



Australian Government

Australian Institute of
Health and Welfare

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle Indicators 2018–19

Measuring progress

AIHW

Stronger evidence,
better decisions,
improved health and welfare

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle Indicators 2018–19

Measuring progress



The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare is a major national agency whose purpose is to create authoritative and accessible information and statistics that inform decisions and improve the health and welfare of all Australians.

© Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020 

This product, excluding the AIHW logo, Commonwealth Coat of Arms and any material owned by a third party or protected by a trademark, has been released under a Creative Commons BY 3.0 (CC BY 3.0) licence. Excluded material owned by third parties may include, for example, design and layout, images obtained under licence from third parties and signatures. We have made all reasonable efforts to identify and label material owned by third parties.

You may distribute, remix and build upon this work. However, you must attribute the AIHW as the copyright holder of the work in compliance with our attribution policy available at www.aihw.gov.au/copyright/. The full terms and conditions of this licence are available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/>.

A complete list of the Institute's publications is available from the Institute's website www.aihw.gov.au.

ISBN 978-1-76054-763-9 (PDF)

ISBN 978-1-76054-764-6 (Print)

Suggested citation

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle Indicators 2018–19: measuring progress . Cat. no. CWS 77. Canberra: AIHW.

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

Board Chair

Mrs Louise Markus

Director

Mr Barry Sandison

Any enquiries relating to copyright or comments on this publication should be directed to:

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

GPO Box 570

Canberra ACT 2601

Tel: (02) 6244 1000

Email: info@aihw.gov.au

Published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Please note that there is the potential for minor revisions of data in this report.

Please check the online version at www.aihw.gov.au for any amendment.

Contents

Summary	v
1 Introduction.....	1
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle	2
2 The ATSICPP indicators.....	4
What is the <i>Placement</i> element of the ATSICPP?.....	5
How do we measure application of the <i>Placement</i> element?.....	5
What is the <i>Connection</i> element of the ATSICPP?.....	8
How do we measure application of the <i>Connection</i> element?	8
Data source and methods.....	16
More information	16
Appendix: Additional draft ATSICPP Indicators.....	17
Acknowledgments	19
Abbreviations	20
Glossary	21
References	23
List of figures	24
Related publications.....	25

Cover artwork: Connection to Family, Country and Culture

Artist: Emma Bamblett

Mobs: Wemba Wemba, Gunditjmara, Ngadjonji (Far North Queensland) and Taungurung connections

Artwork description: This painting represents the importance of having connection to family, country, and culture.

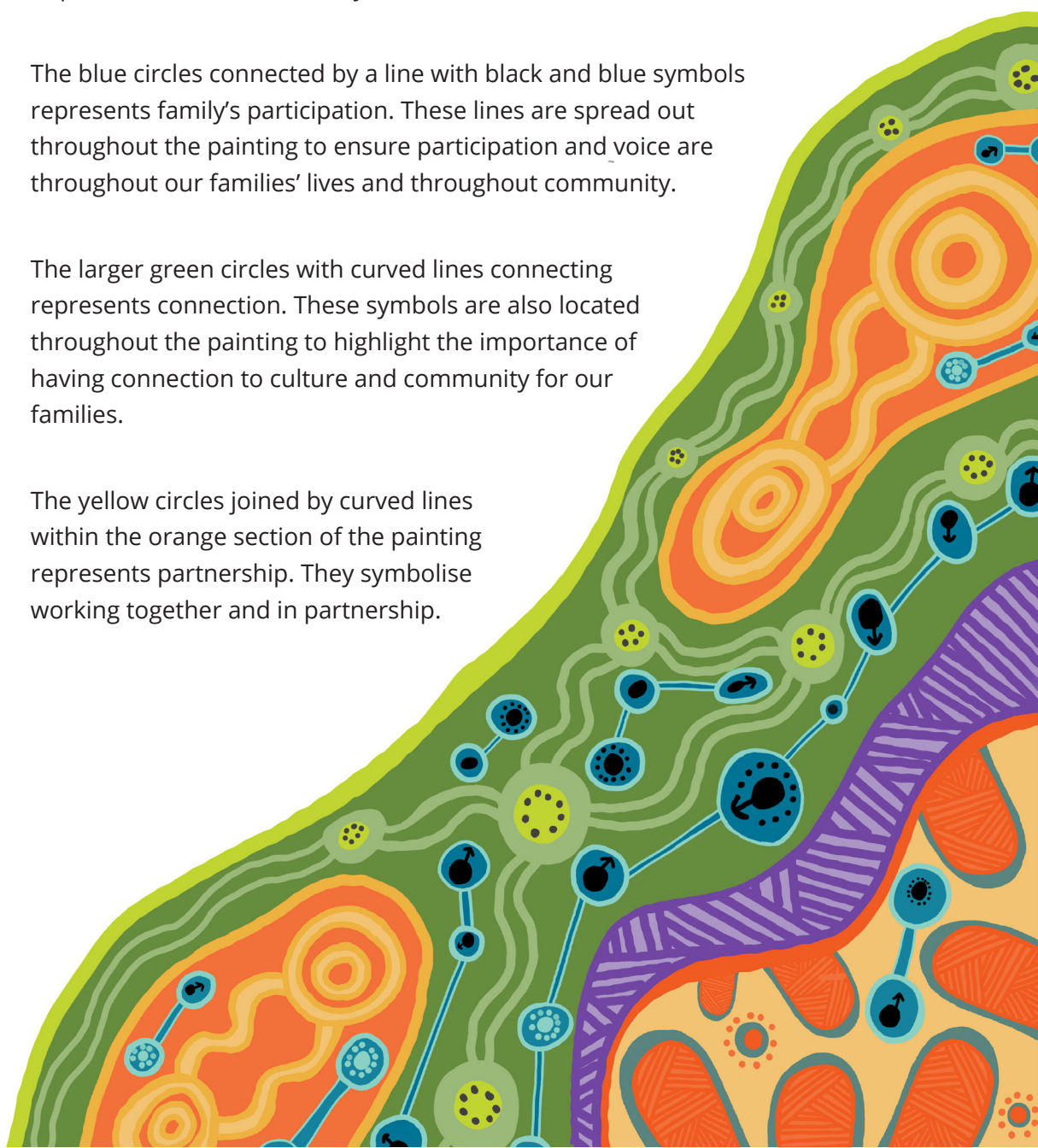
The yellow area in the bottom right corner with the orange hill formations represents the many country and lands that our people connect to. The circle with the smaller dots surrounding represents the sun.

The purple curved stream with the lines connecting represents strength and protection which is a core value when family's use strength to stay connected to protect culture and country.

The blue circles connected by a line with black and blue symbols represents family's participation. These lines are spread out throughout the painting to ensure participation and voice are throughout our families' lives and throughout community.

The larger green circles with curved lines connecting represents connection. These symbols are also located throughout the painting to highlight the importance of having connection to culture and community for our families.

The yellow circles joined by curved lines within the orange section of the painting represents partnership. They symbolise working together and in partnership.



Summary

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) is a framework designed to promote policy and practice that will reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system. This report brings together the latest state and territory data on 5 ATSICPP indicators that measure and track the application of the *Placement* and *Connection* elements of the framework.

The Appendix provides an overview of all of the draft ATSICPP indicators proposed for development in future.



Placement

The *Placement* element can be measured by determining the types of carers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care have been living with, or more specifically, a carer's relationship to the child.

- 1.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous relatives or kin, or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers



Connection


The *Connection* element relates to support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care to maintain or re-establish connections to their family, community, culture and country. This element is considered especially relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living with non-Indigenous carers.

- 2.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin, or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers
- 2.2 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with cultural support plans
- 2.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were reunified
- 2.4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were reunified and did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months

About 18,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were living in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019 (a rate of 54 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children).

Key findings are:

- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous relatives or kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregivers.

- 
- Based on data from 5 states and territories, about 8,100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were required to have cultural support plans at 30 June 2019, and 77% of them had current, documented and approved cultural support plans, which include details such as the child's cultural background and actions taken to maintain their connection to culture.
 - Based on data from 6 states and territories:
 - there were 4,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care during 2018–19 who were candidates for reunification with parents, family or former guardians, and 19% were reunified during the year. Children on long-term guardianship or custody orders are generally not considered to be candidates for reunification
 - of the 820 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–16 who were reunified with family during 2017–18, 82% did not return to out-of-home care in the following 12 months.

