

Out of Home Care Philanthropic Funders Network



Case study

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 Centre for Excellence in
Child and Family Welfare

 Equity Trustees



We would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the past, present, and emerging Traditional Custodians and Elders of this country on which we work. We also acknowledge the injustices and trauma suffered as a result of European settlement, the Stolen Generations, and other policies such as the forced removal of children from their families, communities, culture and land. We respect the resilience of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the face of this trauma and respect their right to, and aspiration for, self-determination and empowerment.



Executive summary

Background

Complex systemic challenges require innovative and collaborative responses scaled to the size of the challenge. **Collaborative philanthropy** provides a way of combining and coordinating the expertise and resources of philanthropic organisations and stakeholder organisations to provide large-scale responses to complex social issues.

The **Out of Home Care Philanthropic Funders Network** (OoHC Network) is a collaborative philanthropy model that has made a strong impact in the Out of Home Care (OoHC) sector in Victoria over the past four years through the contributions of a diverse range of philanthropic organisations in partnership with the OoHC sector.

Purpose

The purpose of this case study is to explain what collaborative philanthropy is and how it works in the context of the OoHC Network. By outlining the purpose, activities and successes of the OoHC Network, the case study provides an overview of the journey and key features of the OoHC Network's collaborative philanthropy approach, demonstrating how this approach has created impact and value for children, young people and the OoHC sector.

Collaborative philanthropy sits alongside and supports traditional individual philanthropic and co-funding efforts. All these philanthropic approaches create significant social impact in addressing societal challenges. The collaborative philanthropy model presents an opportunity for additional scale and reach and is one that can be applied in other locations or to other key issue areas seeking systemic change.

This document will outline:

- 1. What is collaborative philanthropy and the OoHC Network?** It is a collaborative group of philanthropic organisations with a shared interest in improving the experiences and outcomes of children and young people who are at risk of entering, or have an experience of, OoHC.
- 2. Why focus on OoHC?** It is a systemic challenge in Victoria. The wellbeing and safety of children is a fundamental priority for Australian society, however the child protection system in Victoria faces significant challenges. The OoHC Network is aiming to achieve systemic change through collaboration.
- 3. Development of a collaborative philanthropy model** - Since its foundation in 2017, the OoHC Network has evolved and achieved significant milestones and achievements.
- 4. The model of collaboration** - Six key features of the OoHC Network's collaborative approach are critical determinants of its impact.
- 5. Impactful outcomes** - Deep dives into innovation grants and campaigns demonstrate the value of the OoHC Network.
- 6. Collaborative philanthropy in action and next steps** - Through new grant processes, the OoHC Network seeks to fund further innovative practices in OoHC that can prove viability, address innovation risk and demonstrate outcomes for children and young people.

1. Collaborative philanthropy for systemic change

What is collaborative philanthropy?

Collaborative philanthropy is an emerging model for philanthropic organisations with a shared focus, to work together to achieve greater scale and systemic impact. Stakeholders in impactful collaborative initiatives report increased learning and relationship building opportunities, improved ability to direct funding towards a strategy aligned to the scale of the problem, strengthened ability to identify suitable grantees, access to pooled funds, and an increased appetite among donors for assuming risk.⁽¹⁾

What is the OoHC Network

The OoHC Network is a successful example of a collaborative philanthropy model, with members sharing a strong interest in understanding innovation and identifying opportunities to support system-wide change that improves the experiences and outcomes of children and young people who are at risk of entering or have an experience of OoHC.

Who is involved

The OoHC Network is comprised of a diverse range of philanthropic organisations. It is funded through Equity Trustees' Mars-Stride Trust and David Taylor Galt Charitable Trust and is facilitated by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (the Centre), the peak body for the child and family services sector in Victoria, who provide practical supports, sector insights and connections.

"You can't expect everyone to work differently without resourcing it, which is why we've funded the collaboration over multiple years, providing guidance and support to the project manager."

