

Placement Prevention & Restoration

A service system that is failing

Healing our Sector
15 June 2023

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Faircloth McNair & Associates acknowledge the custodians of the land on which we meet today the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We recognise that Indigenous Australians never ceded sovereignty of this country and remain strong and enduring in their connection to land and culture.



Evidence Base

Review

In 2016 Jodie and Doug undertook a review of placement prevention and reunification services for Aboriginal Children and their families on behalf of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.

The review included consultations with 483 persons and organisations; the majority being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.



Evidence Base

Review

Other research activities included in the review included:

- Literature to consider alternate approaches – what works, what doesn't
- Program data
- Demographic studies
- Service mapping
- An economic and investment review and strategy



Evidence Base

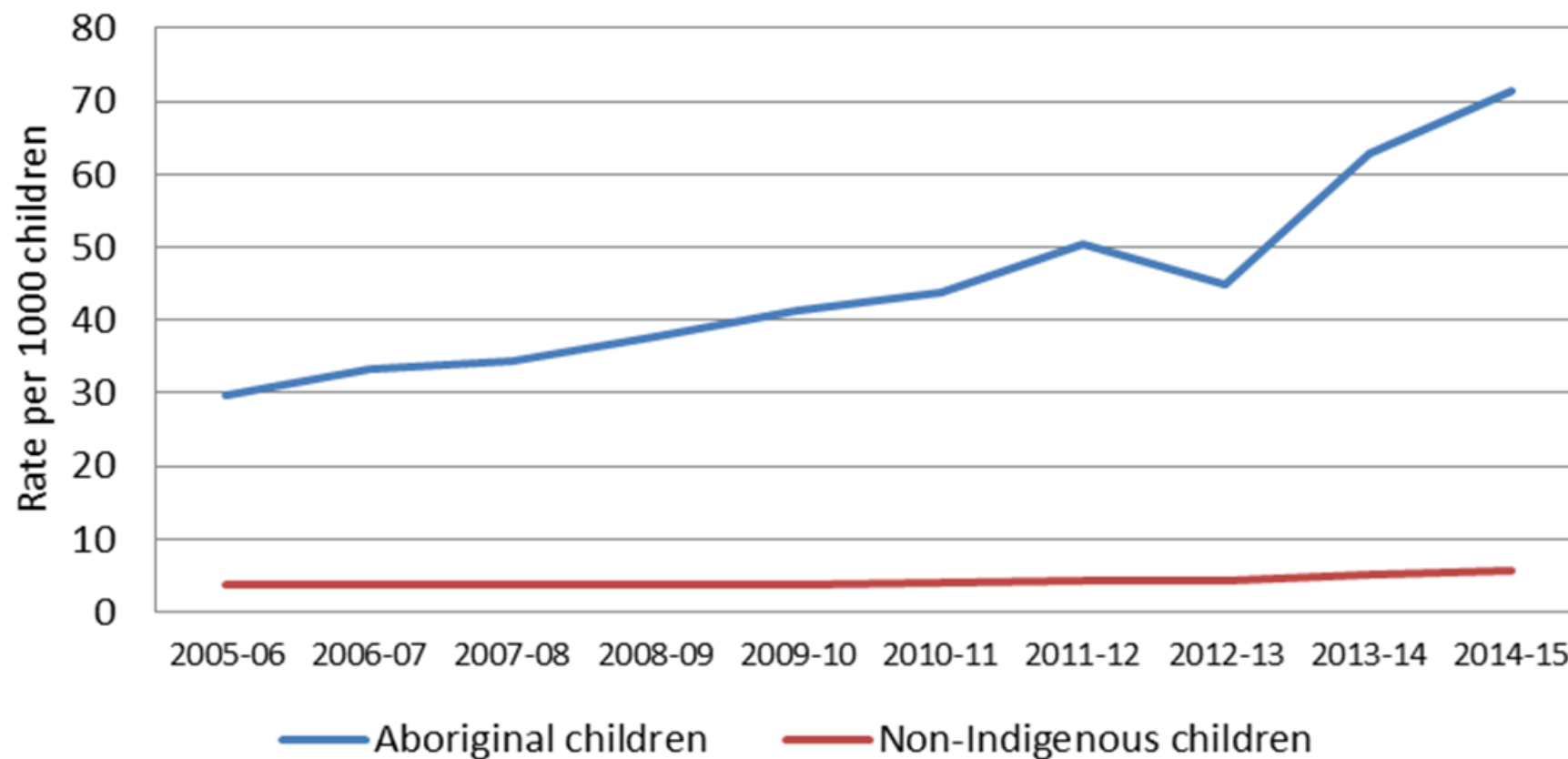
Ongoing Research

- Discussions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia
- Discussions with the sector and with people in the justice system
- Demographic studies
- Economic and investment impacts
- Literature reviews

We are challenged and distressed by what we have found!



Children in out-of-home care, Victoria: number and rate per 1000 children aged 0–17 years by Indigenous status, 30 June



Source: Productivity Commission, 2016 Report of Government Services, Table 15A.18. Accessed 10 Feb 2016 at: <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2016>



3% of all Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria living in OoHC 2005 – 06

