



**Queensland  
Foster and  
Kinship Care**

# CARER EXIT SURVEY

## Northern QLD Region

### 2018-2019

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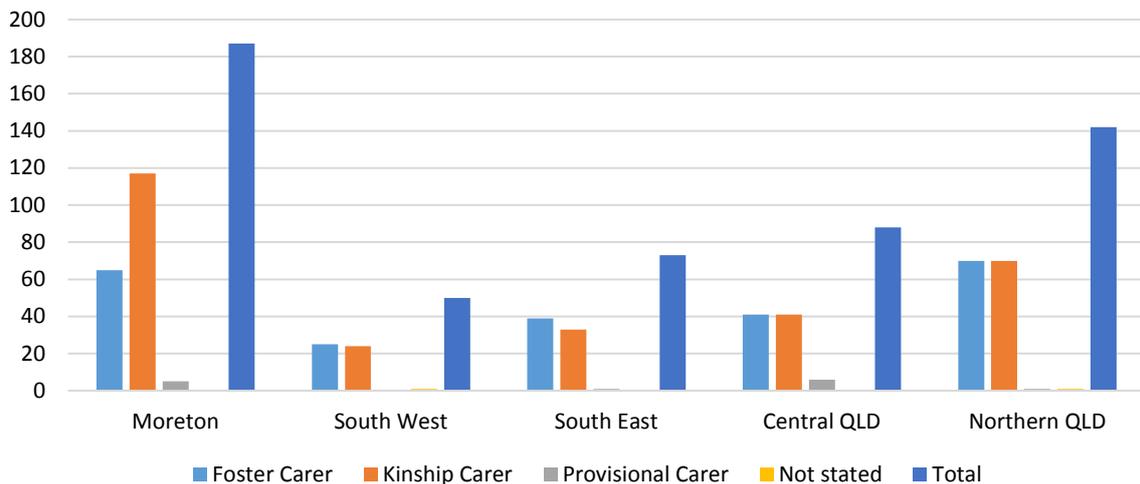
## Executive Summary

### Information relating to End of Carer Approval Notices

This report brings Queensland Foster and Kinship Care, formally Foster Care QLD (hereafter referred to as QFKC) to the end of our eleventh year managing the Exit Interview Program. For this report QFKC has maintained the breakdown of regions.

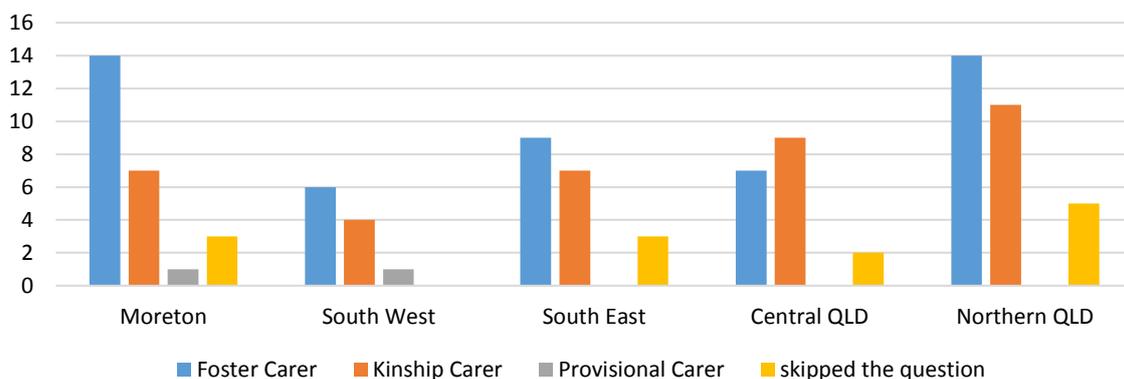
QFKC received a total of 540 Exit Interview referrals for the period **1<sup>st</sup> July 2018 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019**. 240 of the total were Foster Carers, 285 of the total were Kinship Carers, 13 were Provisional Carers and 2 did not state what the carer status was.

**End of Carer Approval Notices received by QFKC during the period of 1st July 2018-30th June 2018**



103 Exit Surveys were completed on Survey Monkey, either by the carers directly, QFKC inputting the data on the carer’s behalf from a paper based survey that the carer was sent and returned to QFKC or the carer requested a telephone interview and QFKC inputted the data on to Survey Monkey during the telephone interview. The return rate this year in relation to completed surveys, is 19%.

**People who completed the Exit Survey**



The procedures for responding to notifications of End of Carer Approval Notices is as follows;

- QFKC send a letter when they receive the End of Carer Approval Notice from the Department, informing the person/persons that QFKC has received the End of Carer Approval Notice and would they like to provide information about their experiences as carers. The letter also provides a number of ways they can complete the survey, either online, over the phone, or have a paper survey sent out with a return stamp addressed envelope, which would then be input into Survey Monkey by QFKC.
- After a two week period QFKC would follow up via phone call where possible with the former carers to confirm receipt of the letter and discuss the opportunity to provide their experiences. When no phone contact details have been provided, QFKC would email the former carer/s if email details were included on the End of Carer Approval Notices.

It has been noted over the years that QFKC do not receive all the End of Carer Approval Notices that should be provided to QFKC to give the opportunity to people who would like to undertake a survey and this needs to improve to ensure equal opportunity for everybody to provide feedback.

As stated in previous reports QFKC continue to receive a number of End of Carer Approval Notices however based on the figures provided by the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women we continue to receive significantly less notifications than we should be receiving. QFKC has endeavoured to address this significant issue in previous years and it would appear that less than half of the End of Carer Approval Notices have been received again by QFKC in the year 2018-2019 when comparing the figures that are provided on the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women website. The lack of understanding by regions as to the importance of QFKC receiving all End of Carer Approval Notices has a direct impact on the integrity of the program and places a question as to whether this undertaking is viable in the future. QFKC absolutely believe the data has validity and strength however the full potential of the data cannot be reached if we do not have (all) the notices.

## Overall Data and Findings

This report outlines the feedback from all 103 carers and it is sectioned into regions so that the information is specific to the feedback from each region.

Overall, across the state people identified positive aspects of their time as carers and these related to;

- The range of allowances provided by Child Safety to help meet the cost of caring for a child
- Number of children placed with the carer
- Contact with the agency
- The allowance payment rates
- How quickly allowances were paid (this was separate to how quickly out of pocket expenses were reimbursed and a high number of people identified that they were not satisfied)
- Opportunities carers were given to participate in training and professional development
- Pre-service training delivery
- Standard training modules 5,6 and 7
- Ability to access additional training
- Information provided about your role and responsibilities
- Information provided about Foster and Kinship Care Services role and responsibilities
- The manner in which the carer approval renewal process was undertaken

These comments are similar to previous years and reflects the overall responses to the question, whilst some responses may differ to being satisfied we have taken a range of responses whereby the percentage rate is high for satisfaction.

Overall across the State, there were similarities in terms of negative feedback provided, listed below are common themes from information provided in the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 reports;

The majority of responses relating to interactions with Child Safety identified that the carer felt;

- Unsupported
- Did not feel valued
- Lack of communication

The majority of responses identifying that the carer left due to issues with the children placed with them, stated it was for the following reasons;

- Behavioural
- Complexity of issues (trauma, medical, psychological)

The majority of responses relating to leaving due to family reasons identified the following;

- Time commitments
- Partner and biological children did not want to continue
- Change in circumstances
- Cost of providing care

The findings relating to what were the most challenging aspects of being a carer have remained consistent over the years that QFKC has been undertaking the Exit Survey Report. The lack of communication and feeling part of a care team is dominant throughout the reports for each region and this would be suggestive that this is a State-wide issue in regards to the feedback provided.

Some areas of care were identified as equally satisfied and dissatisfied in their responses;

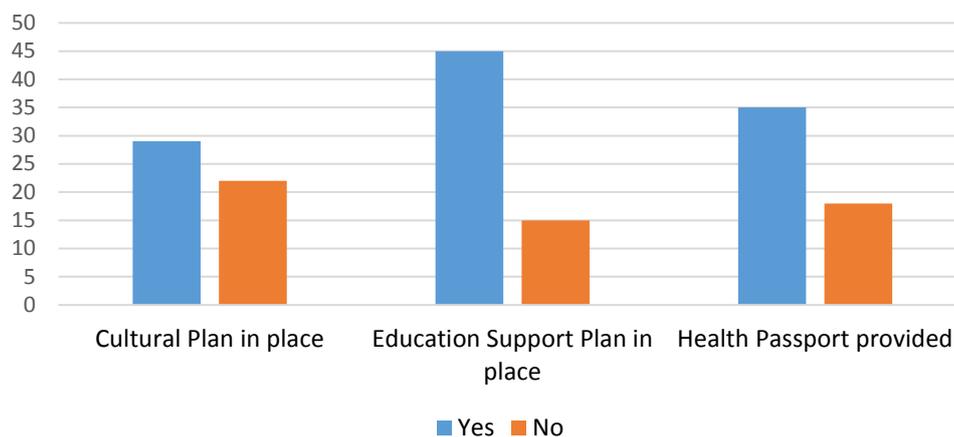
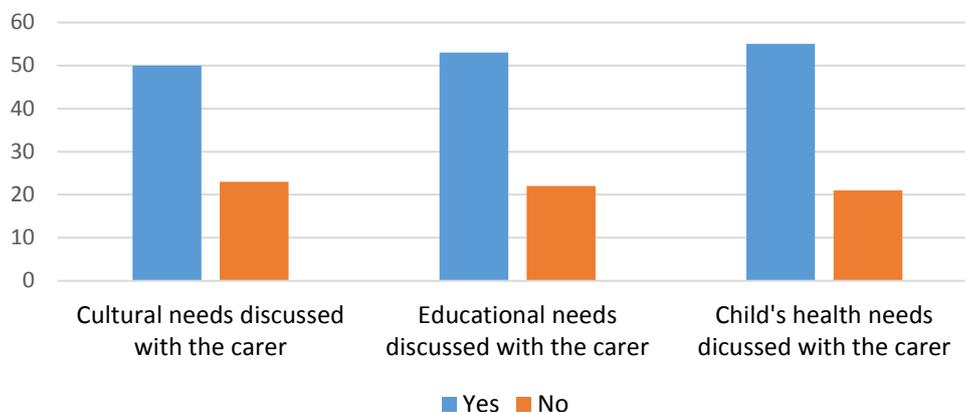
- Child Safety's policies and procedures dealing with Harm Report/SOC process
- Handling of a Harm Report/SOC process
- Outcome of discussions with Child Safety
- Discussions with FAST Reps

People were asked if they had attended training in the last 12 months, 76 people responded to this question and 20 people stated they had attended but 56 people stated they had not attended training.

People were also asked if they had a Foster Care Agreement in place and 56 people stated they did and 4 people stated they didn't.

