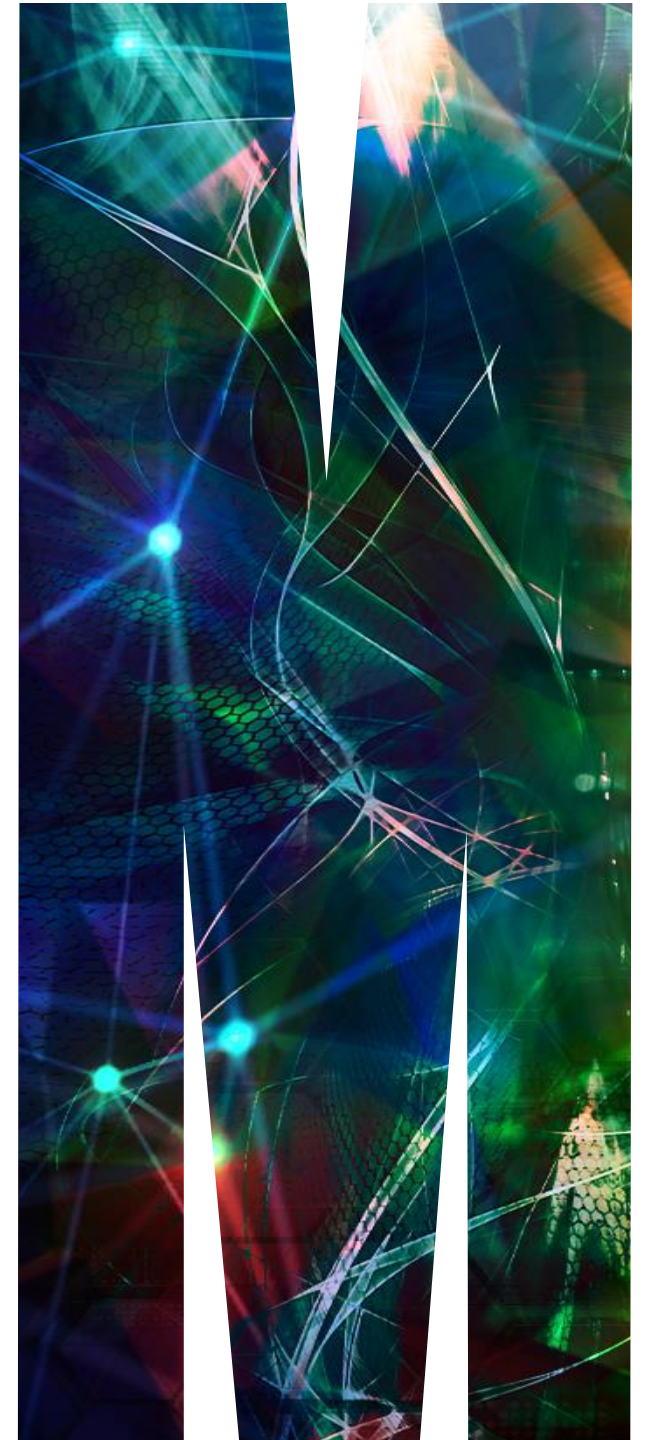


The cost of caring: uncovering the costs for grandparents raising grandchildren with incarcerated parents

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Caring for children whose parents are in prison: what do we know?

- The numbers of children requiring care when a parent is imprisoned is increasing
- Informal care arrangements are most common
- Growing social trend: grandparent carers
- Limited support provided for or accessed by families generally or grandparents specifically



A focus on imprisoned parents and caring for children

What are the current *care planning practices* and *experiences* of children and families in Victoria and New South Wales where a primary carer is imprisoned? (ARC Linkage: LP110100084)

This presentation's focus is on examining the 'costs' to grandparent carers of caring for children when their parent is incarcerated