1 Introduction

There were about 18,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in out-of-home care at 30 June 2019; this is about 1 in 18 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (AIHW 2020). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, maintaining connection to family, community and culture is fundamental to ensuring their wellbeing (Gee et al. 2014) and avoiding the harm and burden suffered by the Stolen Generations (people who were forcibly removed from their families and disconnected from their culture) (AIHW 2018; HREOC 1997).

In response to the ongoing separation and removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and communities during the 1970s, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child care agencies developed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) to foster systemic change in child protection policy and practice (Tilbury 2013).

Since then, numerous inquiries and reviews have recognised the importance of the ATSICPP and its implementation into child protection systems (for example, Commission for Children and Young People Victoria 2016; Commonwealth of Australia 2017; Department of Premier and Cabinet 2012; HREOC 1997; Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry 2013).

Despite the acknowledgement of the importance of the ATSICPP, the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children receiving child protection services and in out-of-home care continue to rise. From 2014–15 to 2018–19:

- The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children receiving child protection services rose from 134 to 156 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The rate is currently almost 8 times the rate for non-Indigenous children.
- The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care rose from 48 to 54 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The rate is currently almost 11 times the rate for non-Indigenous children (AIHW 2020).

In response, as part of the Fourth Action Plan of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, community services ministers across Australia committed to:

- actively implementing the ATSICPP in legislation, policy and practice
- developing a nationally consistent approach to measuring the application of the ATSICPP in child protection systems (DSS 2018).

To measure the application of the ATSICPP across states and territories, a range of indicators have been developed in partnership by government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander non-government organisations. Five of these indicators are presented in this report (see Appendix for additional draft ATSICPP indicators).



The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

The ATSICPP was developed to:

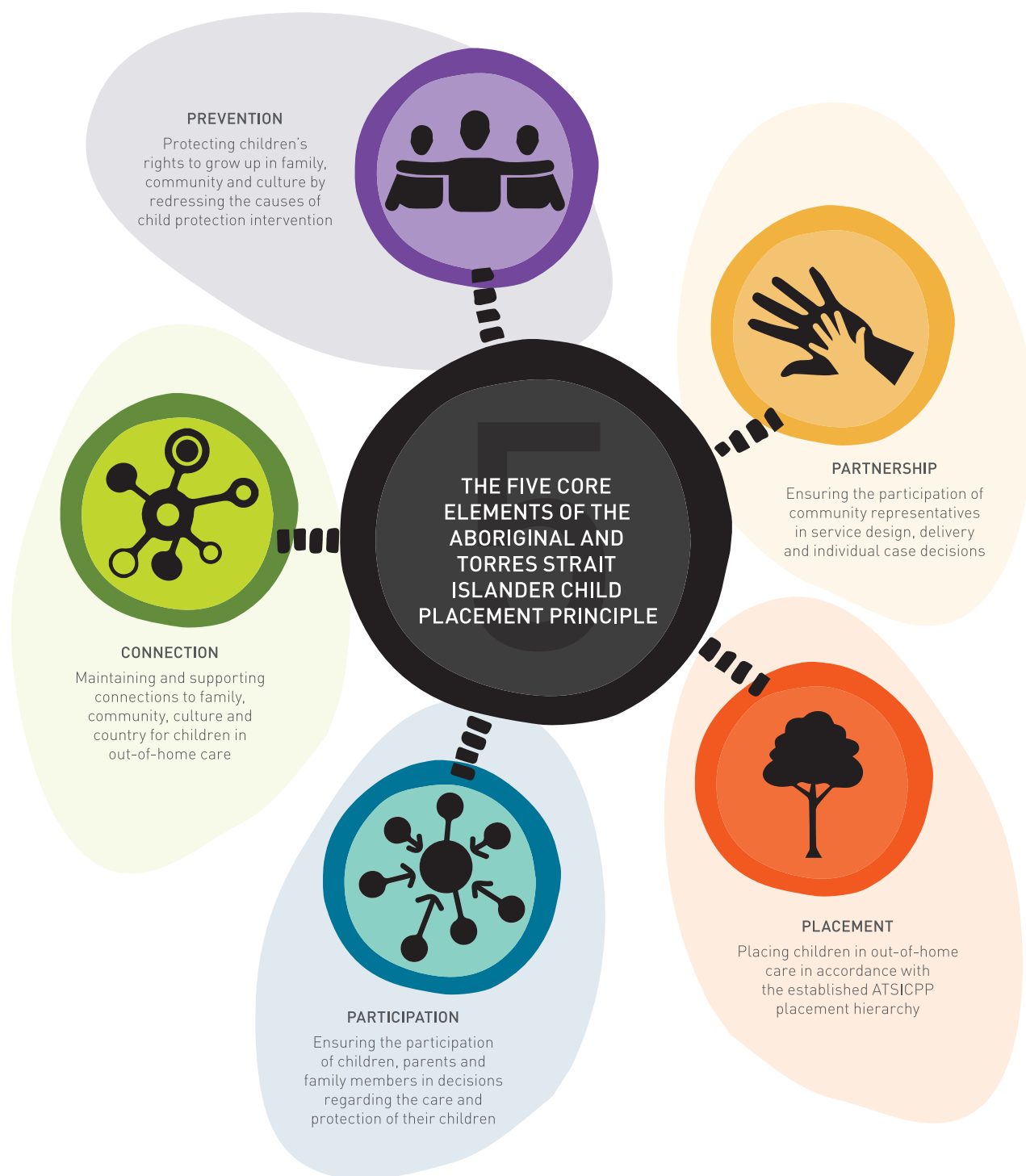
- ensure that the value of culture to the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is embedded in policy and practice
- recognise and protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, family and communities in child welfare matters
- increase the level of self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in child welfare matters
- reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems (SNAICC 2017).

In accordance with the ATSICPP, all state, territory and federal governments have recognised the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be raised in their own culture and the importance of these children maintaining connections to their family, community and culture (DSS 2018).

The ATSICPP is comprised of 5 core elements (Figure 1). This report brings together the latest state and territory data on 5 indicators that measure and track the application of the *Placement* and *Connection* elements of the ATSICPP. Indicators relating to the remaining 3 elements of the ATSICPP (*Prevention*, *Participation* and *Partnership*) are planned for reporting in future through data development (see Appendix).

In interpreting the data contained within this report, it is critical to understand the complex interdependencies between the 5 elements. For example, the *placement* of children in accordance with the established ATSICPP hierarchy is supported and enabled through the *participation* of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in child protection decision-making so that they are involved in the identification of culturally connected placements.

Figure 1: The 5 core elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP)



Source: SNAICC 2017. Reproduced with permission.

2 The ATSI CPP indicators

The ATSI CPP indicators were developed in partnership by cross-jurisdictional government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander non-government organisations following the release of the Fourth Action Plan of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children (DSS 2018). Initial development work resulted in a set of draft indicators being produced in 2018.

This report presents data on the 5 indicators for which data are currently available. These 5 indicators relate to the *Placement* and *Connection* elements of the ATSI CPP. The remaining indicators are still undergoing development (see Appendix). These include indicators relating to the *Prevention*, *Partnership* and *Participation* elements, for which data are currently not available for reporting.

Notes on definitional issues and limitations related to the data used in this report are outlined below (Box 1).

Box 1: Notes on data used for the ATSI CPP indicators

Children in out-of-home care

The ATSI CPP indicators are reported for all years based on the new, nationally consistent definition for out-of-home care that was implemented for national reporting in 2018–19. Therefore, historical out-of-home care data presented in this report may not match out-of-home care data published previously or elsewhere.

Children on third-party parental responsibility orders

Children who were on third-party parental responsibility orders (sometimes referred to as permanent care orders) at the time of measurement are not included in counts for the ATSI CPP indicators as they are not considered to be in out-of-home care. These children are, however, under the legal guardianship of a third-party carer and therefore separated from their birth parents or former guardians. Accordingly, in the context of the ATSI CPP, issues around connection to culture and placement are still very relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on third-party orders.

However, due to data limitations relating to children on third-party orders, insufficient national data is available to report on the ATSI CPP indicators for these children.

For more details on the definition of out-of-home care and children on third-party orders, see *Child protection Australia 2018–19* (AIHW 2020).

Further information on the 5 indicators presented in this report, including detailed data tables and technical specifications, can be found online at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/atsicppi-2018-19>.

