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Removals of infants by the child protection system: examining their nature, extent and impact

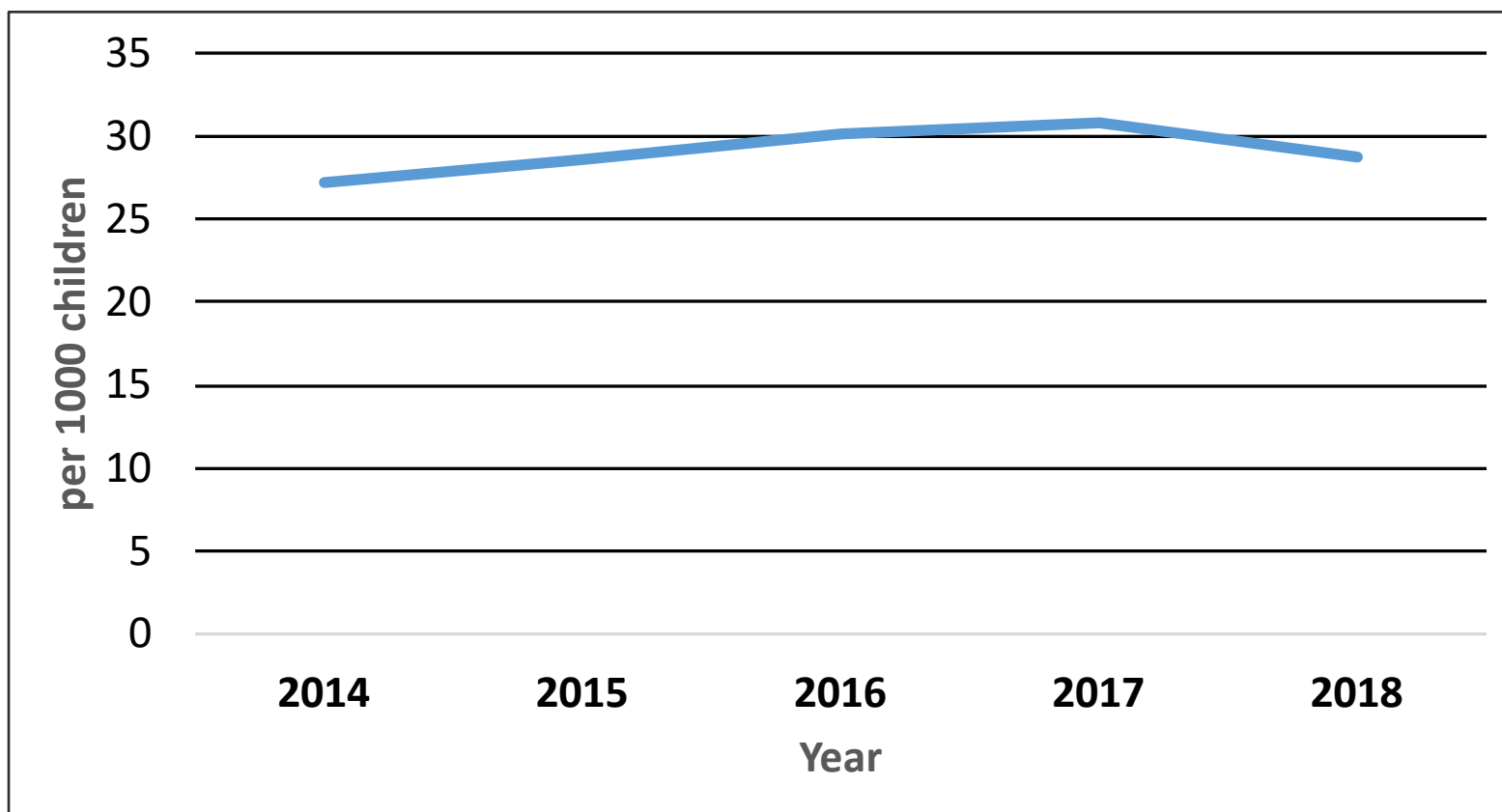


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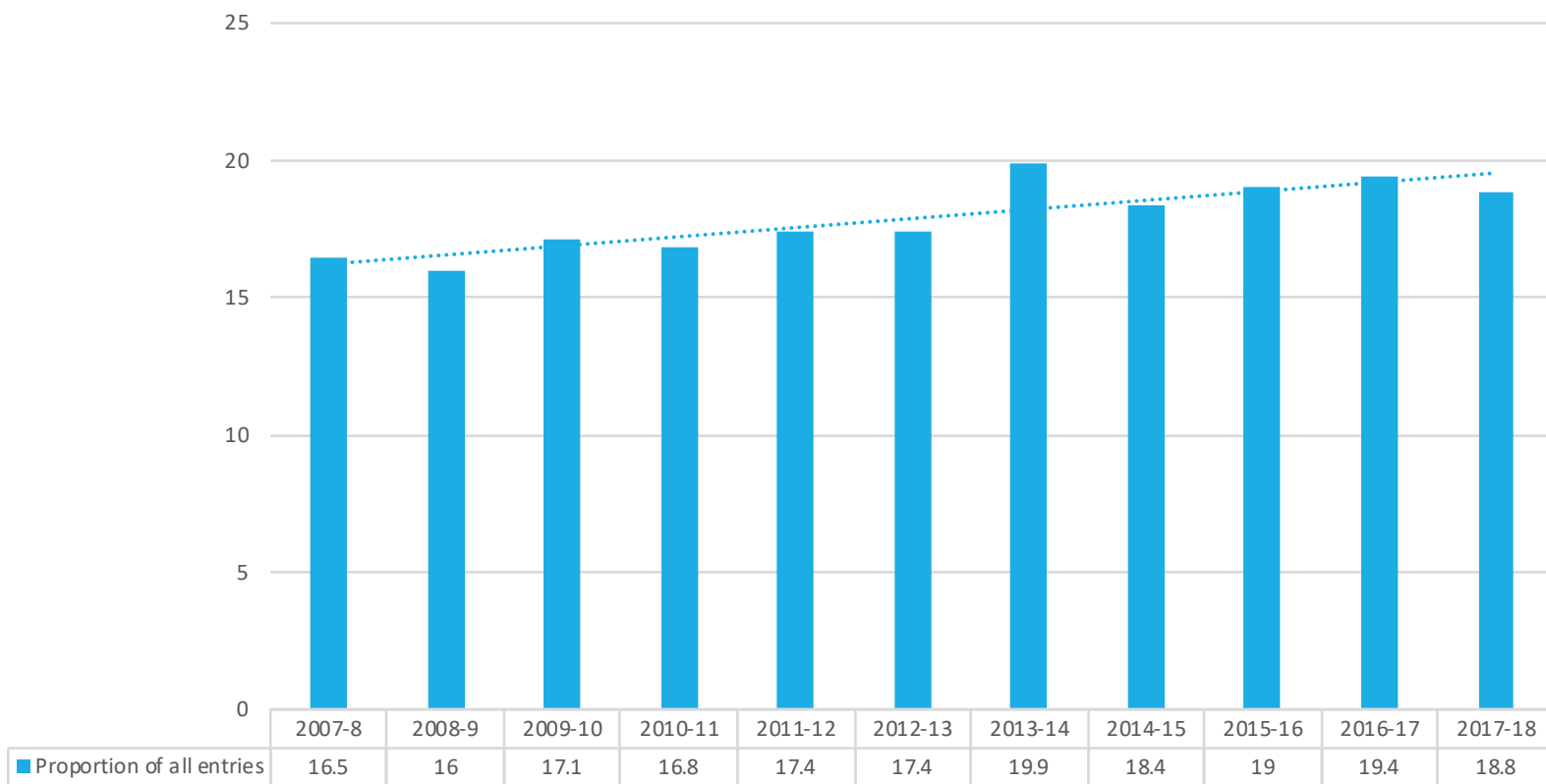
Dr Melissa O'Donnell, Assoc Prof Stephanie Taplin, Prof Rhonda Marriot