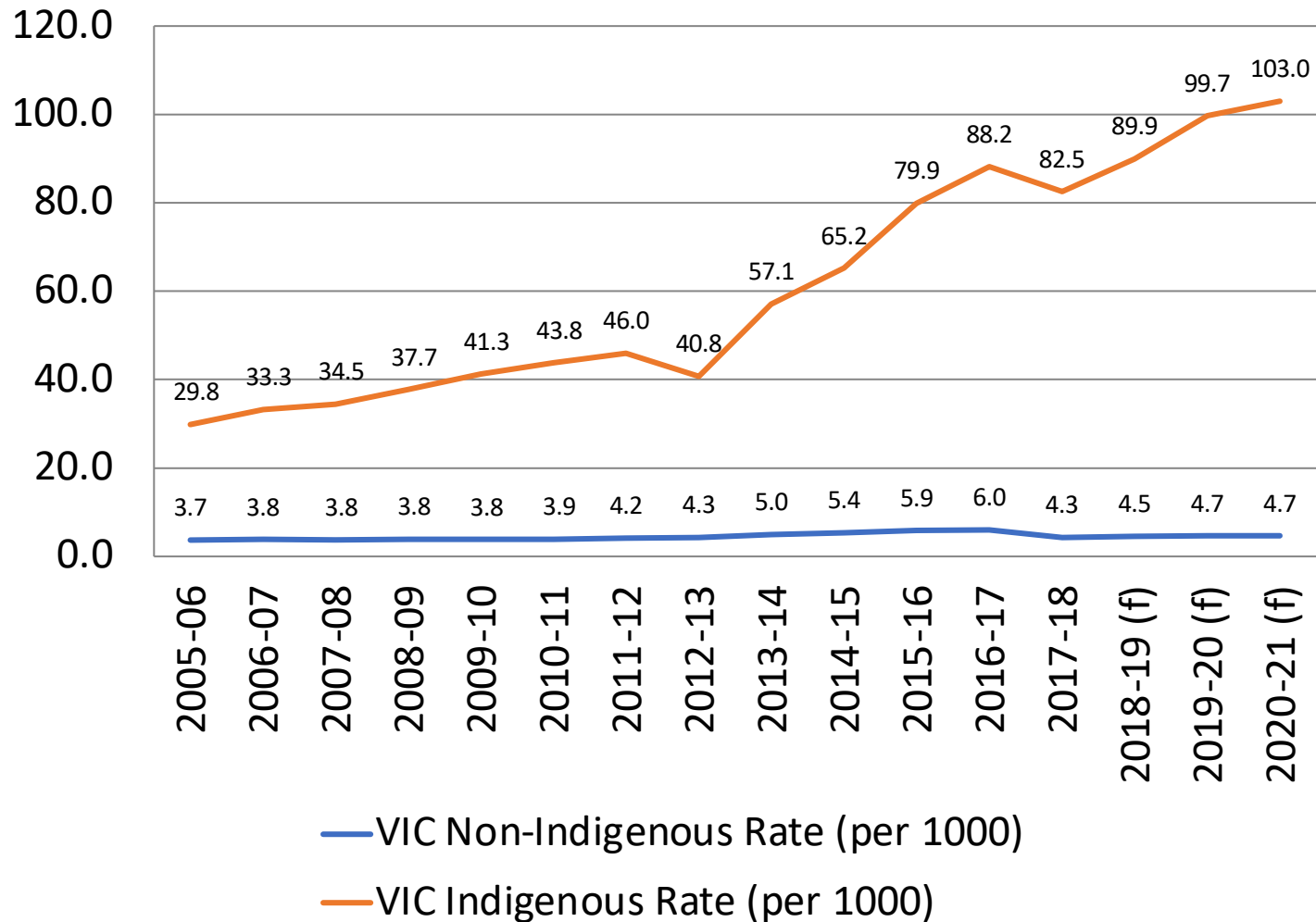
Rising to

7.2% of all Aboriginal children and young people in Victoria living in OoHC 2014 – 15

Increase 140%



Children in out-of-home care, rate per 1000 children aged 0-17 years by Indigenous status, 30 June

