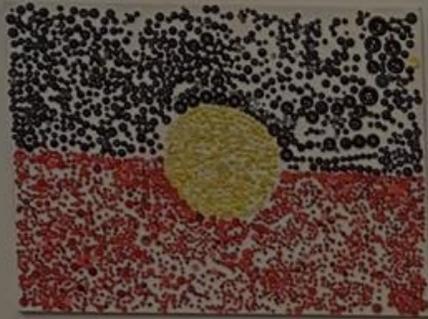
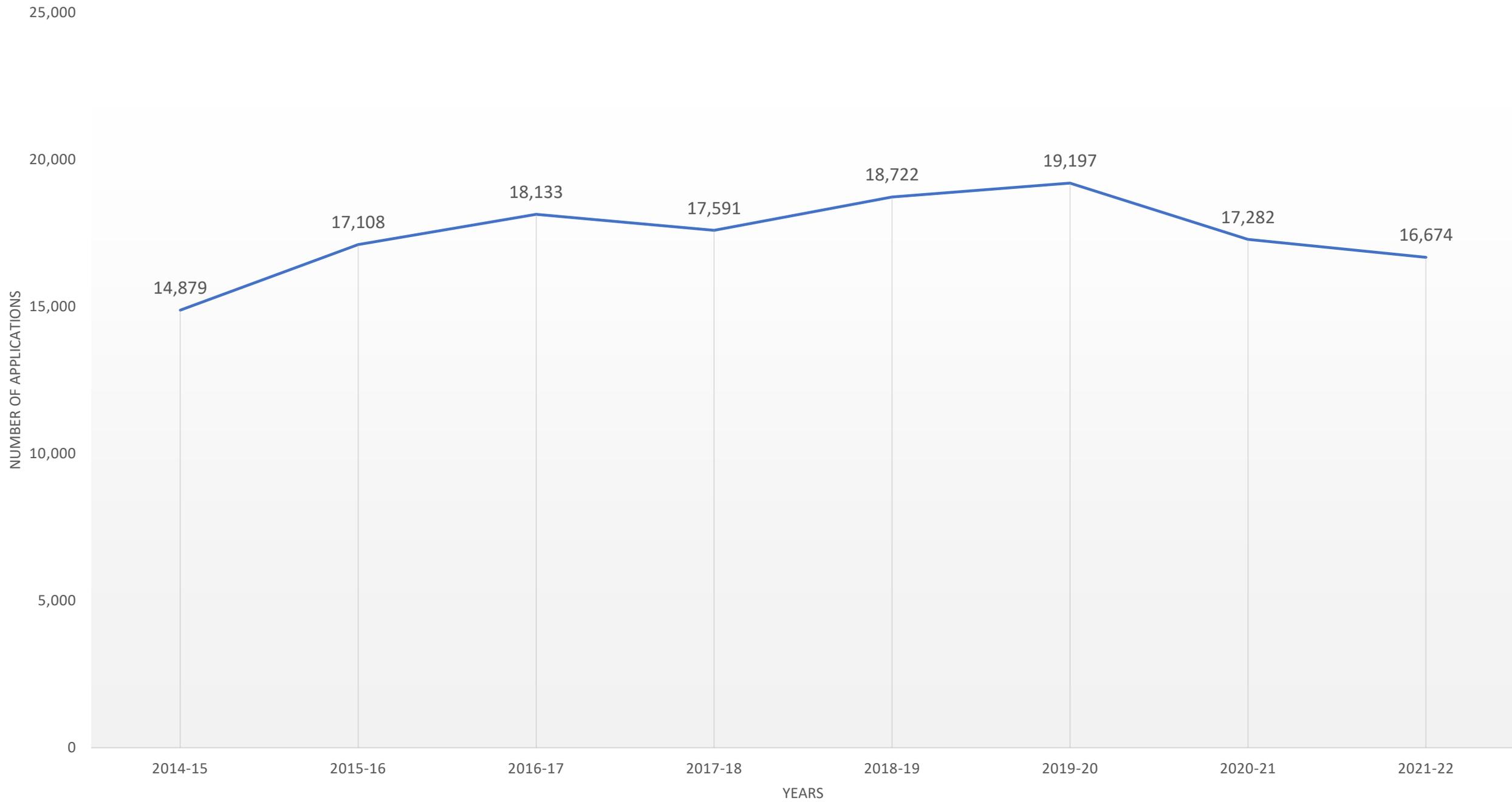


