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A report on Australia's children and young people in care
> PROGRESS > DIRECTIONS > VISIONS >

August 2004

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**Section One: Overview of
Participants**

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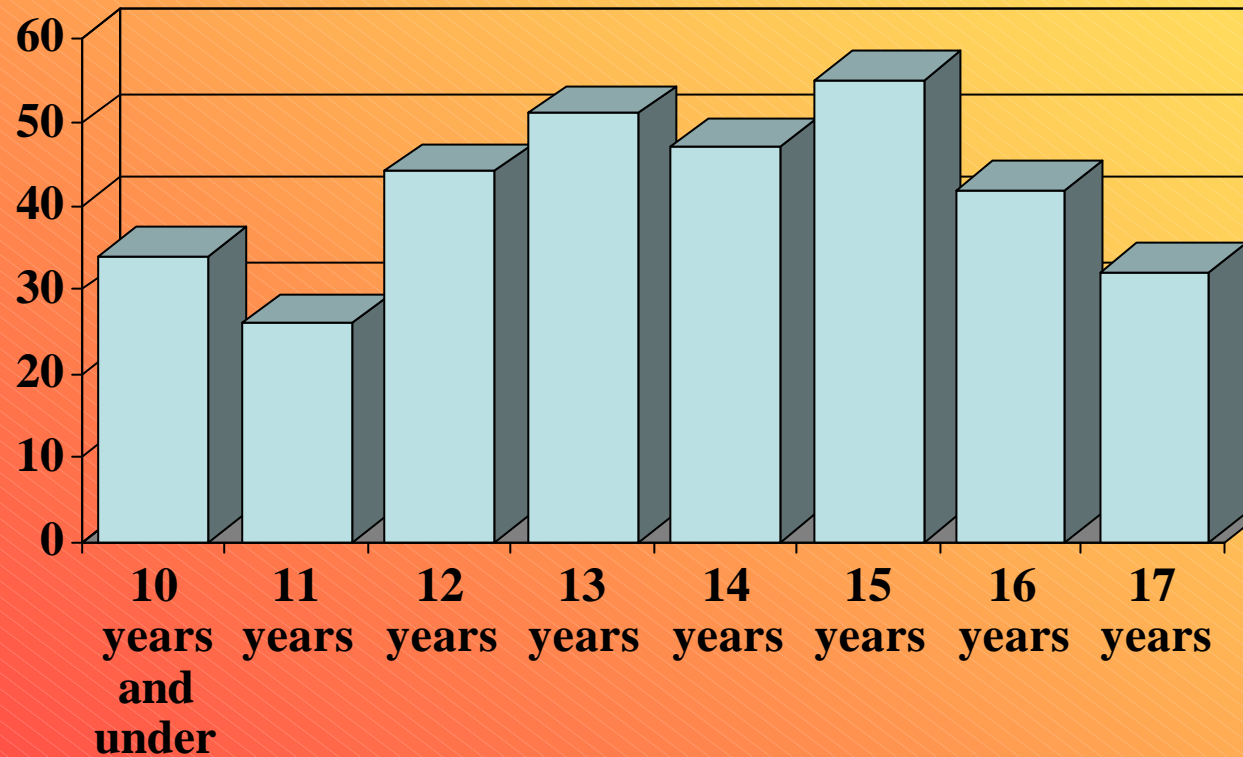
Gender

