

Permanent Care & Adoptive Families

# Carer & Parent Feedback Survey Analysis

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Permanent Care & Adoptive Families

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## Introduction

Permanent Care and Adoptive Families (PCAF) is an early intervention service that provides support to families formed through kinship care, permanent care and adoption. PCAF is keen to ensure that its services are meeting the needs of those families. It has conducted a survey to gather feedback from Carers / Parents about:

- Their experience as carers
- Their satisfaction with the services and supports they have available to them
- The types of services that would be of help to them and allow them to better support the children in their care and
- How PCAF can best support them.

A survey was conducted between May to August 2019 to explore those issues. It was disseminated by email to PCAF Members and through the PCAF website and also on our Facebook page, receiving a very strong response.

The following Report summarises the outcomes of that survey. The Report is structured in six sections. Section 1 provides an overview of the Carers / Parents who responded to the survey. Section 2 discusses how well those Carers feel they are coping. Section 3 discusses the sorts of supports that they are accessing and how satisfied they are with those services. Section 4 identifies what sorts of supports Carers identified as being valuable to them and Section 5 discusses the sorts of supports that PCAF can helpfully provide for them, including the sorts of training that would be useful to them. Section 6 summarises the key insights from the survey for PCAF in relation to how it might review its service offering.

For the purpose of this Report unless otherwise indicated the term Carers has been used to refer to both Carers and Parents.

## 1. Who responded to the survey?

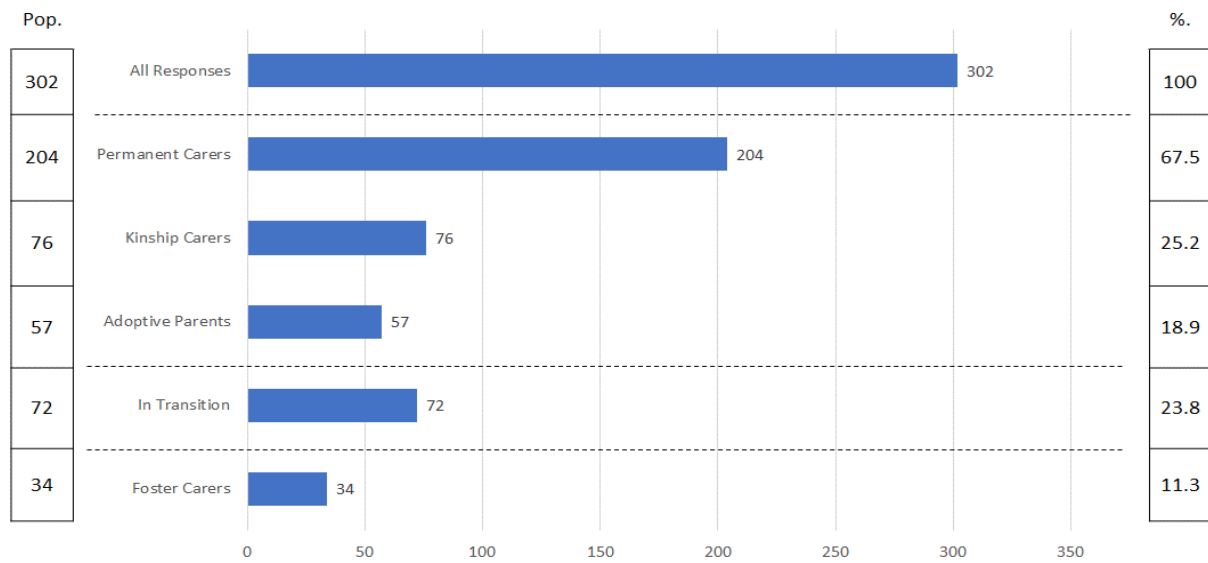
### Number and type of Carers responding to the survey

Just over three hundred (302) Carers responded to the survey<sup>1</sup>. Approximately two thirds of those Carers were Permanent Carers (67.5%), just over a quarter were Kinship Carers (25.2%) and approximately 1 in 5 (18.9%) were Adoptive Parents (of which 70% were inter-county adoptions and 30% local adoptions). Approximately 1 in 10 Carers (11.3%) were Foster Carers. Only a very small percentage of the Carers responding to the survey (2.6%) were looking after children in differing carer capacities. Just under a quarter (23.8%) of the Carers were in transition, waiting as Kinship Carers or Foster Carers on a permanent care order or as prospective parents on adoption.

