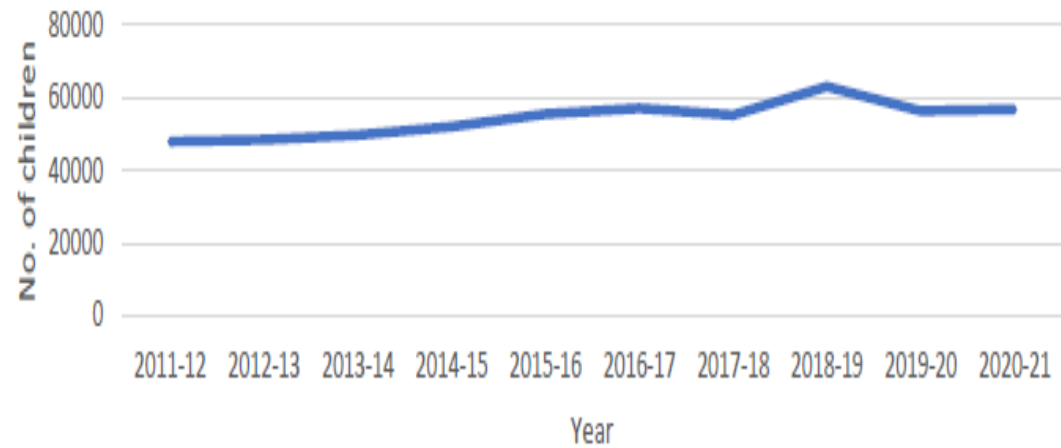


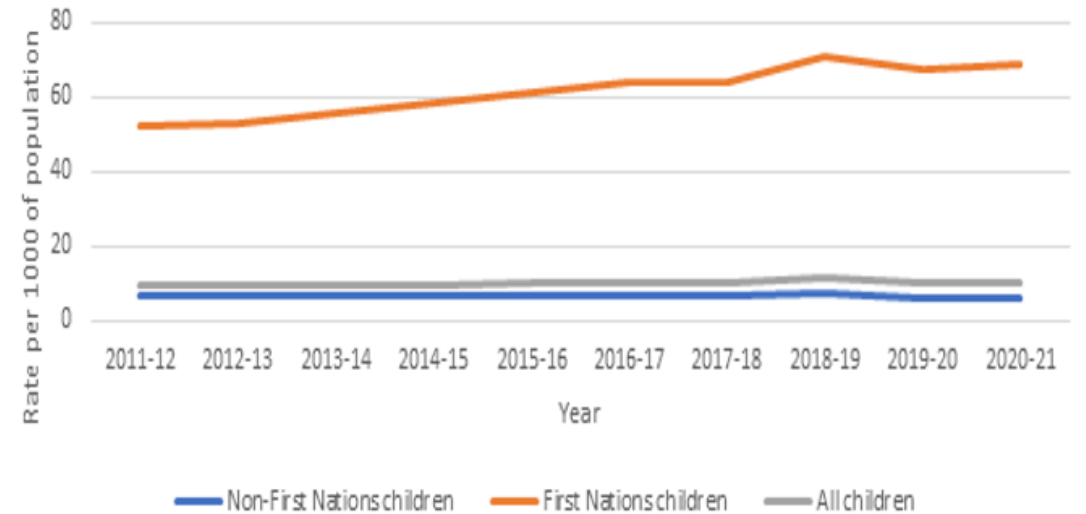
The potential for an Australian-First Specialist Infant Court to change the developmental trajectories and infants and very young children in out of home care.  
Matthew Wilson – 2020 Churchill Fellow



