

# **Working Toward Restoration webinar and research study**

**Amy Conley Wright, Betty Luu, Susan Collings, Irene  
Wardle, Meredith McLaine, PhD Candidate**

**The University of Sydney**





We acknowledge the tradition of custodianship and law of the Country on which the University of Sydney campuses stand. We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for Country.

***Tree of Knowledge*** - pokerwork on kangaroo skin, Lynette Riley, 2010

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



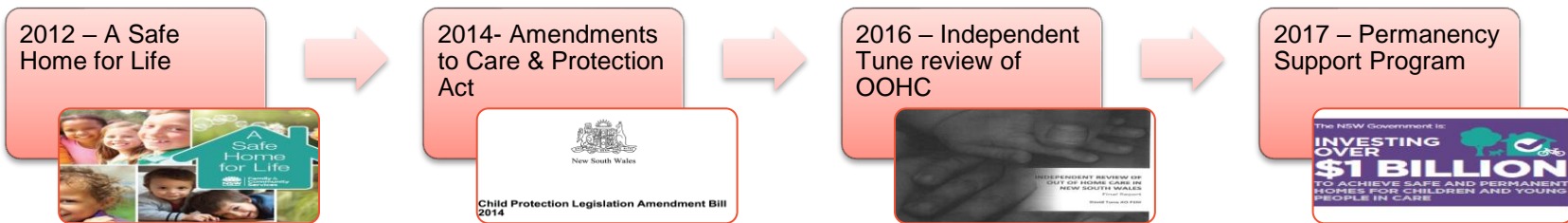
THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

# Outline

- Introduction and welcome
- Setting the scene: NSW permanency reforms, evidence review and permanency practice framework
- What do we know about evidence-based practices that support restoration?
- Overview of co-designing an outcomes framework in NSW
- Reflections on the co-design process
- Working Toward Restoration study – stay on for focus group
  - You can register for a later one and complete survey – email to follow
  - Questions? Put them in ‘chat’ and we will answer or direct to speakers at the end

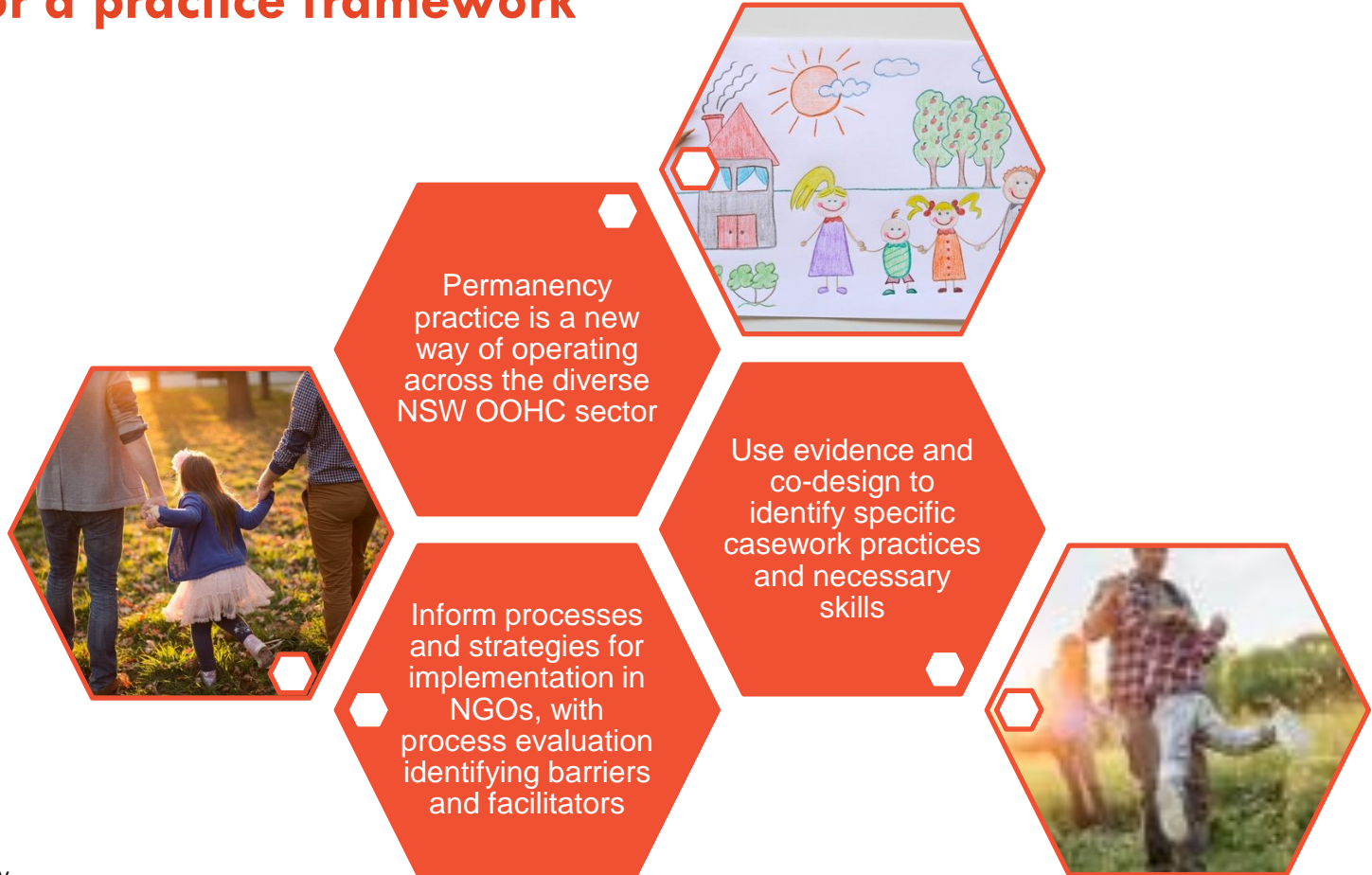
# **Setting the scene: NSW permanency reforms, evidence review and permanency practice framework**

