



Billy Black

# Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study (POCLS)

**Grant information session for interested applicants**

Targeted to Aboriginal-led or partnered analysis projects

*The artist is a young person who grew up in care.*

*“The banner shows many pathways through the care system with a carer or caseworker acting as a guide, ultimately leading to independence for every young person. Whether we live with family or strangers, study, work, or just try our best, the paths we choose and are guided through in our youth are what we use to prepare ourselves for the happiest adulthood we can achieve” Billy Black*

22 November 2022

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# Acknowledgement

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We acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet and pay our respect to Aboriginal Elders past, present and emerging.

We remember the Stolen Generations – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children forcibly removed from their families, communities and culture under past government practices.



# 1

## Background to the POCLS

- Aim of the POCLS
- POCLS sample selection
- POCLS data collection timelines
- DCJ priority policy questions
- Aims of the POCLS EOI for grants

# Aim of the Study



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- The aim of the POCLS is to provide significant new knowledge that will inform policy to improve the outcomes of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) in terms of safety, permanency and wellbeing.
  - The POCLS is designed to examine the factors influencing child development over time in the domains of safety, physical health, socio-emotional wellbeing and cognitive/language development.
  - The POCLS is the first large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children and young people aged 0-17 years entering OOHC for the first time under the NSW *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.
  - The study provides unique, high-quality information about the wellbeing trajectories of children in OOHC. Wave 1 provided a baseline indication of children's socio-emotional wellbeing, cognitive/learning ability, safety and physical health at entry to OOHC. The addition of each wave provides information on children's pathways and the factors impacting on outcomes.
  - The POCLS has collected 10 years of in-depth information on children's experiences and developmental outcomes (Waves 1-5).
  - Wave 6 is commencing in 2023 and will track the infant cohort transitioning to high school, and for this first time track the young people who have aged out of OOHC at 18 years.
  - The results from the POCLS will inform OOHC policy and practice, improve investment decisions and improve the long-term outcomes of children.

# POCLS Sample Selection



## **Study population cohort**

Entered OOHC on interim orders May 2010-October 2011  
(n=4,126)

## **Final orders cohort**

Children's Court order by April 2013 (n=2,828)

## **Interview cohort**

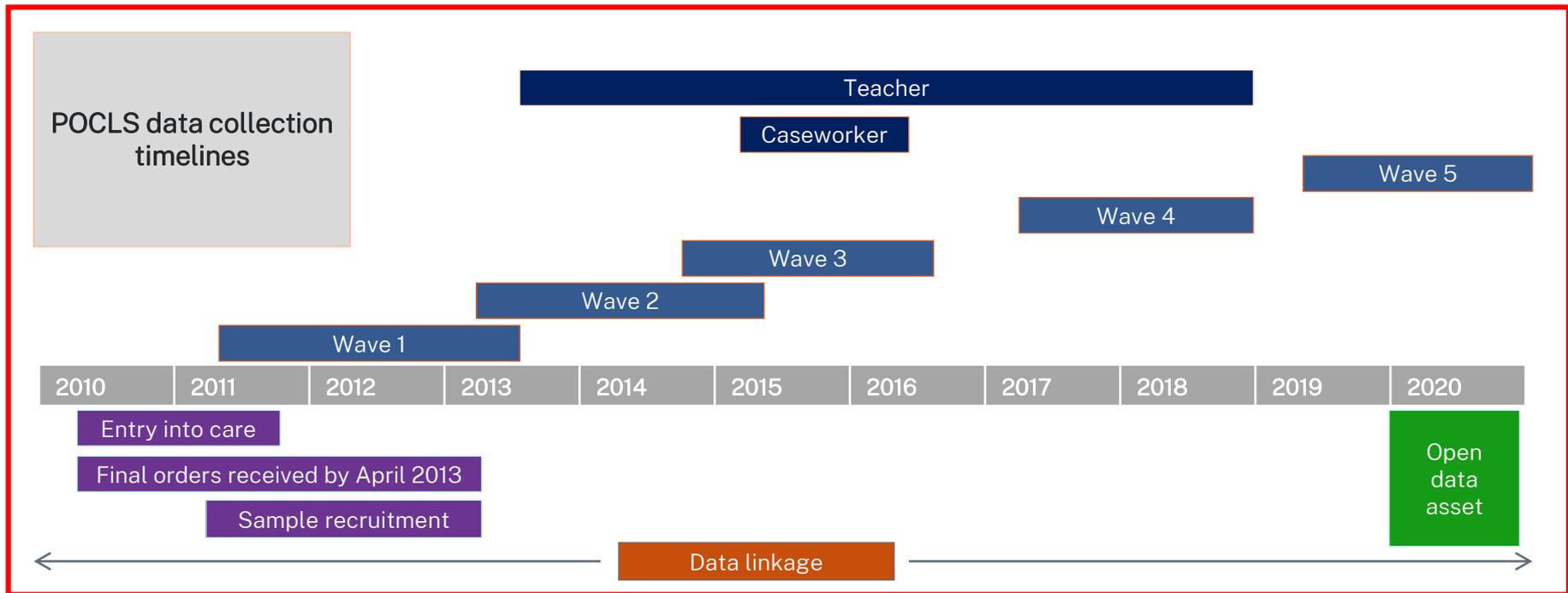
(n=1,789)

