



## STRUGGLING TO KEEP IT TOGETHER®

*A national survey about older Care Leavers who were in Australia's orphanages, Children's Homes, foster care and other institutions.*



*The cover image is reproduced with permission from cartoonist for the Herald Sun - Victoria, Mark Knight*

## CLAN's Survey Report 2011

**We would like to thank the members of the CLAN committee of 2009-2010- Frank Golding, Phyllis Cremona, Pat Griffiths, Lindal Sambrook, Gaye Brown, and Leonie Sheedy for their contribution, encouragement and support with this second survey.**

**We also particularly thank Frank Golding and Benita Rupan for their work in collating data and compiling the results for this survey.**

**The CLAN committee would also like to thank cartoonist for the Herald Sun - Victoria, Mark Knight for kindly giving permission to reproduce his cartoon on the front cover of this report.**

**CLAN would like to acknowledge and thank Jenny Macklin - Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Federal Member for Jagajga, for her support and ongoing funding to CLAN. Thank you to the following states that provide some funding to CLAN- New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.**

**CLAN would also like to thank our patrons for their ongoing support - Jason Clare MP – Blaxland and Minister for Defence Materiel, Richard Marles MP- Corio and Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs, Steve Irons MP - Swan, Malcolm Turnbull MP - Wentworth, former Senator Andrew Murray, ACT Senator Gary Humphries, Victorian Senator Mitch Fifield and New South Wales Senator Steve Hutchins. CLAN would also like to give a very special thank you to our long term supporter Queensland Senator Claire Moore.**

**Thank you to the past providers of institutional care who have supported CLAN financially. Finally, a very big thank you to all our wonderful CLAN members that have trusted us to represent and advocate for them.**

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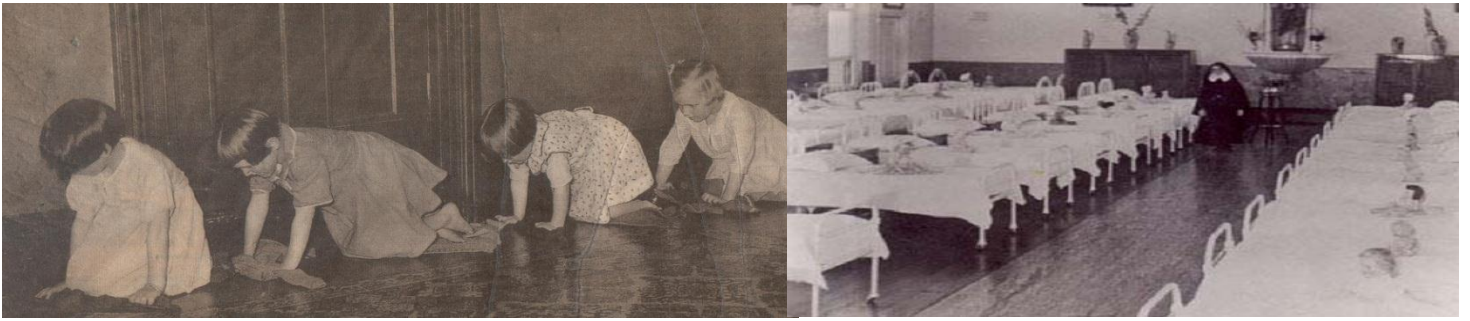
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## FOREWORD

### CLAN PRESIDENT 2011- JIM LUTHY

**The CLAN committee would like to thank the 577 CLAN members who took the time to complete this 16-page survey. The oldest participant to complete the survey was 90 years old and the youngest participant was 27 years old.**

**The CLAN committee understands and appreciates that for many of our members this survey raised many painful memories.**

**The results of this survey will demonstrate to all governments, churches and charities that ran the orphanages, children's Homes and foster care; and the community of the long lasting effects of a Care Leaver childhood on Care Leavers and their family members.**

**Finally, the CLAN committee hopes that the results of this survey will assist Care Leaver's families to have a greater understanding of the lifelong effects of the legacy of a childhood separated from their families and raised in 'care' in orphanages, Children's Homes, foster care and other institutions.**



# CHAPTER 1 –

## INTRODUCTION

This is a report of the second national survey of CLAN members.

CLAN's first survey, *A Terrible Way to Grow Up: The experience of institutional care and its outcomes for Care Leavers in Australia*, (CLAN, 2008) focused on the experiences in 'care' as reported by some 382 CLAN members in the period 2006-07. That survey collected a substantial body of direct knowledge about what it was like to grow up in 'care' in Australia.

It demonstrated as the Senate Report *Forgotten Australians* (August 2004) had done, that the word 'care' was inappropriate in many cases. Our surveys showed that many respondents knew very little about their own history or the reasons for going into 'care'. It was evident that for the majority it really was a terrible way to grow up.

This second survey draws on an even larger number of respondents - 577 CLAN members from all over Australia. Some of the key questions are repeated from the first survey as a means of validating the findings of that survey but it also extends the scope of the research. In particular it asks questions designed to assess how connected Care Leavers are to the mainstream community and to their families. The survey attempts to get a feel for how CLAN members are responding to the measures that have been put in place around Australia within the past five or six years.

Some Care Leavers - perhaps not the majority- may be inclined to think of themselves as "Remembered Australians". This is especially due to recent events such as apologies by national and state governments, churches and charities; acknowledgements through state memorials; the provision of some services; access to their childhood records; and (in a minority of cases) redress and compensation for the harm done to them as children.

In recent years CLAN and other advocacy groups around Australia have brought these issues to the fore, and an increasing number of supportive commentators and professionals have voiced their opinions about the needs of Care Leavers/Forgotten Australians. Since the last survey in 2006, services have been established based on the perception of the needs of Care Leavers by agencies and non-Care Leavers. This is to be applauded, but this survey demonstrates that people affected by childhood in 'care' are capable of articulating these needs themselves. Their voices must be heard. This survey attempts to demonstrate whether Care Leavers feel these first-stage measures are making a difference and if not, then why not and what more needs to be done.

CLAN, the national support and advocacy network run by Care Leavers for Care Leavers was established in 2000 and is now nearly 11 years old. The final section of the survey asks members their opinions on what CLAN does well and what it can do more of or less of. This survey addresses the issues of membership fees and what more CLAN can do to meet the needs of its members.

This survey is designed not only to obtain important and useful information, but also to give Care Leavers the opportunity to tell part of their childhood story and reflect on how their childhood continues to affect their lives today. The survey aims to give Care Leavers a voice. Many respondents found this exercise beneficial or therapeutic, particularly as the history and its effects of Care Leavers is rarely documented.

## CHAPTER 2 – THE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In April 2010 a comprehensive questionnaire was posted to CLAN's Care Leaver members (close to 1000 at the time) with a reply-paid envelope.

In a covering letter members were reminded of the earlier survey and how useful the results had been in our advocacy work with governments and past providers.

The questionnaire was very long and complex in parts with 67 tick-the-box items, most of which were accompanied by an invitation to make additional comments as respondents saw fit.

The CLAN committee felt a combination of direct multiple choice and open ended options would elicit the best outcomes.

The committee was aware that some members would be emotionally affected by some of the questions which touched upon their traumatic childhood experiences. CLAN members were encouraged to seek support and assistance from CLAN's counsellor if they needed assistance in completing the survey. They were also urged to take a break if they found the task overwhelming.

Some of our members that participated in the survey have difficulty with literacy and at our insistence many sought help from CLAN's counsellor or other family members or friends when completing their responses.

Although there was no fixed deadline, there was a very prompt response to the survey mail out, and on one occasion the CLAN staff was overwhelmed to receive 80 responses in one day. In total there were 577 responses.

This response rate (more than 50%, which is unusually high for a survey of this type) indicates how important it is to Care Leavers that their story be highlighted in the public domain.

**It should be noted that not all respondents answered every question. Responses that were left blank were marked as '0' and not counted towards the total of the results.**

Confidentiality was assured to everyone who participated in the survey.

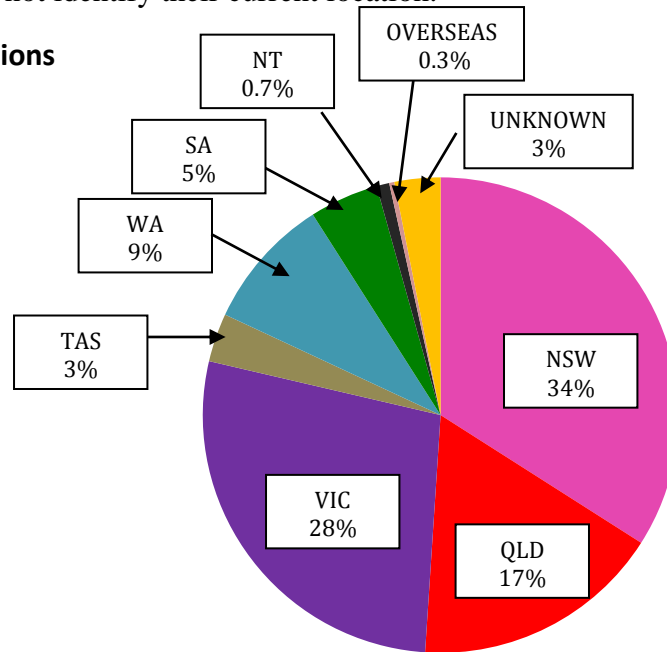
CLAN understands that trust is a significant factor and members were reminded that it was not compulsory to give their identifying data unless they wanted to take up our offer of a posted copy of this report. The report will be available for download from the CLAN website ([www.clan.org.au](http://www.clan.org.au)) and in summary form in a future newsletter, *The Clanicle*.

Of the 577 respondents, 279 respondents indicated they would like a personal copy of the results posted, 219 respondents would like a personal copy of the results emailed and 79 respondents did not provide information to identify themselves to receive a copy of the results.

## CHAPTER 3 – A PROFILE OF CLAN MEMBERS

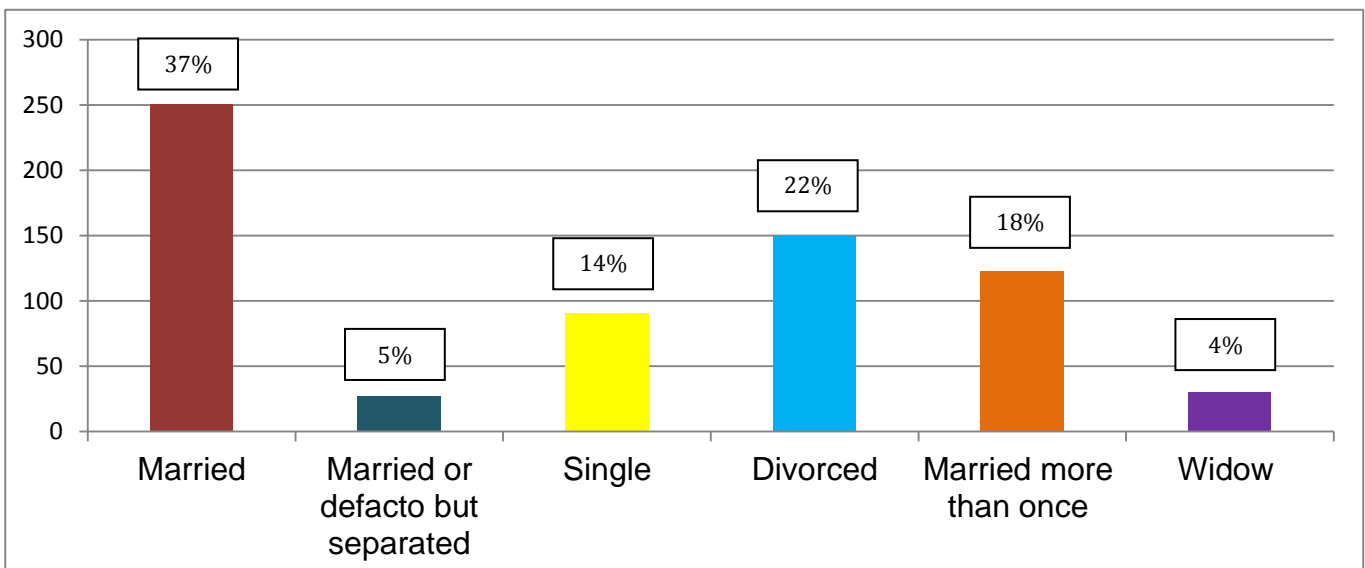
- 56% are female and 43% are male which is similar to the last survey. Three respondents did not identify their sex.
- 85% are 50 years and over and nearly 45% are over 60. The youngest respondent was 27 and the oldest 89. Nineteen respondents did not identify their age.
- The majority (nearly 80%) were from New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. However, there were respondents from all states and territories and even two respondents from overseas – one from New Zealand and one from the Netherlands. Eighteen respondents did not identify their current location.

**Figure 1: Current Locations**



**Figure 2: Family Situation**

Please note some respondents marked more than one response



- Combining those respondents who live only with their partner (44%) and those who live alone (52%), more than half live in the smallest of family units. This suggests that Care Leavers may lack social support and are vulnerable to social exclusion, an issue further explored later in this report.
- Another 27 respondents (4.7%) live with relatives, while 14 respondents (2.5%) live with friends (a total of 7% in shared housing). Nine respondents live in other housing situations including gaol in Queensland, Victoria and South Australia.

## CURRENT HOUSING

- Nearly half of the respondents owned their current accommodation (46%) and, of these, half have a mortgage. For the other 54% who do not own a home, most live in public housing (41%) or in the private rental market (32%).
- *‘Battling to pay mortgage on a pension’*
- *‘I won’t live long enough to pay it off’*
- Respondents also live in a variety of other accommodation including caravans (2 respondents) and retirement villages (6 respondents).