# NSW permanency key legislative and practice changes



- Introduced specified time frames for decisions about restoring children to their parents considering 'realistic possibility of restoration'
- Embedded permanent placement principles, which prioritise legal guardianship with kinship or foster carers and for non-Indigenous children, open adoption with foster carers
- Changes to contracts with out-of-home care to commission for outcomes (eg time to legal permanence)

# The need for a practice framework



## Evidence review purpose

- The Permanency Practice Framework is about *practices and approaches for supporting parents and carers to have the required parenting supports, skills and confidence* to be able to offer and sustain a permanent home to children through restoration, guardianship or open adoption.
- The evidence review examines practices that build the capacity of the adults who care for children in order to promote children's development, wellbeing and safety.
- PRC has used review findings to inform the development of the practice frameworks with chosen sites, drawing on the evidence when exploring each chosen sites' outcomes and existing practices (eg coaching parents and carers to have required skills and confidence).

**What do we know about evidence-based practices that support restoration?**



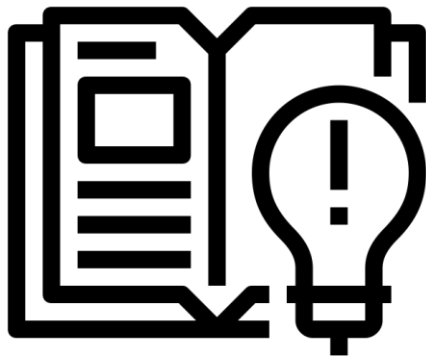
# Common Elements of Permanency Practices for Reunification: Evidence Review

- This review systematically assessed current research about permanency programs and utilised a common elements approach to identify practices that support parents towards reunification.
- Search of published and grey literature for programs that have been evaluated using rigorous methodology (experimental and quasi-experimental designs) within US, UK, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia.
- Studies published in English between January 2000 and September 2020.

