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Pathways to Caring: Profiling Future Carer Families

Issues for Out-of-Home care

Cummins Inquiry/AIHW

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Child Protection Reports in Victoria

- 2000-2011: 49% increase
  - 2012: 21.9 reports /1000 children
  - Increased substantiation trend - 29%

- 1 in 4 children born in 2011 will be the subject of a report by age 18
  - 2013-14: 81,000 reports
  - 2014-15: 90,000 reports*



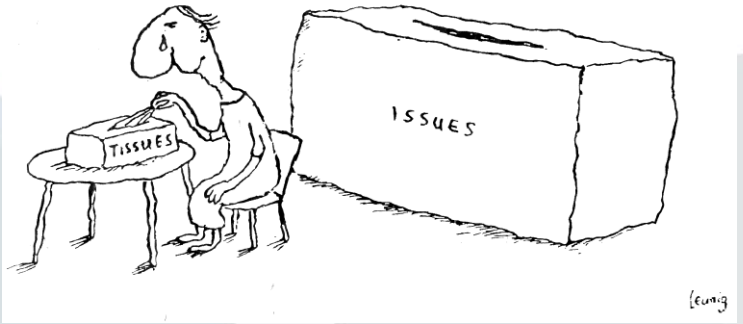
Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry, 2011

*Victorian State Budget, 2014-15, Budget Paper No.3 Service Delivery

AIHW, 2014.

Context of Out-of-Home Care
Scope of Problem today

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- Diminishing care options
- Increasing Kinship care
- Decreasing Foster care
- Children and young people moving from care to juvenile justice
- Family mistrust of the system and impaired impact of Foster Care
- Over representation of Aboriginal children
- Community concern and doubts about quality of care
- Inability to hear the voice of children and young people.

What do we know about demand and supply and Foster Care?

- Absolute demand for Foster Care is not declining as demand for OoHC steadily increases
- In all jurisdictions except Victoria, a greater number of households commenced than exited foster care (AIFS, 2014)
- Foster Carers play increasing role in Respite and Emergency Care
- Foster Care increasingly for children with complex needs.
- Requiring longer term Foster Care placements to enable stabilisation of family (Ombudsmen, 2010)
- Shortages have a cyclical impact – decreased matching; increased stressors; higher placement instability; loss of carers (CFECFW, 2006, Verso 2012, Tomison, 2001)
- Supply Gap – an estimated 511 new Carers needed to meet demand in 2012-13 (we didn't get these) (Verso, 2012; CFECFW, 2012)

What do we know about…

…. attracting, converting, training and retaining Foster Carers?

… attracting and maintaining a pool of Foster Carers who can respond to highly complex cases and emergency care situations.

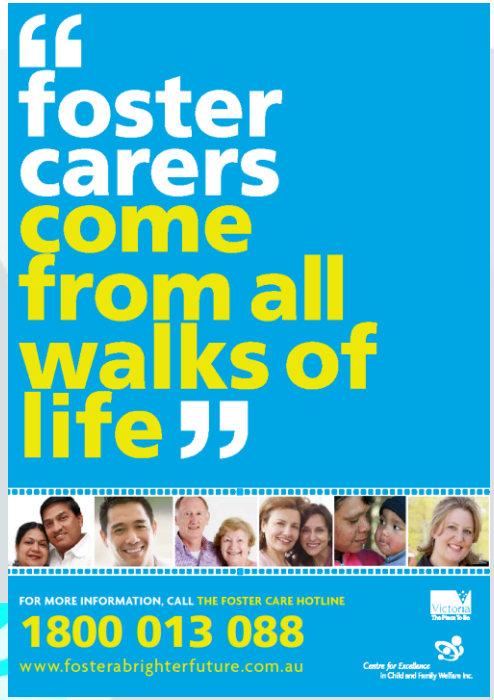
…. the characteristics of supply - and how to cost effectively assure supply to meet demand of current and future children in Foster Care?

