



Abuse of Power and Bullying of Foster and Kinship Carers Report (Abuse of Power Report)

April 2021

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Executive Summary

In January 2020, the Department for Child Protection (DCP) published a 3 year strategy to address the challenges facing DCP to care for children in care. "Every effort for every child", is DCP's strategy for children and young people in care for the years 2020-23. This strategy identifies:

- "The need for more Carers is growing annually.
- The government openly acknowledges it is not meeting the demand for family based placements at the rate of children coming into care.
- There are now more children in care than ever before.
- Family based settings provide the best opportunities for permanency and belonging for the majority of children and young people who come into our care.
- Long-term guardians are essential in building lasting relationships that are important to child development and wellbeing and are a valuable asset.
- The government acknowledges that children coming into care have complex emotional and behavioral needs.
- The government acknowledges that foster and kinship carer's homes are the best place for a child who must be placed outside of their biological family's residence.
- The attraction and retention of carers, including Aboriginal carers, is below what the government needs to support children and young people in care."

Priority 2 in the strategy reaffirms the importance of the family based care setting as the best option for children and the need to attract and retain family based carers.

In the heading marked "Priority 2 Challenges" it appears quite an omission that DCP haven't identified that they need to value their Carer workforce more effectively. When organizations want more members or customers, they usually survey their existing customers to find out what the customers like and dislike and then try to improve on the areas the customer likes and lessen the practices that customers dislike. It is perplexing that DCP and agencies haven't extensively surveyed the current registered Carers in the foster and kinship care system as well as performed thorough exit interviews for Carers who are leaving their caring role.

The Carer Project's survey, Abuse of Power, Bullying, Intimidation and Threats has resulted in the Abuse of Power and Bullying of Foster and Kinship Carers Report April 2021 (Abuse of Power Report) and it will shed some light across the Foster and Kinship Care sector. The responses provide disturbing survey analysis and comments from Carers. 168 Carers responded to an anonymous survey that was open for a week. The survey analysis indicates that Abuse of Power, Bullying, Intimidation and Threats are widespread in the Foster and Kinship Care sector.

Carers state they have reported or attempted to report Abuse of Power, Bullying, Intimidation and Threats to DCP and NGOs for years, but the reports have fallen on deaf ears. When Carers did report abuse and bullying, retribution would often take place. It appears that no one in authority has meaningfully attempted to address the widespread abuse of power within the Carer sector.

NGOs have neglected their Duty of Care as a support system to Carers. NGOs were historically structured to support the foster and kinship Carer, but now many NGOs state their position is to "support the placement". This leaves no one specifically looking after the interests of the Carer. Based on the evidence of responses from the Abuse of Power Report, it appears Abuse of Power and Bullying incidences have steadily increased to breaking point.

DCP utilize words like “collaboration, in consultation with Carers, in partnership with Carers” but these are words and phrases give the impression that something specific and meaningful will be achieved when in fact, only a vague or ambiguous claim has been communicated. The reality of the relationship between DCP and the Carer is one similar to a parent/child relationship. Collaboration, partnership and consultation takes place between 2 equals and there is definitely not equality between DCP workers and Carers. DCP workers evaluate, critique and judge a Carer continually while in the Carers own home sometimes. Unfortunately, the Carer never gets the opportunity to return the favour of evaluating and critiquing the support systems of the DCP support workers.

Natural justice does not exist in the complaints handling process at DCP or the NGOs. Abuse of power, bullying, intimidation and threats are beyond a complaint and necessitate an immediate intervention, protection and investigation from senior management.

Abuse of power is a hot topic in communities around the world with the Me2 Movement, wearwhite2unite and March4Justice which had thousands of supporters in South Australia. Harassment and abuse of power at universities and sexual harassment in the halls of parliaments in Australia are rife across the states. Adelaide City Council and South Australian doctors are the latest to report bullying within the workplace. At the base of many abuse of power reports is the treatment of women. In the case of Foster and Kinship Carers, mostly women with little money but with a big heart- giving so much to children and the entire South Australian community.

If there is ever a hope of attracting and retaining Carers in South Australia, it will need to begin by valuing and treating Carers like the important and integral part of the Strategic Plan that they are. Carers are the ones doing all the hard work 24/7 365 days a year and they are ready to be acknowledged for their efforts in more than just words.

- The Carer Project urge the government to immediately employ a Whistleblower Structure to address the sources of malignant treatment of Carers.
- It is noted that on page 14 of Every effort for every child Strategic Plan 2020-23, confidential surveys are to be conducted to capture carers’ views and how best to support their needs. Over a year has been lost implementing the survey that would provide important feedback from Carers. The Carer Project requests involvement in drafting the survey to ensure the questions are relevant and not neutralized.

Abuse of power and bullying toward Carers needs immediate action. Carers want justice and justice with accountability. Accountability comes with consequences. Carers can’t have justice without consequences for the perpetrators.

Background to Abuse of Power, Bullying, Intimidation and Threats Survey

In March 2021, The Carer Project attempted to work with the DCP to place children in care into available foster care homes rather than Residential Care facilities. 67 Foster Carers who filled in The Carer Project's anonymous "Snap Survey" on Urgent Placements for Children in Care in South Australia stated they could immediately take placements of between 1-3 children representing 97 placements. However, when The Carer Project asked Carers for their contact details, we only received 10 Carer's contact details to forward on to DCP. Unfortunately, the Carer Project team began to receive private email and text messages stating that many Foster Carers would not be putting their names forward for DCP to follow up as they feared retribution from DCP and their Agencies.

Carer's fear of retribution brought about the Abuse of Power, Bullying, Intimidation and Threats anonymous survey that was open for 1 week and easily attracted 168 Carer participants.

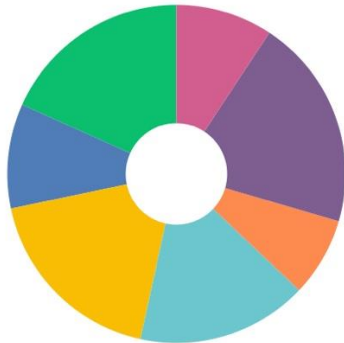
Abuse of Power Survey Analysis

Carers across the state have responded in the survey with the following concerns:

- 110 Carers responded that they did not feel valued or respected in their role as a volunteer Foster or Kinship Carer in South Australia.
- 107 Carers responded that they resisted making a complaint about DCP or their NGO workers for fear of retribution.
- 96 Carers responded that their NGO has not explained a clear complaints process that the Carer believes is fair and independent.
- 38 Carers responded that they felt intimidated or threatened into signing documents by their NGO Support Worker.
- 106 Carers responded they had experienced bullying, intimidation or repercussions from their DCP or NGO Support Worker for escalating issues.
- 68 Carers responded they were not invited/allowed to document opposing views to the care plan in the Annual Review document.
- 151 Carers responded they have not been provided with the Statement of Commitment nor explained its purpose and intent.
- 79 Carers responded that their child's Annual Review had not been scheduled at a convenient time for the Carer to attend.
- 47 Carers responded that they were prevented from attending their child's Annual Review due to DCP refusing to reschedule the meeting at a time to enable the Carer to attend or they were not even invited to attend.
- 111 Carers responded that fear of repercussions prevented them from escalating issues through the DCP office and complaints department.

