

## Executive Summary

Queensland Foster and Kinship Care (QFKC) has undertaken the role of managing the Exit Interview Program for the past fourteen years to establish a report that enables carers across Queensland (QLD) the option to share experiences and provide feedback.

Notification of a carer's exit, known as an *End of Carer Approval Notice*, is referred by the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (Department of Children or Child Safety) to QFKC, allowing QFKC to contact the carer to provide an opportunity to undertake the survey. However, over the years QFKC has identified that the organisation does not receive all *End of Carer Approval Notices* for carer families who have exited the system.

This report will include responses and feedback from former carers who have exited from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2021 to the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2022 and have completed the survey.

### Procedure for Responding to Notifications

An exit letter is sent to the carer/s advising that an *End of Carer Approval Notice* has been received from the Department of Children and inviting them to provide feedback about their experience as a carer, by completing a survey. The letter provides several options including online paper survey or telephone interview.

If they wish to complete the survey online, the letter includes the survey link. If they prefer to complete a paper survey or telephone interview, contact details are provided to request this.

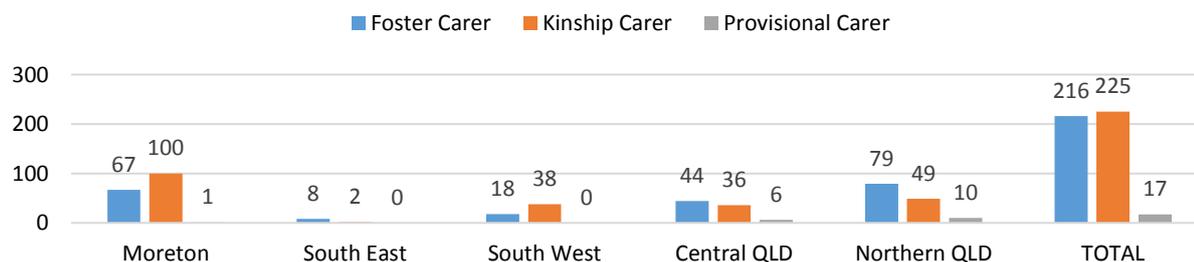
After a two-week period QFKC make a follow up phone call with the carer/s, where possible, to acknowledge if the letter had been received, and discuss the opportunity to provide feedback about their experiences. Where no phone contact details have been provided on the *End of Carer Notice* QFKC would follow up by email.

Paper surveys are posted as requested, and include a reply paid envelope for easy return. Telephone interviews are scheduled when it is mutually convenient. All returned paper surveys and telephone interviews are input into the online survey by QFKC.

### Information relating to End of Carer Approval Notices

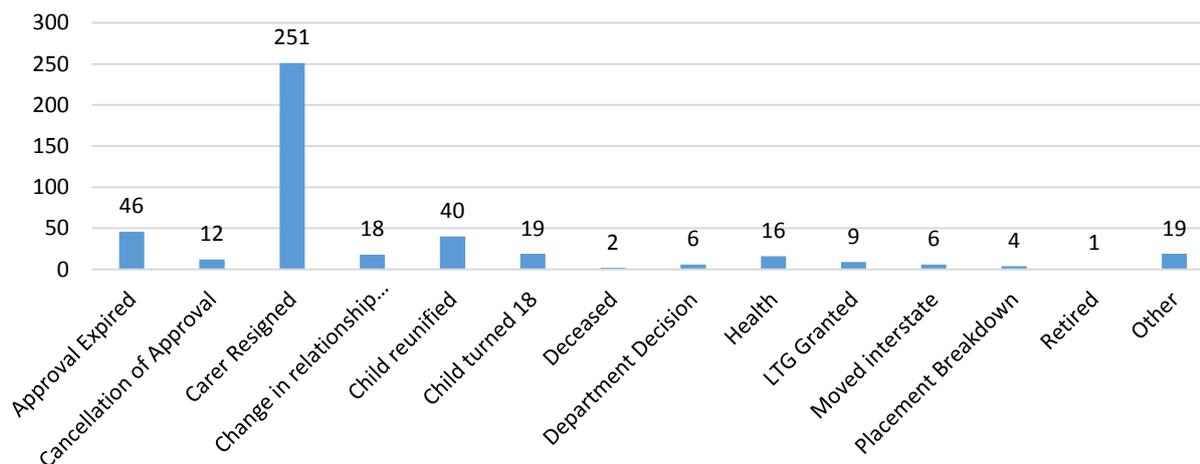
From the **1<sup>st</sup> of July 2021 to the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2022**, QFKC received a total of 458 *End of Approval Notices* from the Department of Children. Within this time period, there was a total of 216 Foster Carers, 225 Kinship Carers and 17 Provisional Carers that have been documented by QFKC to have exited the program.