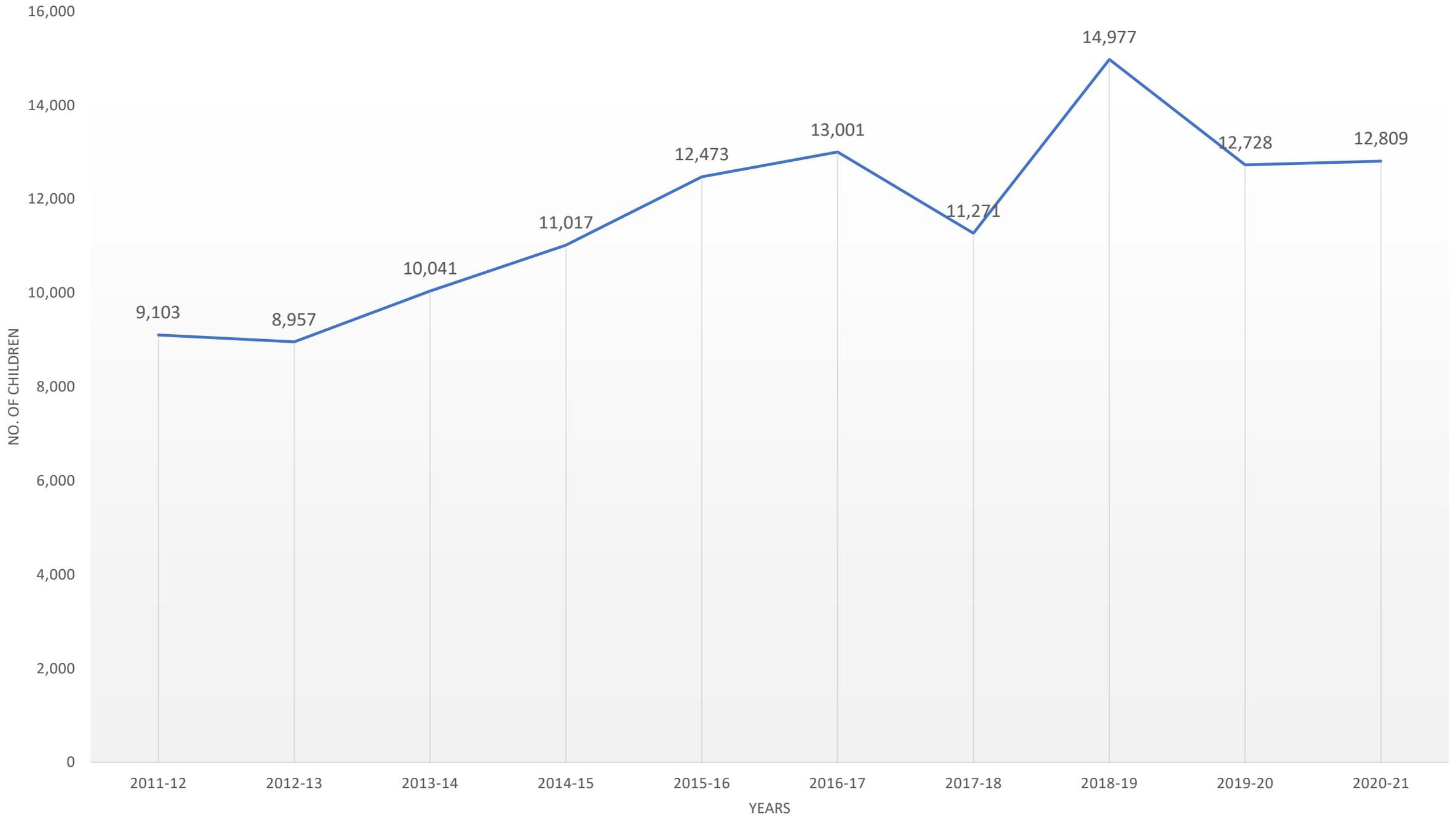
Family Drug Treatment Court.



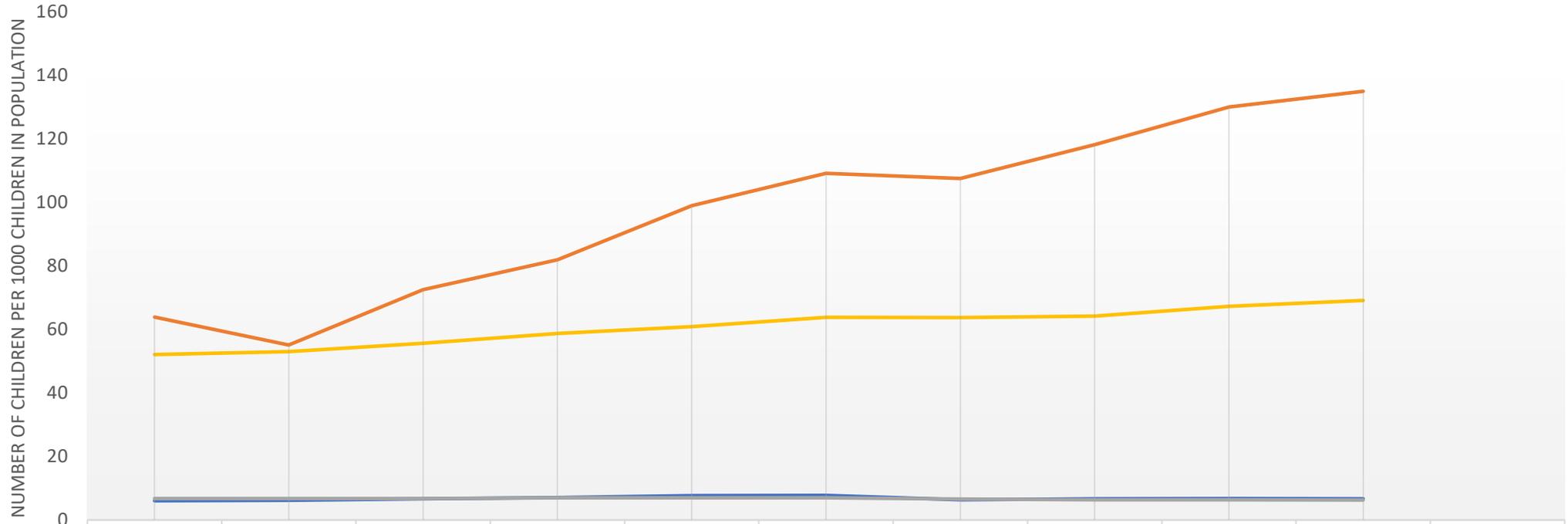
Applications to the Court's Family Division (Annual Reports, Children's Court of Victoria 2014-2021)