…. what this means for the future of delivery of OoHC

Foster Care Communication and Recruitment Strategy (FCCRS)

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- 2006-2011 – Foster a Brighter Future Initiative
- Centralised, sector wide strategy to strengthen communication to, recruitment and retention of carers and address shortages
- Initiative of DHS and The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
  - Harnessed internet
  - Foster a Brighter Future Website and Foster Care 1800 Hotline
  - Rainbow Hair for Foster Care; Posters.
- **Unique survey of <u>actual enquirers</u>** (n=370)

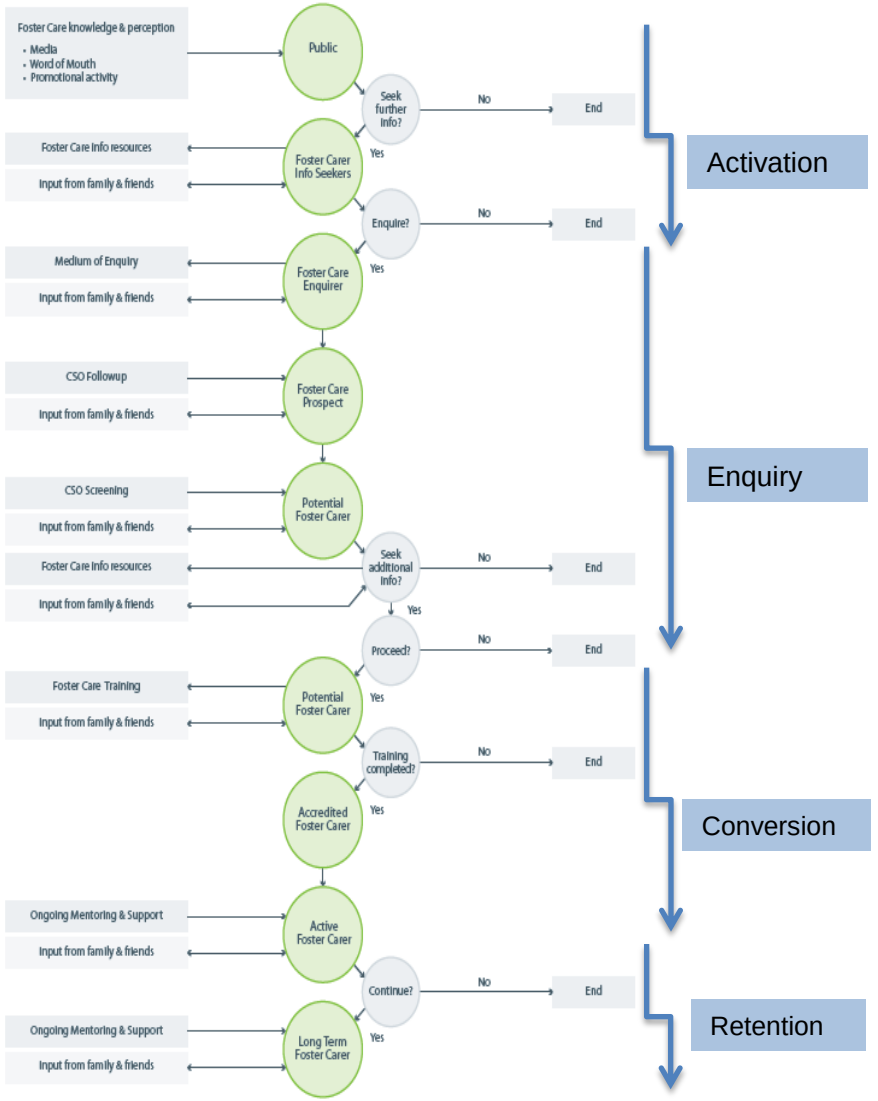




Critical Findings

1) "State of the art" end-to-end engagement strategy

- Define and understand the processes of activation, enquiry and conversion as separate steps in the engagement process
- Motivators and drivers are different at each stage
- Establish effective engagement strategies at each stage of the process
  - Activation – activating general public to become active information seekers
  - Enquiry – information seekers become prospective foster carers through active enquiry
  - Conversion – prospective foster carers are screened to become potential foster carers and undertake training to become accredited (active) foster carers
  - Retention – active foster carers retained by system response and reimbursement mechanisms