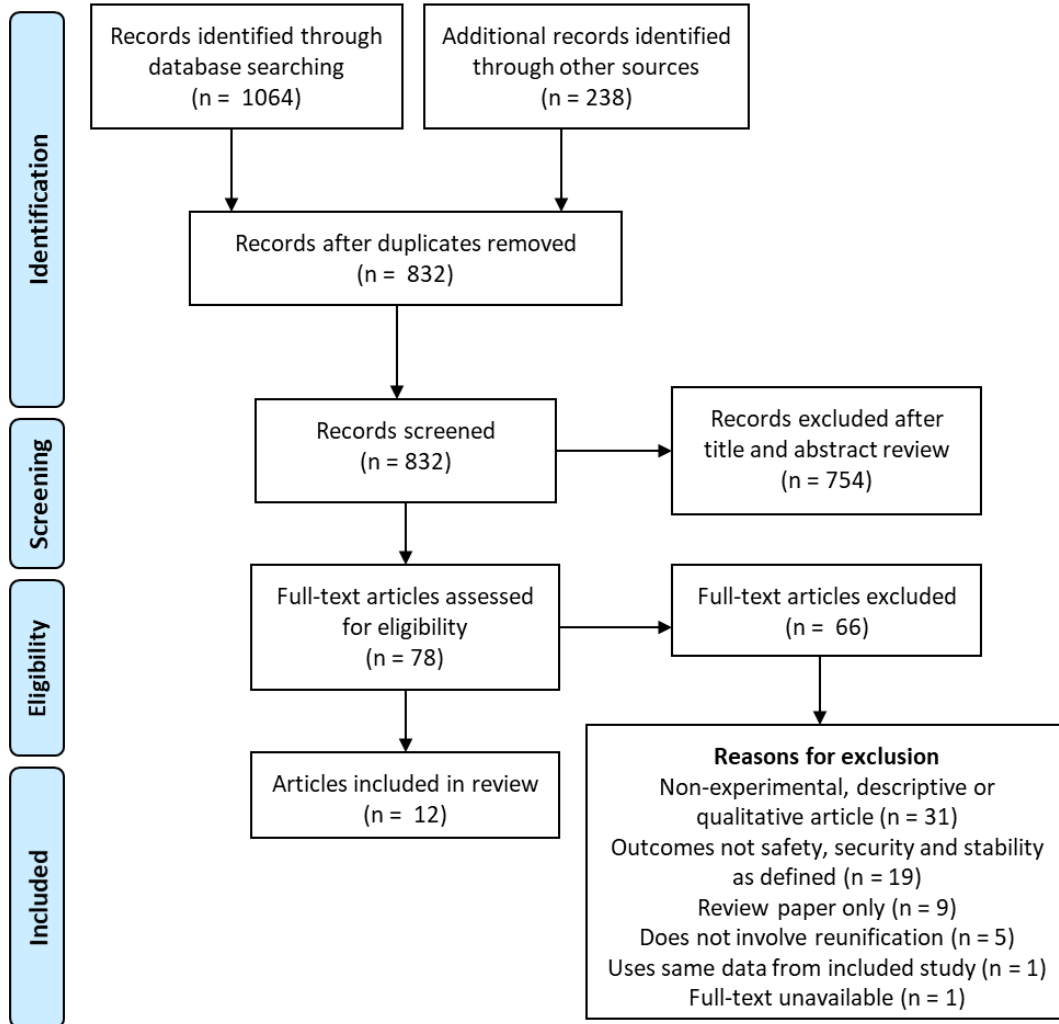
# Common Elements of Permanency Practices for Reunification: Evidence Review

- Practices undertaken by caseworkers ***to help parents develop the skills and confidence to support restoration***
- Permanency outcomes that focus on:
  - Stability - continuity of care over an extended period
  - Security - lifetime relationships and a sense of belonging
  - Safety - being protected from abuse and neglect

# The screening process



Created by Maxim Basinski  
from Noun Project



# Overview of process

## **1. Assessment of Research**

Identifying interventions evaluated in research

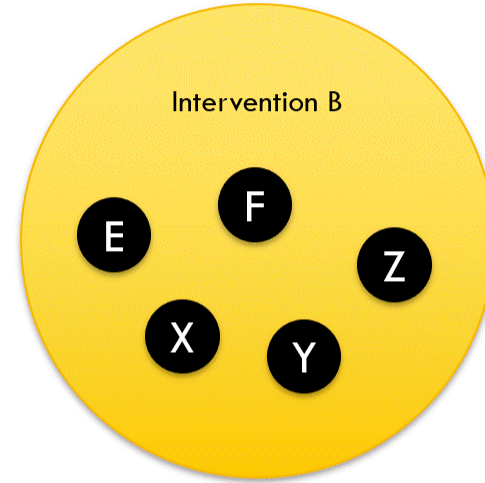
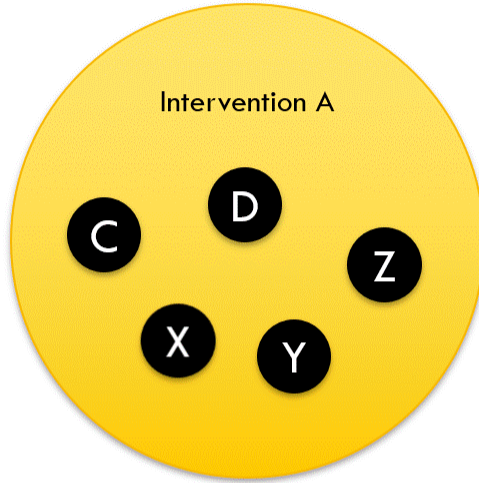
## **2. Assessment of Intervention**

