

The Availability of Foster Carers: Main Report

Author:

McHugh, Marilyn; McNab, Justin; Smyth, Ciara; Chalmers, Jenny; Siminski, Peter; Saunders, Peter

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THE AVAILABILITY OF FOSTER CARERS

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

NOVEMBER 2004



NSW Department of
Community Services

SIPRC
Social Policy Research Centre

The Availability of Foster Carers: Supplementary Report

PREPARED FOR THE NSW DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Social Policy Research Centre
University of New South Wales

Marilyn McHugh, Justin McNab, Ciara Smyth, Jenny Chalmers,
Peter Siminski and Peter Saunders

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Section 1

Table 1: Foster Families by Family Type and State (percentages)

	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	Australia
<i>Couple carers</i>				
With non-foster children	39.8	38.8	41.9	39.8
Without non- foster children	27.8	25.4	23.2	26.5
All Couple carers	67.6	64.2	65.1	66.3
<i>Single carers</i>				
With non-foster children	17.0	20.1	19.2	18.1
Without non-foster children	15.4	15.7	15.7	15.6
All Single carers	32.4	35.8	34.9	33.7
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total number	1865	1201	1017	5458

Source: Derived from custom tabulations of 2001 Census of Population and Housing data

Table 2: Fostering Rate by Family Type and State (per 10,000 families)

	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	Australia
<i>Couples</i>				
With non-foster children	9.6	8.0	10.4	9.6
Without non- foster children	8.7	7.0	6.6	8.0
<i>Singles</i>				
With non-foster children	12.9	13.9	13.5	13.5

Source: Derived from custom tabulations of 2001 Census of Population and Housing data

Table 3: Foster Families by Age of Youngest Foster Child and Family Type in NSW (percentages)

Age of youngest foster child (years)	Single carers	Couple carers	All families
0-4	20.6	32.8	28.9
5-11	34.5	35.9	35.5
12-15	23.2	18.8	20.2
16-17	8.8	5.6	6.7
18 +	12.9	6.8	8.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Derived from custom tabulations of 2001 Census of Population and Housing data

Table 4: Regional Breakdown of Families with Foster Children in NSW by DoCS Region (percentages)

	Couple carers	Single carers	All families
Central Coast	5.3	4.0	4.9
Cumberland/Prospect	8.1	6.9	7.7
Inner West	1.8	3.3	2.3
Nepean	8.5	8.1	8.4
Northern Sydney	4.9	4.0	4.6
South East Sydney	5.9	5.4	5.7
South West Sydney	12.3	12.5	12.4
Central West	4.9	4.8	4.9
Far North Coast	7.3	9.1	7.9
Hunter	11.5	9.2	10.7
Illawarra	7.1	8.6	7.6
Mid North Coast	6.1	7.7	6.6
New England	3.9	5.1	4.3
Orana/Far West	3.3	4.4	3.7
Riverina/Murray	4.2	3.8	4.1
Southern Highlands	4.9	3.1	4.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Derived from custom tabulations of 2001 Census of Population and Housing data

Table 5: Foster Families by Housing Tenure, Family Type and State (percentages)

	Single carers	Couple carers	All families
NSW			
Fully owned	23.2	32.4	29.4
Being purchased	16.6	41.3	33.3
Rented	56.8	22.2	33.4
Other tenure type	2.0	2.5	2.4
Not stated	1.5	1.6	1.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Derived from custom tabulations of 2001 Census of Population and Housing data

Table 6: Percentage of Families with Foster Children in which Female Head of Family (or male head if single male carer) is Indigenous by DoCS Region

	Female couple carers	Single carers	All families
Central Coast	8.6	0.0	6.4
Cumberland/Prospect	5.7	7.1	6.1
Inner West	0.0	14.3	6.7
Nepean	6.5	18.4	10.2
Northern Sydney	0.0	0.0	0.0
South East Sydney	0.0	10.0	3.0
South West Sydney	2.0	18.4	7.5
Central West	11.7	30.3	18.3
Far North Coast	12.2	20.0	15.2
Hunter	8.3	5.4	7.5
Illawarra	3.4	5.8	4.3
Mid North Coast	0.0	29.5	11.0
New England	16.3	31.3	22.2
Orana/Far West	35.9	34.6	35.4
Riverina/Murray	6.8	14.3	8.8
Southern Highlands	4.9	14.3	7.3
Total New South Wales	6.7	16.1	9.7
Victoria	1.7	3.5	2.3
Queensland	12.8	18.6	14.8

Source: Derived from custom tabulations of 2001 Census of Population and Housing data

Table 7: Fostering Rates by Family Type and Weekly Income in NSW (percentages)