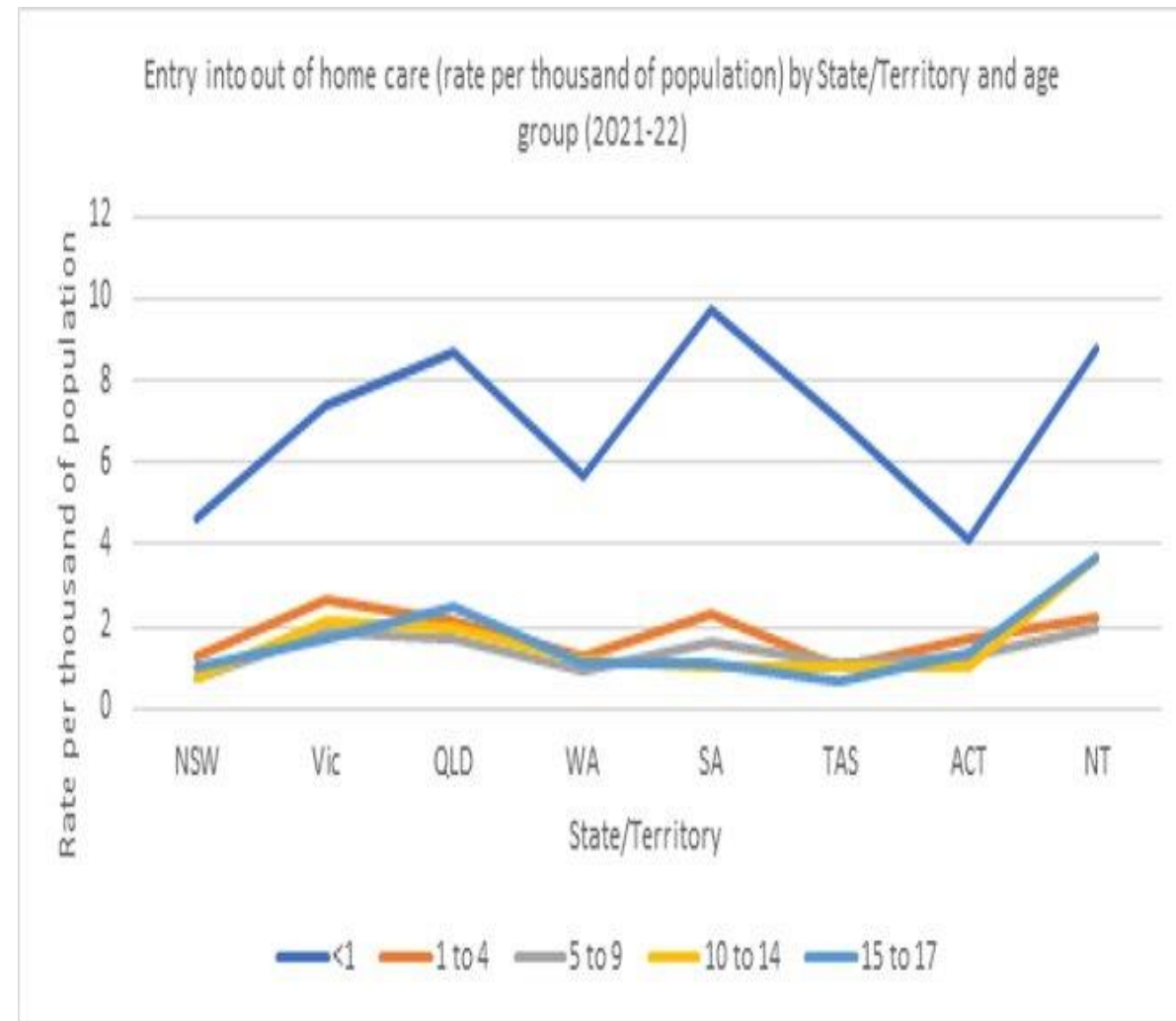
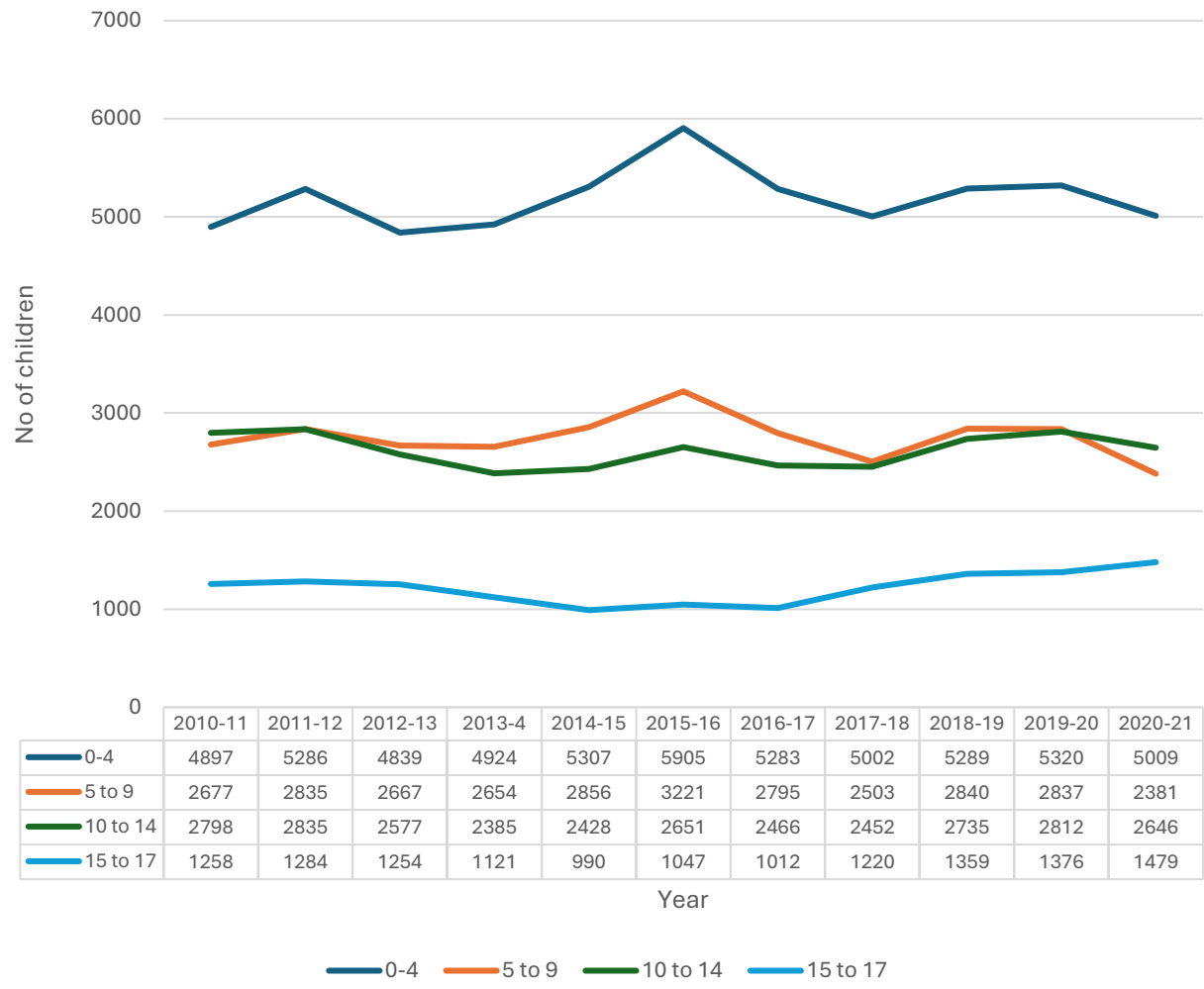
Children experiencing at least one out of home care or other supported placement during the year (Australia)