- Emily Cormack, Equity Trustees, Trust Manager



What it does

With a focus on building member knowledge, the group has developed informed giving strategies and undertaken innovation grants. The OoHC Network's main activities include:

- **Bi-Monthly Meetings:** providing a forum to share learnings, evidence and innovation in the OoHC space in Victoria and other jurisdictions.
- **Innovation Grants:** focusing on innovation, systemic change and collaboration across community services organisations and government.
- **Raising Awareness:** amplifying the voices of different cohorts, such as young people transitioning from care into adulthood, by supporting the Home Stretch campaign to extend care to 21 years (refer to page 9). The Centre led this campaign in collaboration with Anglicare with \$500,000 in funding from OoHC Network members. Another example is Raising Expectations (refer to page 10), funded for three years, it is a program that supports care leavers to access and complete higher education. This successful program is now funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Training.

Critical role of the backbone support

One of the most important elements of the OoHC Network's operations is the backbone support provided by the Centre. Equity Trustees funds the Centre to coordinate the operation and activities of the OoHC Network and facilitate critical connections and expertise across the sector. As a peak body with a large membership base and first-hand knowledge, its role is essential.

2. Why focus on OoHC?

Children and young people in OoHC experience vulnerability and face complex challenges. OoHC Network members identified a shared focus on children and young people and an opportunity to make a meaningful impact through systemic change initiatives.

Through this collaborative approach, the OoHC Network aims to contribute to safe and supportive care of children and young people so they can be healthy, thrive and have access to opportunities for improved outcomes in the long-term.

The Council of Australian Governments’ National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020, the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic), the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) and the Victorian Government’s Roadmap for Reform: Strong Families; Safe Children all recognise the right of children to be safe, supported, and receive the services they need to succeed in life. They also recognise a child’s right to be connected to family, community and culture, and education, focusing on preventing children and young people entering care, supporting their families and ensuring that those that cannot live safely at home are supported to heal and thrive.

“For children and young people who can’t live safely at home - whether temporarily or permanently - out of home care is intended to keep them safe and support them to heal and thrive.”

- Deb Tsorbaris, CEO Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare

The experiences of children and young people prior to and during OoHC can have a significant long-term impact. Supportive and stable OoHC arrangements and early intervention supports to prevent entries into OoHC can provide a platform for effective transition to independence, wellbeing in adulthood and longer-term recovery from abuse and neglect. However, children and young people leaving OoHC often experience poorer outcomes in education, employment, financial sustainability, mental health and social networks.

The drivers of family disruption are complex and a range of social, cultural, and economic factors contribute to a child entering OoHC. Unfortunately children and young people in OoHC do not always receive the care and supports they need to thrive socially, emotionally and educationally.

The complexity and challenges of OoHC illustrate a pressing need for wide-scale and systemic solutions to elicit meaningful change.



1 in 50 children experience OoHC by their 17th birthday in Victoria.⁽²⁾



1 in every 16 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Victoria are in OoHC.⁽³⁾



~12,000 children in Victoria were under OoHC arrangements in 2019-20.⁽⁴⁾



This number is increasing at an annual rate of **11%**. If this continues, there could be **25,000** children in OoHC by 2026.⁽⁵⁾



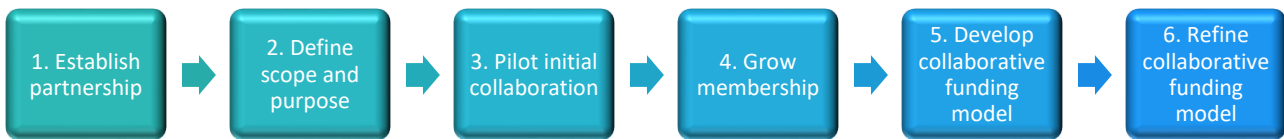
35% of young people leaving care become homeless within 12 months.⁽⁶⁾