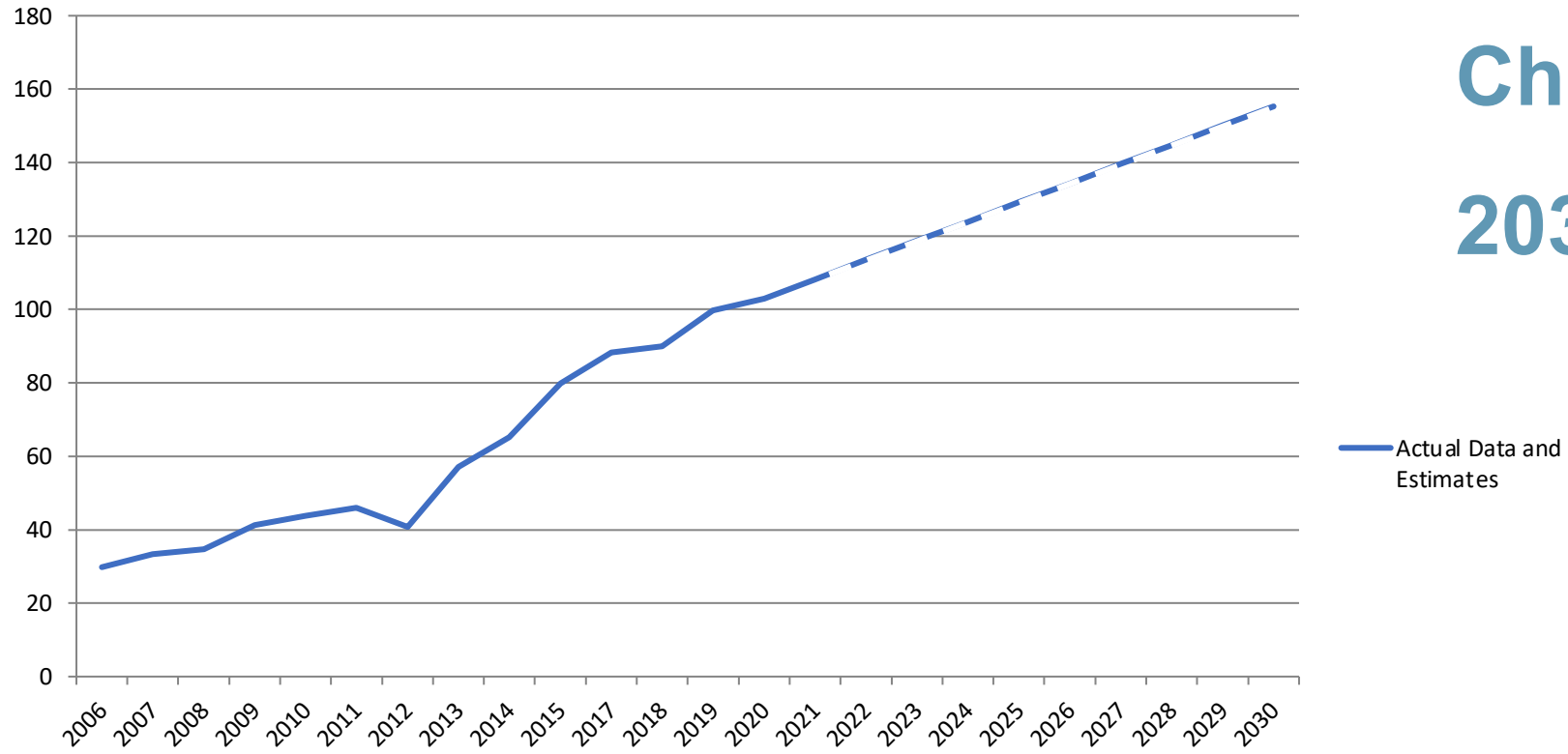


What has happened in Victoria to 2021



Without Radical Change by 2030

Actual Data and Estimated



Truth Telling

The Shocking Truth

15.5% of all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait

Islander children in Victoria will live in OoHC by
2030 without RADICAL change



Another Stolen Generation

A respected Elder wrote to me and stated: “It’s a heart rending issue. It will take another generation to try to fix this genocide”



Another Stolen Generation

Bringing Them Home concluded:

‘Between one in three and one in ten Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities in the period from approximately 1910 until 1970...

Most families have been affected, in one or more generations, by the forcible removal of one or more children.’



Another Stolen Generation

Funston et al (2016):

‘The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children currently being removed from their families...

bears an uncomfortable resemblance to Australia’s colonial era and specifically to the policies and practices that gave rise to the Stolen Generations’



Another Stolen Generation

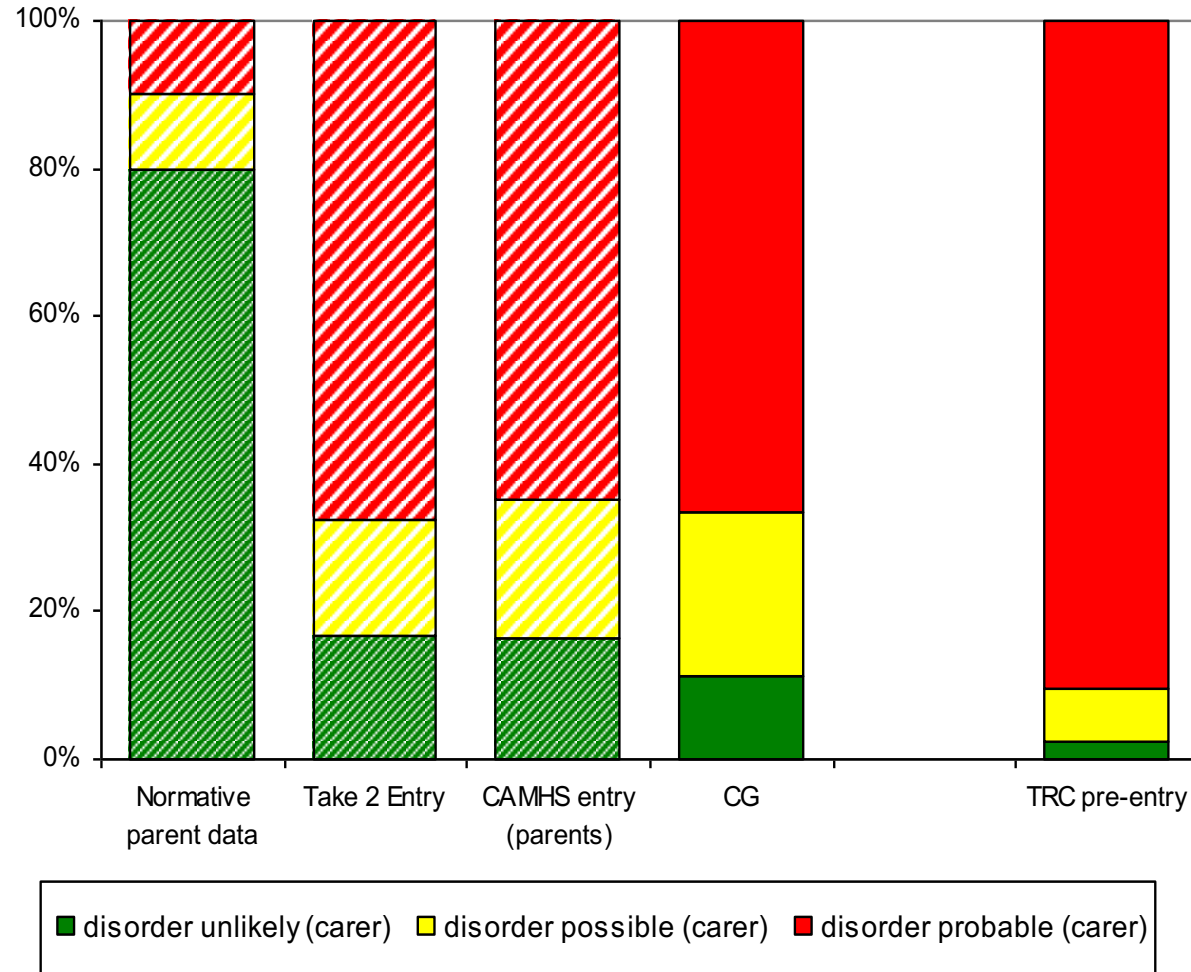
Impacts:

- Every Family
- Every Community
- Ongoing individual and intergenerational trauma
- Continuing and pervasive grief
- For some children and young people the damage in care is acute with a lifetime of poor outcomes
- Ongoing disproportionately high incarceration rates fed by overrepresentation in the OoHC system