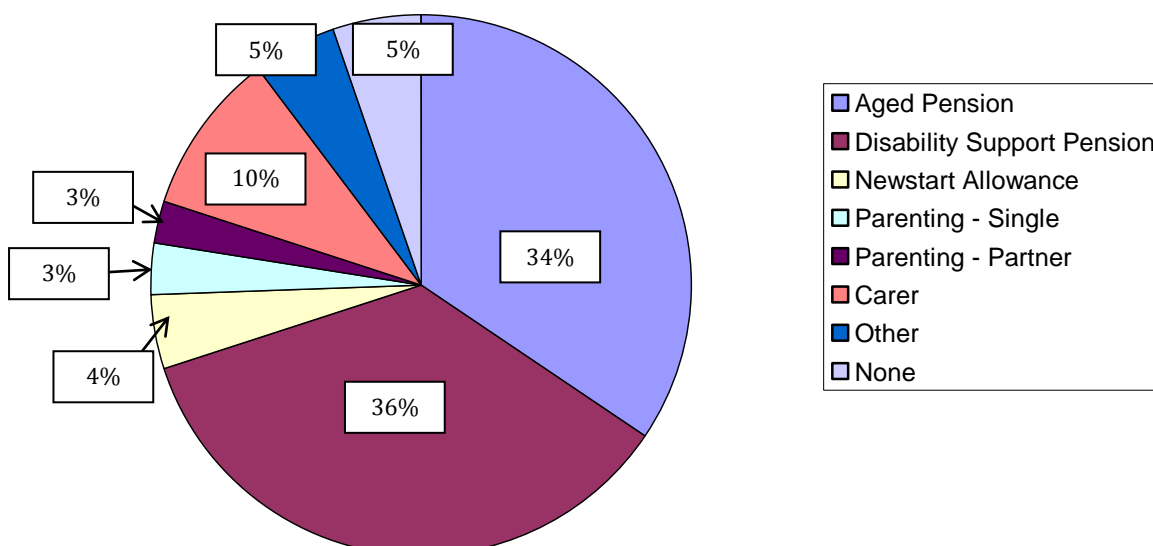
## EMPLOYMENT

Bearing in mind that nearly 45% of our respondents are over 60, only 155 respondents (27%) reported that they are in paid employment of some kind and a little less than half of this minority are in full time work. 244 people reported they were too ill or disabled to work. Care Leaver experiences of long-term unemployment is discussed later in the report.

There were many comments relating to early retirement and the inability to continue work as a result of their treatment in ‘care’.

- *‘I can’t work full time due to serious back pain inflicted as a child in Homes.’*
- *‘Retired at 39 years due to psychological problems when I found out my parents were alive after hearing they were dead when I was in the Home.’*
- *‘Ill for many years due to treatment from the system. I lost a lot of income.’*

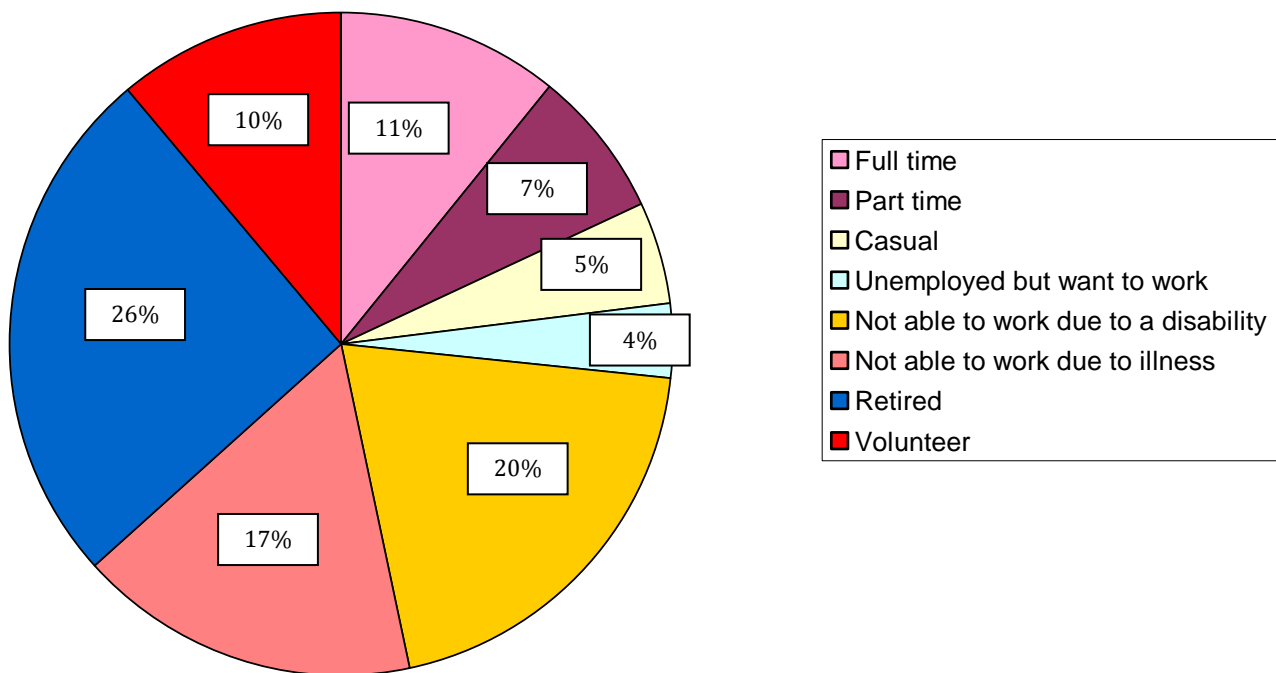
**Figure 3: Income from Government Sources**





**Figure 4: Employment**

Please note some respondents marked more than one response



Employment opportunities are closely related to the education levels of respondents discussed later in the report (refer to Figure 20). The majority of respondents (52%) reached secondary schooling but did not complete Year 10. There were several comments about the lack of work skills or social skills:

- *‘Because of a lack of education in Homes I am only able to get menial labour jobs.’*
- *‘Very difficult to keep a job, I have an issue with authority - suffer depression and anxiety.’*
- *‘When I told the job capacity manager about the Forgotten Australians, she said, “Centrelink has an Indigenous service officer, go there.” I am white!’*

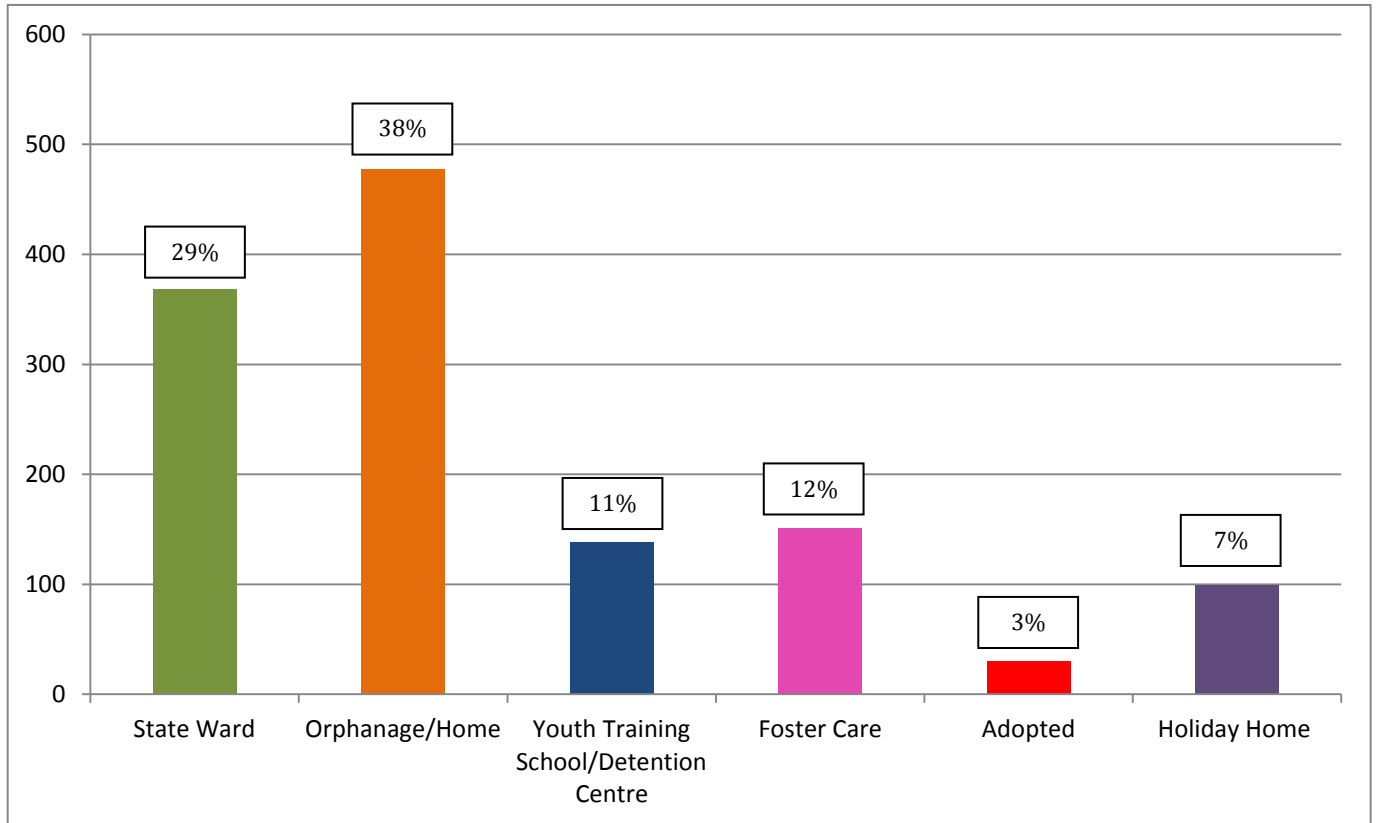
## VOLUNTEERING

Only 13% of the respondents participated in voluntary work. This is compared to more than one-third (35%) of the Australian adult population as cited in the Australian Social Inclusion Board in its report, *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Faring* (2010).

The Social Inclusion Board also comments that a higher level of volunteering is likely to indicate greater community connectedness and social inclusion because volunteering also allows people to develop friendships, networks and skills.

## CHAPTER 4 - EFFECTS OF A CHILDHOOD IN 'CARE'

**Figure 5: Placement of respondents**



**Please note some respondents marked more than one option.**

45 respondents were in more than five different institutions (including orphanages, children's Homes, training centres etc.).

214 respondents said they were in two to three institutions.

Five respondents noted they were in orphanages and/or children's Homes in the United Kingdom and one respondent was in a youth training school in New Zealand.

Holiday host families are a family that volunteered to take children during holidays. Some 97 respondents spent some time with holiday host families.

As many as 64% of respondents said they were in more than one foster family and nine respondents did not know how many foster families they were placed in.

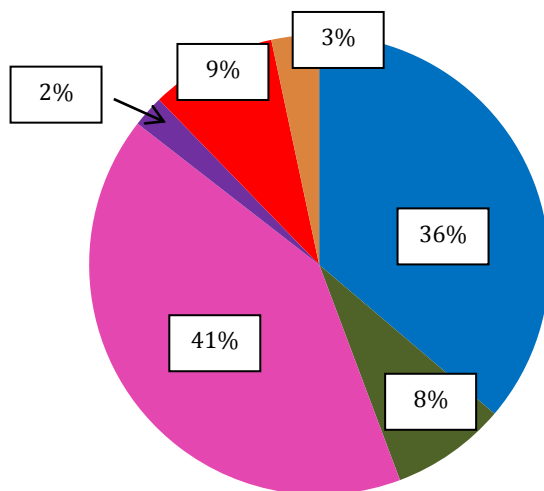
Of the 577 overall respondents, 10 indicated they could not recall precisely how many institutions they were in:

- *'Been to some Homes more than once'*

Of the sample, New South Wales had the highest number of respondents in orphanages or children’s Homes, youth training centres or detention centres, foster families and adoption placements. Victoria had the highest number of respondents in holiday host families.

As more than half of the respondents were in ‘care’ in NSW and Victoria it was evident that New South Wales and Victoria had the highest number of respondents as state wards with 77% of the sample. There were no respondents who were made state wards of the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

**Figure 6: State Wards**

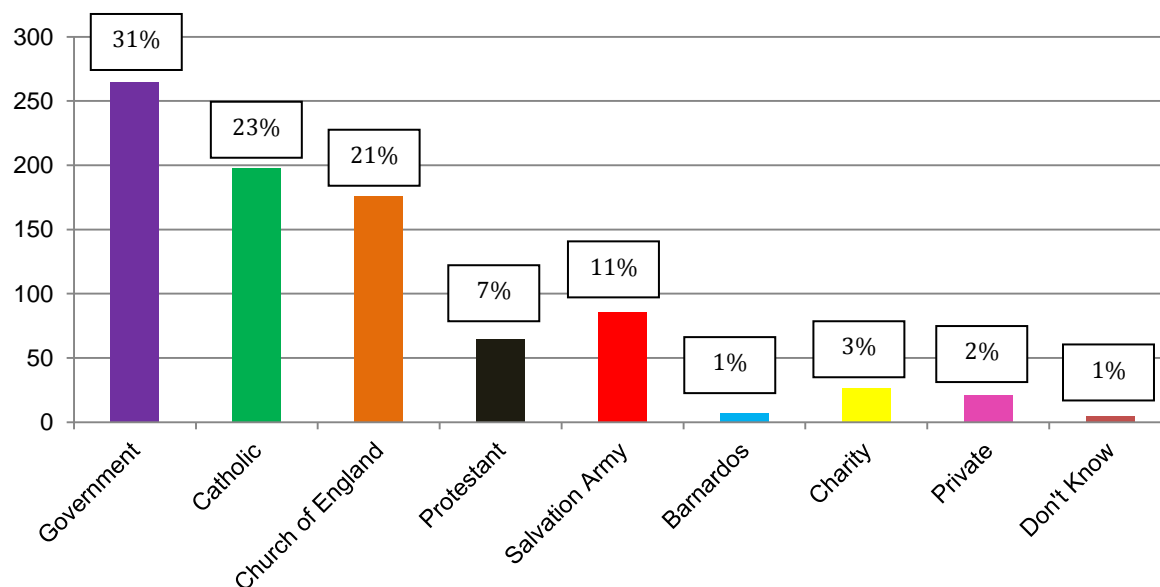


**Please note respondents marked more than one option in the case of multiple placements.**

## RUNNING THE INSTITUTIONS

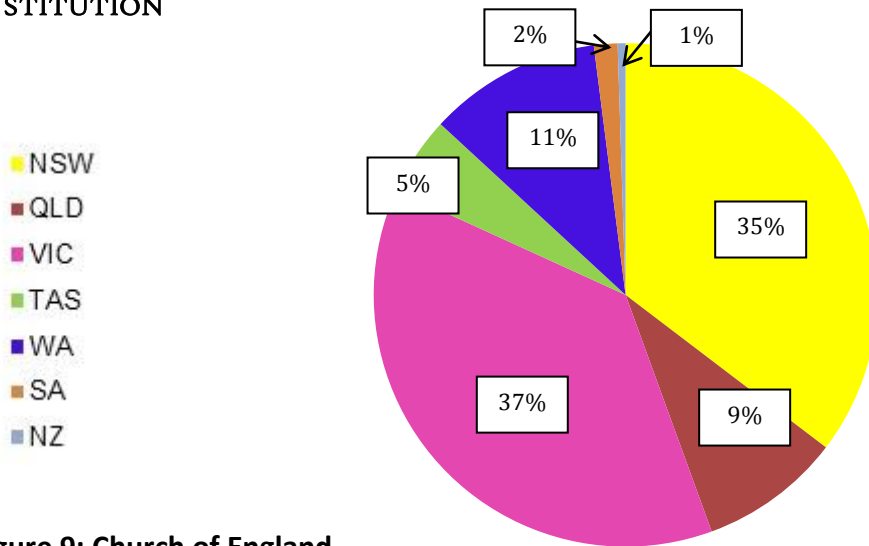
The State Governments, Catholic Church, Church of England and Salvation Army were the dominant organisations running institutions with a total of 86% of all placements mentioned within those. A small number of respondents mentioned being placed in adult mental health facilities as children. It should be noted that 5 respondents did not know which organisation ran the institutions they were placed in. There were no respondents in institutions in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