Weekly income	Singles with non-foster children	Couples with non-foster children	Couples without non-foster children
< \$300	5.9	4.5	7.7
\$300-\$399	9.1	8.8	4.0
\$400-\$499	12.7	9.2	5.2
\$500-\$599	21.6	8.7	10.8
\$600-\$699	15.4	9.5	10.7
\$700-\$799	19.1	9.0	14.5
\$800-\$999	15.5	10.5	11.7
\$1,000-\$1,199	11.9	11.2	11.5
\$1,200-\$1,499	11.9	9.7	11.6
\$1,500-\$1,999	10.0	8.2	9.1
\$2,000 or more	5.0	7.1	6.5
Partial incomes stated	22.7	13.4	14.5
All incomes not stated	7.1	14.1	3.7
Total	12.9	9.6	8.9

Source: Derived from custom tabulations of 2001 Census of Population and Housing data

Table 8: Female Foster Carers by Level of Highest Qualification and Family Type in NSW (percentages)

Level of highest post-school qualification	Single carers with non-foster children (%)	Single carers without non-foster children (%)	Couple carers with non-foster children (%)	Couple carers without non-foster children (%)	All female foster carers (%)
Tertiary	7.0	6.8	10.6	8.9	8.8
Other-post school	16.6	17.5	18.0	21.0	18.9
No post-school	70.4	61.1	60.5	59.9	62.0
Not stated	6.0	14.5	9.5	9.4	9.5
Not present	0.0	0.0	1.4	0.8	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Derived from custom tabulations of 2001 Census of Population and Housing data

Section 2

Table 9: Projections of Selected Populations in NSW

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Foster Carers													
Number													
Series A	1865	1874	1889	1907	1925	1944	1960	1975	1992	2008	2026	2034	2042
Series B	1865	1874	1888	1905	1923	1941	1956	1970	1986	2001	2017	2023	2030
Series C	1865	1874	1886	1902	1918	1935	1948	1961	1975	1988	2002	2006	2010
Percentage growth from 2003													
Series A				1.0	1.9	2.9	3.8	4.6	5.5	6.3	7.3	7.7	8.1
Series B				0.9	1.9	2.8	3.6	4.4	5.2	6.0	6.9	7.2	7.5
Series C				0.9	1.7	2.6	3.3	3.9	4.7	5.4	6.2	6.3	6.5
Females aged 15+													
Number ('000s)													
Series A	2656	2692	2722	2755	2787	2820	2851	2883	2915	2947	2978	3008	3037
Series B	2656	2692	2721	2753	2784	2816	2846	2877	2907	2938	2968	2995	3021
Series C	2656	2692	2718	2748	2777	2806	2835	2863	2891	2920	2948	2971	2994
Percentage growth from 2003													
Series A				1.2	2.4	3.6	4.7	5.9	7.1	8.2	9.4	10.5	11.6
Series B				1.2	2.3	3.5	4.6	5.7	6.9	8.0	9.1	10.1	11.0
Series C				1.1	2.2	3.2	4.3	5.3	6.4	7.4	8.5	9.3	10.2
Children aged under 15													
Number ('000s)													
Series A	1344	1338	1335	1333	1330	1327	1327	1326	1326	1326	1326	1332	1337
Series B	1344	1338	1334	1327	1321	1315	1307	1299	1291	1282	1274	1270	1266
Series C	1344	1338	1332	1321	1310	1300	1283	1267	1250	1233	1217	1202	1188
Percentage growth from 2003													
Series A				-0.2	-0.4	-0.7	-0.7	-0.7	-0.7	-0.7	-0.7	-0.3	0.2
Series B				-0.5	-0.9	-1.4	-2.0	-2.6	-3.2	-3.8	-4.5	-4.8	-5.1
Series C				-0.8	-1.6	-2.4	-3.6	-4.9	-6.1	-7.4	-8.6	-9.7	-10.8
Total population													
Number ('000s)													
Series A	6575	6640	6700	6763	6826	6889	6954	7019	7083	7148	7213	7278	7344
Series B	6575	6640	6695	6753	6811	6869	6924	6978	7032	7087	7141	7191	7240
Series C	6575	6640	6687	6737	6786	6835	6876	6917	6959	7000	7041	7074	7107
Percentage growth from 2003													
Series A				0.9	1.9	2.8	3.8	4.8	5.7	6.7	7.6	8.6	9.6
Series B				0.9	1.7	2.6	3.4	4.2	5.0	5.9	6.7	7.4	8.2
Series C				0.7	1.5	2.2	2.8	3.4	4.1	4.7	5.3	5.8	6.3

Table 10: Projections of Foster Carer Families Without Applying Projected Changes in Labour Force Participation in NSW

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number													
Series A	1865	1883	1905	1931	1956	1982	2004	2026	2049	2071	2093	2106	2119
Series B	1865	1883	1904	1929	1954	1979	2000	2021	2042	2063	2084	2095	2106
Series C	1865	1883	1902	1926	1950	1973	1992	2011	2031	2050	2069	2077	2085
Percentage growth from 2003													
Series A				1.3	2.7	4.0	5.2	6.4	7.5	8.7	9.9	10.5	11.2
Series B				1.3	2.6	3.9	5.0	6.2	7.3	8.4	9.5	10.0	10.6
Series C				1.2	2.5	3.7	4.7	5.7	6.7	7.7	8.7	9.2	9.6