Children Receiving Child Protection Services - Australia

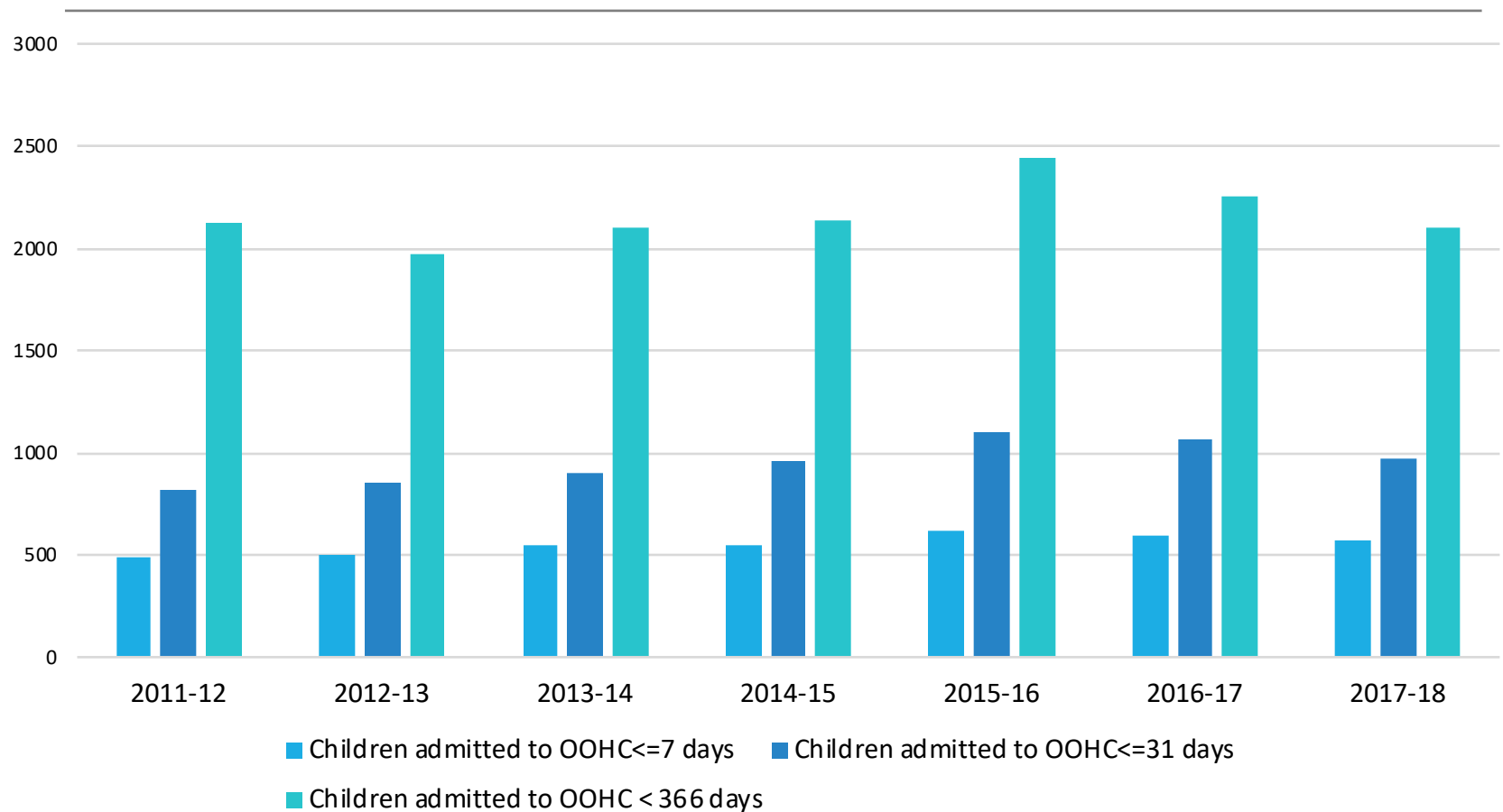


AIHW, 2019

Infants (< 1 yr) as a proportion of all OOHC entries (trends) % (National data: AIHW)