**Figure 7: Who ran the institutions? Please note respondents marked more than one option in the case of multiple placements.**



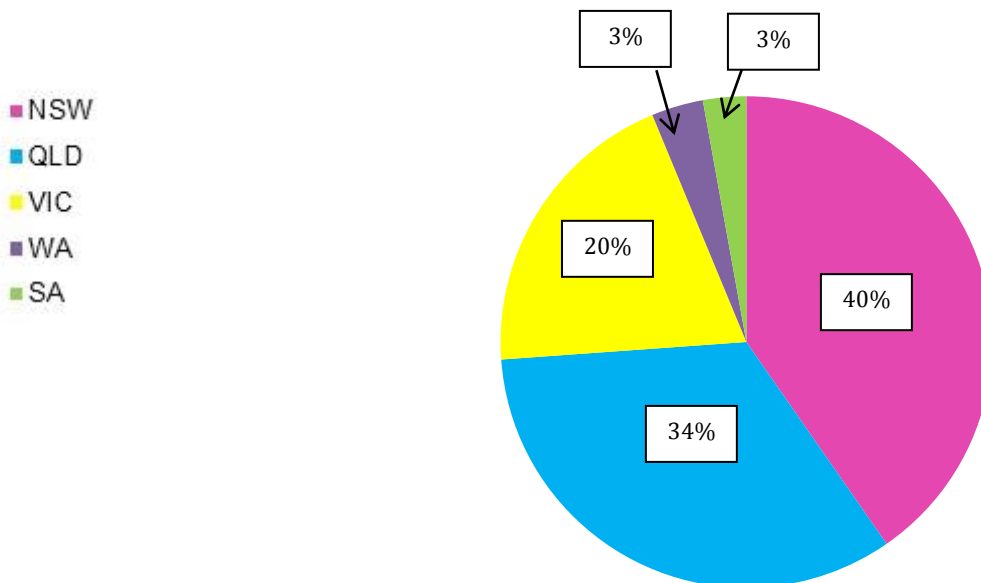
**Figure 8: Catholic Church**

PLEASE NOTE THERE WAS NOT A PLACEMENT IN A NORTHERN TERRITORY INSTITUTION



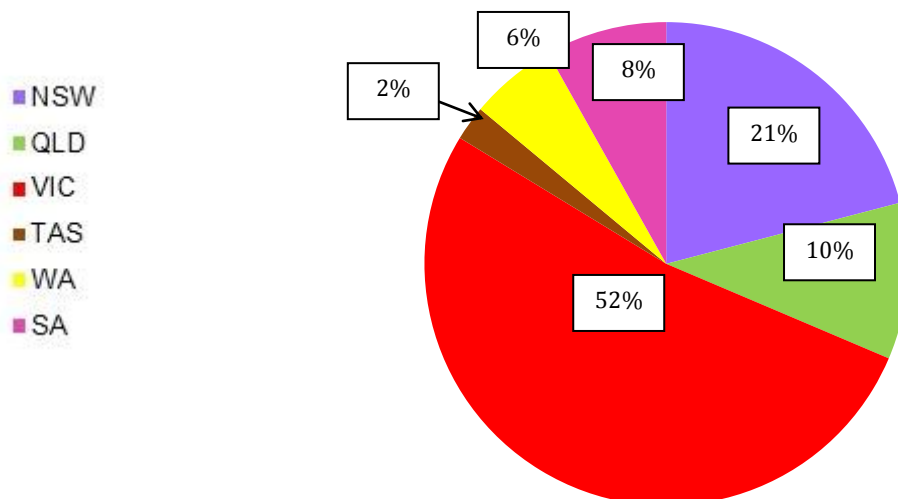
**Figure 9: Church of England**

PLEASE NOTE THERE WAS NOT A PLACEMENT IN A NORTHERN TERRITORY AND TASMANIAN INSTITUTION



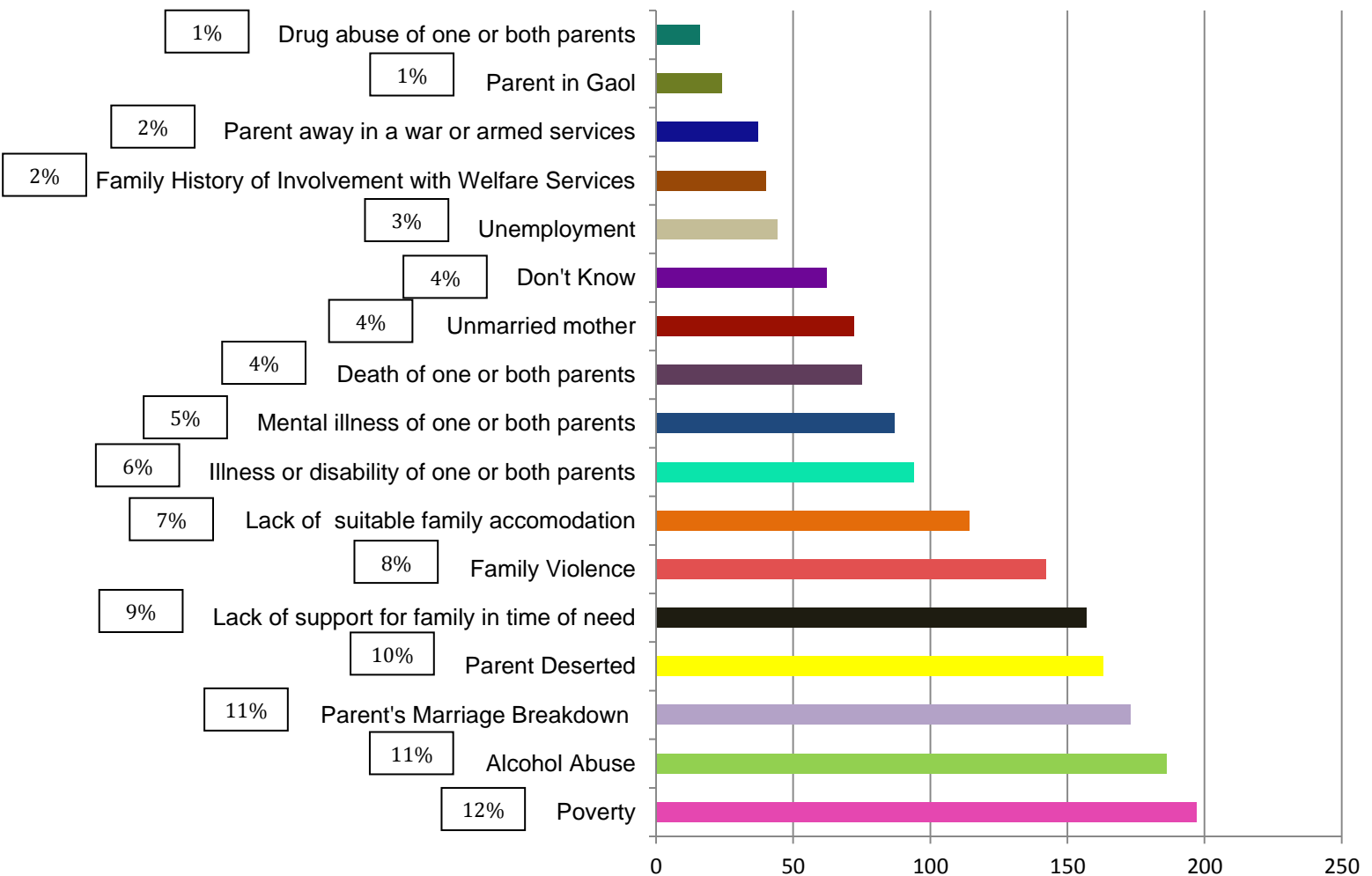
**Figure 10: Salvation Army**

PLEASE NOTE THERE WAS NOT A PLACEMENT IN A NORTHERN TERRITORY INSTITUTION



## REASONS FOR BEING IN 'CARE'

**Figure 11:**



Obviously many respondents were aware that there were multiple reasons for going into care and so they marked more than one option. Overall, the 577 surveys provided 843 responses to this question. These responses confirmed those of our first survey.

Issues such as poverty, alcohol abuse, parent's marriage breakdowns, and lack of support and desertion of parents were the most common reasons for children going into 'care'.

These reasons differ greatly from official reasons offered historically, where there was a great emphasis on either neglect in the case of state wards, or separation and inability to care for children in the case of 'voluntary' admissions (e.g. Tierney 1963: p.9). It is interesting to note that the lack of government support in the context of widespread poverty, unemployment and housing shortages was not considered in official accounts.

Of the sample only 13% of respondents were actual *orphans* in the sense that one or both parents were dead. A relatively high number of respondents (62 people) were still unaware of why they were placed in 'care'.

Further in the report we will discuss why Care Leavers were sent to 'care' as outlined in their personal records.

## INTERGENERATIONAL 'CARE'

A large number of respondents failed to respond to the question presumably because they had no family history of intergenerational 'care' or had no knowledge of whether they did. A total of 56 respondents specifically indicated that they did not know about their family history.

Although only 7% of the sample outlined a family history with welfare services, it was still striking that there were a significant number of people who reported they were not the first generation of 'Wardies' or 'Homies' in their family.

A total of 96 respondents indicated either their parents or grandparents were in some type of 'care'; of these 43% were in either orphanages or children's Homes. This was similar to the first survey's findings wherein 16% of respondents were a part of the cycle of intergenerational care.

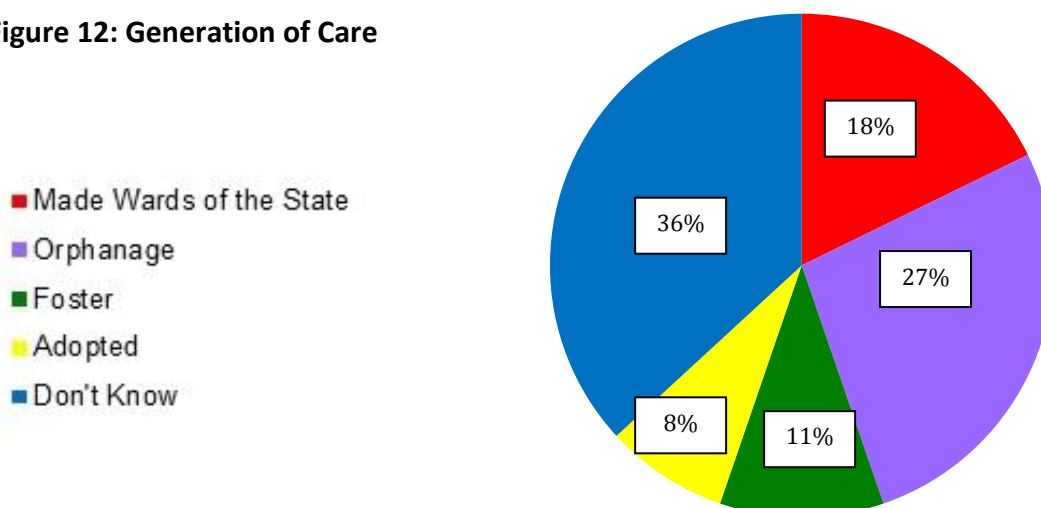
The most common person(s) to place children in the welfare system were parent/s (in particular their mother) with 27% of the sample. Respondents said:

- *Mother sent us to same orphanage that she was placed in - I cannot understand why she sent us there'*
- *'Mother said she couldn't afford to keep me as was already looking after 5 children'*
- *'Mum left dad who was a drinker and sought employment at Windermere as a cottage mother. She was made to surrender me and had me placed in junior boys while she cared for the senior boys'*
- *'I have suspicions mum put me in pretending to be a single mother'*
- *'Dad put mum in Stockton mental hospital and took off with another woman and dumped me and my sister'*

The welfare authorities or social workers (19%) and a police officer (15%) were the next highest groups in taking children away. Respondents said:

- *'The policewoman made a pass at my dad. When he rejected her she took me away'*
- *'Neighbour reported my parents to the police as I couldn't walk or talk from the abuse of my father (not my real father)'*

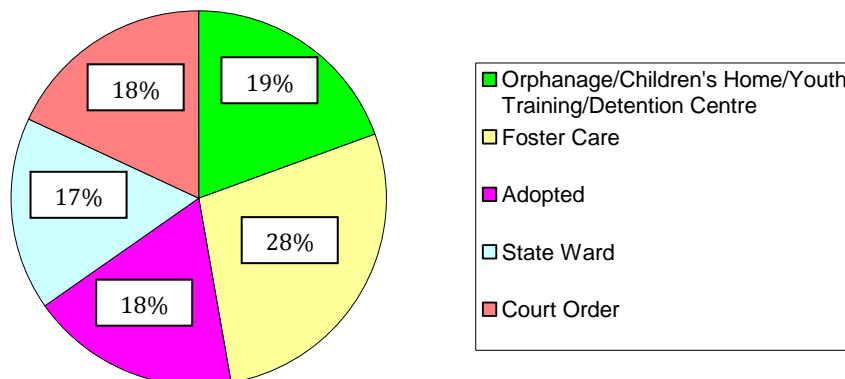
Figure 12: Generation of Care



## ARE / WERE YOUR CHILDREN OR GRANDCHILDREN IN “CARE”?

Intergenerational ‘care’ is indicative of deeply entrenched disadvantage. We saw earlier that many respondents said their parents or grandparents were in ‘care’. Here we see the pattern repeated with the next generation.