What is the *Placement* element of the ATSICPP?

The *Placement* element of the ATSICPP sets a hierarchy of preferred options for caregivers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. The hierarchy is designed to ensure the highest possible level of connection to family, community, culture and country is maintained for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child in out-of-home care.



The hierarchy of placements is as follows:

1. With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous relatives or extended family members (kin)
2. With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the child's community
3. With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-based carers.

The 3 options above are preferred placement types. If these preferred options are not available, as a last resort, the child may be placed in:

4. Another care arrangement (such as with a non-Indigenous carer or in a residential setting).

If the child is not living with their relatives or kin (that is, level 1 in the hierarchy), the placement must be within close geographic proximity to the child's family (SNAICC 2018).

Application of the *Placement* element means fully exhausting all possible options at the highest level of the placement hierarchy before considering options at the next level down. Best practice application of the ATSICPP also includes regular review of placements at lower levels of the hierarchy (e.g. those with non-Indigenous carers who are not relatives or kin, or in residential settings) to enable children to be moved to a higher level placement if circumstances change (e.g. to live with relatives or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members).

How do we measure application of the *Placement* element?

The application of the *Placement* element can be measured by determining the types of carers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care are living with, or more specifically, a carer's relationship to the child. This is measured by Indicator 1.1.

It should be noted that looking at who a child is living with is just one way of measuring the application of the *Placement* element. Application of this element also requires that active efforts are made to find a child's family, to consult with a child's family, community representatives and/or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, to inform placement decisions and to provide support to carers to maximise the success of the placement while minimising the chance of placement breakdown (SNAICC 2017).

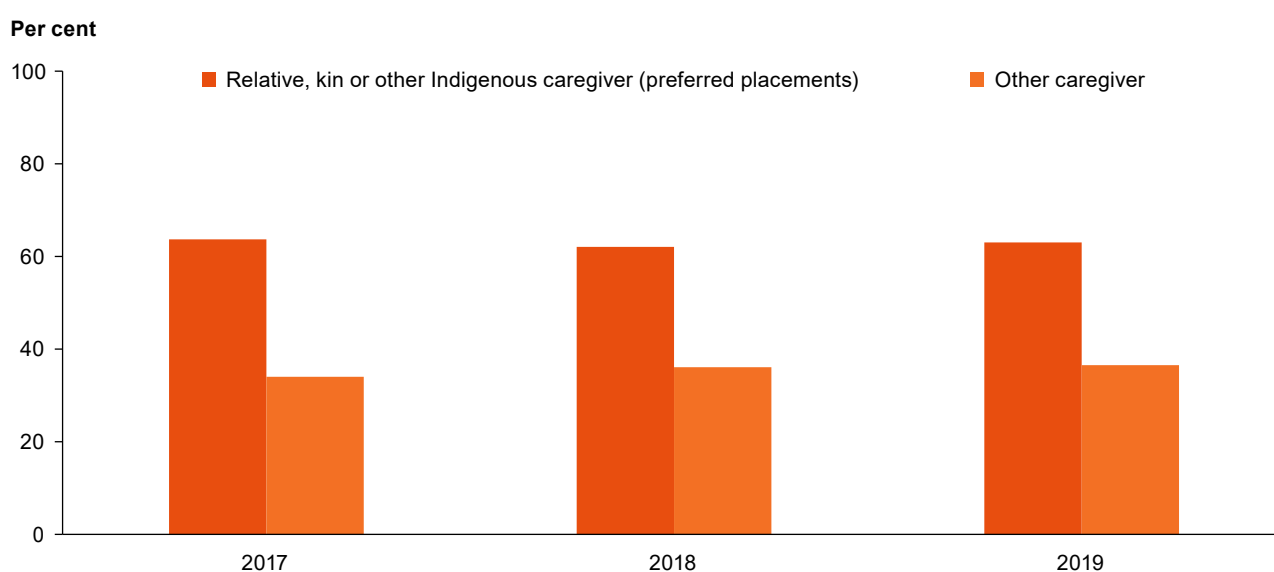
Active efforts also include ensuring that a child's Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status is recorded accurately. The coverage of Indigenous status data for children in out-of-home care is generally very high—at 30 June 2019, Indigenous status was unknown for less than 1% of children in out-of-home care nationally. However, it is unknown whether, or to what extent, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are being incorrectly recorded as non-Indigenous. Active efforts to address this and the other issues highlighted are intended to improve the chance that a preferred placement (that is, the placements numbered 1, 2 and 3 in the placement hierarchy) will be found for a child. Indicators relating to some of these active efforts are in development (see Appendix).

How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are cared for by relatives, kin, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers?

Indicator 1.1: The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care at 30 June who were living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous relatives or kin, or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers

At 30 June 2019, 63% (or about 11,300 out of 18,000) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous relatives or kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregivers, which is in accordance with the preferred placement of the placement hierarchy. This proportion has been relatively stable since 30 June 2017.

Figure 2: Indigenous children in out-of-home care, by caregiver type, 30 June 2017 to 2019



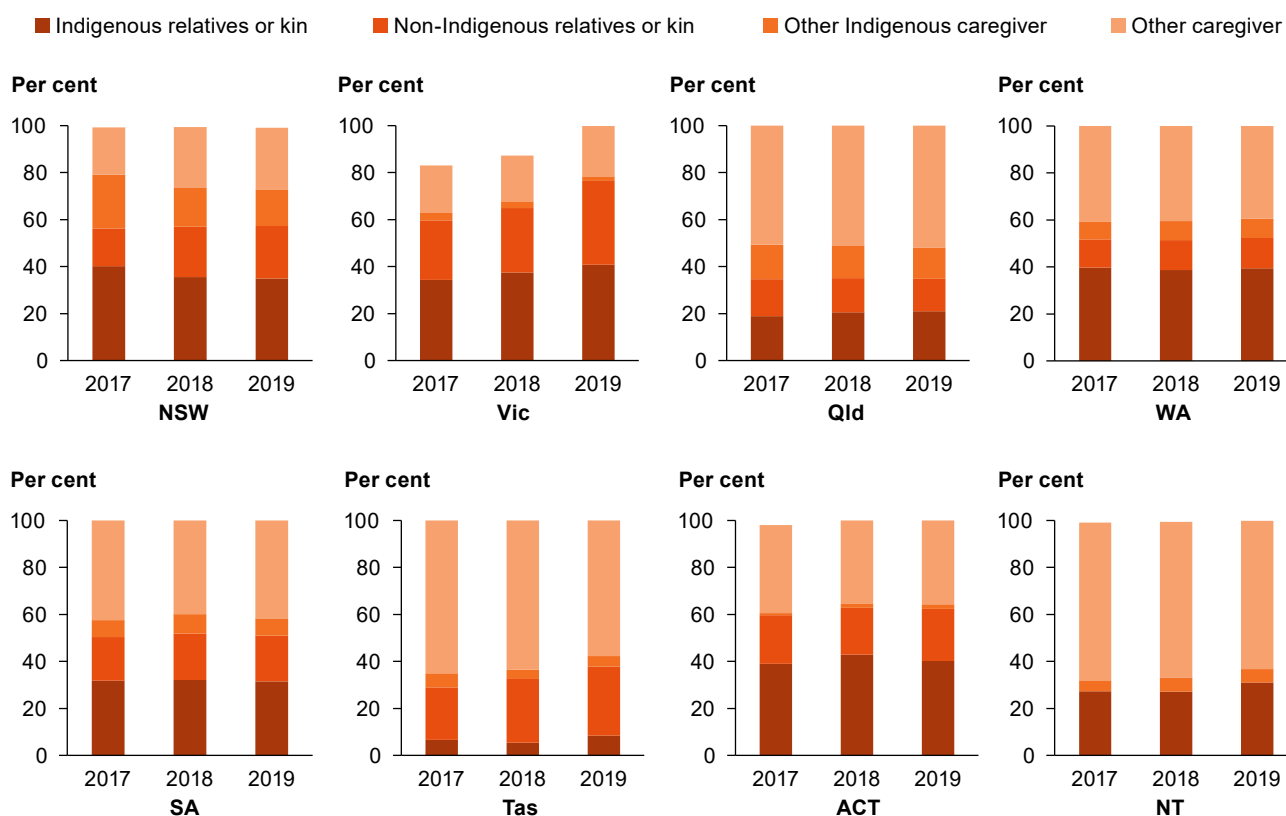
Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 because children for whom information about their caregiver is not available are not included in this figure.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S1.

