

***Education and children who  
experience care:  
exploring higher achievement & trajectories over time  
in the Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study***

Miriam Maclean, Fernando Lima  
& Melissa O'Donnell

# Background

Children who experience OOHC:

- Low achievement common (~1 in 3 lowest 10% reading scores Year 3), achievement declines over time
- Typically many educational risk factors

Some children who experience OOHC achieve well in school, qualitative studies have been conducted with university entrants

Gap: Little research on younger children achieving well quantifying

- Which children within the cohort achieve well academically: characteristics, circumstances, supports?
- Trajectories of children who achieve well in primary school

# Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study

- First large-scale prospective longitudinal study of children and young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) in Australia.
- First study to link data on children's child protection backgrounds, OOHC experiences, health, education and offending held by multiple government agencies; and match it to survey data collected from children, caregivers, caseworkers and teachers.
- The sample is a census of all children and young people who entered OOHC for the first time in NSW between May 2010 and October 2011 (18 months) (n=4,126) and received final Children's Court orders by April 2013 (n=2,828).
- For more information about the POCLS please see:

[www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care](http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/resources/research/pathways-of-care)

# Our Study

## - Pathways of Care Longitudinal Study data

- Linked administrative data NAPLAN from NESAs & DCJ Child Protection and OOHC data
- Carer survey data
- Standardised assessments: socio-emotional wellbeing & cognitive learning ability
  - Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) Internalising and Externalising behaviour scales
  - (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-IV) & Matrix Reasoning Test from Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV))

# Study 1 – Higher Achievement Year 3

- Year 3 Study Sample n=778:
  - Participated in Year 3 NAPLAN reading test; &
  - Carer completed at least 1 interview prior to Year 3 test
  - **Outcome Variable:** Higher achievement – scoring in top 3 of 6 reading achievement bands for year group (NAPLAN)
  - **Other Variables:** child demographics, standardised assessments, child protection history, OOHC placement characteristics, carer characteristics, and services & supports

# Key Findings – Whole Sample

- In Year 3, 46% of the children who had experienced OOHC scored in the top 3 NAPLAN reading bands (lower than general population)
- Higher achieving students were a diverse group and faced many adversities commonly found among children who experienced OOHC generally
- Logistic regression showed higher achievement in Year 3 was significantly positively associated with:
  - Child cognitive ability (PPVT-IV (verbal) & WISC-IV (non-verbal) assessments)
  - Child socio-emotional wellbeing (CBCL externalising behaviours assessment)
  - Carer higher education (source: interview data)
  - Non-Aboriginal students (Source: DJC data)
- (also Tutoring – attributable to reverse causality, children with lower achievement ⇒ receiving tutoring)

# Key Findings – Aboriginal Children

- **Higher achieving Aboriginal children share many of the characteristics & adversities of lower achievers in the POCLS**
- Logistic regression showed carer age (61 years and over ) negatively associated with higher achievement
- **Among Aboriginal children in relative/kinship care with older carers, higher achievement less common**
- These families often have various characteristics linked with lower reading achievement
  - Live in most disadvantaged areas (SEIFA)
  - Boys
  - Lower carer education levels
  - Carer less likely to have participated in carer training in last 12 months
  - BUT better behavioural wellbeing scores on CBCL
- **How can we better meet the needs of these families?**