Indigenous status

**Non English speaking background
status**

Disability status

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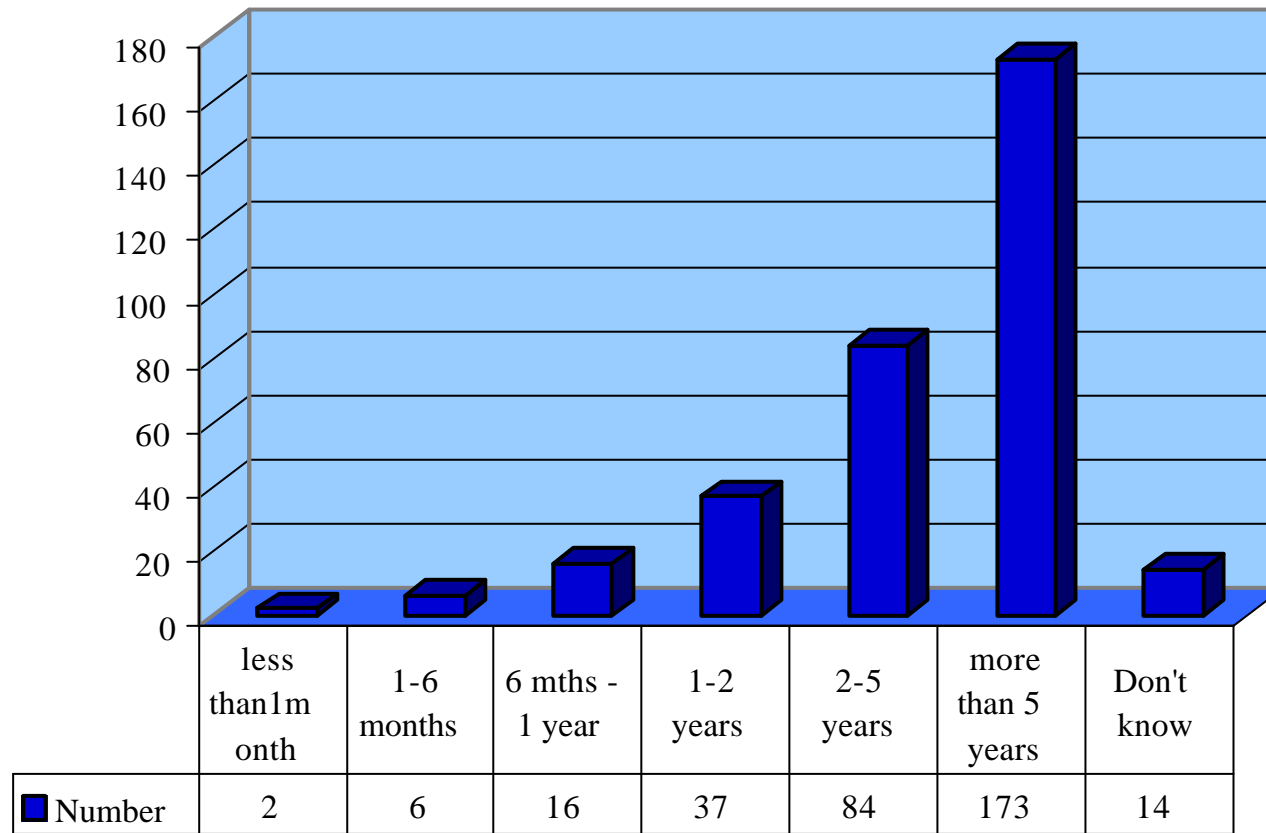
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State and Territory

State or Territory	Frequency	Percent	National Percent
Victoria	65	19.6	19.9
New South Wales	98	29.5	42.5
Queensland	58	17.5	18.7
Western Australia	37	11.1	8.0
South Australia	30	9.0	6.1
ACT	15	4.5	1.4
Northern Territory	19	5.7	1.1

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Time in all care placements



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Number of placements

- One placement – 25% (82)
- Two placements – 18% (59)
- Three placements – 10% (34)
- Four placements – 9% (33)
- Five placements – 7% (22)
- Six to ten placements - 11% (37)
- Eleven to fifteen placements - 7% (22)
- Don't know - 13% (43)

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Type of placements

- 55% (181) of children and young people lived in foster care (national average 51%)
- 17%(57) lived with relatives (national average 40%)
- 15% (49) lived in residential care (national average 5%)
- 4% (15) lived in other situations or are homeless (national average 2%)
- 4% (14) lived with their parents
- 4% (14) lived independently (national average 1%)
- 2 young people lived in Supported Assistance Accommodation Program (SAAP) services

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Educational status

- 85% (275) are attending school
- 3% (11) are attending alternative education
- 3% (11) are attending TAFE
- 4% (13) are seeking employment
- 3% (10) are employed
- 1% Other - suspended or caring for children
- 1 person is at University

