

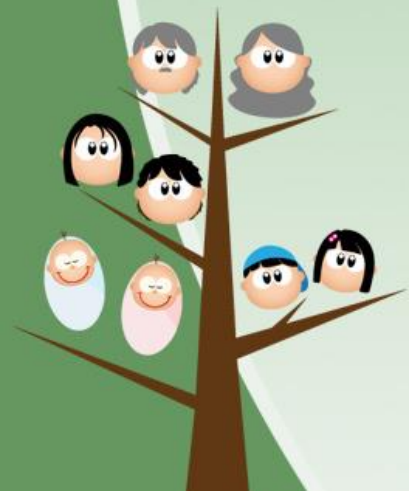
# Supporting Caring Families: Approaches in an Australian Context

**Jennifer McConachy**

Monash University

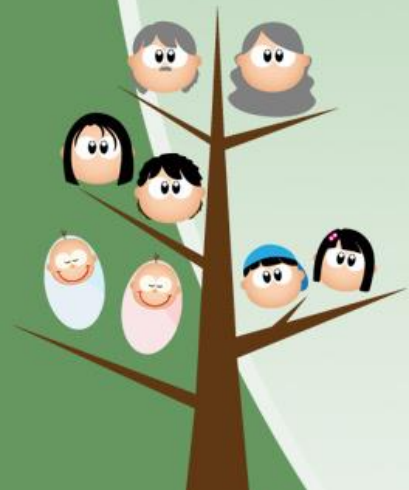
**Juliette Borenstein**

La Trobe University



# Quick introductions

- Wave
  - Families
  - Workers
  - Researchers
  - Policy / government
  - Have we missed someone?



# A little about us...







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### AUSTRALIA

- National capital
- Territory/state capital
- City
- International boundary
- Regional boundary



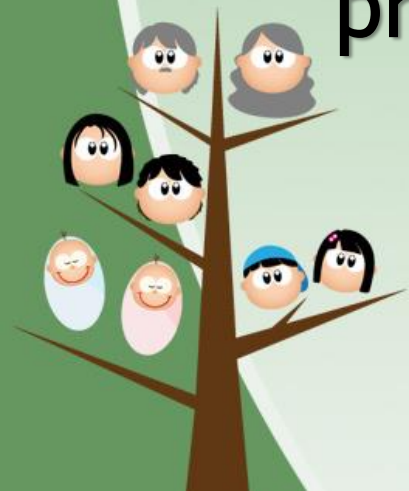
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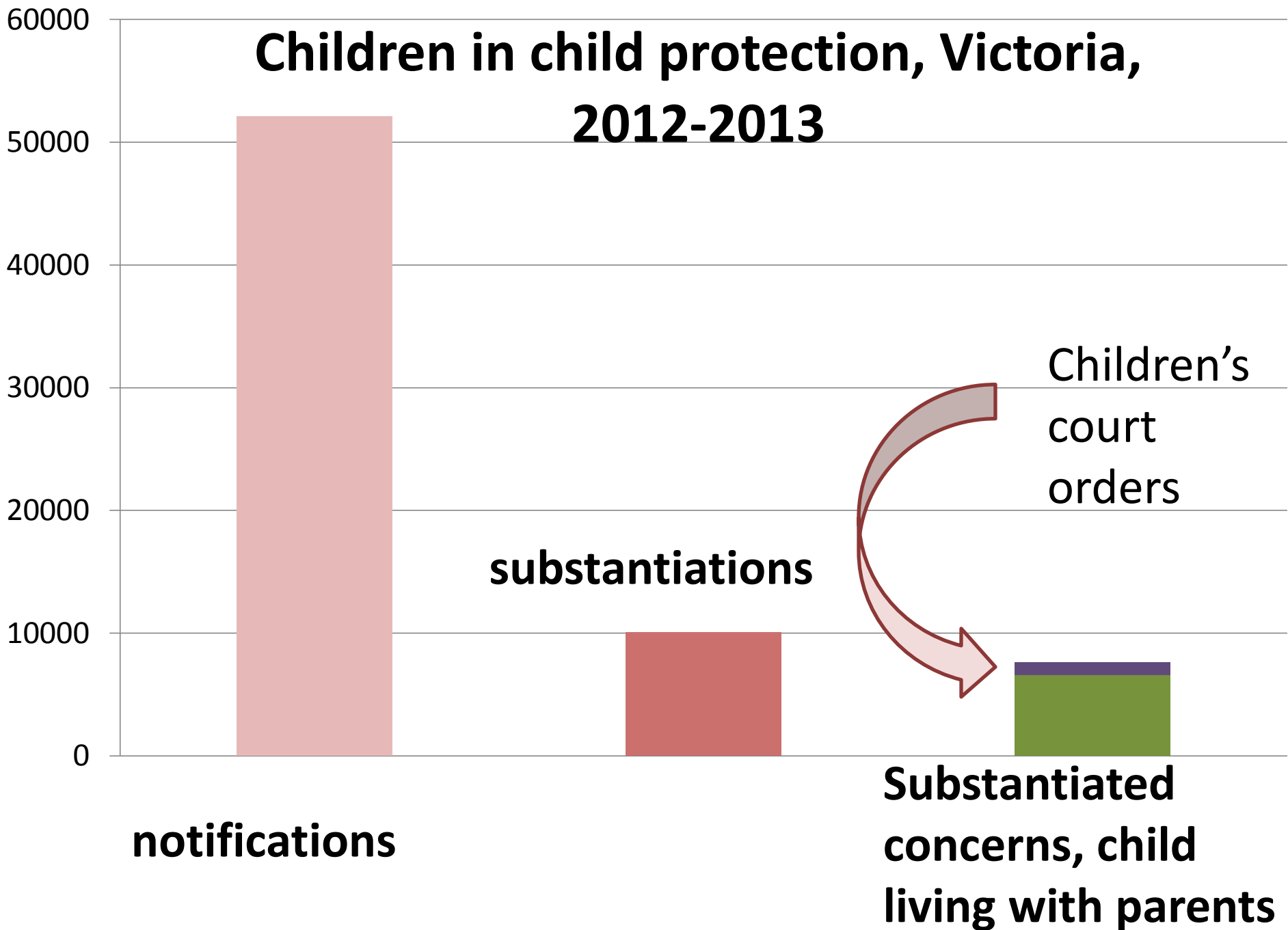
# What my research says

