



**CatholicCare**  
**Costs of Out-of-Home Care in**  
**NSW**  
**August 2010**



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Mr Bernard Boerma  
CEO  
Catholic Care  
Level 10, 133 Liverpool Street  
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10 August 2010

Dear Bernard

**Re: Costs of out-of-home care**

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you and the Out-of-Home Care Coalition on the Costs of Out-of-Home Care Project.

Please find attached our Final Report which is in accordance with our engagement letter dated 3 May 2010.

I would like to thank the agencies that provided data for this Report. Their cooperation and assistance has been greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

**Daniel Fitzpatrick**  
**Partner**

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This report was prepared for CatholicCare for the purpose of internal advice and decision-making.

In preparing this Report we have relied on the accuracy and completeness of publicly available information provided to us by CatholicCare and from publicly available sources. We have also relied on the accuracy of information provided to us by non-government out-of-care care service providers which was based on acquittals provided to Community Services. We have not audited or otherwise verified the accuracy or completeness of the information.

The information contained in this Report is general in nature and is not intended to be applied to anyone's particular circumstances. This Report may not be sufficient or appropriate for your purposes. It may not address or reflect matters in which you may be interested or which may be material to you.

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# Glossary

Term	Defined
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
DoCS	NSW Department of Community Services (now called Community Services and part of the new Department of Human Services)
DHS	Department of Human Services
CS	Community Services
OOHC	Out-of-home care
BCG	Boston Consulting Group
Wood Report	Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW

# 1 Out-of-home care in NSW

## 1.1 Context

There has been considerable focus on care and protection services in NSW over recent years. Of particular relevance to this Paper is the Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW (the Wood Report) which was provided to Government in November 2008<sup>1</sup>, and the government response to the Wood Report titled *Keep Them Safe*<sup>2</sup>.

With respect to Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) services, the Wood Report found:

- a) There are increasing numbers of children and young people in out-of-home care for longer periods of time and with increasingly complex needs at a cost per child which continues to rise
- b) There is a decreasing pool of foster carers
- c) There is a need for a greater number and range of different placement options for children and young people for whom it is not safe to live at home
- d) Children and young people entering, and in, out-of-home care generally do not receive, as a matter of priority, the medical, dental and allied health assessments and treatments they should receive. Neither do they receive the degree of assistance that is needed when leaving care<sup>3</sup>.

Wood made 16 recommendations specifically related to the provision of OOHC including the transfer of all OOHC from government to the NGO sector, reducing the caseload for OOHC to 1:12, the coordination of education and health care for children and young people in OOHC, clearer management of voluntary OOHC, and a common case management framework.

In *Keep Them Safe*, the Government commits to:

- Increasing the threshold for reporting children and young people to the Child Protection Helpline from "risk of harm" to "risk of significant harm".
- Establishing Child Wellbeing Units in the major government reporting agencies
- Establishing a network of Family Referral Services
- Enhanced service provision focusing on early intervention and prevention, including comprehensive universal, secondary and tertiary services
- Increasing the role of non-government organisations in delivering services
- Changes to processes in the Children's Court
- Providing better services to Aboriginal children and young people, with the aim of reducing their over-representation in the child protection system<sup>4</sup>.

*Keep Them Safe* supports, in part, reducing caseloads to 1:12 and supports in principle the transfer of OOHC to the NGO sector<sup>5</sup>. Both are long term commitments<sup>6</sup>.

## 1.2 Current situation

NSW has 15,211 or 9.4 per 1000 children and young people aged between 0 and 17 years in out of home care. This is significantly larger in actual numbers and as a proportion of population than any other Australian jurisdiction<sup>7</sup>. By comparison, Victoria has 4.3 children and young people in care per 1000 and Queensland has 6.7<sup>8</sup>.

