



# *Delivering What Works*

**OzChild's Strategic Plan to 2026**





# President's Message

OzChild has provided care for children and young people for 170 years. From humble beginnings in 1851, our services and programs have continually evolved, with a spirit of innovation and exploration for what works spanning generations. I'm so proud we are continuing to adapt and achieve in that spirit today.

**Five years ago, we set out on our next era of innovation, studying and introducing a new approach to services. Today, we're the largest provider of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs supporting children, young people, and families in Australia.**

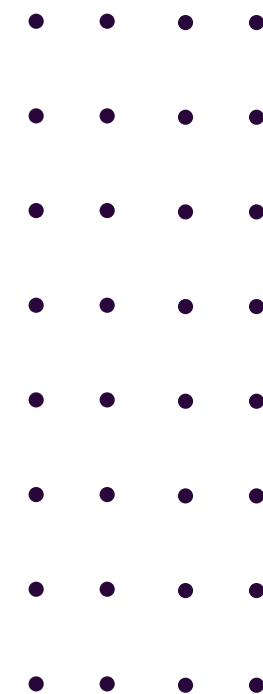


**Helen Maxwell-Wright AM**  
President  
OzChild

We are not stopping there! Our vision that all children and young people are safe, respected, nurtured and reach their full potential demands our continued commitment to do more. The evidence shows that our approach to strengthening families, offering care, support and treatment for children and young people is changing lives.

In our next chapter, we're following the evidence to advance what works. I invite you to get to know our strategy for the work ahead, and look forward to working with our incredible staff, foster and kinship carers and many partners.

**We are 170 years young, and full of energy. Let's make the greatest difference possible in the lives of children, young people, and their families.**



# Chief Executive Officer's Message

As we launch this strategic plan we find ourselves in the midst of a global pandemic. Our staff, carers, partners, and children and young people have shown us just how much ingenuity and perseverance they have to tackle the greatest challenges. I'm so proud of you all and want you to know you inspire us every day.

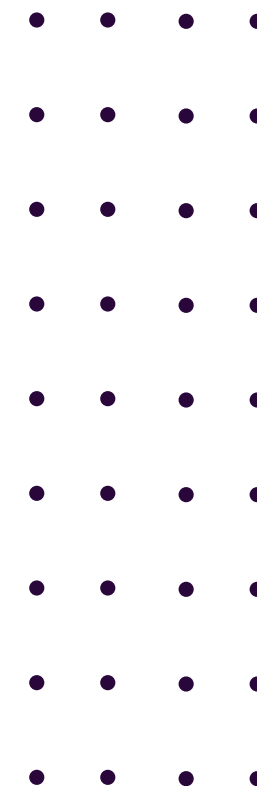
And you have inspired the goals in this new Strategic Plan. We've achieved so much in recent years and we're setting our sights on an equally ambitious horizon ahead. We will advance what works based on evidence, continue to advocate, and speak up on the systemic changes we need to see, and grow our services for greater impact. And of course, we'll keep building OzChild as a contemporary organisation and a great place to work.

**The need to act is compelling. Every year in Australia, more children are removed from the care of their parents and at a much younger age. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families are significantly more likely to experience this trauma. Investment into solving these issues is not cutting through with the usual approaches. Much more needs to be done in delivering services that are matched to need and what the evidence says works. If we are to truly have an impact.**

**At OzChild, we are on a pathway to learn, and to transform our results using evidence-based models and approaches. I'm absolutely committed to that work and to leading the change we need to see. I can't wait to achieve that change with you.**



**Dr Lisa J. Griffiths**  
Chief Executive Officer  
OzChild







Artwork Credit: Rod McIntosh



# The Yirramboi We Seek

**Yirramboi is a word meaning tomorrow used by Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation<sup>1</sup>.**

The future we envisage inspires us to do more for children, young people and families facing incredible challenges. We are strengthening our commitment to focus on what really works to stop the rising number of children and young people being abused, neglected or harmed. We will not accept a role where longstanding forms of child protection and interventions with poor outcomes and lasting consequences are considered good enough. They are not good enough.

Since introducing evidence-based programs to our service model five years ago, **we've supported 1,195 families and nearly 3,000 children and young people with a success rate of 90%<sup>2</sup>** - We strive to keep families together and prevent children and young people entering out-of-home care. And we have only just begun.

<sup>1</sup> OzChild works on diverse Country spanning many language groups. We want to respectfully use language to increase the visibility and use of First Nations languages.