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<sup>1</sup> Two additional parties responded to the survey (a worker and an adoptee). Their responses have been excluded from the analysis on the basis that they represent distinct customer segments that are not able to be assessed because of the small sample sizes gathered for those groups.

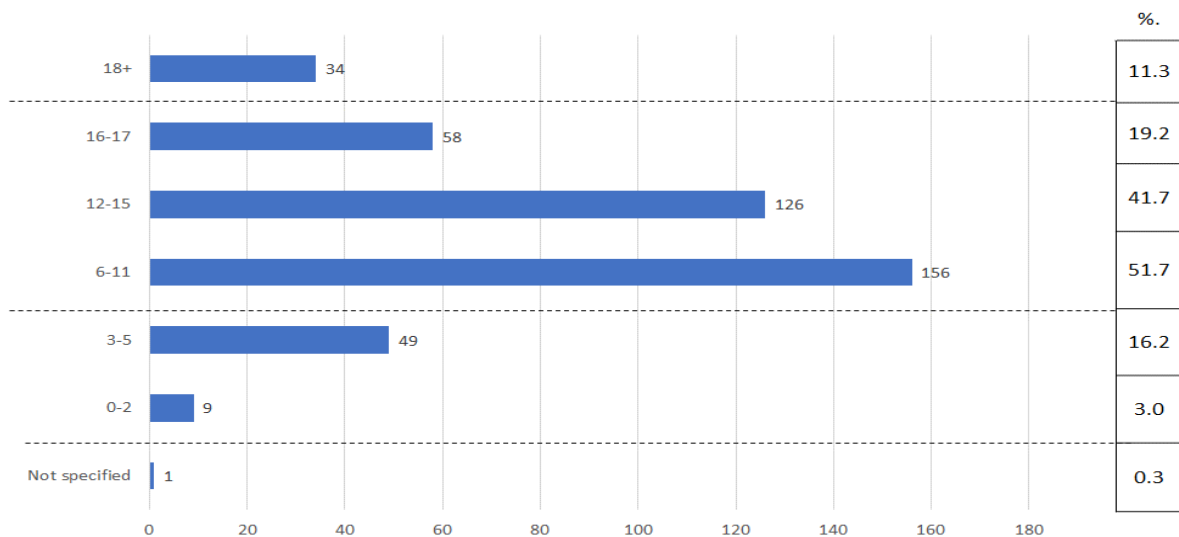
Figure 1 - Respondent profile: (Sample pop. = 302)



### The age profile of the children in their care

Just under 1 in 5 (18.5%) Carers responding to the survey were caring for young children not yet of school age, just over half (52%) had children of primary and / or secondary school age and just over 1 in 10 had children aged 18 years or older (11.3). A number of Carers (17.5%) were looking after children across mixed age groups.

Figure 2- No. families caring for children in specified age groups: (Sample pop. = 302)<sup>2</sup>

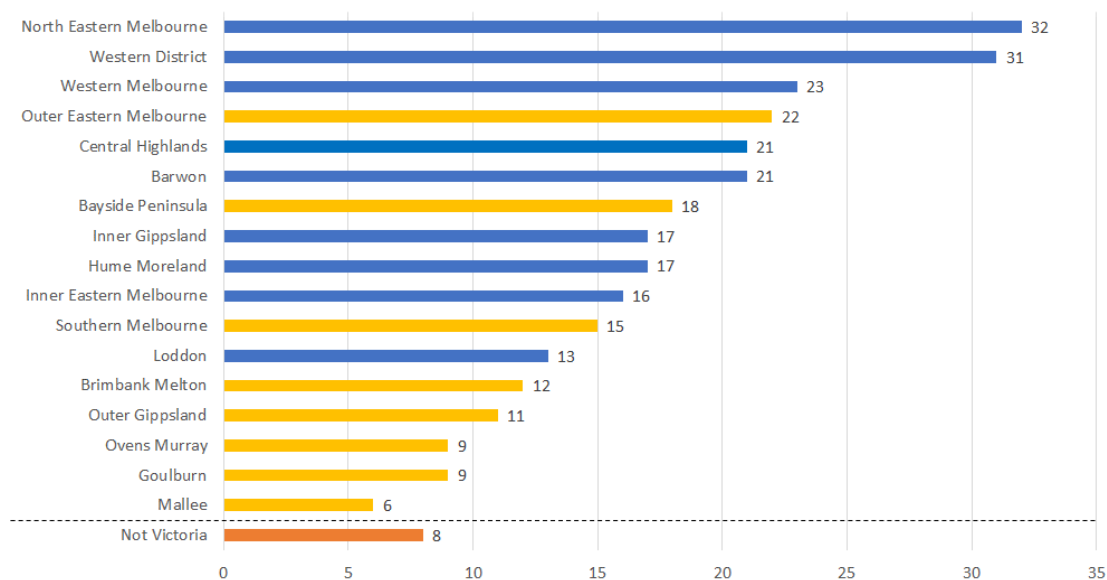


<sup>2</sup> Note that the percentages do not add up to 100% as some Carers have children in more than one category.