Table 11: Projected Number of Foster Carer Families (Series B) by Age and Labour Force Status in NSW

Age	LF status	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
15 – 24	LF	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
15 – 24	NILF	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
15 – 24	All	16	16	16	16	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17
25 – 34	LF	100	101	102	102	102	102	102	103	103	104	104	105	105
25 – 34	NILF	112	111	110	108	107	105	104	104	103	102	102	102	102
25 – 34	All	213	212	211	210	208	207	207	207	206	206	206	206	207
35 – 44	LF	299	301	301	303	305	307	309	310	312	313	314	315	316
35 – 44	NILF	284	280	278	275	273	272	271	269	269	267	267	265	264
35 – 44	All	584	581	579	579	579	579	579	580	580	581	581	580	580
45 – 54	LF	310	315	322	329	337	345	350	356	361	367	372	375	377
45 – 54	NILF	397	391	389	388	388	387	385	382	382	380	380	376	373
45 – 54	All	707	706	711	718	725	732	736	739	744	747	752	751	750
55 – 64	LF	75	79	84	89	93	98	102	107	111	116	120	123	127
55 – 64	NILF	176	183	189	195	201	206	211	215	218	222	226	227	228
55 – 64	All	251	262	273	283	294	304	313	321	330	338	346	351	355
65 – 74	LF	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	7	8	8	8
65 – 74	NILF	49	49	49	50	50	51	52	54	56	57	59	61	64
65 – 74	All	55	55	55	56	56	57	59	61	63	65	67	69	72
75 and over	LF	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
75 and over	NILF	25	26	26	27	28	28	29	29	29	30	30	31	32
75 and over	All	28	29	29	30	31	32	32	33	33	34	34	35	36
not present		13	13	13	13	13	13	13	14	14	14	14	14	14
All	LF	802	814	827	842	856	871	883	896	908	920	932	940	947
All	NILF	1050	1047	1048	1051	1053	1057	1059	1060	1065	1067	1071	1070	1069
All	All	1865	1874	1888	1905	1923	1941	1956	1970	1986	2001	2017	2023	2030

Notes: Labour force (LF); not in the labour force (NILF)

Table 12: Projected Number of Foster Carer Families (Series B) by DoCS Regions in NSW

DoCS Regions	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number													
Sydney*	857	862	869	878	887	896	904	911	919	927	935	938	942
Hunter	203	203	204	206	207	209	210	211	212	213	215	215	215
Far North Coast	145	147	149	152	154	157	160	162	165	168	170	172	174
Illawarra	140	141	142	144	145	147	148	150	151	152	154	155	155
Mid-north coast	121	122	124	126	128	130	131	133	135	137	138	140	141
Central West	93	92	92	93	93	93	93	93	93	93	93	92	92
Southern Highlands	81	81	81	82	83	83	84	84	85	85	86	86	86
New England	80	79	79	79	79	80	79	79	79	79	79	79	78
Riverina/Murray	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79
Orana/Far West	67	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	65	65
NSW	1865	1874	1888	1905	1923	1941	1956	1970	1986	2001	2017	2023	2030

Percentage Growth From 2003 (%)

Sydney ⁽¹⁾	1.0	2.0	3.1	3.9	4.8	5.7	6.6	7.6	7.9	8.4
Hunter	0.7	1.5	2.2	2.8	3.3	3.9	4.5	5.1	5.2	5.3
Far North Coast	1.8	3.6	5.4	7.1	8.8	10.6	12.3	14.2	15.4	16.7
Illawarra	1.1	2.1	3.2	4.1	5.1	6.1	7.1	8.1	8.6	9.1
Mid-north coast	1.5	3.0	4.5	5.9	7.2	8.7	10.1	11.6	12.6	13.6
Central West	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.0	-0.5
Southern Highlands	0.8	1.6	2.4	3.0	3.5	4.1	4.7	5.3	5.4	5.5
New England	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.2	-0.8	-1.3
Riverina/Murray	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.2	-0.3
Orana/Far West	0.0	-0.1	-0.1	-0.2	-0.4	-0.4	-0.5	-0.6	-1.1	-1.6
NSW	0.9	1.9	2.8	3.6	4.4	5.2	6.0	6.9	7.2	7.5

Notes: 1. Includes the following DoCS Regions: Central Coast, Cumberland/Prospect, Inner West, Nepean, Northern Sydney, South East Sydney, South West Sydney

Section 3: The Future Availability of Foster Carers: Projection Methodology

Summary

The decision to be a Foster Carer may involve any number of complex factors, as described in section 7. The underlying assumption made in this section is that age, sex and labour force participation are sufficient explainers of the decision to become a Foster Carer. Thus consider the example of women aged 45-54 years, who are not in the labour force. In New South Wales, about 0.3 per cent of such women were Foster Carers in 2001, so we assume that 0.3 per cent of women with these characteristics will be Foster Carers in future years. So, if the number of such women is projected to decrease by eight percent over the coming ten years, it is assumed that the number of Foster Carers with those same characteristics will also increase by eight per cent.

