

ACWA Education Roundtable

Let Them Learn - 24 October 2017

*A summary report of the presentations
made on the day and key points for future
action...*

ACWA Education Roundtable: Let Them Learn

Purpose: to bring together decision makers and content experts to work in a solution focused way. The Roundtable was designed to enable this group to identify gaps or barriers in current practices and determine a way forward for NSW, to ensure every child in out-of-home care (OOHC) in NSW has access to high quality education tailored to their needs. (Participants were provided with the pre reading pack ahead of the event).

TIME	ITEM
8:30am	Acknowledgement of country and Welcome by PwC (5 minutes) Mark Valerio (Partner, PwC and Director ACWA)
8:35am	Introduction to the day – Amy Brown facilitator (Partner, PwC) (15 minutes) Andrew McCallum (CEO, ACWA) and Andrew Johnson (NSW Advocate for Children and Young People)
8:50am	Making an impact: The UK experience (25 minutes) Prof. Judy Sebba (Director, Rees Centre, University of Oxford)
9:15am	Desktop summary of current research on education for children and young people in OOHC (20 minutes) Zac Hatzantonis (Partner, PwC)
9:35am	What we're being told from the frontline (40 minutes) Wendy Foote (Deputy CEO, ACWA) and Andrew Johnson (NSW Advocate for Children and Young People)
MORNING TEA	
10:30am	Panel: Navigating the system (45 minutes) Steve Kinmond (NSW Deputy Ombudsman), Judge Peter Johnstone (President, NSW Children's Court), Dr Karen McLean (Royal Children's Hospital)
11:15am	Discussion – defining the issue (30 minutes)
12:45pm	Current policy and practice landscape (40 minutes) Deidre Mulkarin (Deputy Secretary, NSW Family and Community Services) Trisha Ladogna (Director, Child Protection Services, NSW Department of Education)
1:25pm	Summary (10 minutes)
LUNCH	
1:55pm	Discussion – where to next? (40 minutes)
2:35pm	Summary (10 minutes)
2:45pm	Close

ACWA invited high level stakeholders and knowledge holders to enable identification of issues and to generate solution focused thinking.

Our key attendees were 35 content experts and decision makers in government and key stakeholders, including:

- DoE, FaCS, DP&C, NSW Ombudsman, The Children's Guardian, NSW Advocate for children and Young People, the Judge of the Children's Court.
- Independent schools and Catholic schools.
- Knowledge holders in health and cost benefit analysis of failure in service provision, PwC.
- ACWA members providing a service provision perspective.
- Other peak bodies responsible for advocating for children and young people in NSW.

Background information

Out-of-home care children in Australia

Out-of-home care in Australia - background information

43,400

Australian children live in out-of-home care*



This number has **risen every year** over the past 10 years.



15% increase in the number of children in out-of-home care from 2011 to 2015, rising from 7.4 per 1,000 children to 8.1 per 1,000 in 2015.*



Over a third of the children in out-of-home care are of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin** (36%). The national rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care was **almost 10 times** that for non-Indigenous children (52 per 1000 compared to 5.5 per 1000).*

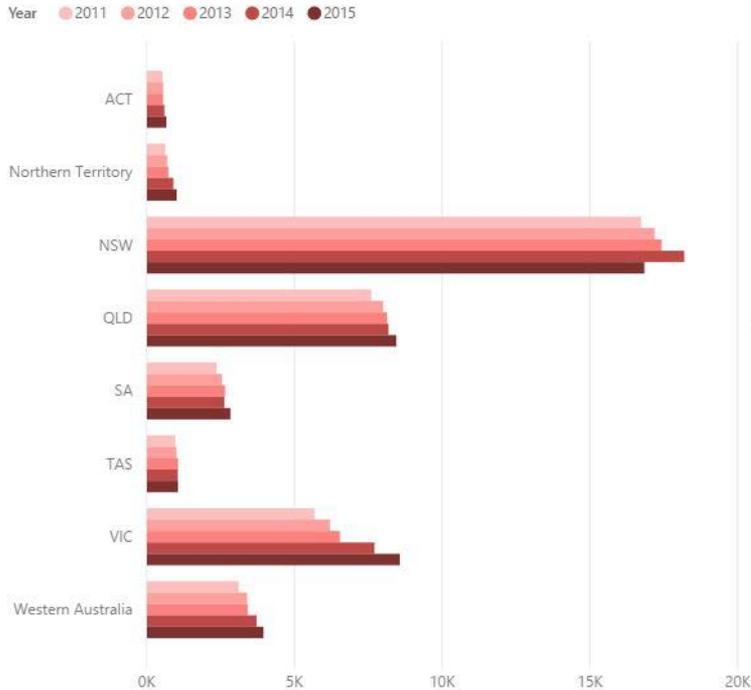
*As of 30 June 2015, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW, 2016)