## Where they live

Three quarters of the Carers responding to the survey live in metropolitan or outer metropolitan areas (75.7%). Just over 1 in 5 (21.6%) live in regional areas and a small number are from interstate (2.7%).

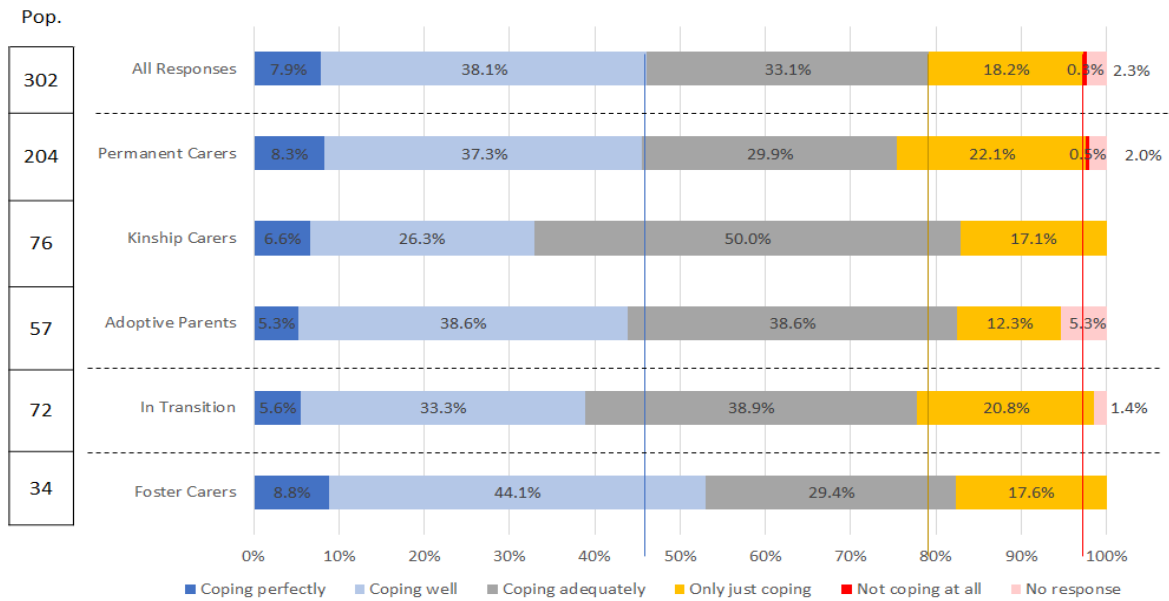
Figure 3 - Geographic distribution of respondents: (Sample pop. = 301)  
(metro and outer metro areas shown in blue, regional areas shown in yellow, interstate shown in orange)



## 2. How were those Carers going?

When asked “How well they thought that they were coping as carers” just under half (46.0%) of the Carers responding to the survey indicated that they thought that they were coping well or better; a third (33.1%) indicated that they were coping adequately. Just over 1 in 5 (20.9%) of Carers indicated that they were only just coping, not coping or did not respond to the question. The percentage of carers in this group was considered significant.

Figure 4 – How well do you feel you are coping with your role as a carer: (Sample pop. = 302)