The NSW Government has contracted the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) to undertake comparative and historical analysis of out-of-home care (OOHC) services in NSW<sup>9</sup>. According to the BCG Report, there has been a 16% increase in the number of children and young people in OOHC in NSW between 2005/06 and 2007/08<sup>10</sup>. BCG attribute this increase to:

- International trends impacting on parenting capacity – increased incidence of drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness and domestic violence
- Increased number of NSW government caseworkers
- Children remaining in care for longer periods of time
- Use of kinship care<sup>11</sup>.

The BCG Report compares government and non-government (NGO) costs to deliver foster care. The NSW government average cost to deliver OOHC is approximately \$30,000/child in foster care and the NGO sector ranges from \$36,000-\$120,000/child in foster care subject to the level of need of the child<sup>12</sup>. The BCG Report also costs three scenarios of the mix of NGO and government services providers (60% DoCS: 40% NGO; 75% DoCS: 25% NGO; 90% DoCS: 10% NGO) and finds that by 2013/14 it would be \$139m (recurrent) less costly for Government to deliver 90% (rather than 60%) of out-of-home care services<sup>13</sup>.

NSW spent a total of \$552m on out of home care services in 2008/09 and spent less per child per placement night than any other jurisdiction other than Tasmania<sup>14</sup>. The average case load in NSW is 1:22<sup>15</sup>. The BCG Report has not costed the impact of implementing the Wood<sup>16</sup> recommendation (number 16.2) to transfer all out-of-home care service delivery to the NGO sector nor the recommendation (number 16.14) to reduce the average OOHC caseload to 12.

We note that NGO providers of OOHC are required to be accredited in NSW by the Children's Guardian under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. The NSW Department of Human Services, Community Services (CS) agency is not accredited at this point.

## 1.3 Purpose of this paper

The purpose of this paper is to provide a basis for NGO's to negotiate with government about OOHC costs and caseloads. The paper:

- Escalates out-of- home care casework costs for foster care in the 2008/09 DoCS costing manual to 2010/11 costs utilising indexation rates from the NSW state budget
- Applies escalated casework costs to a range of caseload scenarios
- Analyses reported data from 2008/09 financial year for four NGO service providers for a range of factors including: cost, caseload and placement stability
- Benchmarks caseload and placement stability data.

This Report was prepared for CatholicCare on behalf of a coalition of NGO's that included: Allambi Youth Services; Association of Child Welfare Agencies (ACWA); ANGLICARE, Diocese of Sydney; ANGLICARE, Canberra/Goulburn; Barnardos Australia; Boys Town Engadine; Care South; CatholicCare Hunter/Manning; CatholicCare, Sydney; CatholicCare, Wollongong; Centacare , Broken Bay; Hunter Aboriginal Children's Service; Life Without Barriers; Mackillop Family Services; Marist Youth Care; St Joseph's Cowper Inc; Samaritan Foundation; Southern Youth and Family Services; The Benevolent Society; Uniting Care Children, Young People and Families; Wesley Mission; Youth Care UP; and Youth Off the Streets.



## 2 The cost of OOHC caseworkers

Utilising the DoCS OOHC Costing Manual 2008/09 the NSW indexation rate as indicated in the state budget (2.9% 9/10 and 2.5% 10/11) was applied to escalate OOHC casework costs from the base year 2008/09 into 2010/11 costs. Table 1 details the base costing for casework from the DoCS OOHC Costing Manual 2008/09 as well as actual costs for four NGO agencies delivering long-term foster care services. We found the average actual cost of the four agencies was \$11,710 lower in 2008/09 than the costs in the base model. It is important to note that temporary, short-term and respite care placements are not included in this costing work and may have higher costs due to the more intensive nature of the work. Table 2 details 2010/11 escalated costs for the base and four agencies.