This method of assuming constant propensities over time is a common method of compiling simple projections to examine the possible effect of future demographic changes on the population of interest. Tesfaghiorghis (2002) provides a recent example of this method with respect to projections of income support recipients. Gyles et al. (2003) also use this method to compile projections of the population of older people with disabilities. However, the present method is more ambitious than these examples, as it not only utilises population projections by age and sex, but also projections of labour force participation rates, simultaneously. The effect of change in these two factors has been disentangled in the analysis. Initially, it was planned to also use projections of changes in living arrangements in the model. However, these data were deemed to be inadequate for our purposes (see section 4 for details).

In compiling the foster carer projections, we have used the 2001 profile of foster carers in NSW, combined with data from two separate ABS projection publications. These are population projections by age and sex (ABS, 2003b) and projected changes in labour force participation rates by age and sex (ABS, 1999b).

Model Specification

In 2001, some 96 per cent of foster families included a woman as a member of a couple, or as a single parent. About 71 per cent were couple families. Data from our survey (see section 5) reveal that a woman was the primary carer in 92 per cent of fostering couples. Thus in the cases where a woman foster parent is present in a family, we have used her characteristics in the projections.

On the basis of the argument presented in section 4, the models take one of the following forms for foster families with a woman present. Equation (1) represents families in which the woman is in the labour force. Equation (2) represents families in which the woman is not in the labour force.

$$C_{t,a,LF} = C_{2001,a,LF} \times \frac{P_{t,a}}{P_{2001,a}} \times \frac{L_{t,a}}{L_{2001,a}} \quad (1)$$

$$C_{t,a,NILF} = C_{2001,a,NILF} \times \frac{P_{t,a}}{P_{2001,a}} \times \frac{(1 - L_{t,a})}{(1 - L_{2001,a})} \quad (2)$$

where:

$C_{t,a,LF}$ is the projected number of foster families with a woman present in New South Wales, at year t , where the woman is aged a and is in the labour force.

$C_{2001,a,LF}$ is the actual number of foster families with a woman present in New South Wales, at August 2001, where the woman is aged a and is in the labour force.

$C_{t,a,NILF}$ is the projected number of foster families with a woman present in New South Wales, at year t , where the woman is aged a and is not in the labour force.

$C_{2001,a,NILF}$ is the actual number of foster families with a woman present in New South Wales, at August 2001, where the woman is aged a and is not in the labour force.

$P_{t,a}$ is the projected population of women aged a , in New South Wales, at year t .

$P_{2001,a}$ is the actual population of women aged a , in New South Wales, at August 2001.

$L_{t,a}$ is the projected labour force participation rate of women aged a in New South Wales, at year t ;

$L_{2001,a}$ is the actual labour force participation rate of women aged a , in New South Wales, at August 2001.

t is the calendar year (at August);

a is the age of the female household reference person in the following categories: 15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, 75 and over;

For the four per cent of foster families without a female Foster Carer, we use the male Carer's characteristics that are in the data. We used the same models as specified above (with C referring to foster families without a woman present, and P referring to the population of men). For a small number of Foster Carer couple families (approximately thirteen in 2001), the mother was not present on Census night. We have assumed that their rate of increase will be equal to overall population growth, since we have no knowledge of their characteristics.

Regional Projections

In principal, the models specified above could also be used at a finer level of regional disaggregation. However, a number of complicating factors arise. Neither of the ABS projection series utilised is published at the necessary geographical detail. One could assume that the rates of changes (but not necessarily the actual levels) in population by age and sex, and labour force participation rates are constant across regions. But

these are questionable assumptions. In particular, ignoring the possibility of differential rates of population growth (and changes in age distribution) between regions would be a major shortcoming.

Furthermore, the issue of perturbation in the Census data on Foster Carers becomes very important at this level of disaggregation. To illustrate, consider that there are 1344 ‘cells’, or combinations of region, family type, age and labour force status in the Foster Carer data obtained from the Census data. Of these cells, only about twelve percent indicate a value greater than three. All of the remaining cells are potentially perturbed. There is no way of discerning which of these cells actually represent the values of zero, one, two, or three, respectively. Clearly it is not sensible to apply a detailed projection methodology for the regional estimates.