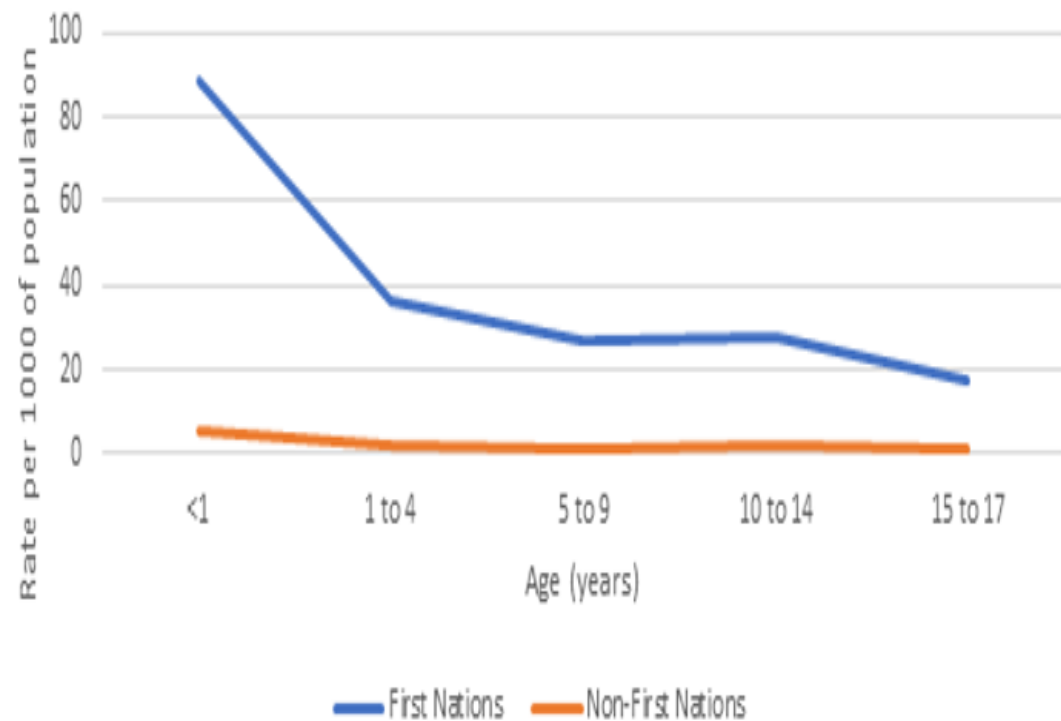
Children experiencing at least one out of home care placement or other supported placement during the year (Australia) by Indigenous status (rate per 1000 of population)