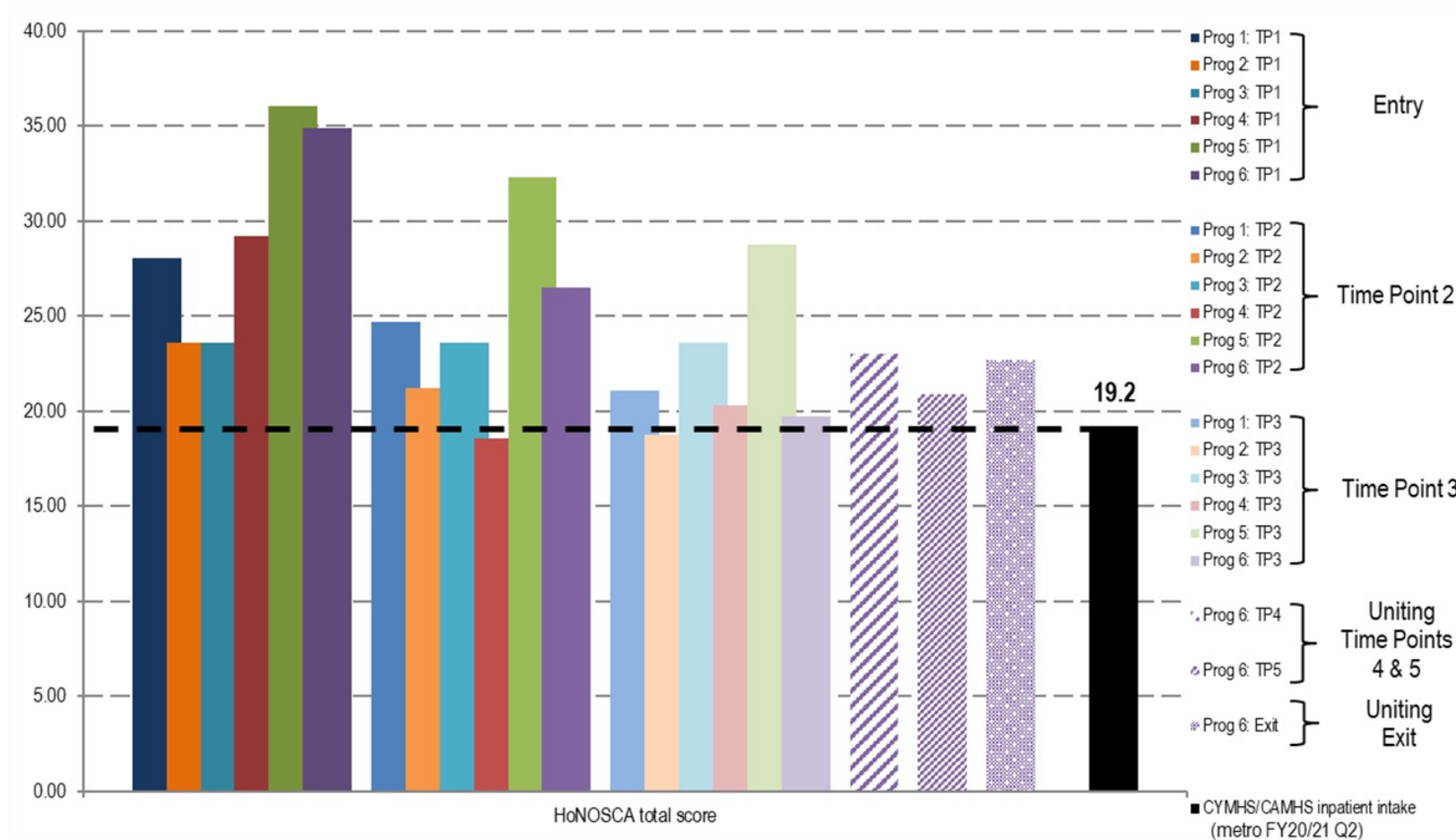


Impact Mental Health - Future

TRC Pilot
Evaluation
using the
SDQ
(a valid and
sensitive tool)