**policy considerations** for the involvement of **extended family** in **family support services** where children have **substantiated child protection concerns** and are living with their parents

Jennifer



# Children in child protection, Victoria, 2012-2013



# Family support work in Victoria

- Diversionary
- Family preservation / family reunification

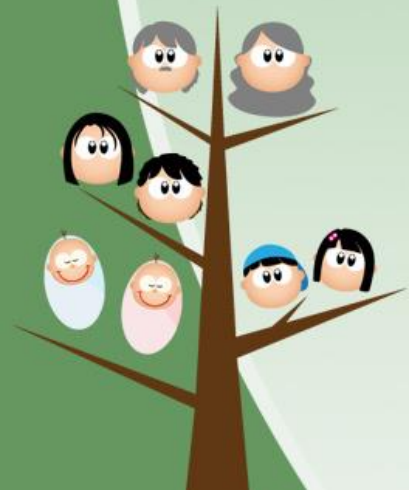
New directions – more integration of services and providing services to children and families earlier





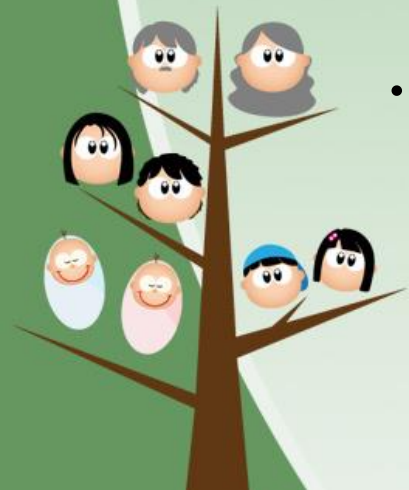
# How I did the research

- 3 surveys
- Intent of the policy
- Scope of the policy
- Essential elements for practice



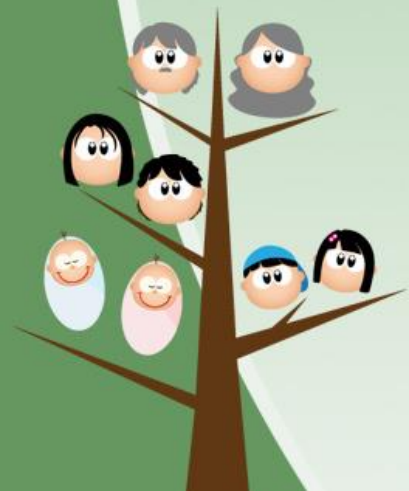
# What the policy should achieve (intent)

- Improved safety and wellbeing for children
- Individuals and the Family feel more together and supported
- Workers stay longer
- Agencies work better together