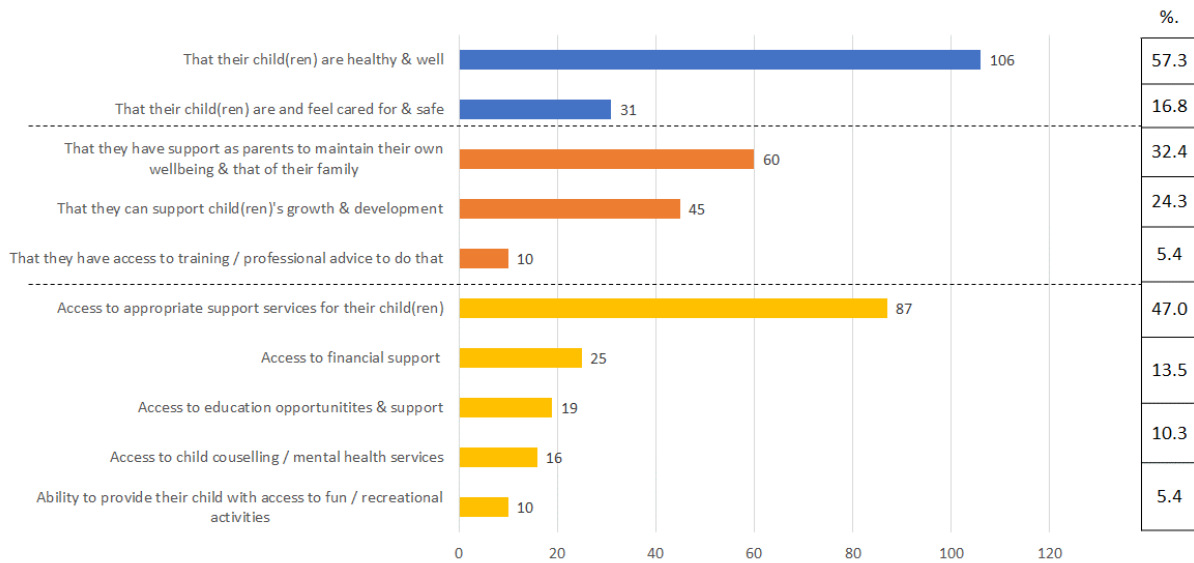


Kinship Carers were statistically less likely to indicate that they were coping well or better than other Carer groups. They were also more likely to indicate that they were coping adequately than the other Carer groups; however, the proportion of Kinship Carers who felt that they were only just coping, not coping or who did not respond to the question were not statistically different from the other Carer groups. The other variations across the Carer groups were not statistically significant.<sup>3</sup>

When asked “*what was important to them*” Carers responded in a number of ways referring to the wellbeing of the children in their care, their ability to maintain their own wellbeing in order to care effectively for their child(ren) and to the sorts of skills and supports that they needed to be able to care for their child(ren) well.

Figure 5 - What Carers identified as being important to them: (Sample pop. = 185)

<sup>3</sup> Based on two tailed z-test at 5% significance level.

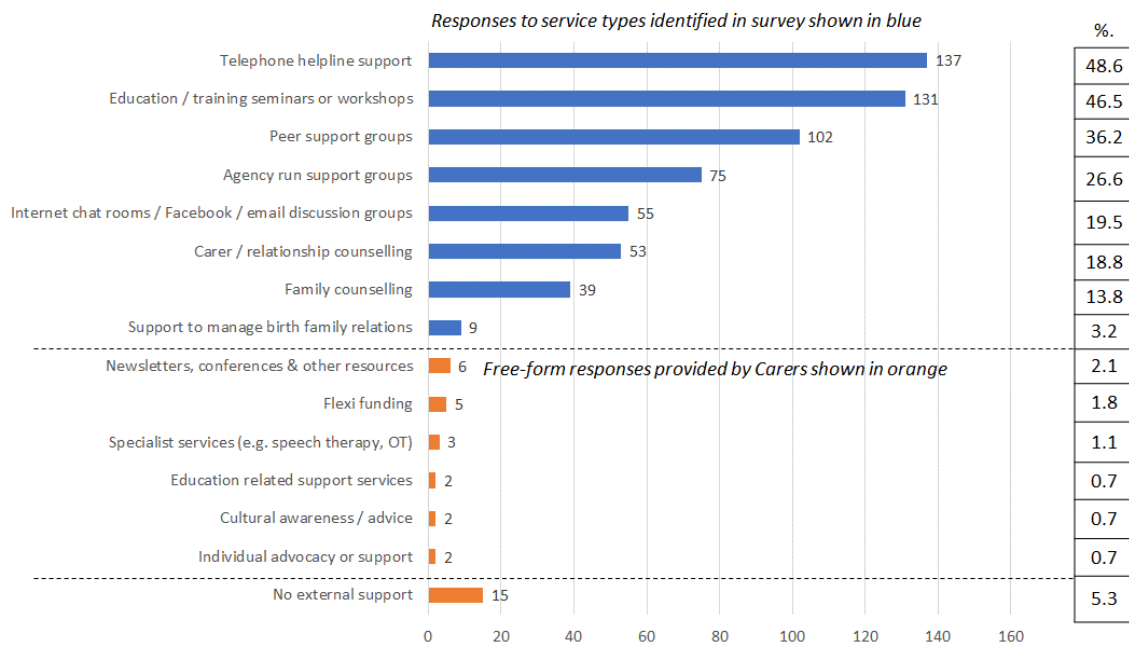


The health and wellbeing of their children and the ability to access appropriate support services for them stood out as being particularly important.