At 30 June 2019, in all states and territories except Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were living in preferred placements, that is, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous relatives or kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregivers.

Additionally, in all jurisdictions except Tasmania, children living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin made up the largest group of children in preferred placements. In all jurisdictions, except New South Wales in 2017 and the Northern Territory in all years, the next most common caregiver type was non-Indigenous relatives or kin. This distribution of caregiver types for each state and territory has been relatively stable since 30 June 2017 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Indigenous children in out-of-home care, by caregiver type and state or territory, 30 June 2017 to 2019



Notes

1. Percentages may not sum to 100 because children for whom information about their caregiver is not available are not included in this figure. In Victoria, caregiver type was unknown for 17% of children at 30 June 2017 and 13% of children at 30 June 2018. Therefore, actual proportions for Victoria for these years may be higher than reported here.
2. In Tasmania, the high number of carers whose Indigenous status is unknown may affect the identification of children living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregivers.
3. For the Northern Territory, counts of children living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous relatives or kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregivers only include children for whom the process of making a placement decision was considered by caseworkers to be in accordance with the ATSICPP. This means there may have been a higher number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living with relatives, kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregivers than is presented here. All children who were not considered to be placed in accordance with the ATSICPP are included in the 'other caregiver' category, regardless of who they were living with.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S1.

What is the *Connection* element of the ATSICPP?

The *Connection* element of the ATSICPP relates to support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care to maintain or re-establish connections to their family, community, culture and country. This element is considered especially relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living with non-Indigenous carers (SNAICC 2017).



How do we measure application of the *Connection* element?

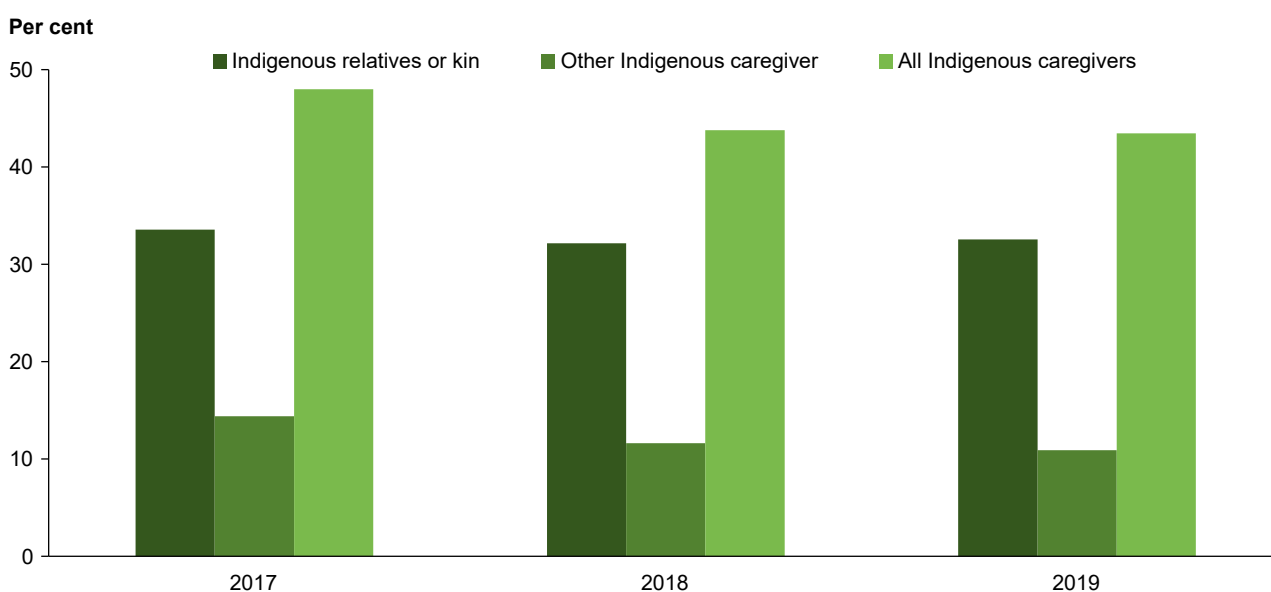
Connection covers a broad range of actions and supports that can facilitate the maintenance or re-establishment of connection to culture. This can include living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers (measured in Indicator 2.1), the creation and maintenance of cultural support plans (measured in Indicator 2.2) and efforts to enable a child to safely return to their family (a process referred to as *reunification*) (measured in Indicators 2.3 and 2.4).

How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are cared for by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregivers?

Indicator 2.1: The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care at 30 June who were living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin, or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers

Living with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregiver can improve the prospects for a child to have the ability and opportunities to maintain a cultural connection. At 30 June 2019, 43% (or about 7,800 out of 18,000) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregivers (Figure 4). This proportion has decreased from 48% in 2017.

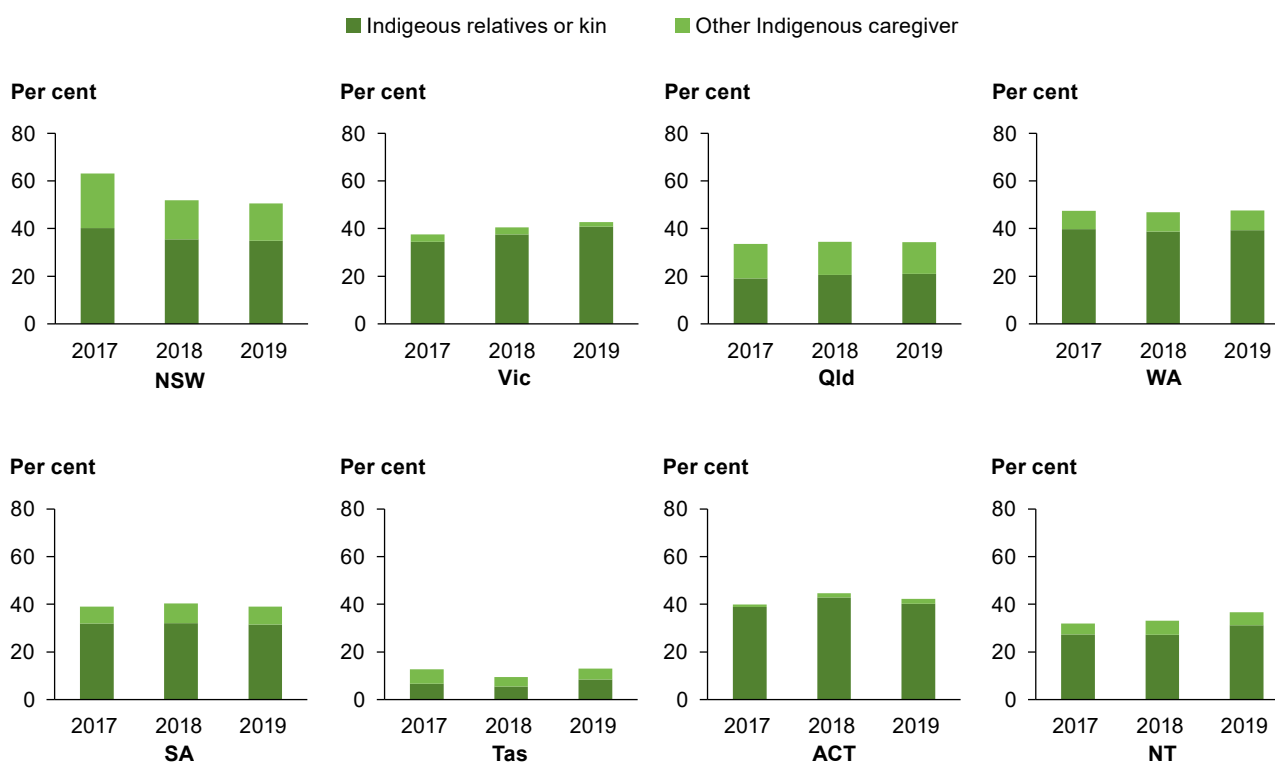
Figure 4: Indigenous children in out-of-home care who were living with Indigenous relatives or kin or other Indigenous carers, by caregiver type, 30 June 2017 to 2019



Source: Supplementary data table (online) S2.