The following graph of question 10 of the Abuse of Power Survey Analysis reflects Carer responses that paints an incriminating picture of Carer's current experiences with DCP workers and their NGO Support Workers in South Australia in April 2021.

10. In the past 18 months, have you experienced any of the following: TICK ALL THAT APPLY



Skipped: 13 Answered: 155

	Bullying, Intimidation or Abuse of Power from a DCP worker/staff	48%	75
	Bullying, Intimidation or Abuse of Power from a NGO worker/staff	26%	41
	DCP staff excluding you from decision making for the children in your care	48%	75
	DCP failed to abide by the Statement of Commitment	43%	67
	NGO Support Worker failed to abide by the Statement of Commitment	20%	31
	DCP staff refused to provide financial support or delayed therapy/medical treatment for the child in your care for something which is their responsibility	54%	83
	Fully supported by our NGO Support Worker and DCP	25%	38

Unedited Carer Comments from the Abuse of Power Survey

Below are a few of the Carer comments provided in the survey. The recurring theme in the comments from Carers is a culture rife with abuse of power, bullying, intimidation and threats throughout most of the 102 comments provided.

Carer #79 "The bullying is endless and many carers I know have relinquished (and) given up fostering or refused additional placements. Because of it (bullying), I won't take any more kids."

Carer #83 "DCP and NGOs are a law unto themselves. There is no "team". Consultation means carers advocate for your child and then they (DCP) do as they please looking for loopholes and excuses to keep expenses for child's needs at a minimum. Foster children are raised with poverty funding at the expense of caring citizens while being abused by government and NGOs."

Carer #76 "We dared to speak up about the DCP worker forever excluding or dismissing us and she and the Anglicare worker turned on us. We need a support agency to protect us from our support agency. We have nowhere to go but to other carers for support. Our workers might think they are tough treating us badly but really, it's the kids who pay the price."

Carer #97 "Parent teacher meetings being cancelled. Lack of communication from DCP. Exclusion from meetings – school and complex care team. Being discussed at meetings with children's school but not being present to answer to what is being said"

Carer #34 "DCP reports false allegations about children to stall OPG. I had a different government department get the OPG application started."

Carer #50 "Maybe it's time carers took their complaints to the media. Carers have been complaining for years and still nothing has changed. So much for the Royal Commission. No matter how corrupt and or useless staff are, they never receive a consequence or get the sack. It's time the CEO and Minister started sacking their staff and got rid of AnglicareSA."

Carer #55 We tried to advocate for several of our children to get support, therapy and had Drs referrals and team C made it very difficult. Then because we tried to get help, we were punished. Punished by not getting placements, round about threats and always had the fear of our children being removed. There are some sick people working for the department who are more interested in punishing carers and not paying for things the kids need. [REDACTED], Please explain to your staff that it is the children who pay in the end-not us. Your (DCP) staff are bullying the kids and ruining good outcomes for the children. Time you replaced some of your bitter staff with some new people who think of the kids."

Carer #65 When we have attempted to escalate our concerns, AnglicareSA have retaliated and ruined longterm placements for children. Sick of being threatened with "do this or you will be deregistered". Impossible to escalate issues when managers will not return phone calls!!!! Not ok! [REDACTED] need to sort this out!"

The full results of this survey are disturbing. This survey is only a snapshot of Carers in South Australia. The evidence from this survey indicate DCP and NGO Support Workers have varying degrees of perpetrating abuse of power, bullying, intimidation and threats toward Carers. Abuse of Power is definitely widespread in the Carer sector in South Australia.

Example of the Current Culture in Attempting to Resolve Carer Concerns

Carers have been advised to refer to The Statement of Commitment as a means of addressing an unsatisfactory circumstance in their roles as Carers, but the abuse of power has moved far beyond anything The Statement of Commitment could or can address.

Furthermore, the Complaints processes within DCP and every NGO lack Natural Justice for Carers. Abuse of Power is or should be an exception to the normal complaints handling processes and therefore requires an independent body.

Given the widespread abuse of power, a Whistleblower Structure needs to be implemented in the Carer sector without delay.

The Carer Project has a practical example of attempting to resolve a straight forward Abuse of Power matter. In January 2021, Foster Carers complained to The Carer Project that AnglicareSA Support Worker's had bullied and threatened Foster Carers into signing a variety of versions of a "Confidentiality Agreement" (CA). We contacted Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA (CFKC) to address the matter with AnglicareSA. The Carer Project recommended that CFKC obtain legal advice to represent their members best interests. This advice was ignored.

The resolution put forward by the Peak Body for Carers in SA (CFKC) was to agree with AnglicareSA Senior Executives that Carers should return to AnglicareSA Support Workers who had reportedly bullied Carers and consult with them again to achieve a different outcome. Next, CFKC believe it is reasonable authority for a frontline Support Worker to rescind a legal document. The final plan CFKC thought was a practical process to resolve inappropriate terms in a legal document is to have bullied and threatened Carers consult with powerful Senior Executives at AnglicareSA to discuss their concerns of a legal document.

The Carer Project stated the proposals put forward by CFKC and AnglicareSA were unworkable for Carers for obvious reasons.

The Carer Project advised CFKC that we believe Carers have legal and ethical rights and should not be abused in their role as a Carer.

As CFKC was unable to address and resolve the matter, they invited The Carer Project to do the work for them. Unlike many Foster Carers, The Carer Project team have the resources that most Carers don't have- access to legal counsel and executive project management skills sufficient to document the abuse of power scandals that are occurring in the Foster and Kinship Care sector.

It has taken over a month to schedule a meeting with AnglicareSA. The Carer Project has tried to be transparent in bringing Carer concerns to AnglicareSA's attention. In preparation for the meeting, The Carer Project provided AnglicareSA Senior Executives and Legal Counsel with The Carer Project's Abuse of Power, Bullying, Intimidation and Threats Survey Analysis along with a detailed Executive Summary regarding the Confidentiality Agreements.

AnglicareSA declined to provide the following documents that The Carer Project requested.

- AnglicareSA Code of Conduct
- AnglicareSA Standards of Practice and Behavior Policy
- AnglicareSA Whistleblower and Protected Disclosure Policy
- AnglicareSA Human Rights and Freedom from Abuse Policy

However, AnglicareSA did provide their Values Booklet that we requested which includes a passage:

...."We are guided in our quest to achieve our vision of 'Justice, Respect and Fullness of Life for All' by our five values of Integrity, Compassion, Stewardship, Equity and Servant Leadership.

Our Values underpin everything we do at AnglicareSA: how we interact and support each other; our relationships and our work with our customers, and the way we work with and support our community."