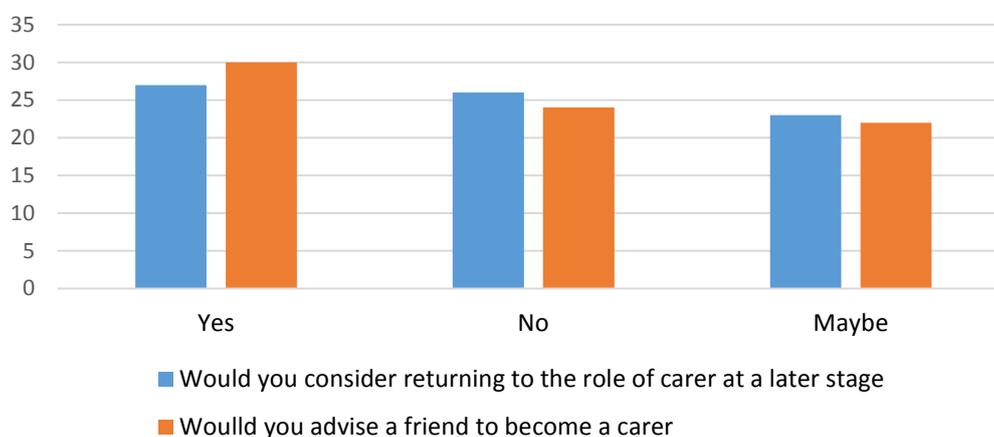
In relation to the needs of the child the following information was identified;

### Child's needs



People completing the survey were asked if they would advise a friend to become a carer and would they consider returning to the role of carer at a later stage, the responses overall for QLD are listed below;

### Overall



In summary, an equal number of people identified that they would/wouldn't consider returning to foster care at a later stage. A slightly lower number of people identified that they may consider returning to the role of caring at a later stage. The responses are also similar for "would you advise a friend to become a carer".

The majority of carers who completed the survey identified that they started fostering due to a desire to help children. This information has also been consistent throughout the years, but this was diminished by the lack of feeling valued or being part of a care team.

While reading the responses there was one response that summarised all the information relating to lack of feeling valued and being part of a care team, I have taken the extract from the responses word for word and QFKC feel that the response is very relevant to how people are feeling.

*"A simple thank you at the end of placement would do wonders"*

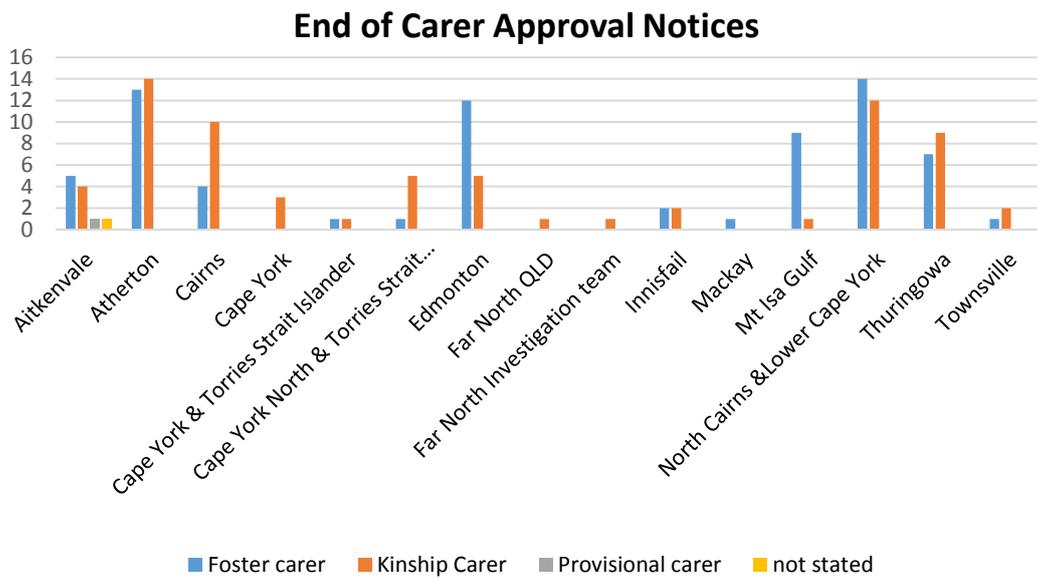
**Completed by:**  
Marijka Kelly  
Recruitment and Exit Co-ordinator

**Presented by:**  
Bryan Smith  
Executive Director

8 August 2019

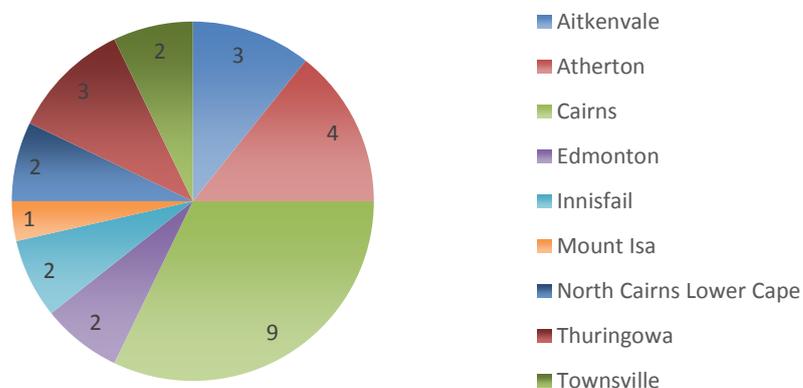
## Summary – Northern QLD Region

Queensland Foster and Kinship Care (hereafter referred to as QFKC) received 540 End of Carer Approval Notices during the period of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2018 to 30 June 2019. 142 (26.2%) of the End of Carer Approval Notices were received from the Northern QLD region and affiliated with the following service centres. Please note that sometimes all the required information is not provided to QFKC.

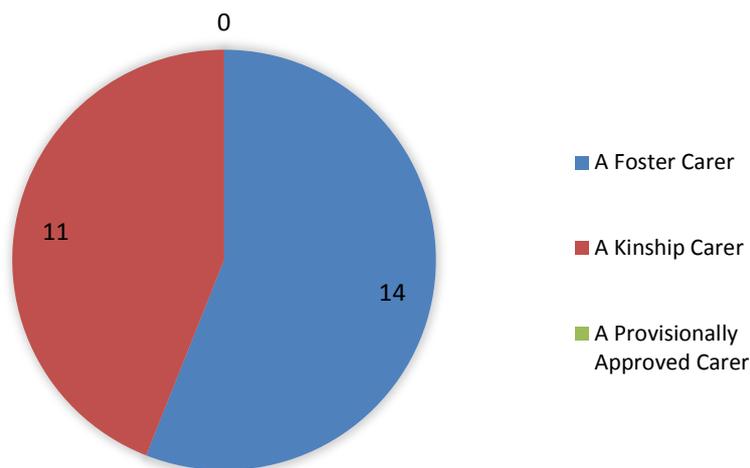
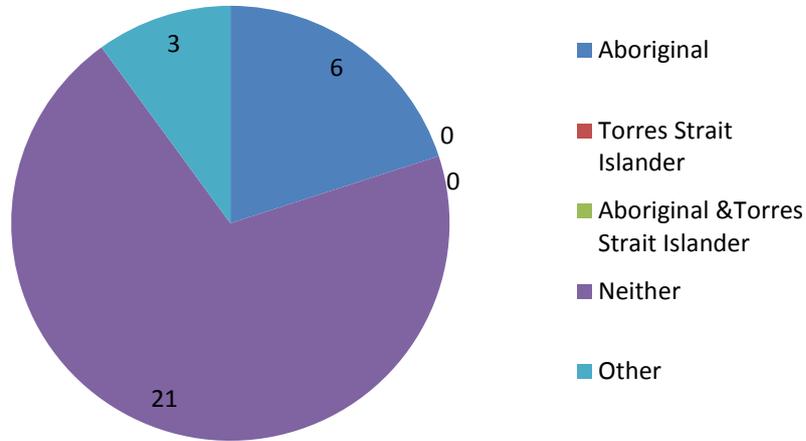


## About You

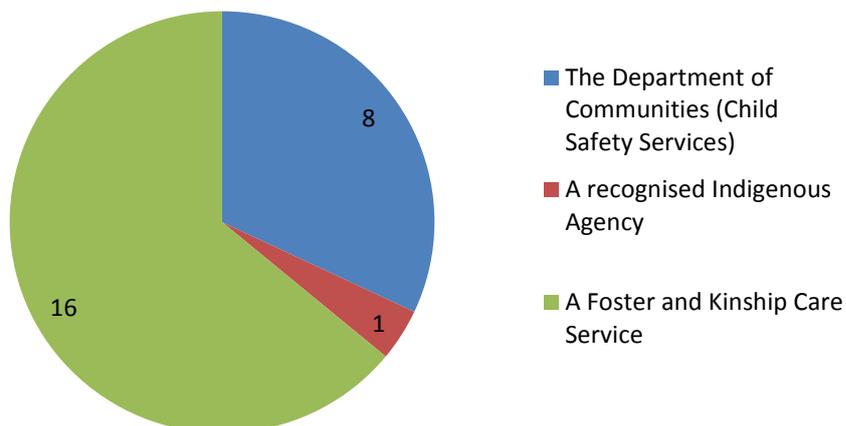
All 142 end of carer approvals were sent an acknowledgment letter from QFKC asking them if they wanted to complete an exit survey. There were 30 people who completed the survey, they were affiliated with the following service centres:



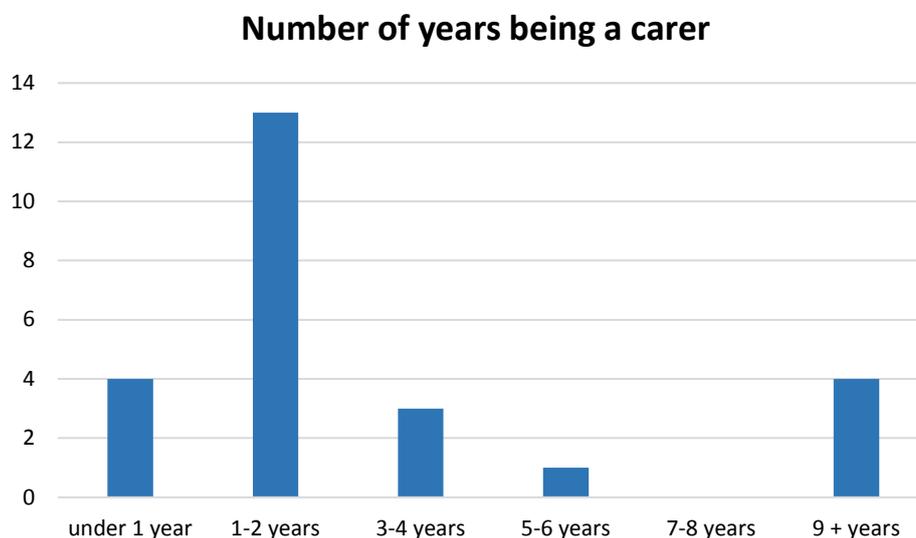
From the 30 people who completed the survey for the Northern QLD region the following information was shared;



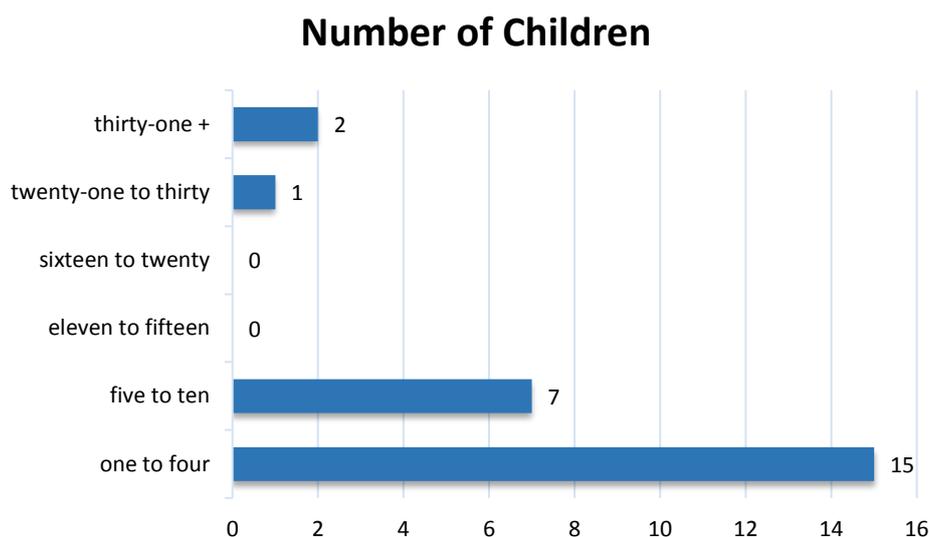
People were asked to identify who they are supported by, they answered as follows;



Information is requested regarding the person's time spent as a carer; to identify when they started as a Carer and when they stopped. Below is a graph that identifies the length of time stated in the responses.