In each state and territory, for all years presented, most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who were living with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregiver were living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin. At 30 June 2019, New South Wales had the highest proportion (51%) of children in out-of-home care living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers while Tasmania had the lowest (13%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Indigenous children in out-of-home care who were living with Indigenous relatives or kin or other Indigenous carers, by caregiver type and state or territory, 30 June 2017 to 2019



Notes

1. In Victoria, caregiver type was unknown for 17% of children at 30 June 2017 and 13% of children at 30 June 2018. Therefore, actual proportions for Victoria in these years may be higher than reported here.
2. In Tasmania, the high number of carers whose Indigenous status is unknown may affect the identification of children living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregivers.
3. For the Northern Territory, counts of children living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregivers only include children for whom the process of making a placement decision was considered by caseworkers to be in accordance with the ATSICPP. This means there may have been a higher number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caregivers than is presented here.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S2.

How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have cultural support plans?

Indicator 2.2: The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 in out-of-home care who have current, documented and approved cultural support plans at 30 June

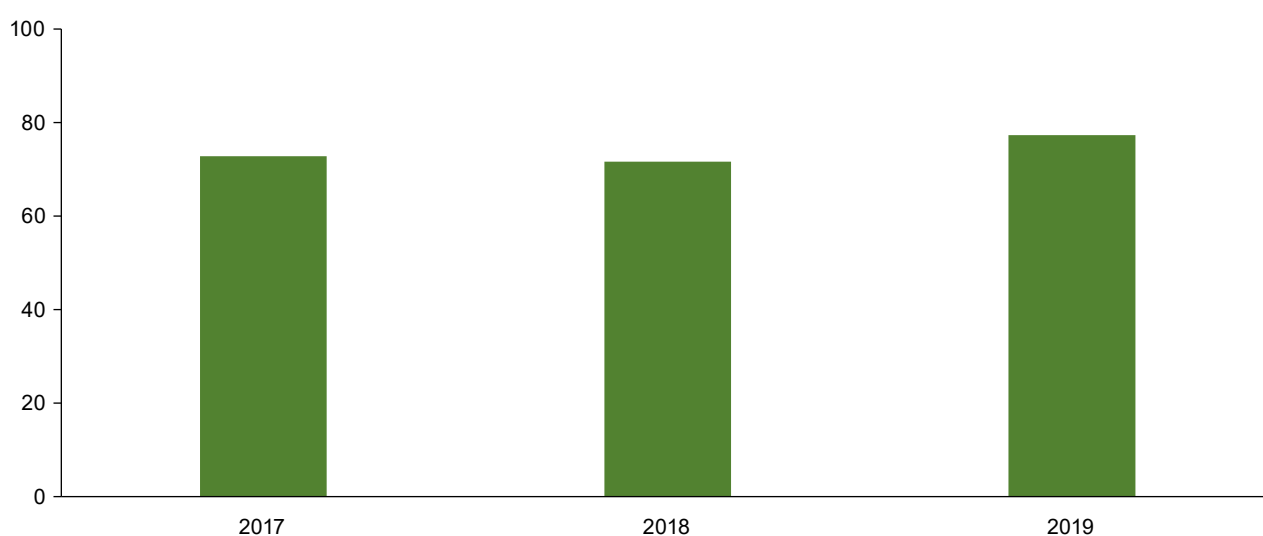
Cultural support plans are individualised and at least annually reviewed plans or agreements created to develop and maintain a child's connection to family, community, culture and country. Each jurisdiction has a state-specific cultural support plan template and related development process as well as a local definition of what is required for a plan to be considered complete and/or approved.

This indicator does not measure the quality of cultural support plans or whether the plan covers the 5 elements of the ATSICPP. In addition to this indicator, which measures the number of completed plans, other indicators relating to the quality of cultural support plans are in development (see Appendix).

Based on available data from 5 states and territories, 77% (or about 6,300 out of 8,100) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care had (and were required to have) a current, documented and approved cultural support plan at 30 June 2019. This proportion has increased from 73% (or about 5,100 out of 7,000) at 30 June 2017 (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Indigenous children in out-of-home care who had current, documented and approved cultural support plans, at 30 June 2017 to 2019

Per cent



Note: Cultural support plan data is not available for New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania. This data is not available for the Australian Capital Territory for 2017.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S3.

The proportion of children with completed cultural support plans at 30 June 2019 is greater than the proportion at 30 June 2017 in all states and territories except for Queensland, where the currency of plans has been highest and is close to 100% for all years. The proportions are lowest in Victoria and the Northern Territory; however, in both jurisdictions, the proportions are higher at 30 June 2019 compared with 30 June 2017 (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Indigenous children in out-of-home care who had current, documented and approved cultural support plans by state or territory, 30 June 2017 to 2019

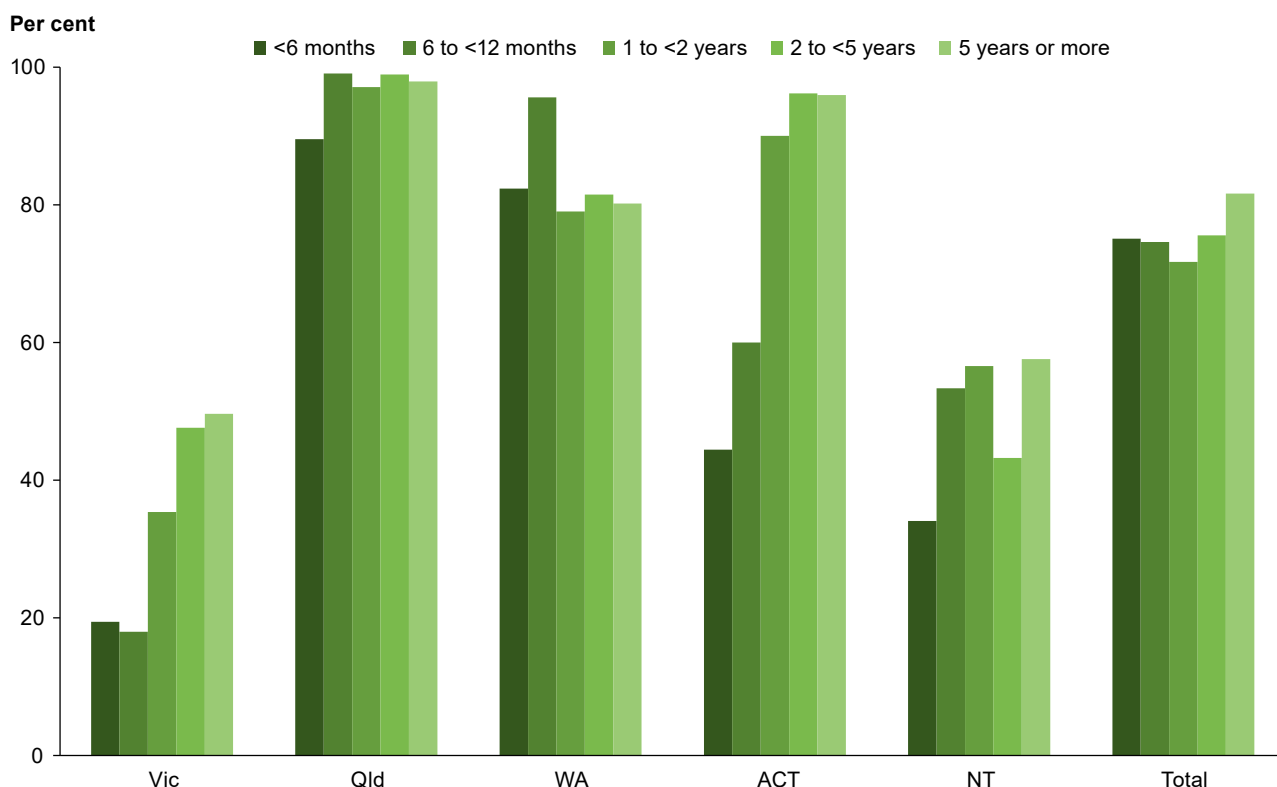


Note: Cultural support plan data is not available for New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania. This data is not available for the Australian Capital Territory for 2017.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S3.

On the whole, children who had spent more time in out-of-home care were more likely to have a current, documented and approved cultural support plan at 30 June 2019, except for those in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. In Western Australia, the proportion remained relatively consistent at about 80% for all children except for those in care for 6 to less than 12 months, of whom 96% had current plans. In the Northern Territory, the proportion rose up to about 58% for children in care for 5 or more years, with a drop in the proportion for children who had been in care for 2 to 5 years, to 43% (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Indigenous children in out-of-home care who had current, documented and approved cultural support plans, by time in out-of-home care and state or territory, 30 June 2019



Note: Cultural support plan data is not available for New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S4.