Number of children (aged 0-17) experiencing at least one out-of-home placement (Victoria). (RoGS, 2022)



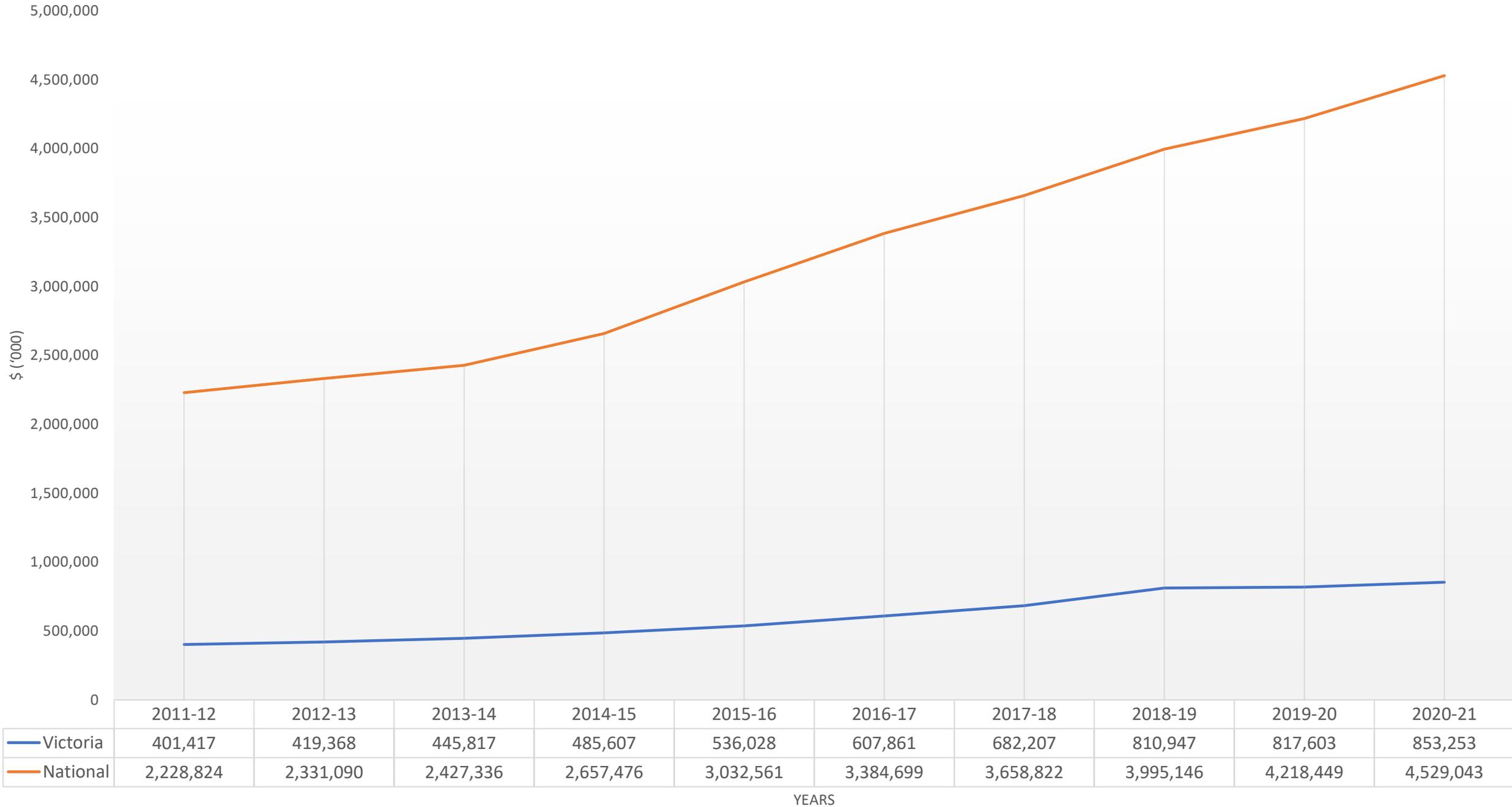
Rate (per 1000 children) of children entering at least one out of home care placement (or other supported placement) (Victoria Non-Indigenous, Victorian Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander, National Non- Indigenous, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Isl