At the premises of CFKC-SA on Friday 16 April 2021, The Carer Project provided an Executive Summary of the numerous flaws in AnglicareSA "CAs" and the threats that Carers stated accompanied the CAs if Carers didn't sign the CA. Various inappropriate clauses were identified and discussed. CFKC now state that they agree with The Carer Project and also believe the AnglicareSA CAs are inappropriate. AnglicareSA have been put on notice regarding the CA clauses since February 2021. Following our meeting with AnglicareSA, they stated they needed to consider the issue further and would respond to the CA concerns in a month's time. This is another example of the character of the Carer sector. Most companies would want to address an abuse of power issue promptly and decisively but there is no hurry to resolve this matter. The real question to ponder is: How did a document such as the AnglicareSA "Confidentiality Agreements" ever make their way past senior executives at AnglicareSA as an acceptable document?

The Carer Project has reaffirmed its request that AnglicareSA :

- Implement a Whistleblower Structure to address the widespread abuse of power taking place in the Carer sector.
- Acknowledge that the "Foster Carer Confidentiality Agreements were inappropriate.
- Unreservedly apologize to Carers for the hurt and distress this has caused Carers and their families.
- Immediately rescind all "Confidentiality Agreements" that contain inappropriate content that purport to be "Confidentiality Agreements"

Government have been provided with AnglicareSA "Confidentiality Agreements"

The Carer Project provided a copy of the AnglicareSA "Confidentiality Agreements" to DCP Executives in February 2021. We asked for these to be followed up, possibly with Crown Law to review and provide their opinion as to the enforceability and more importantly the appropriateness of the documents. We are awaiting a response.

We also provided copies of two versions of the AnglicareSA "Confidentiality Agreements" to Minister Sanderson MP in late February 2021. We stated the circumstances of threats and hurt that Carers felt in relation to the "Confidentiality Agreements". We are awaiting a response.

Clear Indication that a Whistleblower Policy Should be Implemented Immediately

The example of the AnglicareSA "Confidentiality Agreements" clearly demonstrates Carers being subjected to Abuse of Power across the spectrum of the Carer environment. No one in a position of power appears to be willing to speak up or speak out about injustices perpetrated on Carers. There appears to be a need for a special role where injustices are reported. We would call that role a Whistleblower Structure.

Recommendations

1. A Whistleblower Structure to be implemented without delay and in consultation with Carer expectations that incorporate Natural Justice and outcomes that are legally binding. Only a Whistleblower Structure can begin to address the power imbalance.
2. An Annual Survey to be conducted by DCP to measure the satisfaction of Carers regarding the conduct, performance of DCP and NGO workers and finally, the support or lack of support they get from their DCP/NGO workers. The survey should not be outsourced to NGOs or other organisations. Survey responses should be collated and reviewed by Executive Staff. Unedited information is to be made available to parliament. The survey questions are to be compiled with the collaboration of Carers. It would be inappropriate to allow Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA to play in this role as they receive government funding.
3. NGO and DCP front line worker need to be retrained to be “problem solvers” and respectful of Carers.
4. All documents that Carers are asked to sign need to be reviewed by Crown Law to ensure they meet the appropriate standard.
5. All NGOs need to be performance managed and held accountable for their actions that do not comply with values and legal requirements of their contractual obligations.
6. A transparent process that allows Carers to document alternative care options on Annual Review documentation. These documents will be utilized to escalate care options when Carers are advocating for a child in care but are denied the support that the Carer is requesting by DCP workers.
7. Annual Reviews must include the participation of the Carer. The person who knows the child best, is well informed, and many times the only consistent person in the child’s life. The Carer plays a key role in providing accurate up to date information that will be utilized to structure a care plan for achieving outcomes for children in care for the year ahead.
8. Carers must be instructed and provided with the necessary information during their initial training and at Annual Reviews of the correct and appropriate way to address complaints and how to request a review of a decision they do not agree with.
9. Carers want accountability for individuals committing misconduct. Accountability is essential for an organization and for a society. Without it, it is difficult to get people to assume ownership or their own actions because they believe they will not face any consequences.
10. DCP and NGOs workers need customer service training in order to appropriately value and respect Carers who do the bulk of the work of children in care 24/7, 365 days a year.

Carers are ready to see action steps implemented to correct the injustices. The evidence supplied is more than enough to take action and further evidence is available if government will open its eyes.

Attachments to be read in conjunction with this Report:

- Executive Summary
- AnglicareSA “Confidentiality Agreement”
- Statement of Commitment

Executive Summary, AnglicareSA Confidentiality Agreements

Introduction

On an ad hoc basis AnglicareSA has required certain Carers to sign a document described as a Confidentiality Agreement (CA). Several versions of the CA are known to exist. Each version of the document would be more accurately described as a non disclosure agreement.

A number of these Carers have contacted The Carer Project and complained about:

- The circumstances under which they were required to sign the CA including why only now are they being required to sign the CAs; and
- The oppressive and unreasonable nature of the CA.

Invalidity

The Carer Project takes the view that the CAs are invalid and unenforceable for the following reasons.

Total failure of Consideration

Carers received no benefit i.e. “valuable consideration” for entering into the CAs. In each case the Carers were already approved Carers. The CAs were “after thoughts” and not uniformly applied by AnglicareSA.

Unconscionable conduct and Undue Influence

Carers report that they were bullied and intimidated by AnglicareSA into signing the CAs against their will. They did not give willing and informed consent when signing the CAs. That must have been evident to the AnglicareSA representative at the time.

Typically Carers were threatened with various consequences if they did not sign the CAs, the most appalling of which was the threat of losing their children. The stories being recounted by Carers are a scandal.

Evidence of Unconscionable conduct and Undue Influence can also be found in the following factors:

Relevant factors:

- the relative bargaining strength of the parties;
- the extent to which AnglicareSA acted in bad faith;
- the obligations that were imposed on Carers that were not reasonably necessary to protect the legitimate interests of Anglicare;
- that Carers could not be expected to understand the documentation used;
- the use of undue influence, pressure or unfair tactics by AnglicareSA;

Drafting Irregularities

The CAs are poorly drafted and unenforceable for uncertainty and vagueness.

Specifically: “confidential information” is generally not defined in any of the versions although one version does purport to allow AnglicareSA to simply designate “information” as confidential (whether or not it is).

A number of the clauses are “stocking fillers” in that they serve no legitimate purpose except to mask other objectionable clauses. Those clauses are found at the beginning of the CAs with the objectionable clauses inserted towards the bottom. This drafting approach is evidence of the bad faith behind the CAs.

Examples of stocking filler clauses are those:

- providing for confidentiality regarding children in care. At first pass, this seems sensible except that Carers already have a duty of confidentiality so this clause is redundant but “looks good”.
- Allowing disclosure of information in proper circumstances. Likewise this clause is redundant but looks good.
- Allowing Carers to provide information about AnglicareSA’s services. This is self evidently irrelevant.