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Critical Findings

2) Current 'diffuse' recruitment strategies will not provide carers we need
   - 1 in 100 enquirers currently accredited
   - Centralised coordinated, targeted strategy is critical

3) Activation will require 'Social Marketing' - understanding of:
   - The messages that promote call to action
   - Image of foster care in the community
   - Messages that consider family diversity

4) Who are the target audience?
   - Media and messages to attract different segments
   - Information needs
   - Decision making criteria - benefits and trade offs they make
   - Support needed

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The Future Carer Family.

Who are we talking too?
What does that mean for out-of-home care?

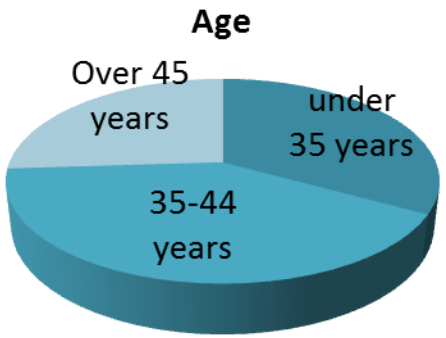
Who are Foster Care Enquirers?

Age and Employment

- Most (2 in 3),
  - 30-44 years (59.6%)
  - Bit younger than expected?
- Closer look - a spread of age
  - 1 in 3 under 35 years (33%)
  - 1 in 4 over 45 years (26%)
- Most enquirers are employed
  - female enquirers are more likely to be employed than male enquirers

Profile	Characteristic	Male 13 %	Female 87%	Total %
Age	Under 35 years	25	33	33
	35-44 years	39	41	41
	45+ years	36	15	26
Employed	Employed	74	82	80
	Not Employed*	26	19	20

* Home Duties, Student, Retired



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Who are Foster Care Enquirers?

Age and Employment into the Future

- Concepts of family and child rearing ages change in society
  - we must reconsider what the age of foster carers might be
  - what that will that mean for recruiting and supporting them?

- As women's roles in the workforce change – more women work
  - can we assume that foster families must have non working mothers?
  - And if so – when will families be in a financial position to provide this type of care?

- What is the role of older parent couples in Out of Home Care?

Who are Foster Care Enquirers?

Marital and Household Status

- 3 in 5 enquirers were married or partnered (64.8%)
    - Only 1 in 2 in 'traditional married/partnered' relationships (53.5%)
    - 1 in 10 (11%)in same sex relationships
- Of those in a traditional 'married' heterosexual relationship, 2 in 5 (41%) did not have children.
    - 1 in 2 of enquirers will not have had children at all (50.6%)
- Almost 1 in 3 (34.6%) - sole adult households – single, divorced, widowed

Profile	Characteristic	Male 13%	Female 87 %	Total %
Marital Status	Married	27	57	**54**
	Same Sex	36	7	**11**
	Divorced/Widowed	9	12	**11**
	Single	27	23	**24**
	Other	-	1	6
Children	None	73	47	51
	1 Child	9	19	18
	2 Children	5	17	15
	3+ Children	11	9	10

Who are Foster Care Enquirers?

Marital and Household Status

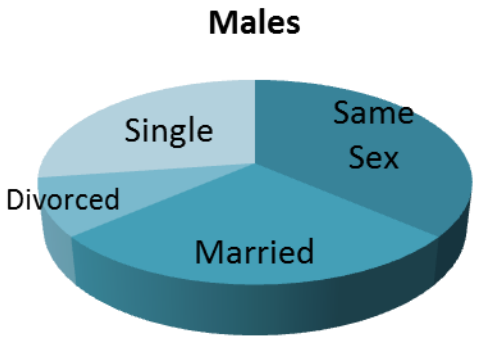
- Every second enquirer will not be in a traditional 'couple' relationship situation
- Only 1 in 4 enquirers will come from a traditional household – married with kids
  - If our recruitment strategies continue to look for married, heterosexual families where the female does not work we will be looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack.
- Is loss at enquiry because we don't respond to, value or leverage the type of family available to provide care?
  - Do our current recruitment responses to enquirers accommodate the range of issues and information needs that will emanate from these types of enquirers?
  - Do we have responsive enquirer strategies
  - Is the information we provide relevant?
- How do we meet demand for Foster Care and children's needs?
  - Are our current assumptions good enough?
  - What are the income capabilities of these enquirers – reimbursement support?