End of Carer Approval Notices received by QFKC  
1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022

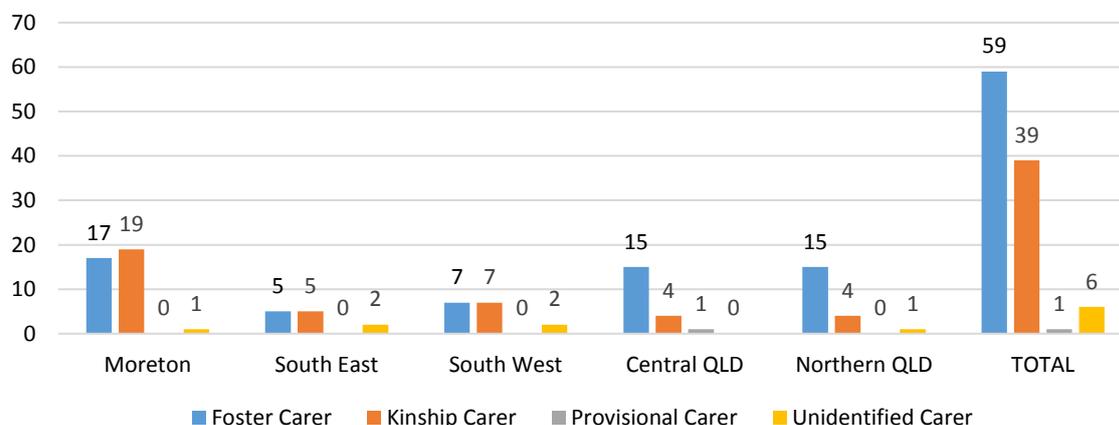


The below graph reveals the reasons for cessation from the *End of Carer Approval Notices* reported by the Department of Children from July 2021 to June 2022. Approximately 55% of notices mentioned the carer resigned with no further reason, followed by 10% having an approval expired and 9% having the child reunified with family. Unfortunately, this does not entirely represent the exit of these carers, and therefore the exit survey provides another perspective as to why this cessation has occurred.

### Reason for carer cessation based from End of Carer Notices 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022



### Exit Surveys Completed



For this report, 454 exit letters were sent out during this period, with 4 exit letters were not sent due to carer reasons. Of this, 105 carers participated in the survey - 59 were Foster Carers, 39 Kinship Carers and 1 was a Provisional Carer. However, 6 participants did not disclose their carer status.

The participation rate was 23% for this reporting period, same as the previous reporting period of 2020-2021.

## Overall Data and Findings

This report outlines the feedback from all 105 carers and it is sectioned into the five regions across Queensland, in this case, North Queensland and Far North Queensland will be categorised as the Northern Region. The information and feedback are specific from each region and are further elaborated within this report.

Across the state people identified positive aspects of their time as carers and these related to:

- The range of allowances provided by Child Safety to help meet the cost of caring for a child. This was consistent to all five regions as being satisfactory.
- Number of children placed with the carer.
- Contact with the agency.
- The allowance payment rates.
- How quickly allowances were paid (this was separate to how quickly out of pocket expenses were reimbursed and a high number of people identified that they were not satisfied).
- Opportunities carers were given to participate in training and professional development.
- Manner of carer approval renewal process.
- Outcome discussions with the agency regarding child and concerns Foster/Kinship Carers had.
- Discussions with Community Visitor or Child Advocate.
- Pre-service training delivery.
- Standard training modules 5, 6 and 7.
- Advanced training.
- Information provided on Child Safety policies, legislation and procedures.
- Information provided to assist the foster care role.
- Information provided about Child Safety's role and responsibilities.
- Ability to access additional training.
- Information provided about carer's role and responsibilities.
- Information provided about Foster and Kinship Care Services role and responsibilities.
- Information provided about positive behaviour support strategies and acceptable discipline practices

Over the years of compiling the exit report, there are common themes in terms of why a person considers foster care outside of the family connections for kinship care applications, in this report, 55% of participants had child-focused reasons for becoming a carer – a desire to help children in need.