PCAF asked Carers to identify the sorts of supports that they had used to help them as Carers. PCAF listed a number of service options, including some that PCAF currently provide either directly or through referral to appropriately credentialled service providers.

A number of Carers had made use of most of the types of support identified in the Survey. Just under half of the Carers responding to the survey had accessed telephone helpline services, the vast majority of whom (97.1%) indicated that they had done so through the PCAF Helpline. A number of Carers also identified that they participated in education or training and / or face to face or online peer support groups. Some Carers identified other types of support that they had accessed. Most of those additional items were identified more broadly by Carers as ones that they would value being able to access going forward in subsequent parts of the survey.

Figure 6 - Types of support being accessed by Carers: (Sample pop. = 282)



A small but significant proportion of Carers (5.3%) indicated that they had not had access to any external support.

Just under half of the Carers responding to the survey (49.6%) indicated that they were extremely or adequately satisfied with the supports that were available to them as carers; a third (33.4%) indicated that they were only somewhat satisfied and the balance either indicated that they were not at all satisfied (13.6%) or did not respond to the question (3.3%). (See Figure 7 below).

There was no statistically significant difference between how satisfied or dissatisfied Permanent, Kinship, Adoptive or Foster Carers were with the supports that were available to them. Carers in transition awaiting a permanent care order or adoptive placement were statistically less likely to be satisfied with the supports available to them, however, compared to the other Carer groups.<sup>4</sup>

There appears to be a relatively strong correlation between how satisfied Carers are with the supports available to them and how well they feel like they are coping.<sup>5</sup>

There does not appear to be a correlation between the age group(s) that are being cared for and the sense of how well Carers are coping or their satisfaction with the supports available to them.<sup>6</sup>

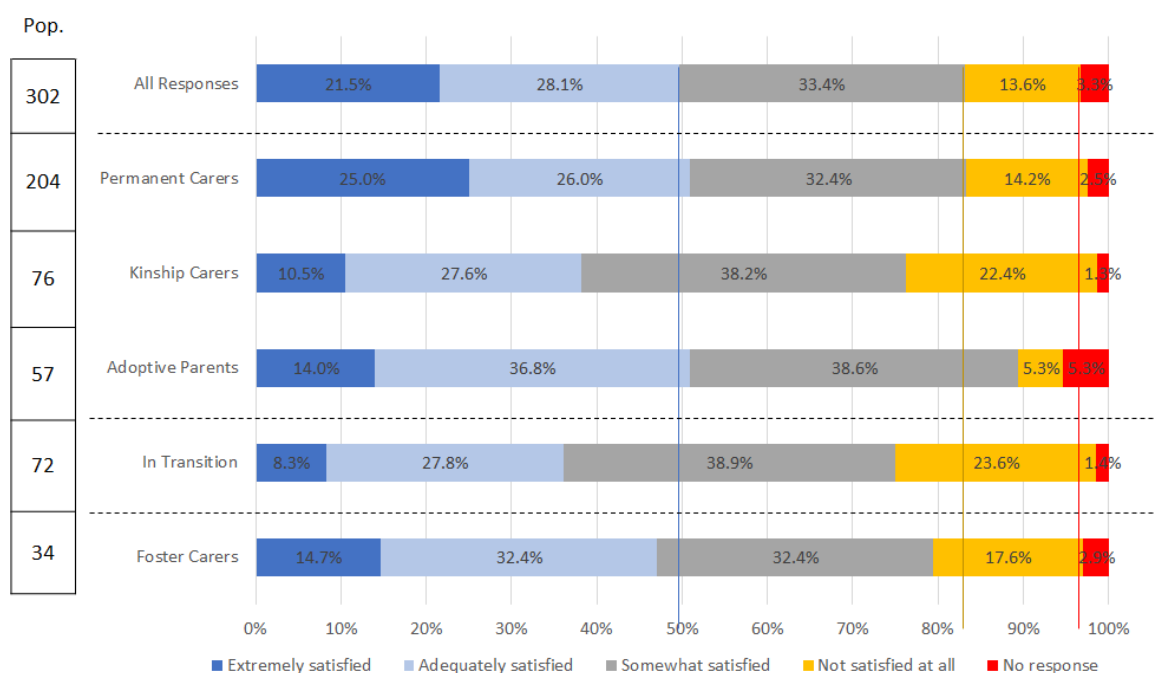
<sup>4</sup> Based on two tailed z-test at 5% significance level.

