

# Out-of-Home Care in WA

## Child protection activity, children in care, and children who leave care infographics suite

### Child protection activity in WA

In 2018 to 2019, Aboriginal children and non-Aboriginal children entered care in similar numbers despite Aboriginal families making up 3.1% of the Western Australian (WA) population.

There was a total of 69,219 contacts with the Department of Communities (Communities). 1.5% of contacts with Communities resulted in a child entering out-of-home care.

Communities implemented a range of Earlier Intervention and Family Support Services in 2019. This includes the Aboriginal In-home Support Service, Intensive Family Support Services and Family Support Networks. This supports families to stay together and prevent children entering out of hand care.

These support services were provided in metropolitan and regional Western Australia and have a strong focus on supporting Aboriginal families and keeping them together.

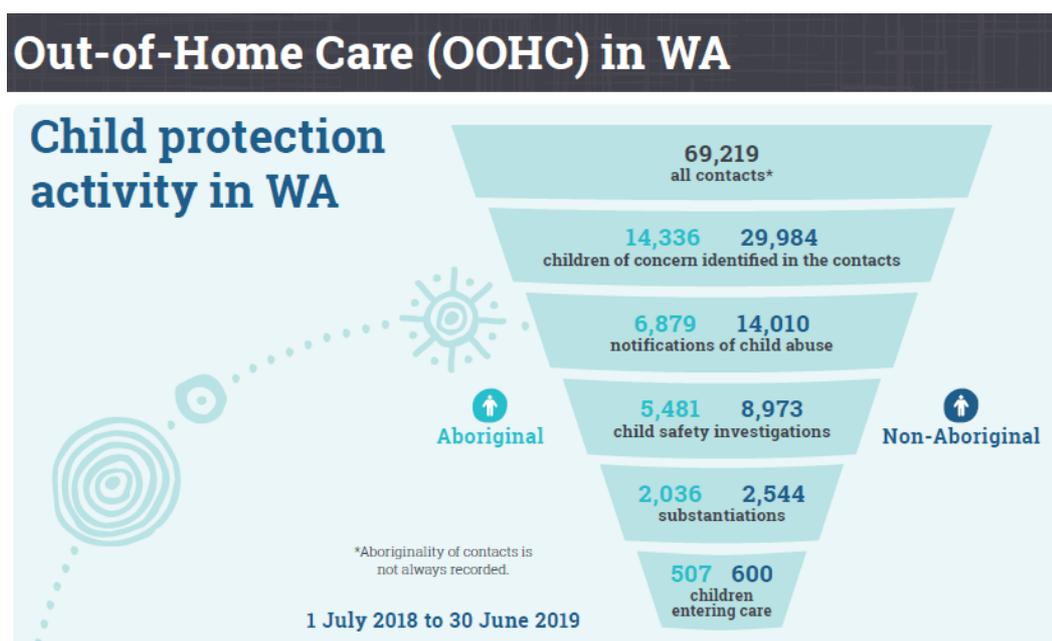


Figure 1. Summary of child protection activity in WA, 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

**Table 1. Summary of child protection activity in WA, 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.**

(Note: Aboriginality of contacts is not always recorded)

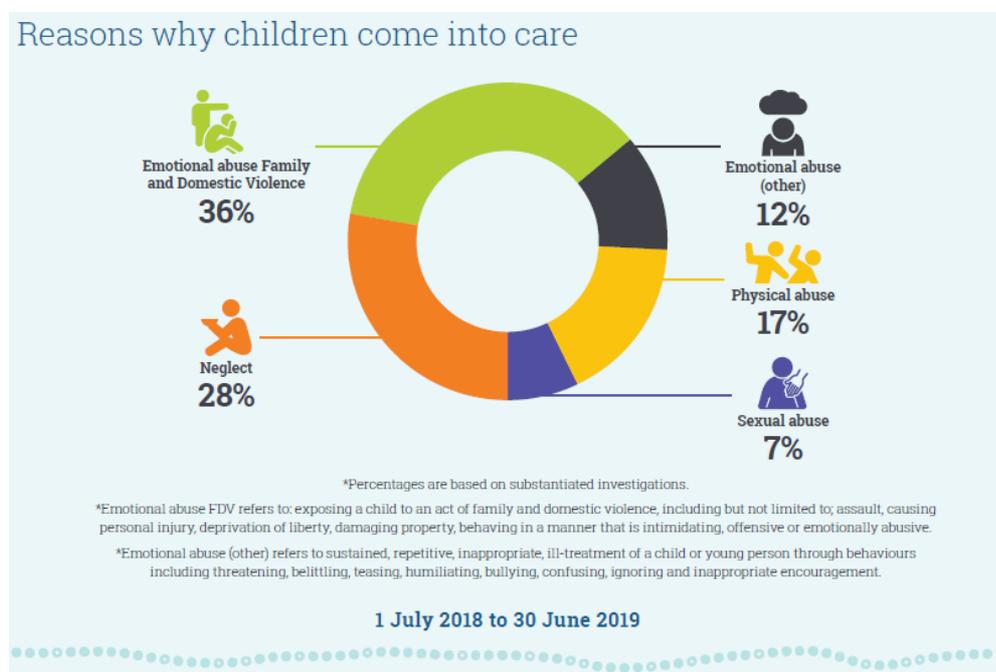
<b>Child protection activity</b>	<b>Aboriginal</b>	<b>Non-aboriginal</b>
Children of concern identified in the contacts	14,336	29,984
Notifications of child abuse	6,879	14,010
Child safety investigations	5,481	8,973
Substantiations	2,036	2,544
Children entering care	507	600