<sup>2</sup> OzChild 2020 Annual Report (results at June 30, 2020)



**Greater investment and commitment to evidence-based prevention and early intervention programs that keep families together is absolutely critical. And where children and young people must be placed in out-of-home care, we want their care, treatment and support to be evidence-led.**

We know our work is achieving real and measurable outcomes. The benefits extend well beyond the children, young people and families we work with:

**We contribute to a healthier, stronger, safer community and significant long-term cost-savings to governments.**

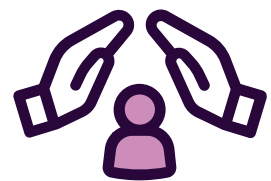
We are proudly and unashamedly focused on making, and being, the difference we need to see.



## Confronting numbers

The compounding negative impacts of family breakdown and removal of children and young people from their homes are plain to see in our national statistics.

As we begin this Strategic Plan, the following statistics set a stark baseline and include:



**275,015**

children (0-17 years) were the subject of notifications to child protection services<sup>^</sup>.

**48,886** of these notifications, were substantiated<sup>^</sup>.



**60,903**

children and young people across Australia were on care and protection orders at 30 June 2020<sup>^</sup>.

Of these 60,903, **38%** were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (23,344)<sup>^</sup>.



**45,996**

children were in out-of-home care at 30 June 2020<sup>^^</sup>. Of these, **41%** were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children (18,862)<sup>^^</sup>.


Additionally **9,677** children were in other forms of government supported care, and of these, **28%** were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children (2,719)<sup>^^</sup>.

<sup>^</sup> Report on Government Services Child Protection Services Data for 2019-20 (released 20 Jan 2021)

<sup>^^</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Child Protection Report 2019-20





**6.7%** 

increase in the number of children in out-of-home care nationally between 2017 to 2020 at 30 June 2020 (43,100 to 46,000)<sup>^^</sup>.

First Nations children are approximately **10** times more likely to be living in out-of-home care. They make up 41% of children in out-of-home care, despite being only **5.9%** of Australia's child population<sup>^^</sup>.

On average, **4,266** young people are under youth justice supervision in Australia on any given day<sup>^</sup>.

**x18**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are overrepresented in youth justice detention by a factor of 18 times the rate for non-Indigenous young people<sup>^</sup>.



**x9**

Young people under youth justice supervision are nine times more likely than the general population to have received child protection services<sup>^^^</sup>.

**x17**

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people are 17 times more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to have received both child protection services and youth justice supervision<sup>^^^</sup>.

<sup>^^^</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019

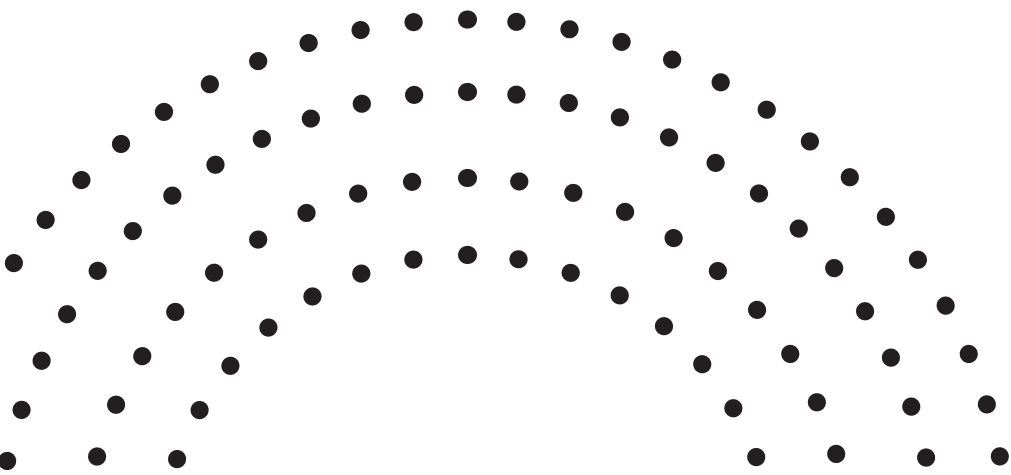


## Complex factors contribute to experiences of neglect and abuse in families

Many of the families, children, and young people we work with live with multiple risk factors and challenges including substance abuse, unemployment and poverty, poor mental health, family or domestic violence, disability, housing vulnerability, contact with the justice system, or their own family history of trauma, neglect or abuse.