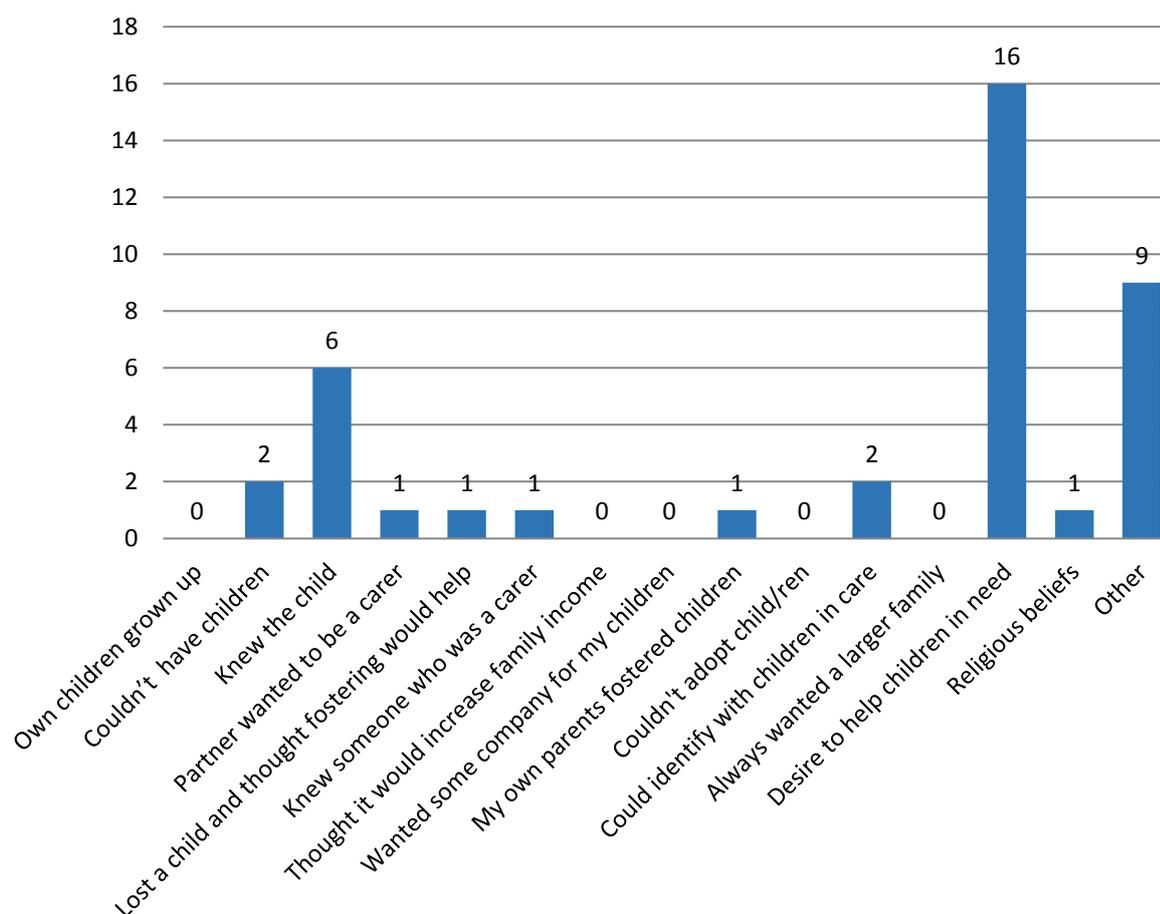
The information provided also evidences the amount of children the person/persons have provided care to.



## About You as a Carer

People were asked to identify what made them decide to become a Foster Carer.

**why carers decided to become carers**



Below is a selection of some of the comments provided by the people undertaking the survey in relation to why they decided to become a carer. This information would be consistent with the section under *other* on the graph.

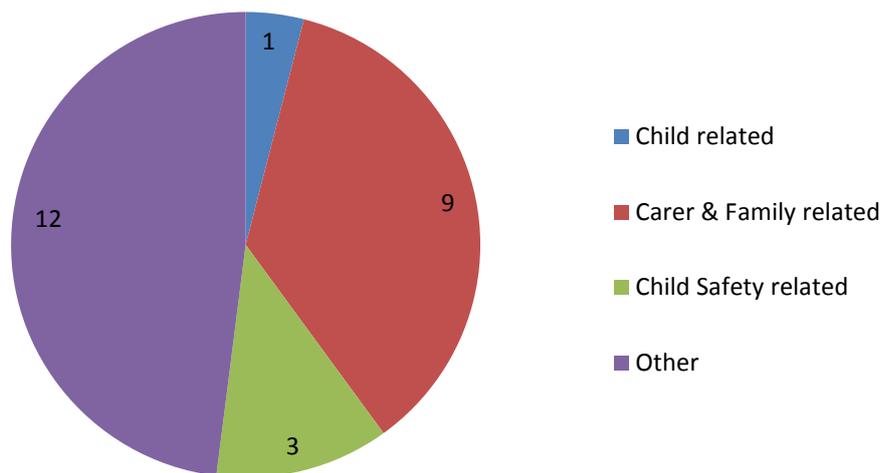
- Younger sisters 3 kids
- Grandchildren
- Sister had her child removed
- Wanted to give children some joy and fun and help them to feel safe and secure.
- Grandchildren
- They are our grandchildren
- Grandmother, they are my grandkids
- Use my skill set
- Child was brother's daughter and both parents are not able to care for her
- So that the children wouldn't to Child Safety
- I worked in the child protection field and did not want to see my grandchildren go into the 'system' to be split up and loss connection with each other
- No was very happy to give love and support to children in need

- I just love old people and children, I worked most of my life in both fields, I love to give them a little fun and laughter. I also feel so sorry for the children and problems they have. I like to feel safe and know how it feels to be unsure or scared of what's happening around you
- To make sure my grandchildren were been looked after by family
- I would do anything to help my grandchildren
- Respite care for the foster carer friend
- I am their grandmother
- We had worked with kids in the system when we were posted in Sydney through Holiday camps. When we moved back to Townsville we decided it would be a great time to take on fostering as we knew there was a massive need in Townsville
- I wanted to help & make a difference & for my children to have that too
- I became a foster carer to support my grandchildren in care and to help raise them
- It's about supporting families

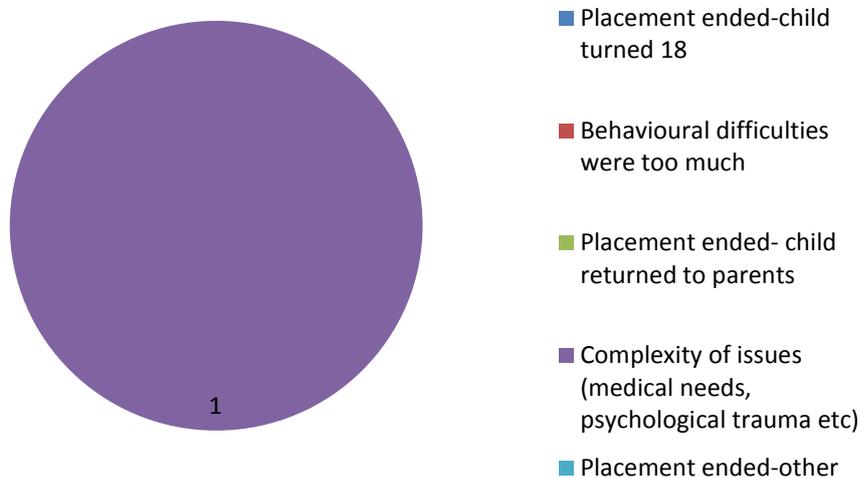
### Reason for Discontinuing as a Foster/Kinship Carer

People undertaking the survey were asked to provide the reason why they deciding to stop being carers. They are provided with four options then asked to elaborate in relation to the option that they have selected.