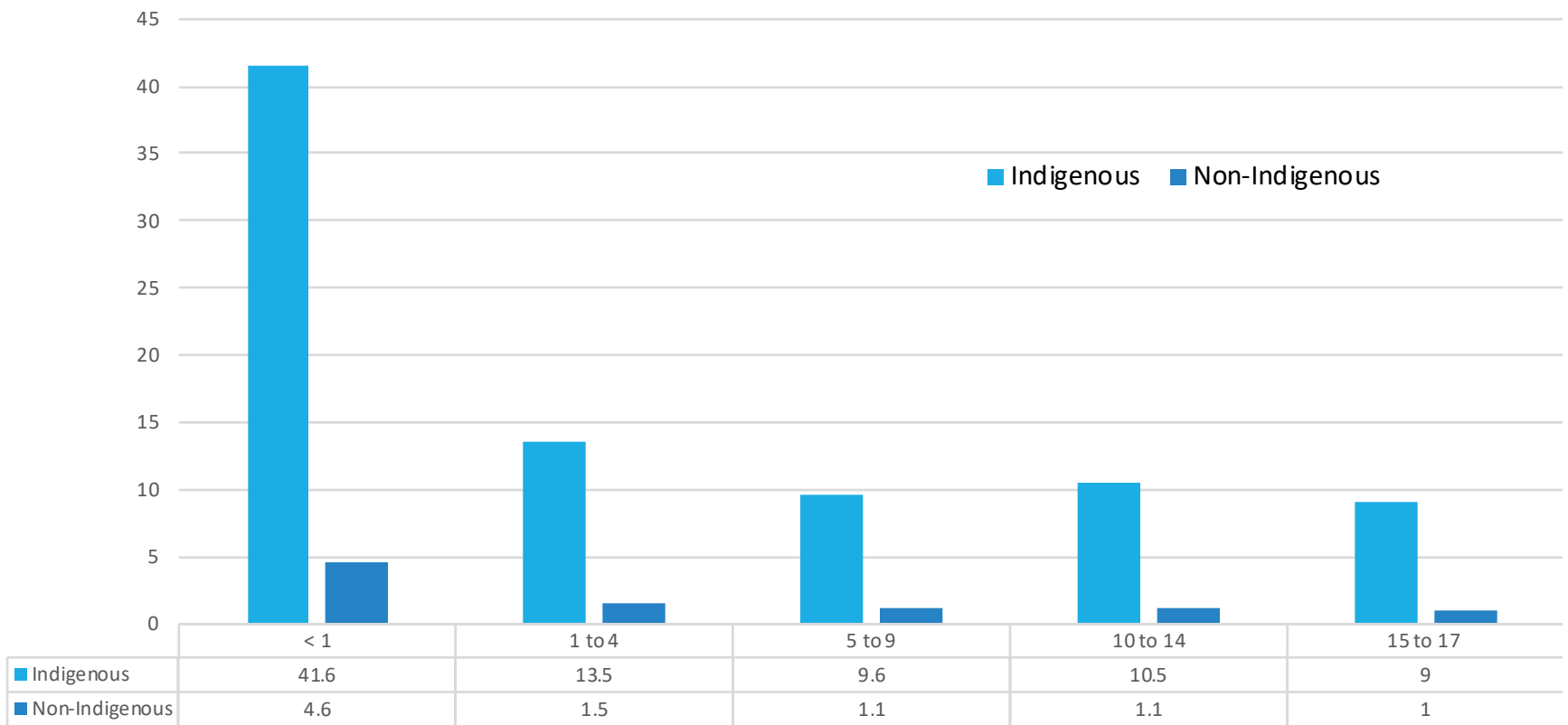


Number of infants admitted to OOHC (AIHW national data)



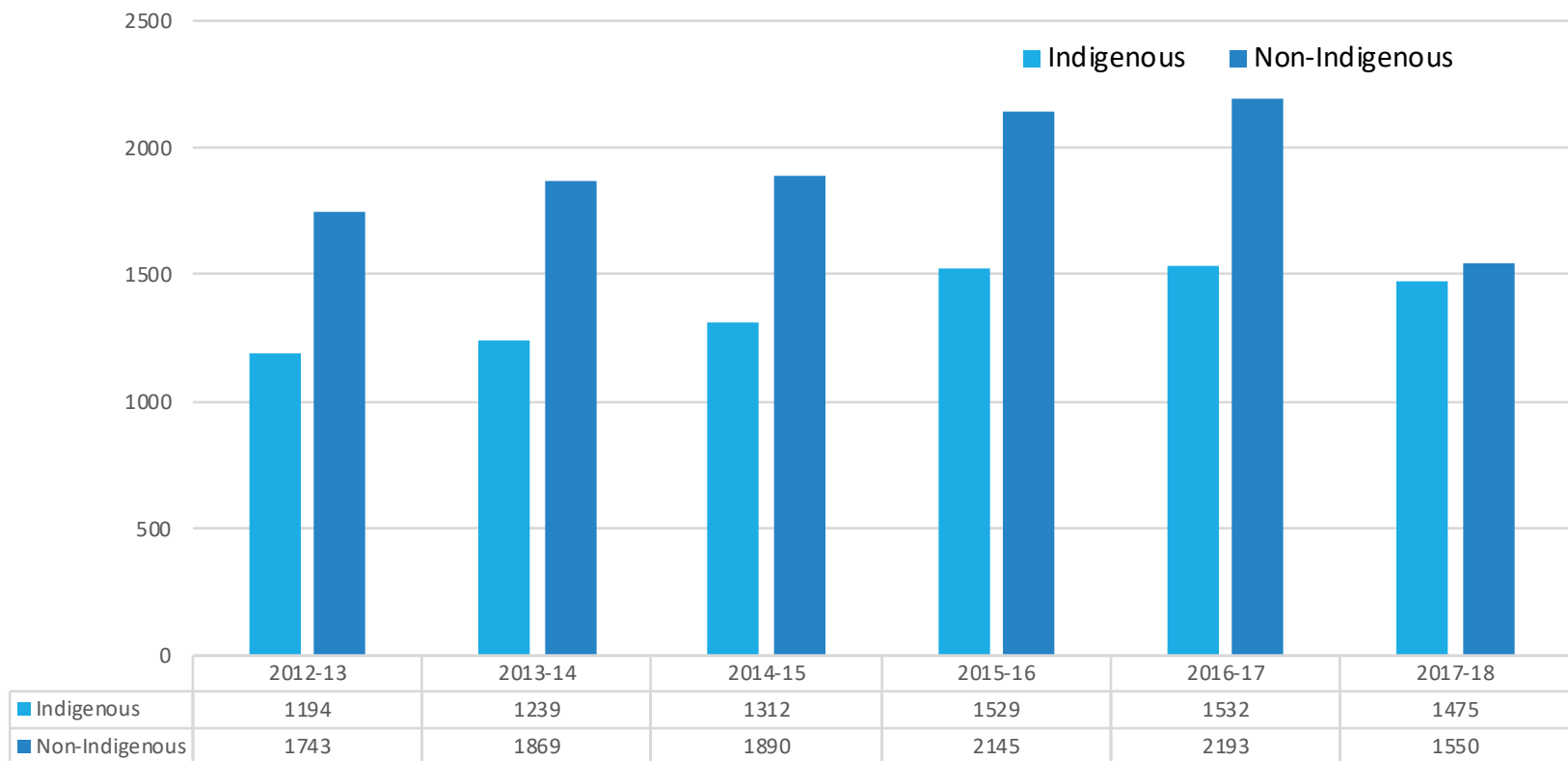
Indigenous and non-Indigenous children admitted to OOHC: Number per 1,000

National data as at 30 June 2018 (AIHW 2019)



Number Indigenous and non-Indigenous children reported prenatally

National data as at 30 June 2018





Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

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Infant removals: The need to address the over-representation of Aboriginal infants and community concerns of another ‘stolen generation’



Melissa O'Donnell^{a,*}, Stephanie Taplin^b, Rhonda Marriott^c, Fernando Lima^a,
Fiona J. Stanley^a

^a Telethon Kids Institute, University of Western Australia, Perth, Western Australia, Australia

^b Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University, Canberra, Australia

^c Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia, Australia

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The removal of a child from their parents is traumatising, particularly in Aboriginal communities where a history of child removals has led to intergenerational trauma. This study will determine where disparities in child protection involvement exist among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and characteristics associated with infant removals. Challenges faced by child protection and other agencies, and opportunities for overcoming these, are discussed.

Methods: Data from both the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and linked Western

'Stolen Generations continue' as Aboriginal kids caught in cycle of trauma

EXCLUSIVE
By VICTORIA LAURIE
SENIOR REPORTER

12:00AM FEBRUARY 25, 2019
16 COMMENTS



Professor Fiona Stanley says families are referring to 'another Stolen Generation'. Picture: Sean Middleton

A study confirming Aboriginal children are 10 times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be placed in out-of-home care has prompted researchers to call for urgent action to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma caused by removing them from families.

The study, published this month in the journal *Child Abuse & Neglect*, found the number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care increased by 21 per cent from 2012 to 2017, while the number of Aboriginal infants less than a year old in out-of-home care increased 17 per cent between 2013 and 2016.