Types of out-of-home care:

- **Residential care:** placement is in a residential building where the purpose is to provide placements for children and there are paid staff.
- **Family group homes:** homes for children provided by a department or community-sector agency, which have live-in, non-salaried carers who are reimbursed and / or subsidised for the provision of care.
- **Home-based care (relative or kinship care, foster care other home-based out-of-home care):** placement is in the home of a carer who is reimbursed for expenses for the care of the child.
- **Independent living:** includes private board and lead tenant households.
- **Other:** placements that do not fit into the above categories. This may include boarding schools, hospital, hotels / motels and the defence forces.

At a glance: out-of-home care in Australia

Rates of children in OOHC 2011-2015

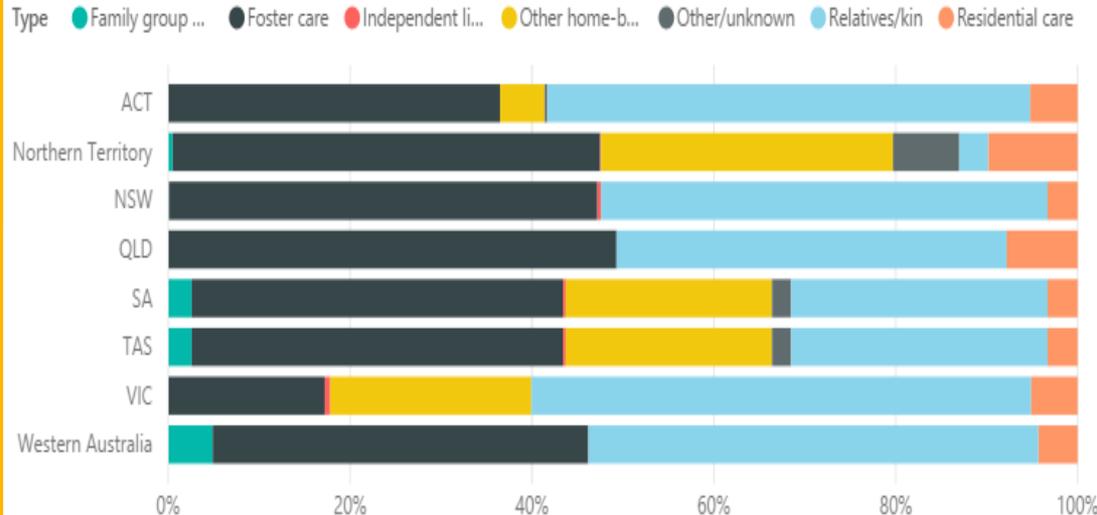


In 2015, the vast majority of children in OOHC had been in care for more than one year. Almost 13% of children had been in OOHC for between 1-2 years, 26.5% had been in care for between 2-5 years, and **41% had been in OOHC for more than five years.**

QLD (49.3%), NSW (47.1%) and NT (47%) have a relatively high proportion in foster care.

VIC (54.9%) and ACT (53.1%) have a relatively high proportion placed with relatives or kin compared to other states and territories.

Types of OOHC by States and Territories



93.4% of children living in OOHC in Australia are in home-based care. Of that figure, 40.4% are in foster care, 47.3% are in relative / kinship care and 5.8% are in other forms of home-based care. A further 6.5% of children were placed in alternative living arrangements.

Out-of-home care and education

A number of **key educational challenges** were identified by children and young people.