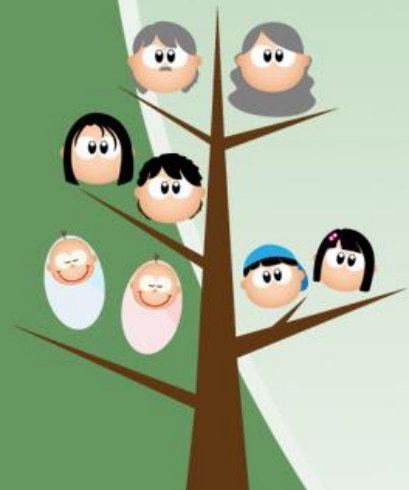
# Broadly... (scope)

- One program across family support and kinship care
- Voluntary participation
  - Families at transition points
  - Indigenous and non Indigenous; culturally responsive and respectful



# What a program would include

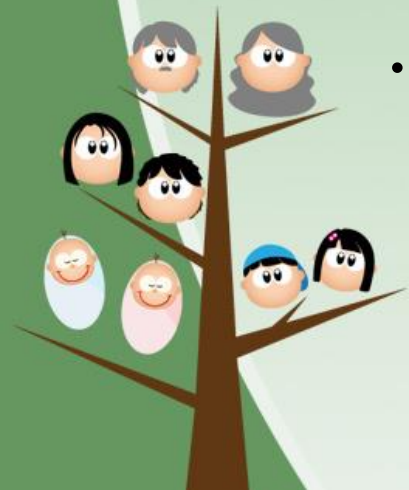
- Initial assessment – 2 stages
- Collaboration – beginning with family-led decision making
  - Review – finish or continue
  - Return to the program





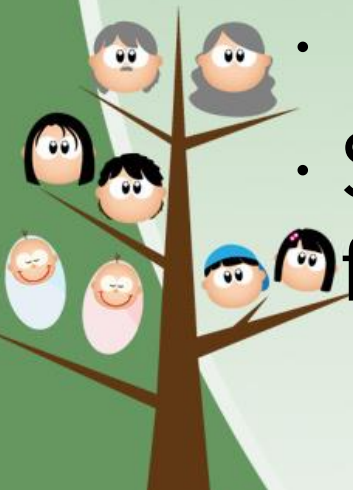
# Principles of the policy (essential elements)

- relationship-based practice
- informed by the principles of:
  - therapeutic engagement,
  - collaborative case management
  - strengths-based approach.



# What's on offer? (essential elements)

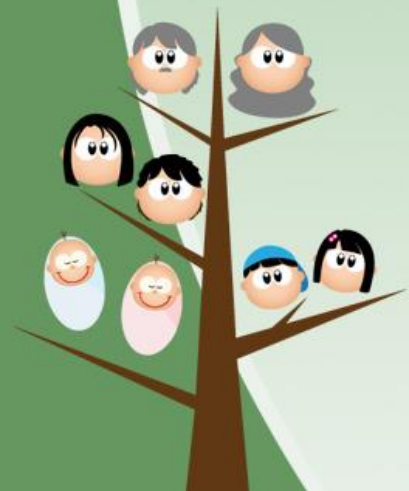
- Family counselling / family therapy
- Information & support about trauma and attachment
- Advocacy
- Peer support group
- Personal counselling
- Some discretionary funds for families and for workers



# Now... it's your turn

How can we have genuine collaboration and sharing of responsibility?

What will we see if a program from this policy is working? How will we measure it?