**Main reason for deciding to stop being a carer**



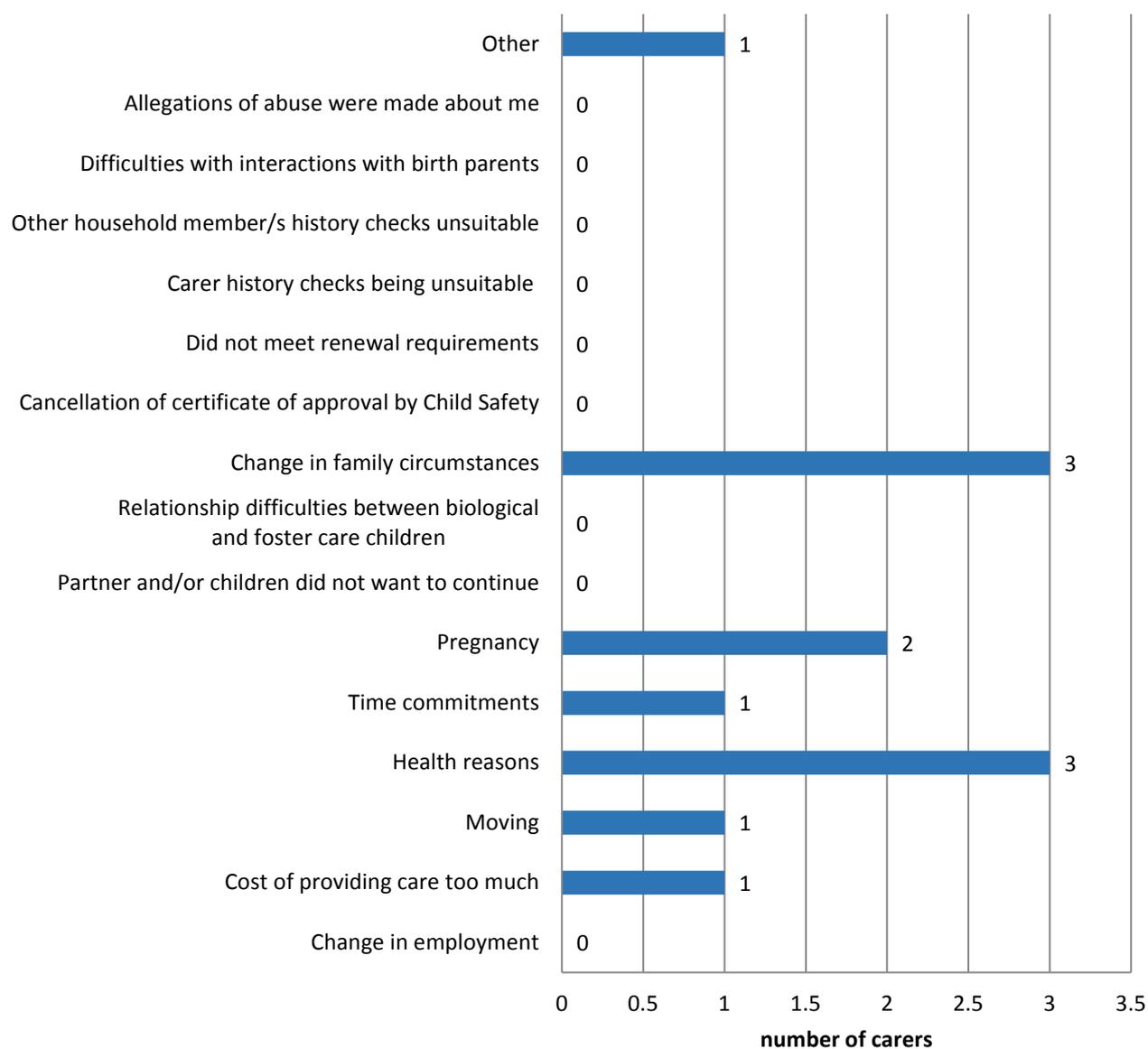
The following information will be specific to the reason that has been provided in this question. If the respondents answered that they ceased being carers due to child related reasons, they are asked to expand on the reasons, as follows.



**No comments were provided by people completing the survey in relation to this question.**

For people who stated that they ceased caring due to carer and family reasons, they were asked to expand on their response.

### Ceased being a carer for carer and family related reasons



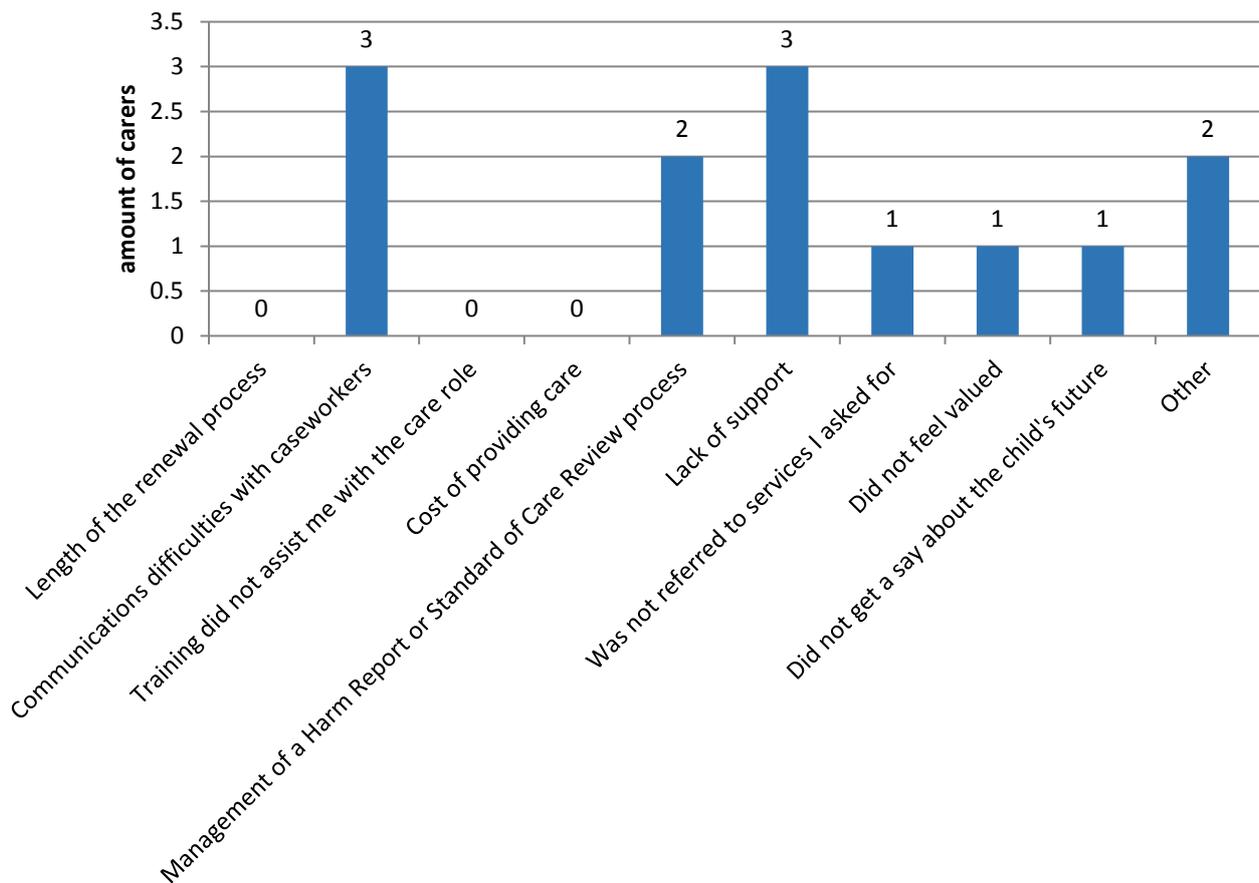
#### Comments provided:

- Children to return to dad after court order
- My elderly mother's health deteriorated and the noise/ disrupted sleep caused too much stress for my mother and the rest of the family. One of the children has Autism and behavioural issues.
- I moved to Tasmania, I still do foster care
- With the impending birth of our first child we decided that we would be unable to give the best care to the children that we fostered
- I did not feel there was enough support & training & bills kept arriving from centre link & schools well after the children left my care. Despite open dialogue about the care & termination thereof there is a

lack of knowledge of procedures in Child Safety & they do not pay child care fees in a timely manner. Centrelink seem unsure around eligibility for foster children also

- I am very very disheartened with the whole system. I can see why parents are angry
- Yes, must say this was another amazing journey, my teenage boy was giving the two older girls a bit of cheek after the girls had been trying so hard to be nice to him. He then asked if he could go for a swim in the pool, I suggested that he apologise to the children first or he can't go for a swim. He refused and said he was leaving. He then went to department and told them I was being mean to him. The department gave me a MOC for upsetting his feelings. As well as having 4 workers from department coming to my home and questioning all my kids asking them if I ever pulled them around or yelled at them. The girls said no! She DOESNT EVEN YELL AT US. They were so angry with the department telling them, that the child was being a pain.... After this three days later the child would come here every day after school to play with all the kids. I was so cranky with department I left and went through Alternate Care.

### Response from carer when ceasing care due to issues relating to Child Safety Services



**Below are extracts of comments made by carers in relation to the questions referring to why they ceased as Carers if this was related to Child Safety Services:**

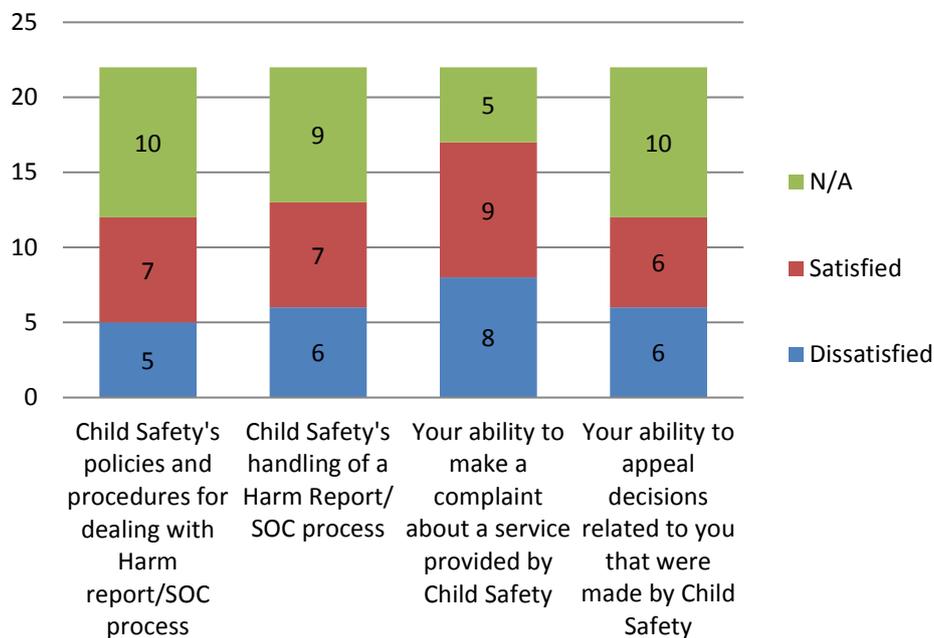
- Was not given necessary important information before children were placed with me and put other children in care at risk
- Was offered support but case workers never followed through with support
- I hate the fact that I walked out on them, I miss my foster children so very much. The department knew I had 4 of the most difficult children, I couldn't get my pool cleaned or windows done, garden mowed without the children having big fights or getting into mischief. They promised me help sent around a gardener for a quote then waited three months, then they said no sorry we are not going to do it. Anyway all children that were extra high care. They were great kids just as long as you had them in your sights at all times. My daughter also had a few that ripped her car apart and her bathroom got demolished three years ago and after putting reports in never got refunded....I WOULD LOVE TO BE A CARER AGAIN BUT I CAN NOT DEAL WITH THE LIES THAT WE HEAR FROM THE DEPARTMENT. The children I had I loved so very much it broke my heart to be so hard to give them all back to the department. I just had enough, my other two friend also gave up after their problems in dealing with the department. They are beautiful people that cared so much for children in care. I then did a bit of caring in a house in Townsville for one girl and another child in Cairns this was hard to deal with as the children had been given so much say and authority that they told us what to do or else they will dob us in. They were given total control, I wonder how this benefits a 12 year old. It's not helping it's not working its turning them into monsters. Anyway I cannot blame the young children in the houses as it's not their fault, I only hope they find a way to help them. And I hope they have discovered its creating more of a problem
- I had 2 young girls in my care for 12 months and this was to continue for at least another 12 months. I was asked to take in 3 young boys, in which I said I would, only to discover harmful sexualised behaviours putting the 2 young girls I already had in my care at risk. When I confronted CSO about behaviour at first he denied it then excused it as nothing, saying that it wasn't anything of concern. I had the 3 boys in my care for 6 weeks with NO support at all from DCS and at that time my usual support person from another company was away and my fill in support person was of no assistance to me either. I was unable to go to the toilet and leave children unsupervised as the older boy would pray on the girls. The CSO was aware of this and done nothing at all to assist. I had stated from about 3 weeks into the placement that this was detrimental to the girl's safety and still nothing was done. When the CSO pushed the issue, for the boys to remain in our care after 6 weeks. My husband stated that we will no longer be carers when we are trying to build a safe environment for children and DCS are putting the children at risk
- Some of the harm reports were not warranted. e.g. Putting my own son's safety at risk for services not allowing the children to catch the bus to school
- Placement ended
- I become long term guardianship to other and no longer considered a 'carer'
- It has been approximately 3 years since we were approved. We still didn't have the child in our care
- No support from either institutions for the Carers
- Placement Ended
- Leaving State (regretfully) - placement ended
- Support person
- My health began to decline as I aged and was no longer able to care for the children
- The older girls went to live with my daughter and the youngest returned to her immediate family
- Trauma
- My daughter became the main carer for my niece instead