## Reasons why children come into care

There are a variety of factors resulting in a child entering out-of-home care. There is rarely only one factor present resulting in a child entering care. In 2018 to 2019 the primary reasons children entered care were neglect and emotional abuse resulting from a child being exposed to family and domestic violence. Reasons include:

- Emotional abuse, family and domestic violence – 36%
- Neglect – 28%
- Emotional abuse (other) – 12%
- Physical abuse – 17%
- Sexual abuse – 7%

**Note:** These percentages are based on substantiated investigations. Emotional abuse, Family and Domestic Violence refers to exposing a child to an act of family and domestic violence, including but not limited to: assault, causing personal injury, deprivation of liberty, damaging property, behaving in a manner that is intimidating, offensive or emotionally abusive. Emotional abuse (other) refers to sustained, repetitive, inappropriate, ill-treatment of a child or young person through behaviours including threatening, belittling, teasing, humiliating, bullying, confusing, ignoring and inappropriate encouragement.



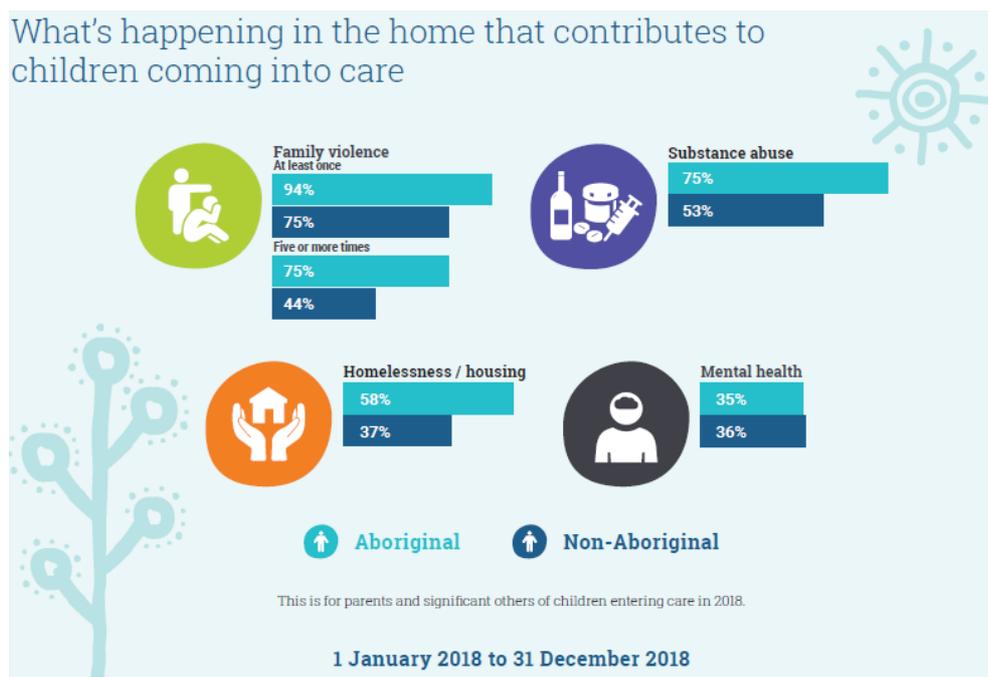
**Figure 2. Reasons why children come into care, 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.**

## What’s happening in the home that contributes to children coming into care

Children entering out-of-home care have often experienced events in the family home that cause trauma. These events include:

- Family violence (at least once) – 94% Aboriginal, 75% non-Aboriginal
- Family violence (five or more times) – 75% Aboriginal, 44% non-Aboriginal
- Substance abuse – 75% Aboriginal, 53% non-Aboriginal
- Homelessness – 58% Aboriginal, 44% (non-Aboriginal)
- Mental health issues – 35% Aboriginal, 36% non-Aboriginal

The Building a Better Future Out-of-Home Care Reform Program aims to strengthen care arrangements, so they include therapeutic supports to help heal trauma experienced by children, keeping in mind the importance of children staying connected to family, culture, community and country.



**Figure 3. What's happening in the home that contributes to children coming into care, 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.**

## Average age of children when they come into care

- Over the last decade, from 1 July 2001 until 30 June 2019, there was a downward trend in the average age of children entering care.
- Since 2001 to 2002, Aboriginal children have consistently entered care at a younger age than non-Aboriginal children.
- The average age of Aboriginal children when they entered care in 2001 to 2002 was 5.9 years of age and in 2018-2019 was 4.6 years of age.
- The average age of non-Aboriginal children entering care was 7.5 years of age and in 2018 to 2019 was 5.5 years of age.