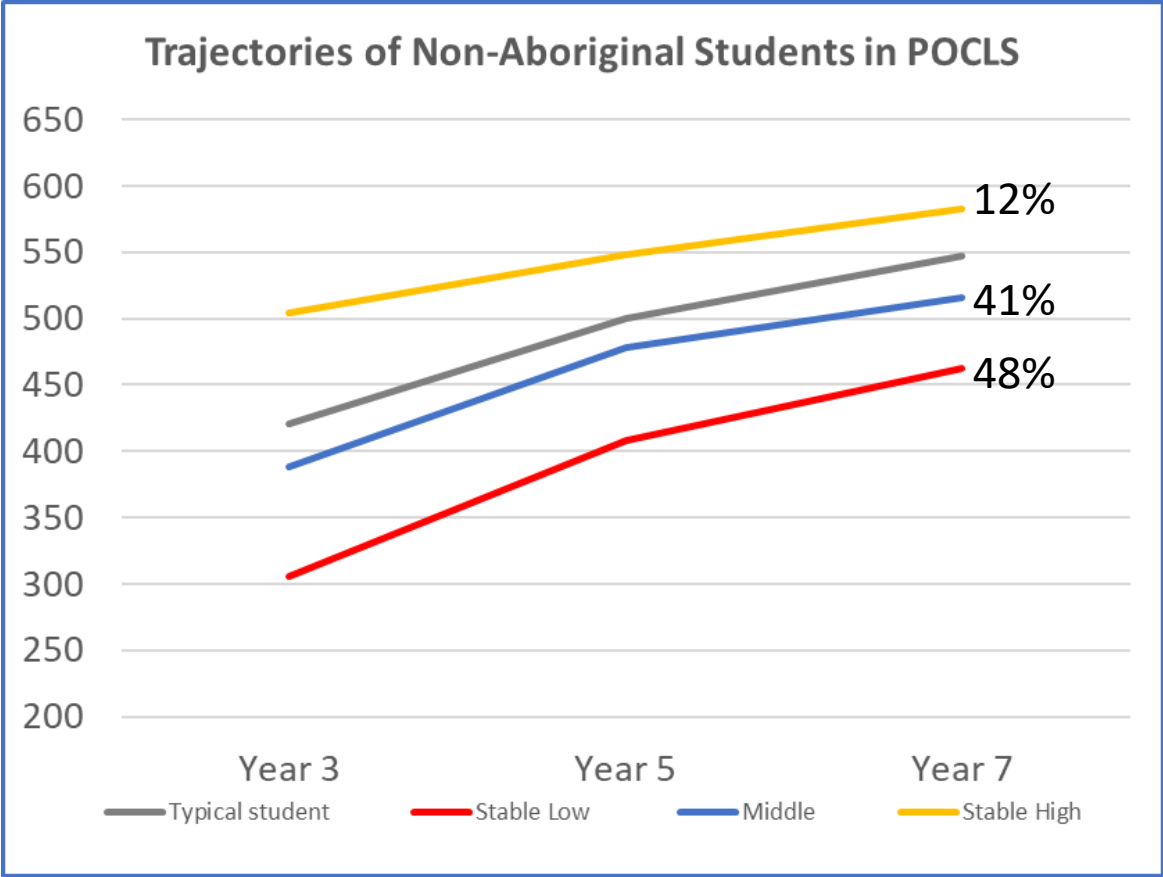
# Key Findings, Policy & Practice Implications

- **Finding: Cognitive ability and socio-emotional (behavioural) wellbeing linked to higher achievement in Year 3**
  - Implications – Clinical assessments should be routinely completed on entry to OOHC and ongoing monitoring for all children. Assessments and services need to be culturally appropriate, timely and repeated over time.
- **Finding: Carer factors associated with reading achievement**
- Implications – some researchers have proposed recruiting highly educated carers, others have used programs that develop carers confidence & skills in supporting children's education. Training and support should be culturally appropriate and targeted to the specific needs of different carers (e.g. education level, age, confidence in interacting with the education system, carers of higher achieving students)

