

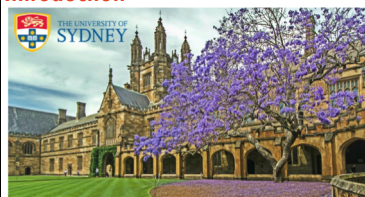
The pivot to permanency: Reforming child protection and out-of-home care in NSW, Australia

Make Visible in Action: International
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Presented by
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Introduction



Dr Amy Conley Wright, Associate Professor of Social Work &
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Acknowledgement of Country



Tree of Knowledge

pokerwork on kangaroo skin
Lynette Riley, 2010

<http://Sydney.edu.au/kinship-module>

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Overview

- Background: Child protection in New South Wales
- The challenge of child protection
- New South Wales permanency reforms
- The concept of permanency: Dimensions, considerations, enactment
- An emerging model of permanency with lifelong connections



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Background on New South Wales



- Largest state in Australia (7.5 million people)
- Includes Australia's largest city (Sydney)
- Child protection and out-of-home care is organized at the state level

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Background on child protection in Australia



Table 2: Trends in children aged 0–17 years in OOHC, states and territories, 30 June 2013 to 30 June 2017

Year	NSW ^a	Vic.	Qld ^b	WA ^c	SA ^d	Tas. ^e	ACT ^f	NT	Total
Number									
2013	17,422	6,542	8,136	3,425	2,657	1,067	558	742	40,549
2014	18,192	7,710	8,185	3,723	2,631	1,054	606	908	43,009
2015	16,843	8,567	8,448	3,954	2,838	1,061	671	1,017	43,399
2016	17,800	9,705	8,670	4,100	3,243	1,150	748	1,032	46,448
2017	17,879	10,312	8,941	4,232	3,484	1,205	803	1,059	47,915

Numbers of children in care has been growing (recent decline in New South Wales not reflected in these statistics) Source: Australian Institute of Family Studies

Background on child protection in Australia, continued



The majority of children in care have been there more than one year. If children remain in care more than 2 years, it is unlikely that they will return home. Source: Australian Institute of Family Studies

Background on child protection in Australia, continued



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 5.5% of the population but more than 1/3 (37.3%) of the out-of-home care population. They are more than 10x more likely to be in care than non-Indigenous Australians.

Indigenous children are significantly over-represented among children who come into care and those who stay in care long-term

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Child protection: The challenge

Keep children safe

Family preservation

When children cannot be safely restored to their families, how will they be cared for until adulthood?



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Basic Permanency Assumptions

- Children have a right and need to live and develop within safe, secure, and permanent families.
- Children have a right to live with parents/caregivers whom they can love, trust, and depend upon.
- Separation for extended periods of time may result in tremendous psychological and developmental disruption.
- A child's perception and experience of time are determined by level of cognitive developmental maturity.



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Source: The Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center

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NSW Permanency Reforms

- A decade of significant reform emphasizing 'permanency' for children
- Introduction of timeframes to make decisions about returning children to their families
- Inclusion of permanent placement principles, which prioritise legal guardianship orders with relatives or open adoption with foster carers over long-term foster care

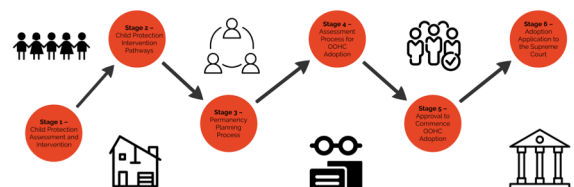


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Out-of-home care in NSW

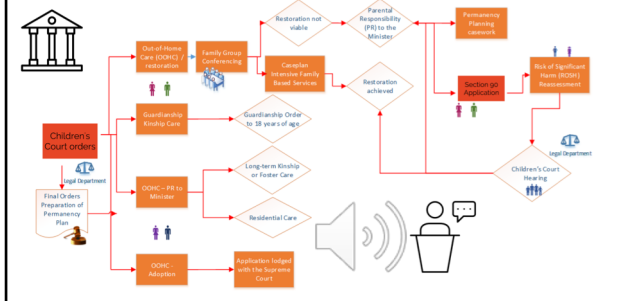
A child's journey



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Stage 3 – Permanency Planning Process



Hierarchy of placement preferences

New South Wales	England and Wales	US
1. Restoration to parents	1. Restoration to parents	1. Restoration to parents
2. Long-term guardianship to 18 to relative or kin	2. Kinship placement with approved kinship carer or under a Child Arrangement Order (previously Residence Orders)	2. Adoption
3. Adoption (open)*	3. Long-term fostering including Special Guardianship*	3. Legal guardianship
4. Parental responsibility to the Minister*	4. Adoption	4. Permanent placement with a fit and willing relative
*Order reversed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children		5. Another planned permanent living arrangement

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

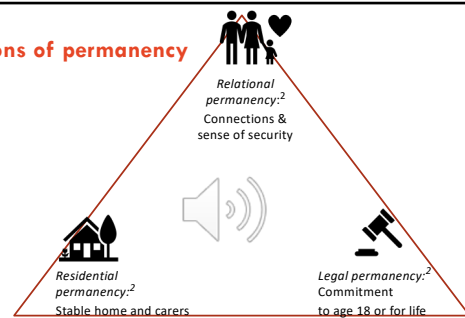
- Recognise the right of Indigenous children to be raised in their own family and community;
- Prioritise child placements with family members or those within the Indigenous community, in the form of kinship care;
- Recognise the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait children, parents and family members to participate in child protection decisions; and
- Support children in out-of-home care to maintain connection to "their family, community and culture, especially children placed with non-Indigenous carers"

Source: Child Family Community Australia, 2015

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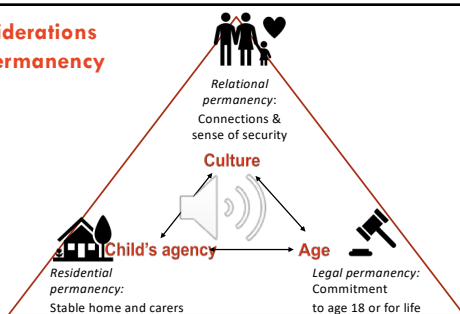
Dimensions of permanency



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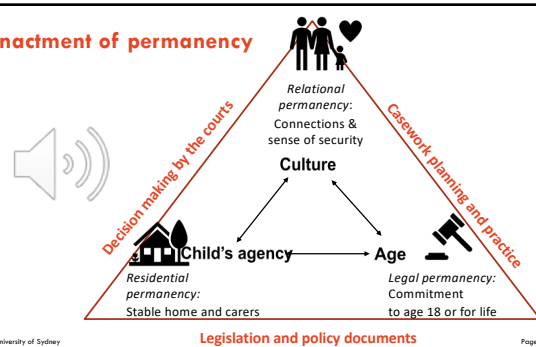
Considerations for permanency



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Enactment of permanency



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Permanency from a child's perspective



How can child protection systems ensure that children experience safe, stable and loving care, and connections to their families of origin that are in their best interests?



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Emerging model: Permanency with lifelong connections



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Questions and Discussion

Thank You



Please contact amy.conlevwright@svdnev.edu.au with questions



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