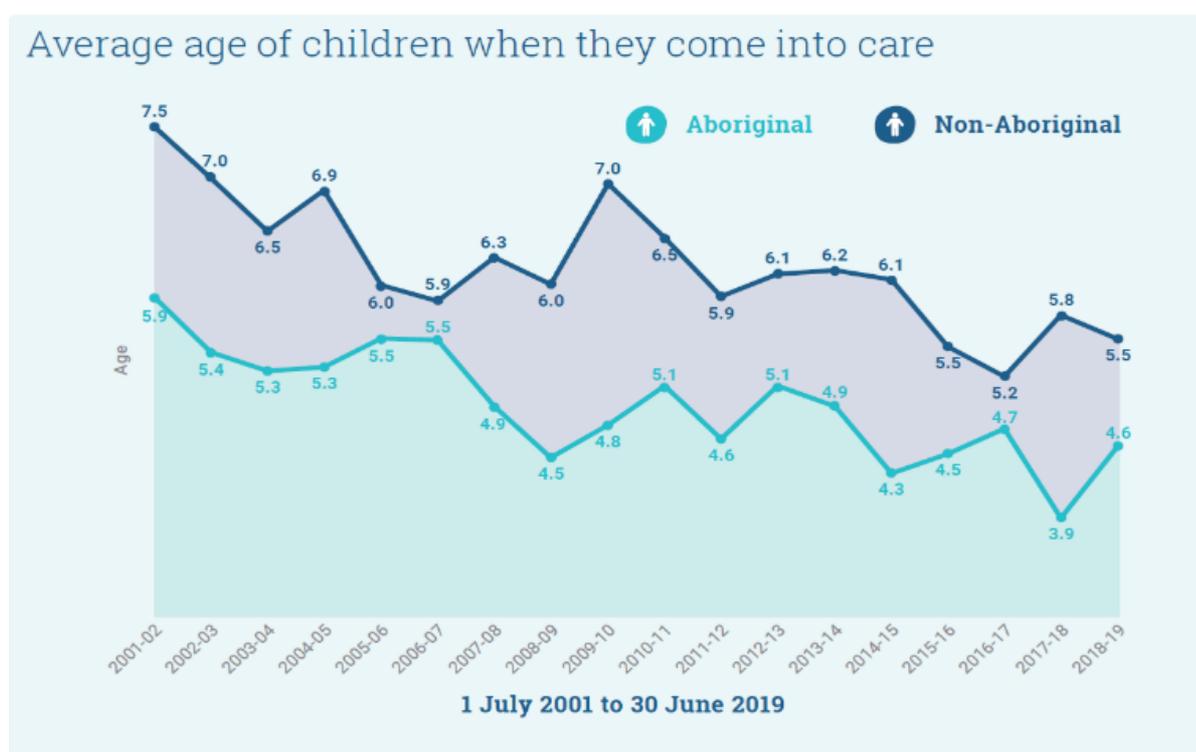


Figure 4. Average age of children when they come into care, 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2019.

## Age groups of children in care in WA

- As at 30 June 2019, there were 5379 children in out-of-home care.
- Aboriginal children represent 54.7% of children in out-of-home care with 2942 children. Non-Aboriginal children represent 45.3% of children in care with 2437 children.
- There are more Aboriginal children in care across all age groups when compared to non-Aboriginal children:
  - less than 1 year – 2% Aboriginal, 1.8% non-Aboriginal
  - 1 to 4 years – 12.2% Aboriginal, 9% non-Aboriginal
  - 5 to 9 years – 16.6% Aboriginal, 13.5% non-Aboriginal
  - 10 to 14 years – 16.7% Aboriginal, 14.2% non-Aboriginal
  - 15 years and older – 7.2% Aboriginal, 6.8% non-Aboriginal
- The aim of the Earlier Intervention Family Support Services is to provide intensive support within the home environment to strengthen parenting skills and safety within the home and prevent children from entering care.



Figure 5. Age groups of children in care as at 30 June 2019.

## The number of children in care

- From 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010 to 30 June 2019 the number of children in care for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children increased.
- The number of Aboriginal children in care has been increasing at a higher rate than non-Aboriginal children.
- As at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010, there were 1492 Aboriginal children in care and at 30 June 2019, there were 2942 Aboriginal children in care.
- As at 30 June 2010, there were 1842 non-Aboriginal children in care and at 30 June 2019 there was 2437 non-Aboriginal children in care.