Who are Foster Care Enquirers?

Gender and Marital Status

- Only 12.7 % of enquirers were male
  - Males more likely to be over 40 years
  - As likely to be from:
    - Same sex couple
    - Single
    - Married

Profile	Characteristic	Male 13%	Female 87 %	Total %
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Who are Foster Care Enquirers?

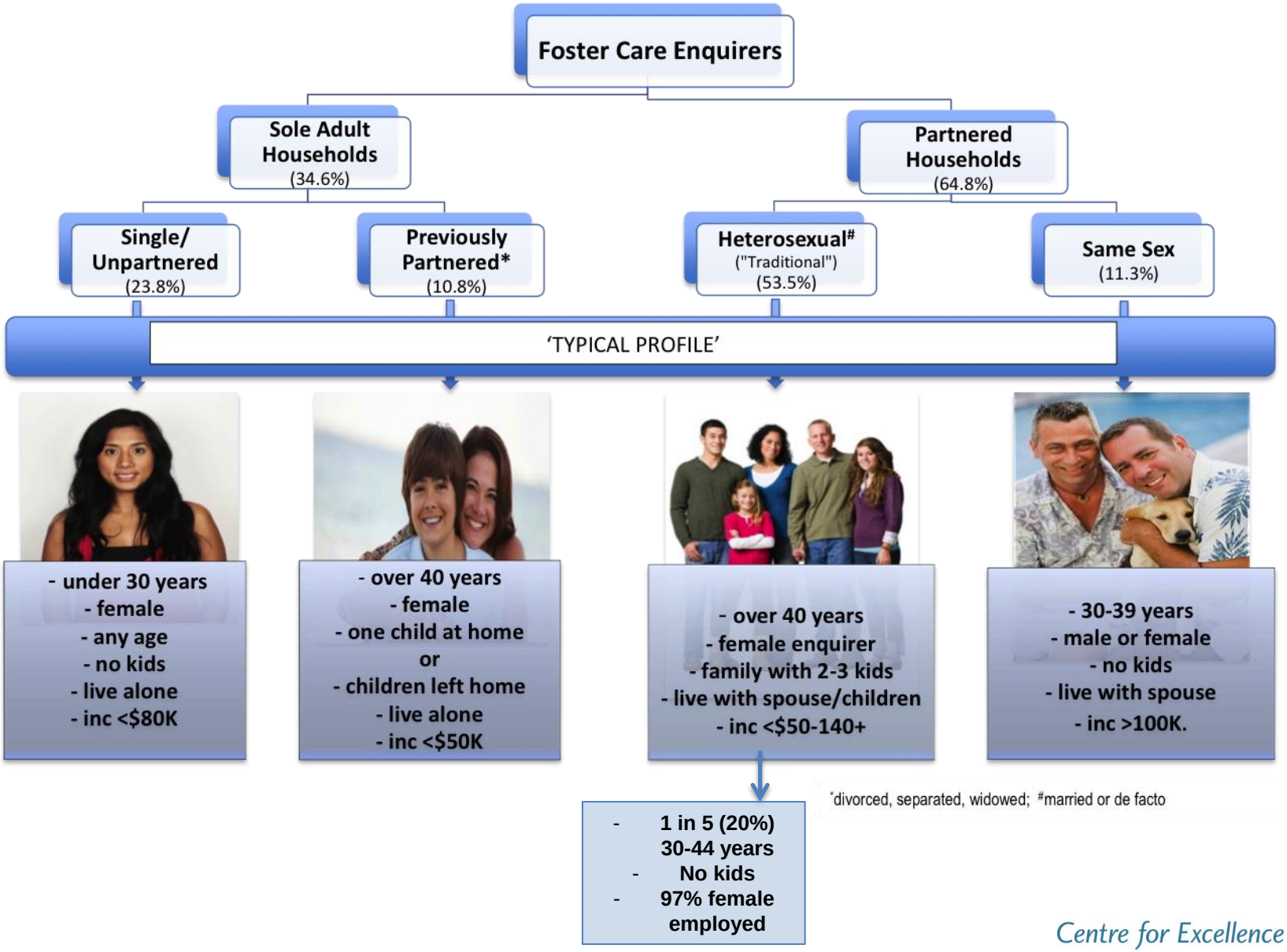
Gender and Marital Status

- What, if any, is the role of male foster carers?
- What is the opportunity for successful fathers to provide care?
- How do we manage stigma and prejudice and leverage an increasing potential from this pool in the light of current social concern
  - Royal Commission in to abuse in care?

Profile	Characteristic	Male 13%	Female 87 %	Total %
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"I don t tell anyone that [child] is my foster child…. There is enough suspicion and assumptions