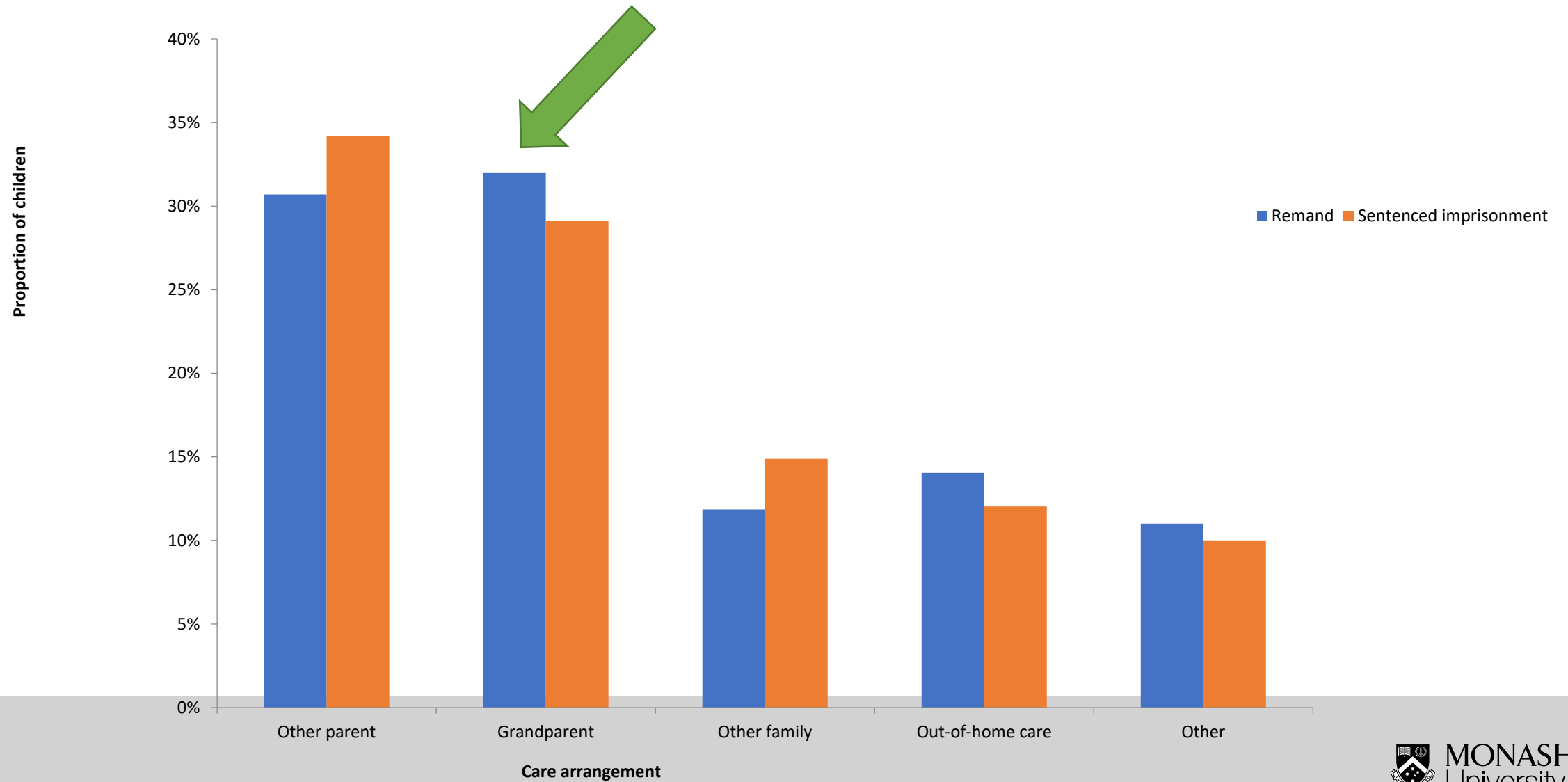


Why focus on grandparent carers?

- Grandparents are consistently noted as the primary caregivers for children who have a parent in prison
 - Research over time, in a range of jurisdictions, has consistently shown this to be for around **1 in 3 children**
- COP study: 50/151 imprisoned parents reported that their children were cared for by grandparents
- COP study: grandparents tended to be the 'go-to' carers when there is a crisis: arrest and remand



Care arrangements for children at parental remand and sentencing



Grandparent care: COP study findings



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lyle58/3075737647>

- **92** children lived with their grandparent/s while their primary care was in prison
 - Average age = **8 years**
 - **60%** of these children had to **move** from their family home
 - **20%** were **split** from their siblings
 - Average length of parental sentence (median) = **18 months**