	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Victoria (non-Indigenous)	6.1	6.2	6.7	7.1	7.7	7.8	6.4	6.7	6.8	6.7
Victoria (Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander)	63.9	55.1	72.5	81.9	98.9	109.1	107.5	118.1	130	134.9
National (non-Indigenous)	6.8	6.8	6.8	7	7	7	6.6	6.4	6.4	6.3
National (Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander)	52.1	53	55.6	58.7	60.9	63.8	63.7	64.2	67.3	69.1

YEARS

Government real recurrent expenditure on care services (Victoria) and (National) (2020-21 dollars) (RoGS, 2022)

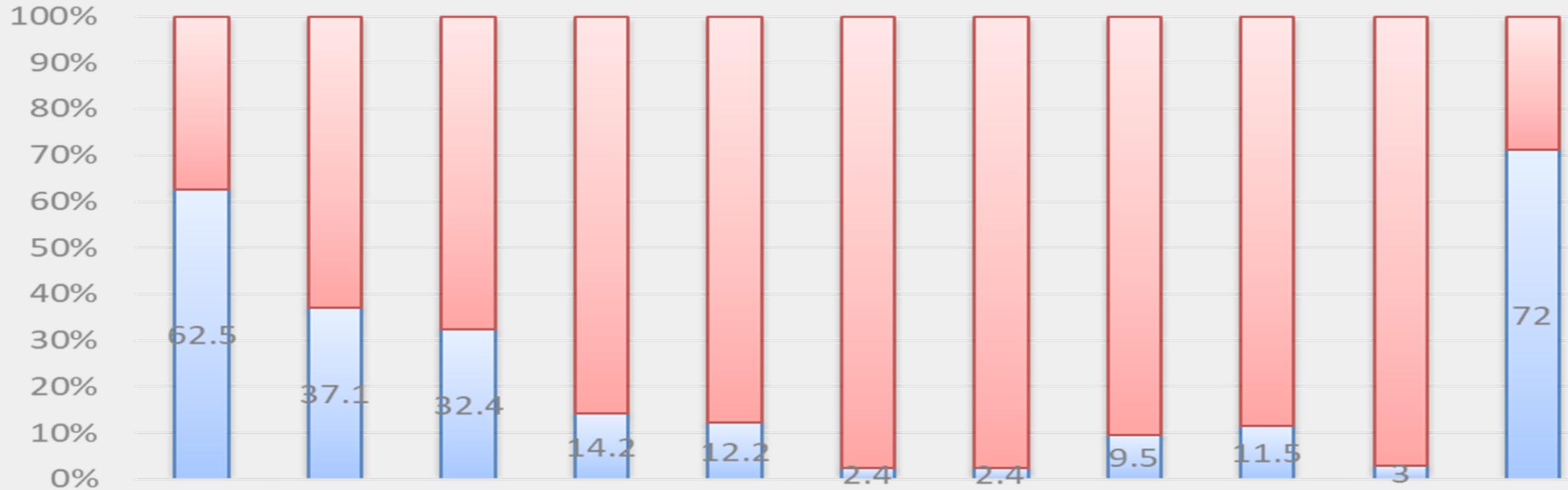


YEARS

The prevalence of parental AOD use in the Children's Court of Victoria.

- Parental AOD use is reported to be prevalent in 70% of primary applications to the Family Division.
- Parental AOD use is reported to be prevalent in 77% of total applications where children have been taken into 'Emergency Care'
- 90.5 % of applications reporting parental AOD use see the children of those parents taken into 'Emergency Care'
- Orders representing a disruption to the pre-application living arrangements of children are statistically more likely to be made in response to applications relating to parental substance use, than in response to applications that do not. ($X^2(1df)=4.818, p=.028$)