Those in care:

- are much **less likely to continue within mainstream education** beyond the period of compulsion;
- are **much more likely to be older than other children** and young people in their grade level;
- on average **attend a larger number of primary and high schools** than other students; and
- **missed substantial periods of school** through changes of placement.*



1 in 5 school aged children and young people in care are absent from school at any given time



Females viewed their schooling more positively than did males and the rating of the educational experience became lower as age increased.

When compared by Placement Type, those respondents in the Other grouping gave significantly lower Experience ratings than did those in Foster, Kinship, or Permanent Care.



Main reasons for leaving school cited by participants in CREATE Foundation's 2016 study in NSW:

- 13 left because they were bullied
- 6 were bored
- 4 found the work too difficult
- 4 thought that there were too many rules
- 3 were expelled
- The remaining 17 claimed some other reason that included emotional issues (particularly anger-related problems), illness, or pregnancy.

Placement Instability

The majority of research shows placement instability as one of the main factors that negatively impacts on the education of children in care.**

The majority obtain a stable and **successful placement within their first 12 months** in care. Ongoing and severe placement disruption appears to affect a relatively small sub-group of children in care.

However, children with a history of placement disruption experience **an average of 11 placements during their time in care**. Disruption **was over four times more likely for boys**, 3.35 times greater for children in the country, and 3.38 times greater for children with a history of multiple (six or more) placement changes.

There is a strong coincidence of early trauma and abuse and subsequent placement instability. In Osborn and Delfabbro's (2006b) national comparative study of 364 children with a history of significant placement disruption across four Australian States (Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland), the majority had suffered physical abuse (73.4%), sexual abuse (65.9%) and/or neglect (58.2%). Only a small number of children (9.9%) were identified as having experienced no form of abuse or neglect.

Out-of-home care and outcomes



\$3.6 billion

Was spent on child protection and out-of-home care services across Australia in 2014-15, an increase of 6.7% from 2013-14.

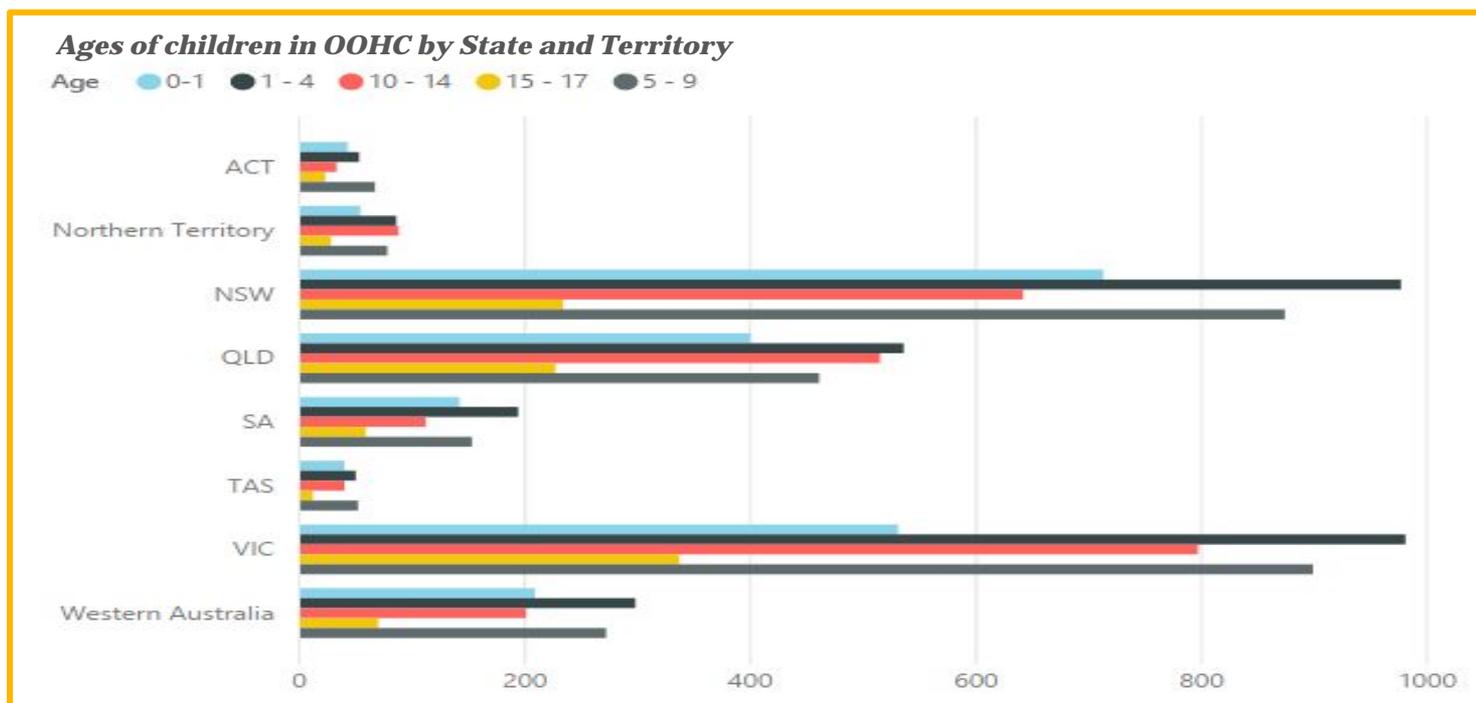
Nationally, out-of-home care services accounted for the majority (67.3%, or **\$2.4 billion**) of this expenditure.*