**Table 1: Base OOHC costs and actual costs for four OOHC agencies**

FY09	DoCS NGO Costing	Agency 1	Agency 2	Agency 3	Agency 4	Average of Agencies	DoCS NGO Costing variance to agency average
Caseworker Base Salary (per FTE)	53,220	52,000	55,500	49,193	48,729	51,356	(1,865)
Direct supervisor allocation	11,540	12,431	15,105	19,825	19,513	16,719	5,179
Admin and other indirect support allocation (per FTE)	20,740	7,202	10,220	13,911	8,169	9,875	(10,865)
Salary on-costs	14,851	16,010	14,468	19,210	9,169	14,714	(137)
<b>Total unit labour costs</b>	<b>100,351</b>	<b>87,643</b>	<b>95,293</b>	<b>102,139</b>	<b>85,580</b>	<b>92,664</b>	<b>(7,687)</b>
Motor vehicle	13,240	10,167	12,898	7,837	13,169	11,018	(2,222)
IT/Computer	4,920	7,583	737	5,567	657	3,636	(1,284)
Telecommunications	1,310	2,083	2,416	1,682	1,687	1,967	657
Stationery/postage/printing	1,610	1,917	1,735	1,909	911	1,618	8
Depreciation and equipment maint.	1,960	2,125	1,814	1,523	2,025	1,872	(88)
Staff training	3,630	1,875	4,639	1,016	1,317	2,212	(1,418)
Accommodation	10,360	9,667	14,285	14,042	12,758	12,688	2,328
Corporate overheads & other	26,100	29,167	23,437	20,667	23,117	24,097	(2,003)
<b>Total non-labour costs</b>	<b>63,130</b>	<b>64,583</b>	<b>61,961</b>	<b>54,244</b>	<b>55,640</b>	<b>59,107</b>	<b>(4,023)</b>
<b>Total loaded cost per FTE</b>	<b>163,481</b>	<b>152,227</b>	<b>157,254</b>	<b>156,383</b>	<b>141,221</b>	<b>151,771</b>	<b>(11,710)</b>
Cost per direct client hour	126	124	114	120	94	113	(13)
Non-labour cost factor	38.6%	42.4%	39.4%	34.7%	39.4%	39.0%	0.4%
Labour cost factor	61.4%	57.6%	60.6%	65.3%	60.6%	61.0%	(0.4)%

**Table 2: 2010/11 foster care costs for base and four OOHC agencies**

FY11	DoCS NGO Costing	Agency 1	Agency 2	Agency 3	Agency 4	Average of Agencies	DoCS NGO Costing variance to agency average
Caseworker Base Salary (per FTE)	56,132	54,846	58,537	51,885	51,396	54,166	(1,967)
Direct supervisor allocation	12,172	13,112	15,932	20,910	20,581	17,634	5,462
Admin and other indirect support allocation (per FTE)	21,875	7,596	10,779	14,672	8,616	10,416	(11,459)
Salary on costs	15,664	16,886	15,259	20,261	9,671	15,519	(145)
<b>Total unit labour costs</b>	<b>105,843</b>	<b>92,440</b>	<b>100,508</b>	<b>107,729</b>	<b>90,264</b>	<b>97,735</b>	<b>(8,108)</b>
Motor vehicle	13,965	10,723	13,603	8,266	13,889	11,620	(2,344)
IT/Computer	5,189	7,998	777	5,872	693	3,835	(1,354)
Telecommunications	1,382	2,197	2,548	1,774	1,779	2,075	693
Stationery/postage/printing	1,698	2,022	1,830	2,013	961	1,707	8
Depreciation and equipment maint.	2,067	2,241	1,913	1,607	2,136	1,974	(93)
Staff training	3,829	1,978	4,893	1,072	1,389	2,333	(1,496)
Accommodation	10,927	10,196	15,066	14,810	13,457	13,382	2,455
Corporate overheads & other	27,528	30,763	24,720	21,798	24,382	25,416	(2,113)
<b>Total non-labour costs</b>	<b>66,585</b>	<b>68,118</b>	<b>65,351</b>	<b>57,212</b>	<b>58,685</b>	<b>62,342</b>	<b>(4,243)</b>
<b>Total loaded cost per FTE</b>	<b>172,428</b>	<b>160,557</b>	<b>165,859</b>	<b>164,941</b>	<b>148,949</b>	<b>160,077</b>	<b>(12,351)</b>
Cost per direct client hour	133	130	120	127	99	119	(13)
Non-labour cost factor	38.6%	42.4%	39.4%	34.7%	39.4%	39.0%	0.4%
Labour cost factor	61.4%	57.6%	60.6%	65.3%	60.6%	61.0%	(0.4)%