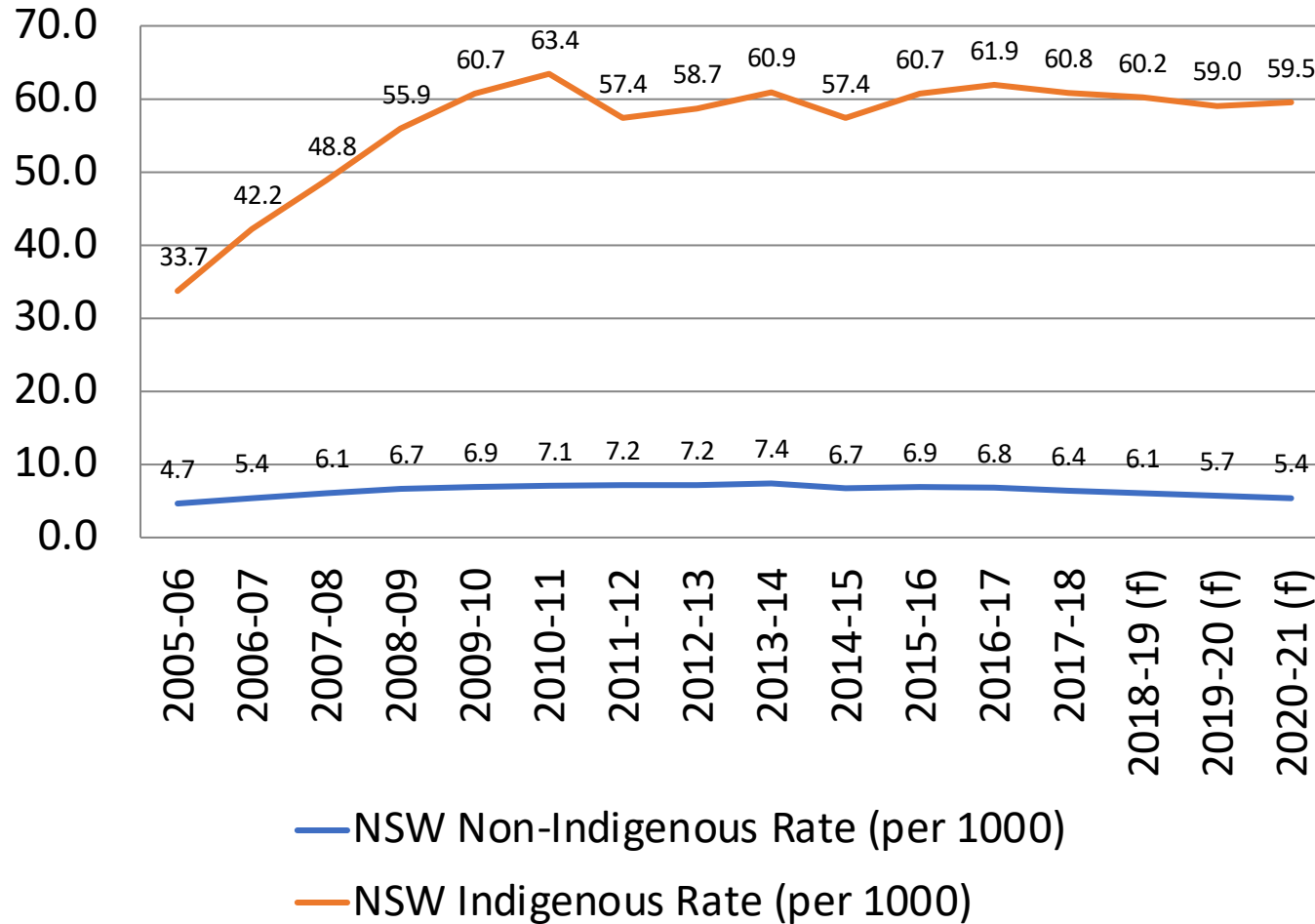
Impact Mental Health - Future



Ongoing Evaluations using the HoNOSCA – a valid and sensitive Tool



Children in out-of-home care, rate per 1000 children aged 0-17 years by Indigenous status, 30 June

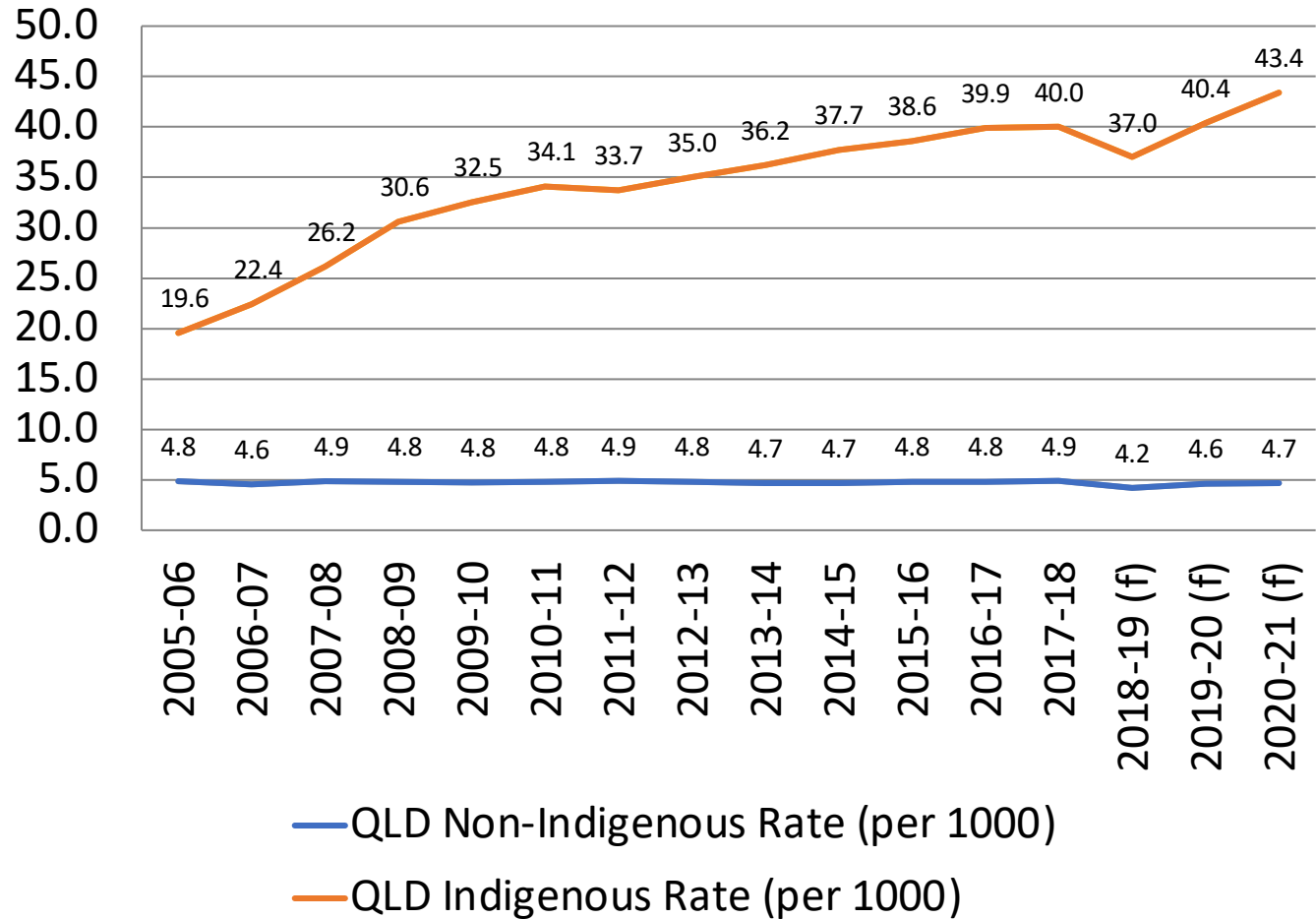


NSW

Stabilised but still high
nearly 6% of all
Aboriginal Children
Compare to Non
Indigenous at 0.54%