Data extraction based on study design, sample & key results

## **3. Practice distillation**

Drilling down to practices that compose the overall intervention

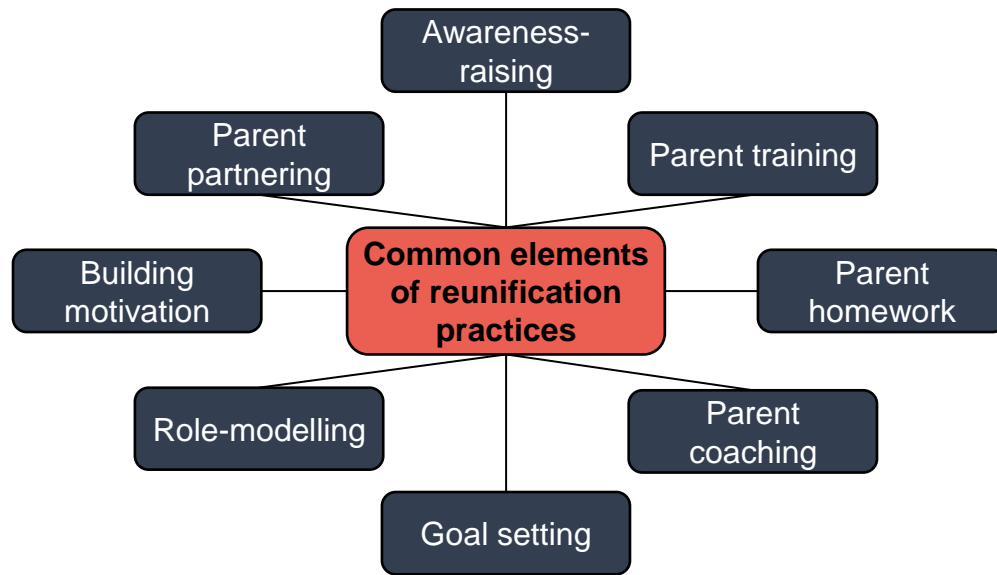
# The common elements approach



E.g., well-evidenced and effective interventions (e.g., Intervention A and Intervention B) are comprised of Practices X, Y and Z

# Programs and Practices

- Parent Management Treatment Oregon (PMTO)
- Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO)
- KEEP (Keeping Foster Parents Supported and Trained) program
- Promoting First Relationships (PFR)
- On The Way Home (OTWH)
- HomeBuilders
- Intensive Reunification Program (IRP)
- NewPin
- Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)
- Shared Family Care (SFC)



*Common Elements of Permanency Practices for Reunification*

## Common elements practices within programs

Name	Aims	EXP	Q-EXP	PT-PT
<i>Awareness-raising</i>	Improve parents' ability to recognize and respond to child behaviour problems.	x		x
<i>Parent coaching</i>	Observe and reinforce positive parent-child interaction skills.	x	x	x
<i>Goal setting</i>	Support parents to identify specific goals to address parenting problems	x	x	x
<i>Parent homework</i>	Reinforce new parenting skills in a familiar environment	x		x
<i>Role modelling</i>	Offer concrete models of positive parenting behaviours	x	x	x
<i>Parent training</i>	Assist parents to recognize and respond to parenting challenges	x		
<i>Building motivation</i>	Encourage parental motivation to change and improve engagement with parents	x		
<i>Parent Partnering</i>	Involve foster carers in the supervision teaching and mentoring of parents to build parenting skills			x

Note. EXP – Experimental; Q-EXP – Quasi-experimental; PT-PT – Pretest-posttest

## Practice spotlight: Parent coaching

- Aims to observe and reinforce positive parent-child interaction skills.
- Observe parents in a structured interaction with their child and provide feedback before, during and after the activity. Parents learn problem solving techniques and to follow the child's lead during play.
  - Observation may be in person or behind a 1-way mirror with communication via a wireless device. The activity can take place in a support group or home visit. Feedback may be given verbally or using a video recording of an interaction.

*Featured in programs: Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP); Intensive Reunification Program; KEEP; Promoting First Relationships*



## Practice spotlight: Goal setting

- Aims to support parents to identify specific goals to address parenting problems
- Invite parents to identify areas that present parenting problems for them and set small, achievable goals around them for improvement.
  - Practitioners offers support, skill building, reinforcement and monitoring of progress.

