

6 September 2019



Report highlights urgent need to invest in our children

UnitingCare Australia is today launching its research Report, *Review of Best Practice in Residential Out of Home Care*. The review was prepared to provide information and guidance on best practice in the provision of residential out of home care for those children and young people who need it.

Claerwen Little, National Director of UnitingCare Australia, said “Far too many children are ending up in out of home care in Australia, and greater investment in early intervention and prevention is urgently needed so children can grow up happy and healthy within their own families and communities.

“However, for those children who are placed in residential out of home care, it is imperative that services are properly resourced and delivering the best possible care and support. This Report identifies the best practice principles and models that should underpin residential out of home care and ensure children are given the best chance to heal and thrive”, said Ms Little.

Drawing on consultations and a review of Australian and international research, the Report identifies 12 best practice principles that should inform residential out of home care.

Key findings of the Report include:

- **Strengthening the informal, community-based support system is key to both preventing child maltreatment and supporting a more effective statutory child protection system.**
- **Preventing children’s exposure to risk factors is essential to reduce rates of child removal and promote children’s wellbeing and longer-term outcomes.**
- **Governments and service systems at all levels must be working to uphold the rights of children and their families.**
- **The most vulnerable children are often those in residential care.**
- **Services should adopt the 12 principles of best practice.**
- **Advocate for an environment that fosters healing and positive development.**

There are more than 47,000¹ children in out of home care across Australia and each year the numbers continue to grow. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have unacceptably high representation in residential out of home care.

“All governments should be investing more in early intervention and prevention so children can grow up happy and healthy within their own families and communities”, concluded Ms Little.

You can download the report at www.unitingcare.org.au

UnitingCare Australia is the national body for the Uniting Church’s community services network in Australia, supporting 1.4 million people each year across urban, rural and remote communities.

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¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2018a). *Child protection Australia 2016–2017* (Child Welfare Series No. 68). Canberra: AIHW