At the time of writing, an alternate source of NSW population projections was being developed. The Population Projections Group (PPG) is developing projections for NSW and each of its major regions. An advantage of such data is its greater degree of regional disaggregation compared to the ABS data that we have used. Unfortunately, these are not yet publicly available. When they are available, it would be worthwhile for DoCS to repeat the regional projections, in order to produce more reliable projections of Foster Carers by regions.

In the meantime, we have used the previous version of the PPG projections, which are based on 1996 Census data (Department of Planning, 2002). These are the latest freely available regional population projections. The projections are published only at total population level (there is no breakdown by age or sex). This publication shows that the projected rate of population change varies quite substantially between regions.

We have used those relativities in combination with the overall projected rates of change in foster carers in New South Wales to construct a series of regional foster carer projections. The implicit assumptions in such an approach are that

- *Changes* in the age and sex structure of the population will be consistent across regions.
- *Changes* in labour force participation by age and sex will be consistent across regions.

These assumptions are not regarded as a major weakness of the regional projections. The model takes the following form:

$$C_{t,r} = C_{2001,r} \times \frac{C_t}{C_{2001}} \times \frac{\frac{P_{t,r}}{P_t}}{\frac{P_{2001,r}}{P_{2001}}} \quad (1)$$

Where $C_{t,r}$ is the projected number of foster carers in year t in region r .

Where $C_{2001,r}$ is the actual number of foster carers in 2001 in region r .

Where C_t is the projected number of foster carers in year t in New South Wales.

Where C_{2001} is the actual number of foster carers in 2001 in New South Wales.

Where $P_{t,r}$ is the projected (PPG) population in year t of region r .

Where $P_{2001,r}$ is the projected (PPG) population in 2001 of region r .

Where P_t is the projected (PPG) population in year t of New South Wales.

Where P_{2001} is the projected (PPG) population in 2001 of New South Wales.

Data Sources

The sources of projections data are described in more detail below.

Population Projections: Australia 2002-2101 (ABS, 2003b)

ABS provides three series of projections in this publication, based on combinations of assumptions in relation to future levels of fertility, mortality, net overseas migration, and interstate migration. In the foster carer projections presented in this paper, we have focused on ‘Series B’ projections, which are based on all of the ‘medium assumptions’. The results generated by the other two series are also shown for context.

Assumptions

The ‘medium assumptions’ are summarised here from ABS (2003b: 4-30):

- Fertility: the TFR for Australia will decline to 1.6 babies per woman by 2011, and then remain constant. The trend towards older ages of mothers at birth is assumed to continue, while the sex ratio at birth is assumed to be 105.5 male births per 100 female births. Assumptions for these three aspects of fertility at lower geographical levels are determined from current differentials between Australia and each state/territory, and between each state/territory and its capital city/balance of state. Thus, for New South Wales it is assumed that the TFR will decline to 1.63 by 2011 (1.57 for capital city, and 1.79 for balance of state).
- Mortality: life expectancy at birth (for Australia) increasing from current levels (77.0 years for males and 82.4 years for females) to 84.2 years for males and 87.7 years for females in 2050-51. Life expectancy at birth will rise by 0.30 years for males and 0.25 years for females per year until 2005-06, following which improvements will gradually decline until 2050-51. Assumptions for mortality at lower geographical levels are based on 1999-2001 differentials between Australia and each state/territory, and between each state/territory and its capital city/balance of state. Thus, for New South Wales it is assumed that life expectancy at birth will increase by 2051 to 84.0 years (84.8 years for capital city, and 83.2 years for balance of state) for males, and to 87.6 years (88.1 years for capital city, and 87.2 years for balance of state) for females.

- Overseas migration: Annual net overseas migration (NOM) will reach 100,000 by 2005-06. New South Wales will receive 39.6 per cent of all NOM in 2003, declining to 38.9 per cent by 2006 and remaining constant thereafter.
- Interstate migration: levels for the medium series have been based on the long-term net interstate migration averages for the states and territories. Net interstate migration for New South Wales are assumed to be –29 000 for 2003, –23 000 for 2004, and –17 000 per year from 2005-2051.

Data Items

This publication provides population projections for each state by age (5 year categories) and sex for the period 2002-2051.

This publication also provides population projections for each state by capital city/balance of state for the period 2002-2051. The lack of an age and sex breakdown in this series would require further assumptions on the differences in the age and sex distributions between capital city/balance of state in order to use the capital city/balance of state breakdown. Thus to avoid complications, the capital city/balance of state breakdown has not been used for the foster carer projections.

Labour Force Projections: Australia 1999 to 2016 (ABS, 1999b)

This publication provides the Labour Force Participation Rate for Australia up to 2016, by sex and age in the following age categories (15-19, 20-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65+).

The age and sex specific labour force participation rates were estimated using time-trend regression techniques, using historical monthly, seasonally adjusted Labour Force Survey data (1978-1999). Three different methods were considered for each age and sex combination – constant rates, linear trends, and logistic trends.