*Featured in programs: Intensive Reunification Program; KEEP*

## Practice spotlight: Building motivation

- Aims to encourage parental motivation to change and improve engagement with parents
- Express empathy and build trust with the parent; and explore resistance to change (e.g., the discrepancy between parents' goals or values and their current behaviour)
  - Building collaborative relationships with parents that are supportive and motivational

*Featured in programs: HomeBuilders*

Meredith McLaine

PhD research:

### **Realistic possibility of restoration**

– Judicial interpretation and application

Case analysis:

- Published judgments (c. 25 cases, 2009-2020)
- Unpublished judgments (sample, eg 25-50)

## Legal framework

*Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (s83) –*

Realistic possibility of restoration

- within a reasonable period (not exceeding 24 months)
- circumstances of the child
- evidence that the parents can satisfactorily address the issues leading to the removal.

Case law –

- a possibility is something less than a probability
- practical and sensible; not merely fanciful or based on unlikely hopes for the future
- since 2019: commencement of, and commitment to, a cohesive, coherent, viable plan
- unacceptable risk of harm.

# Existing research on court decision-making in care & protection

## Australia:

### Perspectives on overall court process -

e.g. parents' experiences; particular groups of parents; Indigenous families' experiences, cultural considerations and over-representation; children's legal representation.

### Focus on specific aspects of process –

e.g. placement; contact; 's90' rescission and variation; s106A presumption; clinical assessments; risk assessment tools.

# Existing research on court decision-making in care & protection

**International** (USA, Canada, Israel, England, Scotland, Norway, Finland, Germany):

- 'risk of harm', incl. correlation between court outcomes and risk factors and other case variables; newborn removals; children's views/participation; judicial perspectives on process.

**Empirical methodologies (Australia and International):**

Predominant: interviews; focus groups; surveys, incl. hypotheticals; observation.

Less common: access to court case files

Rare: access to judgments

Very rare: qualitative analysis of judgments

## Key themes in the literature

- ‘Best interests’ – meaning
- Parenting capacity and ‘good enough’ parenting – standards, weighting, tipping points
- ‘Welfare’ v. ‘rights’ approaches; risks and deficits v. strengths; forensic risk analysis v. structural social inequality
- Parents’ experiences – alienation v. empowerment
- Children’s participation and voice
- Inherent uncertainty and role of discretion
- Expert evidence – role, use of, judicial and lawyer understanding
- Adversarialism

# Substantive issues (case variables) arising in the literature

## A. Parent characteristics & circumstances

Insight; Compliance & Credibility; **Mental health; Intellectual disability**; Substance abuse; **Family violence**; Support networks; Housing and financial security; Personal history (eg trauma, childhood in care); Prior placement of children in care.

## B. Parent-Child relationship and child maltreatment

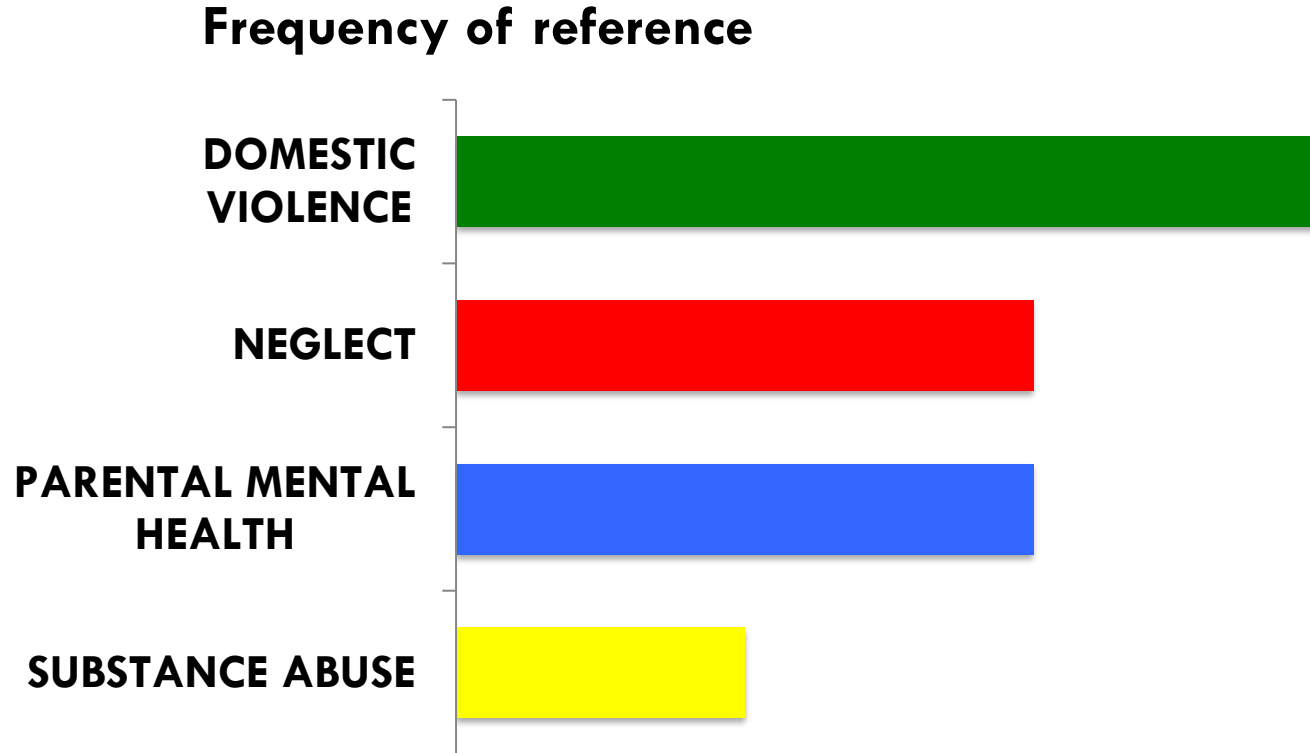
Attachment and empathy; Deficient parental capacity (generic); **Neglect** and emotional or psychological harm; Physical abuse and sexual harm; Family violence exposure.