Occupation since leaving school cited by participants in CREATE Foundation's 2016 study of children in NSW:

- 4 young people explained that they were working full or part-time
- 11 were studying at TAFE or university
- 9 were looking for work
- 15 said they were doing nothing

The 20 who claimed an 'other' activity included eight enrolled in alternative education programs, four who were parents, and another seven who spent their time 'hanging out with friends' or 'socialising'. One was in detention.



Out-of-home care and outcomes

A Victorian study* reported findings from a **survey of 60 young adults** who had been in care and found that they were **experiencing significant disadvantage** in a number of areas compared with the general population:

- only a small percentage of care leavers surveyed were engaged with fulltime employment or education, and their **average incomes were very low**;
- low average incomes were associated with **frequent problems with debt and housing instability**;
- more than a third of the cohort had accessed **drug and alcohol** treatment services in the past 12 months;
- the cohort were vastly **over-represented in the justice system** in terms of spending time in correctional services;
- half of those surveyed had sought help from a **mental health** professional in the six months before interview.

In NSW, following the 2008 Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in New South Wales a number of steps have been taken**:

- School Principals are required to ensure that within 30 days of entering OOHC all preschool and school age children and young people in government schools have an **individual education plan** prepared for them. However, implementation of these is at times inconsistent.
- In 2010, 10 **regional OOHC Coordinators** were appointed within the Department of Education to coordinate the educational support for children and young people in OOHC in government schools. They play an important role, but struggle with covering large area.

* http://thehomestretch.org.au/site/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Raising-Our-Children_Guiding-Young-Victorians-in-Care-into-Adulthood.pdf

** *UnitingCare, Education Matters, Improving educational outcomes of children in care, October 2015*

Out-of-home care: next steps

The statistics paint quite a bleak picture:

- Entry into care can mark the beginning of a cycle of placement change and school transfers, severely compromising the ability to learn.
- Frequent absences, suspensions and expulsions, mean educational outcomes for children in care are very low.



43,400 Australian children live in out-of-home care, and this number is **rising year on year**.



Almost **half** (41%) have been in care for **over 5 years**.



Children in care are less likely to continue with mainstream education and **miss substantial periods of school**.



Children in OOHC must leave at 18, while the age at which youth leave home has been increasing - 50% of 18-24 year olds live with one or both parents.



\$2.4 billion is currently spent out-of-home care services nationally. This figure is predicted to rise.