**Figure 13: New generation of Care?**



The most common sentiment in the survey was that Care Leavers would never put their own children or grandchildren into ‘care’.

Fewer than half of the respondents made comments to the effect that *‘over my dead body will any of my children go into care’*.

Although many attempt to break the cycle of going into ‘care’, 13% of the sample have put their children and/or grandchildren into ‘care’ or had them removed from ‘care’. It should be noted that 54 respondents said that they chose not to have children.

- *‘I did not have the skills necessary to raise my son I gave him up willingly’*
- *‘Daughter was taken off me aged 7 in 1985 and told I was an unfit mother - got her back a year later. She was sexually abused when taken away and put in care’*
- *‘After the 2nd marriage I had a nervous breakdown because of physical abuse and sent to psychiatric care and children in state care - this still upsets and impacts them today’*
- *‘Daughter became a prostitute and was taking drugs. I was charged for putting my children in moral danger. My niece taken from her mother due to abuse and was fostered - but ended up committing suicide. That niece had a son whom we never met and to this day don't know what became of him’*
- *‘First daughter in ‘care’ for a week and second daughter ‘stolen’ by DHS’*
- *‘Children were taken away when I left my violent husband - no help from DoCS- except them taking kids away’*
- *‘Became pregnant at 17 and my mum didn't want anything to do with me. I had no support and gave the baby up’*
- *‘Children taken away after I was sent to prison. I haven't seen or heard from them since as I was not allowed to contact them’*

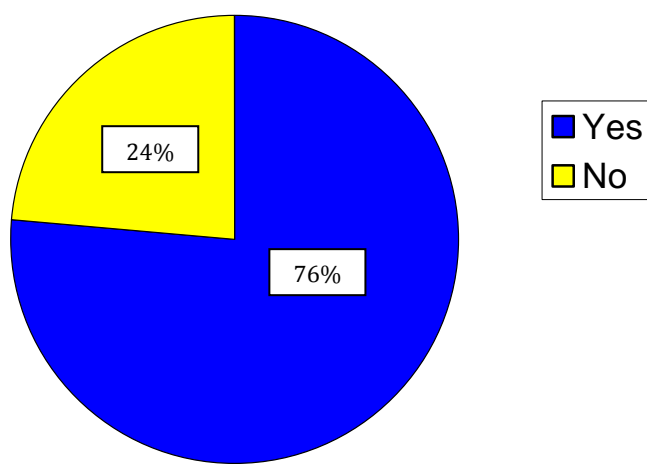
## SEPARATED FROM SIBLINGS WHEN PLACED IN 'CARE'

142 respondents did not answer this question. It could be interpreted that many within this sample did not know they had siblings.

Of those who did respond, 332 respondents said they were separated from their siblings – more than three times as many as those siblings who stayed together (103 respondents).

235 respondents indicated they were separated due to differing ages and/or sex of siblings. It can be interpreted that the Homes were run more for the convenience of the administrators than the well-being of the children.

**Figure 14: Separated from siblings?**



These are some of the comments received:

- *'I was separated from 2 brothers. I didn't know I had 2 sisters at the time. I am still separated from a half-sister and half-brother in Queensland.'*
- *'Brother and sister came in with me. Afterwards, my brother was fostered out haven't seen him in 49 years.'*
- *'Separated from 3 brothers and 4 sisters'*
- *'As I had a hearing problem I was sent to care while my siblings stayed Home and had a good life.'*
- *'Sister and myself in Homes and my 2 brothers stayed with parents'*
- *'Placed in the same orphanage but different dormitories.'*
- *'Didn't know I had a sister in care.'*
- *'Brother in foster care - told he had died but found him when I was 49.'*
- *'We were at the same Home but not much contact allowed'*

A total of 39 respondents said they were the only child in the family to be placed in 'care' and 12 respondents said they were an only child.



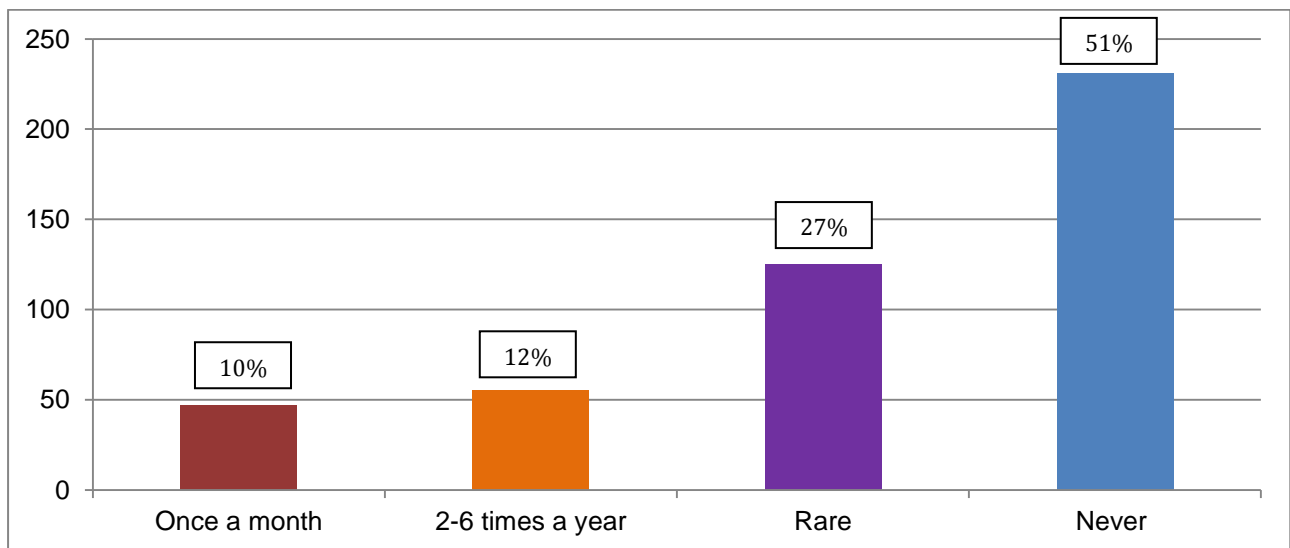
## HOW OFTEN DID YOU SEE YOUR PARENTS?

**Please note deceased relatives were not counted**

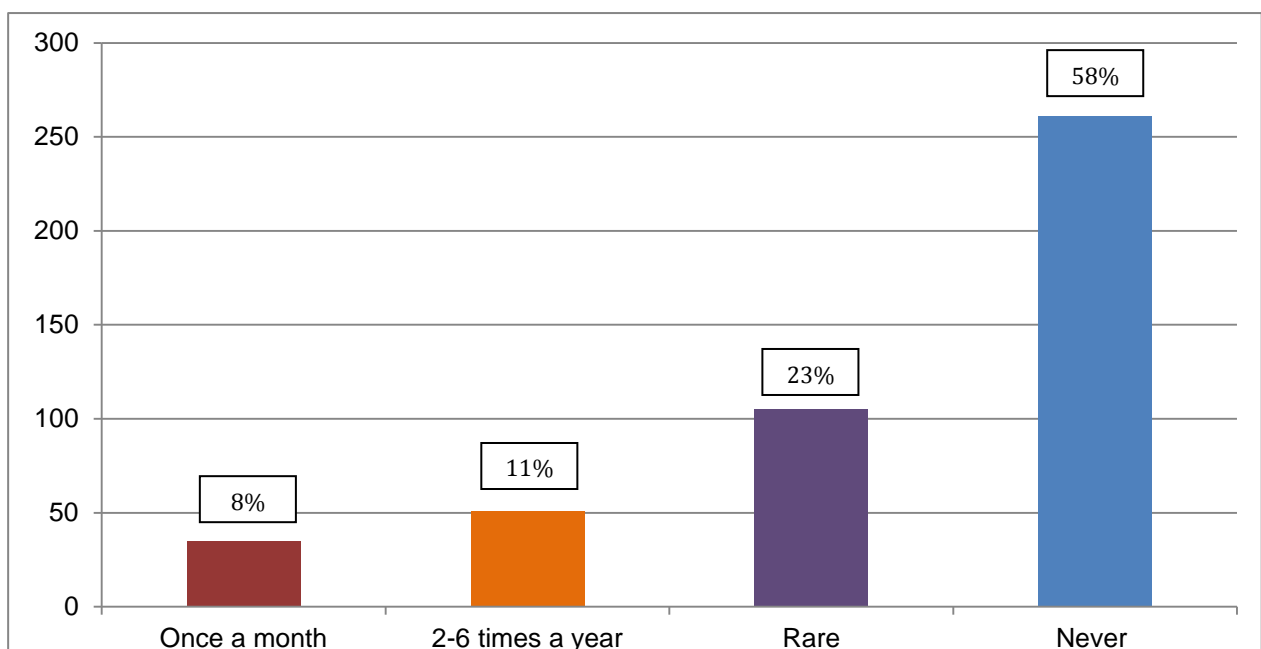
Slightly more respondents saw their mother than their father, but note the large number of respondents who never saw either parent.

Tierney's claim (1963; p.9) that in a study of Victoria's institutions a third of state wards in institutions and 44% of state wards in foster care did not see their parents may have been an under-estimation of the family dislocation brought about through the welfare system.

**Figure 15: Mother**



**Figure 16: Father**



## HOW OFTEN DID YOU SEE OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS?

Figure 17: Sibling/s

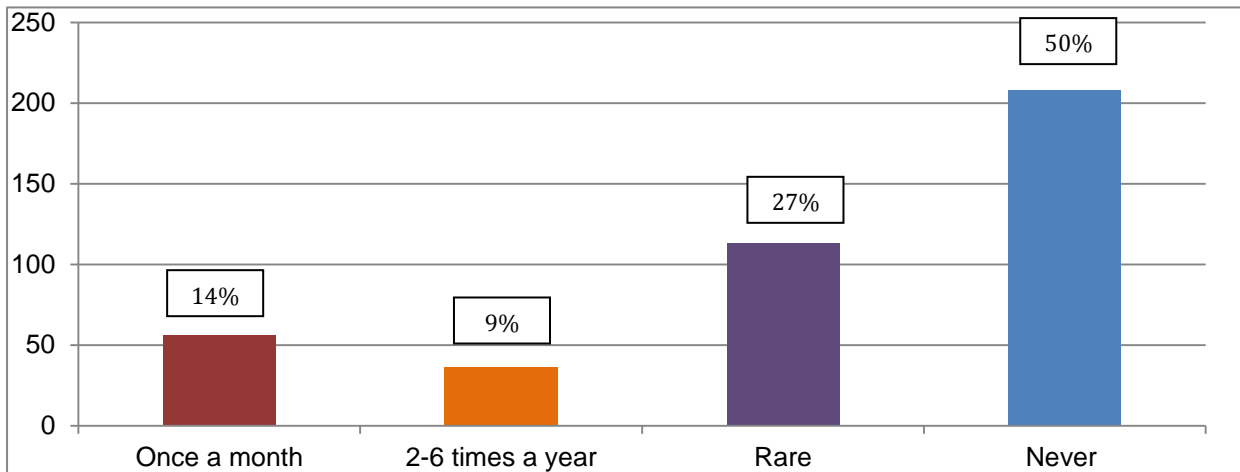


Figure 18: Grandparent/s

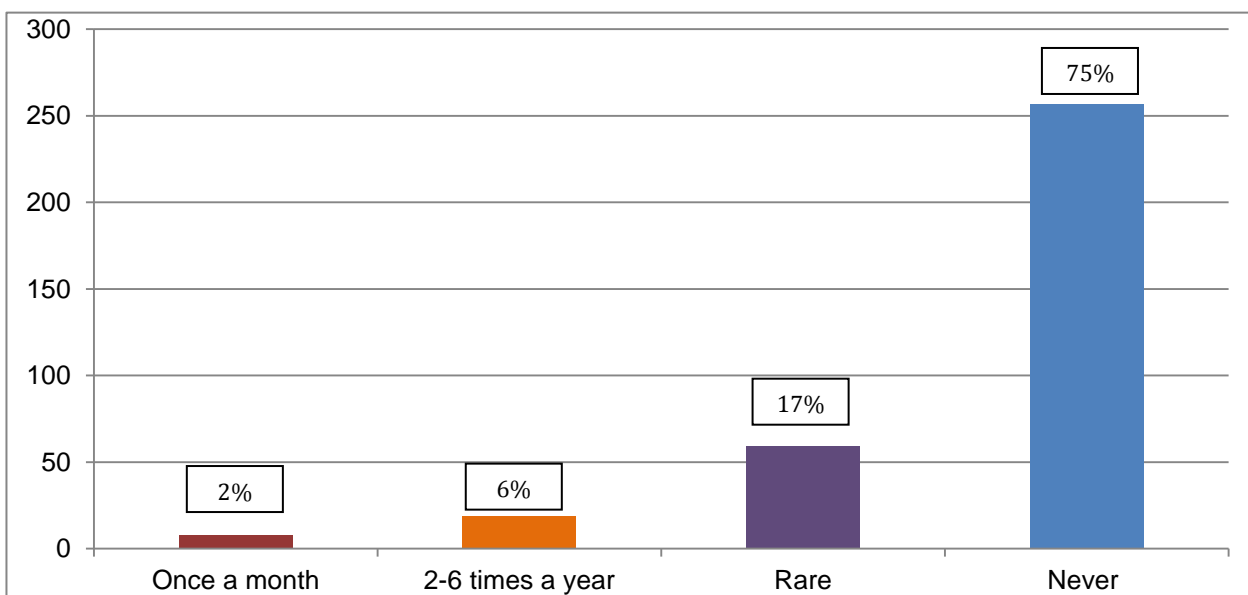
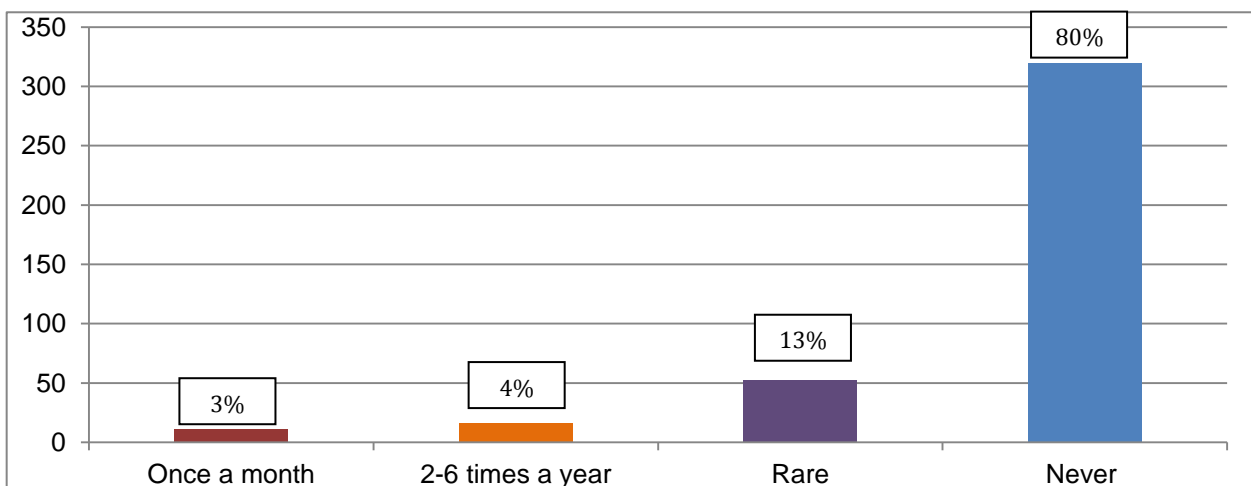