Indigenous kids are still being removed from their families, more than ever before

Larissa Behrendt



There is an important statistic missing from the Closing the Gap report and its absence masks a major crisis facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families



▲ 'The number of Indigenous children who are growing up away from their families and from a true and meaningful connection to their culture is rising' Photograph: Terry Trewin/AAP

Saturday marks the eight-year anniversary of the **national apology to the stolen generations**. It was a speech that captured the spirit of a moment - that the time had come to acknowledge the devastating impact the assimilationist policy of removing Aboriginal children from their families had inflicted.

It was a time to make a promise, as the then prime minister Kevin Rudd said,

New Zealand rocked by Māori protests on child removals and use of sacred land

Jacinda Ardern criticised for absence during protests over removal of Māori children and construction on sacred land at Ihumātao



▲ Protesters gather at Ihumātao as they stand to fight a proposed Fletcher Building housing development in Auckland, New Zealand. Photograph: Phil Walter/Getty Images

Māori leaders are staging two major protests in New Zealand, straining relations with the Labour coalition government and drawing accusations that Jacinda Ardern - who is visiting the remote Pacific territory of Tokelau - is a “part-time prime minister”.

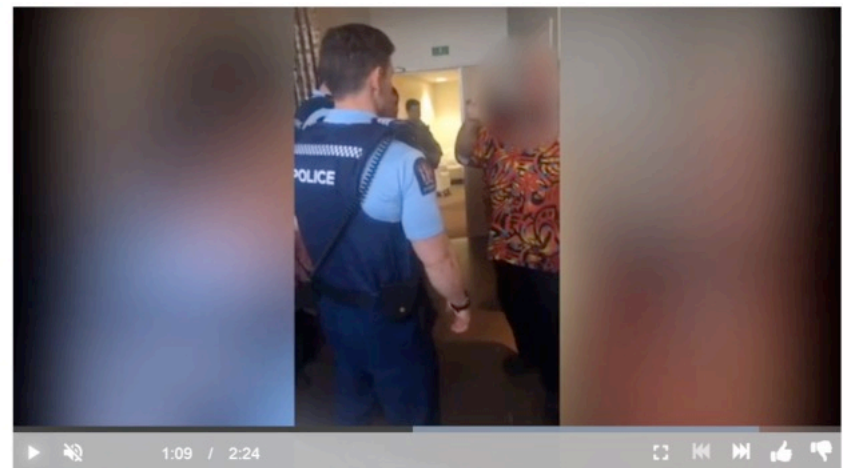
On Tuesday, hundreds of activists marched on parliament house in Wellington, as well as other [New Zealand](#) cities, calling for an overhaul of the government’s child welfare agency, Oranga Tamariki [Ministry for Children], amid a series of controversial cases in which Māori children and newborns were taken into state care.

NEW ZEALAND

Baby uplifts: Distressing new videos emerge showing – newborns being uplifted

6 Sep, 2019 11:45am

⌚ 5 minutes to read



Oranga Tamariki Child uplift from Auckland Hospital. Video

NZ Herald

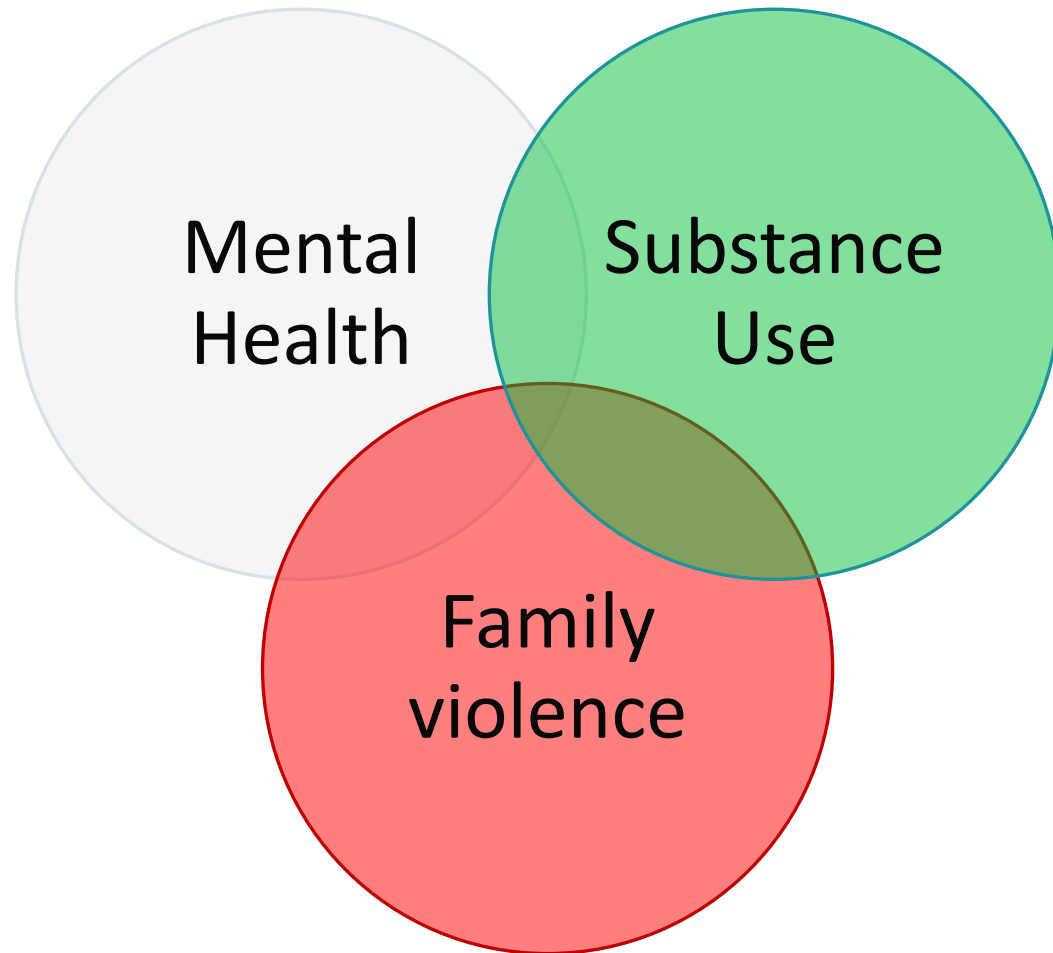
By: [Bernard Orsman](#) and [Anna Leask](#)