- Short term trial
- The survey did not provide questions relevant to 'kinship' carer
- The system is terrible. Her official court case after so many adjournments is March which would mean she has been with the same family for 4 years. To remove her from them now would be cruel and damaging to the child. The system is disgusting. It should not have taken this long
- Our granddaughter was reunited with her mum, our daughter, was the 2-3 year old
- Received a phone call telling me I was no longer a carer and would I complete this exit survey. New support person never met but found her too pushy and un-relatable
- All three girls were able to be placed where they wanted to be
- My niece is still living in the same house so I am still able to assist with caring for niece. My daughter and I with her children share a house together
- I did not cease being the carer for my grandchildren, I was granted long term guardianship. I will say, the lack of support and 'insight' from both Child Safety and my Support Service workers almost lead to the relinquishment of the children. One day, "when my life is not so busy" I would really like to write about my experience as a kinship carer, sadly it would not demonstrate a 'supported, caring experience' for kin carers and their family
- Child Safety not following up on outstanding actions for the child. New CSO within the 3 months and new CSO had no idea of how much we had done for the child in that short time frame so we were accused of contributing to the child's decline in mental health
- No. The children were difficult but easy to deal with in a home environment. They knew the rules and just needed you to be around them prompting. The department sometimes expected so much concerning taking the children to soccer the other to netball and one to drama, all the carers run around so much to doctors , specialist, school meetings, homework, school sports all so much. Given monitoring tool having Evolve come in morning to view breakfasts or evenings, community visitors, although community visitors are worth their weight in gold. Our cars get little bits taken off ashtrays disappear, furniture scratched, all if your eyes are not on them. But that is all part of it the hardest part is dealing with the demands of Child Safety. People that look after these little ones should be paid and respected. Of course there are few that take advantage and don't have a love for the children and only want the money but they can be nussed out. I know Child Safety in Atherton have a lady that was put off as a bad carer with a history of mental health, alcohol and a drug addiction, we ex-carers from Tablelands are all shocked by this
- The fact that at the time we were going through all of this my usual support person was on leave and the person replacing her at that time was useless did not help matters at all. I was working when the girls were placed with me and I had to cover all day care fees which did not help either as the day care fees were more than DCS were giving us. So when the boys came into care I could not afford to keep working and left my place of employment to care for the children, so when I realised that the boys would not be staying in my care, due to their extreme behaviours toward the girls in care, I was left with no employment either. Upon the return of my usual support worker she informed me that carers now had to arrange their own respite placements and there was no respite payments which would also mean I would be paying for unused day care days out of my own pocket, which wasn't an option now I was unemployed
- Our daughter was sanctioned to have her daughter and son reunited with her, as she is doing very well
- We were rarely offered children in the age bracket we asked for
- If we had been offered more permanent and long term foster we may have decided to continue with the baby but it was hard when we were only offered small respites
- Financial loss, lack of communication
- None of the above

- No the children were all beautiful and good natured. Little wild sometimes and very destructive
- DCS did not disclose important child behaviours before placement of children and this in turn affected greatly other foster children in my care
- We simply, as grandparents, had done our time in caring for grandchildren & the time had come for our daughter to be reunited with the children.
- At one stage I had four foster children as well as my own. It was indicated at one point that these children should take priority over my own. This is totally unreasonable. I tried my utmost to treat all equally. Foster children know that they have their own home & biological parents. Just as your own children know that you are their parent for ever. Also my children with the last child we had. Actually voiced that they had had enough of her. A very clear indication that it was all becoming too much. I was only ever to be short term or respite. This did not turn out to be the case. There was a lack of understanding that it is very hard to ask for a child to be moved on when all is going well. Just as it is impossible to know when it all becomes too much for anyone in the house
- No other reason, I would love to be still caring for children in a home that required less maintenance, I miss doing this work so much

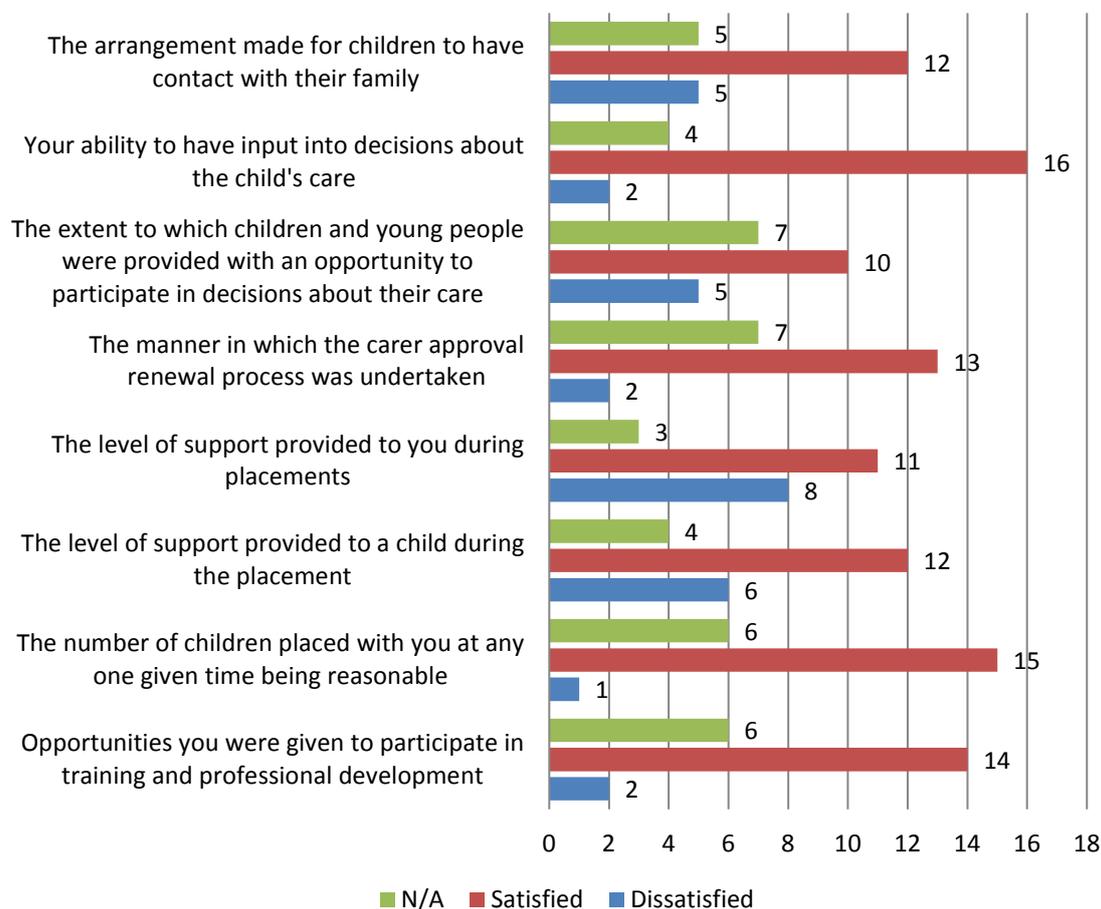
**People undertaking the surveys were asked how satisfied they were with different elements of their involvement with the Department of Child Safety.**

**In regards to Child Safety,  
 how satisfied were you with**



## The Experience of Caring

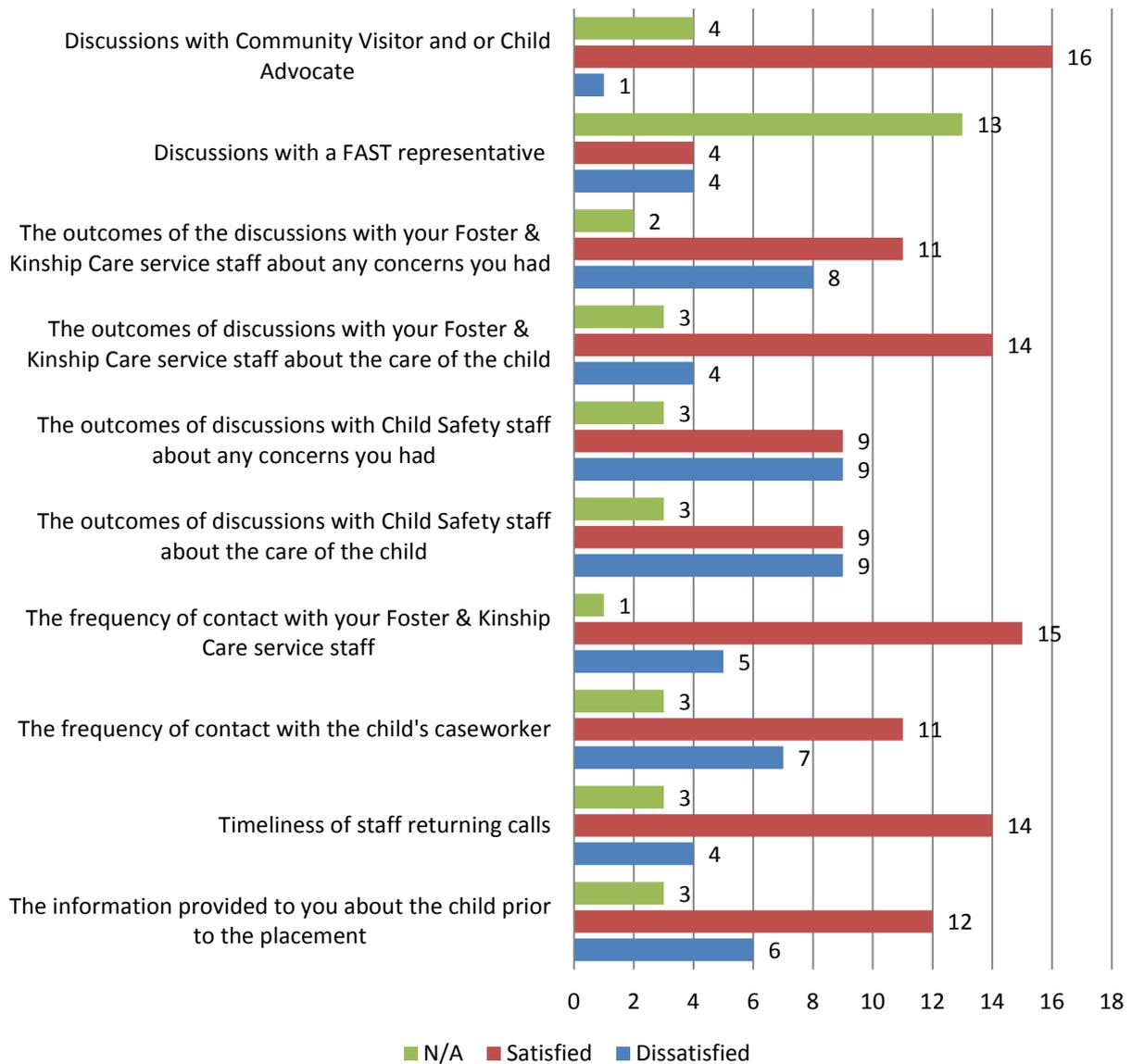
### How satisfied were you with



## The Experience of Caring: Communication

Carers were asked how satisfied they were with their experiences of communication with relevant stakeholders. Below is a table that outlines the responses and extracts of further comments that they wanted to make in relation to the question.