### 3 Caseload and placement stability

In foster care, placement stability and caseload are often used as proxy indicators for quality. Contemporary research indicates that placement instability leads to poorer outcomes for children in OOHC and increased costs<sup>17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25</sup>. According to the Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2010, the average number of children and young people in Australia in OOHC with 1-2 placements was 49.7%. In NSW, the average was 56.5%. This means that 50.3% and 43.5% respectively had three or more placements<sup>26</sup>. In contrast, the four case study agencies had placements stability rates for the same period, utilising the same data definition, of between 97.1% and 100% of children and young people with 1 -2 placements, and 2.9% and 0% with three or more placements. See Table 3. We note all four case study agencies pay higher than standard carer payments (see Appendix A) and have lower caseloads than the state average. These factors may be associated with placement stability.

**Table 3: Comparison rates of the proportion of children with 1-2 placements**

	NSW	Australia	Agency 1	Agency 2	Agency 3	Agency 4	Average of agencies
Proportion of children in 1-2 placements (%)	56.5%	49.7%	97.1%	98.3%	100.0%	100.0%	98.8%

The DoCS NGO OOHC Costing Manual 2008/09 is based on a caseload of 1:12. Contemporary research also indicates, placement stability and better outcomes are correlated with caseload<sup>27 28</sup>. We found that caseloads ranged from an average of 1:6.6 to 1:12 in the four agencies. This is compared with the NSW average of 1:22. See table 4. The issue of comparability of caseload between agencies was carefully considered. Agencies providing data assumed a mixed caseload which included a range of cases from standard care through to care+2. We note that whilst DoCS has care responsibility for the vast majority (85%) of children in OOHC, the NGO sector has responsibility for 84% of high needs children (DoCS 16%).<sup>29</sup>

**Table 4: Caseload comparison**

	NSW Average	DoCS NGO Costing	Agency 1	Agency 2	Agency 3	Agency 4	Average of agencies
Caseload (children per caseworker)	22.0	12.0	12.0	6.6	7.2	8.8	8.7

# 4 Costs including care allowances

The costs of providing OOHC vary considerably between OOHC agencies from an average of \$31,026 to \$43,867 for standard care through to an average of \$42,544 to \$55,671 for Care+2. The key areas of variance include the wages paid to case workers, rental and other non-labour costs, and the level of carer payment. Table 5 shows actual costs of delivering long-term foster care services including casework, carer allowances and contingencies of four NGO services and makes comparison with the DOCS NGO Costing Manual. These costs are escalated in Table 6 using indexation rates applied by Treasury in 2009/10 and 2010/11.

**Table 5: Comparison of caseload and costs (including casework, carer allowances and contingencies)**

Costs per case <sup>1</sup> – Agency specific						
FY09	DoCS NGO Costing Manual	Agency 1	Agency 2	Agency 3	Agency 4	Average of agencies
Current caseload	12.0	12.0	6.6	7.2	8.8	8.7
Cost per case	13,623	12,686	23,826	21,720	16,068	18,575
Carer Allowance and Respite Annual Cost Per C/YP - Standard Care	31,120	43,867	42,941	40,103	31,026	39,484
Carer Allowance and Respite Annual Cost Per C/YP - Care+1	37,340	49,431	48,661	48,891	36,785	45,942
Carer Allowance and Respite Annual Cost Per C/YP - Care+2	43,580	55,671	54,901	54,091	42,544	51,802