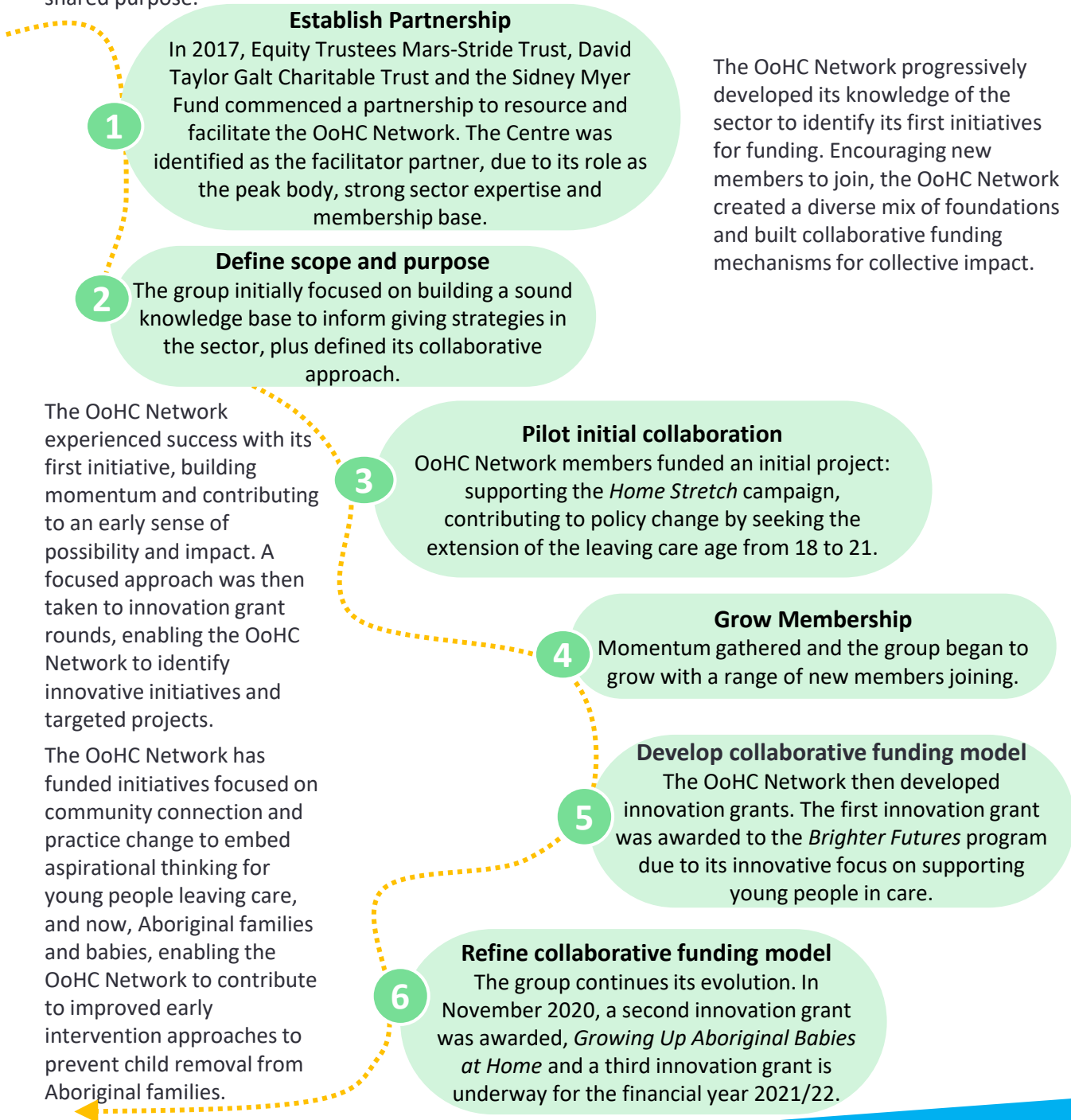
1% of children exiting OoHC enter higher education, compared to **40%** of their peers.⁽⁶⁾

3. Development of a collaborative philanthropy model

The OoHC Network has evolved since its inception. Its journey to date has involved six key stages of evolution, contributing to the strength of collaborative philanthropic practice.



In the OoHC Network’s initial stages, a small group of like-minded foundations identified an opportunity to work collaboratively to support improved outcomes for children and young people in OoHC. Forming the OoHC Network, inaugural members sought to define the focus of the partnership and establish a shared purpose.



4. The model of collaboration

A significant factor behind the success of the OoHC Network has been the emphasis placed on sustained and meaningful collaboration. Six key features of the OoHC Network's collaborative approach are critical determinants of the Network's impact.