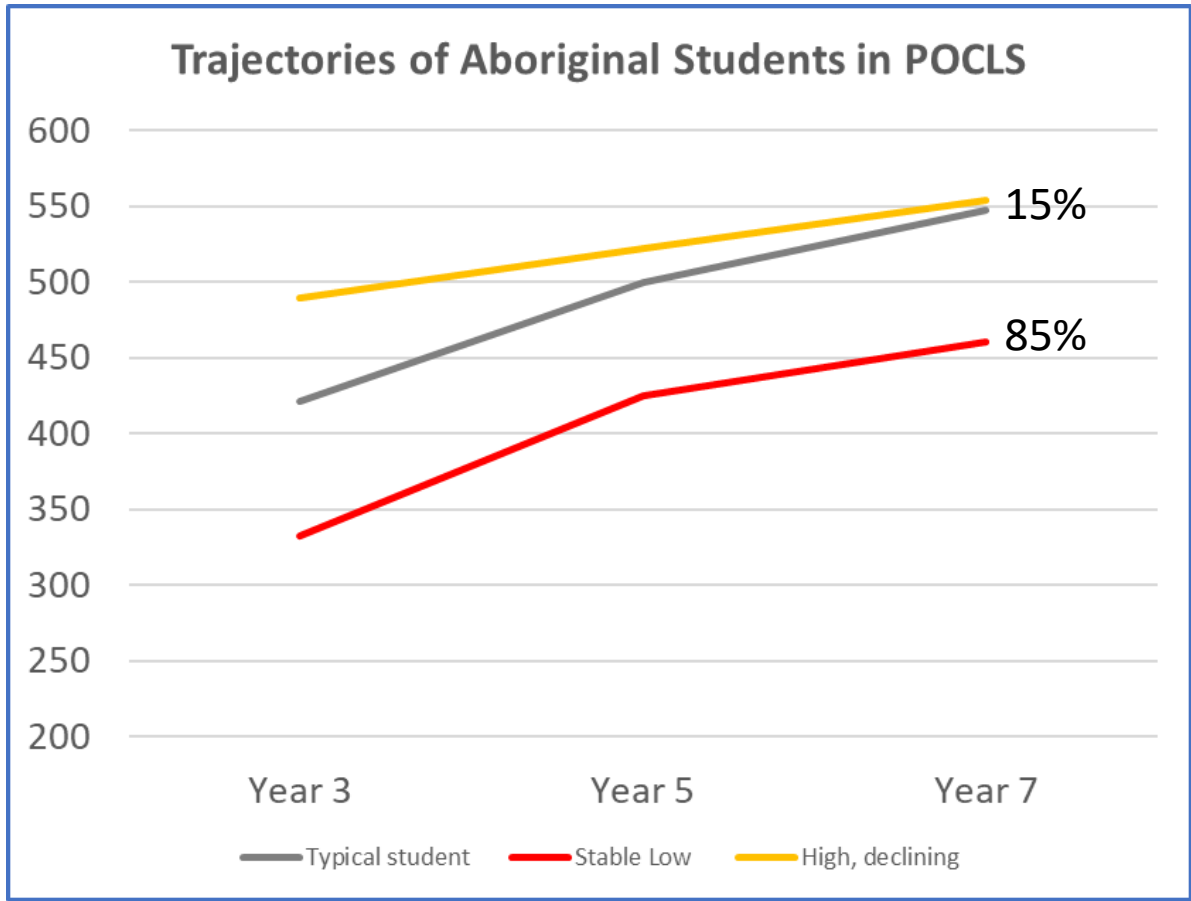


# Study 2 -Trajectories Year 3 - 7

- **POCLS Trajectory Study Sample n=325:**
  - Participated in Year 3, 5 & 7 NAPLAN reading tests; &
  - Carer completed at least 1 interview prior to Year 7 test
- Latent Class Growth Modelling identifies groups of children following similar trajectories of reading achievement across the NAPLAN tests



Typical Student (Equivalent Year Level) from Goss, P., Sonneman, J., Chisholm, C., & Nelson, L (2016)



Typical Student (Equivalent Year Level) from Goss, P., Sonneman, J., Chisholm, C., & Nelson, L (2016)

# Key Findings, Policy & Practice Implications

- **Finding: Majority of students who experienced OOHC did not keep pace with their peers**
- Implications: Recommend a target of one years reading growth each year of school; High achieving Aboriginal children need more support to maintain achievement.
- **Finding: 12 & 15% of the children in high trajectory groups**
- Implications: consider how to support high achievers through teenage years and into higher education

# Key Findings, Policy & Practice Implications

- **Finding: Only around 1 in 4 were reported to have received tutoring in past 6 months**
- Implications - many students who are not keeping pace with peers or with low reading scores are not currently receiving tutoring which they may benefit from
- **Finding: Supports and services – significant in some analyses, but inconsistent**
- Implications: Caution in drawing conclusions from mixed results, but some evidence e.g. positive family connections may support higher educational outcomes

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