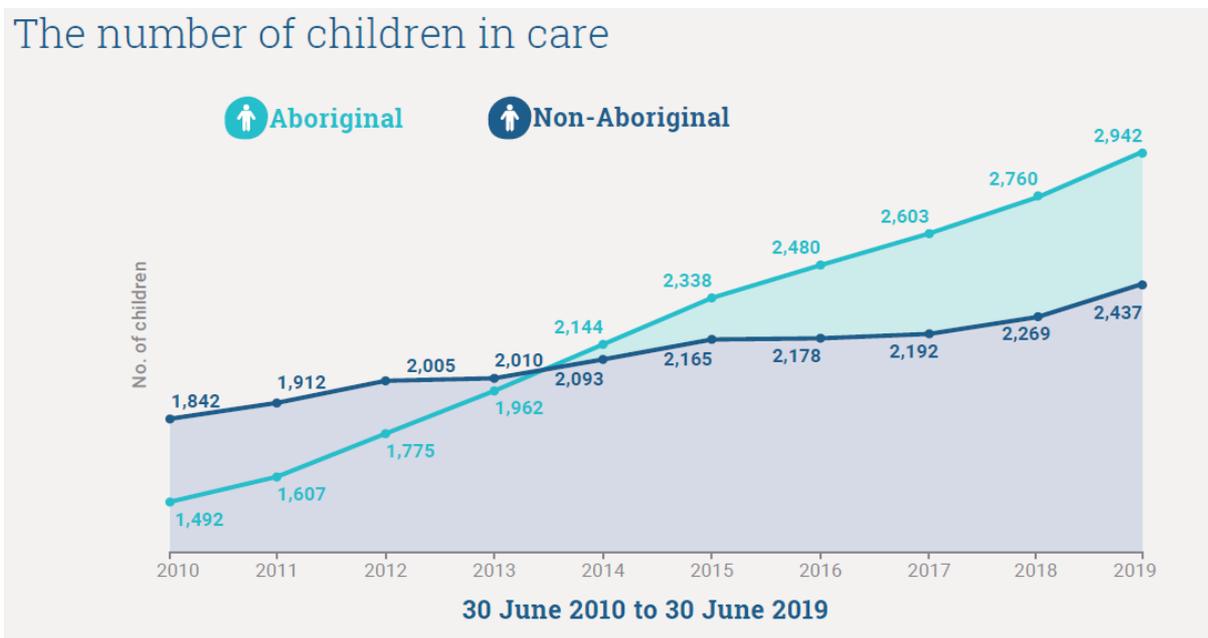


Figure 6. The number of children in care, 30 June 2010 to 30 June 2019.

## Regional versus metro case management

- As at June 30 2019, 55% of children in care were Aboriginal and 45% were non-Aboriginal as at June 2019.
- In the metro area, 30.1% of cases were Aboriginal children and 35.6% were non-Aboriginal children.
- In regional Western Australia, 24.8% of cases were Aboriginal children and 9.5% were non-Aboriginal children.
- A focus of the Out-of-Home Care Reform is to collaborate with the community to design and implement services. These services are designed to meet local needs, build on community strength and support children to remain on country to stay connected to family.

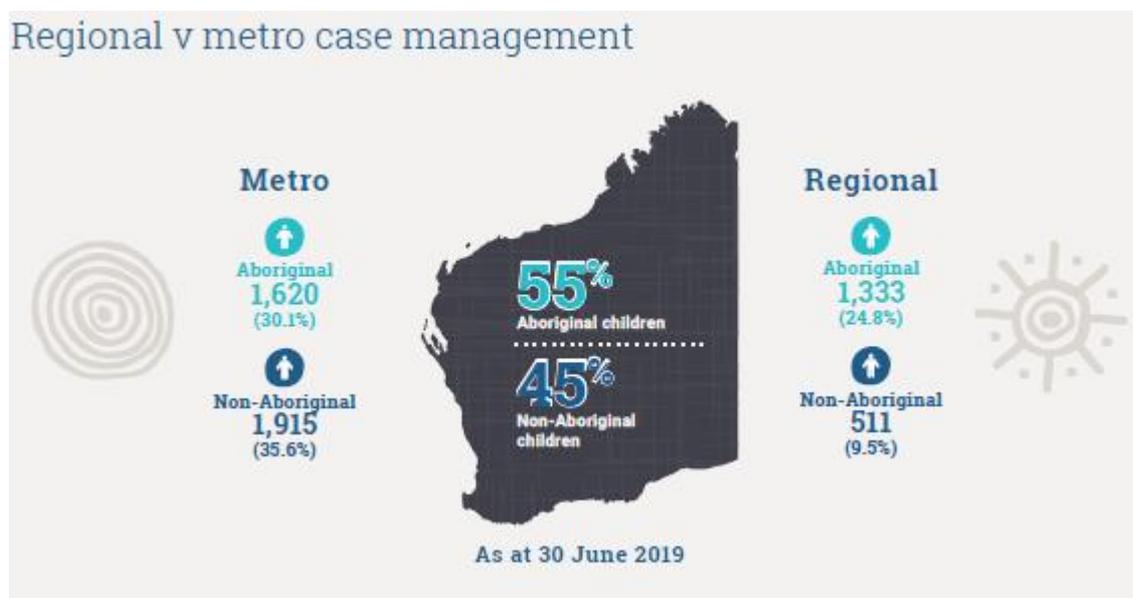


Figure 7. A comparison of regional and metropolitan case management in WA as at 30 June 2019.

## Who they live with

- A priority of Communities is to find care arrangements for children with family or kin wherever possible. This is in accordance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement and is supported by the Children and Community Services Act 2004.
- As a result:
  - 45% of children in out of home care are in family care arrangements (1,366 Aboriginal, 1,074 non-Aboriginal)
  - 24% of children are in Department general foster care (656 Aboriginal, 650 non-Aboriginal)
  - 12 % of children are in funded service foster care (360 Aboriginal, 280 non-Aboriginal)
  - 6% of children are with parent/former guardian (170 Aboriginal, 122 non-Aboriginal)
  - 5% of children in funded service residential (112 Aboriginal, 156 non-Aboriginal)
  - 5% of children in an unendorsed arrangement (173 Aboriginal, 82 non-Aboriginal)
  - 2% of children in Departmental residential (73 Aboriginal, 38 non-Aboriginal)
  - 1% of children in other care (32 Aboriginal, 35 non-Aboriginal)
- The Out-of-Home Care Reform work includes designing and providing out-of-home care services that are culturally safe, for all children and particularly Aboriginal children.
- This will mean improving the availability of culturally safe care arrangements and decision making about the care of Aboriginal children being led by relevant Aboriginal family and community members.