when they see a single man with any child…I don't need their bias and I am sure that [child] doesn't… It is awkward enough…. I mean…you can see what is running through people's minds"

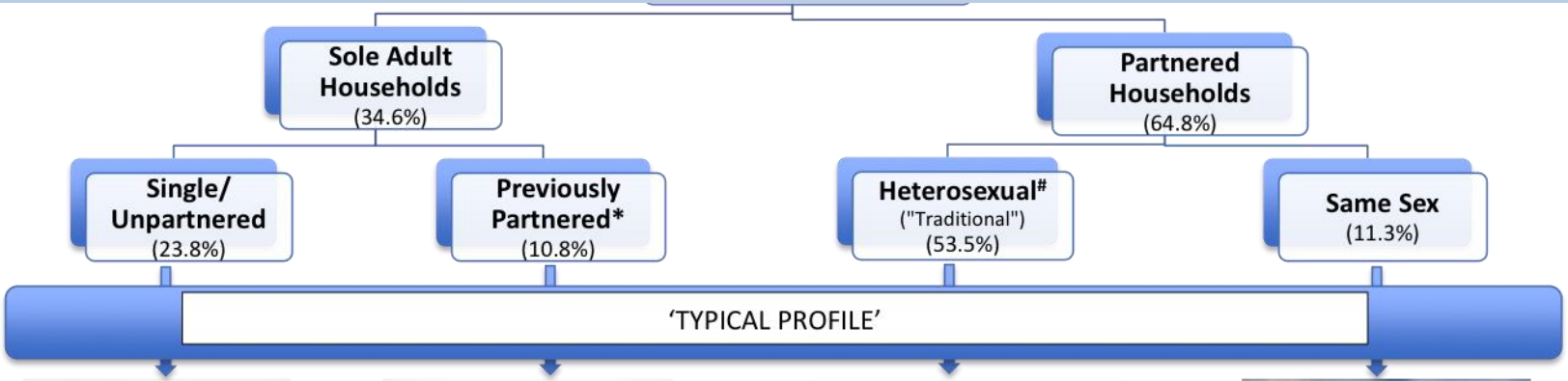
Profiling Foster Care Enquirers.

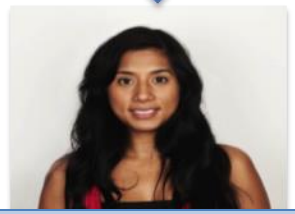


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Motivations of Foster Care Enquirers.

Provide a Home/positive environment for a Child in Need





Long term care
Not emergency care

I want to give to a child in my life
I have built relationships/ developed skills with children in professional life



Flexible Available for any type of care

I have built relationships/develop ed skills with children in professional life



Short term Foster care

We need longer term care?



Long term care

I want to give to a child in my life

High means but do we support them?

A unique set of skills?