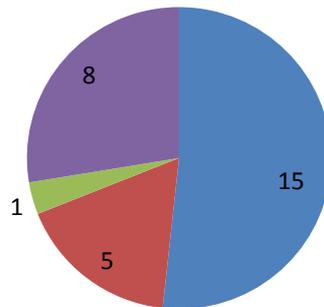
### How satisfied were you with



The carers were asked to identify whether Child Safety discussed the following matters with them:

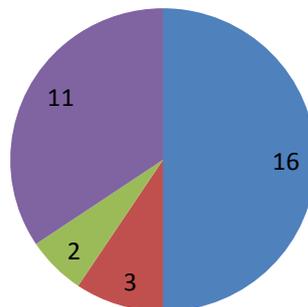
### The child's cultural support needs

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure ■ If yes, was there a cultural support plan in place



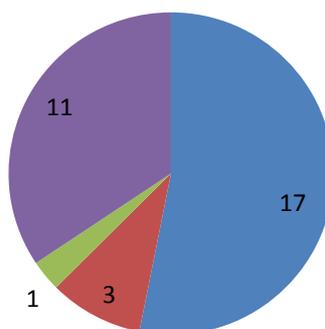
### The child's educational needs

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure ■ If yes, was there an education support plan in place



### The child's health needs

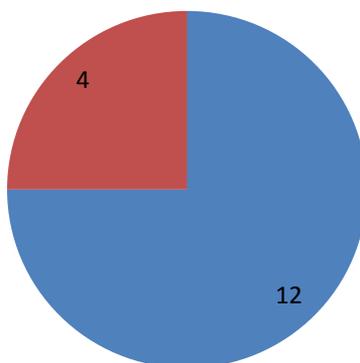
■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure ■ If yes, did the child have a current child health passport



Carers were asked if they had received information regarding FAST Representatives and QLD Foster and Kinship Care, the table below identifies their responses:

### Did you receive information about FAST and/or QLD Foster and Kinship Care (formerly Foster Care QLD)

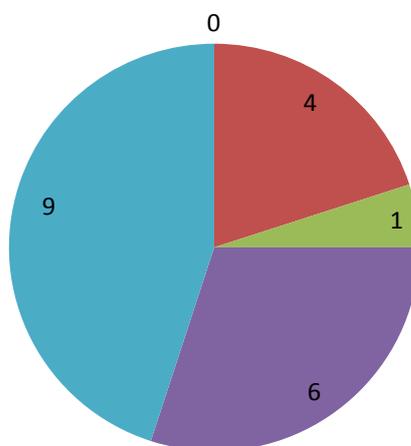
■ Yes ■ No



### Experience of Caring – Contact

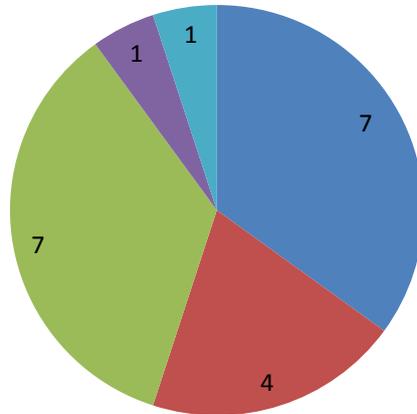
#### How often did you have contact with Child Safety staff

■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Fortnightly ■ Monthly ■ Only occasionally



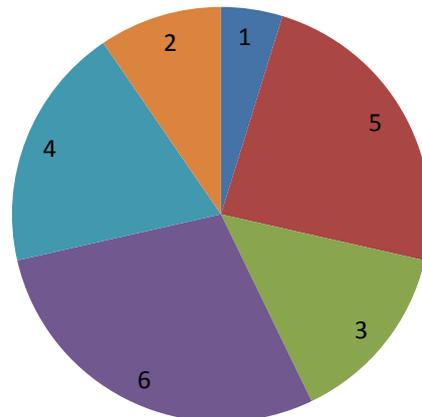
### How did contact occur?

■ Phone call ■ Home Visit ■ Email ■ Meeting at the office ■ Other



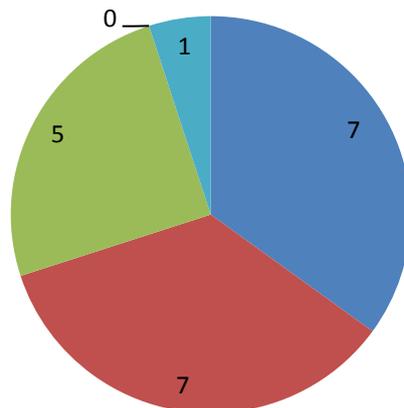
### How often did you have contact with your Foster and Kinship Care Service?

■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Fortnightly ■ Monthly ■ Only occasionally ■ Not applicable



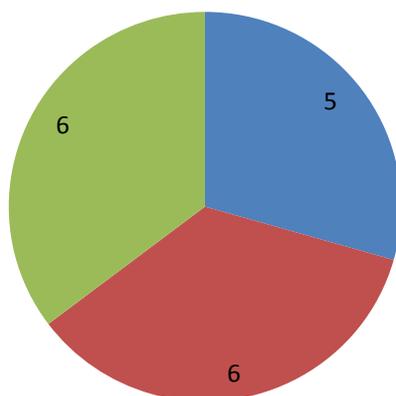
### How did this contact occur?

■ Phone call ■ Home visit ■ E-mail ■ Meeting at the office ■ Other



### What was your preference regarding contact?

■ E-mail ■ Phone ■ Face to face

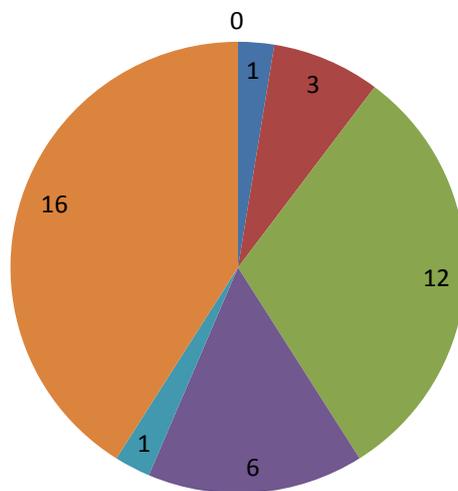


#### Comments provided:

- Didn't have a preference
- I preferred all communication to go through my FKCS
- It was quite rare for CS to come to our home, due to the fact we were grandparents and they assessed quickly that all was well at home
- Face to face
- Outside school hours
- Does not matter face to face is great as well as phone calls

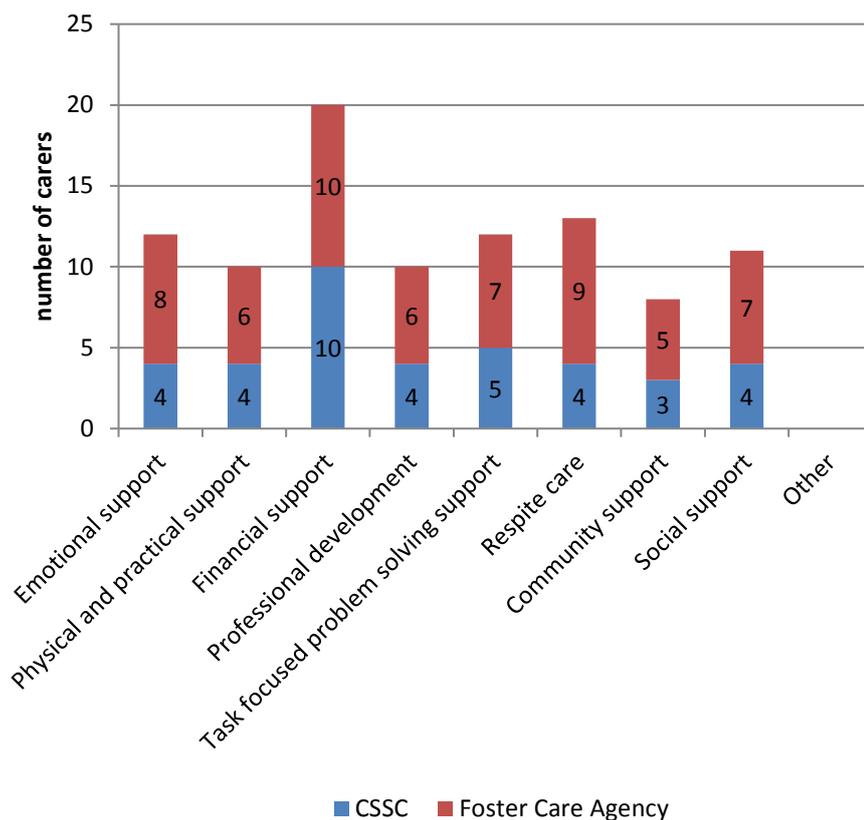
### Which of the following persons did you usually have contact with?