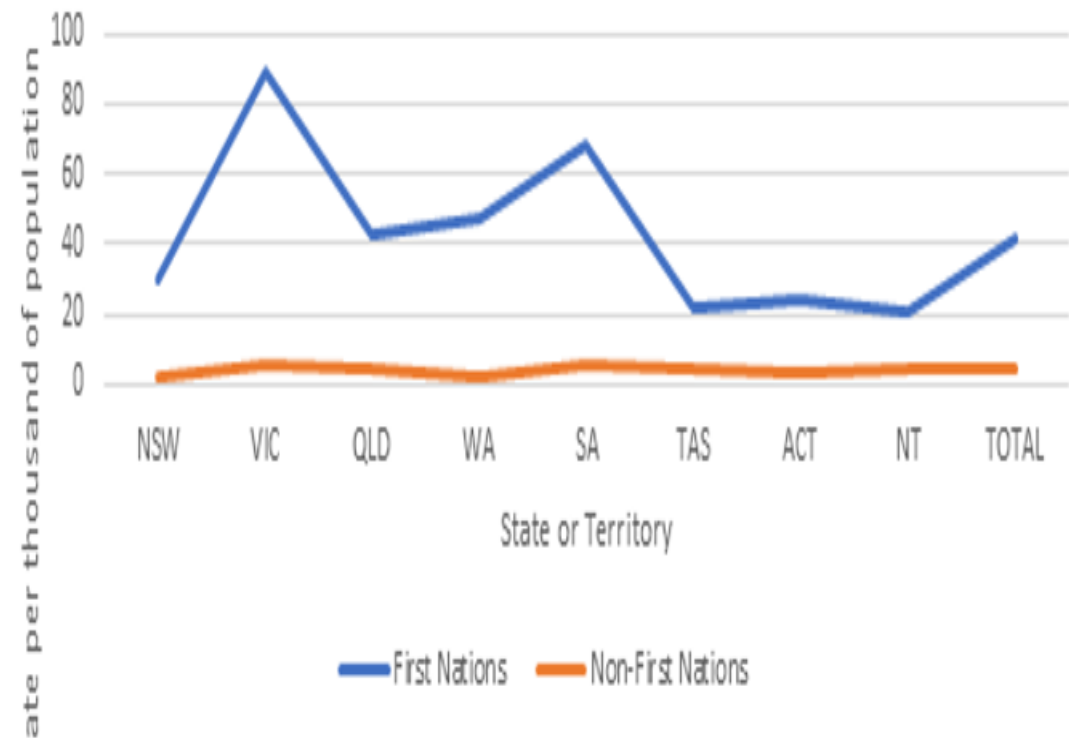
Children admitted to out-of-home-care by age group (Australia) 2010-11 to 2020-21



Children admitted to out-home care (rate per thousand of population) by age group and indigenous status (Vic 2021-22)



Infants' (under 1 year) entry into out of home care in 2021-22 by Indigenous status (rate per thousand of population)



## Infants in out of home care:

More likely to experience  
developmental delays

More likely to experience adverse  
physical health

More likely to develop attachment  
problems

More likely to experience adverse  
longer-term outcomes

Key  
neurodevelopmental  
tasks of infancy:



The development of the stress  
response system



The development of emotional  
and behavioural regulation



The development of the capacity  
to make and sustain prosocial,  
adaptive relationships

# What can be done?

*The legacy of unhealed adverse childhood experiences is seen every day in [Children's Courts]' as formerly abused or neglected children are now the abusing or neglecting parent. Fortunately, this multigenerational cycle of trauma and maltreatment can be interrupted with a systemic shift towards 'therapeutic jurisprudence,' a reframing of the judicial system to promote a more effective approach to altering the trajectory for maltreated children and their families.'*

Florida State University study into Early Childhood Courts, 2017.