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Planning out-of home care

- Fewer than 1 in 4 (23.5%) future foster families will meet the traditional concept of a foster family
- Traditional carer types – heterosexual, partnered, families, parents aged 25-45, other children
  - Largely do not exist
  - are becoming the minority
- Where this type of Foster Family does exist they prefer to provide short term Foster Care
- Are these enquirers the right environment for our aims to provide
  - Long term stability of care?
  - Care to complex and highly traumatised children?
  - What sorts of support will they need?

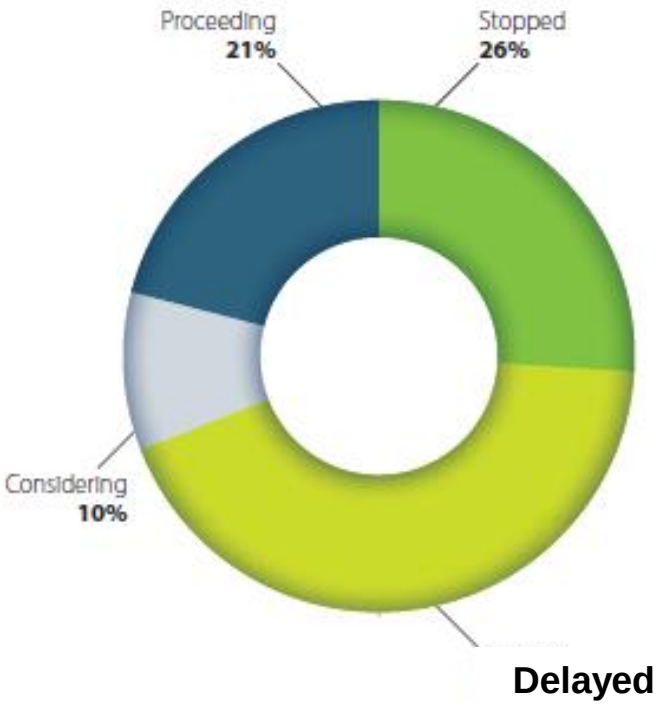
Profile of heterosexual families		
Age	Under 30 years	14%
	30-34 years	22%
	35-39 years	24%
	40-44 years	19%
	45 + years	21%
Children	Children at home	58%
	No children at home	42%
	No children at all	34%
Traditional foster care families	Heterosexual, 20-45 Children at home	**23.5%**
Non traditional Foster families		**76.5%**

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The Potential of the "Delayed" pool

Almost 1 in 2 of enquirers who have withdrawn at any point along the enquiry-accreditation process have not dropped out but have 'delayed' (43%)

- They have not lost interest or withdrawn, but need to be further convinced to undertake foster caring
- Not the 'right time'
- Are delayed by the emotional enormity of the task



Re-engagement of only 1 in 2 of the 'delayed' group could potentially increase conversion rates by 20%.