Prevalence (%) of substance types in total AOD applications

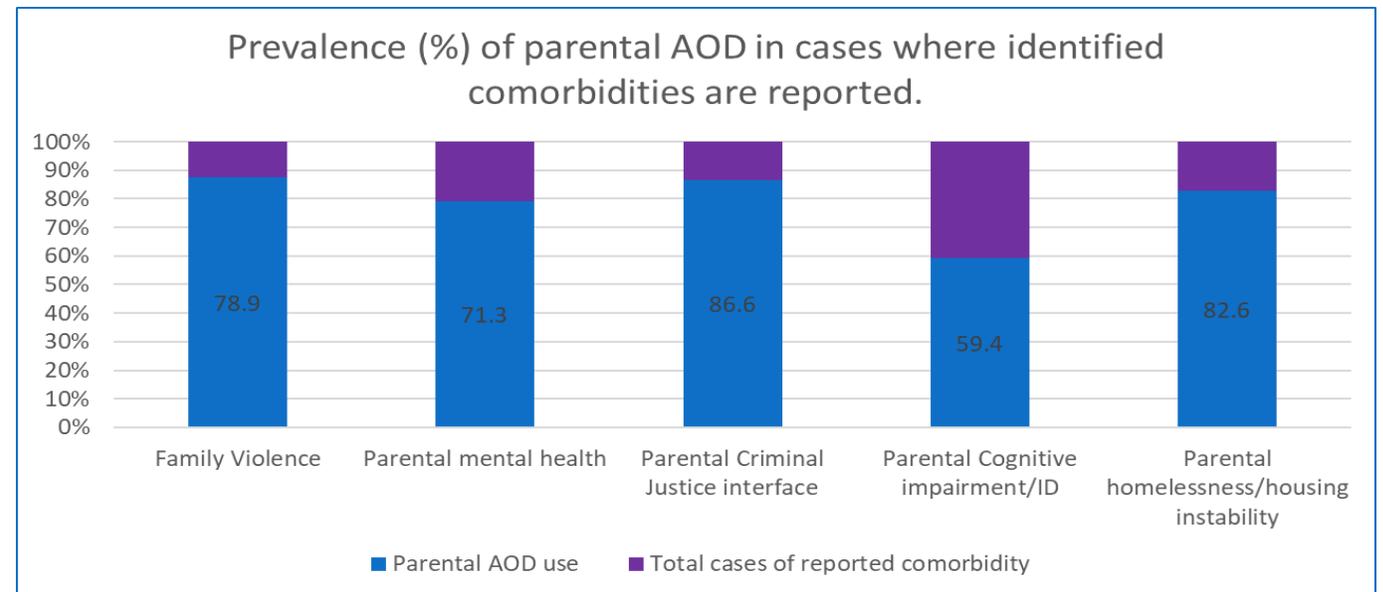
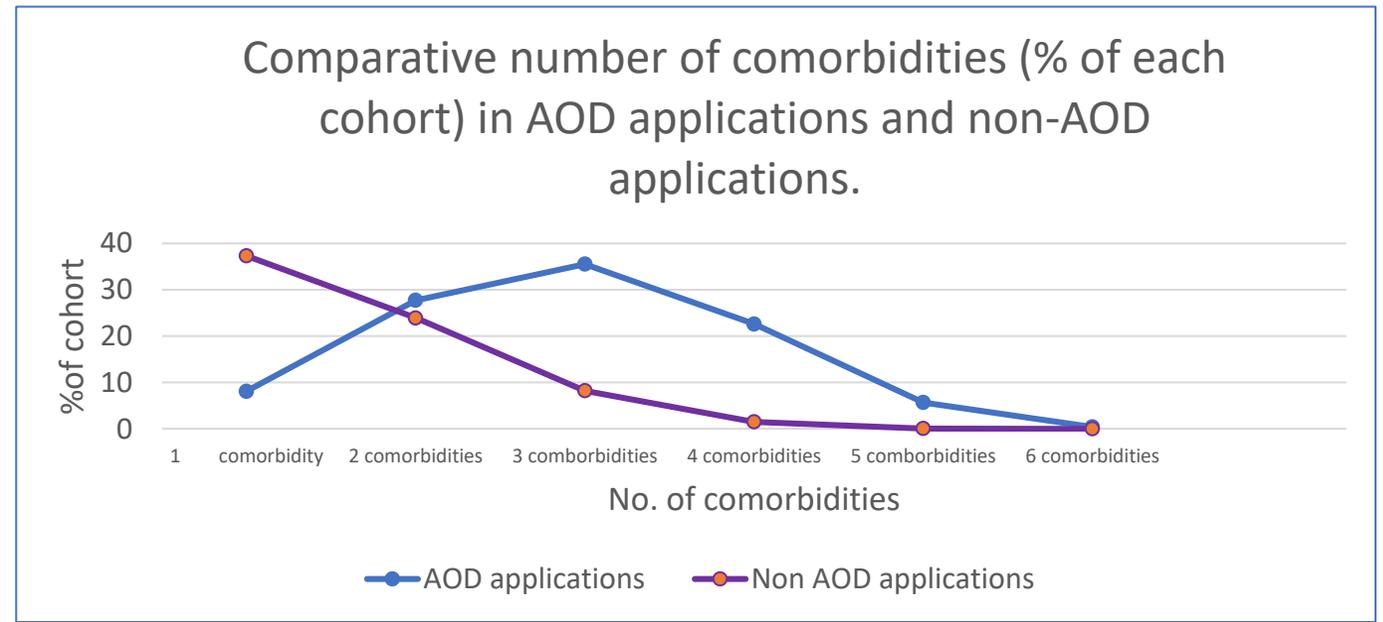


■ Prevalence of substance type

■ Total AOD applications

*Applications reporting parental AOD report a greater number of accompanying comorbidities than applications that do not report parental AOD use.

* Where other common comorbidities are reported, parental AOD use is reported to be prevalent in them to a very significant degree.