Five waves of data collection completed with children 0-17 years in long-term OOHC or exited to restoration, guardianship and adoption. An aftercare sub-study will track young people over 18 years.

# POCLS Data Collection Timelines



- As with all prospective longitudinal studies, the evidence base becomes stronger and more robust as more waves of data are collected from the same cohort of children in the study.
- The POCLS has 10 years of in-depth data on children’s OOHC experiences (including exits and re-entries) and developmental outcomes ready for analyses.



# DCJ Priority Policy Questions



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Details on DCJ priority policy questions specific to the characteristics and experiences of Aboriginal children and carers from consultations with stakeholders including Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes, Ngaramanala and AbSec are summarised in the *Grant Document, Appendix 1: Targeted priority policy questions*.

Please note, applicants can choose to examine other research questions in their application for a grant.

DCJ priorities policy areas are:

- What can the POCLS tell us about the OOHC service system and factors that influence Aboriginal children's outcomes?
- What can the POCLS tell us about permanency options and Aboriginal children's outcomes?
- What can the POCLS tell us about the experiences of Aboriginal children and young people who have entered OOHC and their developmental outcomes over time?
- What can the POCLS tell us about carer characteristics and what can we do to better support carers of Aboriginal children?
- What can the POCLS tell us about the experiences and developmental outcomes for cohorts of interest (age cohorts, carer cohorts, geography, etc)?

# Aim of the POCLS EOI for Grants



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- Improve the outcomes for Aboriginal children in OOHC and their families by expanding the evidence to inform policy and practice and strengthen the OOHC service system.
  - Encourage the use of the POCLS survey and linked services data in policy relevant research.
  - Raise the profile of the POCLS study among Aboriginal researchers and communities through policy relevant research, research outputs and research-guided policy and practice change.
  - Begin to develop a critical mass of Aboriginal researchers with expertise in using the POCLS data.
  - Invest in building career Aboriginal researchers in OOHC.