# Core components of a specialist infant court

Judicial Leadership

Local Community Coordinator

Active Family Team

Continuum of behavioural health services including dyadic therapeutic work (Child Parent Psychotherapy)

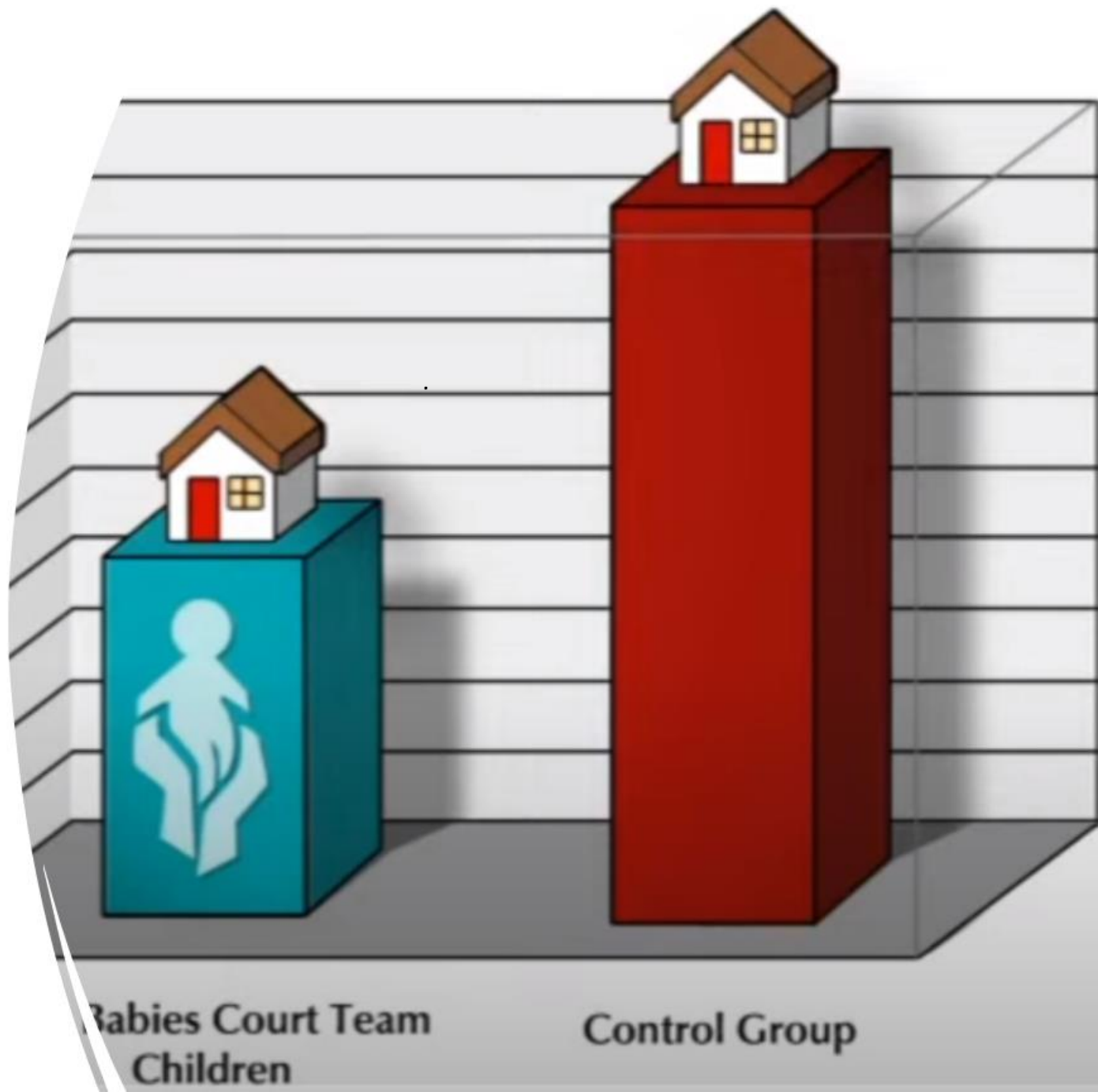
Monthly Court appearances

Active Court Team focussing on the bigger picture

# Evaluation outcomes

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- Higher rates of stability for children
- Quicker discharge from out-of-home care
- Lower likelihood of re-entry to out-of-home care
- Significant reduction in future substantiated maltreatment or neglect and in future applications to the court
- Greater parental knowledge of early childhood development
- Infants and their parents develop stronger relationships and are less likely to pass on generational patterns of trauma and attachment problems.



# Recommendations

Pilot and evaluation

Formation and maintenance of  
a working group

In-depth, ongoing consultation  
with First Nations communities