

The Children in Care Collective is winding up.

The Children in Care Collective (the Collective) was conceived as an interagency think-tank, established in 2017, whose members have been not-for profit out-of-home care service providers, academic centres and academic experts in the areas of child abuse and neglect, child protection, out-of-home care, and children's rights and best interests.

The Collective's vision of success has been that all children and young people living in out-of-home care feel valued and safe in a responsive and well-resourced service system whose foundation is best practice evidence and the deep experience of service providers. The Collective has used its rare combination of practitioner and academic wisdom and experience to focus on specific systemic issues in this service system.

The Collective has hosted six forums, bringing together national and international researchers and practitioners to discuss current policy and practice options and to influence better evidence-based practice. It has made many submissions, representations to government ministers and provided campaign support on issues relevant to improving out-of-home care and the outcomes for children and young people who grow up in care.

The Collective has supported research and conducted internal surveys to inform policy and practice within Collective agencies.¹ It produced three research publications, including a peer reviewed report published in April 2025 by *Children Australia*.² Work with the Australian Tax Office led to the publication of information about non-taxable allowances for carers, reducing the need for agencies to seek advice individually.³

Over the years, more than 30 speakers have joined the Collective's bi-monthly meetings with presentations on current research, policy and practice initiatives and approaches to collaborative work.

One of the aspects of the Collective most valued by its members has been the safe and collegiate space it created where people were free to raise concerns and discuss problems with a view to identifying solutions and to freely sharing information as well as resources. Speaking with a unified voice has given the Collective the freedom to address complex issues.

Much has changed since 2017 and a great deal of reform of the out-of-home care sector is underway right across the country. The Collective has always sought to be a contributor not a competitor and the time now seems right for agencies to focus tightly on the sector-wide complexities with which they are faced.

The Collective has recently developed a brochure aimed at recruiting respite carers, for use by all agencies. It is finalising its work on a booklet that will give health professionals a clear understanding of the main elements of the out-of-home care system in Australia, including legal roles and responsibilities. It also sets out the particular challenges faced by children and young people growing up in care.

The website will be available until April 2026 at which point it will be closed down. We thank all those who have supported and contributed to our work. We hope our contribution will continue to support the health and wellbeing of children and young people in care and their successful transition to adulthood and independence.

¹ Member agencies in 2025 are Allambi Care; Anglicare NSW South | NSW West | ACT; CareSouth; Key Assets Australia; Lifestyle Solutions: Mackillop Family Services; Marist180; Pathfinders; Settlement Services International; Uniting NSW/ACT; Institute of Child Protection Studies - Australian Catholic University; Australian Centre for Child Protection - University of South Australia; Research Centre for Children and Families— University of Sydney

² The Collective's research reports are: *Barriers to mental-health support and services for children and young people in out-of-home care: The Children in Care Collective's audit findings, 2025*; *More Care Required 2021*; *Health and well-being in out-of-home care 2020*. See <https://www.childrenincarecollective.com.au/research>

³ *Foster Carer Allowances – Advice from the ATO*. See <https://www.childrenincarecollective.com.au/research>