



Empowering Peer-Parent & Family Advocacy in Australian Child Protection

Chief Investigators

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- Micah Projects (Family Inclusion Network, South East Qld)
- Community Living Association
- Life Without Barriers
- AbSec - NSW Child Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation
- Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP)
- Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter
- The Family Inclusion Network WA

Main Funding Body

Australian Research Council Linkage Grant

Timeframe

The project will run from 2025 until 2028

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The challenge

Australian child protection systems are in crisis. In 2022-2023, Australian governments spent \$9.4 billion on child protection services, a doubling of costs over the previous decade. The over-representation of families with complex needs, children of parents with intellectual disability, and of First Nations families as subjects of child protection investigations and child removals to out-of-home care is substantial and growing. Concern exists about the financial sustainability of Australian child protection systems and of the harms these systems can cause to children and to their relationships with parents, families, communities, and Country.

The project

This project aims to build knowledge and practical resources to empower parents and families, with lived experience of child protection systems, as peer-advocates and change leaders. Its significance lies in being the first study to examine the scope, characteristics, and the resources needed to build and sustain peer-parent and family advocacy (PPFA) in Australian child protection systems. Using mixed research methods, this co-designed project entails a unique partnership with families with experience of child protection intervention, family support and disability services, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Expected outcomes include strengthening of PPFA capabilities to reduce the incidence, and the financial and social costs, of children's removal from families, communities and Country.

Project aims

Build knowledge and resources to empower and sustain parent, family, and community-led PPFA initiatives in Australian child protection systems.

Identify and develop the specific processes and resources required to provide parents and family caregivers with intellectual disability with safe, accessible, and sustainable opportunities to be peer-parent and family advocates.

Understand how the unique experiences and worldviews of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, families, and advocates can inform culturally respectful approaches to PPFA.

Analyse how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community initiatives can inform PPFA approaches throughout Australian child protection systems.

Build knowledge on the scope of, and opportunities to embed, PPFA in Australian statutory child protection systems.

Project design and key features

The project will take place across three stages:

Stage 1 will seek to identify PPFA activities across Australia, to produce a map that documents current initiatives.

Stage 2 will involve data collection to capture the voices and experiences of key stakeholders, including the perspectives of peer advocates and the organisations they work with.

Stage 3 will synthesise findings across the three studies in the co-production of new knowledge and resources.

Study 1 will examine what is required to sustain parent, family and community-led peer-parent and family advocacy initiatives care, including those for parents and caregivers with intellectual disability.

Study 2 will examine culturally responsive peer-parent and family advocacy initiatives in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Study 3 will explore peer-parent and family advocacy within Australian statutory child protection systems.