In exploring our context and priorities, we've reflected on the fragmented systems that attempt to treat any one of these factors, but struggle to support the whole person or whole family.

**We must do more to address this – it is incumbent on us to design and be part of connected systems, true partnerships and evidence-led interventions that see and respond to complexity.**





## Closing the gap

OzChild supports and works with children, young people and families from many different cultures and backgrounds. The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in our care, and in the out-of-home care and justice systems nationally, presents a difficult truth.

The 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap has a target to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent by 2031. Sadly, in the first 12 months under this Agreement, numbers have increased<sup>3</sup>.

**Systemic change is needed to build and progress the central right of self-determination for First Nations Peoples<sup>4</sup>, both at a community and individual level. Dhiyaan Mirri is our deep commitment to change for every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child, young person, and family we work with.**



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard/socioeconomic/outcome-area12>

<sup>4</sup> For more information about the central right of self-determination, see (for example): <https://declaration.humanrights.gov.au/get-it>

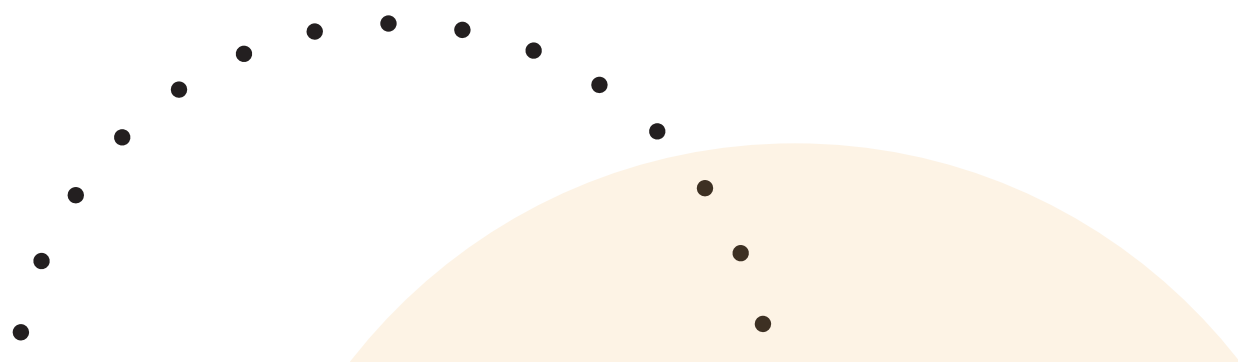


## A global pandemic has both destabilised and stimulated our world

The global COVID-19 pandemic is causing widespread ramifications which are still unfolding. While there are many unknowns, some factors are starkly understood. The economic impact of this event will be felt for decades, and thousands of households are already experiencing financial vulnerability, uncertainty and the many knock-on impacts of this. Ongoing employment insecurity, particularly for young people, is anticipated. Governments will be limited in their capacity to increase investment while they simultaneously focus on economic recovery.

**On the upside however, we expect to see governments applying greater scrutiny to their investments, making sure they are delivering on outcomes.**

And we have seen incredible innovation and opportunity emerge in how technology can help us all to connect and deliver services in different ways. We have also observed a renewed connection in many families, social networks, and communities for what really matters. We're looking forward to seeing these advances continue.

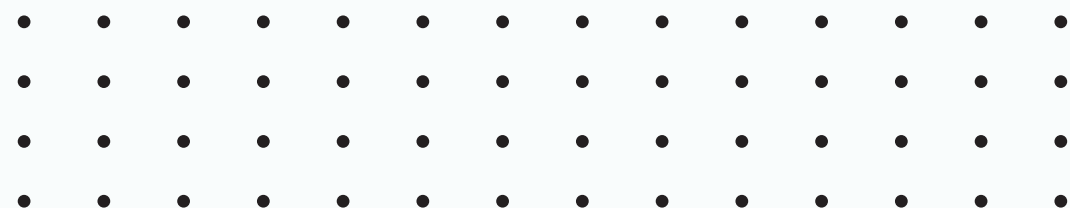




# Our Vision

**All children and young people are safe, respected, nurtured and reach their full potential.**

We seek a society in which all children and young people, regardless of their background, religion, culture, sexual orientation, or socio-demographic standing, live happily in a safe and caring environment. They are respected, supported, and part of a family. They have their needs met, have a safe home, are engaged in education or work, are participating in their community, and have the supports they need to reach their fullest potential.