Objectionable provisions

Examples of objectionable clauses:

- Each version of the CA has a form of gag order regarding the media. The early draft was not very subtle and spelt out exactly what was intended. The gag covered “any matter relating to Anglicare.” Carers see this for what it is. It is aimed at closing down any media reporting of wrong doing or misbehavior by AnglicareSA or those it is legally responsible for.
- The later version of the media gag is more subtle but equally offensive. It now speaks of “any matter referring to Children,Foster Carers ..”. Wrong doing and misbehavior by AnglicareSA in respect of “ Children or Foster Carers” would presumably be said to be caught by this clause.
- The general catch all clause that alleges that a breach of the CA may result in the cancellation of the” Foster Carer approval”. The expression “Foster Carer approval” is deliberately misleading and vague so as to confuse and intimidate a Carer. AnglicareSA does not approve Carers, DCP does (through CARU). The clear implication is that a Carer will put in jeopardy their Carer status if they upset AnglicareSA.

Statement of Commitment

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN
FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARERS

Children and young people have the right to receive safe, nurturing and competent care that recognises and respects their identity, and supports them to grow, develop and reach their full potential. Importantly, children and young people are at the centre of everything we do, and must be empowered to make decisions about their own lives. Without the dedication and commitment of foster and kinship carers*, this could not be possible. We respect carers as individuals beyond their caring role, and acknowledge the emotional impacts that caring may have on their own lives and families. We recognise the cultural strength and unique contribution that Aboriginal carers bring. By working together and supporting all carers in their vital role, we can provide children and young people with the care they need to look forward to a bright future.

This Statement of Commitment has been developed between Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA Inc, Child and Family Focus SA and the Department for Child Protection (DCP). It recognises that we must work in partnership and value carers as an essential and respected part of the care team for children and young people. Carers can expect to be:

INFORMED

We will provide clarity to carers around their role, responsibilities and entitlements.
We will ensure carers have the information they need about the children in their care.
We will be transparent about the legal rights of carers, how carers can report concerns and ask for decisions to be reviewed.

SUPPORTED

We will provide support, guidance and training to carers to meet the needs of children in their care.
We will provide carers with allowances, subsidies and reimbursements to enable a sustainable placement.
We will empower carers to make decisions for children to take part in everyday activities.

CONSULTED

We will involve carers in decisions about the children and young people in their care.
We will be open and honest when communicating with carers and honour agreements made with them.
We will provide carers with the opportunity to give feedback on policies and practices.

VALUED

We will acknowledge the skills, expertise and knowledge that carers bring to their role.
We will recognise carers as an integral part of the care team.
We will listen to carers and value their views and circumstances.
We will recognise and celebrate the contributions carers make.

RESPECTED

We will be culturally safe in the way we work with carers.
We will recognise the significant relationship that carers have with the children in their care.
We will respect carers as individuals beyond their caring role.
We will treat the personal information of carers in accordance with the Information Sharing Guidelines.

We commit to support carers by:

- Working together in partnership
- Communicating openly, honestly and respectfully
- Building and maintaining relationships based on mutual trust and respect
- Meeting legislated requirements of the child protection system.

Roles and responsibilities

Foster and kinship carers

- Providing safe care in a secure, nurturing family home environment
- Developing meaningful relationships with the children in their care and other members of the child's care team
- Maintaining the child's health and wellbeing, connection to culture and relationships with significant others
- Supporting the child to develop independent life skills and transition to adult life.

Department for Child Protection

- Approving carers
- Acting in the best interests of children and young people to maintain safety and wellbeing
- Involving carers in the child's care team
- Providing ongoing support and training to carers
- Understanding and responding to the needs of carers.

Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA

- Providing information and advice to foster and kinship carers
- Advocating for individual foster and kinship carers
- Connecting foster and kinship carers with each other for peer support
- Advocating on behalf of, and representing, carers and the carer sector with government and community stakeholders.

Child and Family Focus SA

- Representing the interests of children, young people and their families
- Advocating for the sector, including carer agencies, in prevention, early intervention and out of home care services
- Promoting effective partnerships and building sector capacity.

Foster care agencies and DCP Kinship Care Program

- Recruiting and retaining suitable foster carers
- Finding and supporting kinship carers
- Providing quality training, assessment and support to assist carers to provide safe and stable care
- Ensuring practices comply with relevant legislation, regulations and guidance.



Fiona Endacott
Fiona Endacott
Chief Executive Officer



Rob Martin
Rob Martin
Chief Executive Officer



Cathy Taylor
Cathy Taylor
Chief Executive



Hon Rachel Sanderson
Hon Rachel Sanderson MP
Minister for Child Protection

*Both foster and kinship carers are defined as those currently approved by the Chief Executive under section 72 of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. Kinship care is provided by a relative, extended family member or kin. Foster care is provided by someone who has no previous relationship with a child or young person.



Submission to the Royal Commission into Domestic Violence:

Abuse of Power Report

Personal details of the Submitters:

[REDACTED]

Contact details:

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Topic:

- Abuse of Power and Bullying of Foster and Kinship Carers.
- Domestic Violence towards children and in their presence.

Standing:

- Terms of Reference of the Royal Commission
- Royal Commission Guidelines
- Nyland Royal Commission Reforms
- Children and Young People (Safety) (Inquiry into Foster and Kinship Care) Amendment Act 2021 – Section 169A(3)

Confidentiality / Privacy: No

Relevant other Legislation or Codes:

Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017

“South Australian **Statement of Commitment** with foster and kinship carers”

Submission:

- Abuse of Power and Bullying of Foster and Kinship Carers Report

(Abuse of Power Report) - April 2021 Authors: Lisa O'Malley & Joyce Woody; and

- Survey Monkey Data – Abuse of Power;

are now formally tendered to the Commission.

Both documents set out relevant and compelling information pertaining to matters and issues that ought to be considered and reported on by the Commission.

Both documents speak for themselves.

Attachments:

- Abuse of Power and Bullying of Foster and Kinship Carers Report

(Abuse of Power Report) - April 2021 Authors: Lisa O'Malley & Joyce Woody;

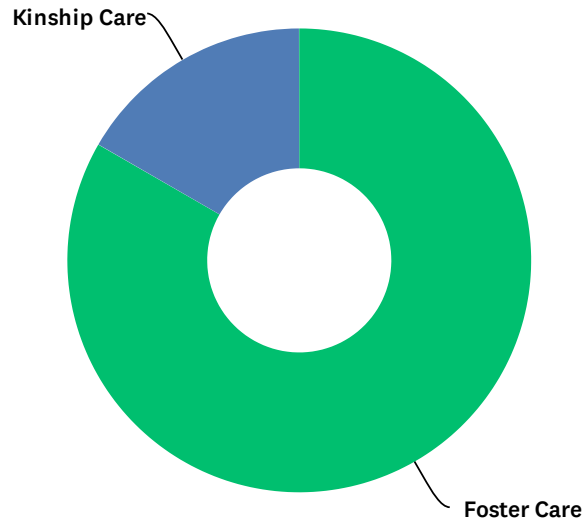
- Survey Monkey Data – Abuse of Power

Action by the Commission:

1. Acknowledge receipt of this Submission.
2. Accept both documents into the official records and materials of the Commission.