Shared purpose

From the outset, the group was established with the clear intention of understanding issues in OoHC and exploring the benefits of a collaborative endeavour. All parties expressed a commitment towards working together to achieve mutually beneficial and consensus-driven outcomes.

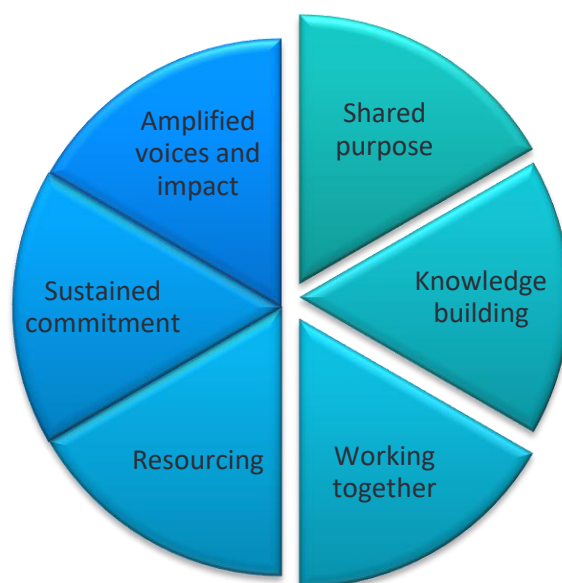
The OoHC Network's purpose and objectives were formed through the members' shared values. Some OoHC Network members have been historically interested in at-risk youth and increasing Australian philanthropy through collaboration. Many other members, including long-established foundations, had clear funding objectives linked to vulnerable children and young people which created strong alignment to the focus on OoHC. This has enabled a strong foundation for collaboration – members have common motivations and feel an alignment to their organisations focus area which helps to create a shared sense of purpose.

Regular and frequent meetings between members and timely project meetings with grant recipients have also helped to maintain a focus on the OoHC Network's purpose and shared work.

Knowledge building

A critical focus of the OoHC Network has been on building the knowledge base and understanding of members. This has included knowledge of the OoHC sector as well as the experiences of children and young people in care arrangements or those at risk of being placed in OoHC. Members are connected with key sector stakeholders to increase shared knowledge.

OoHC Network meetings focus on sector news, regular updates on policy, research and budget developments and engagement with peak bodies. A range of high calibre speakers from service providers, individuals with a lived OoHC



experience, key government stakeholders, academics and practitioners have also assisted to build the OoHC Network's collective knowledge.

This has enabled members to gain an understanding of innovation gaps and the support needs of individuals affected by OoHC. It has also helped the OoHC Network develop a shared risk appetite for innovative projects and inform the identification of potential projects for funding.

Working together

Philanthropic organisations have strong values and unique histories underpinning their work. Through a deliberate focus on cooperation and activating the OoHC Network's purpose, members have developed trusting relationships and successfully worked together.

There have been many opportunities for members to engage with each other. Over time they have built an understanding of each other's individual values, funding priorities, timeframes and constraints.

Members have been highly flexible, working hard with each other and their respective Trustees to navigate funding cycles and approval processes, combining grant money without a confirmed recipient and successfully collaborating towards a shared outcome.



Resourcing

A key element in the OoHC Network’s success is the resourcing of a dedicated OoHC Network facilitation role by a recognised sector peak body. The Centre was selected for this facilitation role given its strong sector representation, expertise and membership base. Funded by Equity Trustees, the facilitator has supported the OoHC Network since its inception and has driven both the OoHC Network’s meeting cadence, knowledge building and collaborative granting processes. Members have highlighted the critical role that the facilitator has played in promoting the objectives and shared purpose of the OoHC Network, gathering information and speakers to build knowledge and understanding, and constantly liaising with members and stakeholders to foster trusted relationships and a coordinated approach. By keeping all relevant parties engaged in the process and coordinating grant processes end to end, the OoHC Network facilitator has sustained collaboration and helped to realise the OoHC Network’s aims.