Children in out-of-home care, rate per 1000 children aged 0-17 years by Indigenous status, 30 June

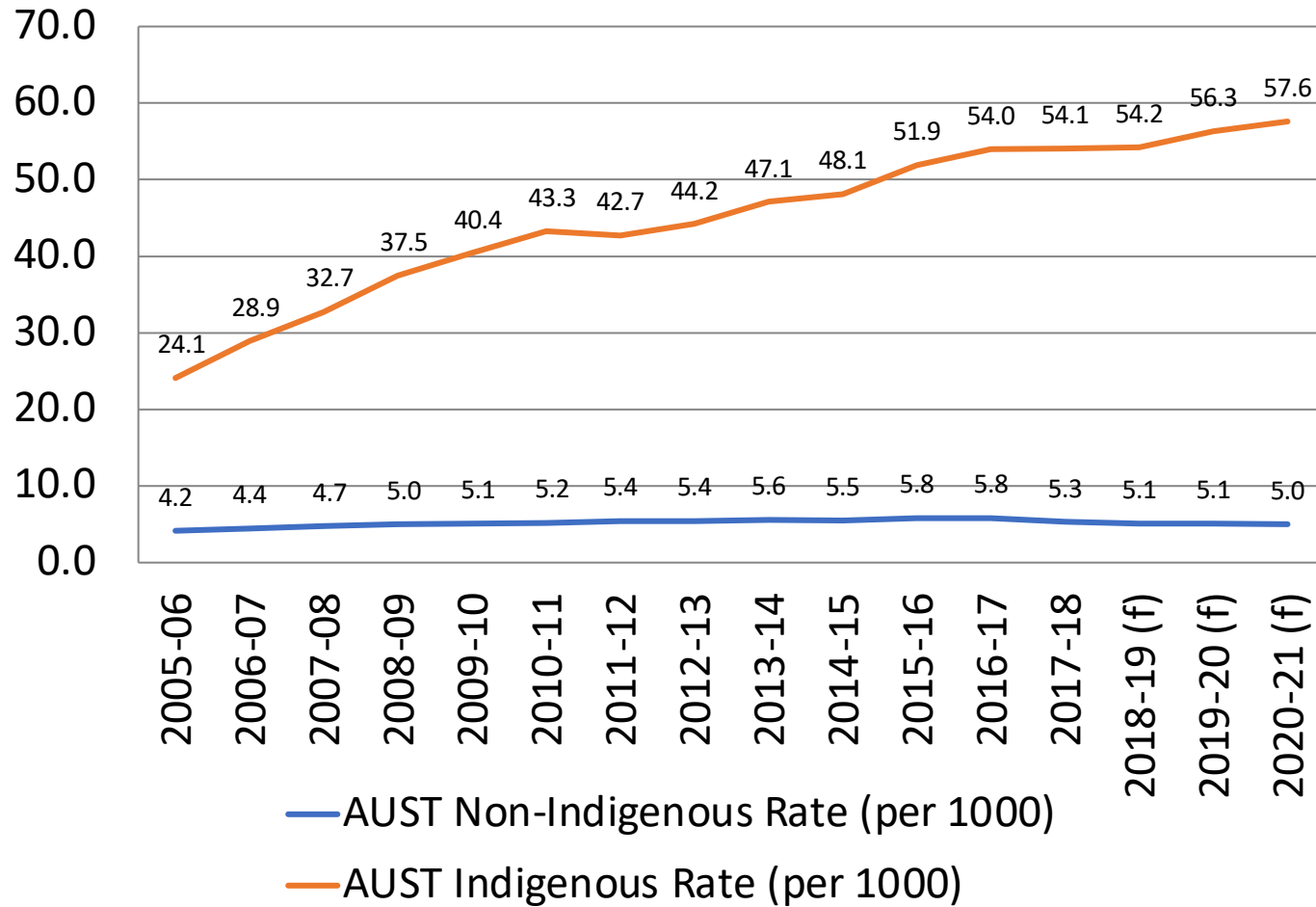


Qld

Rising to 4.3% of all Aboriginal Children Compare to Non Indigenous at 0.47%



Children in out-of-home care, rate per 1000 children aged 0-17 years by Indigenous status, 30 June