Q1 Which Caring role do you provide?

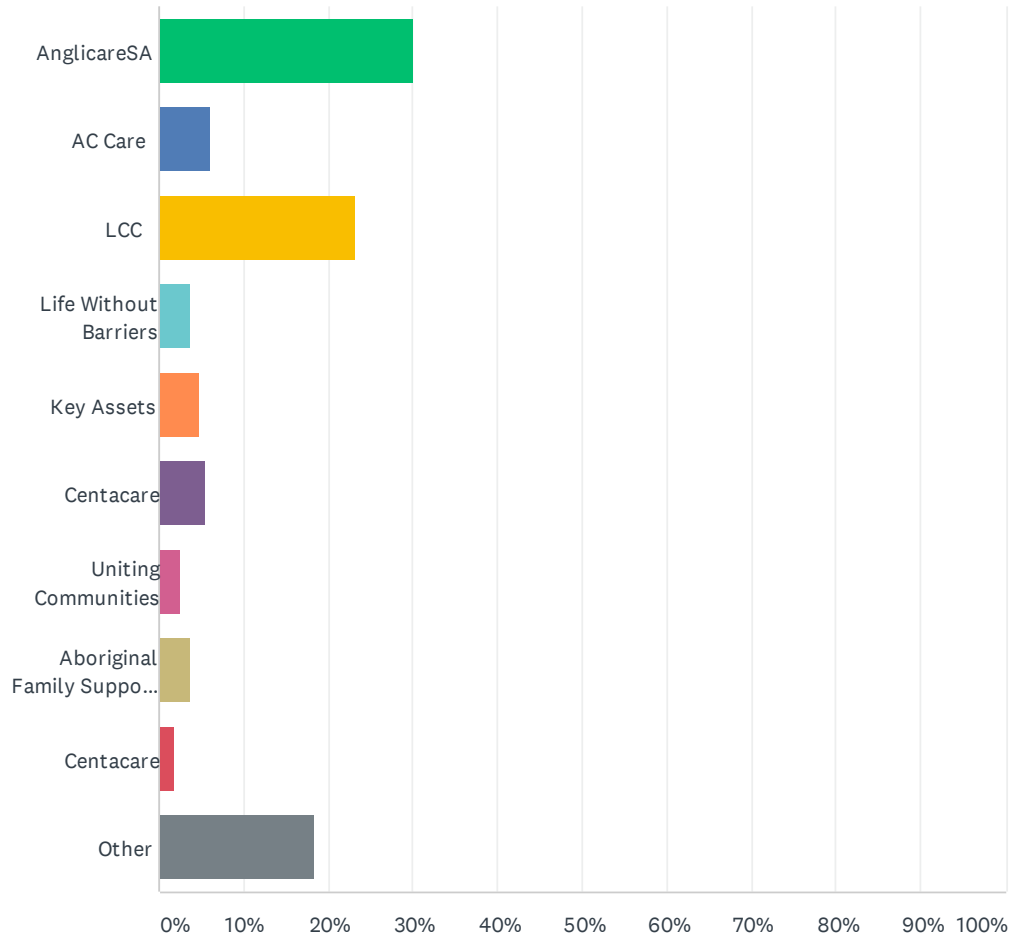
Answered: 168 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Foster Care	83.33%	140
Kinship Care	16.67%	28
TOTAL		168

Q2 Which Non Government Organization (Agency) are you registered with?

Answered: 163 Skipped: 5



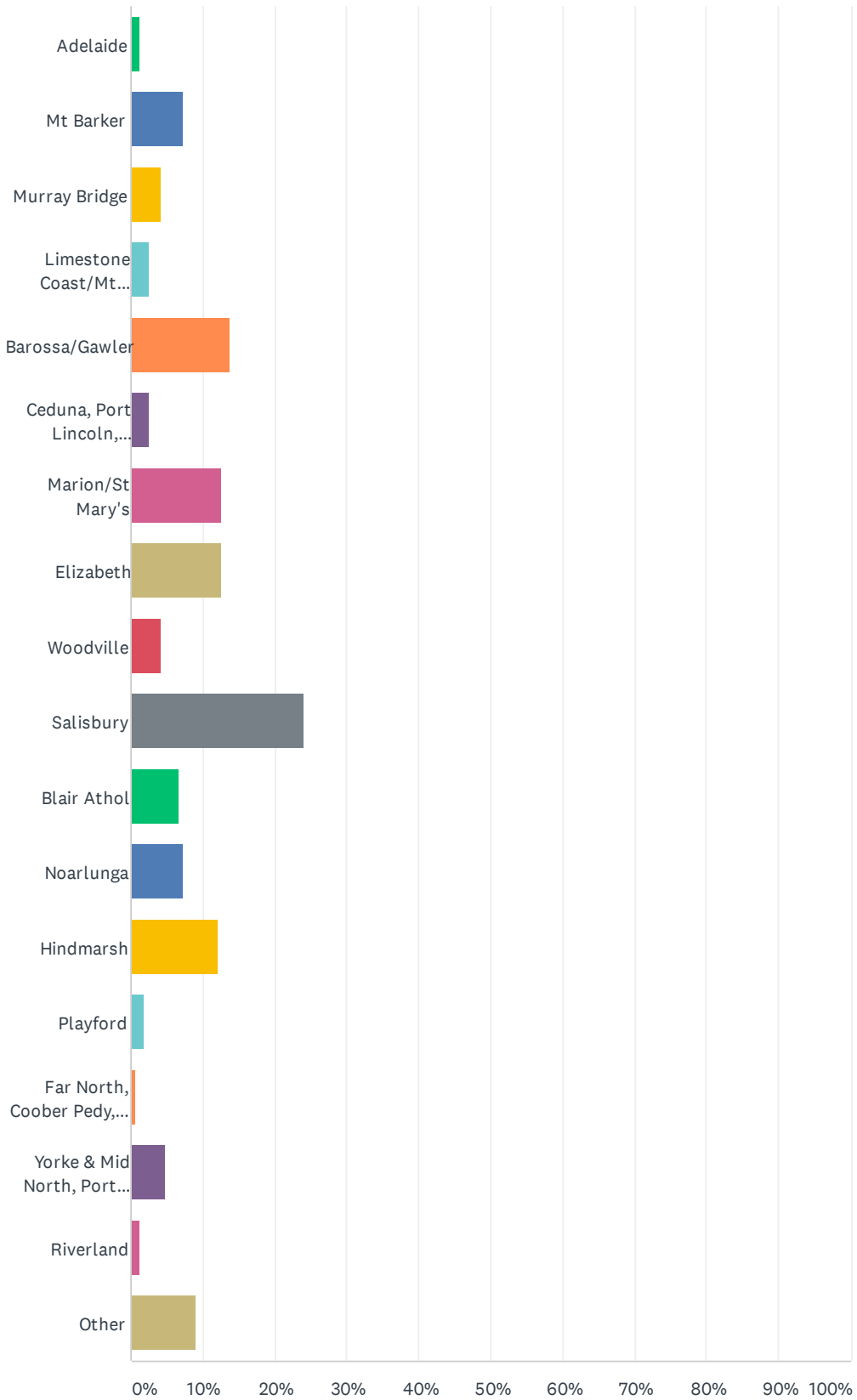
Abuse of Power, Bullying, Intimidation and Threats

