

## Institute for Social Science Research - PhD Student Project

**ISSR Impact Area:** Policy and Practice / Health

**Title:** *Improving the experiences of, and outcomes for, Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in Out-of-Home Care (OOHC)*

**Supervisor/s:** [Dr Jenny Povey](#), [Professor Janeen Baxter](#), [Dr Peter Walsh](#) and [Professor Karen Healy](#)

**Funding:**

Student Scholarship required, top-up funding may be available to suitable candidate.

**Project description:**

Children placed in out-of-home care (OOHC) are a highly vulnerable group who face enormous challenges over their life course. The experiences of children prior to, and during, their journey through OOHC may have life-long effects on their emotional, social and cultural well-being. Despite government initiatives to reduce the number of children entering and remaining in OOHC, the number is increasing. Further, the number of Indigenous children in OOHC continues to grow with Indigenous children 11 times more likely to be in OOHC than non-Indigenous children. Moreover, many of these children are not placed in accordance with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principles.

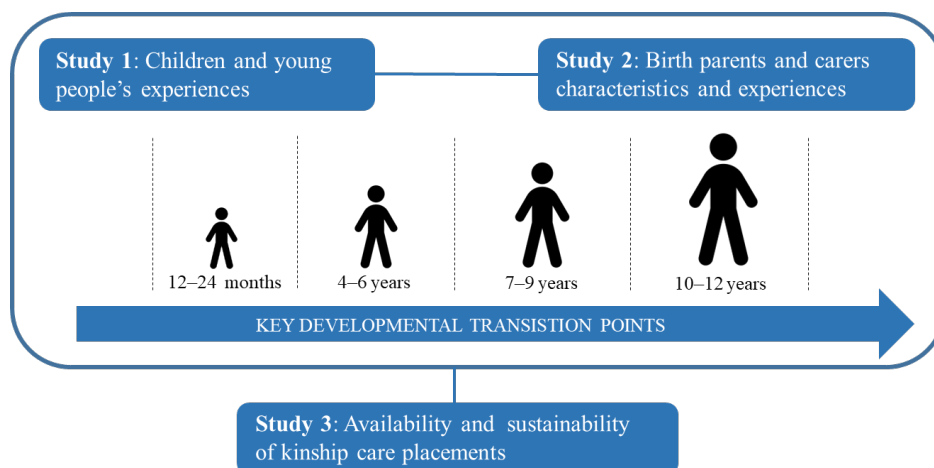
Researchers at The University of Queensland have been awarded ARC Linkage funding to conduct a qualitative longitudinal study to examine the association between characteristics of, and changes in, care arrangements, on children's social and emotional well-being and connection to their cultural communities. The project aims to provide evidence to improve service agencies' understanding of children's experiences in OOHC and how agencies can best support families, carers and communities to promote the emotional, social and cultural well-being of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in OOHC.

The project will:

- Analyse Indigenous and non-Indigenous children's experiences of OOHC placements over time and at key points in the children's development.
- Explore how Indigenous and non-Indigenous children's experiences of OOHC care and their relationships with foster/kinship carers and birth families contribute to their social and emotional well-being and connection to culture over time.
- Analyse the experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous birth families and foster/kinship carers over time and how they can be best supported to support children's social and emotional well-being and connection to their cultural communities.
- Analyse reasons for, and identify options to address, the low proportion of kinship care placements especially for Indigenous children in Queensland.

The project will comprise three related studies in Queensland. Study 1 will examine experiences of children (1-12 years) over time in their journeys through OOHC using data from a sample of 160 children and young people in home-based OOHC. Study 2 will examine experiences of birth families and carers of children in OOHC over time using data from birth families and foster/kinship carers of the children from Study 1. Study 3 will assess factors shaping the availability and sustainability of kinship care placements, especially for Indigenous children. The successful PhD candidate will contribute to either Study 1 or 2.

At each data collection round, 480 semi-structured interviews will be conducted, short standardised instruments will be administered to the children and a short standardised parenting styles instrument will be administered to parents/carers. Interviews with parents and carers will include elicitation techniques such as eco-maps, life history timelines and life story books to facilitate interviews.



To apply, please submit a proposal (no more than 4 pages) detailing your potential topic area and a copy of your CV. If successful, we will work with you to refine the topic to ensure it is complementary to the larger ARC Linkage project and does not duplicate work already planned.

#### **The candidate:**

We are seeking a candidate who has an Honours or Masters degree with a research component. To be competitive in the scholarship round, a publication track record and previous research assistance experience is advantageous. Experience in qualitative data collection, qualitative data analysis, elicitation methods, mixed methods, the substantive area and a high level of writing skills is desirable.

#### **Achievable Outcomes:**

- A PhD degree
- Scientific papers in high impact research journals
- Experience with oral/written presentations at national/international conferences

- Non-traditional research outputs such as research reports and summaries of findings for participants
- Experience in all stages of a research project including planning meetings, sample design, development of research instruments, coding, analysis, write up and presentation of findings
- Experience working in an interdisciplinary team and engaging with external partners and stakeholders