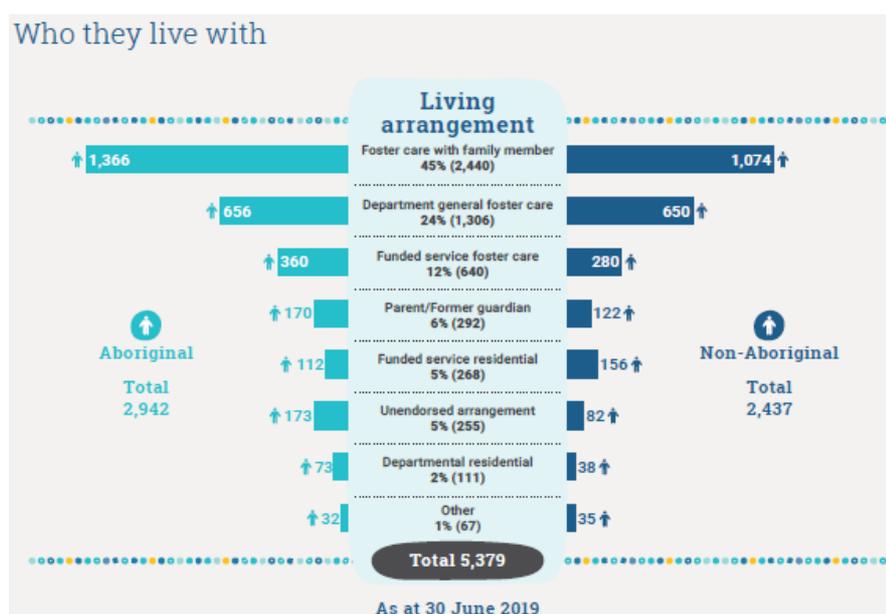


Figure 8. Living arrangements for children in care as at 30 June 2019.

## Foster carers

- As at June 2019, there were a total of 3,230 approved carers:
  - approved Departmental family carers – 587 Aboriginal, 1,024 non-Aboriginal
  - approved Departmental foster carers – 48 Aboriginal, 891 non-Aboriginal
  - approved community organisation foster carers – 64 Aboriginal, 616 non-Aboriginal
- The majority of Aboriginal carers were family carers.
- The majority of foster carers with community service organisations and non-family foster carers with the Department of Communities were not Aboriginal.
- The Out-of-Home Care Reform is focusing on increasing the number of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations providing out-of-home care. An aim of this is to increase the number of children in out-of-home care being cared for by Aboriginal carers and organisations.

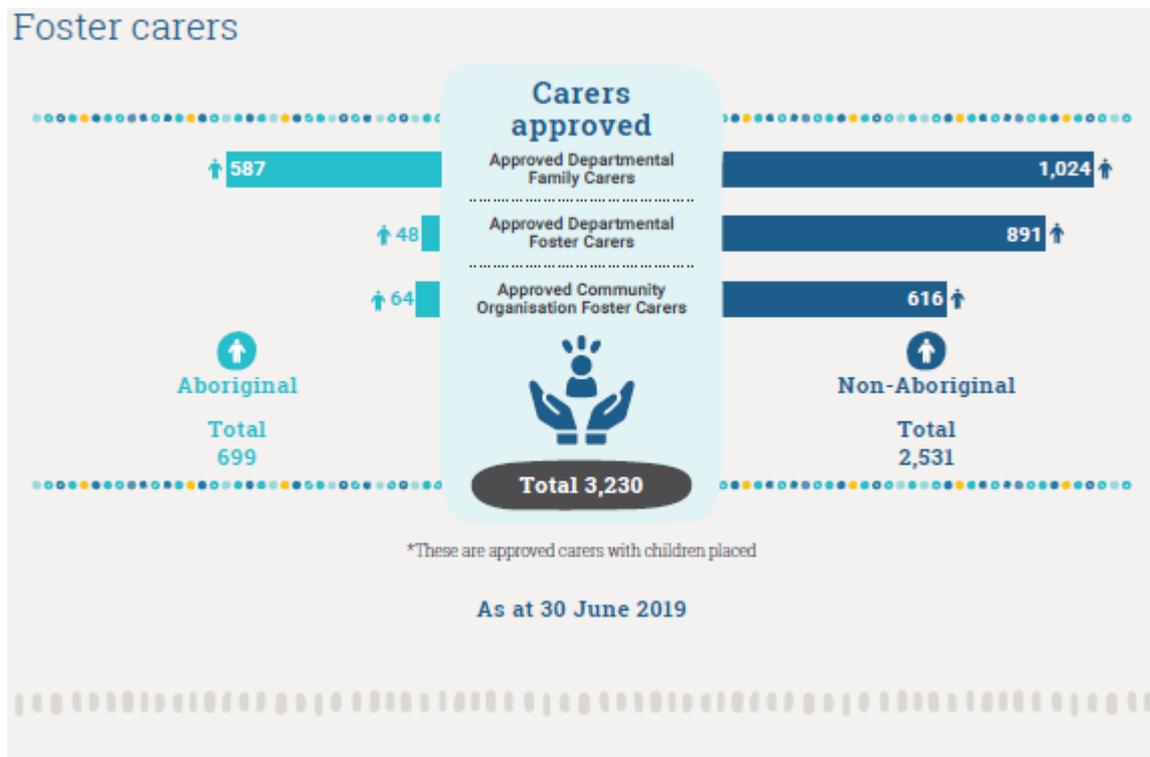


Figure 9. Summary of foster carers as at 30 June 2019.