**Table 6: Comparison of caseload and escalated costs (including casework, carer allowances and contingencies)**

FY11	DoCS NGO Costing Manual	Agency 1	Agency 2	Agency 3	Agency 4	Average of agencies
Current caseload	12.0	12.0	6.6	7.2	8.8	8.7
Cost per case	14,369	13,380	25,130	22,909	16,947	19,591
Carer Allowance and Respite Annual Cost Per C/YP - Standard Care	32,823	46,268	45,290	42,297	32,724	41,645
Carer Allowance and Respite Annual Cost Per C/YP - Care+1	39,383	52,136	51,323	51,566	38,798	48,456
Carer Allowance and Respite Annual Cost Per C/YP - Care+2	45,965	58,718	57,905	57,051	44,872	54,636

<sup>1</sup> Contingency payments are averaged across the OOHC population.

# Appendix A – Cost and caseload

Caseload has a major impact on the cost of foster care. For the purposes of this paper, five caseload scenarios were costed against the base DoCS NGO 2008/09 Costing Manual. We found the cost per case for casework varied between agencies from \$28,244 to \$31,451 on an average caseload of 1:5 and \$6,419 to \$7,148 on an average caseload of 22 in FY09. See Table 7. We found the cost per case for casework varied between agencies from \$29,790 to \$33,172 on an average caseload of 1:5 and \$6,770 to \$7,539 on an average caseload of 22 in FY11. See Table 8.

**Table 7: Comparison of costs for casework by caseload scenarios FY09**

FY09	DoCS NGO Costing Manual	Agency 1	Agency 2	Agency 3	Agency 4	Average of agencies
Cost per case 1:5	32,696	30,445	31,451	31,277	28,244	30,354
Cost per case 1:8	20,435	19,028	19,657	19,548	17,653	18,971
Cost per case 1:12	13,623	12,686	13,104	13,032	11,768	12,648
Cost per case 1:15	10,899	10,148	10,484	10,426	9,415	10,118
Cost per case 1:18	9,082	8,457	8,736	8,688	7,846	8,432
Cost per case 1:22	7,431	6,919	7,148	7,108	6,419	6,899

**Table 8: Comparison costs for casework by caseload scenarios FY11**

FY11	DoCS NGO Costing Manual	Agency 1	Agency 2	Agency 3	Agency 4	Average of agencies
Cost per case 1:5	34,486	32,111	33,172	32,988	29,790	32,015
Cost per case 1:8	21,553	20,070	20,732	20,618	18,619	20,010
Cost per case 1:12	14,369	13,380	13,822	13,745	12,412	13,340
Cost per case 1:15	11,495	10,704	11,057	10,996	9,930	10,672
Cost per case 1:18	9,579	8,920	9,214	9,163	8,275	8,893
Cost per case 1:22	7,838	7,298	7,539	7,497	6,770	7,276

# Appendix B - Escalated costs for other OOHC services

	DoCS NGO Costing Manual FY09	DoCS NGO Costing Manual FY11
<b>Relative/kinship Supported Care Annual Cost Per C/YP</b>		
Casework Support	8,174	8,372
Carer allowance	11,930	12,219
Contingencies	2,200	2,253
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,304</b>	<b>22,844</b>
<b>Intensive Foster Care Annual Cost Per C/YP</b>		
Casework Support	20,440	20,935
Carer allowance	41,755	42,765
Contingencies	27,323	27,984
<b>Total</b>	<b>89,518</b>	<b>91,684</b>
<b>Standard Residential Accommodation Annual Cost Per C/YP</b>		
Casework costs	13,620	13,950
Total labour costs	86,600	88,696
Non-labour costs	28,090	28,770
Client costs and contingencies	11,990	12,280
<b>Total</b>	<b>140,300</b>	<b>143,695</b>
<b>High and complex needs residential accommodation (total unit cost per C/YP)</b>		
Casework costs	27,250	27,909
Total labour costs	150,069	153,701
Non-labour costs	45,190	46,284
Client costs and contingencies	23,750	24,325
<b>Total</b>	<b>246,259</b>	<b>252,218</b>