## C. Child characteristics

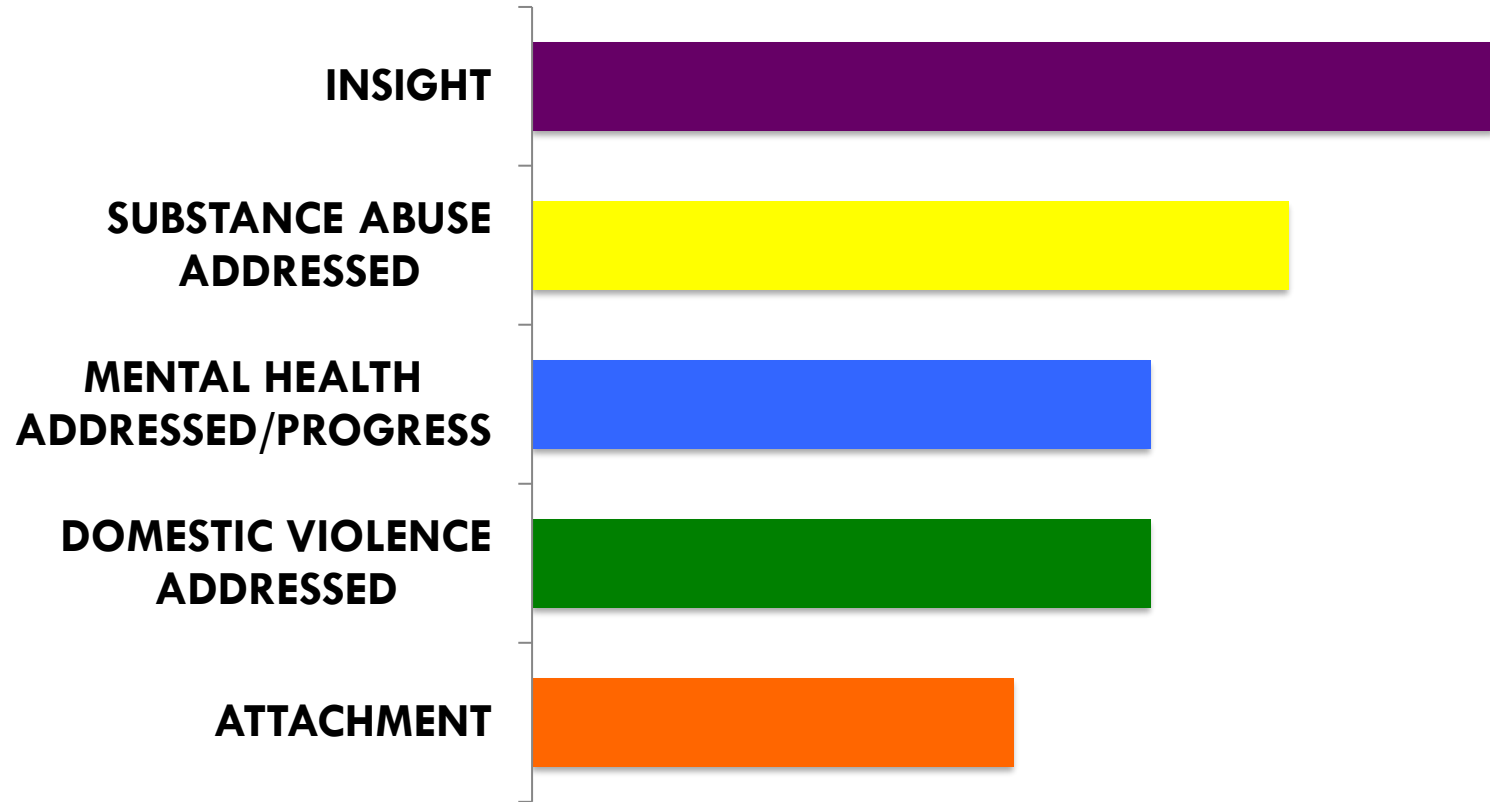
**Safety; Certainty, stability & security**; Harm of removal & out-of-home care; Separation from siblings; Age and vulnerability; Disability and mental health.