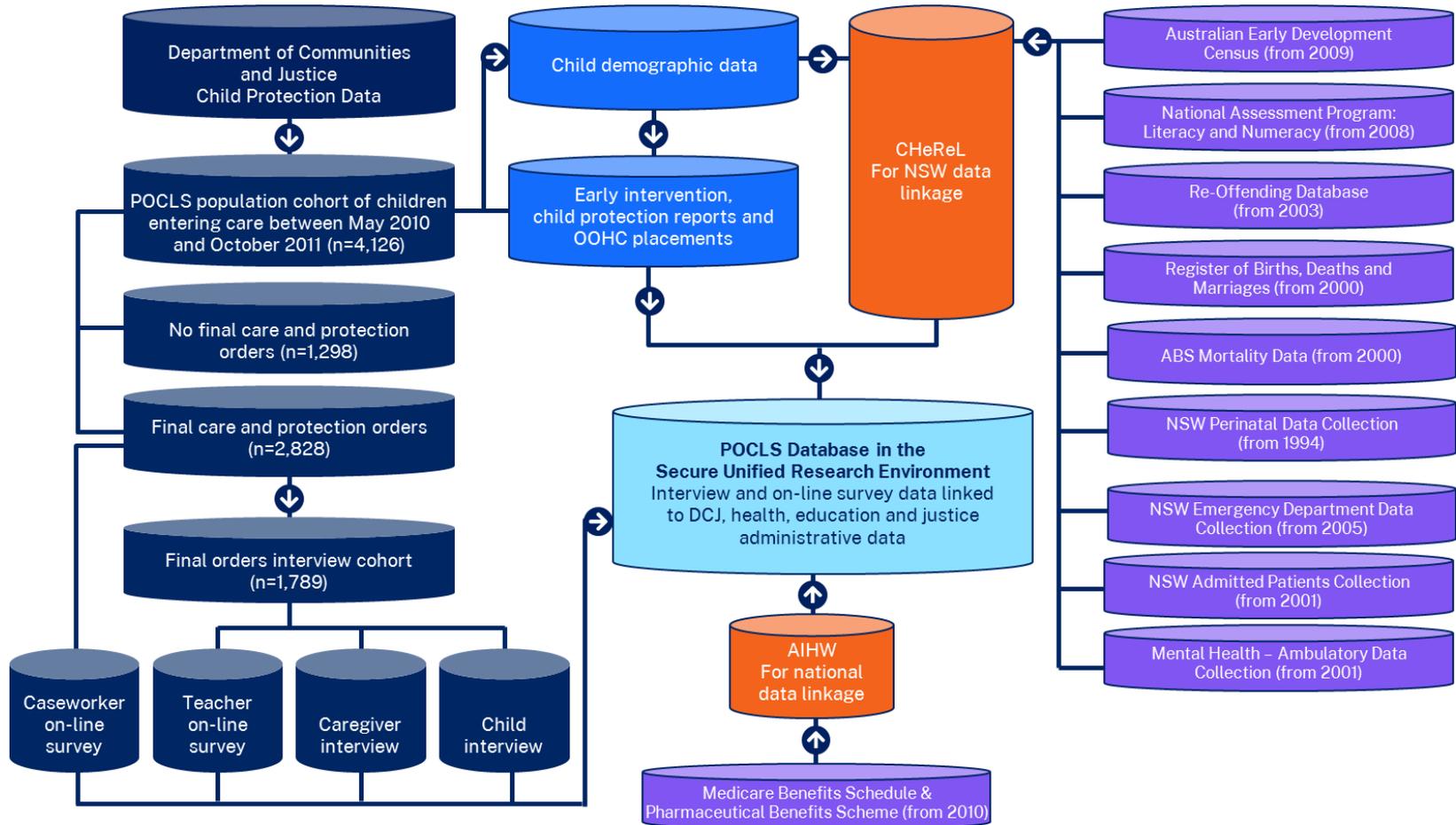
# 2

## POCLS Data Sources and Participation

### Data Sources:

- Data linkage
  - DCJ administrative data
  - Education administrative data
  - Health administrative data
  - Youth offending administrative data
- Child and caregiver measures and interviews
- Childcare/school teacher and caseworker surveys

# POCLS Data Asset



# POCLS Data Asset (cont.)



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The data asset created by the POCLS is of international and national significance and is likely to have greater explanatory power than other studies because of the large sample size and high retention rate across waves.

The breadth of information in the data asset is extensive and includes data collected from:

## Children

- Detailed information about the child including their physical health, socio-emotional well-being, cognitive development, how settled they are, temperament, activities and friends, education and work, services and supports, casework , and birth family contact.