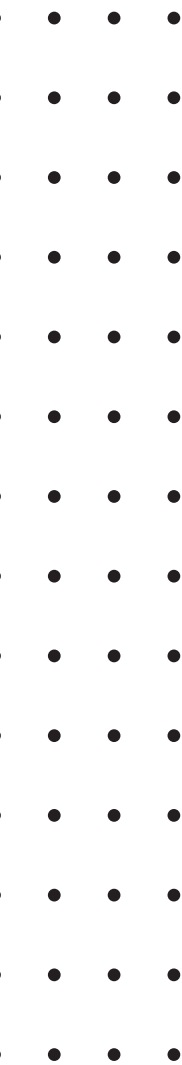




# Our Purpose

**OzChild supports children, young people and families who are experiencing significant challenges, by strengthening families, providing healing, and preventing abuse and neglect.**

At OzChild, we start by asking the right questions. We look for the insight and evidence from multiple sources and critically evaluate our options, our actions, and our results. We are committed to creating better outcomes for those we serve and work with. We deliver a diverse range of programs and services which respond to different needs, from those that focus on prevention and family preservation, right through to complex, high-impact interventions. And while our services are diverse, our unifying philosophy is that what we do is backed by the evidence and will always be focused on achieving our vision.



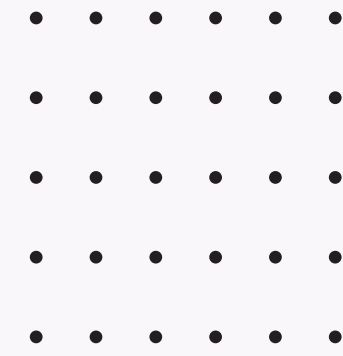


# Our Commitment

1. We will safeguard children in all that we do
2. We will continuously advocate to enable self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People
3. We will act on the evidence, rigorously evaluate outcomes, and invest in what works
4. We will continue to support those impacted by our care throughout our history







# The Values We Bring

**Our vision unifies us, and at OzChild we appreciate and celebrate diverse strengths and perspectives.**

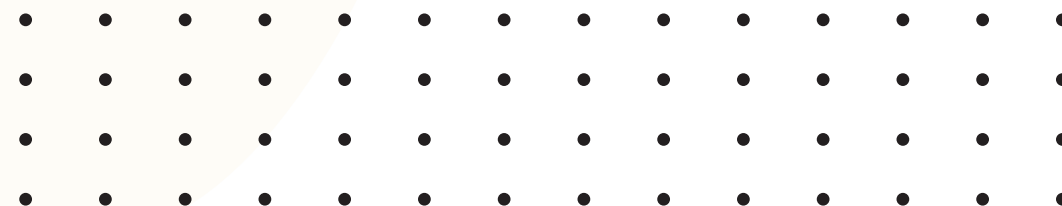
We nurture *The OzChild Way* as a shared philosophy rather than ask staff and carers to subscribe to a short list of common value statements. We want everyone to bring their genuine, whole self to their work, and believe that we benefit from the collective diversity of thought, perspective, and experience this offers. This requires effort and attention, including self-awareness, cultural competence, and the holding of safe, appreciative space for dialogue and shared understanding.





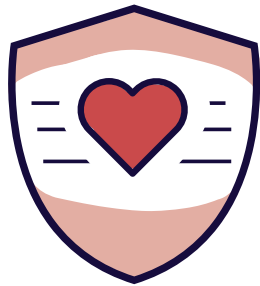
# The OzChild Way

- We deliver **evidence-based** services
- Our **customer** determines our success
- We deliver **innovative solutions**
- We set each other up for **success**
- I learn, adapt, grow and embrace my **cultural competence**





# Our Strategy



## Advance what works

We are deeply committed to doing what works for each child, young person, and family. We know our evidence-based services have outstanding impact, and we will continue to embed evidence-led decision-making in all that we do.



## Be a courageous voice for change

We all want the best possible service system for children, young people, and families in need. We will partner, collaborate, and advocate for better responses to complex challenges, including the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in the child protection and justice systems.



## Grow for greater impact

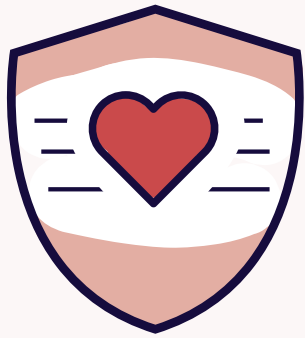
We are proud of what we have achieved in recent years and will continue to find opportunities to do more for children, young people, and families. We will grow our service delivery in areas of greatest need, where our evidence-based approaches can have the greatest impact.