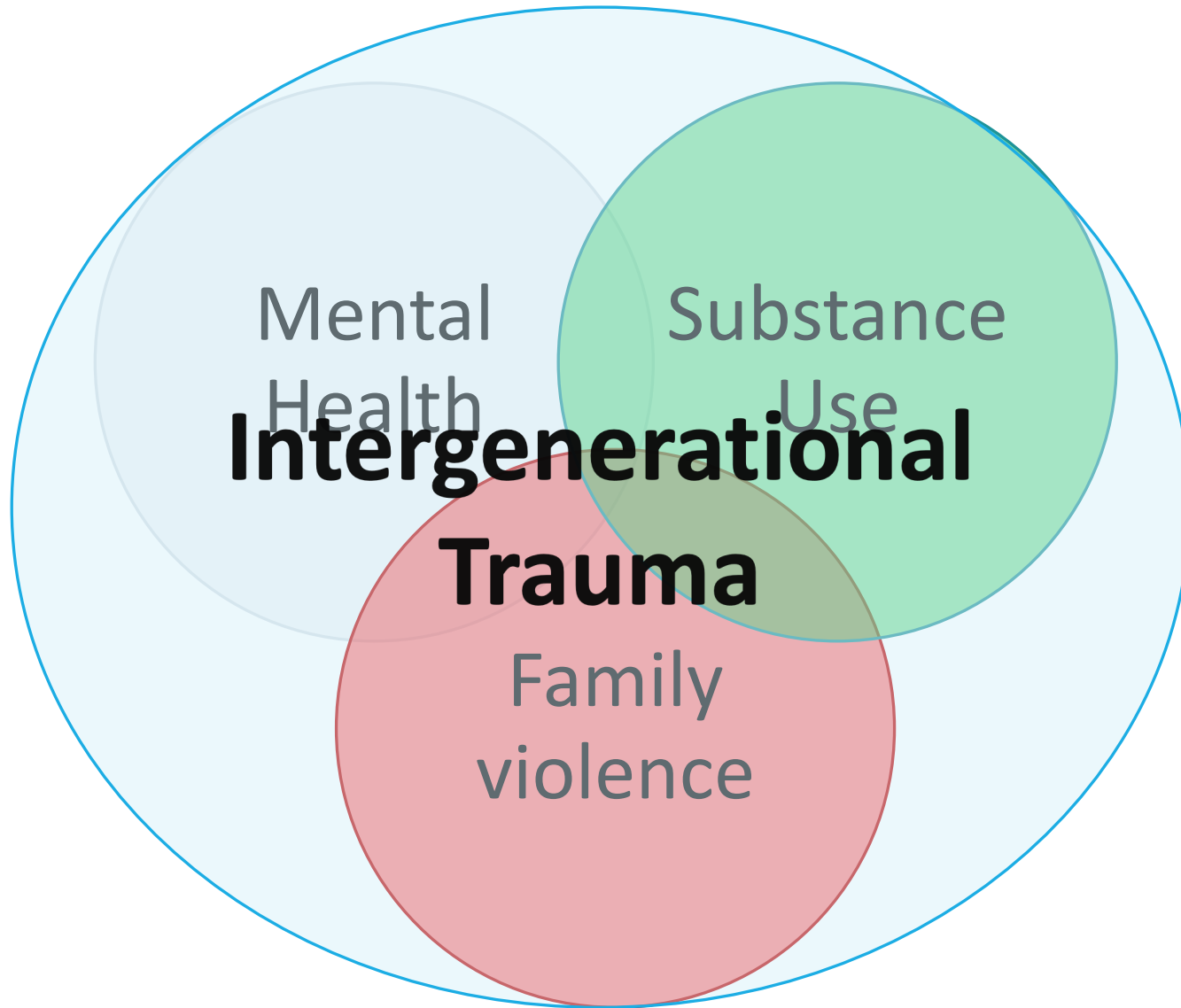
New videos have emerged of newborn babies being uplifted by police under orders of Oranga Tamariki in Auckland.

In one case two family members were arrested for obstruction as they tried to block police from taking a newborn.

Risk of child protection involvement



Colonisation



Western Australian – Linked Data (1990-2015)

Department for Communities

Child Protection and Family
Support Data

Health Department

Birth Registrations
Midwives Notifications
Hospital Morbidity Data Collection
Death Registrations
Mental Health Information System
Birth Defects
Intellectual Disability

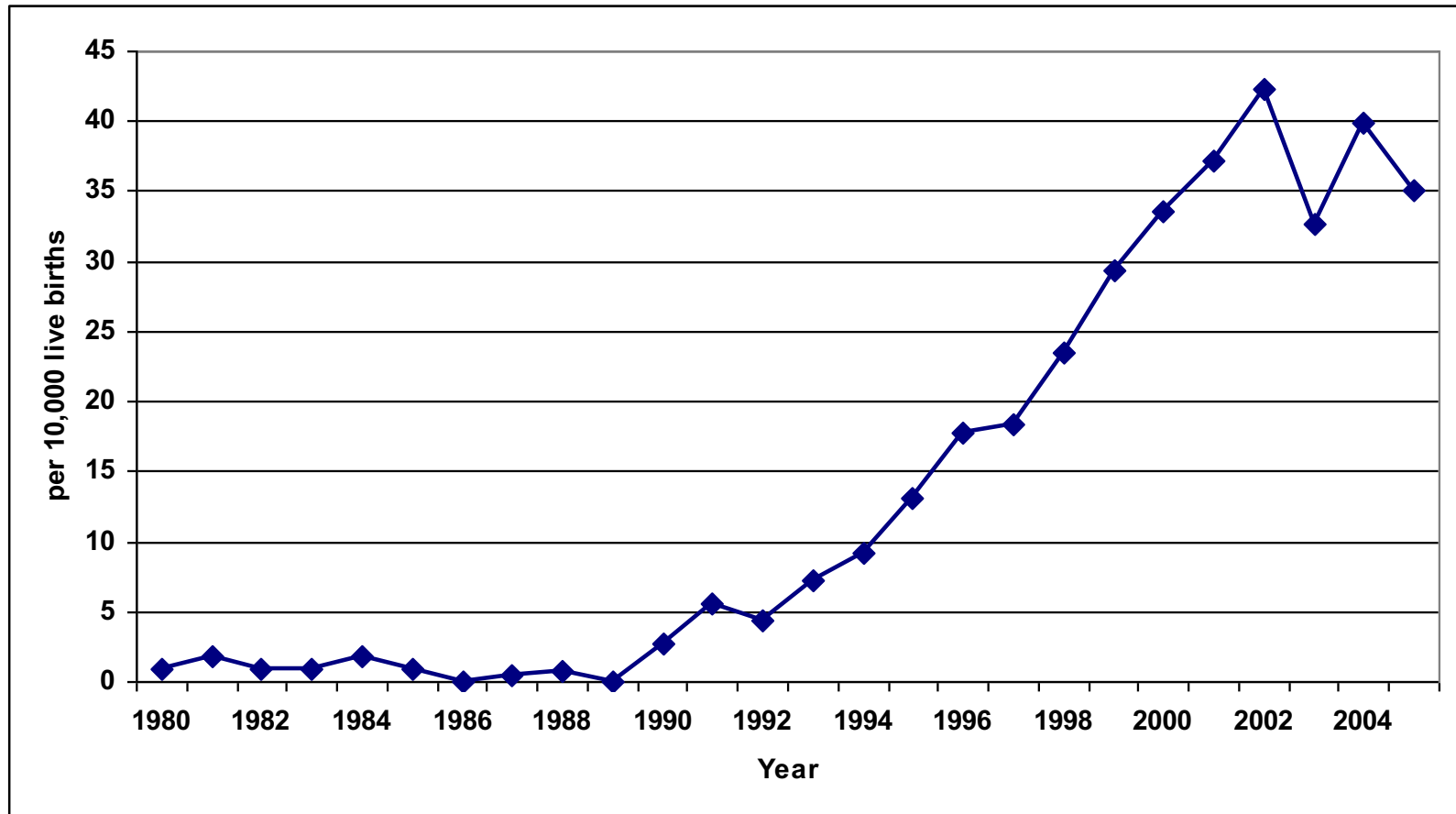
Justice Department

Corrective Services and
Courts Data

Education Department

High school completion certificate
Australian Early Development Census
School achievement (Y3, 5, 7, 9)
Attendance and suspensions