<sup>5</sup> A correlation coefficient of +1 indicates a perfect positive correlation. As variable X increases, variable Y increases. As variable X decreases, variable Y decreases. A correlation coefficient of -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation. As variable X increases, variable Z decreases. As variable X decreases, variable Z increases. In this case as Carer's satisfaction with the supports available increases with their sense of how well they are coping (correlation coefficient = 0.87).

<sup>6</sup> Correlation coefficients of 0.13 and -0.06 respectively.



Figure 7 – Satisfaction with the supports they are currently offered as Carers: (Sample pop. = 302)



Carers noted that they often “had to seek out ... assistance. Finding help was difficult.” A number of carers identified the need for more support in non-metropolitan areas. Carers also noted that the waiting time to access support could be long. A number of carers noted the value of having access to online support and a small number to out of hours support.

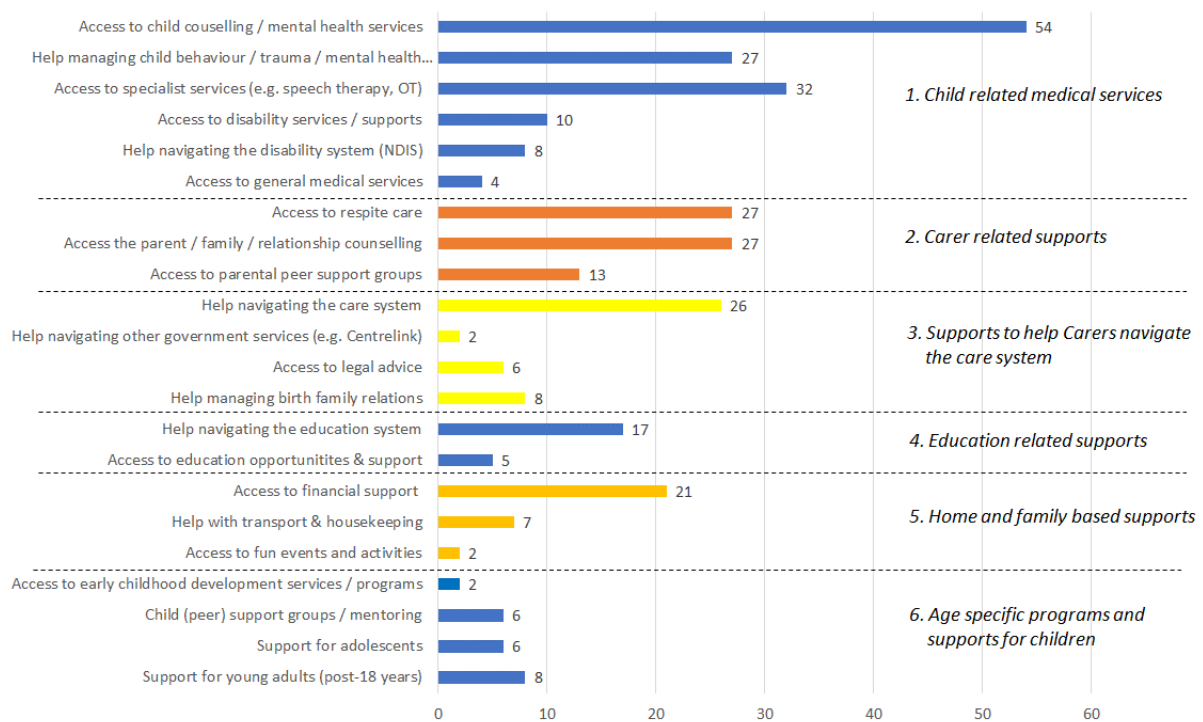
A significant number of Carers supporting young adults noted the lack of support for children after they turned 18 years old.