Introducing the Family Drug Treatment Court (FDTC)

- The FDTC is the first and still only court of its kind in Australia.
- Established in 2014, The FDTC now sits in two locations: In Broadmeadows in Melbourne's northern suburbs, and in the Victorian regional city of Shepparton.
- The FDTC is a voluntary, non-adversarial, solution-focussed court program providing parents who have lost the care of their children the very best opportunity to achieve a level of recovery that can allow reunification to occur, though offering:
 - Intensive court-based, judicially-led case management for a period of 12 months, with an additional 6 months of 'after care.'
 - Frequent judicial monitoring, of lessening frequency as participants progress through phases.
 - Access to tailored and unique resources including addiction-specific parenting programs, peer mentors, and other ancillary programs.
 - Collaborative relationships with key stakeholders, including child protection to ensure consistent and informed decision making across the interface between parties.

Eligibility criteria

- At least one child (aged 0-3) in out-of-home care or a child over the age of 3 that has been placed in out-of-home care for less than 6 months
- Presence of parental substance misuse and/or dependence
- Willingness and ability to participate (i.e. no significant mental or physical health issues that hinders parents participation) in the program for a duration of 12 months
- Provision of informed consent
- A commitment to family reunification, and appropriateness for children to be reunified with parents
- Parents live within the catchment area of the relevant DHHS location servicing each court location.

Eligibility constraints

- Physical and/or psychological difficulties submitting to regular urinalysis
- Psychological difficulties (e.g. agoraphobia) attending Progress Review Hearings (court) and participating in key support programs (i.e. My Kids and Me)
- Outstanding criminal matters that may result in a term of imprisonment

Family Recovery Plan

Three key areas:

Family

<u>Goal</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Supports</u>
What do I want to achieve?	What can I do? When can I do it?	Who can help me?

Substance Use

<u>Goal</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Supports</u>
What do I want to achieve?	What can I do? When can I do it?	Who can help me?

Health (physical and/or mental), Family Violence, Housing etc.

<u>Goal</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Supports</u>
What do I want to achieve?	What can I do? When can I do it?	Who can help me?

Phases of FDTC

Phase 1: Trust

- **Attend Progress Review Hearings:** 1 x per week
- **Attend urinalysis:** 3 x per week
- **Engage with Clinical Case Manager:** At least 1 x per week
- Attend Family Recovery Plan meetings as required
- Engage with Child Protection Practitioner as required

Phase 2: Readiness

- **Attend Progress Review Hearings:** 1 x per fortnight
- **Attend urinalysis:** 2 x per week
- **Engage with Clinical Case Manager:** At least 1 x per week
- Attend Family Recovery Plan meetings as required
- Engage with Child Protection Practitioner as required

Phase 3: Family

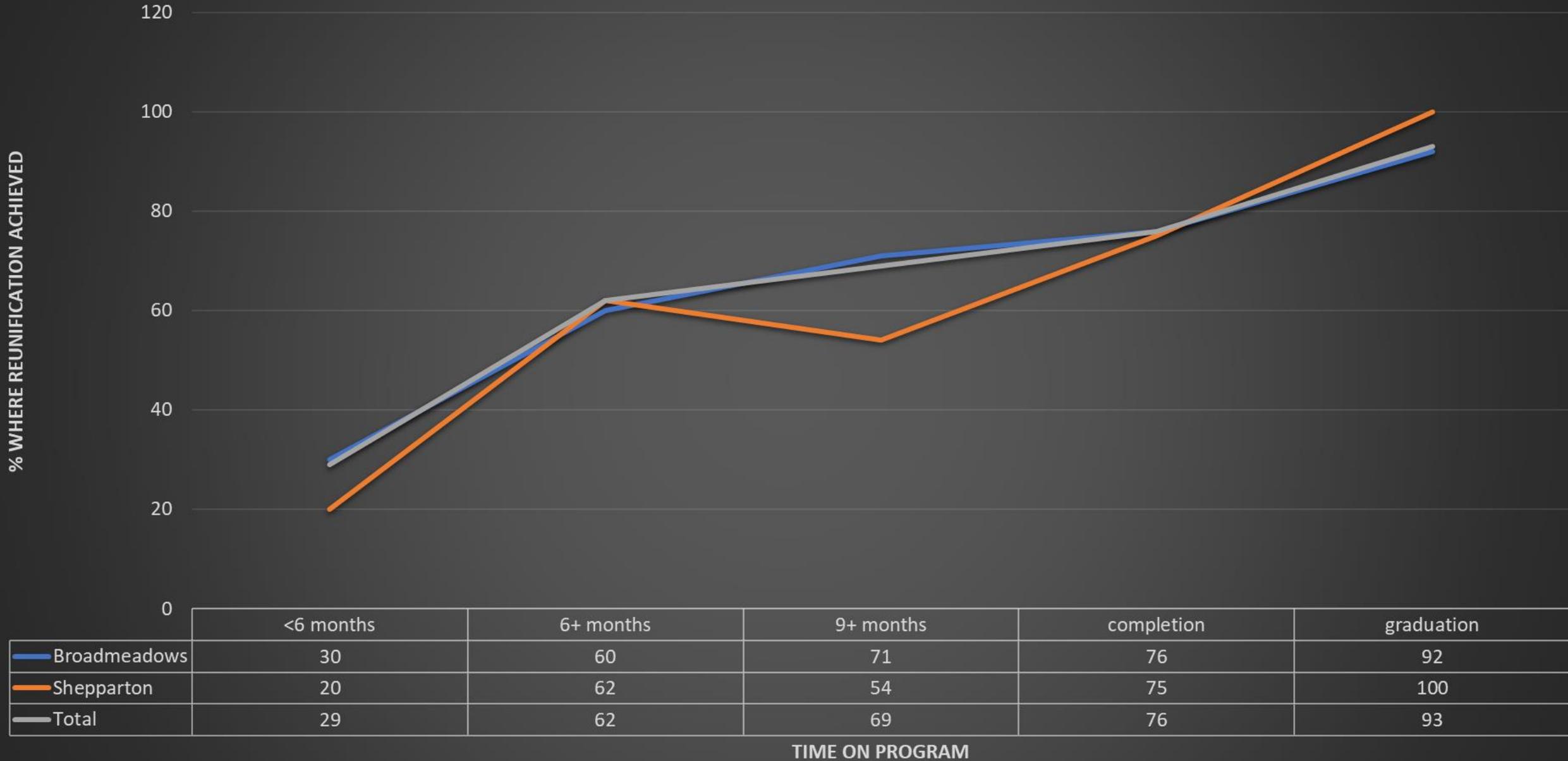
- **Attend Progress Review Hearings:** 1 x every 4 weeks
- **Attend urinalysis:** 1 x per week, on a random basis
- **Engage with Clinical Case Manager:** At least 1 x per fortnight
- Attend Family Recovery Plan meetings as required
- Engage with Child Protection Practitioner as required