How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were reunified with their families/guardians?

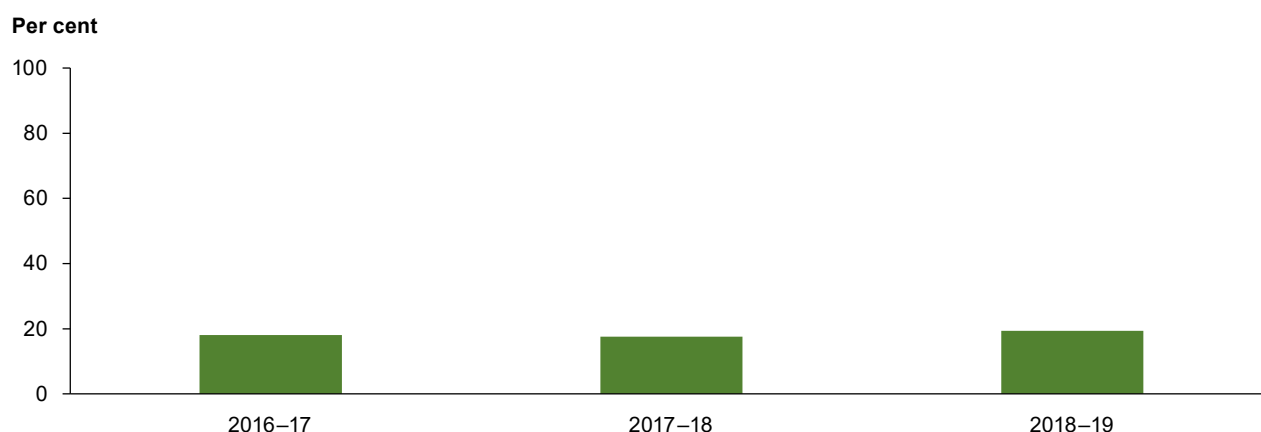
Indicator 2.3: The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 who were reunified during the year

Reunification is a planned process of safely enabling a child to return to their parents, family or former guardian. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, this can mean potentially re-establishing the closest possible connection to their family, community and culture, especially for those children who were living with non-Indigenous caregivers who are not relatives or kin.

Note that there is no national definition of reunification and each jurisdiction has reported based on their local definition. Also, while reunifications only occur where it is judged to be in the child's best interests, a reunification occurring does not guarantee that a child will not return to out-of-home care (see Indicator 2.4).

Based on available data from 6 states and territories, 19% (or about 910 out of 4,700) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who were candidates for reunification (not on long-term guardianship or custody orders) were reunified during 2018–19. This was slightly greater than the proportion reunified during both 2016–17, 18% (or about 870 out of 4,800), and 2017–18, 18% (or about 800 out of 4,600) (Figure 9).

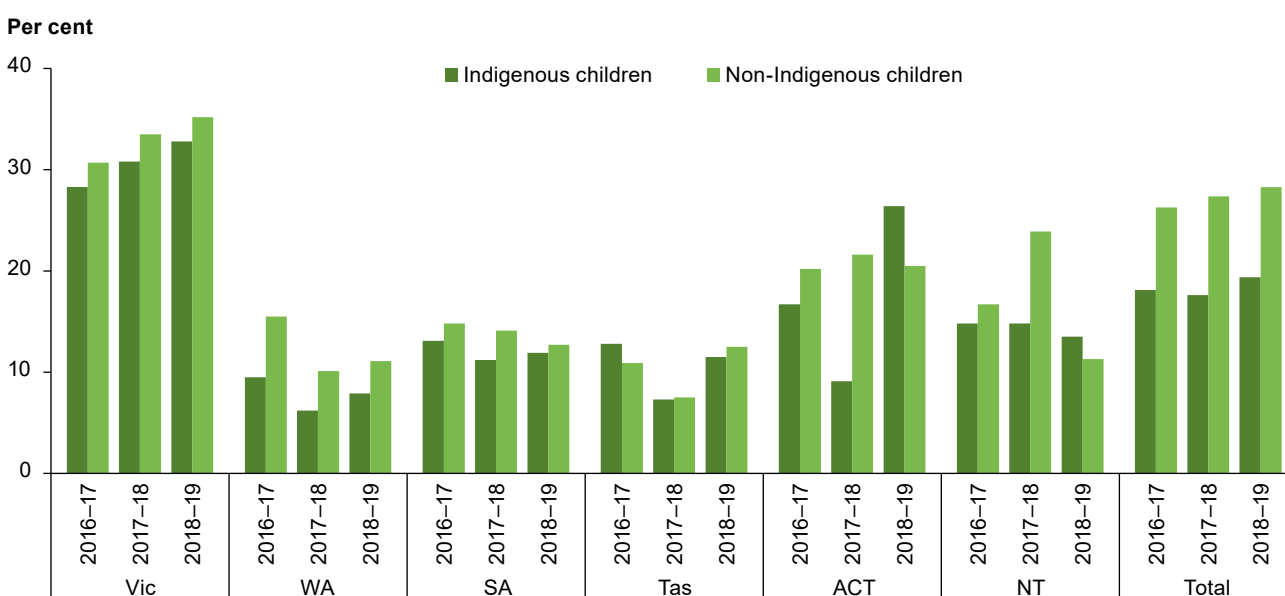
Figure 9: Indigenous children in out-of-home care who were reunified during the year, 2016–17 to 2018–19



Source: Supplementary data table (online) S5.

Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were less likely to be reunified than non-Indigenous children (18% compared with 26% respectively in 2016–17, and 19% compared with 28% in 2018–19). During 2018–19, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children reunified varied from 8% in Western Australia to 33% in Victoria while the corresponding proportions for non-Indigenous children varied from 11% in Western Australia to 35% in Victoria in the same year (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Children in out-of-home care who were reunified during the year, by Indigenous status and state or territory, 2016–17 to 2018–19



Notes

1. For New South Wales, reunification data were not available at the time of publication.
2. For Queensland, reunification data are not currently available.
3. In Western Australia, reunification refers to a child being reunified with one or both parents. The term parent refers to a person, other than the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Communities, who, by law, has responsibility for the day-to-day and long-term care, welfare and development of the child.
4. In Tasmania, children are defined as 'reunified' if they have been living with their parents for a period of greater than 2 months.

Source: Supplementary data tables (online) S5 and S6.

How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were reunified with their families/guardians, and did not return to out-of-home care?

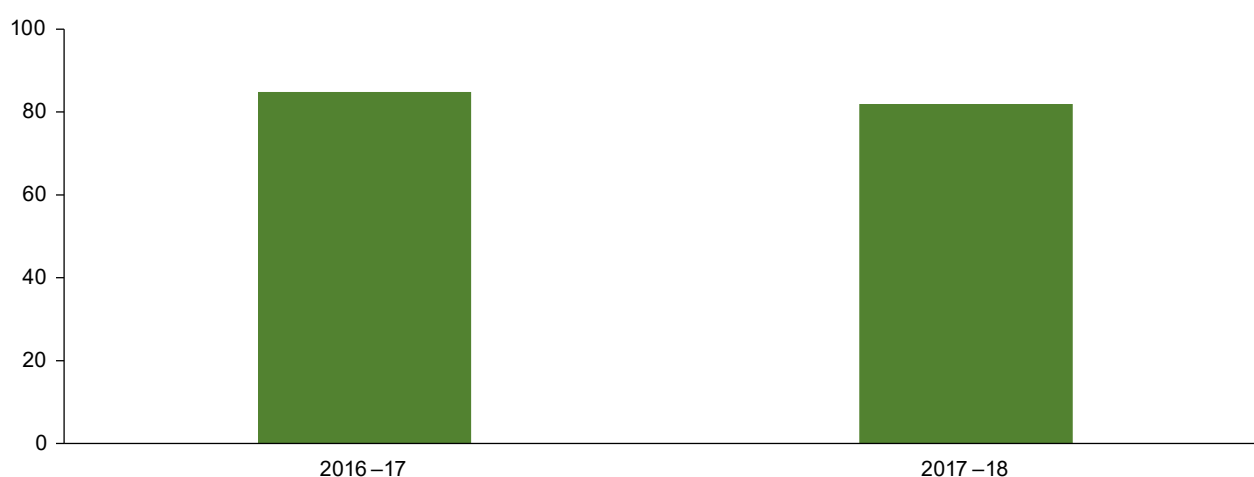
Indicator 2.4: The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–16 who were reunified during the year and did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months

The success of a reunification can be measured by the fact that the child did not return to out-of-home care.