Reviewing survey feedback and comments relating to a carer leaving a role, generally does not relate to the child but the lack of support from stakeholders involved, such as Child Safety. This report has revealed various comments from carers on their awareness of the high turnover rate within Child Safety. Therefore, consequently reducing the carer's ability to receive support and limited communication with the department during the care of the child.

As in previous reports, carers have expressed their difficulty in being heard by the Department of Children regarding the child's wishes, advocating their concerns and/or contributing to any decision-making involving the child's wellbeing or future. This focus has been consistently voiced throughout all regions.

Overall, across the state, there were similarities in terms of negative feedback provided. Listed below are common areas from information provided in all Carer Exit Interview Reports since 2014.

The majority of responses relating to interactions with Child Safety identified that the carer felt:

- A lack of support
- Communication difficulties with case workers

- Feeling undervalued
- Not having a say about the child's future

Where the response identified the carer left due to issues with the children placed with them, the following reasons were stated:

- Placement ended – Child returned to parents
- Placement ended – Other reasons
- Behavioural issues

With regards to issues relating to the child, it was identified the lack of support and information about the child before placement resulted in carers being unable to manage and support complex behaviours. Despite concerns being raised by carers, over time the difficulty of this has resulted in the end of a placement.

The majority of responses relating to leaving due to family reasons identified the following:

- Time commitments
- Health reasons
- Relationship difficulties between family and foster care children

The findings relating to what were the most challenging aspects of being a carer have remained consistent over the years that QFKC has been undertaking the Carer Exit Interview Report. Time commitments of carers have changed over the years, therefore, restricting the carer's ability to be flexible with time and foster to their full capacity due to work, family and other obligations. Maintaining relationships with family members was also revealed to be difficult and caused stress on households. Throughout the regional reports, this would be suggestive that it is a state-wide issue with the feedback provided.

Responses from carers have shown a high dissatisfaction rate in the following areas:

- Child Safety handling of a Harm Report/SOC process
- The ability to make a complaint about a service provided by Child Safety
- Level of support provided to a child during placement
- Level of support provided to the carers during placement
- The ability to have input about the child's care
- Outcomes of discussion with Child Safety staff about the child and concern carers had

Some areas of care were identified as equally satisfied and dissatisfied in their responses, in particular:

- Timeliness of staff returning calls
- Information provided to the carer about the child prior to the placement
- Frequency of contact with child's case worker
- Arrangement made for the child to have contact with their family

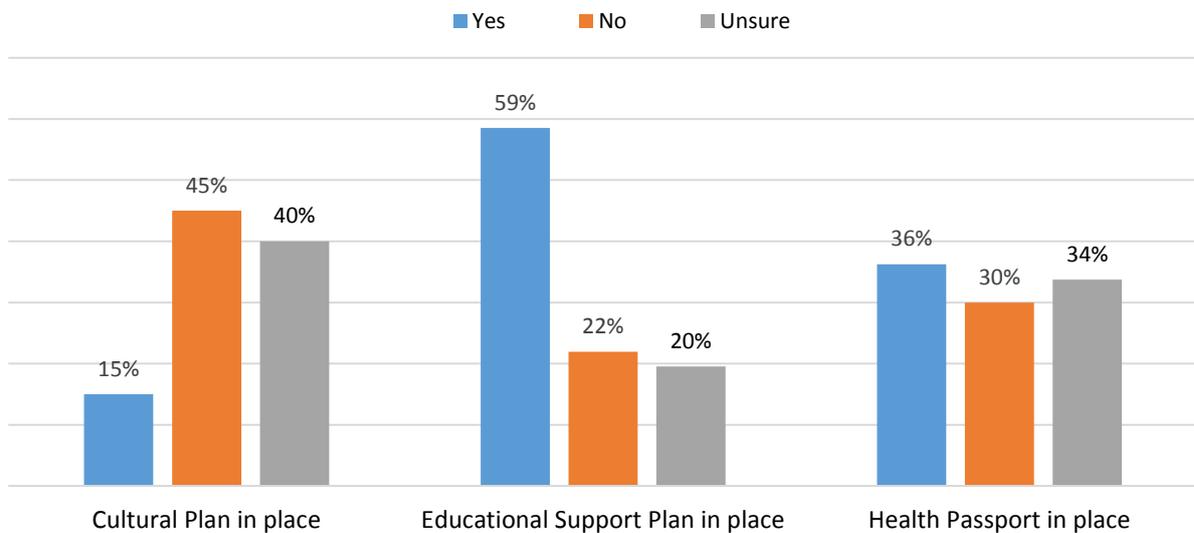
There was a question about training, and overall 69% of carers who completed the survey, had received no training in the last 12 months.