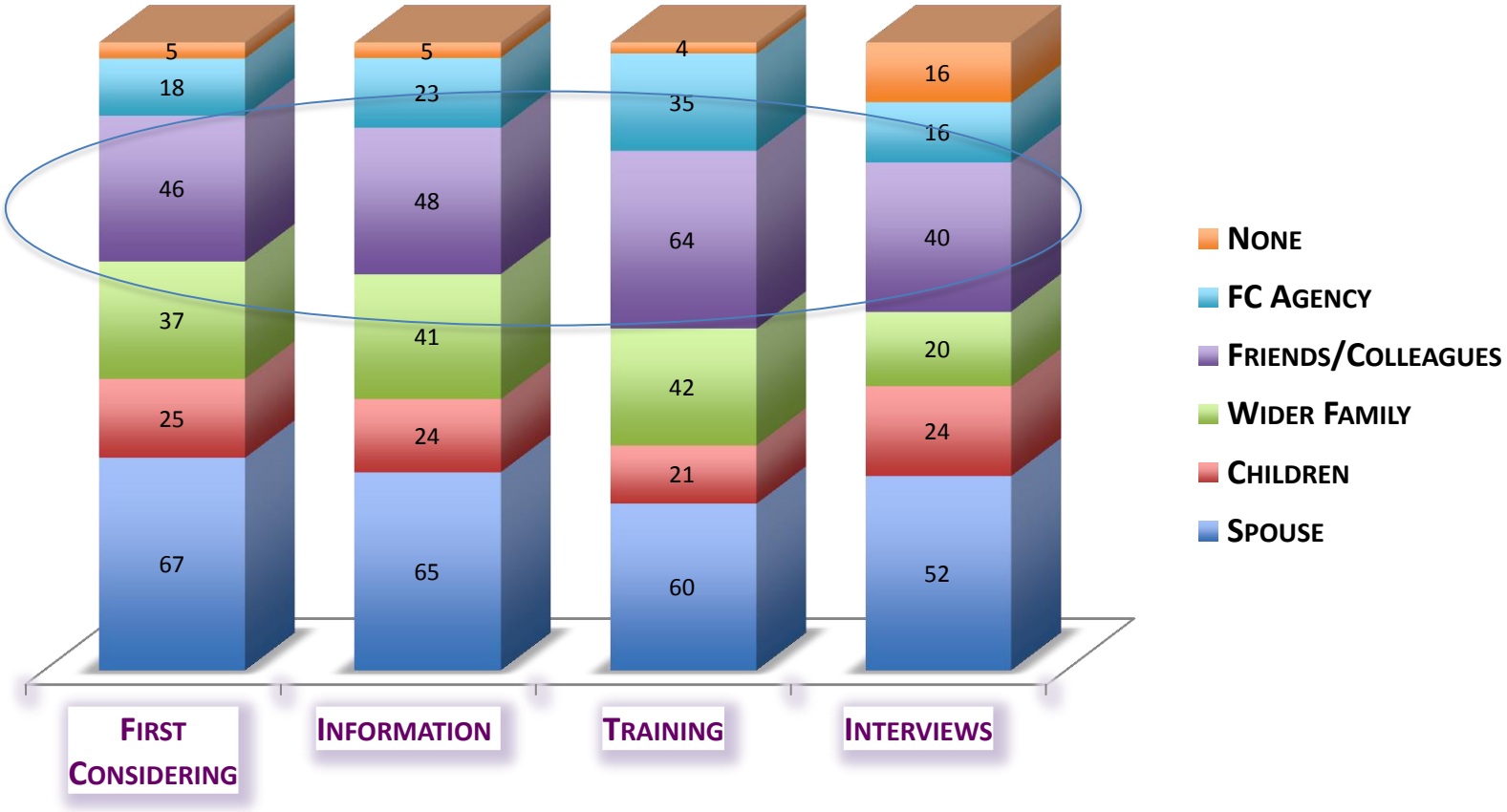
Do we have the strategies to re-engage the types of enquirers interested in caring?

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The Image of Care in the community

Image of Foster Care in Community

Wider community has significant impact on decision-making



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Maturing Our Approach





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Our challenge is:
to ensure that the community remains engaged in the
task of making children safe,
ensuring their wellbeing, and ensuring the opportunity to flourish