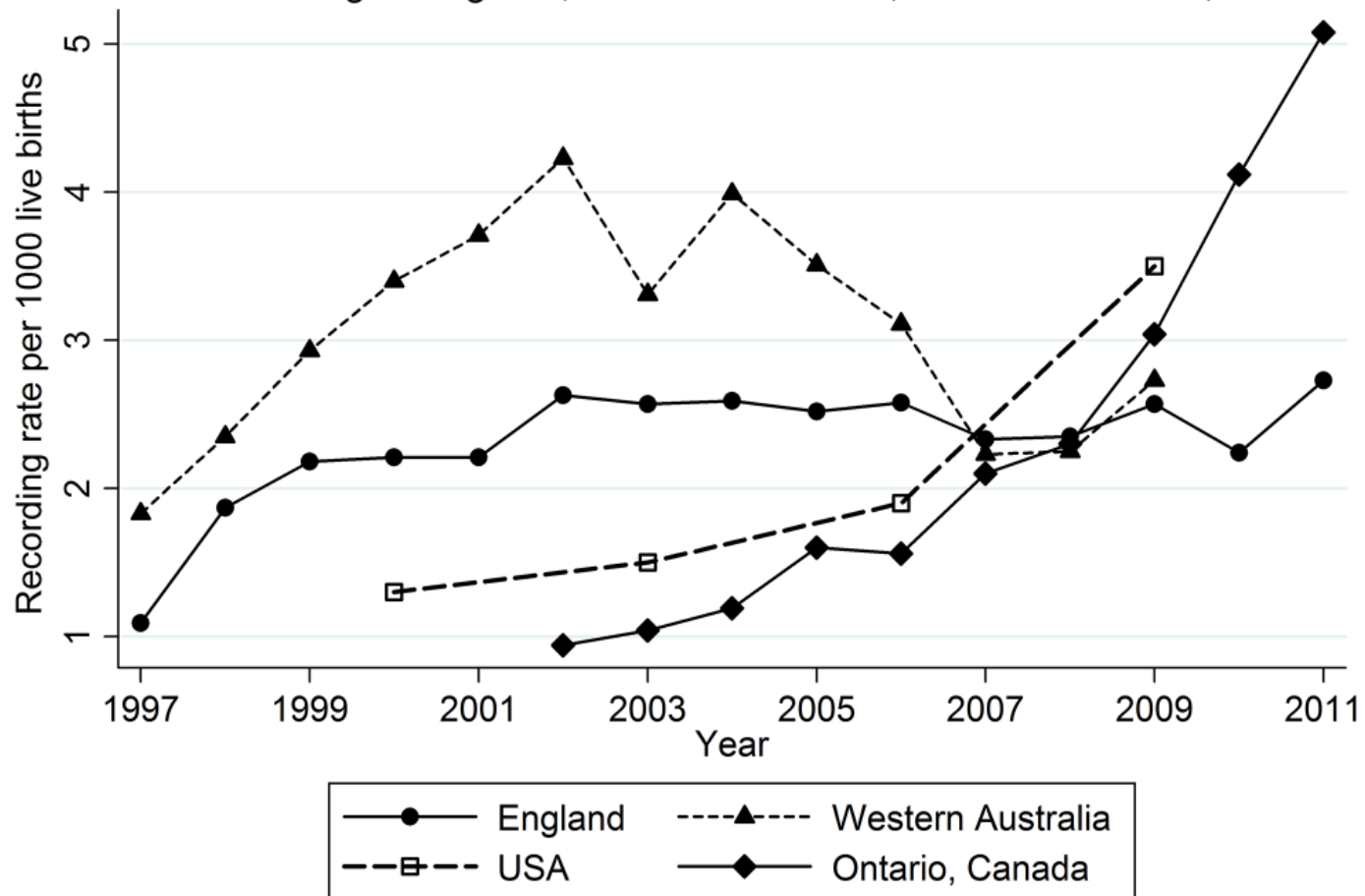
Neonatal Withdrawal Syndrome - WA



O'Donnell et al, Pediatrics, 2009

NWS: International comparisons

NWS recording in England, Western Australia, USA and Ontario, Canada



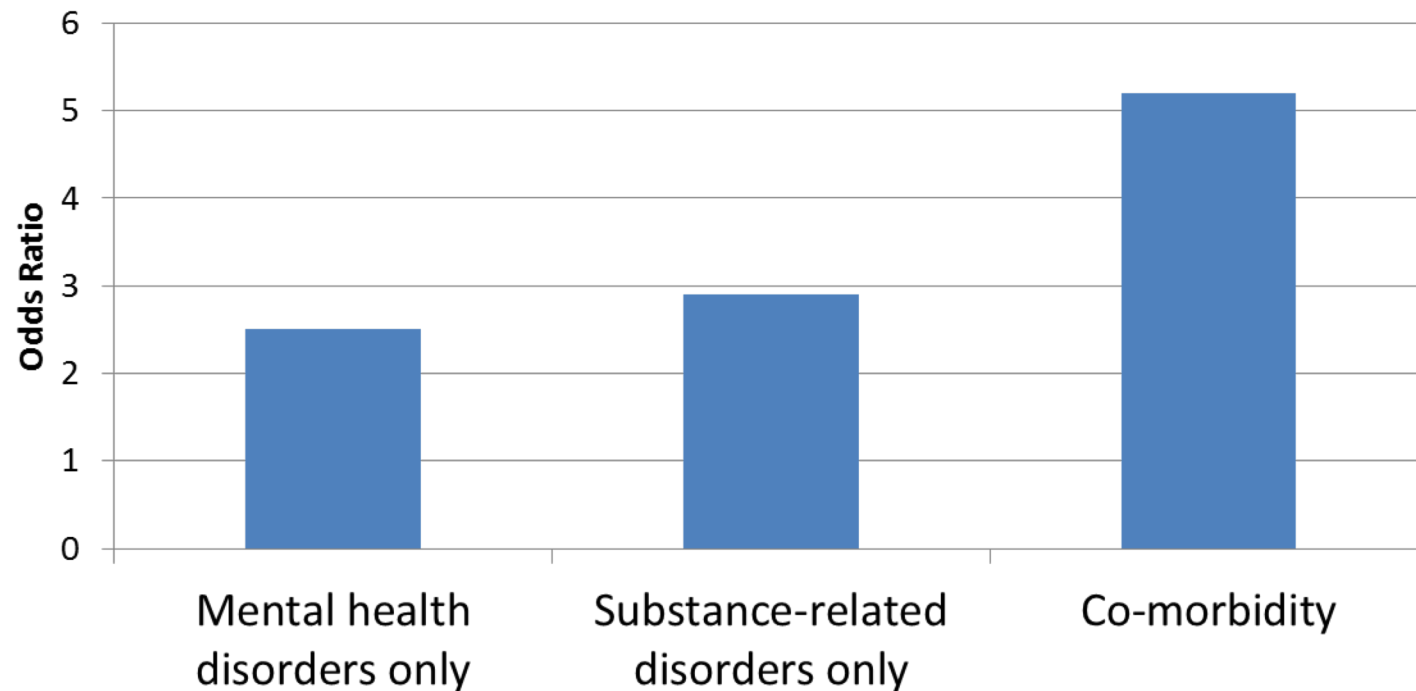
Child Maltreatment Allegation Risk Mothers – Mental Health contact