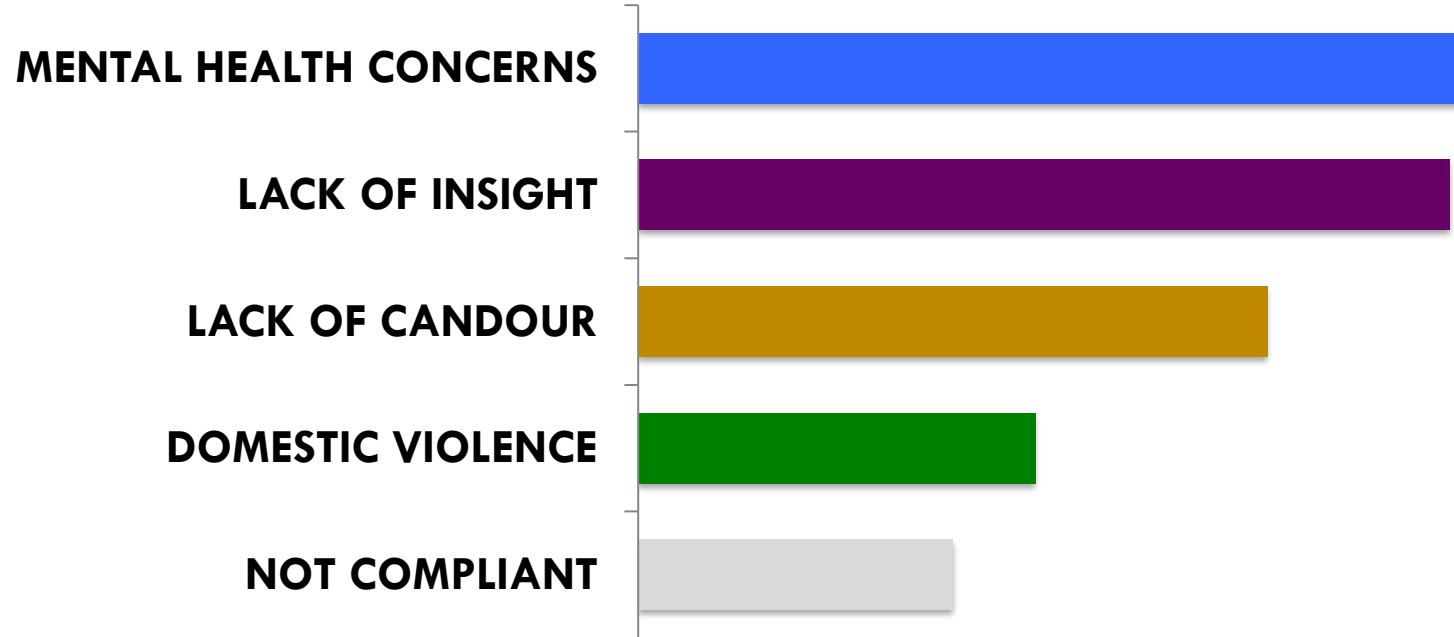
# Published NSW judgments: Dominant Reasons for Initial Removal