## Strengthen our vital organisation

Our best work happens when everyone feels empowered, connected, and enabled to achieve. We want our systems to be contemporary, our financial health to be strong, and our staff and carers to feel valued and supported to be their best.





**With a deep commitment to what works, we will advance our evidence-based services.**

## Advance what works

**We are deeply committed to doing what works for every child, young person, and family in need.** We know our evidence-based services have outstanding impact, and we will continue to embed evidence-led decision-making in all that we do. To demonstrate and nurture this we will:

- 1.** Develop our practice in evidence-based family strengthening and preservation, and support for parents and families to achieve return of their children.
- 2.** Draw on the evidence to advance foster and kinship care models of service, to improve outcomes for children and young people who cannot live safely at home.
- 3.** Increase our focus on evidence-based interventions and partnerships that address complex underlying and intersecting needs in families around issues such as mental ill-health, family and domestic violence, and drug and alcohol misuse.
- 4.** Do more for young people at high-risk, including those interacting with youth and juvenile justice systems, and young people leaving care.
- 5.** Research and pilot innovative models of service delivery, including better utilisation of technology to connect and deliver services.





**We will  
advocate and  
collaborate  
for a brighter  
tomorrow.**

## Be a courageous voice for change

**We all want the best possible service system for children, young people, and families in need.** We will partner, collaborate, and advocate for better responses to complex challenges, including the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in the child protection and justice systems, and:

1. Continue our journey to build high-quality evaluation that illustrates the compelling need for high-impact action and investment.
2. Sustain our commitment towards self-determination for Aboriginal families and services by working with local communities to understand how our services can make a difference, as part of our Dhiyaan Mirri priorities.
3. Empower children and young people to have a greater say on decisions which affect them, and which shape our broader work, by creating relationships and opportunities for meaningful participation.
4. Articulately convey the voices of children, young people, families and carers to our funders, peers, partners, and the wider community.
5. Advance our work to build sector-wide leadership and capability in evidence-based programs, practices, and decisions.







**We will grow our services and respond to need where we can have the greatest impact.**

## Grow for greater impact

**We are proud of what we have achieved in recent years and will continue to find opportunities to do more for children, young people, and families.** We will grow our service delivery in areas of greatest need, where our evidence-based approaches can have the greatest impact. To do this we will:

- 1.** Improve our approach to assessing opportunities and need so we can expertly tailor and target our responses for different communities.
- 2.** Forge and nurture purposeful relationships, collaborating to achieve unique outcomes, and following the evidence to understand where we can make a bigger difference, together.
- 3.** Create processes that help us efficiently replicate, rollout and sustain high-quality, high-impact services.
- 4.** Continue to demonstrate, evaluate, and communicate the success of our programs and services.







**We will invest in OzChild as a contemporary, vital organisation.**

## Strengthen our vital organisation

**Our best work happens when everyone feels empowered, connected, and enabled to achieve.** We want our systems to be contemporary, our financial health to be strong, and our staff and carers to feel supported and equipped to be their best. We will:

- 1.** Develop practice that embeds our commitment to learning, advancing knowledge, and replicating what works across all that we do at OzChild.
- 2.** Support our people to deliver inclusive services with competence and respect in all aspects of diversity represented in the children, young people, and families we work with.
- 3.** Develop contemporary, connected systems that support our people by reducing administrative burdens and providing high-quality data and information to inform decisions.
- 4.** Deliver sustainable financial health, and funding models that complement our strategic service delivery goals.
- 5.** Bring out the individual and collective best of our staff and carers and build inclusion and connection to help us learn and grow together.





# Our Success

Our progress and success in achieving these strategic goals will be measured in multiple forms. It is exciting to think that in 2026 we will be able to report on the impact that a decade of continued commitment, learning and investment in evidence-based action has made.

To implement our strategic goals, we will build annual plans and targets that align to this Plan and hold ourselves to account for, and report on, our achievements against these. When assessing our success we will consider the tangible, quantitative results and experiential, qualitative results. Metrics are important, but the experience of ‘success’ can also be better understood through the eyes and voice of a child or young person, and so we will seek and value both.

We expect to be challenged, and to adapt when things aren’t working, and we’ll continually review our priorities and performance to pursue our vision that all children and young people are safe, respected, nurtured and reach their full potential.





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