SurveyMonkey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
AnglicareSA	30.06%	49
AC Care	6.13%	10
LCC	23.31%	38
Life Without Barriers	3.68%	6
Key Assets	4.91%	8
Centacare	5.52%	9
Uniting Communities	2.45%	4
Aboriginal Family Support Services	3.68%	6
Centacare	1.84%	3
Other	18.40%	30
TOTAL		163

Q3 Which DCP office are your children linked to?

Answered: 166 Skipped: 2



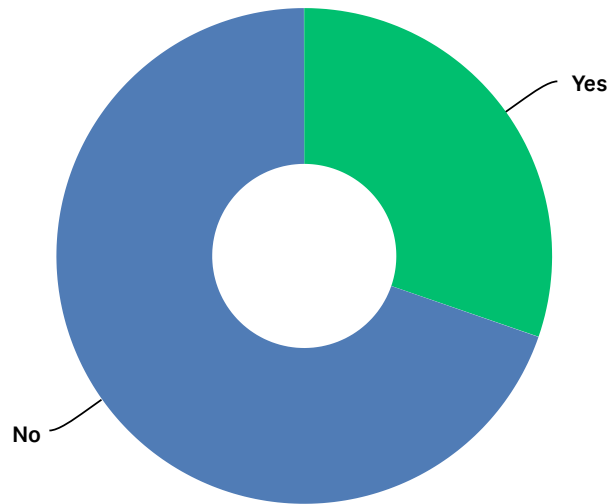
Abuse of Power, Bullying, Intimidation and Threats

SurveyMonkey

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Adelaide	1.20%	2
Mt Barker	7.23%	12
Murray Bridge	4.22%	7
Limestone Coast/Mt Gambier	2.41%	4
Barossa/Gawler	13.86%	23
Ceduna, Port Lincoln, Whyalla	2.41%	4
Marion/St Mary's	12.65%	21
Elizabeth	12.65%	21
Woodville	4.22%	7
Salisbury	24.10%	40
Blair Athol	6.63%	11
Noarlunga	7.23%	12
Hindmarsh	12.05%	20
Playford	1.81%	3
Far North, Coober Pedy, Port Augusta	0.60%	1
Yorke & Mid North, Port Pirie, Kadina	4.82%	8
Riverland	1.20%	2
Other	9.04%	15
Total Respondents: 166		

Q4 Has your NGO Support Worker provided you with a Carer Support Agreement at your Annual Review and explained its purpose and intent?

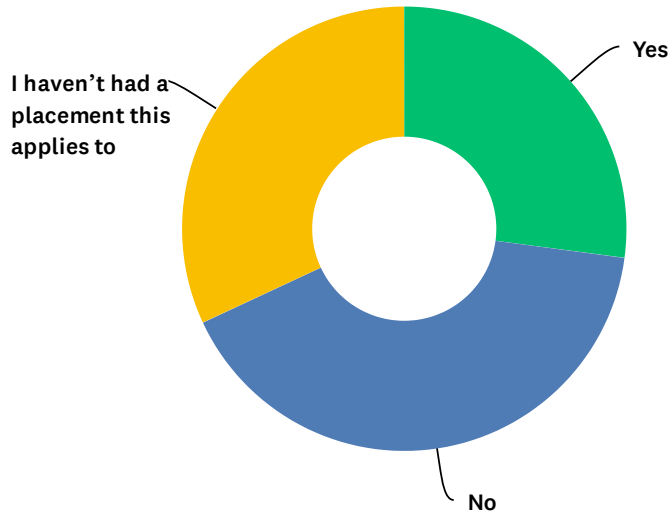
Answered: 165 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	30.30%	50
No	69.70%	115
TOTAL		165

Q5 At your child's Annual Review, were you invited/allowed to document alternative care options in any areas that you did not agree with regarding the plans that the Support Worker provided?

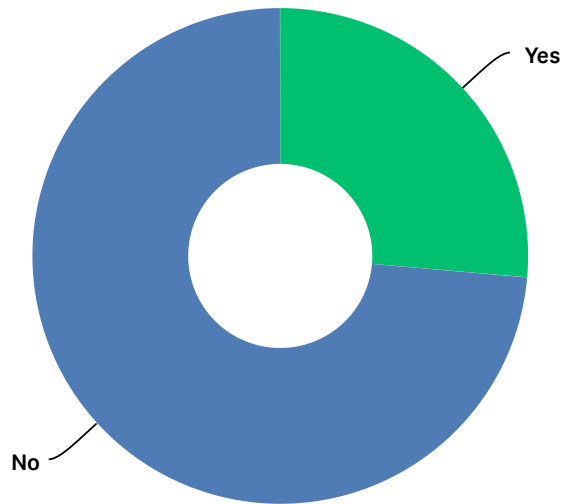
Answered: 166 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	27.11%	45
No	40.96%	68
I haven't had a placement this applies to	31.93%	53
TOTAL		166

Q6 Has your NGO Support Worker provided you with a copy of the Statement of Commitment and explained its purpose and intent?

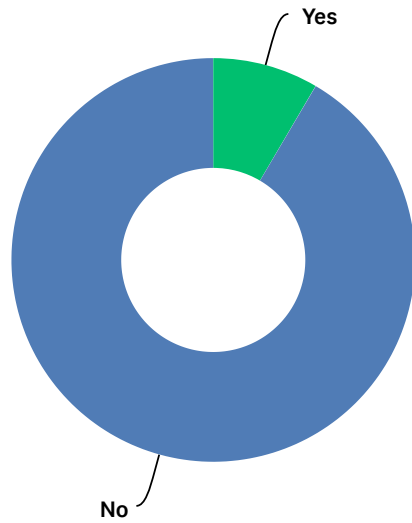
Answered: 163 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	26.38%	43
No	73.62%	120
TOTAL		163

Q7 Has your child's DCP worker provided you with a copy of the Statement of Commitment and explained its purpose and intent?