Young people who were the subject of a care and protection order were **20 times as likely to be under youth justice supervision** in the same year as the general population.*



46% of young men and 22% of young women with a care experience had been involved in the **juvenile justice system****



The **total lifetime costs** associated with outcomes for young people leaving care were estimated to be **\$738,741** (2004-05 dollars) per care leaver.*



Research suggests these issues are likely to increase unless we act to address them

Out-of-home care: next steps

However, it is not all bad news. There is a growing evidence base of education models that are achieving good educational outcomes for children and young people in out-of-home care.

We know the benefits from investing in education. In early childhood, PwC estimated around \$13.3bn in benefits to GDP of increased participation of vulnerable children in early childhood education and care[^]

In primary and secondary education, the benefits of education are well-known, positively correlated with longer life expectancy, high civic engagement, higher income levels, life satisfaction and happiness*.

Some of the key challenges are:

What can we do to better support children in care?

How can we improve educational outcomes for children in care?

How can we keep these children more connected to education?

How should funding be allocated to support children in care?

What can we do to break the cycle of placement instability and disruption?



Now is the time to rethink our approach to supporting children in care in Australia

[^]PwC (2015), *Putting a value on early childhood education*, figures cumulative to 2050.

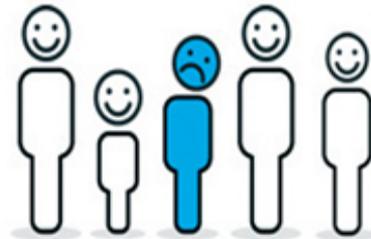
* OECD (2013), *Education indicators in focus*

What's already happening?

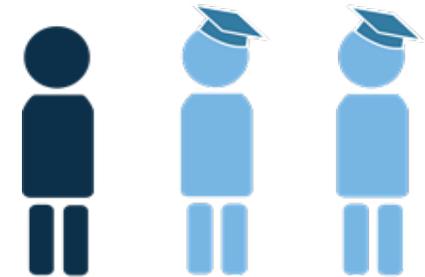
ACWA Snapshot: OOHC Education Engagement

ACWA's small scale survey into OOHC identified critical issues

ACWA's data snapshot from a small-scale exploratory survey of NSW service providers gives some indications of the level of engagement in education by children and young people living in OOHC



1 in 5 school aged children and young people in care were absent from school during the Snapshot period



1 in 3 school aged children and young people in care did not have an Individual Education Plan

Recommendations

- Establishment of a governance mechanism that will provide oversight of the development of processes that will ensure the provision of education for children in OOHC. This will involve independent authorities, government departments and NGO representatives.
- Development of a plan that ensures the education needs of children in OOHC in NSW are met.
- Financial provisions must ensure that all children have access to appropriate education, regardless of school or education type.
- Review policy and practice in regard to Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and ensure robust monitoring and data collection is established in regard to these plans with a view to ensuring all children and young people in care in NSW have a well supported IEP that includes information on their extra-curricular school activities as well as academic progress and educational engagement.
- The collection of systematic and regular data on the educational outcomes and attendance of children and young people in statutory OOHC in NSW by the Department of Education that is made available to relevant stakeholders through a regular annual reporting process

First Priority Cohort - what we've learned

NSW Department of Education focus on understanding the needs of the 'first priority cohort' – 66 children in OOHC

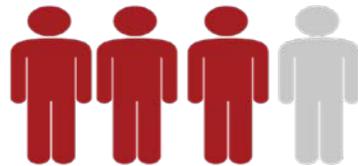


1 in 3 of these students are:

- Aboriginal
- in Years 2 to 4

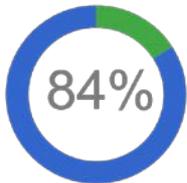


High levels of student mobility



3 in 4 of these students:

- have significant mental health
- Attend a special school or support class or receive targeted funding support



Average attendance rate for these students is Semester 1 was 84%

8 missed days
6.25 missed days

Suspension – intense trauma, gaps in specialist therapy, mobility, impacts on behaviour and engagement at school

Source: NSW Department of Education, ACWA Education Roundtable presentation

Out-of-home care priorities

Children's Court President priorities informed by the NSW Department of Education General Counsel discussions