What outcomes does the FDTC achieve?

- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Sustainability

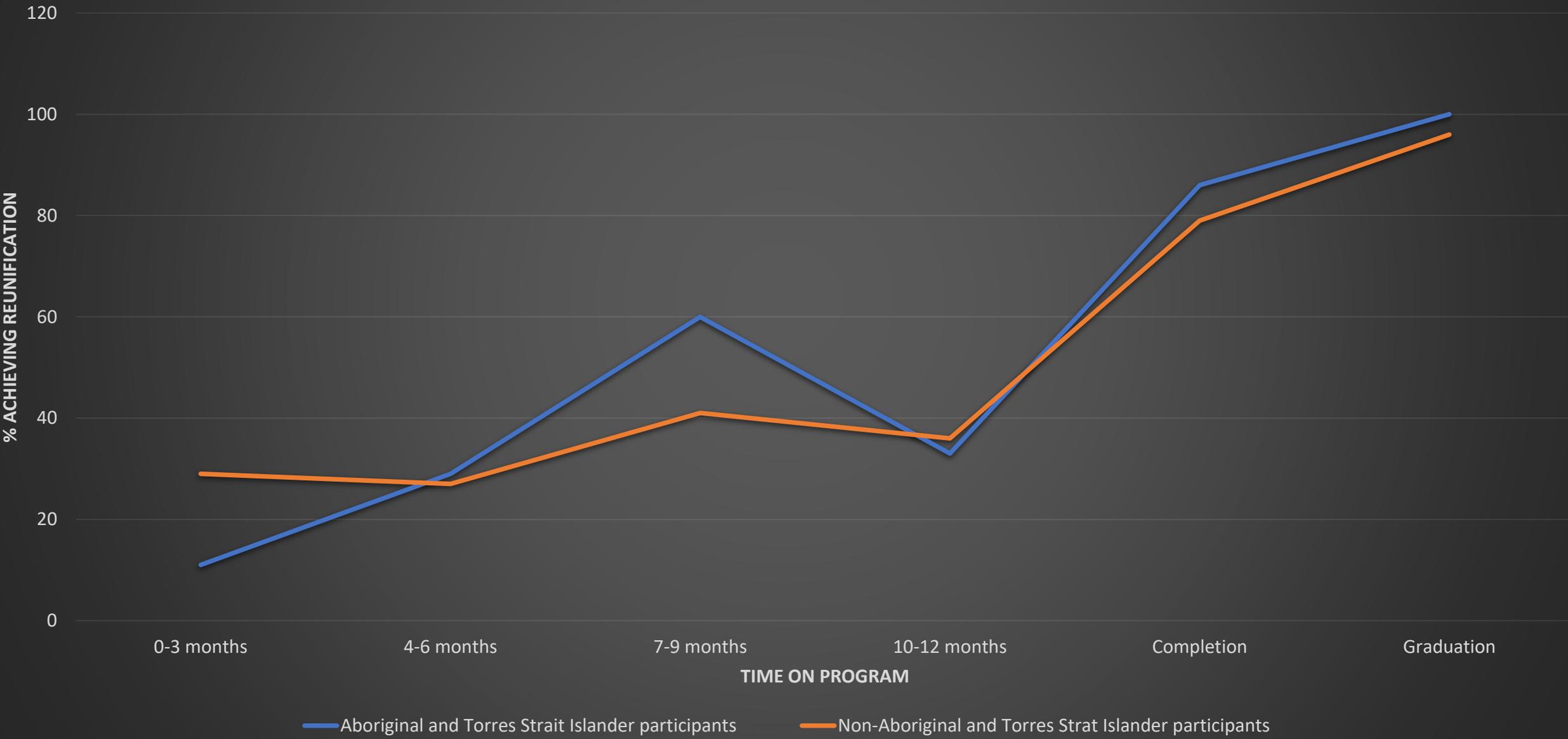
- FDTC participants are up to 2.5 times more likely to achieve reunification than AOD using parents not participating in the FDTC. (43.3% reunification rate in through mainstream court processes, compared with a reunification rate of 69% for FDTC participants who maintain an engagement of at least 9 months, and between 76% and 93% for 12 month engagement.)
- Where reunification occurs through FDTC participation, it happens sooner. (Average of 1.4 years, compared with average of 3.5 years)
- Where reunification does occur through FDTC participation, those families are 2.2 times less likely to have a substantiated report received by child protection in post-court period.