- Child Safety Service Centre Managers
- Child Safety Team Leaders
- Child Safety Officers
- Child Safety Support Officers (family support worker)
- Child Safety Youth Worker
- Foster and Kinship Care Service Workers
- None of the above

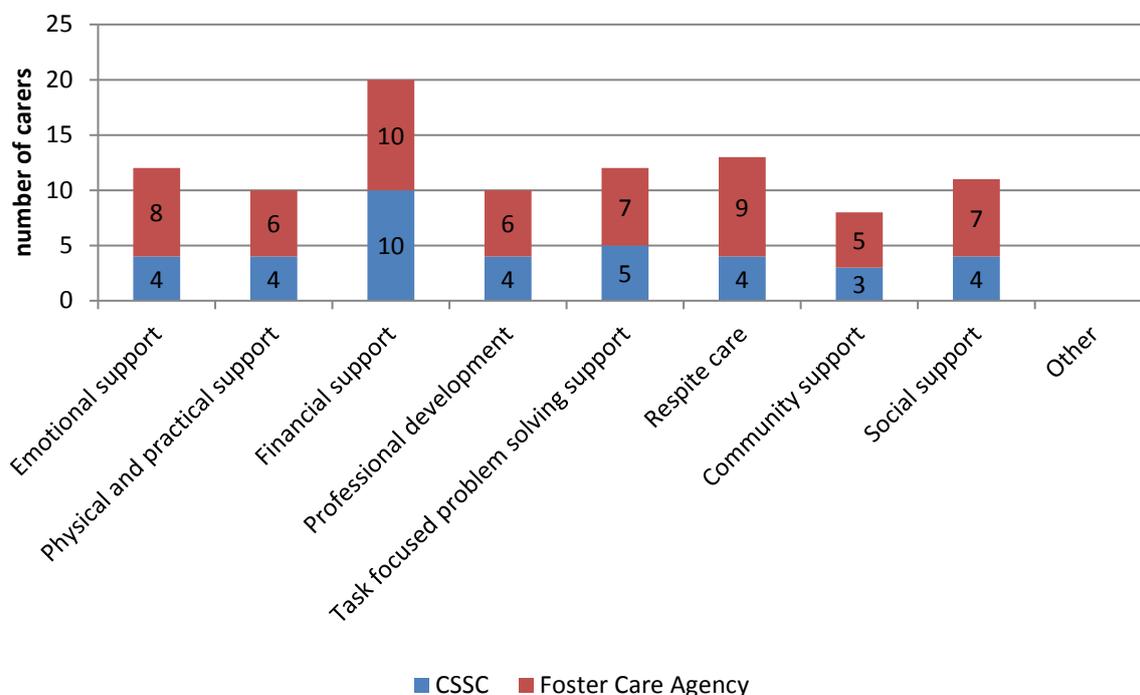


## The Experience of Caring: Support

Please indicate whether during your time as a foster carer you requested any of the following supports from Child Safety and or your Foster & Kinship Care Service



**Please indicate whether during your time as a foster carer you received any of the following supports from Child Safety and or your Foster & Kinship Care Service**



**Carers were asked to provide responses to two questions:**

- Did they seek or receive any other form of support, and where was this from?
- Were there other supports you would have liked access to?

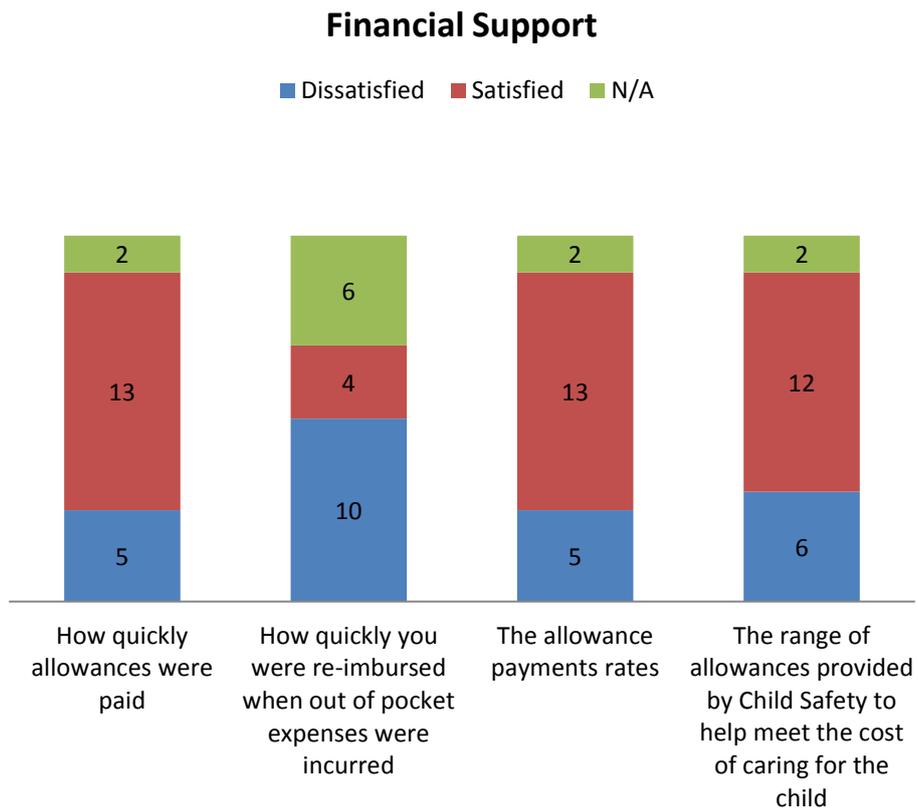
**Below are the responses supplied:**

- No
- I had a support worker assist with 'outside school' activities. This did not come without a battle.
- Just from other carers on Tablelands
- Received absolutely nothing it was always for the children in care
- Child Safety and foster case helped
- Yes, Cooktown District Community Centre child support counsellor for our autistic granddaughter to have counselling, as she suffered/struggled with school and social issues
- No
- No
- No we were supported well from Churches of Christ Mt Isa and Child Safety Mt Isa
- Family & friends. Emotional & practical support
- No
- Yes from Justice Group
- No support
- Financial support was not given while I was working, only the standard payments, which did not cover day care fees

**Responses to, were there other supports you would have like to access:**

- None
- Youth worker support from either CS or Kinship Support Service
- Yes
- Yes
- Not that I was aware of
- No
- Resource groups
- No
- ATOD's for the parents
- iPad for schooling

**The Experience of Caring: Financial Support**

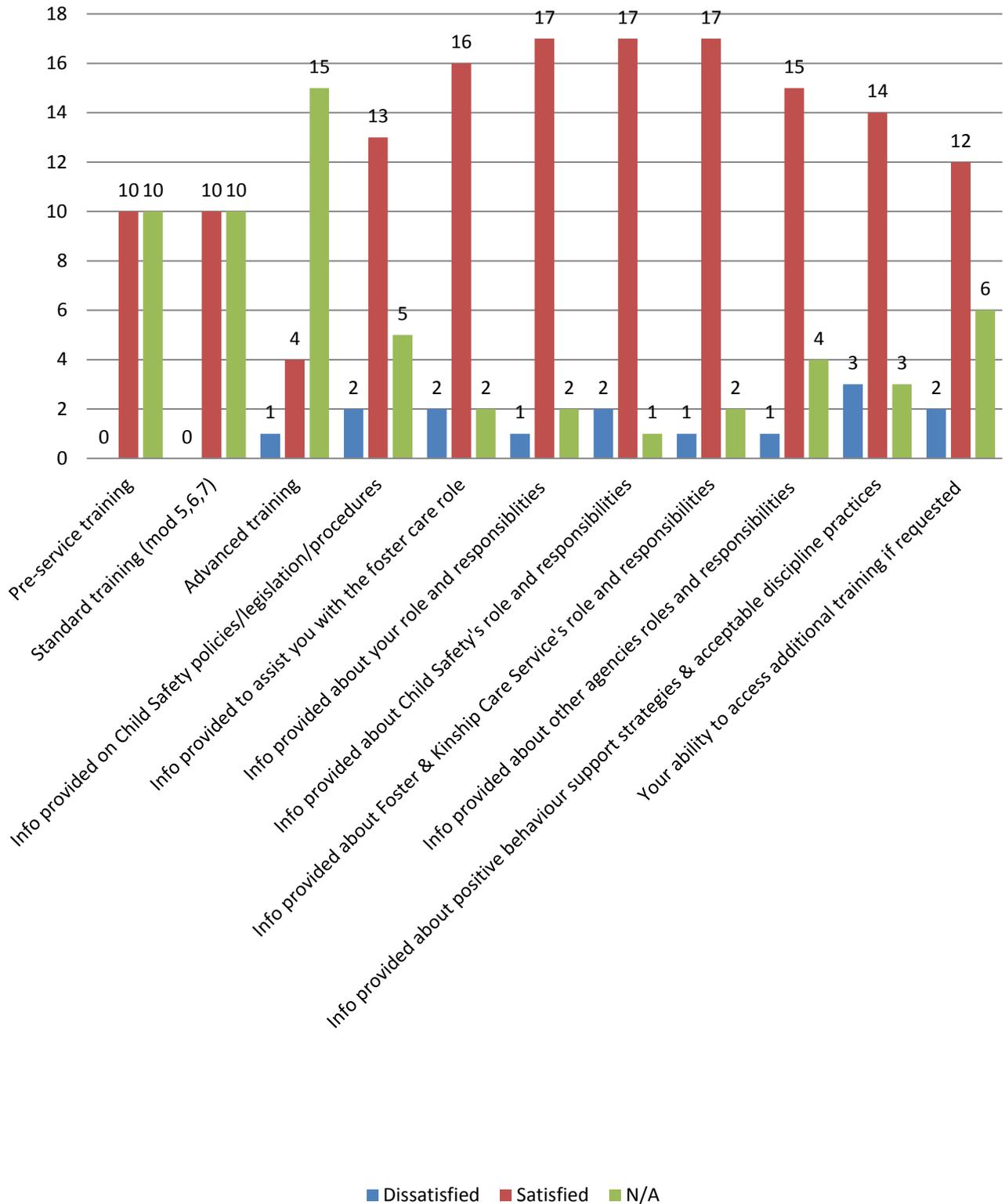


**Responses from carers in relation to financial support:**

- Although satisfied with the allowances I had to fight to be appropriately funded to support the children
- Sometimes! Well often Child Safety would forget to renew the plan and allowance was very wrong. Child Safety forget we have excess water rates, house rates, higher electricity, car maintenance and fuel costs, and repairs. Excess washing laundry, and do not consider many things that carers require to pay. Clothing, iPhones, computers, birthdays, school trips, clothing and worst of all shoes as they get lost when out with workers, towels clothes when they go swimming with school. Head lice creams lotions, chips off the sides of the house, downpipes pulled of the wall. People have no idea
- It was only while I was working that I requested day care payments to be covered as this was a huge burden to myself and my husband as the allowance we were receiving did not cover these fees. We were not assisted and I ended up ceasing my employment so that I could stay at home with the children and care for them although they still had a couple of days in day care for socialisation which I was happy to cover the cost for those days
- Dissatisfied - promised to be reimbursed by CS & FC, in 2 years hardly saw reimbursement. FC told us put receipts in (e.g. bed and mattress) (travel, fuel), never saw monies for things like that. CS told us most of our expenses paid for us, because fortnightly payment we receive from them should cover that. We did towards the end have success with CS with accommodation a few times when visiting the younger brother, as we needed to stay overnight, as it is a 4 hour trip one way
- At the start it was very expensive for after school care and child care. Unit it got sorted. The problem was Centrelink. Take too long to process. You guys should have a liaison in Centrelink
- Family day care, day care & vacation care payments sometimes did not happen or were extremely slow

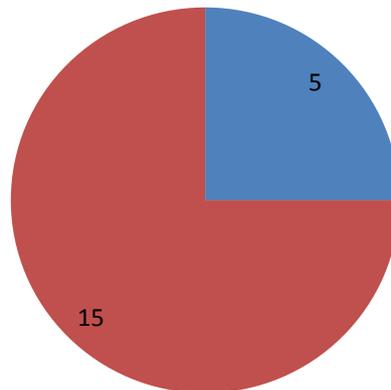
## The Experience of Caring: Training and Professional Development

In regard to training and development, how satisfied were you with the following?