Variable	Adjusted OR* (95% CI)	
	Non-Aboriginal	Aboriginal
Mental health contact	3.0 (2.8-3.2)	2.0 (1.7-2.2)
Perinatal mental health contact	3.4 (3.2 – 3.6)	

**Adjusted for child gender, marital status, parental age at birth, level of disadvantage, child disability, mother assault admission, housing issues.*

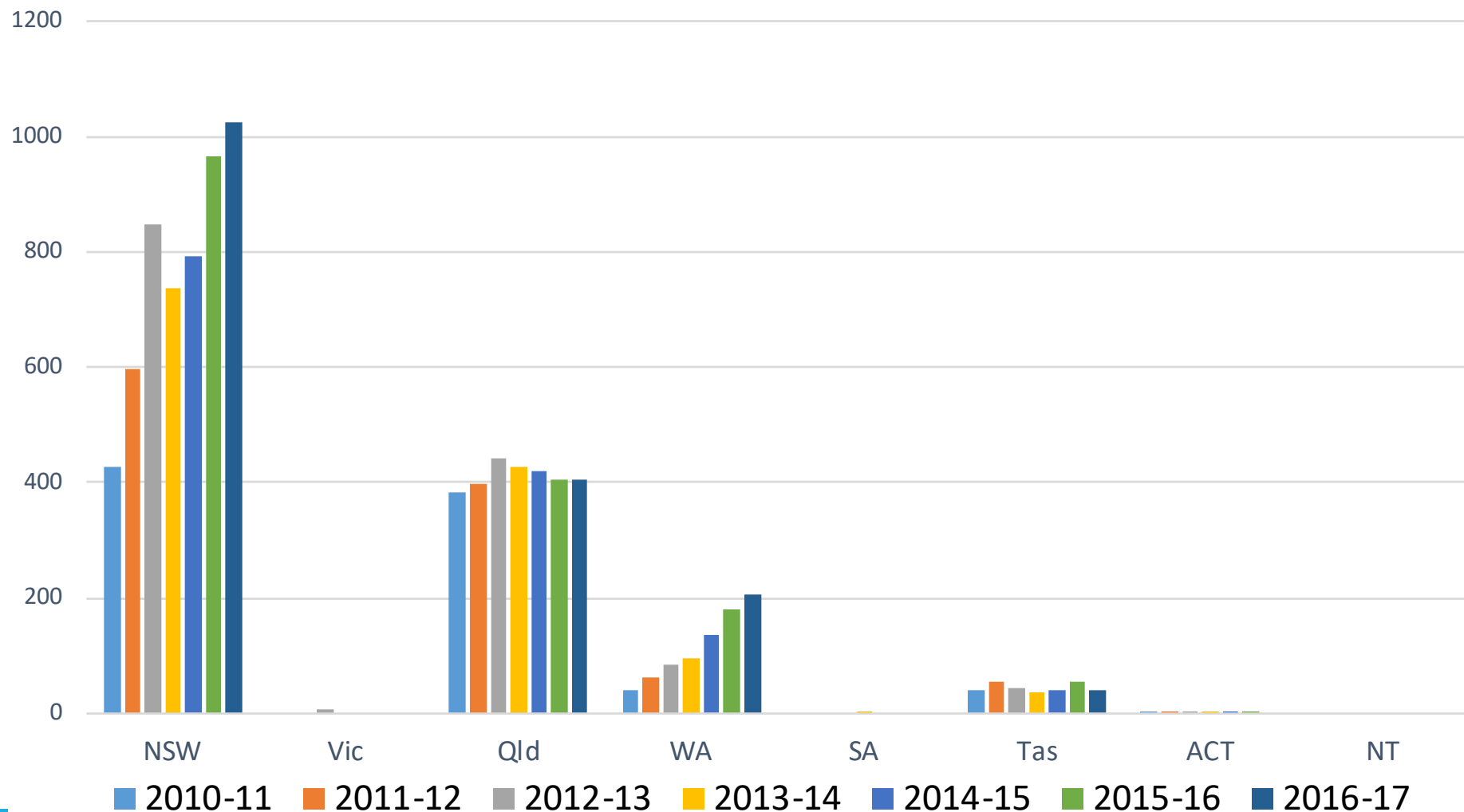
O'Donnell et al, Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 2015