Based on available data from 5 states and territories, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–16 who had not returned to out-of-home care 12 months after being reunified in 2017–18, 82% (or about 670 out of 820), was less than the proportion in 2016–17, 85% (or about 690 out of 810) (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Indigenous children reunified during the year who did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months, 2016–17 to 2017–18

Per cent



Note: Only children aged less than 17 years are included in this indicator to allow for a full 12 months follow up. This is because 12 months following the reunification for a child aged 17, that child would be aged 18 and no longer eligible for entry into out-of-home care.

Source: Supplementary data table (online) S7.

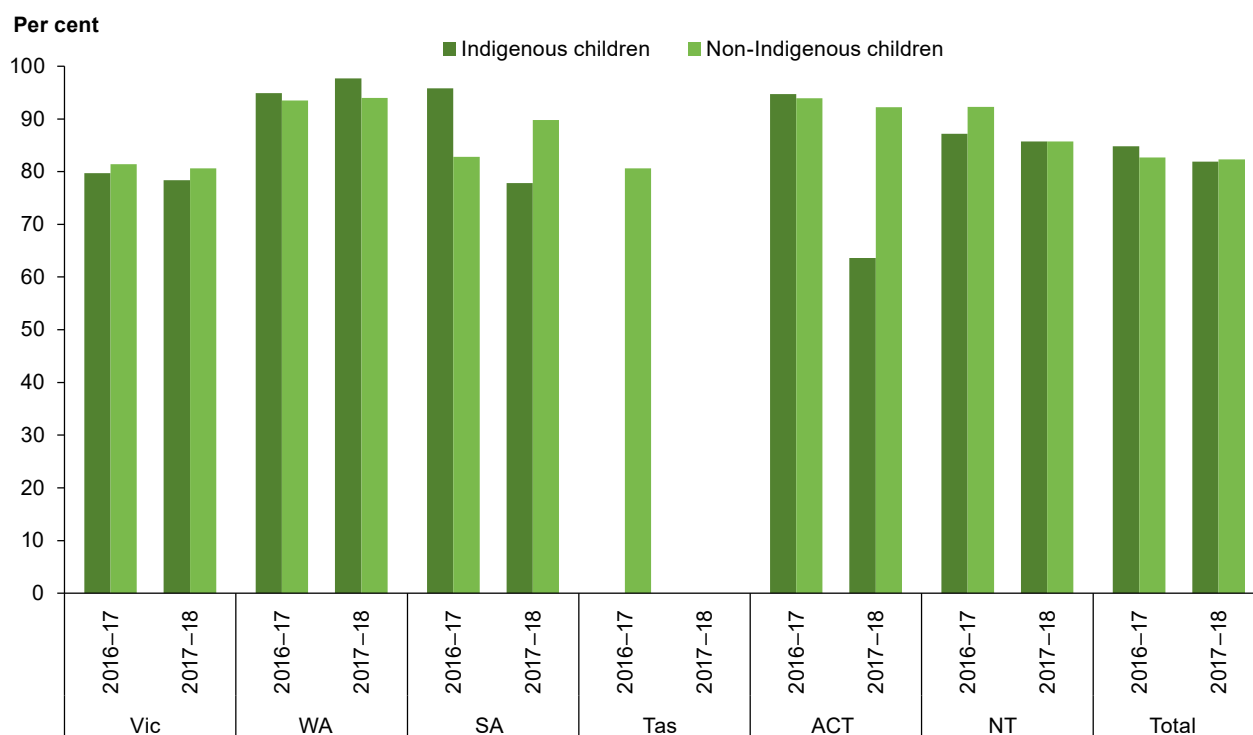
Notably, although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were less likely than non-Indigenous children to be reunified in the first instance, they were more likely to remain reunified than non-Indigenous children in the following 12 months for those reunified during 2016–17, 85% compared with 83%. Of those reunified during 2017–18, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were as likely to remain reunified in the following 12 months as were non-Indigenous children (82%).

Compared with non-Indigenous children, a slightly higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Western Australia, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory who were reunified during 2016–17 did not return to out-of-home care in the following 12 months.

Of those who were reunified during 2017–18, lower proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children did not return to out-of-home care in all states and territories except in Western Australia and the Northern Territory (Figure 12).

In Victoria, a lower proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children did not return to out-of-home care than in most other states and territories, however, Victoria had the highest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children reunified in the first instance (see Figures 10 and 12).

Figure 12: Children reunified during the year who did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months, by Indigenous status and state or territory, 2016–17 to 2017–18



Notes

1. Only children aged less than 17 years are included in this indicator to allow for a full 12 months follow up. This is because 12 months following the reunification for a child aged 17, that child would be aged 18 and no longer eligible for entry into out-of-home care.
2. For New South Wales and Queensland, reunification data are not currently available.
3. In Western Australia, reunification refers to a child being reunified with one or both parents. The term parent refers to a person, other than the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Communities, who, by law, has responsibility for the day-to-day and long-term care, welfare and development of the child.
4. In Tasmania, children are defined as 'reunified' if they have been living with their parents for a period of greater than 2 months.
5. For Tasmania, some Indigenous status data for 2016–17 and all Indigenous status data for 2017–18 are not published because of confidentialisation due to on small numbers.

Source: Supplementary data tables (online) S7 and S8.



Data source and methods

The data used for the ATSICPP indicators published in this report are sourced from the Australian Institute of Health Welfare's Child Protection National Minimum Data Set (CP NMDS) and aggregate child protection data provided by some states and territories. The CP NMDS is a national unit record data collection, with data supplied by all states and territories except New South Wales.

Aggregate data from New South Wales and the Northern Territory were used for Indicators 1.1 and 2.1, which relate to caregiver types for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. For all other indicators, available data was sourced from unit record data in the CP NMDS.

Data was not available from all jurisdictions to support reporting of the 5 published indicators for all years. An overview of data availability by indicator can be found online in *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle Indicators 2018–19: background information and technical specifications* at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/atsicppi-2018-19/related-material>.

Additional details on caveats relating to data in the CP NMDS can be found in the supplementary data tables and footnotes from *Child protection Australia* reports online at <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/child-protection/overview>.

More information

More information on these indicators, including detailed data tables and technical specifications, can be found online at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/atsicppi-2018-19>.

Appendix: Additional draft ATSICPP Indicators

A list of the remaining draft indicators under the ATSICPP indicator project are outlined below. These indicators are not currently reportable, and require national data development.

The indicators below have been grouped according to the ATSICPP element they align most closely with, though it should be noted that many of the indicators relate to more than one element.



Prevention

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children receiving prevention services



Partnership

Expenditure on child protection-related services provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOS)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children receiving child protection-related services from ACCOs

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children admitted to out-of-home care for whom an ACCO was consulted regarding placement decisions

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with cultural support plans that include the input of an ACCO



Participation

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children admitted to out-of-home care for whom the input of family regarding placement decisions was collected through a family group conference or family-led decision-making meeting

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with cultural support plans that include the input of the child

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with cultural support plans that include the input of family members


Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with cultural support plans that include the input of family collected through a family group conference or family-led decision-making meeting



Connection

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with documented genograms

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relative or kin for the first time



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who were reconnected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives and kin through placement change

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who were reconnected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives and kin through placement change and remained with relatives for 12 months or more

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with cultural support plans that include the child's cultural background

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with cultural support plans that include actions for the maintenance of the child's culture

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were reunified with their birth parents

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were reunified with their relatives or kin

Acknowledgments

Kanishka Karunaratne and Alison Watters wrote this report. Indrani Pieris-Caldwell, Louise York, Fadwa Al-Yaman, Matthew James, Dinesh Indracharan and members of the AIHW Child Welfare Unit provided valuable input and feedback.

The AIHW also acknowledges the valuable contributions of SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group and the now defunct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Safety and Wellbeing Indicator Working Group in the development of the ATSICPP indicators and providing valuable feedback on this report.