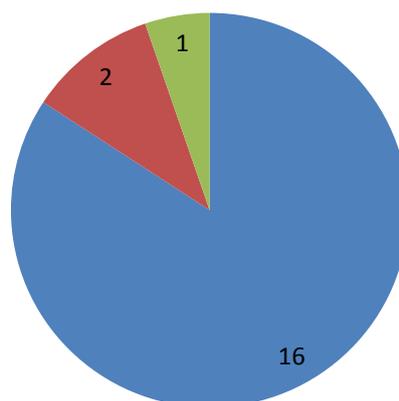
### Have you attended any training in the last 12 months

■ Yes ■ No

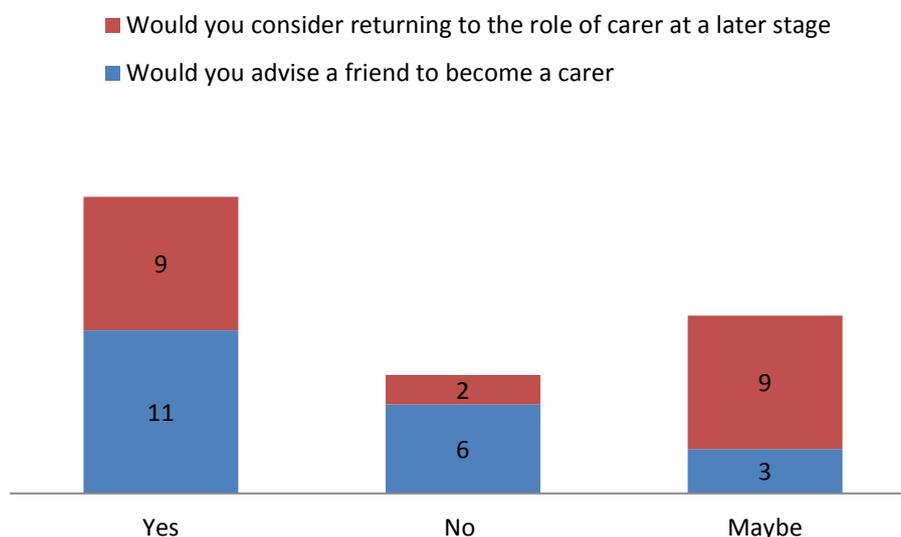


### If you were approved as a Foster Carer, was there a Foster Care Agreement in place?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know



## Overall Experience



### Responses in relation to returning to the role as a carer at a later stage and advising a friend to become a carer:

- For Kinship they would
- Only if they can
- Until the culture changes I would not recommend anyone become a carer. I have known many carers who quit because of the treatment from CSO's not because of the children they care for
- Not happy with the system but there is a need
- I did years ago and four of my friends started here on the Tablelands but at this time things were much better
- And I would also consider becoming a carer again in the future if the FCS changes and puts the children first
- Remembering we were kinship carers - very different to normal caring with strangers.
- If family member needed it
- Trying to for the last 6 months
- Only if I was needed for my grandchildren. However in saying that if there was only one or two I'd rather not be involved with the 'system'
- Would love to but things would have to be better
- Not 'normal' caring re: strangers
- For health reason's no

### Carers were asked to provide comments in relation to their overall experience as a carer, the responses were as follows:

1. **Did your experiences of providing care meet the expectation you had when you decided to become a carer?**
  - I could not envision my grandchildren in the foster care system, therefore to say I 'decided' to become a carer would be incorrect. Caring for my grandchildren is a responsibility I chose to accept
  - I found after 25 years of being a carer I learned so much. I have gained a greater understanding and compassion
  - The children were my grandchildren

- We are Family
- We were hoping for more long term and were only ever offered respite
- We didn't go in with expectations, we didn't know what to expect. We were new at it and each child is different

## 2. What were the most challenging aspects of being a Carer?

- Busy constantly....with so many children in the house, trying to keep it clean and kids being kids
- Of the 6 kids, having to juggle everything. But it turned out okay. Rules that applied to own children and those of those of kin
- The mood swings of having 4 girls in the house. But loved the challenge
- Working within the Child Protection System, including the external services involved.
- I didn't get to be one!!!!
- I guess when you have a child that has decided to be defiant then after you tried a few different strategies realise it's not changing or achieving a positive outcome, it's time for prayer. That's what works for me
- Getting support for us the Carer
- How they use to fight and hurt each other
- Seeing Children going home to parents who were not ready to take on the role. It was hard knowing that the mother had requested another couple of years before taking the 2 children placed with me. She had already taken 2 older children back into her care and had 2 younger children already in her care and she wasn't ready to take on another 2 and the DSC said if you don't take them now you won't be getting them back
- None, we just got on with it. We already understood and know our grandchildren
- Dealing with child Services
- Communication with other carer
- It took 11 months to become a Foster Carer, and we never had full time placement like we asked for
- Being offered ages that we were not equipped for and how last minute the respite placements were
- To work with challenging behaviours
- The lack of support & training to deal with lots of behavioural & society based issues that I had never encountered before
- Communication
- Time was always short, as I am a single parent working full time
- Being there to always support and not get over worked because there a other things happening personally (work and families). Child's family crisis being in a small community

## 3. What was the most positive aspect of being a Carer?

- They got to learn normality with being kids and learning life skills instead of sitting in front of T.V's and devices all the time. Learning to swim was a huge achievement for them
- Eventually outcome, they started listening after being quite strong willed
- See the girls grow knowing that I've made a difference
- I was able to keep my grandchildren together and with family
- I didn't get to be one!!!!
- Having the children achieve their goals and feel confident in their own ability. Seeing them laugh and watch them being considerate towards others
- Not much
- giving them love and support

- Knowing that I was able to give these children a safe childhood, time for them to be children. A caring environment and knowing that some children with behavioural issues were still able to be in a loving home where they knew they were safe and still able to express themselves
- Spending everyday with them. Our grandchildren
- The support from Foster and Kinship
- Having grandkids visit
- Showing love to kids who needed it
- The impact and joy those kids brought to our lives
- Helping the girls on their journey to reunification with mum
- Making a change in the children's lives. Seeing their confidence grow & watching them thrive & be happy
- Meeting kids
- Enjoying the company of great kids who really deserve a happy stable home
- Seeing the child grow and feel safe and loved but to still have contact with own family

#### **4. What helped you feel supported in your role as a Carer?**

- My family
- Received great support
- The carers community events were great
- My social networks, family and friends.
- I NEVER REQUIRED MUCH SUPPORT AS I am always busy and am happy being busy. It's just when I can't keep up with the house and gardens I would have required support
- Nothing
- My family
- My support through Althea Projects was outstanding, the only time I felt unsupported was when my original support person was on leave and I had a young male who I feel was not very supportive in his role in communicating with DCS
- Foster and Kinship
- My husband
- The church
- Our great case worker at Althea Projects
- Churches of Christ Care Mt Isa. They were awesome
- My family & friends reminding me of the changes that had happened & listening when we were struggling
- My family
- The CSO and LWB staff were always happy to help and advise
- My own professional as well as support from Child Safety and other agencies as needed

#### **5. What could be improved to assist Carers in their role?**

- You can only do so much
- No, happy with outcome
- All was quite good
- Attitudes of CSO's: they are not expected to hold power over others, they are expected to work with carers and care providers with a common goal - 'what is in the best interest of the child/ren'. Regular communication / conflict resolution courses / workshops would provide knowledge of

effective communication strategies to build relationships. Trauma does not stop when a person becomes an Adult, relationship need to be respectful and non-judgemental

- Lots
- To be treated better and respected. To be giving an ear and some understanding when needed. For the staff and management to watch a video of life as a foster carer. WOULD LOVE TO MAKE THIS!
- Explain that you need to have support
- Regular respite for carers who feel they need a break. Carers not made to feel guilty because they would like a weekend of caring for children. Carers are people too, with children and grandchildren of their own and they need to be able to have that time with them without being made to feel they are burdening DCS
- Need more home visits please the officers could interact at school more. As that's for officers to get to know 'what's going on' whether it be good or bad!
- more understanding and support from social workers
- Set plans
- Not chucking foster parents in the deep end with previously reported bad behaved kids on their first placement
- Centrelink - need to be quicker
- A better data base of training & resources. An understanding that foster children are still just children. That the homes that they enter still need to function as a home & sometimes no just means no. Boundaries & structure. With fun & understanding
- Financial support and relationships with support agency staff
- The system as it is worked well for us.
- Open and transparent discussions with other carer's community not feeling alone. When Child Safety visit a group discussion over coffee

**6. Do you have any additional comments, suggestions or concerns?**

- Was treated really well, and felt very supported
- When separated, I tried twice to be assessed solely, only to be cancelled by my ex. Never was I contacted when it was cancelled. Then holidays that were approved and taken were never paid for and paperwork was lost (yet the email trail was still in the system)
- Tensions were naturally high after the separation and it all became too hard to deal with. I continued to have the 2 foster girls every second weekend with no financial support for about 3 months until I could not afford to have all 4 (2 are my biological girls). I continued to pick them up from school every Wednesday and drop them to my ex (who is still primary carer). After about a year and getting my finances back to normal, I started to have them every second weekend again (still no financial support). The ex was going on holidays for 10 days so I got a provisional approval so I could legally have them for the time she was away (financially supported). That was September, and that was when the assessment process started. All forms have been filled out (twice now) but still waiting. The girls were 3 and 4 when they came into our care and have always called me dad, sometimes not in the best tone, but I'm sure that's a teenage girl thing. That will never change but some support would be nice
- I have been on three sides of the system, a CSO, NGO support service worker and a carer. As a CSO I was not aware of the lack of respect numerous Child Safety staff held toward parents, carers and NGO staff. As an NGO staff member I was unaware of the lack of knowledge many support service staff had in regard to advocating for carers. And as carer I've learnt about the struggles and life changing commitments involved with caring for a young family again. Not to mention the number

of children involved and the lack of acknowledgement of the impact this has on grandparents who only want the best for their grandchildren

- If a child is removed and the parent hasn't don't what is asked of them time and time again don't dragged the process out for so long. Either you are going to give them back or you're not. Easy!
- Most carers feel everyone in the office look on carers as money grabbers as we feel that we are looked down upon. Many carers are scared or never even want to complain that the allowance is not correct
- YES... when you get a good carer, appreciate them and listen to them. Sadly not all carers are doing it for the right reasons but there are a lot of good carers out there that would like to be treated like people. They do this out of their own heart, sometimes own money too. Make sure that carers in rural communities have regular access to support and training
- Guardians & Children - initially came monthly, then 3 monthly. I'd suggest keeping it at the most to monthly, thanks can change quickly. Child Safety was, 'more than a phone call away. They had ever at our place, after all we were kinship in a small tight knit town. But 'fortnightly to 3 weeks' maximum home visits should apply to normal carers as basically they are strangers to each other
- I find it hard to understand why some of the children were encouraged to call the foster parents Mum & Dad or Grandma & Grandpa. They have their own families & this seems disrespectful & to cause confusion & is over familiar almost immediately. I struggle to see how this helps the children. We are their friends. Especially when the child needs to introduce us e.g. she's not my mum in shops. No I'm your friend. It seems to be more about the carers?