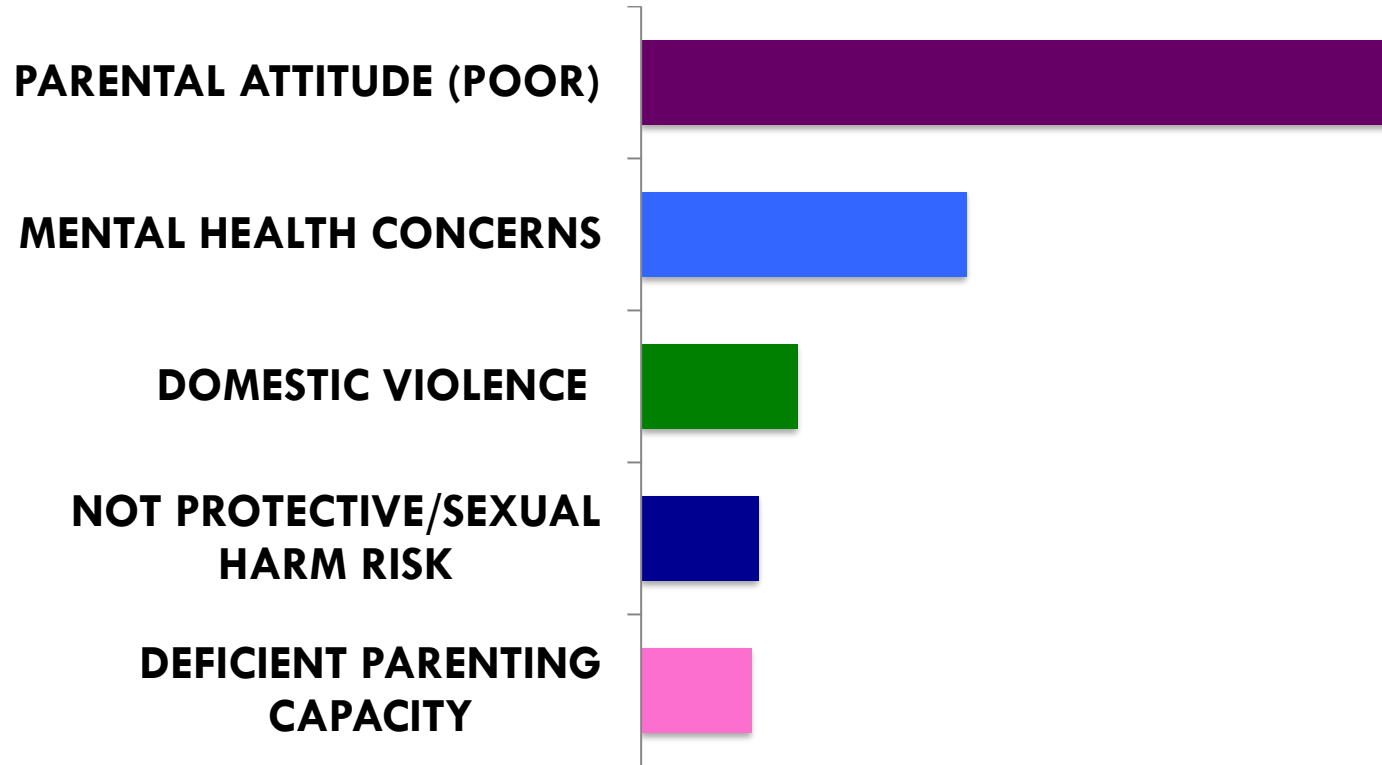
## Published NSW judgments: Realistic Possibility of Restoration



## Published NSW judgments: No Realistic Possibility of Restoration

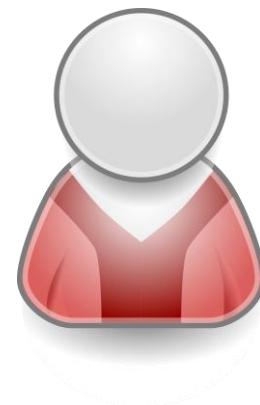


## No Realistic Possibility of Restoration: Consolidated - Parental Attitude



## Some key emerging issues

- Mental Health
- Insight and Compliance – how determined?
- Risks v. Strengths
- Parental factors – dominance over child factors?



# Questions



## Working Toward Restoration study

- To understand what professionals think helps or gets in the way of restoration
- From the perspective of professionals working with families
- Focus groups (after this webinar):
  - In-depth discussion of main legal and practice issues
- Survey:
  - Rank series of statements about what evidence is used to assess whether there is a “realistic possibility of restoration” (s 83).
  - Establish consensus across professions, locations, and settings
- Present themes and discuss implications for restoration practice in NSW

**End of  
webinar**



**Start of  
focus  
group**

- About one hour
- You can leave at any time
- Will be audio recorded for research
- No one will be identifiable in reporting



**Research Centre for Children and Families**  
Sydney School of Education and Social Work  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Website:

<https://www.sydney.edu.au/arts/our-research/centres-institutes-and-groups/research-centre-for-children-and-families.html>

Email: [rccf.research@sydney.edu.au](mailto:rccf.research@sydney.edu.au)

Email to register for our mailing list.