Sustained commitment

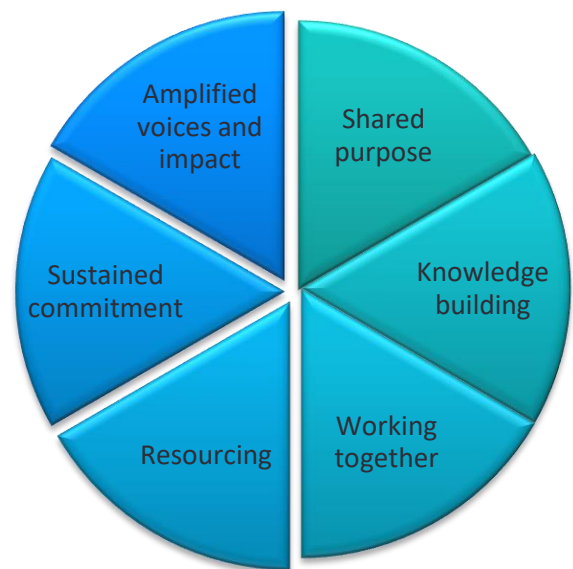
Members reflected that the OoHC Network has successfully driven a collaborative model where innovation and commitment have both been fostered, overcoming any fatigue of the cause area.

Members have committed for a sustained period of time, building strong momentum and a more sophisticated understanding of funding opportunities. This has helped the OoHC Network to target their philanthropic risk investment appropriately and to identify genuinely innovative funding opportunities across the sector.

Amplified voices and impact

Through the collaborative philanthropy model, OoHC Network members have been able to work together to amplify their voices and achieve greater impact through funding initiatives across the sector. The OoHC Network provides the necessary infrastructure to facilitate decisions and creates an equal space where all members, regardless of size and influence, have a critical voice and a chance to make an impact.

Through connections to key policy makers, leading thinkers, academics and service providers, the OoHC Network has been able to target their focus to the greatest areas of need, and initiatives that present the most opportunity for innovative practice. This has been demonstrated in the OoHC Network’s funding of innovative grants programs to drive change in service delivery, as well as contributions to policy debate to highlight key themes and identified needs in the OoHC sector.



Snapshot: The Home Stretch Campaign

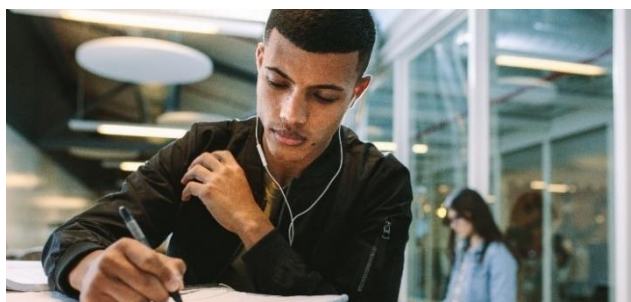
One of the first programs the OoHC Network supported was the Home Stretch campaign. The **Home Stretch** campaign represented a diverse group of organisations and individuals seeking to highlight the need for young people in OoHC to remain supported until the age of 21. This campaign was led by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare in collaboration with Anglicare Victoria, with \$500,000 in funding from Equity Trustees' David Taylor Galt Charitable Trust, William Buckland Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund and Gandel Philanthropy.

Evidence showed there were poor outcomes for young people leaving care at the age of 18. Within one year, 50% of state care leavers were unemployed, in jail, homeless or had become a new parent. International research shows that where care is extended until the age of 21, education participation doubles and homelessness rates are halved.⁽⁷⁾ The campaign had a strong focus on extending support to ensure that these young people are better positioned to transition to independence and achieve lifelong outcomes.

Targeted support for the Home Stretch campaign contributed to the Victorian Government's decision to pilot an extension of the leaving care age during the COVID-19 pandemic. The November 2020 Victorian State Budget made extended care universal, which means that all young will have guaranteed access to accommodation and support until the age of 21 through **Better Futures: Home Stretch**.



This example demonstrates how philanthropic networks can use their collective voice to contribute to important dialogue in policy development. This is a crucial step in effecting large-scale and systemic change for children and young people in OoHC.



Challenges of collaboration

Collaboration among philanthropic organisations brings its own set of challenges. The OoHC Network has navigated these, aided by a shared purpose, sustained commitment and a flexible approach. An awareness of these challenges is crucial to achieving progress in collaborative philanthropy models.