### 3. What supports do Carers say would be helpful?

Carers identified a range of supports that would be helpful for them, that they would have liked to be able to access in the past and / or would like to have access to in the future. The services that were identified can be grouped in five broad categories:

1. **Child related medical services and support navigating related service systems** including the NDIS
2. **Carer related supports** including both personal support, practical support in the form of respite and therapeutic supports including personal, relationship and family counselling
3. **Support to help Carers to navigate the care system** and advocate effectively for their child(ren)
4. **Education related supports** to help children to engage and learn effectively at school
5. **Basic home and family based supports** including access to financial support, help with day to day requirements like transport and housekeeping and options to help families to provide their child(ren) with access to fun recreational activities
6. **Age specific programs** to address the needs of children (including infants and young children), adolescents and young adults who are over 18 years old.

Figure 8 - Types of support identified as being valued by Carers: (Sample responses = 318<sup>7</sup>)



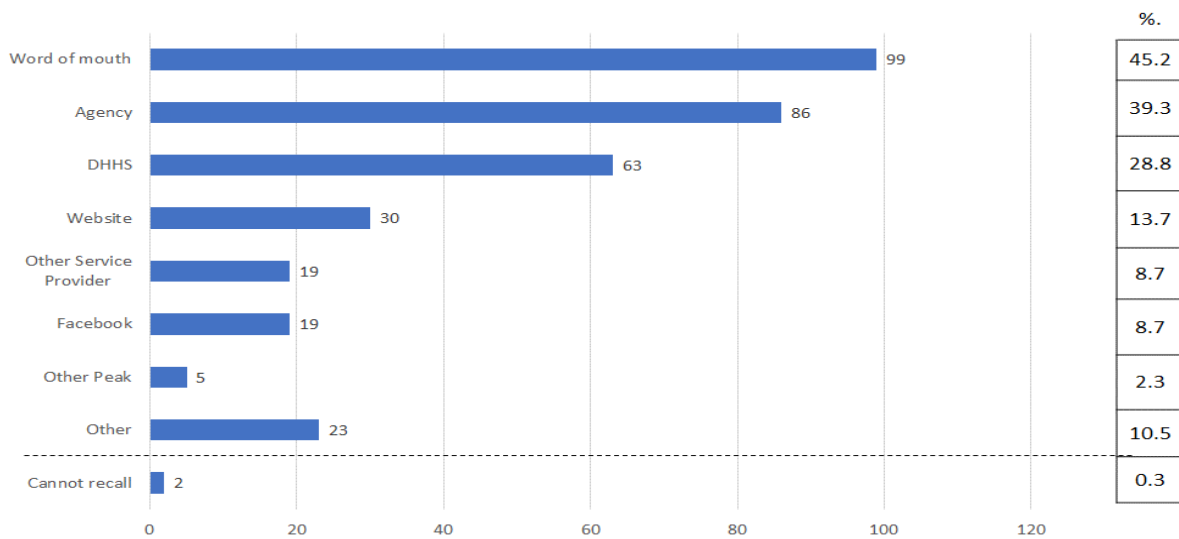
#### 4. How are Carers finding out about PCAF?

Given how the survey was disseminated it is likely that many, if not most, of the Carers responding to the survey had had some engagement with PCAF prior to completing the survey. It is not clear from the survey exactly how familiar those Carers were with PCAF at the time of the survey and how that informed their assessment of what types of support PCAF might best provide for Carers like them.

The most significant channels through which Carers came to know about PCAF were identified as being word of mouth and referral through the Carer's Agency and / or the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS).

<sup>7</sup> Responses collated from Questions 8 and 10 in the survey.

Figure 9 - How respondents had heard about PCAF: (Sample pop. = 219)



Feedback provided by Carers in the survey indicates that a number of Carers have had a positive experience with PCAF. *“I feel PCAF are supportive of us as a family.”* Staff are *“positive, knowledgeable and friendly”*. They are *“always accessible and your listening ears are invaluable”*. They *“keep us informed as to what is available”*. PCAF’s *“newsletter and emails have been valuable and knowing now that I can call for help is great.”* *“Keep up the good work.”*

## 5. What supports and training could PCAF provide that would be helpful?

A number of Carers (10.0%) specifically indicated that they were keen for PCAF to continue to do what they are doing.

The areas that Carers identified as being ones that PCAF could play a role in broadly aligned to the list of supports that they identified as being ones that they would like to be able to access (outlined in Section 3 of this Report.)

The provision of funding, through the Flexi fund, was identified as a key area that Carers thought that PCAF could play a role in by helping Carers to access the sorts of support that they needed. Particular areas where funding was seen as being useful included: medical, dental, disability therapeutic (including child, parent and family counselling), and education related supports, recreational activities, transport, household based expenses and respite.