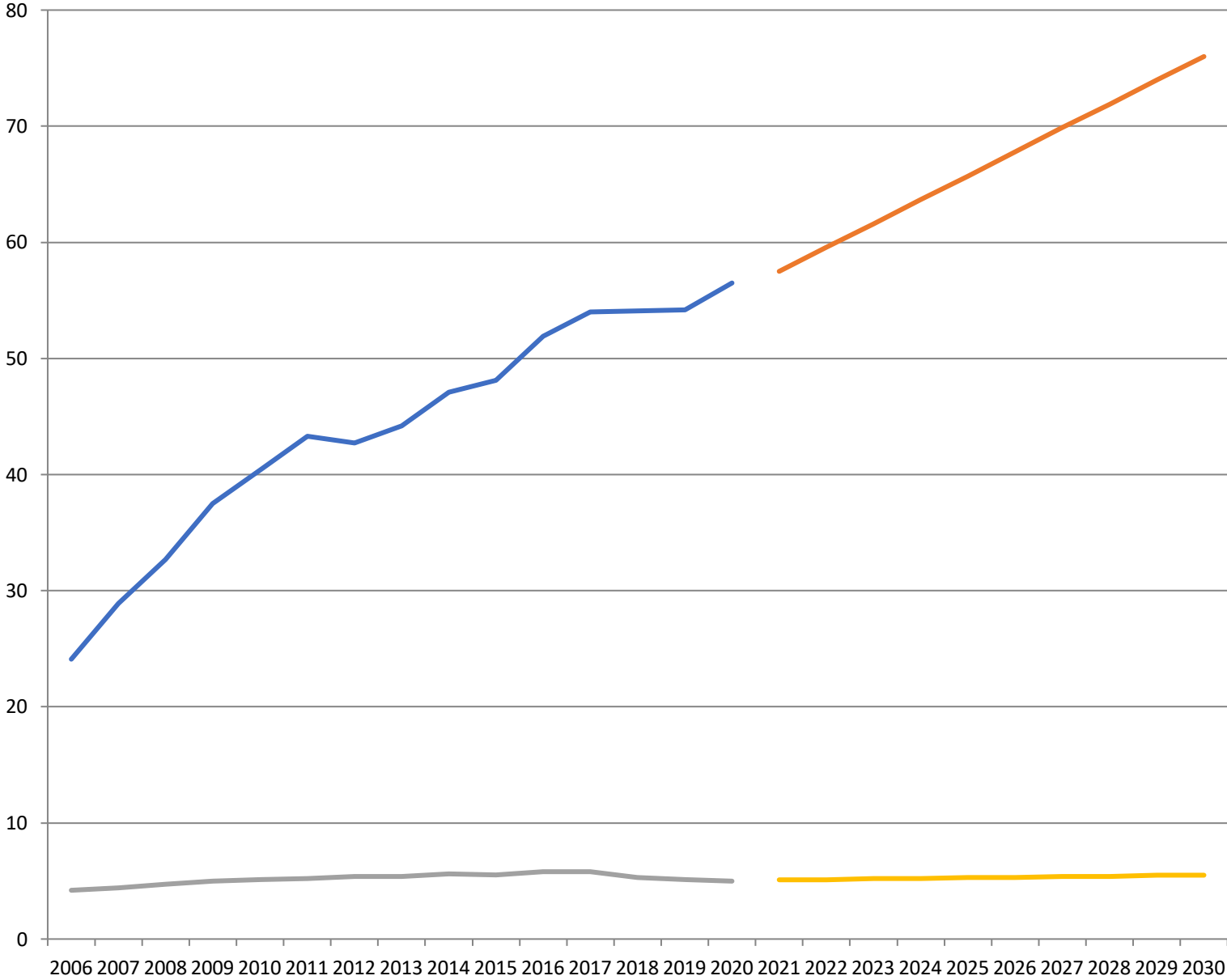


Australia

Rising to nearly 5.8%
of all Aboriginal
Children
Compare to Non
Indigenous at 0.5%



Projected and Actual Data (Australia)



Australia

Rising by nearly
7.6% of all
Aboriginal
Children

- Actual
- Projected
- Non Indigenous Actual
- Non Indigenous Projected

Per 1,000 children 0-17
in OoHC June 30

Sources Report on Government
services Child Protection 2022
(16 A.2) and 2016 (Table
15A.18.)



First Nations Voices

- Inconsistent legal support
- Intergenerational trauma – re living over and over again the removal children and the powerlessness and loss of hope from the removals
- Not being listened to
- Child protection adversarial, plagued with constant changes of workers and workers are young, inexperienced and lack cultural competences /safety
- Placement prevention and reunification services are considered to be ineffective by the majority of respondents



First Nations Voices

Answers

- First Nations design and delivery
- Build the capacity of Aboriginal community controlled organisations to deliver more of the services
- Earlier interventions – before Child protection involvement
- Responses that address the whole family, not just the child; these service responses must be flexible
- Must address intergenerational trauma



First Nations Voices

Answers for Reunification/ Preservation

- Cultural plans are in place (real)
- Aboriginal people need to drive the decision making and options for reunification (Community members identify more and better options)
- Develop or support local Aboriginal community activities/ events that foster positive experiences of reconnection
- Improved practices (resources) regarding access visits (e.g. time of day, consideration of travel times and costs, issues related to extended Aboriginal families)



Truth Telling

Placement Prevention and reunification services are not effective for Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander Children and their families

- The outcomes demonstrate that they don't work



What Works

There is a lack of evidence for what works

- An international review of 51 program evaluations and reviews revealed that reunification and placement prevention programs struggle to provide a robust evidence base. The review identified common issues including lack of fidelity to the program intent and poor maintenance of program structure.



What Works

There is a lack of evidence for what works

- In the research report Moving to Prevention, Clare Tilbury states: “Few Australian evaluations of intensive family support services have been conducted and even fewer have been publically released.”