## Caregivers

- Detailed information about the caregiver including their relationship with the child, parenting style, carer experience and training, informal support network, casework support, satisfaction with being a carer, health/mental health, relationship with partner, finances and housing, and neighbourhood.

## Caseworkers

- Information from the caseworker about their current involvement, how well they know the child, placement and child needs, child's birth family, birth family contact and case planning.

## Childcare/school teachers

- Information from the child's teacher (childcare, preschool or school) about the child's socio-emotional wellbeing (CBCL), school attendance, education plans, progress with schoolwork, extra activities and friends.

# POCLS Data Asset (cont.)



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## Safety

- Details of child protection reports and OOHC placements.

## Health

- Perinatal information about mothers and babies.
- Information about presentations to the emergency departments of public hospitals in NSW.
- Information about all admitted patient services provided by NSW public hospitals.
- Information from the NSW Mental Health Ambulatory Data Collection which is dedicated to the assessment, treatment, rehabilitation or care of non-admitted patients. It may include mental health day programs, psychiatric outpatients and outreach services (e.g. home visits).
- Death and cause of death information.
- Information on subsidised services provided by doctors, specialists, optometrists, etc; and prescription drugs dispensed by approved suppliers (MBS; PBS).

## Offending

- Information on contact with the juvenile justice system including offending and custodial sentences.

## Education

- Indicators of the children's development in their first year of full-time school using the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC).
- Details of educational performance using the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy, (NAPLAN), school suspensions and school attendance.

# POCLS Data Asset (cont.)



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## Standardised measures

- The use of standardised measures in the POCLS enables the comparison of outcomes for children and young people in care with those in the general population. For example, the POCLS uses the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) to measure whether children are in the normal, borderline or clinical range in terms of their socio-emotional development. These results can then be compared to results for the general population.

## Record linkage data

- Outcomes for children who entered OOHC for the first time and then went on to receive final care and protection orders can also be compared with outcomes for children who did not receive final orders and returned home using the record linkage data.

## Mode of data collection

- Face-to-face interviews are conducted by trained interviewers using CAPI or ACASI set questions – little probing.
- During COVID the mode was changed to telephone interviews. The change in mode meant that the direct child measures had to be dropped.