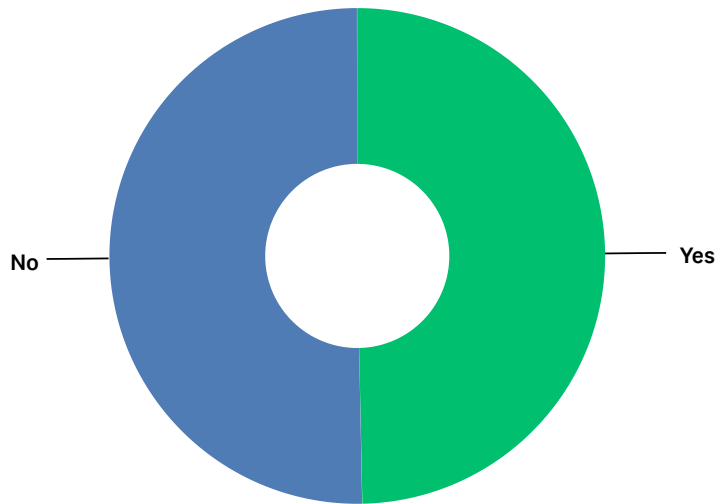
Answered: 165 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	8.48%	14
No	91.52%	151
TOTAL		165

Q8 Has the Annual Review for your child in care been scheduled at a mutually convenient time so you are able to attend?

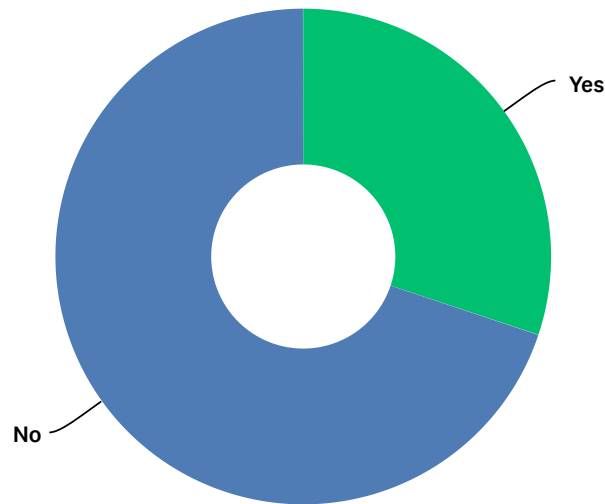
Answered: 157 Skipped: 11



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	49.68%	78
No	50.32%	79
TOTAL		157

Q9 Have you been prevented from attending your child's Annual Review due to DCP refusing to reschedule a meeting time to enable you to attend or were not invited to attend?

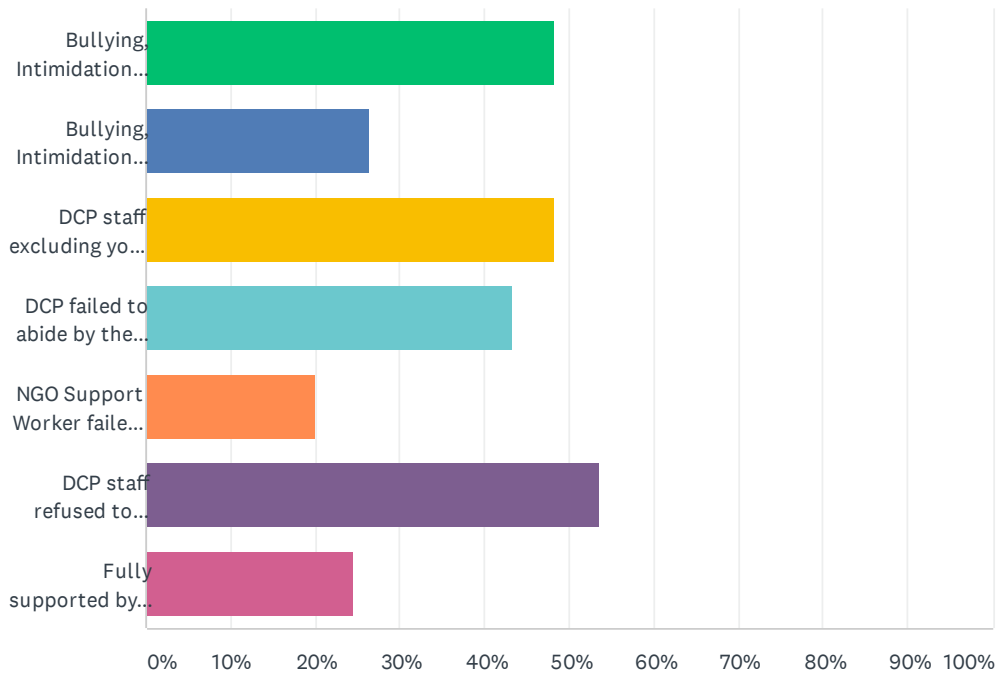
Answered: 156 Skipped: 12



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	30.13%	47
No	69.87%	109
TOTAL		156

Q10 In the past 18 months, have you experienced any of the following: TICK ALL THAT APPLY

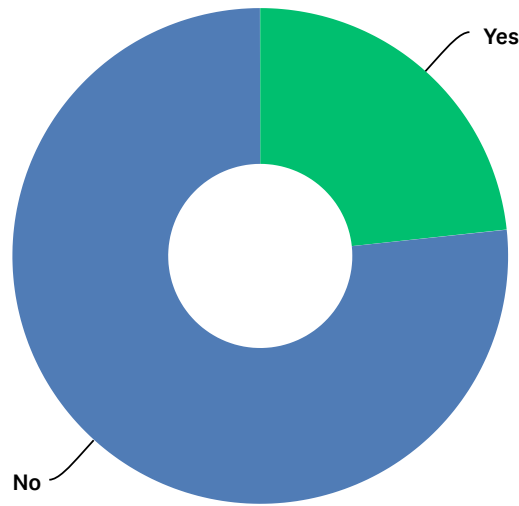
Answered: 155 Skipped: 13



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Bullying, Intimidation or Abuse of Power from a DCP worker/staff	48.39%	75
Bullying, Intimidation or Abuse of Power from a NGO worker/staff	26.45%	41
DCP staff excluding you from decision making for the children in your care	48.39%	75
DCP failed to abide by the Statement of Commitment	43.23%	67
NGO Support Worker failed to abide by the Statement of Commitment	20.00%	31
DCP staff refused to provide financial support or delayed therapy/medical treatment for the child in your care for something which is their responsibility	53.55%	83
Fully supported by our NGO Support Worker and DCP	24.52%	38
Total Respondents: 155		

Q11 Have you felt intimidated or threatened into signing documents by NGO Support Worker?