### Have you attended any training in the last 12 months?



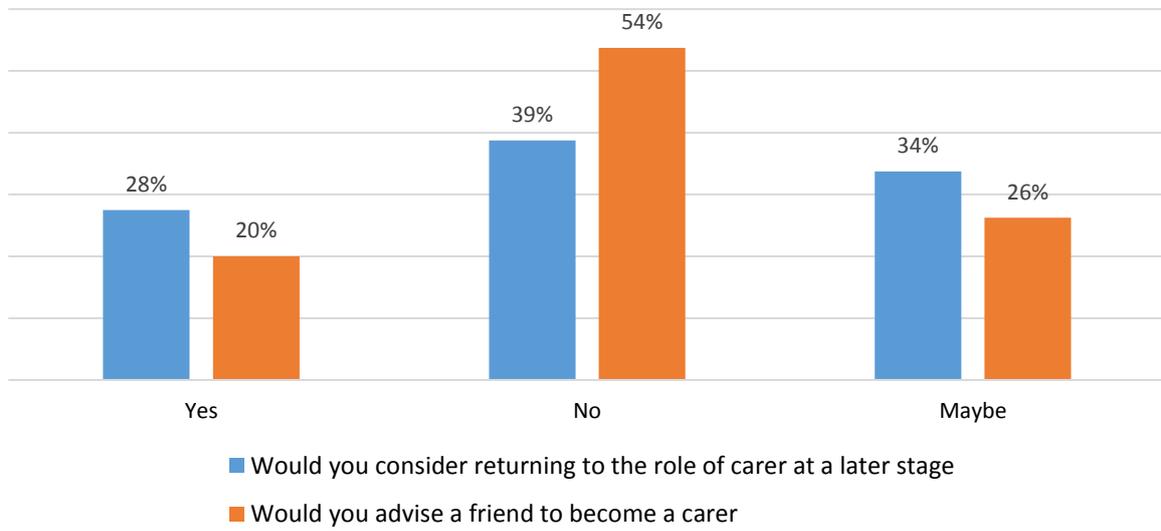
In relation to the needs of the child the following information was identified:

### Child's Needs



Overall 62% of carers stated either yes or maybe, that they would consider returning to the role of carer, and 46% stated they would encourage a friend to become a carer.

### Overall



## Summary

The 2021-2022 Carer Exit Interview Report has many similarities to previously published reports, with responses from carers there has been a satisfaction rate within their caring role, as well as training and financial support areas. In conjunction with previous reports, there is still a high quantity of former carers that have participated in the survey who feel that during their time as a carer there was a lack of support and communication from Child Safety.

Of the 105 participants in this survey, 35% identified that Child Safety was the reason for withdrawing, with the remainder 65% having reasons relating to either the child (15%), carer and family reasons (23%), or something else (26%). Despite over a third of participants highlighting their decision to resign their position due to Child Safety, 40% of former carer's expectations of providing care were not met when they decided to become a carer in the first place.

This report will provide feedback from 105 carers across Queensland who have taken the time to share their experiences, both positive and challenging.

### Report presented on behalf of QFKC by:

Hazel Little  
President

Bryan Smith  
Executive Director

08 August 2022