Information and advice based services were also valued. Carers were keen to have support to understand what services and funding options were available to them, to get support to navigate the care system and manage birth family relationships, to identify how to address issues that their child(ren) were facing from a physical and emotional health and wellbeing perspective, to deal with trauma and behavioural issues, to get support in relation to helping child(ren) to engage constructively in education and to get personal support to maintain their carer role.

A number of Carers with older children identified a desire to better understand the types of support that were available to young adults when they are no longer subject to a permanent care order.

Peer support groups for Carers and children were also identified as areas when PCAF could continue to provide support, with a number of Carers expressing interest in more online options. Mentoring programs for older children, adolescents and young adults were also identified by some Carers as being another area of potential support.

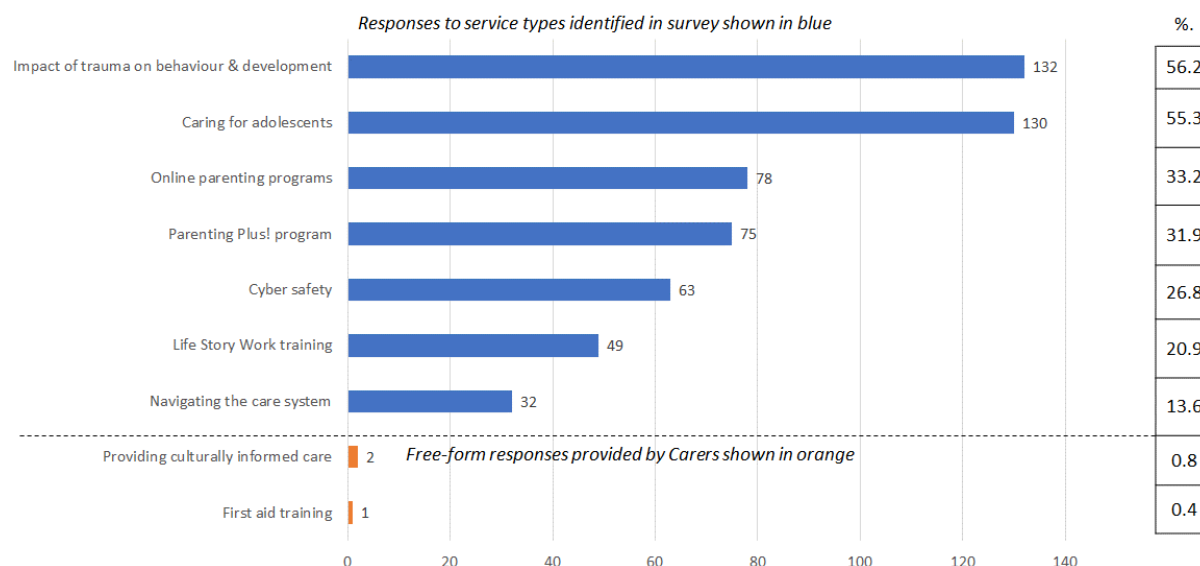
The provision of group activities and events was also mentioned as an area that would be valued by Carers.

Access to professional advice and the provision of parental education and training was also seen as being important.

### What types of training were Carers interested in?

PCAF sought specific feedback from Carers on the types of training that they would like to be able to access over the next 12 months. There were strong positive responses to most of the types of training that PCAF identified in the survey. Culturally informed care and first aid training were also identified by Carers as topics of interest.

Figure 10 – Carer expressions of interest in training topics: (Sample pop. = 235)



Cares noted that online training options, “webinars and podcasts would be helpful additions” to PCAF’s training offering. Carers from non-metropolitan areas were keen for PCAF to broaden the provision / accessibility of its education and training programs to cover those areas.

## 6. Key conclusions

There was a high level of internal consistency in the responses provided by Carers to the different questions in the survey.

A number of Carers indicated that they valued the services that PCAF provides and are keen for them to continue to provide those services.

The feedback that Carers provided confirmed that the focus of PCAF’s services are generally in line with what Carers are seeking in terms of support.

There was a desire to increase the reach of services, with a number of Carers encouraging PCAF to broaden its use of online tools.

There is also an opportunity to tailor the provision of information, advice, training and peer support programs to meet the needs of Carers caring for particular age groups and to provide stronger support for Carers in transition, waiting as Kinship Carers or Foster Carers on a permanent care order or as prospective parents on adoption.