Mental health and Substance-related disorders

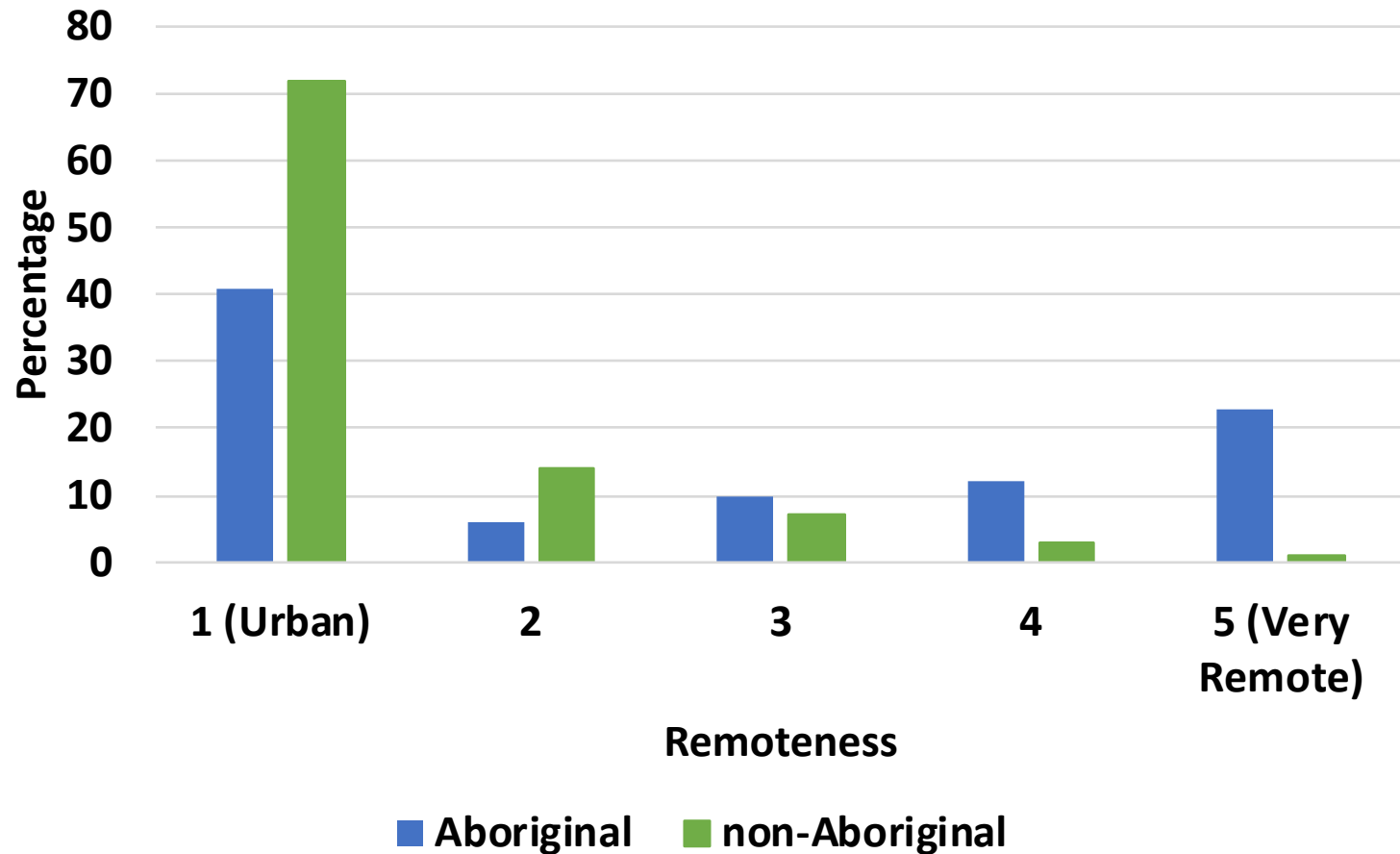


O'Donnell et al, Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, 2015

Trends in prenatal reporting by jurisdiction (AIHW data)



Infant Removals by remoteness



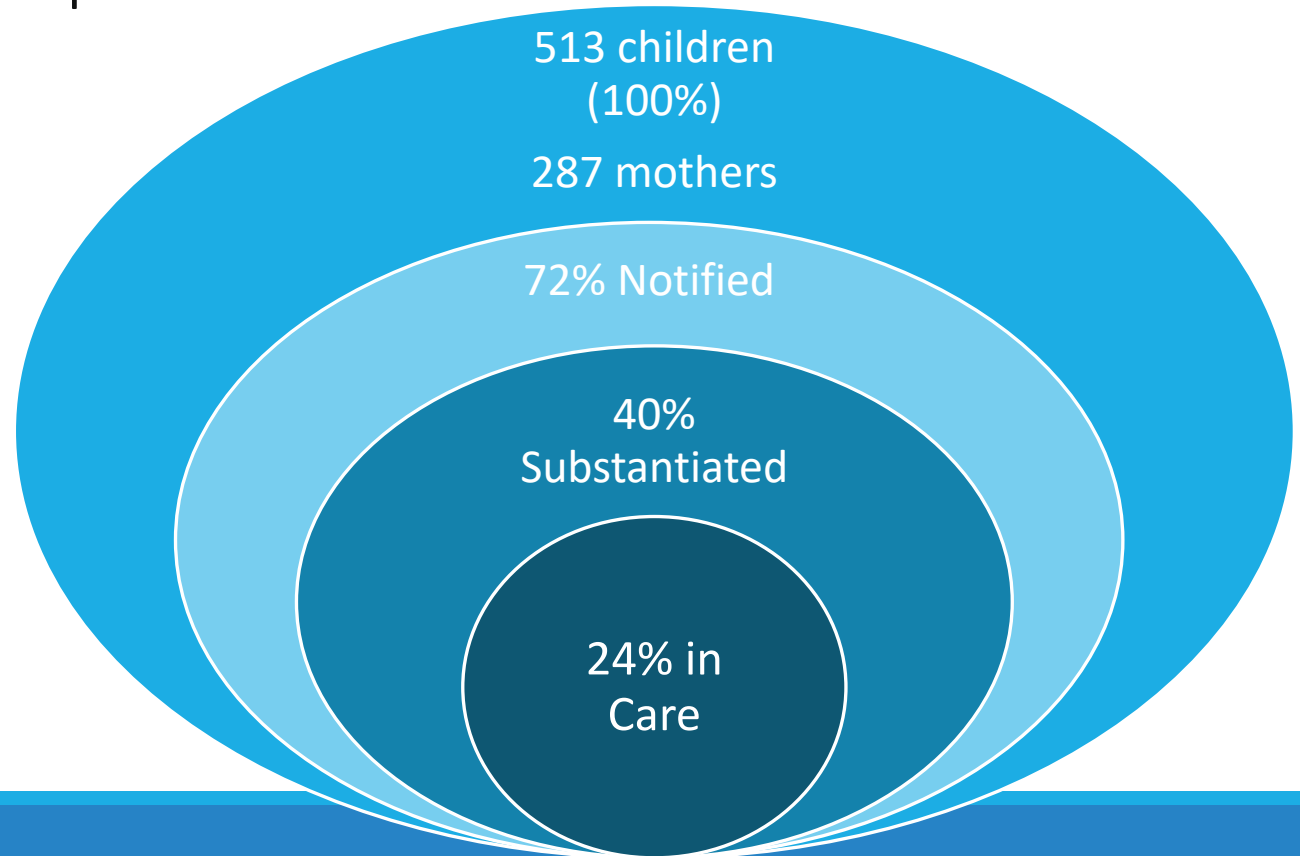
O'Donnell, et al, 2019

Children of care cohort

Pregnancy (client system data)

- 28% of the Care group females had a baby (that could be identified through child protection records).

Children of care group



ARC Discovery 2017-20: State Intervention with Babies

AIMS:

To increase our knowledge about the nature, extent and impact of the removal of infants (< 1 year old) and newborns (<31 days old) from their mothers.

RESEARCHERS:

Assoc Prof Stephanie Taplin (NSW)

Dr Melissa O'Donnell & Prof Rhonda Marriott
(Aboriginal health and wellbeing) (WA)

Prof Karen Broadhurst (UK); Dr Fred Wulczyn (USA)



National data

National Child Protection Minimum Dataset

- Prenatal reports
- Allegations
- Orders (2 year and 18 year protection orders)
- Out-of-home care and reunifications

Individual data for all states

Case file review

Infants involved in child protection proceedings

- Characteristics and histories of women whose infants were removed from their care, including previous child removals
- Extent and nature of services and interventions provided to mothers and infants
- Child protection system involvement of the infants removed at birth
- Decision-making in relation to removals of infants across NSW and WA

Interviews and Focus Groups

- **Interviews with mothers:** factors involved, impact of processes, support, recommendations for improving processes and support
- **Focus groups with service providers:** support provided, barriers and enablers to outcomes, recommendations.

Development of Pre-birth Guidelines and Ethical Removal Processes

- Evidence will be used to develop **pre-birth guidelines** for working with vulnerable mothers and improve safety and optimise health outcomes for infants.
- Develop international ethical **removal processes**.
- **International Network on Infants, Toddlers and Child Protection** – led by Harriet Ward (Oxford University) and Fred Wulczyn (Uni of Chicago)



Australian Government

Australian Research Council



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Dr Miriam Maclean Carol Orr
Scott Sims



Western Australian Data Linkage Branch

Industry Partners – This presentation does not necessarily reflect the views of the Government Departments



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Department of **the Premier and Cabinet**
Department of **Education**
School Curriculum and Standards Authority
Mental Health Commission
WA Police