- 1. Establishing an ongoing formalised collaborative interagency framework – improving information sharing and data collection**
- 2. Differentiating and identifying the distinct cohorts of non-attending children and establishing a safety net for chronically absent children**
- 3. Identifying life skills and extra-curricular activities to improve the expectations of children and young people**
- 4. Identifying the cross-over between health and education and impediments to learning, including trauma-based analysis of absenteeism**
- 5. Establishing an education / justice liaison initiative at Children's Court crime lists, similar to the Victorian scheme**

Key themes and policy discussion

Key themes

A number of key themes emerged during the presentations and panel discussion



Process

There's a **gap in the system** of being clear to kids about:

- **where they can go**
- **what services they need**
- **the process itself**

Voice of the child



- Kids must have a voice in the process, and a **dedicated person** at school who they can turn to.
- Young people in OOHC don't want to be identified as such – they want to be **treated as a 'normal' child**.
- **Respect** is the majority kids' number 1-ranked quality, and their **top priority is education**.
- It is important to involve children in a **student-centred** approach to planning.



Need for evidence

- The ability to support children with high needs is a **proxy** for the health of both our OOHC & education system.
- NAPLAN is not the best **indicator for the progress** of OOHC kids.
- There is a need to **build an evidence base**: establish the baseline and measure so we know what works.
- **Quantify the benefit to GDP** of increased participation of OOHC kids in school.



Teachers & carers

- There is a need for **specialist training** for teachers.
- **Aspirations of carers** are a strong predictor of kids' outcomes.
- **Peer support for carers**: learning support sometimes depends on carers' confidence in their own education.
- **Understanding behaviour is critical in developing a 'trauma informed' response to it and helping children feel 'normal'**

Policy discussion and proposed solutions (1)

Six areas for policy change and targeted reform were identified in the Roundtable discussion



Engagement

What problem are we solving?

- **School moves and gaps: very detrimental**
- Snapshot data: 43% of OOHC kids had missed 44% of the school year (**av. of 88 days** missed per year) **7% not enrolled**
- **No alternate provision** of education for children suspended or expelled
- Lack of **accountability** for schools that expel / suspend

What are some solutions?

- **Minimise moves: plan placements around schools**
- **Understand the segments within the OOHC cohort & their needs**
- **Provide flexible educational programs for those who cant manage a classroom environment**
- **Provide pathways and support for children returning from exclusion**
- Establish a **education/justice liaison initiative** at children's court crime lists
- Change **expulsion policy** to require some form of education provision while child is excluded



Data and evaluation

What problem are we solving?

- Lack of data / visibility of children:
 - in OOHC in Catholic and Independent school system
 - who do not attend any form of education
 - children who are expelled / suspended
 - in priority cohorts
- Performance metrics not measuring the 'right' indicators

What are some solutions?

- Identify children in OOHC in **Catholic/Independent** schools
- Develop '**integrated**' **policy solutions** that apply for intersecting layers of disadvantage e.g.. disability
- **Link and analyse data** b/n FACS & DoE to identify children:
 - Do not attend any form of education
 - Are expelled or suspended
 - Are the most at-risk
 - Have intersecting needs e.g.. disability
- Establish **safety net for chronically absent children** (DoE)
- Broaden **performance measures** beyond educational achievement to include other indicators such as wellbeing
- **Evaluate** and learn from programs such as Victoria's Lookout to understand applicability and benefits for NSW

Policy discussion and proposed solutions (2)

Six areas for policy change and targeted reform were identified in the Roundtable discussion



Governance

What problem are we solving?

- **Duplication of effort** as public sector addresses OOHC, Disability and other areas in silos
- **Lack of collaboration and connection** between all organisations involved with children in OOHC

What are some solutions?

- Identify and provide **senior contact for OOHC** within the Department of Education (ACWA action)
- Establish an **MOU with Independent, Catholic schools, FACS and Education**
- Include **children in consultation** of future reforms
- Establishing an **ongoing formalised collaborative interagency framework** – improving information sharing and data collection (DET OGC initiative)
- Ensure **voice of the carer, parent, educators and children** are involved in development of reforms
- Include **Indigenous and CALD communities** in inter-agency collaboration



Planning and implementation

What problem are we solving?