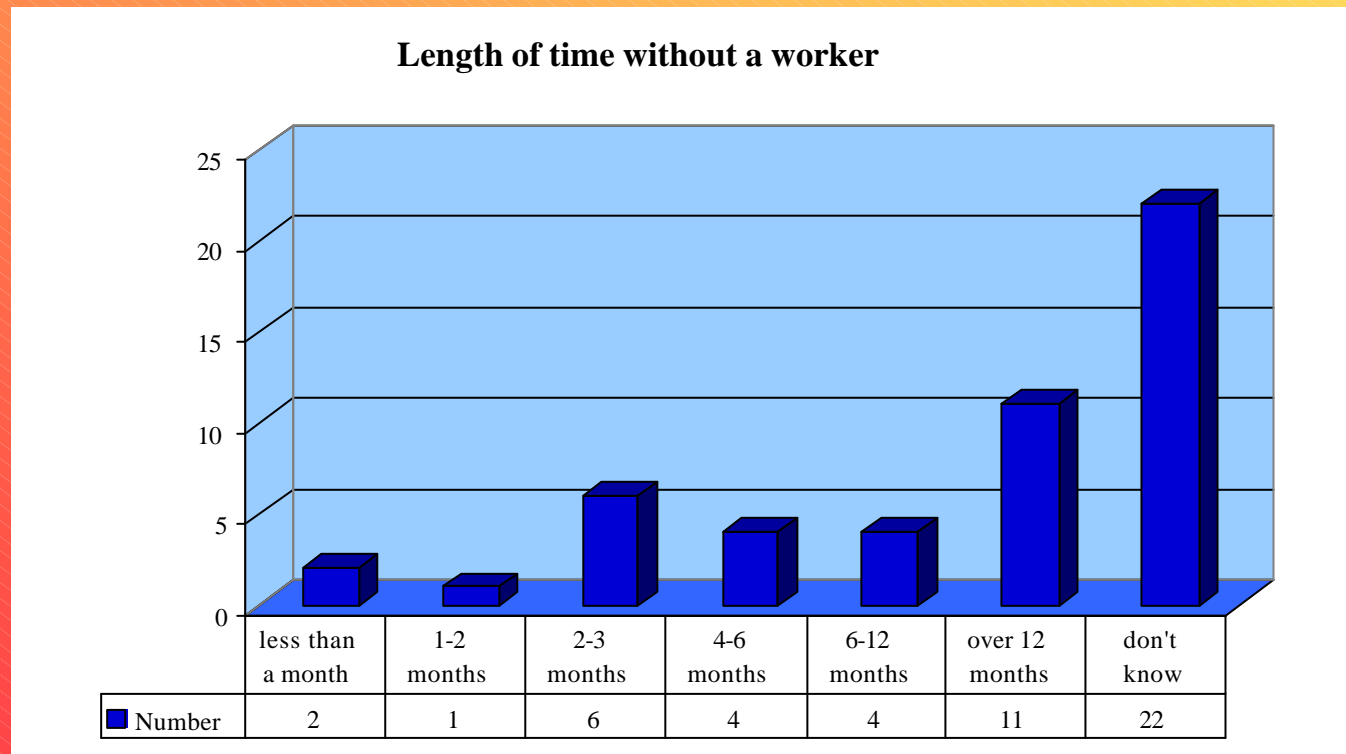
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Department workers

- 85% (283) of children and young people surveyed indicated they had a departmental caseworker and 15% (49) indicated that they did not have a departmental caseworker.
- For the children and young people surveyed who identified that they currently had a caseworker, 20% (68) indicated that they had the same caseworker for three months or less. A total of 44% (147) had their current caseworker for less than a year.