Our Children

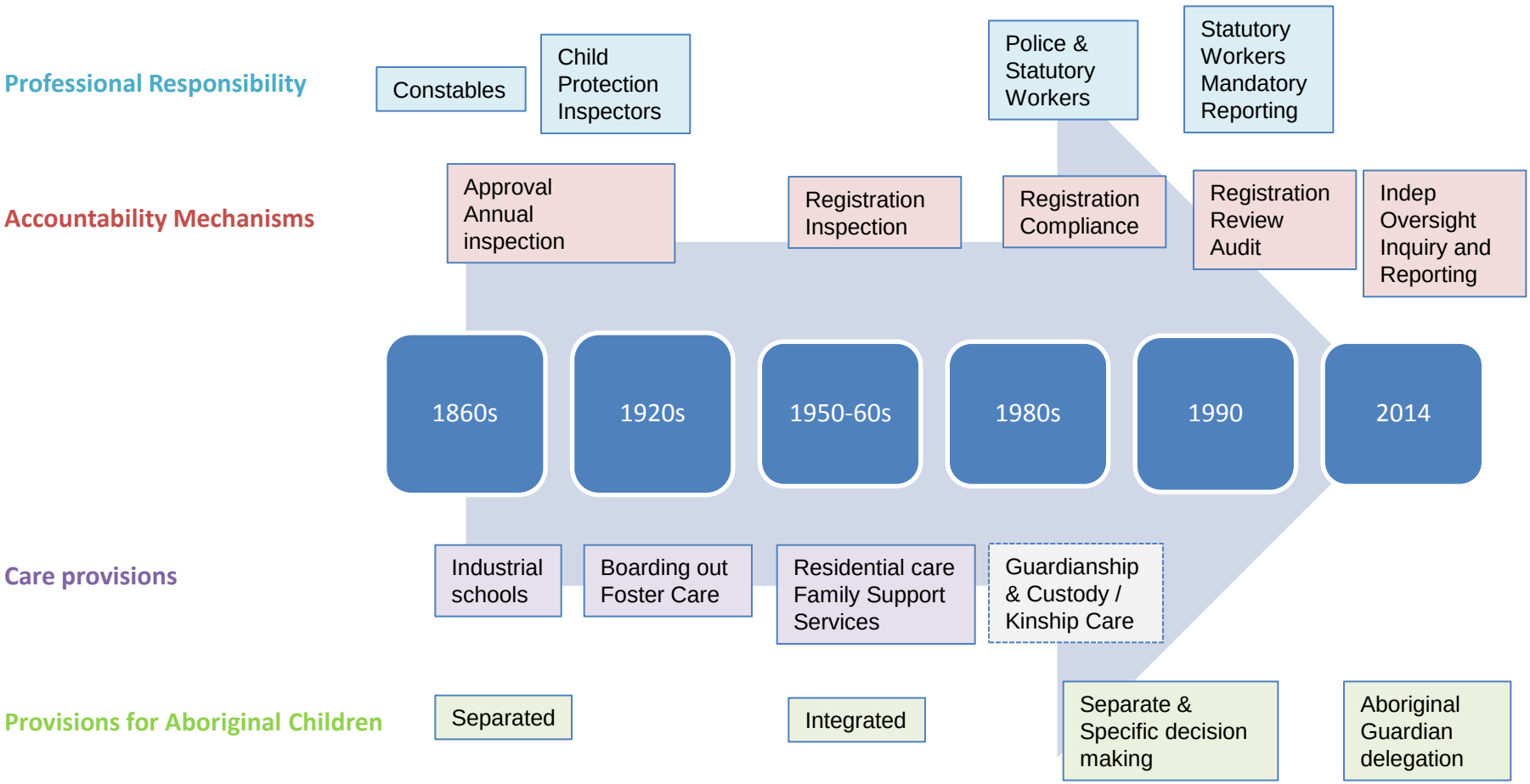


How do we impact the community image of providing care to ensure those Carers best placed to help feel valued and trusted?

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Challenges – the way forward

Key changes in elements of care, up to 2014:



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Challenges

- Who are the Carers of the Future?
  - How do we talk to them and support them for stability of care?
  - We have to face that we are seeking to attract from among many social commitments
- What models of care will leverage community diversity?
  - Diversity in carers
  - Diversity in children
  - Optimising supply and demand
  - Through NGO or professional care models?
- Full Engagement strategy is critical – marketing strategy
  - What will cost and result effective engagement strategies look like?
  - Failure to activate non-traditional families will potentially result in a conversion loss of at least 1 in 3 prospective carers
  - How do you address the image of Foster care/Out of home care - social marketing?

Challenges

- What models and delivery of out-of-home care will:
  - Adapt to changes in future carer families?
  - Optimise recruitment strategies and conversion rates ?
  - Provide support for retention and success of model?
  - Meet diversity of demand with diversity of supply?

Place the right child

in the right place

at the right time?



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