Figure 19: Uncle or Aunt



Typical comments included:

- 9 respondents said comments *similar to 'I felt unwanted'*
- 8 respondents said comments *similar to 'I did not know who my family was'*
- *'Apart from a brother - I wasn't aware of any other family till 1985 - after I left care'*
- *'I saw my father while in care but I didn't know who he was'*
- *'I was only allowed visitors when I was "good"'*
- *'My step-father refused my aunts and uncles to visit me'*
- *'Courts forbade mother to see us again'*

## LEAVING 'CARE'

Returning to their family was the most common pathway after leaving 'care', but often it was not a happy relationship as articulated by respondents:

- *'Was sent back to abusive father'*
- *'I went back to the same alcoholic parents that I was taken from - nothing had changed'*
- *'Was returned to abusive alcoholic father - who had sexually abused me was still in the area – also abused the father of my son'*
- *'I was welcomed back to hell and mental abuse, but the sexual and physical abuse stopped - I was strong'*
- *'I was sent back to parents but ran away due to violence at home'*
- *'I was returned to my abusive mother where her boyfriends attempted to molest me'*

Three respondents said they went to the military after leaving 'care'.

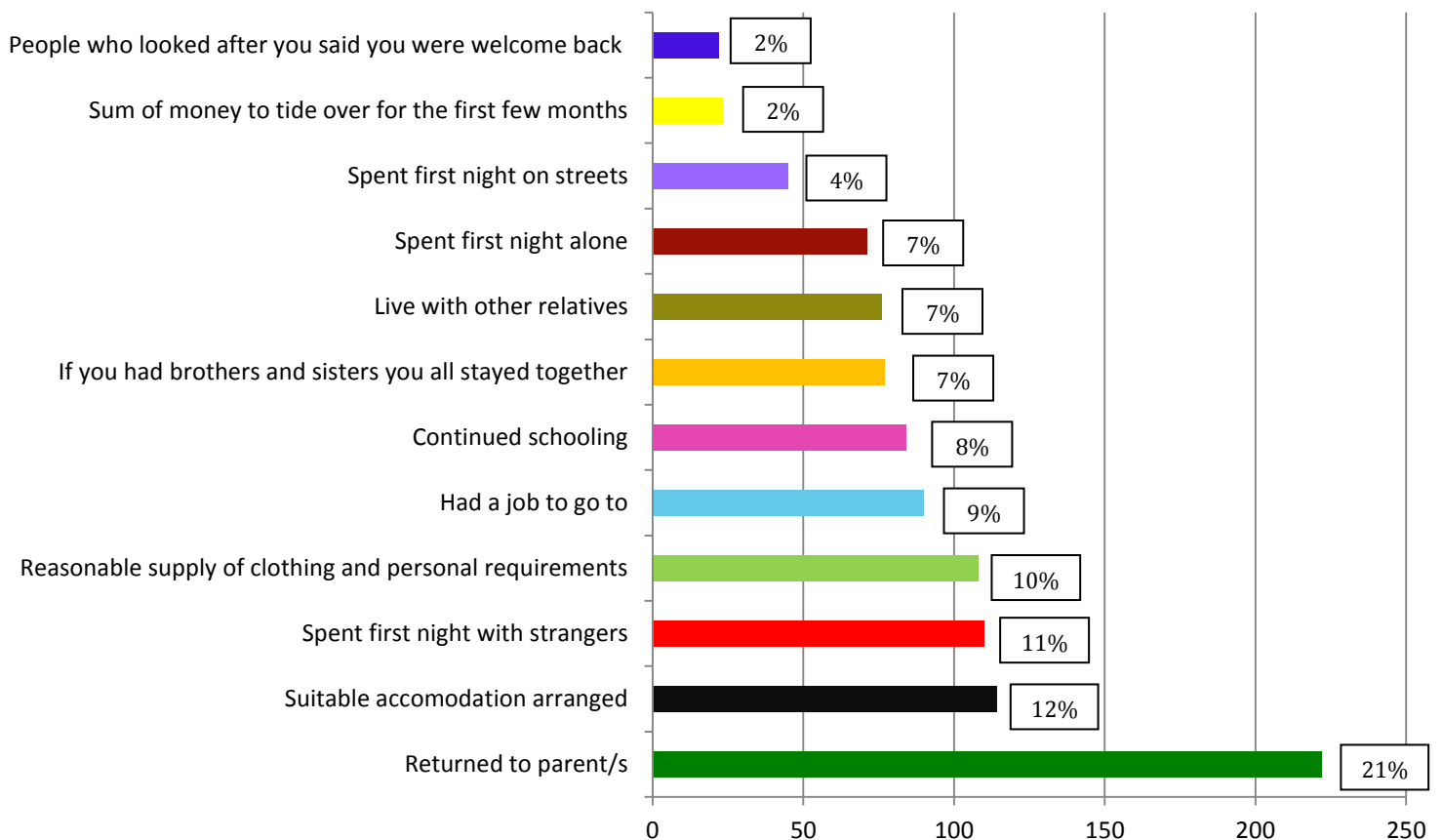
For those that were not sent back to their families a comment included:

- *'Welfare provided accommodation but it was not reasonable. I was with an unknown family and the rent was more than half my wage'*
- *'The first person I was sent to was a drunk'*

It was evident that many respondents were given little to no assistance upon leaving 'care' and an astonishing number of respondents (21%) either spent the first night either with strangers, or on the streets, or alone. The results were similar to the first survey wherein 39% of the respondents spent their first night with strangers, on the streets or alone.

- *'No clothes, no money, no assistance!!'*
- *'I was dumped'*
- *'Moved out on my own at 16 - lived by myself'*
- *'Lived on the streets of Kings Cross for some time'*
- *'Taken in by transvestites when they realised I was homeless'*

**Figure 20: Leaving 'Care'**



**Please note some respondents marked more than one response**

It is clear that when children were placed in institutions many lost contact with their parents, siblings and relatives, particularly with strict visiting and contact restrictions. As a result, many Care Leavers lacked information about the location of their family and any major family events.

As the first CLAN survey acknowledged (p.10), if carers and extended families assisted in keeping contact with family members and assistance with other services it *'would have helped them to retain a meaningful relationship with their own family and background. This is a major component of the emotional neglect experienced by all children in institutional care.'*

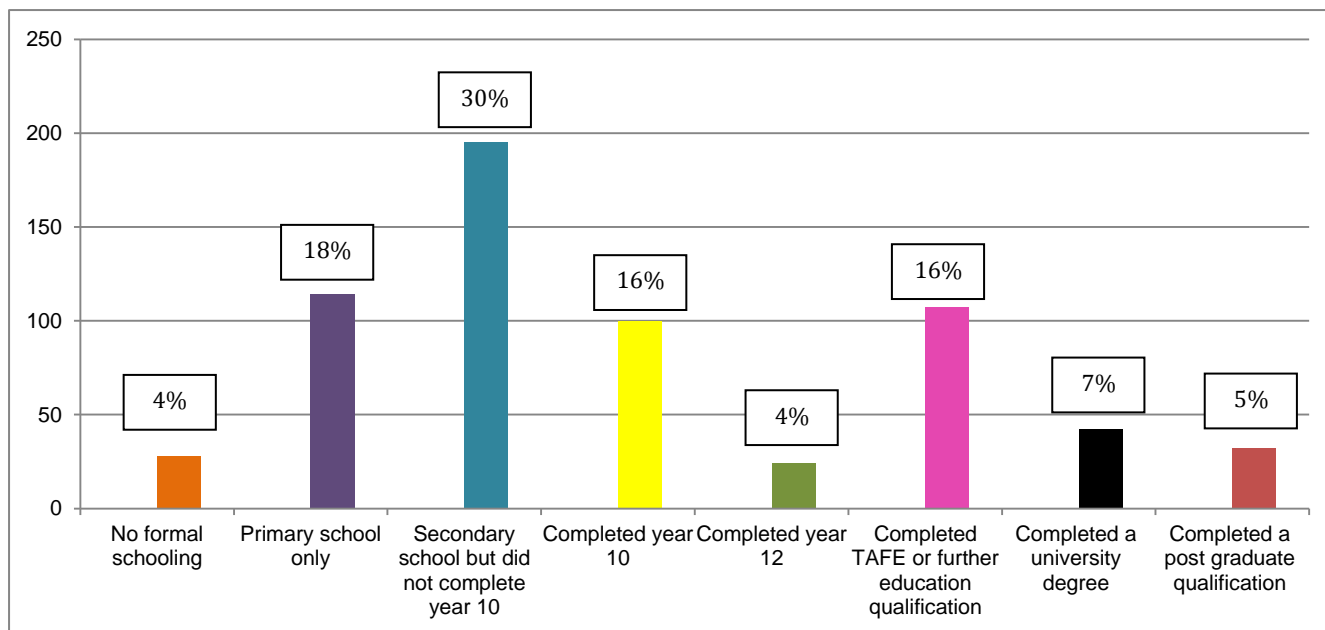
### HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION COMPLETED

This could also be part of the Care Leaver profile but has been placed here to illustrate the impoverished experience of a childhood in 'care'.

The figures in relation to the option of post-graduate qualifications require scrutiny. Comparing the results of this survey with the first CLAN survey, the results from this survey for post-graduate qualifications may be flawed. It is highly likely that many respondents have deemed a first level TAFE certificate as a post-graduate qualification.

It is also important to note that this current survey shows the highest level of education completed without reference to when completion occurred. Many respondents – especially those with TAFE and University qualifications – have indicated that they went back to school as adults to *'get an education'* that was not offered as part of their time in 'care'.

**Figure 21: Highest Level of Education Completed**



The responses from this sample confirm findings from the first survey that institutionalised children were given inferior education creating a negative impact on employment and earning capacity for their working lives.

A little less than a quarter (22%) had no schooling beyond primary level and more than 50% were not given the opportunity to gain the first certificate level of secondary schooling. Only 28% had a post-school qualification compared with 61% (Education and Work, Australia [ABS], May 2010) in the general population.

The dominant comment was that respondents were denied an education and a number were told they were *‘stupid and had no ability’* where some were sent to “special schools”. One respondent optimistically acknowledged, in relation to their post school success; *‘not bad for someone who was continuously told they are stupid and will never get anywhere’*.

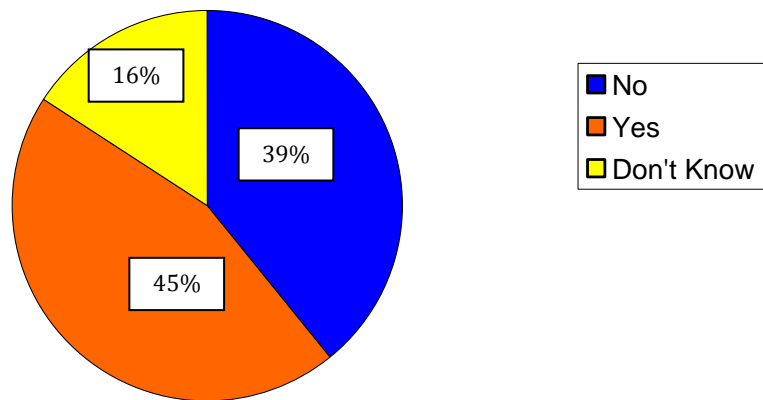
Other comments included:

- *‘Institutional life stuffed up my education. I was denied or had a broken education’*
- *‘Had ability but not the opportunity’*
- *‘I would like to get a better education’*
- *‘Have to go to TAFE for year 10. It was 39 years after I left school’*

## **PARENT SERVED IN AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCES**

90 respondents said they did not know whether their parents were in the armed forces but for those respondents that did know, 45% had parents in the armed forces. The majority (93% of these respondents) had their father in the armed forces. It was evident from these results that many Care Leavers’ parents were fighting for this country in the Second World War just as an earlier generation did in the First World War. The causal relationships between war and its effects on CLAN members’ upbringings should be a subject of further research.

**Figure 22: Parent/s in the Defence Forces**



A respondent commented that;

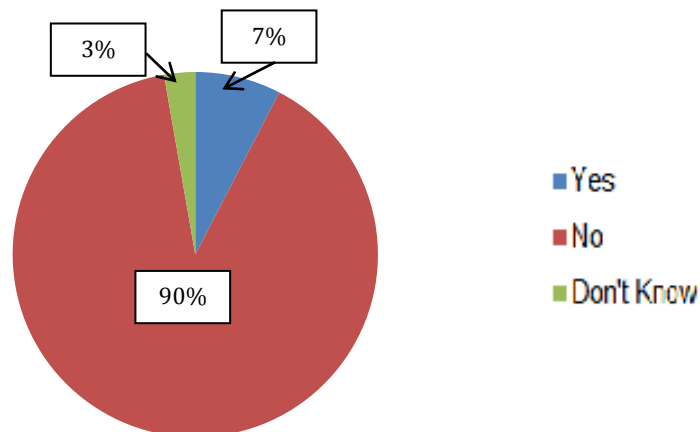
- *'WWII created havoc for our family and led to a divorce.'*
- *'Father damaged emotionally after WWII and mother was unable to cope and had a few breakdowns'*

Three respondents outlined that their father was in the Australian Defence Forces but was never sent to war and situated in a base camp in Australia.