These participation rate projections have been adjusted for the foster carer projections in this paper by 2001 relativities between New South Wales age and sex specific participation rates and Australia-wide rates. Thus the age and sex specific odds ratios between the NSW 2001 actual figures and the 2001 projections for Australia are assumed to stay constant for future years. An odds ratio is simply the ratio of the odds. In this case, the odds are equal to the probability of being in the labour force, divided by the probability of not being in the labour force.

Household and Family Projections: Australia 1996 to 2021 (ABS, 1999a)

We initially intended to use a third source of ABS projections data. However, these projections were deemed to be inadequate for our purposes. We outline the main features of these projections and the reasons for our decision.

For these projections, the ABS employed a propensity method to project numbers of households, families, and persons in different living arrangements living in Australia. Trends in observed propensities for people to live in different living arrangements over the three censuses to 1996 are estimated for each five-year age group (but not by sex). The rates of change in each propensity were estimated using a line of best fit across the three points in time. The projected propensities were then applied to a

given series of population projections based on data up to the 1996 census. Three series of projections were reported by ABS, based on the following assumptions:

Series A: No change: The living arrangement propensities remain constant between 1996 and 2001.

Series B: Low rate of change: The linear trend in propensities from 1986 to 1996 continues at the full rate of change to 2001, then continues at half the rate of change to 2006, at one-quarter the rate of change to 2011, and then remains constant to 2021.

Series C: 1986-96 rate of change continues: The linear trend in propensities from 1986 to 1996 continues at the full rate of change to 2021.

Note that for our purposes, using the Series A propensities is equivalent to not using this publication at all. The Series C propensities were considered. The problems with this source are listed below:

- The first issue is whether trends observed over a ten-year period up to 1996 are a reliable predictor of changes from 2003 onwards. The next version of these projections is expected to be published in approximately May 2004. A method of replicating these projections utilising 2001 data from the Census was considered, but it was deemed to be too complex and hence infeasible.
- For most living arrangement types, the propensities were not projected by sex. One would need to assume that many of the overall changes apply to male and females equally. One reason why this assumption is questionable is due to the inevitability of differences in age between members of couples. Other reasons are the possibilities of sex-specific changes in the propensity to live in group households, or as adult children, or as non-nuclear relatives, or in non-private dwellings.
- New South Wales-specific projections were not published at a sufficient level of detail. One would need to assume that the changes projected for Australia were appropriate for New South Wales. Due to the projection method in the relevant series (a constant rate of change in the propensity of each total by age), there is no apparent method for making adjustments to create a NSW-specific series.
- Furthermore, some implications of these projections are not consistent with other information. For example, the projections imply a substantial increase in the proportion of people aged 45-54 who do not have children living with them. Under the assumptions related to sex stated above, the percentage of 45-54 year old women who have children is projected to decrease by seven points over ten years. Published fertility data can be examined to provide an insight into one of the factors that will influence this rate in the future. Age-specific fertility rates have increased considerably in recent years for women aged over 30. Between 1982 and 2002, the fertility rate of 30-34 year olds increased by 38 per cent. For women aged 35 and over, the rate more than doubled. Prior to about 1980, such age-specific fertility rates trended in the opposite direction. (ABS, 2003a: Figure 2.2). The effect of this change on the proportion of women aged 45-54 who have children living with them will not have been

captured in the ABS projections, since they were based on change between 1986 and 1996. While other factors also influence this proportion, it seems highly unlikely that it will decrease by seven per cent over the next decade. This is an important consideration because 45-54 year old women are more likely to be Foster Carers if they do not have children of their own, and more than one third of Foster families included a 45-54 year old woman in 2001. Furthermore, this observation raises a general question over the validity of using this series of projections data for the present project.

- A method of applying projected changes in labour force participation and family status cumulatively implies an assumption of independence between the two. Both respective sets of ABS projections are based on time series methods. It is possible, for instance, that past changes in labour force participation (by age) were actually driven by changes in living arrangements, and hence applying both projections cumulatively is not appropriate. For example, in younger age groups, women without children have higher participation rates than women with children. An increasing proportion of 25-34 year old women are childless. This has the effect of increasing the overall participation rate of 25-34 year old women, independently of changes in participation *within* any family type. In fact, between 1992 and 2002, the participation rate of 25-34 year old women increased more than the rate increase for any of the family types. A similar effect is not observed for women aged 35-64 years of age. The last row of the table contains a weighted average of the age and relationship-specific ratios according to the relative magnitude of each family type in 1992. In other words, it represents the overall change in age-specific participation rates with the effect of composition shift in family type removed. The second issue worthy of consideration is the differences between relationship-specific rates to the overall rates by age. There is some variation in these ratios, again questioning the validity of the independence assumption. However, the results shown below could be used to adjust the labour force participation rates for these differences, if one was to use both the labour force and living arrangements simultaneously. Nevertheless, the other issues listed above are sufficient for this to be irrelevant.