- **Child not included in planning** (i.e.. Planning done 'to them' not 'with them')
- Often policy is sound but **implementation is challenging** and fails to deliver benefits

What are some solutions?

- Direct OOHC funding for **Individual Education Plans** such as in the UK Virtual Schools program and engage child in developing
- Undertake **high quality and meaningful planning**
- Leverage ideas from 'Fostering achievement' program such as **'Education Champions' and carer support**
- Understand what we are currently doing (ACWA action)
- **Improve focus on prevention, not just crisis / response**
- Across all areas of planning and implementation consider:
 - **Leverage existing practice**
 - Include **voice of carer / parent / educators / children**
 - Applicability to **Independent and Catholic schools**
 - Crossover of **education and health**

Policy discussion and proposed solutions (3)

Six areas for policy change and targeted reform were identified in the Roundtable discussion



What problem are we solving?

- **Long delays in intervening** in health issues (i.e.. often labelled as challenging behaviour rather than understanding behaviour is an outcome of trauma)
- **Lack of training for educators** and case worker staff on trauma-informed practice
- Lack of understanding within schools and NGOs of expertise and benefit of **engaging with community paediatricians**

What are some solutions?

- Improve **capability of staff** in trauma-informed practice
- Establish **regular health assessment and reviews** as part of OOHC
- Identifying the **cross-over between health and education** and impediments to learning, including trauma-based analysis of absenteeism (DET OGC initiative)



What problem are we solving?

- **Lack of information sharing** between Departments (e.g.. FACS and Education), government and NGOs
- **Independent and Catholic schools need to be considered and included in the system**

What are some solutions?

- **Collate and share data on OOHC children** between Departments and NGOs
- Develop guidance for NGOs re: **section 16 part a)**
- **Development of guidelines for clear roles and responsibilities: NGOs, education institutions (DoE, Independent and Catholic schools), and FaCS.**

Appendix

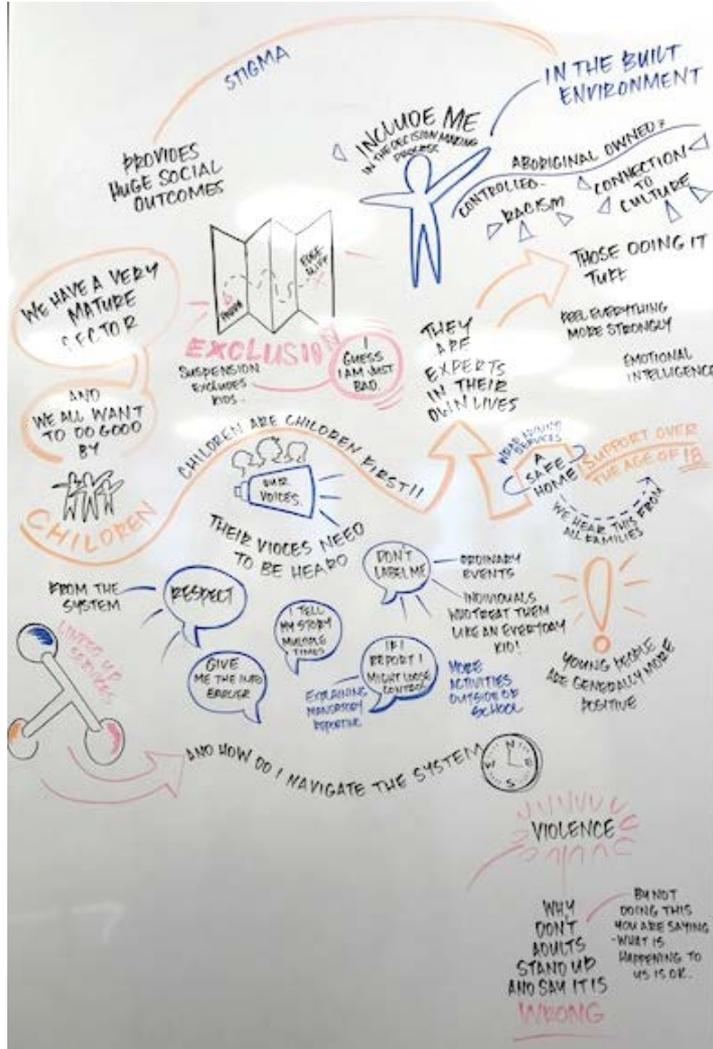
1. List of roundtable presentations
2. Images