Reunification rate by time on program



— Broadmeadows — Shepparton — Total

Comparative reunification rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants by time on program.



Why does it work?

- Therapeutic Jurisprudence
- Judicially-led case-management
- Intensity of case-management
- Partnerships and collaboration
- The power of routine and accountability
- Connection as the antithesis of addiction

- **Therapeutic Jurisprudence**

“Processes used by courts, judicial officers, lawyers and other justice system personnel can impede, promote, or be neutral in relation to outcomes connected with participant wellbeing such as respect for the justice system and the law, ... rehabilitation, and addressing issues underlying legal disputes.” (AIJA, <https://aija.org.au/research/resources/the-concept-of-therapeutic-jurisprudence/>, November 2022.

Essentially – re-thinking the user-experience. Particular importance of cultural safety and competence.

- **Judicially-led case-management**

High quality, expert engagement and case-management, led by the authority represented by the judicial officer.

- **Intensity of case-management**

High intensity, highly responsive solution-focussed and strengths based engagement and service coordination.

- **Partnerships and collaboration**

Cross-sectoral engagement and connections

Embedded senior child protection representation

The power of lived-experience – SHARC peer mentors and their incredibly valuable support

- **The power of routine and accountability**

- **Connection as the antithesis of addiction**

Some participant reflections:

- “This process has been so insightful and moving that I’ll forever be grateful to the family drug court and all of my professional supports. So much so that... I've signed up to begin studying for Certificate IV in Alcohol and other drugs. I too want to be there to help other people achieve their dreams of putting back the pieces to their lives. I began this journey facing what I thought to be an impossible goal of achieving abstinence, stability and being the mother my children desperately needed. Now I can happily say...I AM THAT PERSON.”
- “Although at the start I thought this program was so hard. I now know it just gets easier and easier as you go on, I’m so thankful I was given this chance to do this program. I don’t think I would have gotten my kids back if it wasn’t for Family Drug Treatment Court and all their support. So, I’m so thankful for that. I’m now so proud of how far I’ve come compared to where I was, I’ll never go back to that sort of life. I feel so good now.”
- “My world is finally complete, we are all in one place in our new home together. If it wasn't for the support of the FDTC crew, I wouldn't be here today graduating and celebrating with you all. I couldn't see my life any other way now, it is actually perfect! Thank you all so much for putting up with my emotional roller coaster ride and never giving up on me. I am happy, content and blessed for who I am today. Thank you all again. FDTC has changed my life.”
- “We are fighting for a positive change. We have been through hell and back. All we are looking for is a break. I'm here to tell you guys that it is here. Being part of the whole family drug court experience has been a life changing moment for me. It has been the greatest period of my life where I have gained so much knowledge and self-control of my life.”
- “Recovery works for those who work it. I have made the most out of this journey which I never thought was possible. And for all those who believed in me, I am forever grateful. This has been the most life-changing experience of my life and cannot wait to give back all that I have been taught with love and experience.”
- “I feel very strong and secure in my life. I know that I have everything I need to continue with my life independently. My life feels complete, I’m so proud of myself and inspire myself all the time with what I have achieved. I know that I am a great role model for my kids and I agree when people tell me that I am a super mum. I am going to keep moving forward and will never look back or take my new life for granted.”
- “I can’t believe that this is my final reflection piece for FDTC. I never thought that I would get here. I’m so excited to live a normal life and see a new future for myself and my kids. I’m so grateful for the support I’ve received from my care team and FDTC, especially the support that [my FDTC case manager] has given me throughout this process. I can’t wait to graduate!”

Questions and contact details

For further information about the Family Drug Treatment Court, please visit:

<https://www.childrenscourt.vic.gov.au/family-division/family-drug-treatment-court>

For referral enquiries:

Contact: fdtc@courts.vic.gov.au

For additional enquiries:

Statewide Program Manager: Matthew Wilson

Contact: Matthew.Wilson@courts.vic.gov.au