### WERE YOU OR YOUR PARENTS HELPED BY THE RSL OR LEGACY?

Only 7% of the sample (36 of the 473 responses) said they were helped by the RSL or Legacy. However, all those who said they were helped were assisted solely with medical repayments in funeral costs.

**Figure 23: Assistance from RSL or Legacy**



Close to 5% of those respondents that did not receive assistance from Legacy or the RSL were rejected when they sought help. Comments included:

- *'Went to ask for help after death of father but was pushed away'*
- *'My mother was given financial assistance after the death of father during the war'*

## CHAPTER 5 –

### IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD ON ADULT LIFE

The Australian Social Inclusion Board in its report, *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is Faring* (2010: p. 5) says: *‘people at risk of social exclusions often have a number of disadvantages, or complex interrelated problems. A relatively common constellation of disadvantages are: low income and low assets; low skills; difficulties finding and keeping a job; housing stress and poor health.’*

The Social Inclusion Board defines people with **Multiple Disadvantages** as those who fall into at least three of six named categories. **Entrenched Disadvantage** is defined as experiencing three or more of these disadvantages for two years or more. The data in this CLAN survey leaves no room to doubt that children who grew up in ‘care’ experience such a collection of disadvantages as adults.

- ***People who live in a household where no person is employed.*** 59% of respondents reported that there was no person in paid employment in their household and long-term unemployment was prevalent. **Refer to Figure 4.**
- ***People in the bottom 30% of equivalent household disposable income who would not be able to raise \$2,000 within a week.*** Only 29% said they could raise \$2,000 and a further 19% said maybe – while 53% said they definitely could not. **Refer to Figure 24.**
- ***People who are not able to get support in times of crisis from people living outside the household which may impact adversely on their ability to participate in the community.*** Only 36% said they could get help. The majority who could not receive support outlined reasons such as a lack of social interaction with family or friends. This exemplifies the extent to which Care Leavers are disconnected from their family and community. **Refer to Figure 24.**
- ***People whose self-assessed physical and mental health status as either dominant fair or poor.*** 60% reported their physical health to be fair, poor or very poor, while 57% reported their mental health to be fair, poor or very poor. **Refer to Figures 29 and 30.**
- ***People aged 20 years or more who had not completed year 10 or higher at school.*** 22% of respondents had no schooling beyond primary level and more than 50% were not given the opportunity to gain the first certificate level of secondary schooling – Year 10. From this sample it was evident that institutionalised children were offered inferior schooling and as a consequence had negative lifelong effects on employment and earning capacity. **Refer to Figure 21.**
- ***People who felt unsafe or very unsafe at home alone after dark.*** The Social Inclusion Board states that only 7% of Australian adults felt unsafe or very unsafe alone at home after dark. This is in comparison to as many as 19% of respondents who felt unsafe or very unsafe alone at home after dark. **Refer to Figure 27.**

Furthermore, the Social Inclusion Report (2010: p. 74) goes on to say that, 5% of Australians aged 18 to 64 years could be considered multiply disadvantaged as they reported experiencing at least three of the six selected disadvantages. The CLAN survey shows that more than 5% of Care Leaver respondents would be classified as multiply disadvantaged based on this criterion. The following section elaborates on these issues.

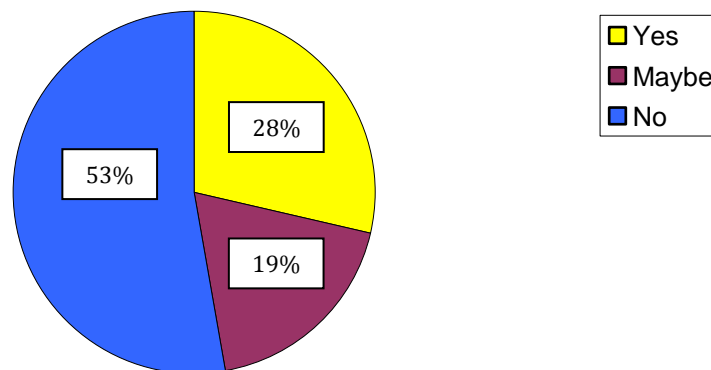
## LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL REPERCUSSIONS

There is a higher level of Care Leavers in the ranks of the long-term unemployed and this is to be expected given that nearly 45% of respondents are over 60. But over three-quarters reported they experienced unemployment during their working life. More than 50% were unemployed for over a year, and of that group 40% were unemployed for more than two years. This is in contrast to the Social Inclusion Report (2010: p. 31) which indicates that the majority (85%) of unemployed people in Australia were unemployed for less than a year. The Social Inclusion Board's research demonstrates the high correlation between jobless families and a complex cluster of disadvantages.

### COULD YOU RAISE \$2000 IN A CRISIS?

More than half (53%) said they would not be able to raise \$2000 within a week to deal with a crisis such as a death in the family or a car crash repair. This is one of the prime examples used by the Social Inclusion Report (2010).

**Figure 24: Emergency Funds**



- *'Who would give me a loan?'*
- *'All my children have grown up and cannot afford to help me when they have their own families'*

### IN A FAMILY CRISIS, COULD YOU GET HELP FROM SERVICES OR PEOPLE OUTSIDE YOUR HOUSEHOLD?

Of the 444 respondents to this question, 263 said they could receive help from services or people outside their household (just under 60%) and 181 (just over 40%) said they could not or did not know if they could. Compare this with the Social Inclusion Report (2010: p. 56) which states that *'in 2006, 93% of the population was able to get support in time of crisis from people living outside their household'*. Just over 60% of respondents outlined that they do not know anyone who would help them and have no one to turn to. Similar comments included:

- *'Don't want help or don't want to be a burden'*
- *'I have no friends or acquaintances'*
- *'No one cares'*
- *'I do not trust anyone'*



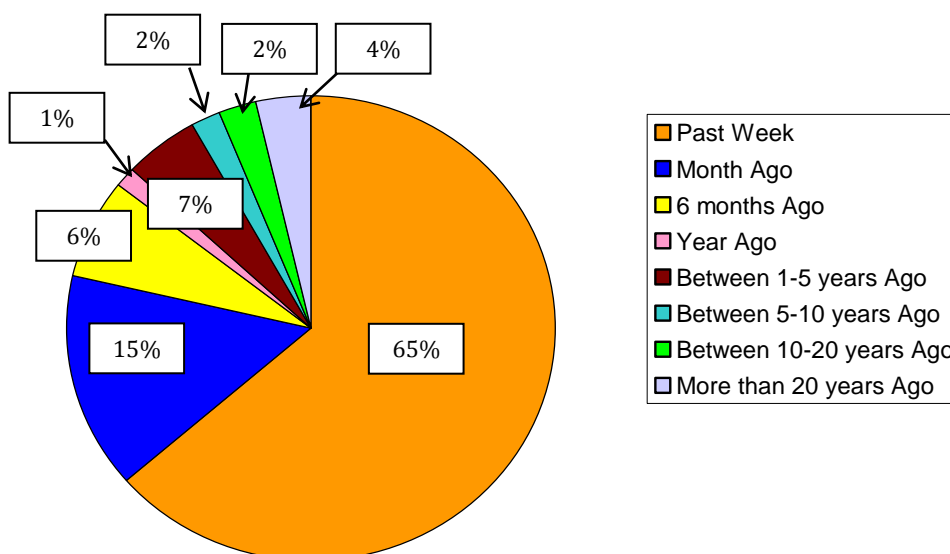
## LAST TIME HAD CONTACT WITH FAMILY OUTSIDE THE HOUSEHOLD

Figure 25 above shows that 64% of all respondents had contact with a family member outside their household in the past week. More than 20% had no contact with a family member for a prolonged period (six months or more).

Some 32 people said they had no contact at all for periods longer than 10 years. Some had never made contact since leaving 'care'.

Less than 10% of respondents said their family lived interstate which made it increasingly difficult for consistent communication and contact, and 24 respondents stated that they have cut ties with family. It is evident from the results that these respondents found their family relationships compromised by the impact of the welfare system.

**Figure 25:**



Comments included:

- ***'Most of my family is interstate so I keep in touch by the Internet or telephone'***
- ***'I try to maintain a close relationship with my children and they phone me often'***

However 6% of the respondents also outlined a lack of relationships

- ***'My family has cut all ties with me'***
- ***'I've always felt alone'***
- ***'My upbringing has made it hard for me to be close with my family''***

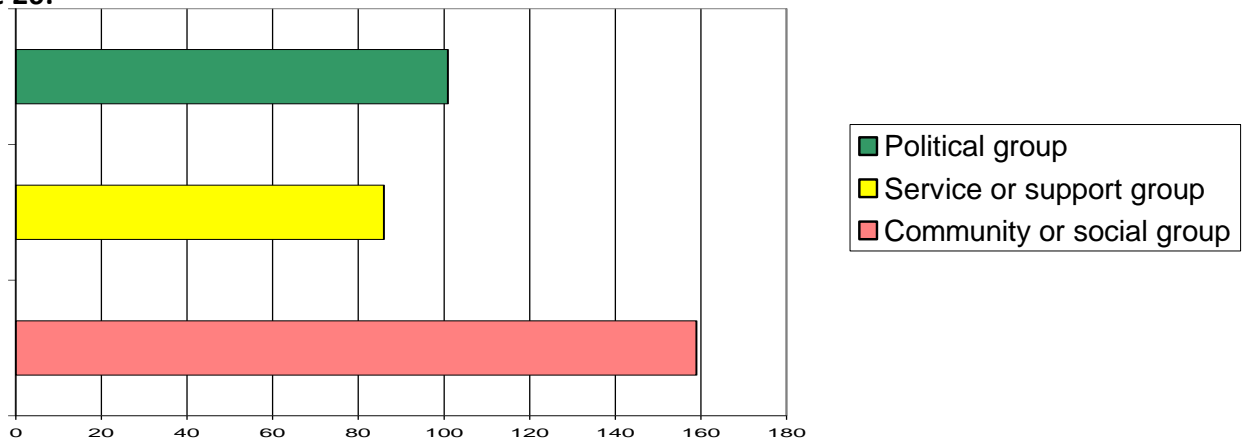
The Social Inclusion Board reports that about 96% Australians have contact with friends and family outside the household at least once a week. The report (2010: p. 37) indicates;

*'Having regular contact with family or friends provides many benefits. Communicating with friends or family can assist people to feel connected, cared for, and part of a strong family or social network. Regular communication with friends and family also means that when people are faced with challenges it is more likely that they will have someone to go to for support or to talk to.'*

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Of this sample, 46% reported involvement in community groups - with religious and recreational sporting groups as the most dominant.
- 25% have involvement in service or support groups including 15 people with charities/op shops, 7 people with support groups other than CLAN and 5 people with AA.
- 29% have involvement in political groups including 27 people with the RSL, 8 with trade unions and 7 with political parties.

Figure 26:



The ABS General Social Survey (2006 as quoted in Social Inclusion report 2010: p. 35) found that 63% of Australian adults were actively involved in a social group within their community in the previous 12 months. A third (33%) of the sample was involved in community support groups and 19% were involved in civic and political groups. The only involvement where Care Leavers come close to reflecting the population at large is in political groups, whereas involvement in social and support groups is well below par.

28 respondents said that many were socially withdrawn and some noted:

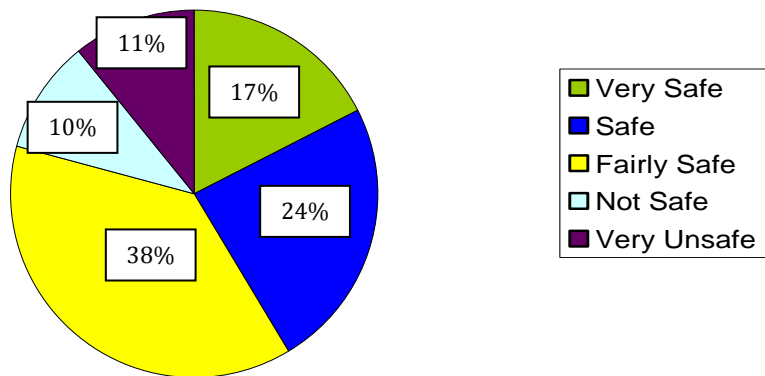
- *'I keep to myself'*
- *'I do not trust people'*
- *'I have lost interest in all activities'*

## SAFETY: WHEN ALONE AT HOME HOW SAFE DO YOU FEEL?

As many as 134 or 23% of respondents felt unsafe or very unsafe. This is exponentially higher than in the Social Inclusion Board (2010: p. 67) stating that 7% of Australian adults felt unsafe or very unsafe alone at home after dark. The Board commented *'a person's feeling of safety can play an important part in their decision to participate in activities in their local community as well as their ability to access and utilise community services'* (ibid.).

Respondents made comments about still sleeping with the lights on or feeling paranoid about others. Many respondents made special efforts to install safety measures such as security doors, screens and locks or have guard dogs as pets.

**Figure 27: Safety**



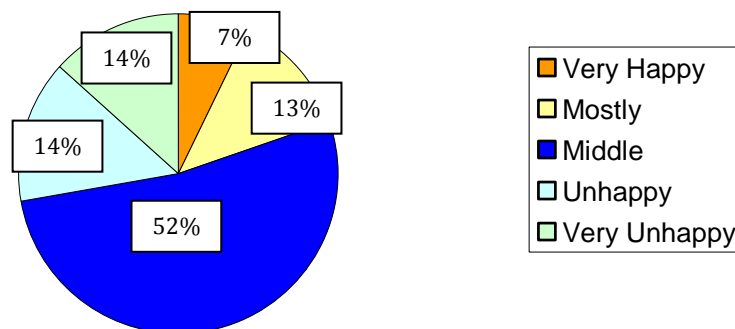
Other comments included:

- One respondent said that in his circumstances he had *‘built 7 foot walls around the house’*
- Another respondent noted that they *‘are very lonely but paranoid of others’*

### HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR LIFE?

Of the sample: 27% of people said they were unhappy or very unhappy with their life while 20% said they were either happy or very happy. Just over a half sat in the middle.