Table 13: Ratios of Labour Force Participation Rates in 2002 to 1992 for Women by Relationship and Age

Relationship	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Wife or partner with dependants	1.079	1.008	1.143	1.374
Wife or partner without dependants	1.039	1.079	1.157	1.558
Lone mother	1.055	1.042	1.111	1.192
Single childless women	0.988	0.962	0.996	1.570
All	1.090	1.012	1.121	1.547
Weighted average	1.051	1.017	1.123	1.548

Source: ABS (various years) *Labour Force, Australia*; and ABS (various years) *Labour Force Status and Selected Characteristics of Families*

Note: The 2002 participation rates were calculated as averages of June 2001, June 2002 and June 2003 rates. The 1992 participation rates were calculated as averages of June 1991, June 1992 and June 1993 rates.

Population Projections for NSW (Department of Planning, 2002)

The NSW Interdepartmental Population Projections Group is expected to release population projections based on 2001 Census data for New South Wales and its regions in March 2004. More detailed projections by local government areas (LGAs) are expected to be released by the end of 2004. The decision was made to not wait for the release of these data in order to meet the project deadlines.

The regional projections data that we have used are the latest available regional projections for New South Wales. These are based on 1996 Census data, and the 'latest available data on population change up to 1998'. These projections are based on the following assumptions:

- The total fertility rate will fall from 1.83 children per woman in 1996 to 1.73 in 2016.
- Age-specific death rates will decline between 1996 and 2005 according to short term rates of change in mortality. After 2005, the age-specific rates will continue to decline at a slower rate, based on trends between 1971 and 1996.
- There will be an annual net overseas migration gain of 70,000 to Australia, and 29,900 to New South Wales in the long term.
- New South Wales will have a net interstate migration loss of 14,300 per year.
- Shares of internal migration to each region have been estimated based on analysis of both the shares of net migration during the 1991 to 1996 period, and an assessment of long-term trends over the thirty years from 1966 to 1996.

This publication states that a corresponding set of projections for LGAs was to be published 'later in 1999'. However, we have been advised by a source in the NSW branch of ABS that those LGA projections never eventuated. A different set of projections by SLA are available from the ABS website at a cost of \$700. Those projections, however, do not take account of planning data, while the forthcoming PPG projections will. Furthermore, the ABS projections were compiled in 1999, thus not taking the latest Census data into account. If DoCS were to re-estimate the regional projections on the basis of more detailed regional projections data, we advise the use of the PPG projections by LGA, to be released by the end of 2004.

The 'regions' in the PPG regional projections correspond to Statistical Divisions (SDs), in the 1998 edition of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification. One complication is that the DoCS regions do not exactly correspond to SDs. In particular, the PPG projections treat Sydney as a single region. Therefore, we have no data to support a series of projections for sub-regions of Sydney. Most of the other DoCS regions correspond reasonably closely to SDs, or combinations of SDs. A possible exception is the DoCS region 'Far North Coast'. Most of the LGAs within this region are in the 'Richmond/Tweed' SD. However, a large minority are in the 'Mid North Coast' SD. For the same reasons, the DoCS region 'Mid North Coast' is a large subset of the 'Mid North Coast' SD. Fortunately, the projected rates of population growth are not dissimilar for these two SDs. A full list of the concordances between DoCS Regions and SDs is given below.

Table 13: Concordance of DoCS Regions with Statistical Divisions (ASGC 1998)

DoCS area(s)	Corresponding Statistical Division(s) (SDs)	Discrepancies
Central Coast Cumberland/Prospect Inner West Nepean Northern Sydney South East Sydney South West Sydney	Sydney	None
Central West	Central West	SD has an additional SLA (Rylstone)
Far North Coast	Richmond/Tweed	DoCS region has the following additional SLAs: Companhurst, Grafton, Maclean, Pristine Waters (which are all within the Mid-North Coast SD)
Hunter	Hunter	SD has an additional SLA (Great Lakes)
Illawarra	Illawarra	SD has an additional SLA (Wingecaribee)
Mid North Coast	Mid north coast	SD has the following additional SLAs: Companhurst, Grafton, Maclean, Pristine Waters, Lorde Howe Island. DoCS region has an additional SLA (Great Lakes)
New England	Northern	None
Orana/Far West	Far West North Western	DoCS region has an additional SLA (Rylstone)
Riverina/Murray	Murrumbidgee Murray	DoCS region has two additional SLAs (Young and Harden)
Southern Highlands	South-Eastern	SD has the following additional SLAs: Boorowa, Harden and Young. Docs region has an additional SLA: Wingecaribee

Section 4: Interview and Focus Group Schedules

Topics Included in Stakeholders Interviews

Availability:

- Explore areas of demand for carers
- Explore need for ethno-specific carers including Indigenous carers
- Explore gaps in type of carers required
- Explore gaps in carer availability for specific age groups, sibling groups, teens, children with 'special needs'.