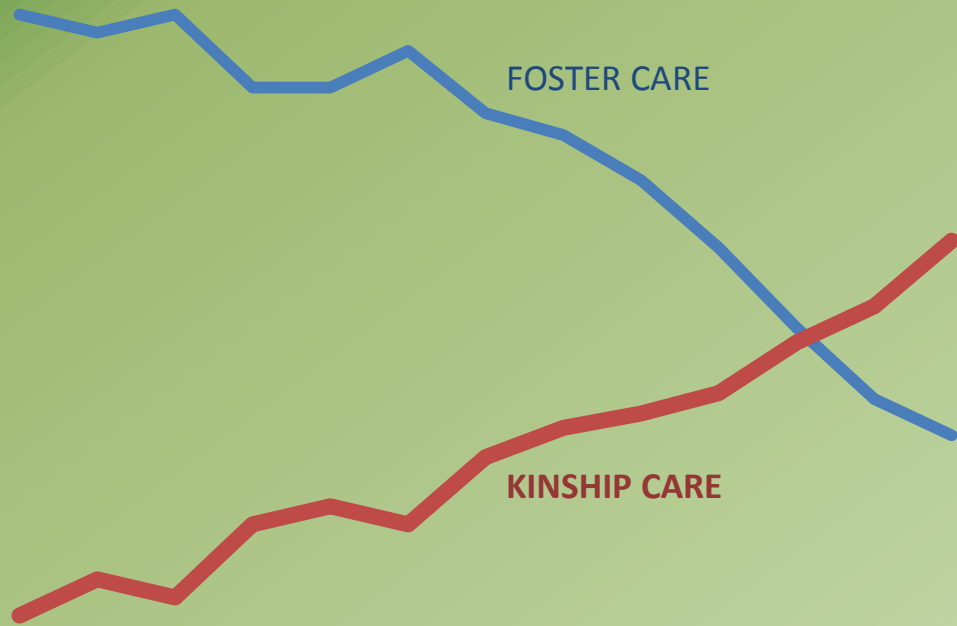


# Kinship Care in Australia....

‘is the care provided by relatives or a member of a child’s social network when a child cannot live with their parents.’

(Department of Human Services 2009)

# Kinship Families: A new phenomenon



# Statutory Kinship Care in Australia

## AUSTRALIA

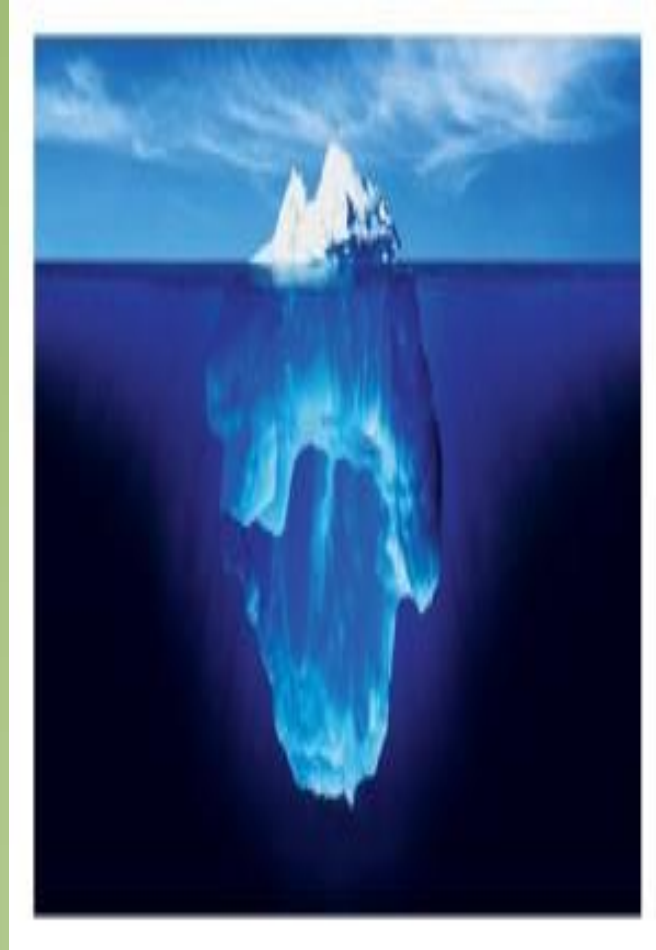
19,426 children

## VICTORIA

3,248 children

At 30.6.13

Source: AIHW 2013



Estimates from  
U.S. & U.K.