## How long children are staying in care

As at 30 June 2019, the majority of children in care were remaining in out-of-home care for 2 years or more:

- Less than 30 days – 43 Aboriginal, 33 non-Aboriginal
- 30 days to less than 6 months – 192 Aboriginal, 238 non-Aboriginal
- 6 months to less than 1 year – 206 Aboriginal, 237 non-Aboriginal
- 1 year to less than 2 years – 376 Aboriginal, 359 non-Aboriginal
- 2 years to less than 5 years – 836 Aboriginal, 619 non-Aboriginal
- 5 or more years – 1,289 Aboriginal, 951 non-Aboriginal

Aboriginal children remained in out-of-home care for longer than non-Aboriginal children.

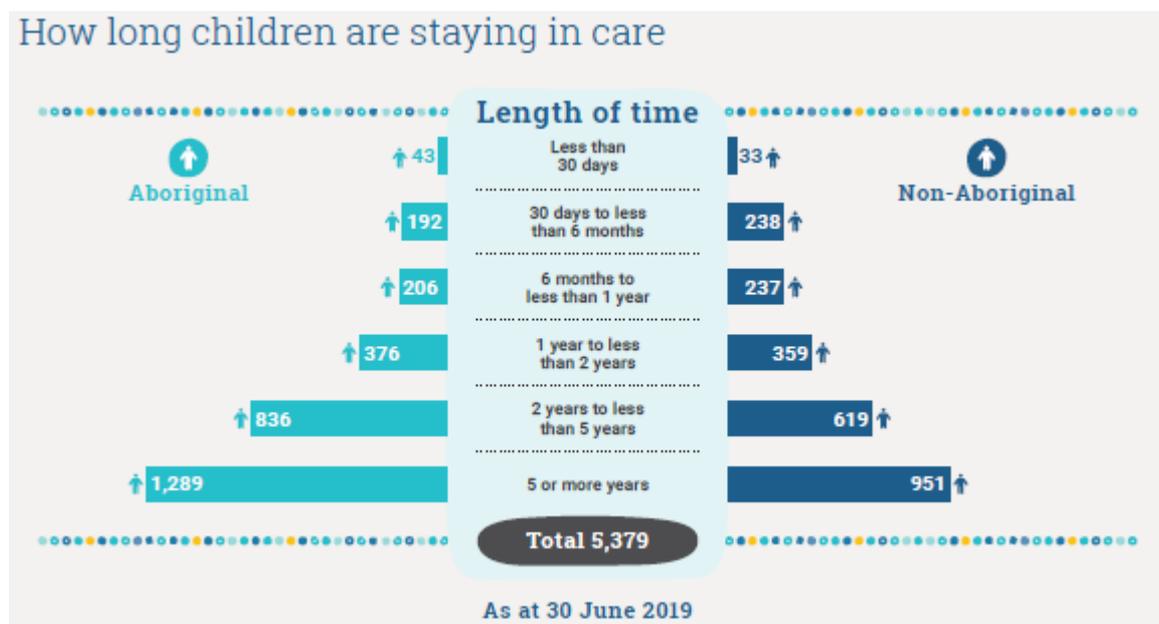


Figure 10. Length of time children are staying in care as at 30 June 2019.

## The increase in children staying in care

- From July 2001 to June 2019, there has been an increase in the average length of time children are staying in care for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children.
- In 2001, Aboriginal children were staying in care for an average of 0.90 years, at 2019, Aboriginal children are staying in care for an average of 4.57 years.
- In 2001, non-Aboriginal children stayed in care for an average of 1.29 years, at 2019, non-Aboriginal children were staying in care for an average of 3.82 years.
- Earlier Intervention Family Support Service prioritise and seek to strengthen and support reunification of Aboriginal children with their families.
- Services designed as part of the Out-of-Home Care Reform will work closely with earlier intervention services to build strong pathways to return children to their parents.