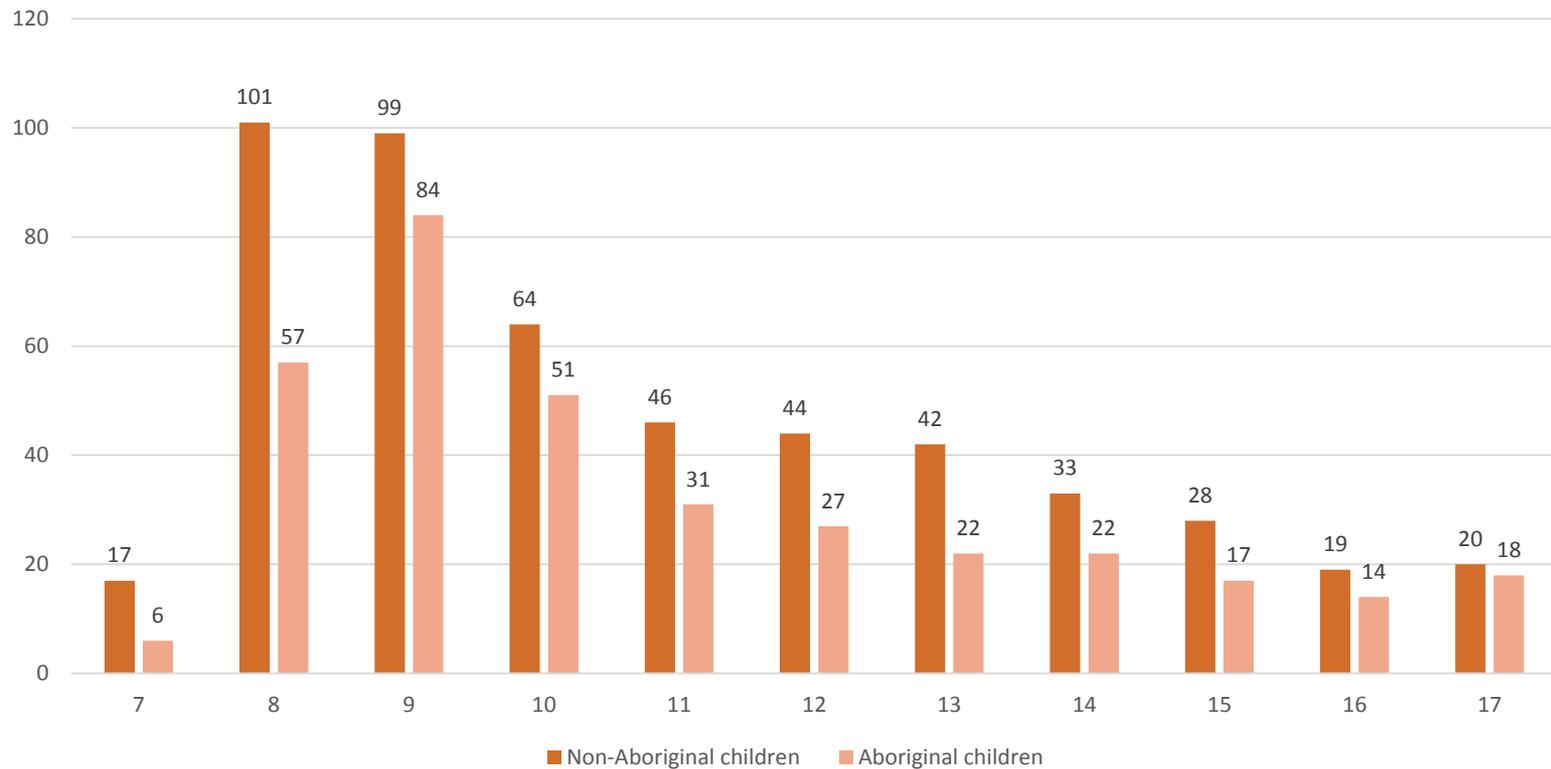
## Qualitative data is limited

- Caregivers are asked four open ended questions which are not coded and the confidentialised verbatim text are in the dataset
- Children and young people are asked describe why they do not feel safe or settled; what they would like to change about family contact/time; and if there is anything else they would like to say at the end of each module.

# Participation in the POCLS interviews

Wave	Aboriginal children	Non-Aboriginal children	Total
Wave 1	495	790	1,285
Wave 2	480	720	1,200
Wave 3	419	614	1,033
Wave 4	382	580	962
Wave 5	349	513	862
All five waves	241	382	623
At least one wave	589	932	1,521

# Age of children in Wave 5 interviews by Aboriginal status



# Placement type/exit reason for children in Wave 5 interviews

Placement type/exit reason	Aboriginal children		Non-Aboriginal children		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Foster Care	150	43.0	179	34.9	329	38.2
Relative/kinship Care	93	26.6	114	22.2	207	24.0
Residential Care	10	2.9	12	2.3	22	2.6
Guardianship	70	20.1	120	23.4	190	22.0
Adopted	0	0.0	48	9.4	48	5.6
Restored	26	7.4	40	7.8	66	7.7
Total	349	100.0	513	100.0	862	100.0