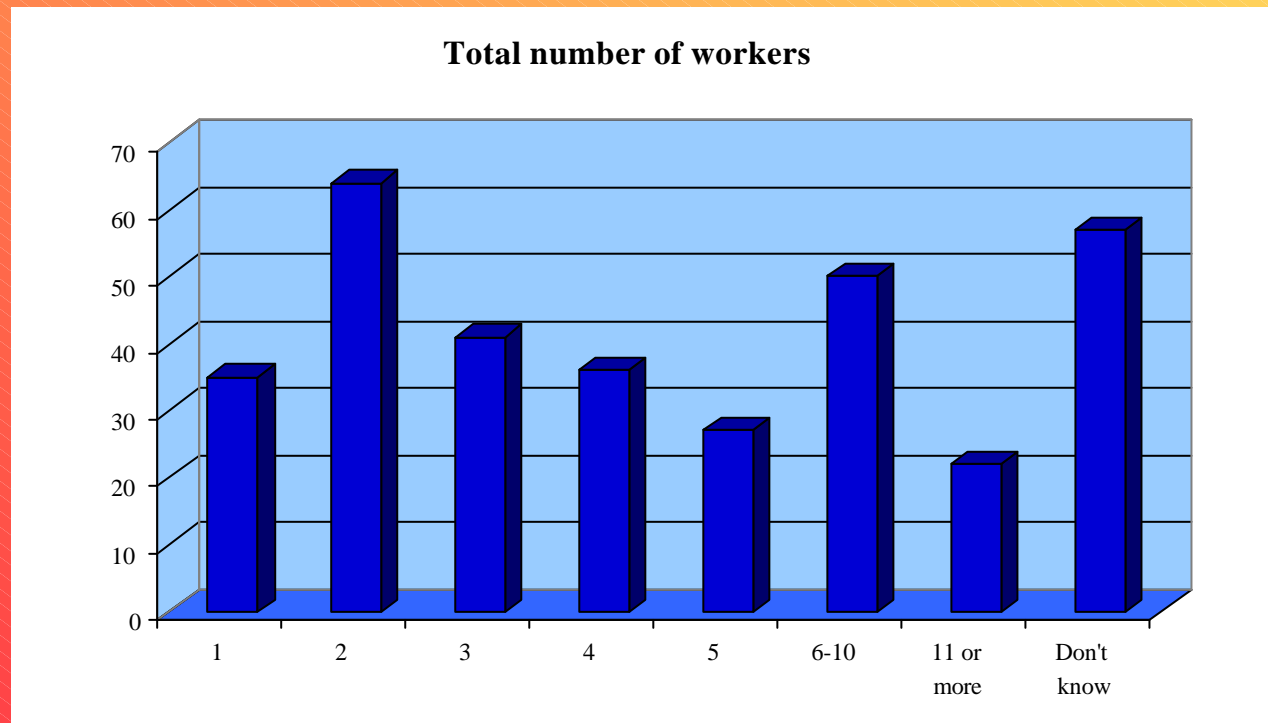
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Department workers



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Total number of Department workers



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Section Two: Participation

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Participation - what do children and young people want to have a say about....

1st priority - Everything

2nd priority - Where I live

3rd priority - Having contact with my family and length of that contact

4th priority - My education

5th priority - I don't know

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- Only 47% (156) indicated that they were aware they had a case plan
- 28% (92) stated they did not have a case plan
- 25% (83) were unsure if they had a case plan

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Decrease in case plans?

In a previous CREATE survey undertaken in late 2002 with 146 children and young people in care, 64% indicated that they were aware they had a case plan compared to 47% in 2004.

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Decrease in participation in case planning?

76% of the children and young people who have a case plan **participated** in developing it, **24% did not** have the opportunity to **participate**

In **2002 100%** of the children and young people who indicated that they had a case plan, said they participate in developing it.

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In 2004

- **31%** (49) stated they were involved by **discussing their plan with their worker**
- **42%** (66) stated that they had **attended a meeting**
- **18%** (29) stated that they had **discussed their plan with their carer**
- **6%** (9) stated that they had **written down** what they wanted to have in the **plan**, and
- **4%** (6) stated that they had **participated in other ways**

In 2002

- **100%** stated they were involved by **discussing their plan with their worker**
- **47%** stated that they had **attended a meeting**
- **29%** stated that they had **discussed their plan with their carer**
- **10%** stated that they had **written down** what they wanted to have in the **plan**
- **87%** stated that they had **participated in other ways**

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Summary of perceptions of participation

	Workers listening to views	Having a say about where they live	Having a say about their education	Having a say about contact with relatives	Having a say about clothing	Access to file information
Always	33	30	42	42	48	9
Mostly	29	15	14	19	17	6
Sometimes	23	22	17	18	21	12
Never	9	29	24	12	12	69

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**Section Three: Meeting the
Needs of Children and Young
People in Care**