Timeframes: Due to timing and sequencing of funding and administrative processes of members of the OoHC Network, timeframes for a collaborative funding opportunity can be lengthy.

Members' individual funding requirements: The legal status of trusts and foundations, eligibility requirements, and specific focus areas also need consideration and time. Through persistence and a sustained commitment to the objectives of the OoHC Network, members navigated these varying requirements and overcame practical hurdles to collaborative funding.

Fluidity: A key benefit of philanthropy is its ability to flexibly identify initiatives and take decisive action where government funding may not be available. However the fluidity of the

philanthropic sector can also create uncertainty for service providers and grant recipients, with ambiguity in the type of support offered by philanthropic groups. The OoHC Network sought to overcome this through a deliberate approach to knowledge building that informed careful selection of initiatives for funding and well-structured grant rounds that provided recipients with clarity on the nature of support offered. Over time, the OoHC Network has demonstrated a long-term commitment to the sector, building trust, certainty and awareness across the sector. The OoHC Network has also seen tangible success in continuity of initiatives and demonstrating its value to sector stakeholders.

Risks in innovative funding: Philanthropy is a natural fit for innovative practices and members of the OoHC Network see a key part of their role as providing a unique degree of risk investment to the OoHC sector. The OoHC Network has experienced some challenges balancing the desire for innovation with the capacity of applicants to create and define innovation and the social impact of proposed initiatives. This means there is a risk of worthy programs missing out on funding, despite their potential to generate OoHC outcomes. Working with the OoHC sector to understand the benefits and requirement for innovation will be a focus in future collaborative funding rounds.

Snapshot: Raising Expectations

The **Raising Expectations** program is led by the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare in partnership with higher education institutions Federation University of Australia, La Trobe University and Swinburne Institute of Technology. The program aims to improve higher and vocational education participation rates for OoHC care leavers. The program was originally funded by an OoHC Network member, the Sidney Myer

Fund, and was one of the early initiatives which contributed to the OoHC Network's establishment.

A more responsive and inclusive education system that encourages participation and engagement of children in, or with an OoHC experience is a key protective factor to improve their lifelong outcomes. By focusing on the development needs of young people, Raising Expectations supports a responsive and inclusive education system for young people in and leaving OoHC.

Raising Expectations has effectively transitioned from being funded by philanthropy to having the Department of Education and Training as its funding partner for a further 3.5 years. The program provides a framework for how philanthropy can assume the risk in a project, demonstrate the outcomes and prove the viability of the model to Government.



5. Impactful Outcomes

The collaborative work of the OoHC Network sets a foundation for impactful outcomes for children and young people in OoHC.

New initiatives in the OoHC sector often take time to implement and require extended periods to create an impact for individual children and young people. In the context of constrained resources, government is focused on providing adequate services for children currently in OoHC. In contrast, flexible approaches in philanthropy can support proactive responses to address systemic drivers of OoHC and improve outcomes for children and young people.

Snapshot: Brighter Futures

Grant Partner: Anchor Inc.

The first OoHC Network collaborative innovation grant brought together six funders and a total of \$500,000 to fund the project **Brighter Futures: Learning for Life** through Community Connections (Brighter Futures). Members of the OoHC Network who collaborated to fund this project include Gandel Philanthropy, Sidney Myer Fund, Ross Trust, The Jack Brockhoff Foundation, Bennelong Foundation and Australian Communities Foundation.

Brighter Futures partnered with various organisations, plus the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education and Training. The project sought to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from an OoHC experience to adulthood by connecting them with relevant community members or groups connected to their aspirations and goals. The findings of the pilot highlighted how such services can accentuate the voice and agency of young people exiting OoHC.

Brighter Futures illustrated both the need for and the challenge of systemic change, and how philanthropy can play a role in highlighting these issues. The program also reflects the OoHC Network's commitment to innovation due to the 'try-test-learn' approach where iterative adaptations were made to improve program outcomes and support young people to successfully transition to independence. The pilot also influenced state government approaches to supporting young people leaving care, again demonstrating the role philanthropy can play in highlighting these systemic issues.