NB: *ACWA Education Roundtable Pre reading pack* can be found on the ACWA website

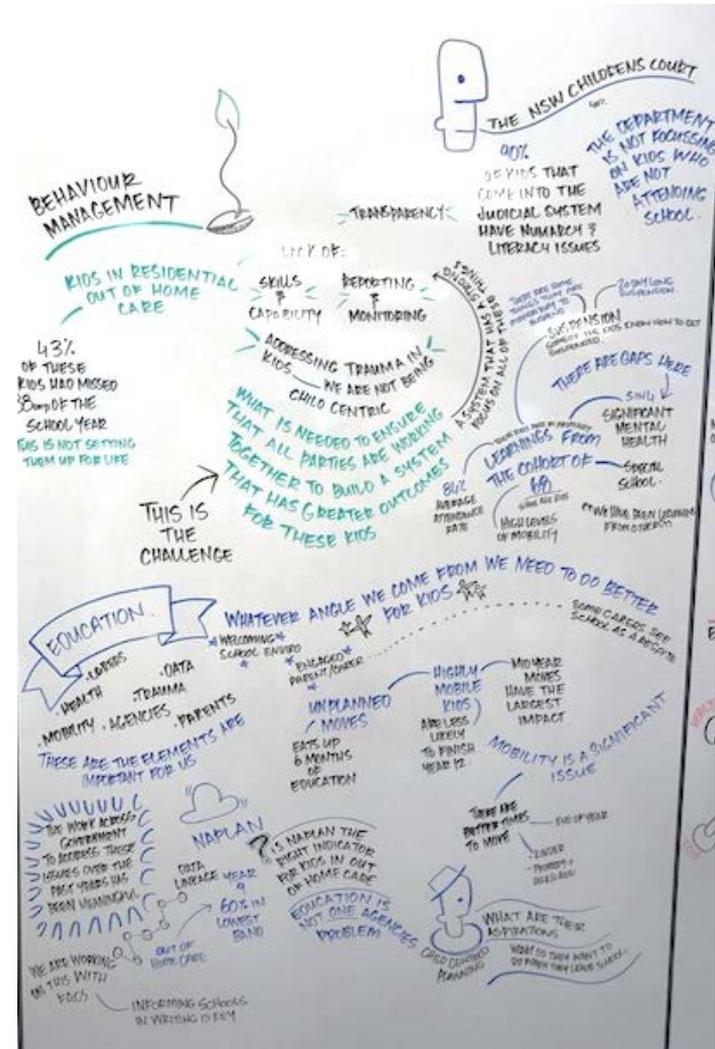
List of roundtable presentations

Presenter	Presentation / reference
Professor Judy Sebba The Rees Centre for Research in Fostering and Education, Oxford University, UK	<i>Making an impact: The UK Experience</i>
Zac Hatzantonis Partner, PwC	<i>Out-of-home care children in Australia background information</i>
Wendy Foote, Deputy CEO, Association of Children’s Welfare Agencies	<i>SNAPSHOT: Educational Engagement of Children and Young People in Out of Home Care in NSW, Preliminary Findings</i> <i>Video excerpts from - Anglicare Sydney - why traditional methods for managing traumatised children in the classroom can be detrimental; Allambie Youth Services – an education program for children outside the traditional classroom.</i>
Andrew Johnson Advocate for Children and Young People	<i>Let Them Learn Education Roundtable</i>
Trish Ladogna Director, Child Protection Services, NSW Department of Education	<i>OOHC initiatives</i>
Steve Kinmond Deputy Ombudsman	<i>Navigating the system: The Ombudsman’s Inquiry into Behaviour Management in NSW Schools</i>

'What we're being told from the front line'



'Navigating the system'



'Navigating the system'



'Current policy and practice landscape'



Summary of 'big issues' from the morning