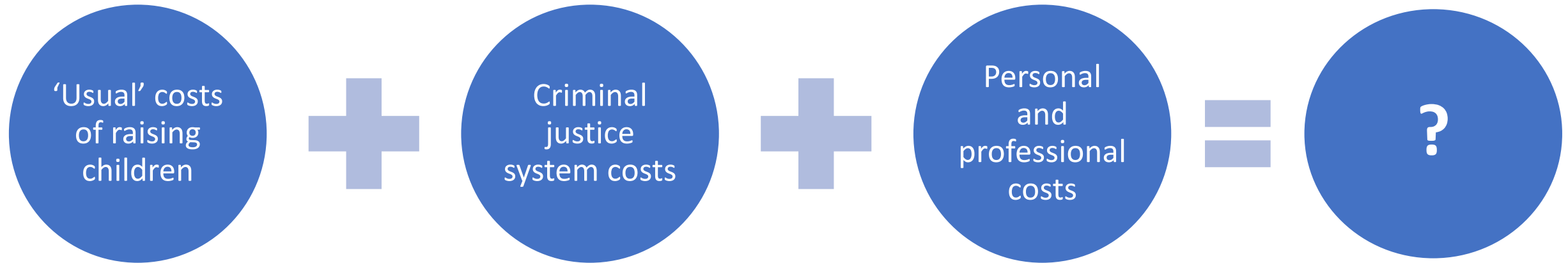
cost

An amount that has to be paid or given up in order to get something. In business, cost is usually a monetary ...