Recruitment:

- Knowledge of type and frequency of carer recruitment campaigns
- Which communities targeted for recruitment
- Who organises recruitment campaigns
- Explore targeting needs and groups in recruitment campaigns
- Are recruitment processes for Indigenous and specific ethnic groups the same or different
- Are information packages provided to prospective carers
- Is there value in using experienced carers in recruiting campaigns.

Training Packages for New and Prospective Foster Carers:

- Explore types of pre-service training
- Who are the providers of current training packages for carers
- How useful are the training package
- Explore in-service or ongoing training
- Explore formal /informal support components of foster care programs
- Explore knowledge of carer assessment and training packages e.g. *Step by Step and Shared Stories/Shared Lives*
- Explore strategies for attracting, recruiting, training and support for isolated rural and regional carers
- Explore extent of Outreach programs meeting this need
- Explore availability of training and assessment package for ethno-specific foster carers including Indigenous carers.

Administrative or system problems affecting the Department's ability to provide carer support and resources:

- Explore worker turnover and caseload size
- Explore availability of workers trained in OOHC/fostering
- Explore availability of ethno-specific workers
- Explore Department's relationship with Foster Care Association.

General Areas:

- What attracts people to care
- Why the poor retention of carers
- Explore the turnover rate of carers
- Explore public perception of carers
- Explore notion of a 'successful' carer
- Explore notion of a 'typical' carer

- ideas for solutions on attracting carers – short and long-term and alternative models if appropriate

Topics Included in the Carer Focus Groups

Carer Personal Experience:

- What are the highs and lows of your fostering experience

Support for Caring:

- Any issues/concerns around level of subsidy or adequacy of financial support
- Impact of ceilings (i.e. child care, health and education) on ‘management’ of allowance
- Any issues/concerns with housing or personal transport
- Any issues/concerns around access to services for child/ren e.g. health, education, etc

Training:

- Explore level of training (pre service/in-service/ongoing)
- Explore usefulness of training
- Explore additional training needs
- Explore issues/concerns around type/place of training sessions
- Explore issues/concerns around accessing training e.g. child care, respite or transport costs.

General:

- Explore changing nature of fostering
- Carer understanding of why carers continue. What is their particular motivation
- Carer understanding of why carers leave fostering. What if anything would make them give up fostering
- Would they recommend others to be carers – why/why not
- Where are ‘new’ carers likely to come from
- What if anything, could the Department do to attract more people to care for abused and neglected children.

Topics Included in OOHC and Fostering Team Focus Groups

Carer Numbers and Type:

- Explore area of demand for carers e.g. temporary, long-term or bridging care
- Explore age group(s) or need(s) of child most difficult to match
- Type of carers needed to fit needs of children (skills/abilities)
- Is there a pool of local carers
- Explore makeup of the pool of local carers
- Shortage of carers – in what areas

Recruitment:

- Explore type and frequency of recruitment campaigns
- Explore methods used (radio/TV/newspapers/schools, etc) to recruit potential carers
- Explore most successful approach to attracting potential carers

- Any specific communities targeted in recruitment campaigns
- Besides Indigenous care is there a need to provide OOHC for a specific ethnic group or groups – if so which ones
- Any difference in recruiting approach for Indigenous and/or specific ethnic carers
- Strategies used in recruiting in smaller rural or regional locations
- Types of packages (material/information sessions) provided to prospective carers
- Involvement of local FCA representative in recruiting campaigns
- Response (numbers) to recruiting campaigns
- Number of potential carers screened out or withdrew
- Number of potential carers completed training and registered as ‘new’ carers
- Is recruiting becoming more difficult
- Are records kept on recruiting campaigns

Training Packages for New and Prospective Foster Carers:

- Which program/package used to assess and train carers
- Knowledge of *Step by Step*, (competency based resource for assessing potential foster carers) and *Shared Stories/Shared Lives* (training course for new and prospective carers)
- Usefulness (issues or problems) of the assessment and training packages
- Availability of assessment and training packages for ethno-specific foster carers and/or Indigenous carers
- Who conducts carer and training
- What is the involvement of the local FCA representative in training
- Are experienced carers used in the assessment/training of prospective carers
- Ongoing carer training – who organises/who provides
- Methods used to attract carers to ongoing training
- Regularity of ongoing training
- Level of assistance provided to carers to attend
- Extent of Out reach programs for training and supporting isolated rural and/or regional carers

Supporting Carers:

- Explore availability of workers trained in OOHC/fostering
- Explore availability of ethno-specific workers
- Explore relationship with Foster Care Association
- Explore number of local support groups
- Explore Department’s involvement in local support groups

General:

- Notion of a ‘successful’ carer
- Notion of a ‘typical’ carer
- What reasons do carers give when leaving fostering
- What motivates carers to continue fostering
- Ideas for solutions on attracting carers – issues and concerns.

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