# 3

## The Grant EOI

Grant EOI  
Access to the POCLS data  
Secure Unified Research Environment

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- Suitably qualified researchers are encouraged to apply using the application in the *Grant Document Appendix 3*
  - When reviewing applications, Selection Criteria included in the Grant Document will be applied by a 12 member Steering Committee chaired by Brendan Thomas Deputy Secretary Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes
  - Research collaborations and joint funding will be considered. The *Grant Document Appendix 2* lists researchers who have analysed the POCLS data and could be possible collaborators or advisors to your project
  - Projects are expected to be completed within 12-18 months of funding allocation
  - Project outputs include a paper suitable for submission to a peer reviewed journal, a short Evidence-to-Action brief, and presentation to the POCLS Advisory Group
  - Grant value is \$30,000 per project. SURE fees for 12 months access to the data up to \$6,000 will be covered by DCJ. Anything beyond this will need to be covered by the researcher.
  - Agreements include:
    - DCJ Service Agreement
    - Data use and confidentiality agreements
    - Working With Children Check and a Police Check
  - Start date is as soon as the above are completed and the HREC's have approved the addition of personnel to the POCLS project
  - FACSIR will organise data user training, quarterly catch-ups with projects, and collaborators meetings.

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## Selection Criteria applied by a 12 member Steering Committee:

### Proposed Quality and Innovation: 40%

1. Does the research directly address one or more of the DCJ priority policy areas?
2. Is the conceptual/theoretical framework innovative and original?
3. Will the aims, concepts, methods and results advance knowledge?

### Feasibility: 20%

4. Does the project's design and leadership provide confidence in the timely and successful completion of the research?

### Benefit: 20%

5. Does the research address multiple domains/ priorities/ policy areas?
6. Will the proposed research be cost-effective and value for money?

### Candidate: 20%

7. Is the research Aboriginal led?
8. If the research is not Aboriginal led, is there a strong partnership with Aboriginal communities?
9. Evidence of past performance.
10. Time and capacity to undertake the proposed research.

# Secure Unified Research Environment (SURE)



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- De-identified unit record data are available to approved researchers under strict controls to ensure the information is being used appropriately, and that the research is scientifically sound, feasible and answers important policy questions.
  - Flexible data access and distribution control is therefore required.
  - To this end, data files will only be accessible to researchers through SURE.
  - SURE is a high-powered computing environment where researchers remotely and securely access a data research laboratory to analyse project data.
  - A project-data-curator controls import and export of files to the project workspace.
  - We recommend you only start to access the data in SURE once you are ready to start analysis. After 12 months, the SURE workspace will be suspended for a 12 month period during which time researchers can get 2 x 2 weeks access to address journal reviews. The workspace is then closed and archived.
  - Further details about SURE are available at <https://www.saxinstitute.org.au/our-work/sure/>

# POCLS publications



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**Aggregated data** are available through:

- Wave Reports
- On-line interactive dashboards (currently not available while being updated)
- Statistical and research reports

**Data documentation and technical reports** are available to assist in using and understanding the POCLS data. This includes questionnaires, data dictionaries and data user guides as well as papers on statistical power, selection bias and cross-sectional and longitudinal weighting. Data user training will be provided to successful applicants.

**Research reports** are published on the webpage or in journals. For more information about the POCLS and publications please see the POCLS Technical Report 1: Study objectives and strategic research agenda [www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=778733](http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=778733)

# 4

## Governance and further information

Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance  
POCLS Governance Framework  
Ethics  
Acknowledgements  
Further Information

# Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) and Indigenous Data Governance (IDG)

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The POCLS acknowledges and honours Aboriginal people as the First Peoples of NSW and is committed to working with the DCJ's Ngaramanala and Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes (TAO) to ensure that Aboriginal children, young people, families and communities are supported and empowered to improve their life outcomes.

The POCLS data asset will be used to improve how services and supports are designed and delivered in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities.

Ngaramanala is leading DCJ's response to the Family Is Culture (2019) Recommendations 1 and 2, which relate to IDS and IDG policy. Recommendations 3 and 96 relate to the POCLS design, methodology and knowledge translation to strengthen Aboriginal community members and stakeholders engagement as equal research partners in all aspects of the study. As an interim measure, the MaiaM Nayri wingara principles of IDS and IDG will be used for the POCLS where possible.

The Secretary has agreed to fund the establishment of an Aboriginal Governance Panel for DCJ.

Over the next few years, a whole of government response to IDS and IDG in NSW is being led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations. The POCLS will continue to collaborate with Aboriginal Peoples and will apply the policy once developed.