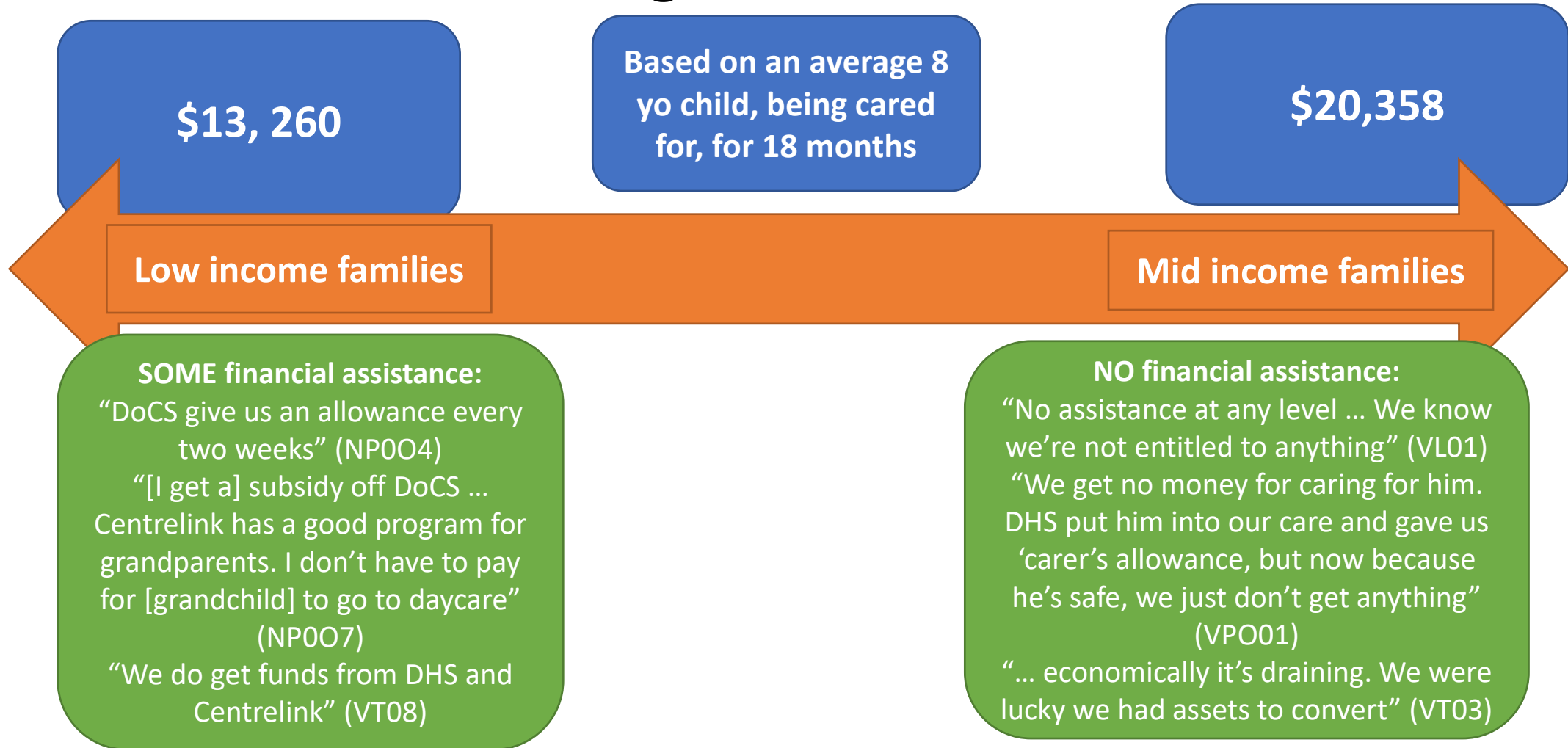


BusinessDictionary

'Cost' to grandparents



'Usual costs' of raising children:



Data sources: Saunders, P & Bedford, M 2018, [‘New estimates of the costs of children’](#), Family Matters, Issue 100.

Percival, R & Harding, A 2005, [‘The estimated costs of children in Australian families in 2005-06’](#), National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling.

Additional costs: with minimal support

“No financial support unless in a really hard way ... We are comfortable, we own a house and car. For people who aren't in this situation they would find it quite difficult ... May get a bit back from Centrelink, school bonuses. We will last as long as we can ...” (NSW02)

“Financially a lot more. School and eating or if she wants to go to her friends. Normally her dad would pay for it, but clothing, school uniforms, books, excursions, nearly forgot how much it costs for kids” (VL16-2)

“We both work full time, so we've had to put him into childcare fulltime and because we both work fulltime we get no help from Centrelink for feeding or caring for him. So we have to take on all financial responsibilities for him, so it's been a financial strain on us” (VDP02)

Criminal justice associated costs: prison visiting

- Travel time
 - Travel costs (accommodation; visits centre food etc.)
- “... five hour round trip ... It’s miles away” (VPO01)
- “It takes a whole day” (VT03)
- “Cessnock gaol was very poor – accommodation very expensive, transport very poor” (NP007)



Criminal justice associated costs: specialist support services needed for children

Counselling

Trauma

- Impact of chronic home/family conditions
- Nature of parent's crime
- Experiences of arrest
- Behavioural difficulties

Complexity of the issues

- Locating services
- Funding of services

Some use and access of services via GP and mental health care plan

Generic services – are not sufficient or specialised enough

Health conditions

Hidden costs: What is given up ... or lost?

- **Changes to employment:**
 - time off work
 - having to reduce work days/hours
 - having to quit work
- **Changes to home/housing**
- **Lifestage changes and challenges**



pinkomelet - Fotolia.com

“Time, worry, responsibility...” (VL01)

“You just have to put your own life on hold when you do it” (VPO01)

“You get more support (financially and practically) as a foster parent than a grandparent. This is due to blurred lines between grandparents who care for children because their parents work and grandparents who look after children permanently” (VPO05)

“Nobody’s come to us to see how he is. It’s not like support services, police, child services have come to see how he is, how he’s doing, what he’s doing. All his needs have been met by us, nobody else. We’ve done everything we can, but as far as outside services, there’s been nothing. You’re [the researcher] the first person to call. It’s as if, ‘he’s with the grandparents, he’ll be fine’, but he’s not” (VDP02)

What are the costs?

- The costs are both widespread and substantial
- The costs are typically not shared or alleviated
- The costs are hidden

- These families need ***specialised*** assistance and ***ongoing*** support to manage complex and often chronic issues
- Support needs to be ***proactively offered***: make use of 'crisis' points
- ***Information packages*** need to be made available for all carers regarding financial supports – entitlements

Acknowledgements: research collaborators

Partner organisations:

Department of Justice – Victoria

Department of Human Services – Victoria

Victorian Association for the Care and
Resettlement of Offenders

Commission for Children and Young
People

SHINE for Kids

Prison Fellowship - Victoria

Supporting organisations:

Dept. of Corrective Services - NSW

Victoria Police

NSW Police Force

Dept. of Education and Early
Childhood Development - Victoria

Dept. of Education and Communities
– NSW