**Figure 28: Satisfaction**



The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (Social Inclusion report 2010: p. 50) from the University of Melbourne collects information on quality of life by asking respondents the following question, *all things considered, how satisfied are you with your life?*

On a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being the most satisfied, the average score remained fairly steady at about 8 over the period from 2001 to 2006. While CLAN used a different scale (1-5), the results indicate that Care Leavers overall are far less satisfied with their lives than the population at large.

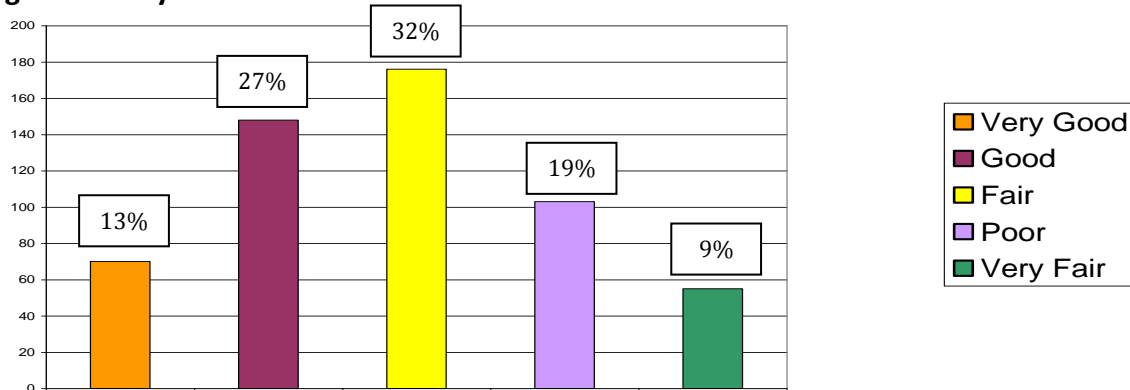
- *‘I don’t know how to love and be loved’*
- *‘I do not like myself’*
- *‘I have too many regrets’*
- *‘Like everyone I have good days and bad days’*
- *‘Carry the burden of a hard and disturbing life everyday’*

## SELF-REPORTED HEALTH STATUS

According to the 2006 ABS General Social Survey (Social Inclusion report 2010: p. 48), 16% of the population aged 18 years and over reported that their health was fair or poor. However, that increased to 27% when considering 65–74 year olds, this is still well below the reporting rate of Care Leavers. Over 60% reported they were in fair, poor or very poor physical health.

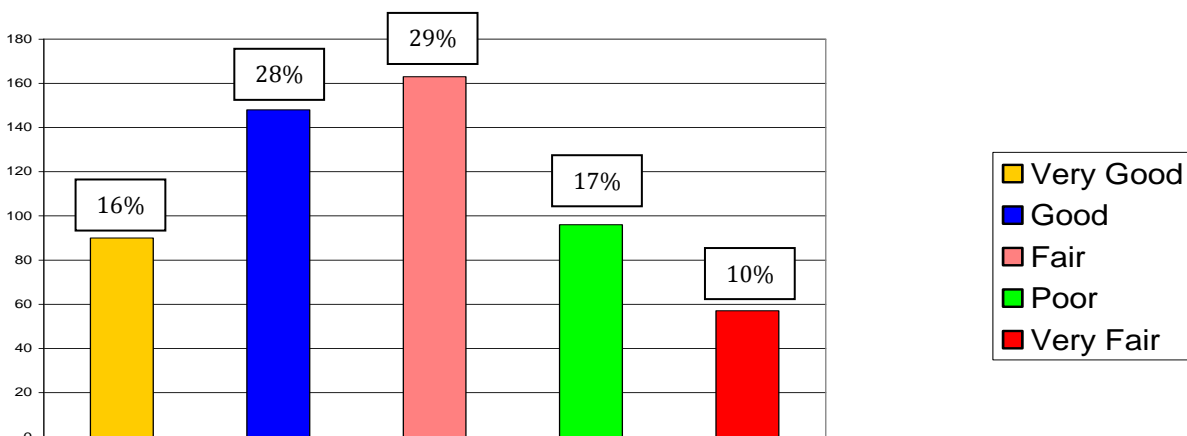
- *‘Knee replacement from labour done as a child’*
- *‘Constantly suffer back pain from violence from Homes’*
- *‘Suffer badly with migraine – have an episode 3 times a week’*

**Figure 29: Physical Health Status**



A high rate of physical and mental ill-health is evident among groups most likely to suffer multiple disadvantages and to be socially excluded. Poor health outcomes can result in poor employment outcomes, affect family relationships and lead to other negative social outcomes. In addition, people who suffer from low levels of resources can have poor health. Such outcomes can lead to long term disadvantage.

**Figure 30: Mental Health Status**



- *‘Mental health fluctuates with bouts of depression’*
- *‘I had been interfered with as a child and I still struggle to sleep at night. Sleeping pills do help a bit’*
- *‘I always feel emotional when I think about my childhood’*

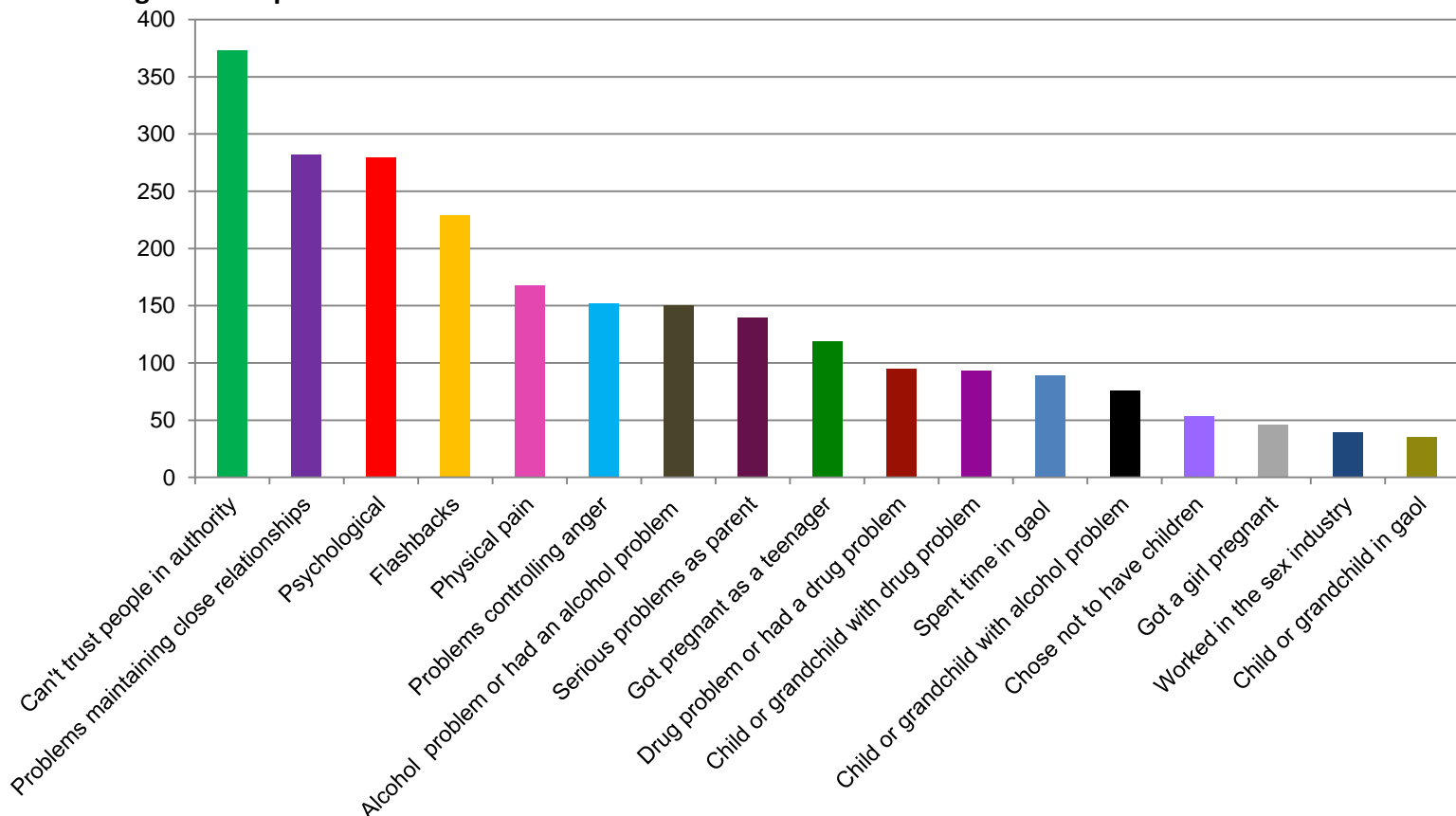
Only 43% reported their mental health to be good or very good. Of those who reported poor mental health, the most dominant causes were depression, low self-esteem, use of drugs and the need to regularly attend counselling or therapy.

## EXPERIENCES IN ADULT LIFE AFTER CARE

The survey outlined 17 options for CLAN members to select, which properly acknowledged the experiences derived directly after leaving ‘care’ and whether those experiences still affect them today.

- ***Can't trust people in authority-*** 15%
- ***Problems maintaining close relationships*** – 12%
- ***Psychological problems*** – 12%
- ***Flashbacks*** – 9%
- ***Physical pain*** – 7%
- ***Problems controlling anger***– 6%
- ***Alcohol problem or had an alcohol problem*** – 6%
- ***Serious problems as parent*** – 6%
- ***Got pregnant as a teenager*** – 5%
- ***Drug problem or had a drug problem*** – 4%
- ***Child or grandchild with drug problem*** – 4%
- ***Spent time in gaol*** – 4%
- ***Child or grandchild with alcohol problem***– 3%
- ***Chose not to have children***– 2%
- ***Got a girl pregnant***– 2%
- ***Worked in the sex industry***– 2%
- ***Child or grandchild in gaol***– 1%

**Figure 31: Experiences after “care”**



From the sample it was evident that of the options given Care Leavers found the following the five most dominant indicators of satisfaction or dissatisfaction:

- **Trust** – *‘I can't trust anyone’*
- **Difficulties with relationships** – *‘I don't think anyone will love me’*
- **Psychological issues** – *‘Been diagnosed with severe post-traumatic stress syndrome’*
- **Physical pain** – *‘I have to take medication everyday for my arms because of the beltings in the Homes’*
- **Problems as a parent** – *‘I don't know of any children that I may have had because they have all been taken away from me’*  
– *‘I find I am too overprotective with my kids’*

These difficulties are clearly a consequence of a childhood in ‘care’ which translates to disadvantages as adults with few assets, low skills, difficulties finding and keeping a job, housing stress and poor health.

In short, the effects of childhood deprivation, neglect and abuse do not readily diminish or disappear as people grow into adulthood.

The damaged child often becomes the damaged adult.

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Chapter five of this report shows that the impact of a childhood with loss and deprivation continues well into adult life.

In many ways for many Care Leavers, their childhood has been so traumatic that it remains life-long excess baggage they can ill afford to carry. But carry it they do, to their great personal cost.

The evidence is clear. At the risk of over-simplification, the situation can be expressed as a dismal formula:

**Separation from parents and siblings + A childhood of neglect and abuse**

=

**An adulthood of social exclusion and entrenched multiple disadvantage**

The question then becomes: how can governments, past and present providers including the churches and non-government organisations best respond to the needs that stand starkly before them?

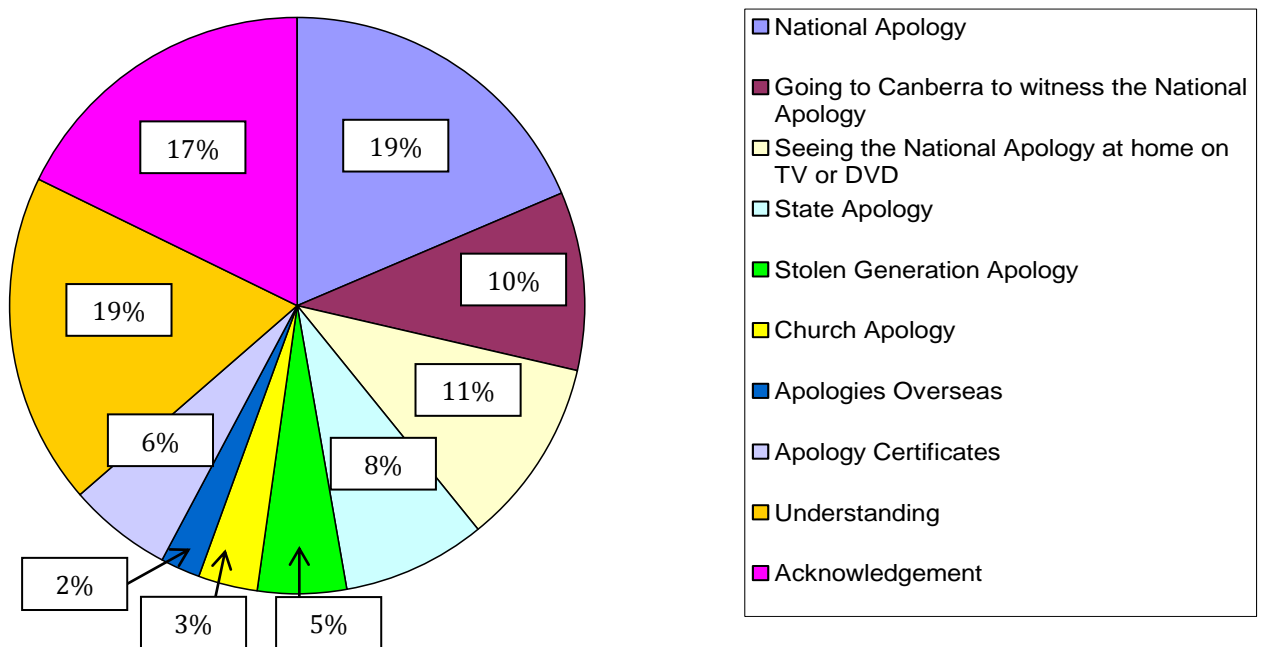
Chapter six outlines how CLAN members from this sample have been affected by recent events such as Federal and State apologies, Memorials and access to services - especially for Care Leavers and the issue of Redress and Compensation.