# POCLS Governance Framework



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The POCLS collaborative governance framework includes experts from DCJ, universities, other government and non-government agencies:

- **Chief Investigator** is responsible for leading the POCLS and ensuring that the overall conduct of the POCLS aligns with the ethics approvals granted.
- **DCJ Executive Board** reviews the POCLS progress and strategic research agenda twice a year.
- **Study Management Group** were responsible for the internal strategic management and coordination of the study during the establishment stage 2008-2010.
- **Study Working Group** was established in 2011, meets quarterly and is responsible for design, implementation, scientific input and analysis.
- **Study Advisory Group** was established in 2017, meets up to twice a year and is responsible for providing high level advice and direction, identifying key policy and practice questions, review insights and applications to policy and practice.
- **Study Evidence to Action Working Group** was established in 2019 and meets as research reports are finalised to ensure key insights are captured in recommendations to improve policy and practice and provide advice on knowledge translation.
- **Aboriginal Governance Panel** is being established for DCJ and the POCLS will use the Panel so that Aboriginal community members and stakeholders are better engaged as equal research partners in all aspects of the POCLS.

# Ethics approval

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## **Human Research Ethics Committee**

University of New South Wales HREC (HC 210985).

## **Aboriginal Ethics Committee**

Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) of NSW Ethics Committee (766/10).

## **NSW Population & Health Services Research Ethics Committee**

(HREC/14/CIPHS/74 and Cancer Institute New South Wales 2014/12/570).

## **Australian Institute for Health and Welfare (AIHW) Ethics Committee**

(EO2019-1-406).

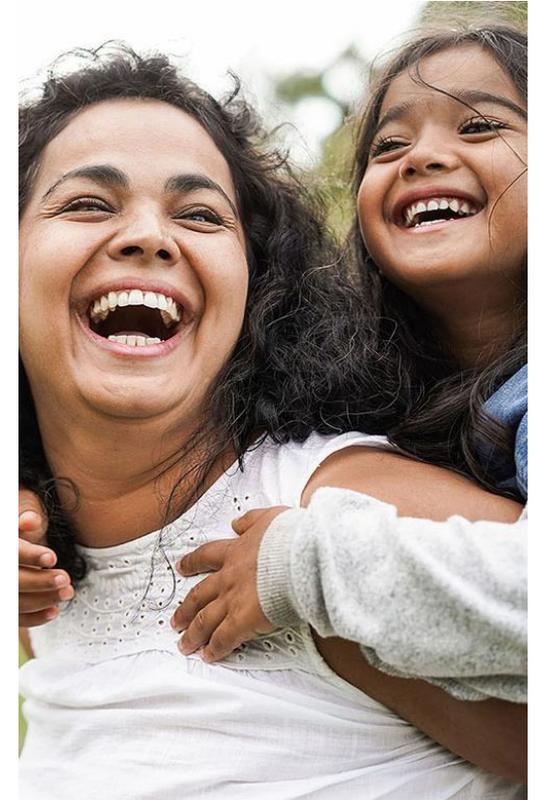
## **NSW Department of Education**

State Education Research Applications Process (SERAP) (2012260).

**NSW Catholic Education Office Sydney and relevant dioceses.**

# Acknowledgements

- DCJ for the investment in research and leading the POCLS
- I-view who collected the data
- **Children and young people** who are participating in the study
- **Carers and birthparents** who are participating in the study
- **Caseworkers, childcare and school teachers** who assisted with sample recruitment and completed on-line surveys
- **Create Foundation, AbSec and Adopt Change** for assisting during the study design stage and supporting participants
- **Stakeholders and experts** who have provided support, assistance and advice



# Further information

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Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study Team:

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Email: [Pathways@facs.nsw.com.au](mailto:Pathways@facs.nsw.com.au)

POCLS Webpage: [www.community.nsw.gov.au/pathways](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/pathways)

Study information and publication clearinghouse