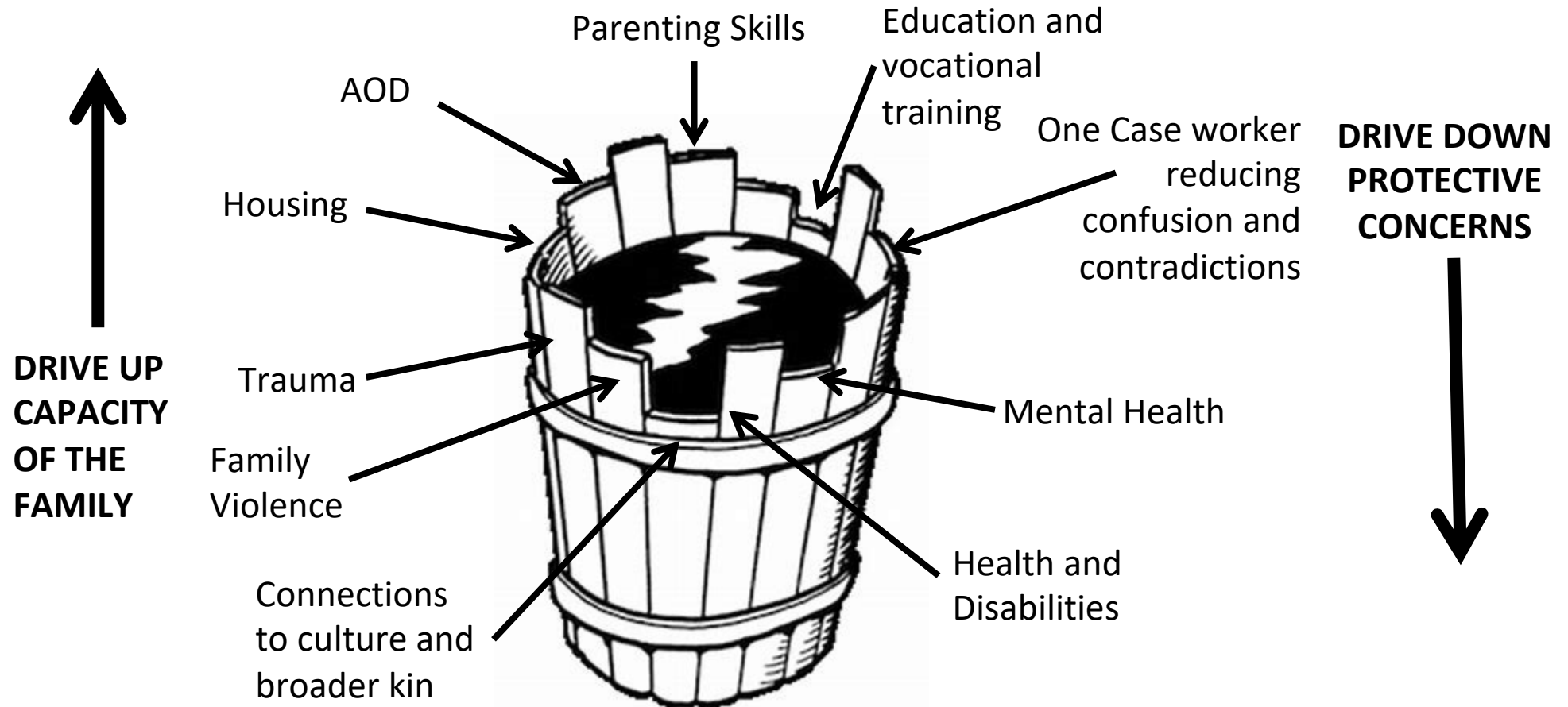


What Works

- An Evaluation of Aboriginal Stronger Families Programs demonstrated that early interventions that address multiple stressors that impact families can reduce protective concerns
- This finding is consistent with Wraparound Milwaukee which is a program addressing the whole family with one pool of funding with one single plan – with only ONE Case Worker; in New Zealand ‘one car in the driveway’ – Whanau Ora



Holistic Responses



Deal with stressors holistically to reduce protective concerns

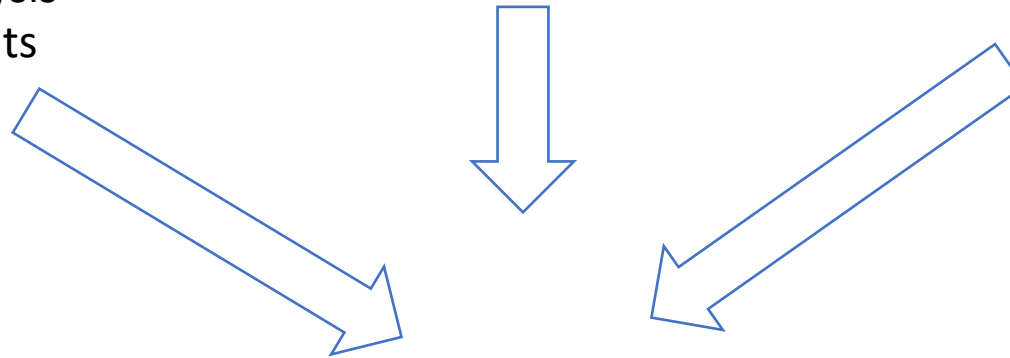


Bringing Voices and Research Together

⇒ Research Evidence –
Child protection and
related fields
⇒ Economic Analysis
⇒ Risk Assessments

Overwhelming Case for
RADICAL and IMMEDIATE
ACTION

The Stories, Voice and
Wisdom of First Nations
people, families,
communities and
organisations



**Proposed
Actions**



Proposed Actions

Allocate funding commensurate with the proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander CYP subject to substantiations and placements:

- With a loading of 20% to support added complexity (including remoteness)
- With funding being provided to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations



Proposed Actions

Allocate funding commensurate with the proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander CYP subject to substantiations and placements:

- To facilitate; local responses, design, prioritisation and delivery of placement and prevention responses tailored to individual needs with cultural authority



Proposed Actions

Allocate funding commensurate with the proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander CYP subject to substantiations and placements:

- With the business, financial, evaluation and strategic planning expertise provided by a panel of suitably qualified and culturally competent experts. Experts agree to provide up to ten years of support (as determined by the ACCO) to ensure trust and relationships are prioritised



Arguments to Oppose Action

- A lack of funds to deliver these options - Increases in placements come at a very high financial cost (we estimate up to \$622m in lost opportunities since 2016 to the present in Vic)
- A lack of funds - Proportion of funds to support Aboriginal children in Aboriginal organisations to date has lacked equity



Arguments to Oppose Action

- Aboriginal community organisations will struggle to deliver the programs:

Support and build capacity of Aboriginal organisations who need and welcome this support and recognise their strengths do so in a culturally safe manner – with at least a ten year commitment from those building capacity

Move from fragmented and uncertain program funding to block funding with Aboriginal design



Arguments to Oppose Action

- It is too risky - The current system is very high risk:
 - For Government
 - For Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families and communities
 - For Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people now and certainly for the future



Urgent Action Required

What is happening now does not work

- Radical transformation must happen
- Funding cuts and budget controls cannot be the basis on which the urgency and priority of immediate and comprehensive action is decided



Questions

Comments

Thoughts

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