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Meeting the needs of children and young people in care:

- Relationship with a significant adult
- Health Care
- Education
- Contact with family and satisfaction with this
- Access to resources – pocket money, clothing, resources for extra curricular activities and activities at school

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Relationship with a significant adult

- 93% of children and young people in care felt they had someone they could talk to about their lives
- Of this group, the majority (225) of children and young people in care identified a number of people they could talk to
- 81 children and young people were only able to identify one person
- Over half nominated their case worker as the person with which they would raise their concern

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Health care needs

- 62% (205) said they felt that their health care needs were **always** met
- 19% (64) believed their health care needs were **mostly** met
- 13% (44) felt that their health care needs were **sometimes** met
- 4%(14) believed they were **never** met

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Health care needs key issues highlighted:

- Need for assessment on entry to care
- Need for regular review of health care needs
- Need for increased emphasis on dental and orthodontic work
- Need for more efficient access to approval and resources for health needs to be met

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Educational needs:

- 60% (198) said they felt that their educational needs were **always** met
- 19% (63) believed their educational needs were **mostly** met
- 11% (35) felt that their educational needs were **sometimes** met
- 7% (22) believed they were **never** met

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Educational needs - key issues highlighted:

- Need for consistent support in catching up with peers and progressing their educational outcomes
- Need for participation in choice of schools
- Need for fewer school changes

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Family contact:

- 83% (276) of children and young people in care see some members of their family outside their immediate placement
- 15% (51) don't see any members of their family outside their immediate placement
- 2% (5) were unsure

Satisfaction of family contact:

- 73% (243) were happy with the level of contact they had with their family
- 24% (80) were unhappy
- 3% (9) were unsure

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Who supports you to see your family and relatives:

- Foster carer/foster parents - 59
- Myself - 33
- Caseworker - 27
- Grandma/Nan - 26
- No-one - 12

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Does anything stop from seeing your family and relatives:

- Nothing - 64
- Court order or Department stops or limits access - 30
- Distance - 18
- Money and or time - 15
- Do not want to see them - 11
- Unknown location of family - 11

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Clothing

- 48% (159) said they felt that their clothing was **always** similar
- 22% (72) believed their clothing was **mostly** similar
- 21% (68) felt that their clothing was **sometimes** similar
- 9% (30) believed their clothing were **never** similar

Pocket money

- 47% (157) said they felt that their pocket money needs were **always** met
- 15% (51) believed their pocket money needs were **mostly** met
- 17% (56) felt that their pocket money needs were **sometimes** met
- 16% (52) believed they were **never** met

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**Section Four: Key Strengths
and Challenges in Children and
Young People in Care's lives**

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What is the best thing about your life right now?

- Foster care/foster carers - 31
- Sports or activities - 29
- Family - 27
- School - 25
- Combined response of above - 22
- Everything - 22
- Being in care (cared for and well looked after) - 20

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What would you most like to change about your life right now?

- Family contact and/or restoration - 64
- No changes required - 54
- Change in my or my parents attitude and behaviour - 25
- Not to be in care - 12

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Facilitation and support of children and young people's **contact** with their **birth family**, particularly their mother and siblings.

Appropriate placements that meet children and young people's needs for **stability, belonging and building of relationships with significant adults**. Placement with siblings and in proximity to birth family is optimum and should be pursued.

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Financial support is consistent, readily available and approved to ensure health, clothing, educational needs and participation in activities, sporting or other hobbies are met regardless of care type.

Significant resources are committed to **reunifying** children and young people with their families where possible or making long term **permanent arrangements** if the child or young person is to stay within the care system.

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The significance of children and young people's **relationships with caseworkers** is under appreciated by the system and there is a high need for increased consistency in those relationships and time to enable relationship building.

The facilitation of children and young people's participation in **all** decisions being made about their lives is decreasing and this needs to be turned around. The key areas that children and young people consistently want to participate in concern decisions about who they live with and contact with their families.

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Education is prioritised by children and young people, but not always by the system - education support to be increased and school changes to be decreased.

The ongoing **physical and psychological health and well-being** of children and young people must be in the forefront of case planning processes to ensure these needs are not only being met but decisions that are to be made are taken in light of these needs.