## End notes:

- 1 <http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/publications/news/stories/?a=33794>
- 2 [http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/57145/Keep Them Safe.pdf](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/57145/Keep_Them_Safe.pdf)
- 3 <http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/publications/news/stories/?a=33794>, p. iv
- 4 [http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/what is keep them safe a shared approach to child wellbeing/key changes](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/what_is_keep_them_safe_a_shared_approach_to_child_wellbeing/key_changes)
- 5 [http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/57145/Keep Them Safe.pdf](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/57145/Keep_Them_Safe.pdf) pp. 80 & 84
- 6 Ibid pp. 80 & 84
- 7 [http://www.pc.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/93968/63-chapter15-attachment.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/93968/63-chapter15-attachment.pdf) Table 15A.16
- 8 Ibid Table 15A.16
- 9 [http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/\\_assets/main/documents/bcg\\_report.pdf](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/documents/bcg_report.pdf)
- 10 Ibid, p. B9
- 11 Ibid pp. A4 & A32
- 12 Ibid, p. A43
- 13 Ibid, p. B11
- 14 [http://www.pc.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/93968/63-chapter15-attachment.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/93968/63-chapter15-attachment.pdf) Table 15A.32
- 15 [http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/\\_assets/main/documents/bcg\\_report.pdf](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/documents/bcg_report.pdf) p. B10
- 16 <http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/publications/news/stories/?a=33794> pp. xxix & xxx
- 17 The literature refers to longer term costs such those associated with the provision of mental health services and under/unemployment post-care due to poor educational attainment. Whilst there is limited costing work on the shorter term costs of placement instability (such as carer recruitment, additional casework time), these would be significant when considered across the out of home care population.
- 18 Harden, B. (2004) Safety and Stability for Foster Children: A Developmental Perspective in *Children, Families and Foster Care* Vol. 14, No. 1 p 39
- 19 Northern California Training Academy (2008) A Literature Review of Placement Stability in Child Welfare Service: Issues, Concerns, Outcomes and Future
- 20 Munro, E.R. & Hardy, A. (2007) Placement stability: a review of the literature <http://www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/profile.asp?guid=f3360146-4e93-4abf-93ff-25e0637c749d>
- 21 Pecora, P., Whittaker, J.K., Maluccio, A.N., Barth, R.P., & DePanfilis, D. (2010) *The Child Welfare Challenge: Policy, Practice and Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey p9.
- 22 <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/cws/cpohepci/cpohepci-c01.pdf> p.16
- 23 <http://www.sprc1.sprc.unsw.edu.au/ASPC2005/papers/Paper37.pdf> p.28
- 24 <http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/issues/issues26/issues26.html#outcomes> section 2.3.2 & Table 2
- 25 [www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/reports/outofhome/outofhome.docpp](http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/reports/outofhome/outofhome.docpp) pp. 34-39
- 26 [http://www.pc.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/93966/61-chapter15.pdf](http://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/93966/61-chapter15.pdf) Figure 15.8
- 27 Harvard Medical School (2008, June 6). Improved Foster Care Reduces Risk Of Adult Mental And Physical Illness, Study Finds.
- 28 Improving Family Foster Care Program Comparison Findings from the Northwest Foster Care Alumni Study May 2008
- 29 <http://www.casey.org/Resources/Initiatives/FosterCareAlumniStudies/default.htm>  
[http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/\\_assets/main/documents/bcg\\_report.pdf](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/docswr/_assets/main/documents/bcg_report.pdf) p A. 60.