suggest 95%  
of kinship care  
arrangements  
are private and  
non-statutory

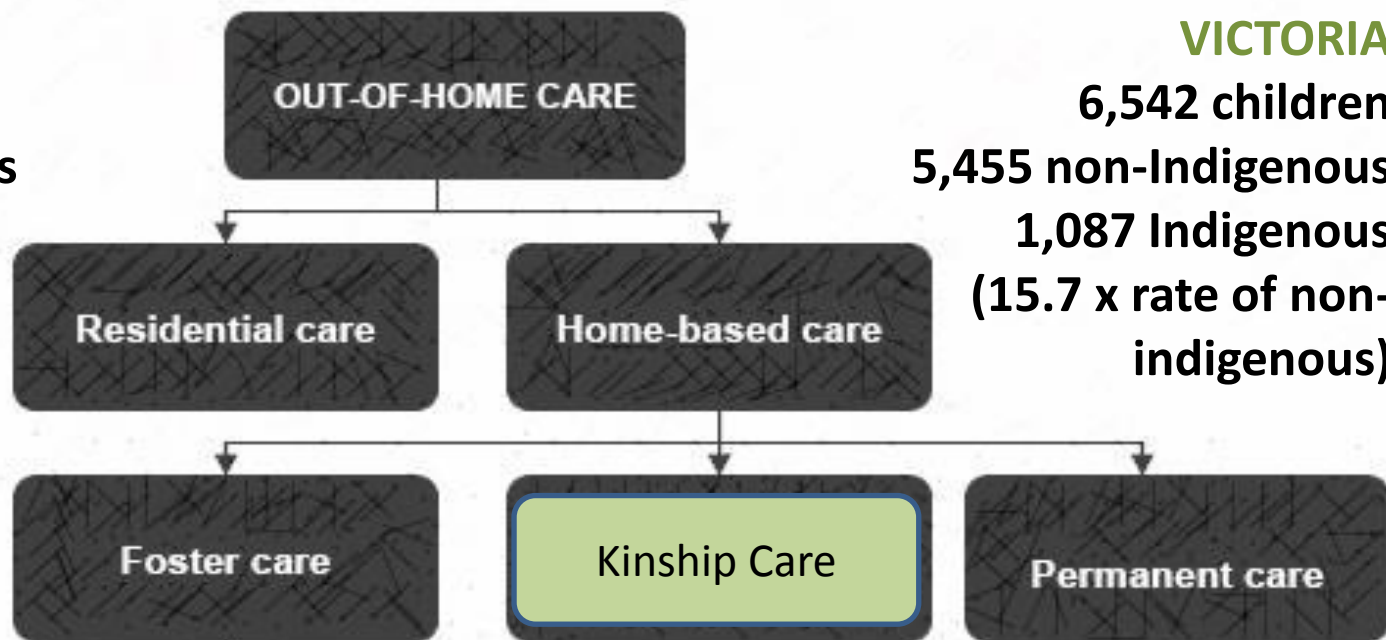
(Selwyn & Nandy, 2011; Annie E Casey Foundation, 2012)

# Statutory Kinship Care in Australia

## Where does it fit?

### AUSTRALIA

40,549 children  
26,597 non-Indigenous  
13,952 Indigenous  
(10.6 x rate of non-Indigenous)



### VICTORIA

6,542 children  
5,455 non-Indigenous  
1,087 Indigenous  
(15.7 x rate of non-indigenous)

**AUSTRALIA 47.95%**

**VICTORIA 49.6 %**

Source: AIHW 2014,  
as at 30.6.13



# Statutory Kinship Care in Victoria

## What's happening?

- Since 2006 kinship care has been the ***first option*** when children are removed from the care of their parents (Children, Youth and Families Act 2005)
- Between 2006 and 2009 ***a support model*** was developed by the Department of Human Services Victoria (DHS), and there are now 27 funded kinship programs; 16 mainstream, and 11 Indigenous

# Statutory Kinship Care in Victoria

## What's Happening?

The programs provide:


- **Establishment support** (for up to 6 months)
- **Case management** for long term orders
- **Information**-also available for non-stat carers
- The programs can support **750 kinship care arrangements** (another 2500 are supported by DHS child protection officers)

# Statutory Kinship Care in Victoria

## Issues-for Carers

- Contact
- Legal issues
- Unmet support needs
- Lack of information
- Educational issues

(Brennan et al 2013, Kiraly 2011(2))



‘We love caring for all the children and see them develop and gain confidence. It is not an easy path at times but it is not dull! ‘

Kiraly 2011

# Statutory Kinship Care in Victoria

## Issues-more broadly

- Permanency
- The needs of Indigenous children
- The 'fit' of kinship care in the welfare system

# Statutory Kinship Care in Victoria

## Promising practice & developments

- Focus on contact
- Mirabel-support
- Winangay assessment tool & other specialised processes for Indigenous children and their carers
- Proposed changes to permanency laws

# A Framework for Statutory Kinship Care

## Issues:

- Kinship care is complex and unique
- ‘Square peg in a round hole’
- Inadequate practice guidance

Confusion of carers and workers

Inconsistent practice





# A Framework for Statutory Kinship Care

CARERS



The nature of statutory kinship care

Standard of care

PRACTITIONERS



Quality care

Role of government

Quality practice

Carer and practitioner roles

# Questions for you...

- Where does statutory kinship care fit?  
Family care / foster care?
- What is the role of government?
- What is the standard of care-same as a parent / a foster carer?
- What is important with good quality practice and good quality care?

Indigenous assessment tool

[www.winangay.com](http://www.winangay.com)

# Thank you

- Donna and all at CWLA
- Monash and La Trobe Universities
- Berry Street
- Our research participants



MOST IMPORTANTLY – TO YOU,

The wonderful audience who  
took a chance and participated

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