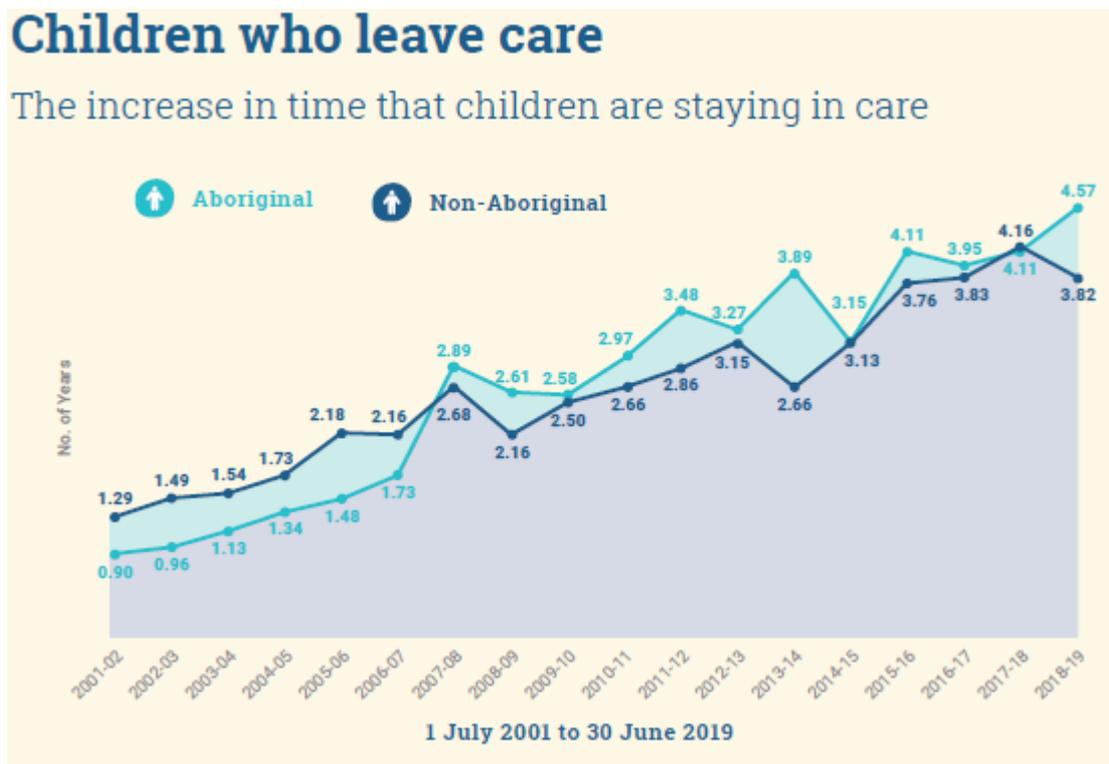


Figure 11. The increase in time that children are staying in care, 1 July 2001 to 30 June 2019.

## Children entering and leaving care

- Each year on average, more non-Aboriginal children leave care than Aboriginal children.
- This contributes to there being more Aboriginal children in care.
- Over the period 2009-10 to 2018-19, an average of 447 Aboriginal children entered care and 285 left care; an average of 542 non-Aboriginal children entered care and 452 left care.
- Over the period of 2018 to 2019, an average of 507 Aboriginal children entered care and 327 left care; 600 non-Aboriginal children entered care and 404 left care.

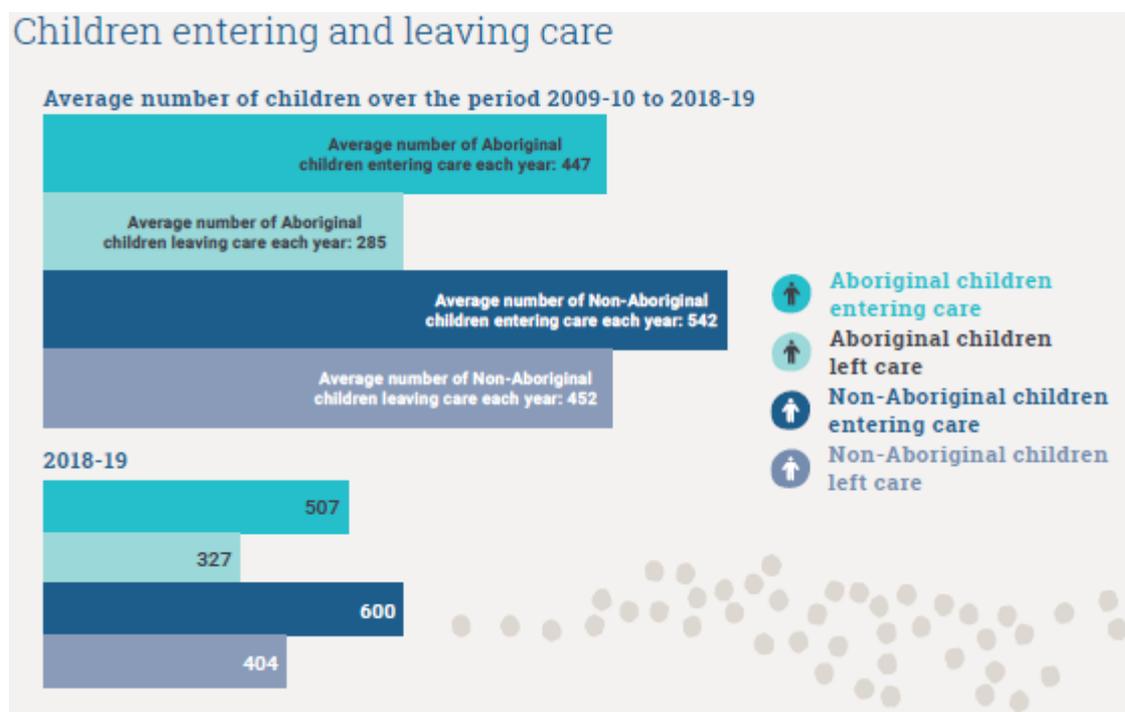


Figure 12. Average number of children entering and leaving care.

## Age groups of children and young people when they left care

- 731 children left care between 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019. The age groups were:
  - Less than 1 year – 6.1% Aboriginal, 5.2% non-Aboriginal
  - 1 to 4 years – 18.7% Aboriginal, 18.1% non-Aboriginal
  - 5 to 9 years – 22.3% Aboriginal, 22.3% non-Aboriginal
  - 10 to 14 years – 19.3% Aboriginal, 18.3% non-Aboriginal
  - 15 to 17 years – 6.4% Aboriginal, 9.9% non-Aboriginal
  - 18 years or older – 27.2% Aboriginal, 26.2% non-Aboriginal
- Approximately a quarter of children left care due to turning 18 years of age.
- This is closely followed by children aged 5-9 years leaving care.

