeing indicators for Indigenous children.</p>

**Source:** New South Wales Community Services Commission. (2001). *A question of safeguards: Inquiry into the care and circumstances of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care*. Strawberry Hills, NSW: Author

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
<p>The aim of the report was to examine the care experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children</p>	<p>Case reviews were conducted for 15 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care.</p> <p>A number of issues were considered, including family contact, educational, health, social and recreational issues.</p> <p>Aspects of case management were also considered, including case planning and review, support to the child or young person and support to the carer.</p>	<p>The report observed that although the majority of the children and young people were benefiting from their care experiences, too often this was related to “good luck” rather than effective casework intervention. Several themes were identified in the context of the care and circumstances of the 15 children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There appeared to an “encouraging” degree of compliance with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle; however there were a number of problems in its application. These included inadequate assessment prior to placement with extended family, placement with extended family often necessitating moving the child from their locality, and limited placement options for children with complex needs. There was a requirement for a greater focus on the recruitment, training and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers, and the development and implementation of a policy and practice framework to support the placement principle.</li> <li>• For many of the children and young people, contact with family occurred in an <i>ad hoc</i>, unplanned and uncoordinated way, or not at all.</li> <li>• Strategies to ensure that family identity and relationships were maintained were not identified in case planning.</li> <li>• None of the 15 children and young people had a case plan that addressed cultural issues or documented strategies to promote cultural identity.</li> </ul> <p>It was concluded that the Aboriginal and Islander child care agencies (AICCAs) providing out-of-home care services were hampered by outdated and inadequate policy and practices and a lack of resources. The absence of a policy and practice framework in relation to the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle resulted in problems in the application of the principle by the AICCAs and the department.</p>	<p>Although a small study, important issues were identified for this group of children</p>

**Source:** Osborn, A., & Delfabbro, P. H. (2006). *National comparative study of children and young people with high support needs in Australian out-of-home care*. Adelaide: University of Adelaide.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
<p>The aim of the national comparative study was to provide the first national profile of children and young people with high support needs in Australian out-of-home care.</p>	<p>A national comparative study of 364 children (mean age = 12.92, <i>SD</i> = 3.28) from South Australia, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia. The study involved detailed interviews with caseworkers, extensive case file readings, and comprehensive analysis of objective placement data.</p> <p>The study provides a detailed analysis of the social and family background of children, their psychosocial profile, service history and their placement experiences. The children were selected if they were aged between 4 and 18 years of age and referred for emergency, short- or long-term placements. The children were only selected if they had experienced 2 or more placement breakdowns in the previous 2 years or had experienced a placement breakdown during their first 4 months in care.</p>	<p>The majority of children fell into the abnormal range for conduct disorder problems measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Close to half of the children fell into the abnormal range for hyperactivity and emotional problems and close to two-thirds of the children fell into the abnormal range for peer functioning problems. Overall, close to 60% of the children and young people fell into the “abnormal” clinical range for the Total Difficulties Score of the SDQ for emotional and behavioural functioning.</p> <p>State comparisons revealed no significant differences in the overall level of emotional and behavioural functioning across the country, except for children in Western Australia, who were found to have higher conduct disorder problems than the Victorian and South Australian children.</p>	<p>The study provides the first national comparative data on high support needs children in Australia.</p> <p>A limitation of the study is that the findings can only be generalised to four Australian states and the findings only relate to children in metropolitan areas. Therefore, the relevance of the findings for rural children needs to be treated with caution.</p>

**Source:** Victorian Department of Human Services. (1998). *Statewide review of out-of-home care services for Aboriginal children and young people*. Melbourne: Author.

Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comments
<p>The aim of the review was to attempt to address the key issue of whether the service system provided for the needs of Aboriginal children and families who were in the system.</p>	<p>An internal review of out-of-home care services for Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria. The primary data for the review were collected during a series of community consultations with six Aboriginal agencies involved in the provision of out-of-home care services to Aboriginal children.</p> <p>Case-related statistical data on Aboriginal children and young people placed by Aboriginal agencies were collected from the six agencies (Aboriginal children in the care of non-Aboriginal families were excluded). These data were primarily administrative and no measurement of children’s wellbeing was considered.</p> <p>There were also focus groups held with Aboriginal carers. The number of carers attending the groups was not specified, nor was there documentation of the interview questions or schedule.</p>	<p>Case-related statistical data suggested that placement services for Aboriginal children provided insufficient or no care planning, and children and young people were remaining in out-of-home care for inordinate lengths of time, with no clear vision for permanency.</p> <p>Several themes emerged from the community consultations and caregiver focus groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agencies were not fully informing caregivers regarding the processes and legalities of placements.</li> <li>• Caregivers voiced concerns about the lack of information on children’s medical and behavioural issues.</li> <li>• A common issue identified by all carers was the need for more home support, financial advice and respite support.</li> <li>• Carers believed that they did not need parental skills training; however, there were “constant requests” in focus groups for training in managing children and young people with special needs.</li> <li>• Aboriginal agency staff and carers reported they often found it very difficult to work with government workers, including child protection staff and other departments. A preference was expressed for the use of Aboriginal community organisations.</li> </ul>	<p>The report identified a range of issues that required immediate attention, including the main issue of insufficient case planning.</p>

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**Source:** Western Australian Department for Community Development. (2004). *Indigenous Wards in Care Project*. Perth: Author.

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Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
To incorporate the voices of children in the research process, thereby providing a more complete picture of individual practice with Indigenous children and young people.	The study includes both quantitative (case files) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews) data. The sample comprised a random selection of 13 of the 50 children and young people in care included in the audit of case files of Indigenous children in the care of the department. The report provided the participants' responses in relation to their understanding of the care process, their care experiences and their connections to their families and culture.	Despite participants' responses to specific questions being included, the report lacked synthesis of these responses into general themes. As a result, it was not clear how research findings informed the recommendations. One of the key recommendations was that caseworkers, carers and residential workers be trained in the importance of Indigenous children and young people's connections to their culture.	The report provides important information concerning the experiences of Indigenous children in care. There appears to be limited integration between the views of the children and the report's recommendations. When including the voices of young people in care, it is important to find a meaningful way to incorporate their opinions and views into research recommendations. Research that consults children and young people but does not follow through by incorporating their views into recommendations may result in a loss of faith of children and young people in the process of being consulted. Importantly, the report noted that the project was negatively affected by some metropolitan departmental officers' resistance to allowing the project group to speak with the children and young people.

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**Source:** Yeo, S. S. (2003). Bonding and attachment of Australian Aboriginal children. *Child Abuse Review*, 12(3), 292–304.

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Aim	Method	Findings and recommendations	NCPC comment
To review the applicability of assessments of bonding and attachment for Australian Aboriginal children.	A critique of assessments of the bonding and attachment of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to their carers.	The author argued that the use of the concepts of bonding and attachment to assess the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is inconsistent with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values of relatedness and childrearing practices. In general, more research of culturally specific wellbeing indicators for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children needs to be conducted.	The paper provides insight into an under-researched and poorly understood area.

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