Philanthropy has a higher threshold for risk which can enable innovative practices and provide the opportunity to test novel ideas.

Through collaborative practices, OoHC Network members have combined resources to provide innovation grants for the OoHC sector, co-designing and building preventative solutions for children and families engaging with OoHC. Since 2017, collaborative grant rounds have involved eight OoHC Network members and totalled over \$1million. These snapshots highlight how the OoHC Network and the Centre has supported innovative, preventative and systemic solutions.

Snapshot: Growing Up Aboriginal Babies at Home

Grant Partner: Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

The second collaborative innovation grant funded the project **Growing Up Aboriginal Babies at Home** which commenced in November 2020.

The project is supported by \$580,000 in funding over three years. Members of the OoHC Network who collaborated to fund this project include Equity Trustees – the David Taylor Galt Charitable Trust, Gandel Philanthropy, William Buckland Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund, The Jack Brockhoff Foundation and Australian Communities Foundation – EM Horton Family Fund. The project will be delivered by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) in partnership with Melbourne University's Department of Social Work.

The project will work with young Aboriginal women (and their partners) who are at risk of their baby being placed in OoHC or, if removal has already occurred, seek reunification with their baby. VACCA will support the women to meet the needs of their infants and will use Aboriginal defined measures of success.

The second innovation grant is a strong example of the OoHC Network's ability to identify a targeted funding initiative to develop innovative supports for specific cohorts and communities.

Through a self-determined and co-designed model of support, the project aims to contribute to improved outcomes for the youngest children in or connected with the OoHC sector and their families in Victoria's Aboriginal communities.

6. Collaborative philanthropy in action and next steps

The OoHC Network has evolved into a strong model of collaborative philanthropy and has demonstrated a range of highly effective practices that have enabled:

- Improved collaboration, sustained momentum and joined up working across funders, enabled by a well-resourced and supported OoHC Network
- Improved knowledge and evidence base of funders to inform targeted selection of initiatives
- Strengthened opportunity for collective impact through combined funds and resources
- Effective selection and funding of grant recipients, overcoming challenges in funding timelines and guidelines through collaborative approaches

The range of innovative initiatives funded by the OoHC Network have demonstrated collaborative philanthropy's capacity to:

- Meaningfully contribute to policy change that positively benefits children and young people in OoHC
- Fund innovative programs and prove the viability of critical initiatives for ongoing government support
- Support and develop innovative responses to gaps in service provision that better equip young people to transition from care and improve opportunities for young people to thrive and realise lifelong outcomes.

Next steps

The OoHC Philanthropic Funders Network continues to build on the success of its collaborative philanthropy model. Through ongoing knowledge sharing and collaboration with the OoHC sector, the OoHC Network seeks to continuously build knowledge and understanding of the evidence base for initiatives, service system gaps and funding opportunities. Through new grant processes the OoHC Network seeks to fund further innovative practices in OoHC that can prove viability, address innovation risk and demonstrate outcomes for children and young people.

As the OoHC Network looks to the future, a range of interest areas have been identified for exploration by members:

Growing diversity of voices

Additional members and new voices can help the OoHC Network make continued improvements in the outcomes and experiences of children and young people in OoHC and enable giving strategies that are informed by an enriched and diverse knowledge base of experiences in OoHC.

Addressing the impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has intensified the risk of abuse, neglect and family separation⁽⁵⁾, making the need for early intervention more urgent. The OoHC Network can play an important role in understanding and mitigating the impact of the pandemic on children in, or at risk of entering, OoHC.

Looking to the future

The OoHC Network has shown how knowledge building, regular collaborative forums and a focus on impactful outcomes can grow and sustain a commitment to change. Looking to the future, the OoHC Network will continue its growth and work to support systemic change for children and young people in OoHC.

Final message

Collaborative philanthropy is a powerful model to enable individuals and organisations to shape society for the better through the power of collective action.

The wellbeing and safety of children is a fundamental priority for Australian society. Collaborative philanthropy can play an instrumental role in changing the system for children and young people in OoHC, allowing all families, children and young people to thrive.



For more information or to get in touch please visit:

www.cfecfw.asn.au/oohc-philanthropic-funders/

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