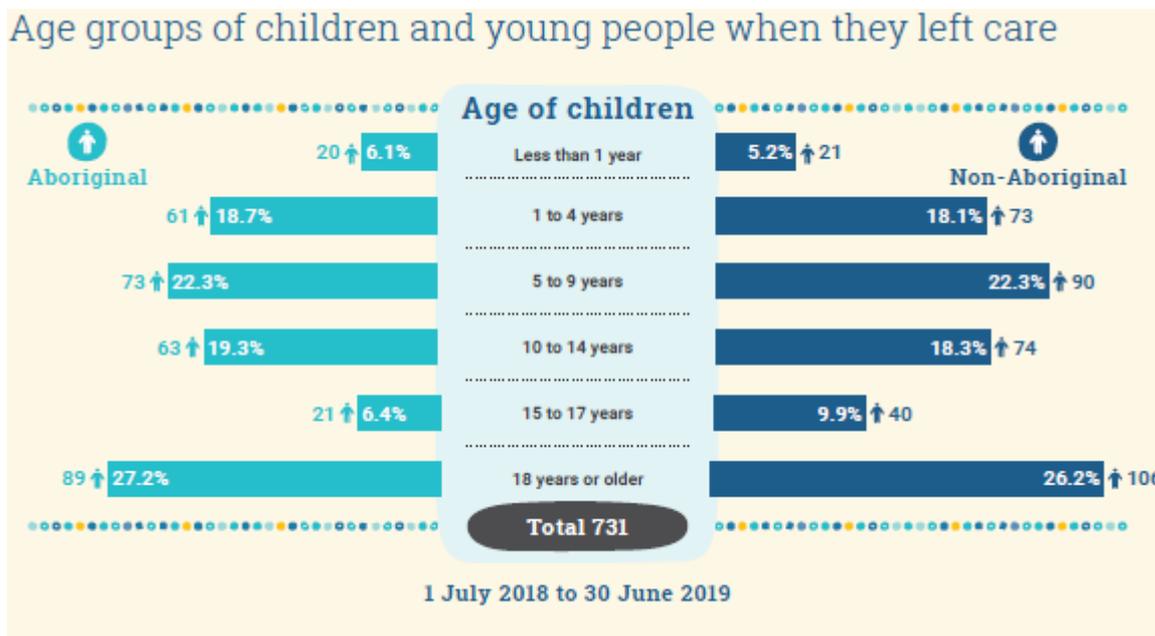


Figure 13. Age groups of children when they left care, 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

## Why children left care in 2018 to 2019

- The majority (70%) of children leaving care (not including children who left care on turning 18 years of age) left to return to family. Other reasons were:
  - Reunified with biological parents – 66%
  - Reunified with a person with prior parental responsibility – 4%
  - Transferred to special guardianship order – 11%
  - Child adopted – 1%
  - Other – 18%
- The Out-of-Home Care Reform aims to support children to maintain meaningful connections to culture, family and country whilst in care to support the safe reunification of children to families.

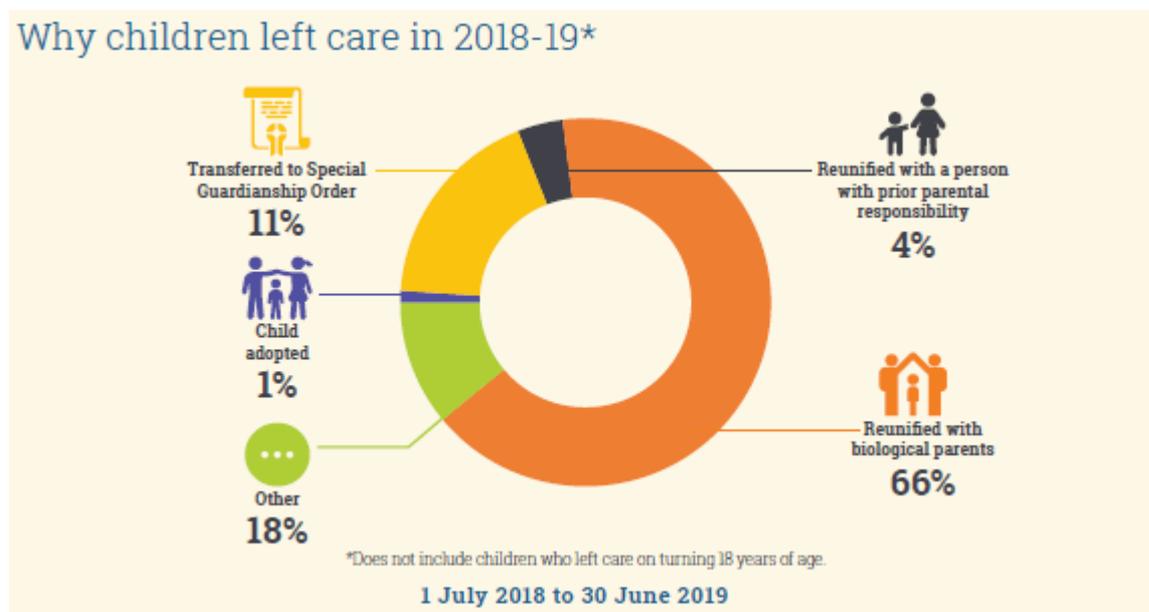


Figure 14. Why children left care between 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.