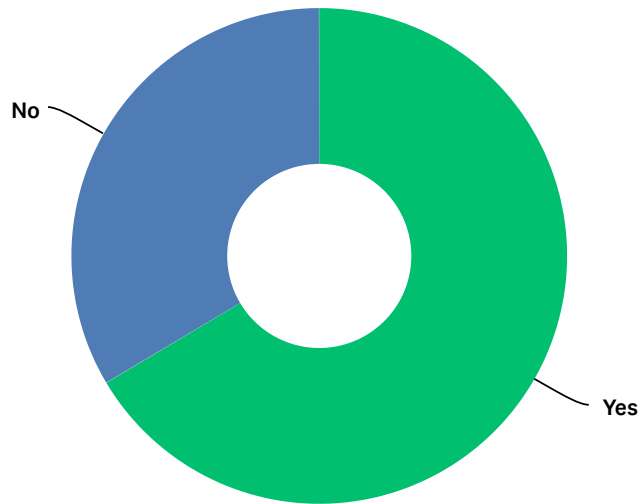
Answered: 163 Skipped: 5



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	23.31%	38
No	76.69%	125
TOTAL		163

Q12 Does fear of repercussions prevent you from escalating issues through the DCP office and complaints department?

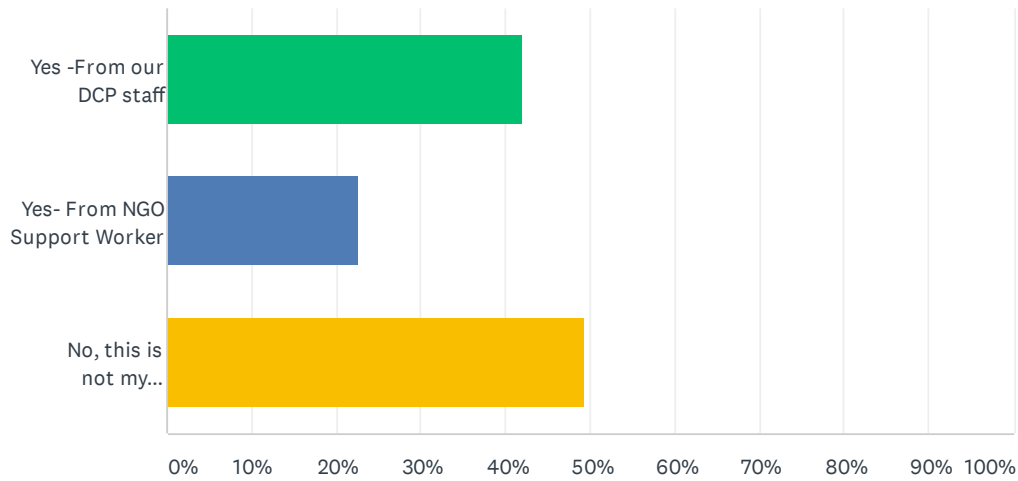
Answered: 167 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	66.47%	111
No	33.53%	56
TOTAL		167

Q13 Have you experienced further bullying, intimidation or repercussions for escalating issues? TICK ALL THAT APPLY

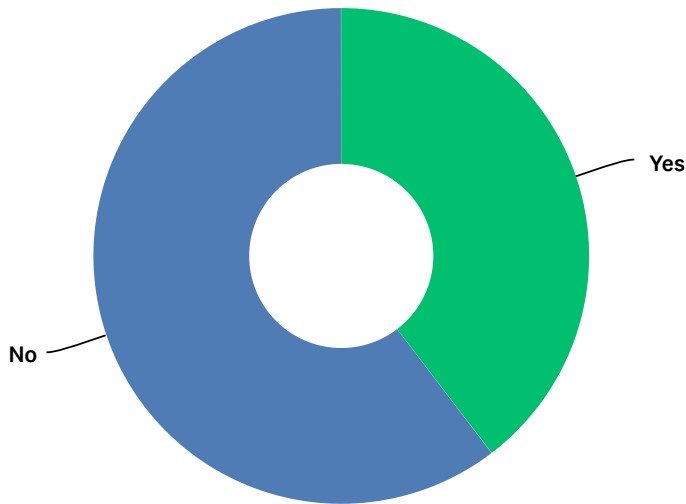
Answered: 164 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes -From our DCP staff	42.07%	69
Yes- From NGO Support Worker	22.56%	37
No, this is not my experience	49.39%	81
Total Respondents: 164		

Q14 If you were to have an issue with your NGO, has your NGO explained a clear complaints process that you believe is fair and independent?

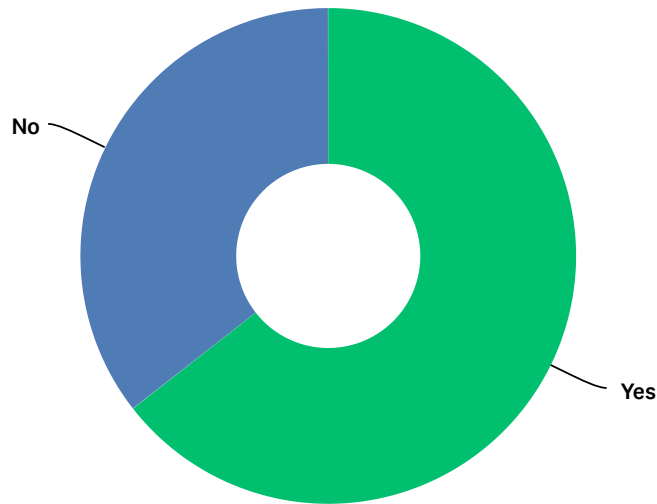
Answered: 159 Skipped: 9



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	39.62%	63
No	60.38%	96
TOTAL		159

Q15 Do you resist making a complaint about DCP or your NGO workers for fear of retribution?

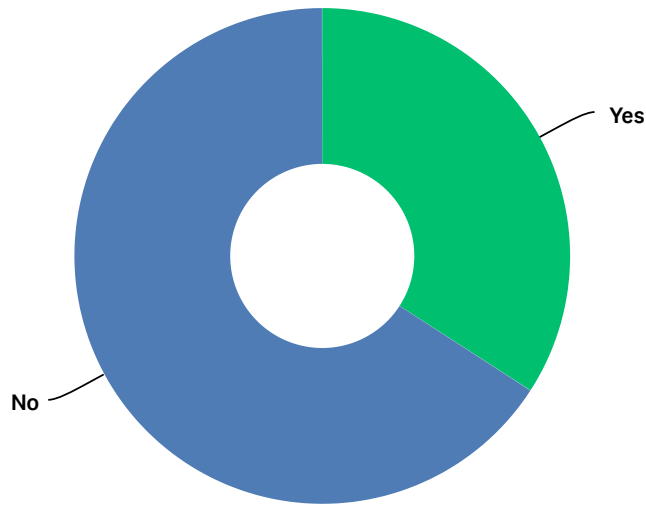
Answered: 166 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	64.46%	107
No	35.54%	59
TOTAL		166

Q16 Do you feel respected and valued in your role as a volunteer Foster or Kinship Carer?

Answered: 167 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	34.13%	57
No	65.87%	110
TOTAL		167

Q17 Please provide any comments regarding abuse of power, bullying, intimidation, harassment, threats or likewise compliments of the genuine support you receive from DCP or your NGO Support Workers.

Answered: 105 Skipped: 63