The AIHW would also like to acknowledge the valuable contributions of the technical experts from each jurisdiction. Thanks are extended to the state and territory departments that provided data for this report:

- Department of Communities and Justice, New South Wales
- Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria
- Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, Queensland
- Department of Communities, Western Australia
- Department for Child Protection, South Australia
- Department of Communities, Tasmania
- Community Services Directorate, Australian Capital Territory
- Territory Families, Northern Territory.



Abbreviations

ACCO	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ATSICPP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle
CP NMDS	Child Protection National Minimum Data Set
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
Qld	Queensland
Tas	Tasmania
SA	South Australia
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

Glossary

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander: A person of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

child: Unless otherwise stated, a young person aged 0–17. For some states and territories, this includes unborn children.

cultural support plan: A cultural support plan is an individualised, dynamic written plan or a support agreement that aims to develop or maintain children or young people's cultural identity through connection to family, community and culture. Cultural support plans help to ensure that planning and decision-making are culturally appropriate and in the best interests of the child. A current cultural support plan is one that has been approved and/or reviewed within the previous 12 months.

family: Includes parent/guardian, sibling, and other relative or kin.

family group home: A home for children provided by a department or community-sector agency that has live-in, non-salaried carers who are reimbursed and/or subsidised for providing care.

independent living: Accommodation where the child lives independently, such as private board or being the lead tenant in a household.

Indigenous: See **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**.

Indigenous relative or kin care: An out-of-home care placement type where the household contains an Indigenous caregiver who was a relative or who had a kinship relationship with the child.

Indigenous status: The status of a person who identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and is accepted as such by the community in which they live. See also **Indigenous**, **non-Indigenous**, and **unknown Indigenous status**.

non-Indigenous: A person who has not been identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent; this excludes people of unknown Indigenous status.


non-Indigenous relative or kin care: An out-of-home care placement type where the household contains a non-Indigenous caregiver (or a caregiver of unknown Indigenous status) who was a relative or who had a kinship relationship with the child.

other care arrangement: Out-of-home care placements that include non-Indigenous caregivers who are not relatives or kin, residential care, family group homes or independent living.

other Indigenous caregiver: An out-of-home care placement type where the household contains an Indigenous caregiver who was not a relative and did not have a kinship relationship with the child.

other non-Indigenous caregiver: An out-of-home care placement type where the household contains a non-Indigenous caregiver who was not a relative and did not have a kinship relationship with the child.

out-of-home care: Overnight care for children aged under 18 for whom there is ongoing case management and financial payment (including where a financial payment has been offered but has been declined by the carer). This excludes placements for children on third-party parental responsibility orders.



placement type: The type of care in which a child in out-of-home care was living. Also referred to as a living arrangement. See also **Indigenous relative or kin care, non-Indigenous relative or kin care, other Indigenous caregiver, other non-Indigenous caregiver, residential care, family group home, and independent living.**

reunification: Reunification is a planned process of safely returning and enabling a child to remain at home with their birth parent(s), family, or former guardian after a period of time in care when it is in the child's best interests to do so, and where it will safeguard the child's long-term stability and permanency. In practice, reunification tends to be nearly exclusively with birth parents. Also known as restoration.

residential care: A type of care where the placement is in a residential building whose purpose is to provide placements for children, and where there are paid staff.

unknown Indigenous status: Describes people whose Indigenous status was unknown.

References

- AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2018. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants: numbers, demographic characteristics and selected outcomes. Cat. no. IHW 195. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2020. Child protection Australia 2018–19. Child welfare series no. 72. Cat. no. CWS 74. Canberra: AIHW.
- Commission for Children and Young People Victoria 2016. In the child's best interests: inquiry into compliance with the intent of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle in Victoria. Viewed 9 June 2020, <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/Publications-inquiries/In-the-childs-best-interests-inquiry-report.pdf>
- Commonwealth of Australia 2017. Report of the Royal Commission and Board of Inquiry into the protection and detention of children in the Northern Territory. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Department of Premier and Cabinet 2012. Report of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry. Melbourne: Department of Premier and Cabinet. Viewed 9 April 2020, http://childprotectioninquiry.vic.gov.au/images/stories/inquiry/volume1/cpi%207649%20web-pdf%20volume%201%20protecting%20victoria_s%20vulnerable%20children_%20inquiry_bm.2.pdf
- DSS (Department of Social Services) 2018. Department of Social Services National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children – fourth three year action plan 2018–2020. Canberra: DSS. Viewed 26 March 2020, http://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2019/dss-fourth-action-plan-v6-web-final.pdf
- Gee G, Dudgeon P, Schultz C, Hart A & Kelly K 2014. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing. Chapter 4 from Dudgeon P, Milroy H & Walker R 2014. Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice. 2nd edn. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. Viewed 26 March 2020, <https://www.telethonkids.org.au/globalassets/media/documents/aboriginal-health/working-together-second-edition/working-together-aboriginal-and-wellbeing-2014.pdf>
- HREOC (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) 1997. Bringing them home. Sydney: Spinney. Viewed 15 April 2020, <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/bringing-them-home-report-1997>
- Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry 2013. Taking responsibility: a roadmap for Queensland child protection. Viewed 9 April 2020, http://www.childprotectioninquiry.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/202625/qcpci-final-report-web-version.pdf
- SNAICC – National Voice for our Children 2017. Understanding and applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: a resource for legislation, policy, and program development. Melbourne: SNAICC. Viewed 16 June 2020, https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Understanding_applying_ATSICCP.pdf
- SNAICC – National Voice for our Children 2018. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: a guide to support implementation. Melbourne: SNAICC. Viewed 20 August 2020, <https://www.snaicc.org.au/the-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-child-placement-principle-a-guide-to-support-implementation/>
- Tilbury C 2013. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: aims and core elements. Melbourne: SNAICC. Viewed 16 June 2020, <https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/03167.pdf>


List of figures

Figure 1:	The 5 core elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP)	3
Figure 2:	Indigenous children in out-of-home care, by caregiver type, 30 June 2017 to 2019.....	6
Figure 3:	Indigenous children in out-of-home care, by caregiver type and state or territory, 30 June 2017 to 2019	7
Figure 4:	Indigenous children in out-of-home care who were living with Indigenous relatives or kin or other Indigenous carers, by caregiver type, 30 June 2017 to 2019	8
Figure 5:	Indigenous children in out-of-home care who were living with Indigenous relatives or kin or other Indigenous carers, by caregiver type and state or territory, 30 June 2017 to 2019	9
Figure 6:	Indigenous children in out-of-home care who had current, documented and approved cultural support plans, at 30 June 2017 to 2019.....	10
Figure 7:	Indigenous children in out-of-home care who had current, documented and approved cultural support plans by state or territory, 30 June 2017 to 2019	11
Figure 8:	Indigenous children in out-of-home care who had current, documented and approved cultural support plans, by time in out-of-home care and state or territory, 30 June 2019.....	12
Figure 9:	Indigenous children in out-of-home care who were reunified during the year, 2016–17 to 2018–19.....	13
Figure 10:	Children in out-of-home care who were reunified during the year, by Indigenous status and state or territory, 2016–17 to 2018–19.....	13
Figure 11:	Indigenous children reunified during the year who did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months, 2016–17 to 2017–18	14
Figure 12:	Children reunified during the year who did not return to out-of-home care within 12 months, by Indigenous status and state or territory, 2016–17 to 2017–18.....	15

Related publications

The following AIHW publications relating to children and child protection might also be of interest:

- AIHW 2020. Child protection Australia 2018–19. Child welfare series no. 72. Cat. no. CWS 74. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2019. Australia's welfare 2019. Australia's welfare series no. 14. Cat. no. AUS 226. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2016. Permanency planning in child protection: a review of current concepts and available data 2016. Child welfare series no. 64. Cat. no. CWS 58. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2014. Indigenous child safety. Cat. no. IHW 127. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2014. A new approach to national child protection data: implementation of the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set. Child welfare series no. 59. Cat. no. CWS 50. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2013. Scoping reportable measures for the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020: supporting outcome 1. Cat. no. CWS 45. Canberra: AIHW.
- AIHW 2013. National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020: technical paper on operational definitions and data issues for key national indicators. Cat. no. CWS 44. Canberra: AIHW.



The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) is a framework designed to promote policy and practice that will reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system. This report brings together the latest state and territory data on 5 ATSICPP indicators that measure and track the application of the Placement and Connection elements of the ATSICPP.

aihw.gov.au

AIHW

Stronger evidence,
better decisions,
improved health and welfare