## CHAPTER 6 – RESPONDING TO ONGOING NEEDS

### WHAT HAS HELPED HEAL THE PAIN OF CHILDHOOD IN ‘CARE’?

Support, apologies and the Senate Report were the three most popular aspects respondents identified as a part of their healing process. The particular appeal of these three activities is shown in Figures 32-34 below.

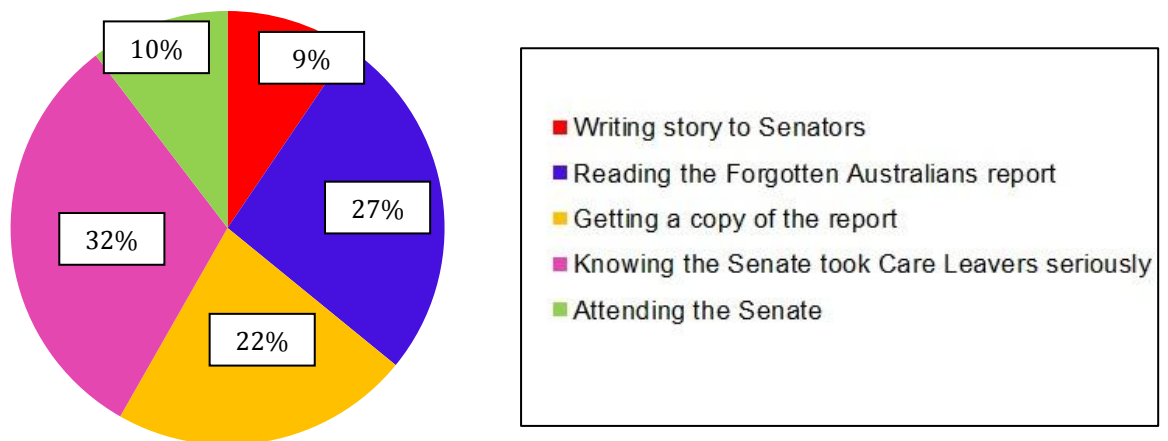
**Figure 32: Apologies**



Respondents acknowledged the power of the National Apology and State Apologies. In particular, they valued the thought of being acknowledged and understood by the general public was significant. Comments included;

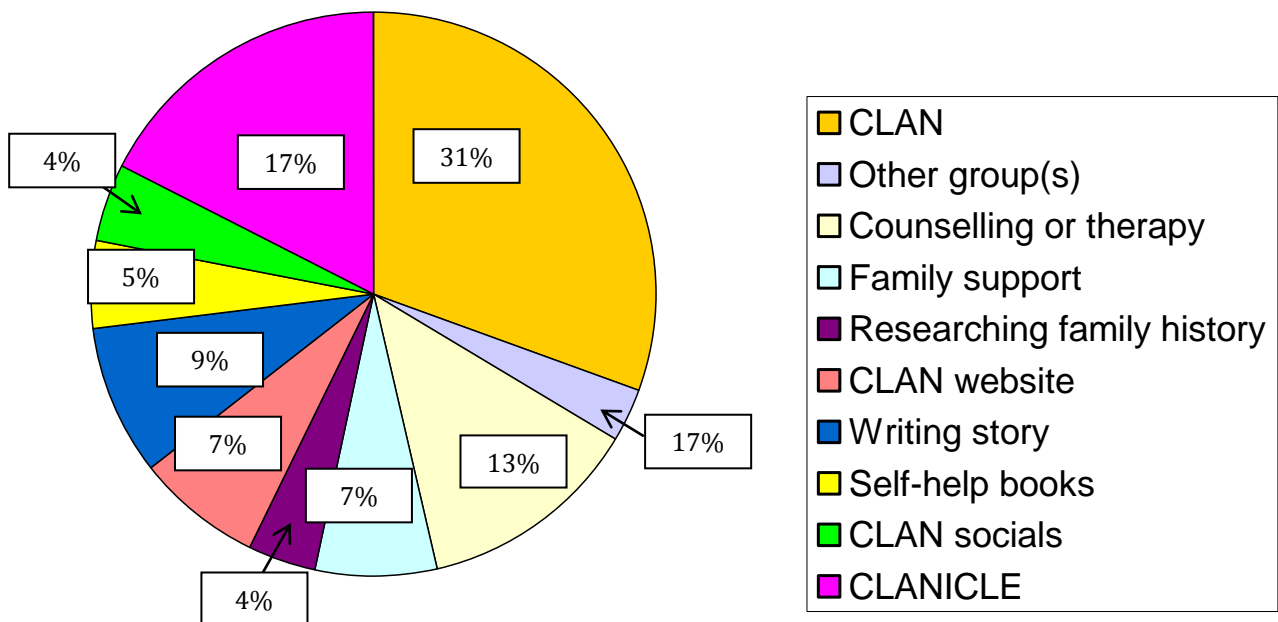
- *‘It was a long time coming but I’m glad it finally happened’*
- *‘Kevin Rudd did the right thing’*
- *‘The National Apology was a step forward especially Malcolm Turnbull’s speech’*
- *‘I like to think of myself as a Remembered Australian now’*
- *‘I finally felt that us Forgotten Australians were finally believed’*
- *‘I’ve framed my certificate that I received from the government. I want to show my grandchildren when they get older what Care Leavers achieved in history’*
- *‘The national apology is a day that I will never forget and will continue to celebrate till I die’*

**Figure 33: Senate Inquiry and Reports**



- *‘I felt my story was heard’*
- *‘I felt validated’*

**Figure 34: Support**

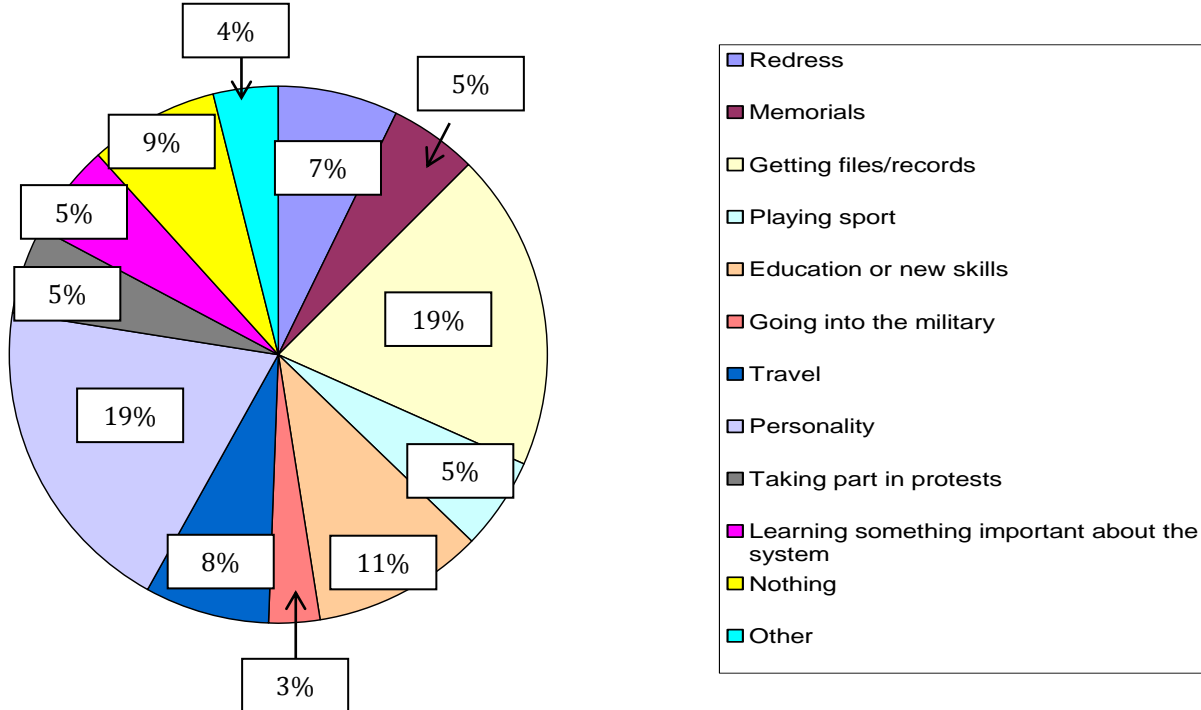


- *‘Apart from information from CLAN I have no idea what other services are available and how to access them’*
- *‘I love to meet others I can share my story with’*
- *‘I love to keep my mind busy by reading’*
- *‘I need ongoing counselling and with it I find that I am able to cope day to day’*
- *‘I love to keep in touch with technology and the world so I love logging on to the CLAN website to get all the latest information and getting the Clanicle’*



- *‘Without my wife to keep me together I don’t know where I’d be’*
- *‘I love attending the socials held by other Clannies. I feel like I am a part of something’*
- *‘When I found out that there were support services especially for us Homies I felt a great weight lifted off my shoulders. I am not alone’*

Figure 35: Other Factors



- *‘I hold [onto] hope for redress and compensation for the pain we suffered’*
- *‘Now that I have all my file I feel that I can pursue justice through compensation’*
- *‘When I go out to protest with other Clannies I feel that we are doing something good and right’*

Ten respondents mentioned their partner, family members and friends and five respondents said religion and spirituality were positive ‘other’ factors that contributed to their healing.

- *‘Having a "Homie" as a best friend and hearing her experiences makes my time seem "like a walk in the park"’*
- *‘I never thought anyone would love me after I told them about my childhood but I was one of the lucky ones who found someone to understand me’*

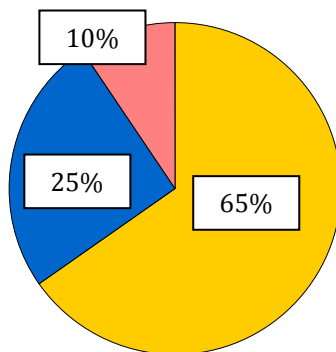
This is in contrast to 15 respondents who said that nothing would help their healing process as the trauma and consequences were still inherent.

- *‘There can never be "healing" of the pain’*
- *‘There is too much pain’*
- *‘I have learnt that the system is broken’*

## HAVE USED CARE LEAVER SERVICES?

Yes 329 respondents (65%); No 126 (25%); Don't Know 48 respondents (10%). 74 respondents did not answer.

**Figure 36: Using Services**



The questionnaire listed 11 commonly-provided services and asked respondents how many times they had used each service. The number of responses was in excess of the numbers who said the services existed in their state (refer Figure 36 and Figure 37). One possible interpretation is that Care Leavers have used services other than those they identify as Care Leaver services.

The most frequently used service (defined as used once or more in the past 12 months) was counselling or therapy (159 people or 74% of respondents to this question). It is clear that **Counselling** by its very nature tends to be a recurring activity whereas the next most frequently used service, **Access to Records**, in many instances is a one-off activity as you ask for your records and you get them or not.

However, using the definition of used at least once, the following were the most frequently used services after Counselling;

- **Access to Records** (138 people)
- **Legal Matters** (112 people)
- **Help with Finding your Family** (91 people)
- **Medical and Dental Services** (87 people)

By contrast services listed as never used included:

- **Help with Reading and Writing** (125 people)
- **Find your Family** (109 people)
- **Housing** (119 people)
- **Medical and Dental Services** (108 people)
- **Computers** (118 people)
- **Support Groups** (106 people)
- **Centrelink** (115 people)

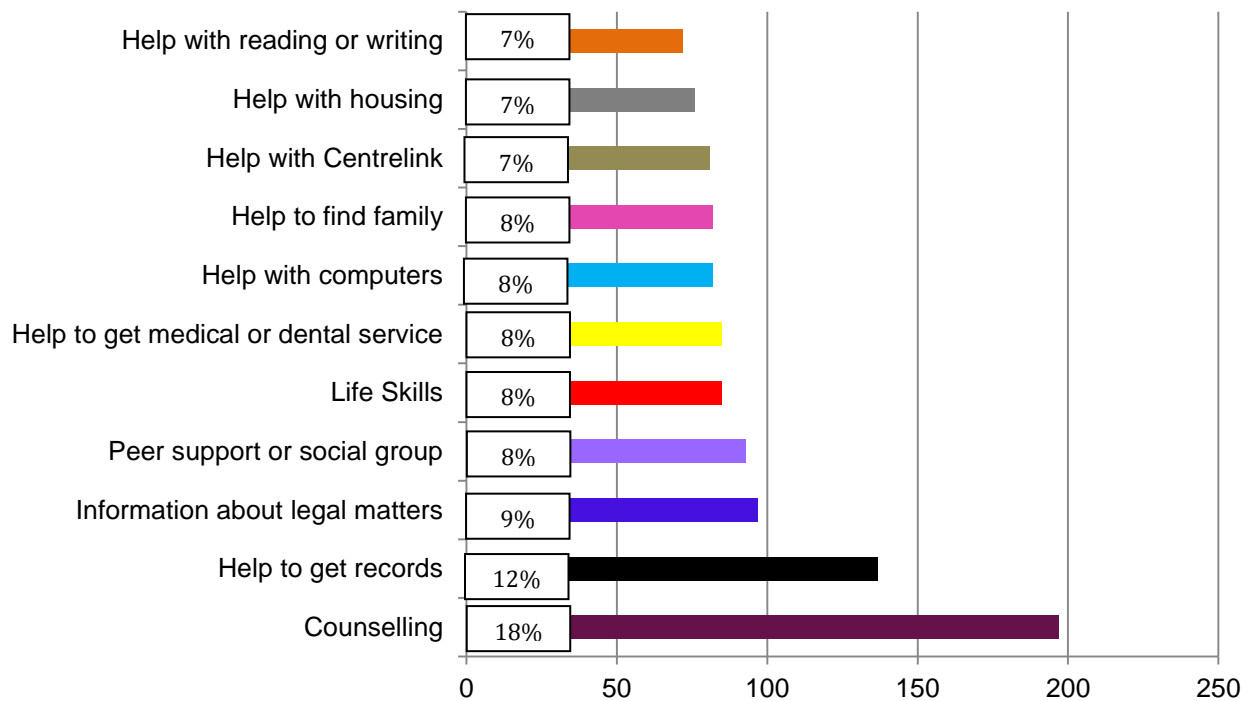
It can be concluded that a service can be well used by some but never used by others but we need to understand better the reasons why people use or don't use services if we are to improve these services.

## HOW HELPFUL HAVE SERVICES BEEN?

The questionnaire offered opportunity to comment on 11 commonly provided services, and respondents were asked to rate these services from 'not helpful', 'a bit helpful', 'helpful' to 'very helpful'. Not all chose to respond to all 11 service types.

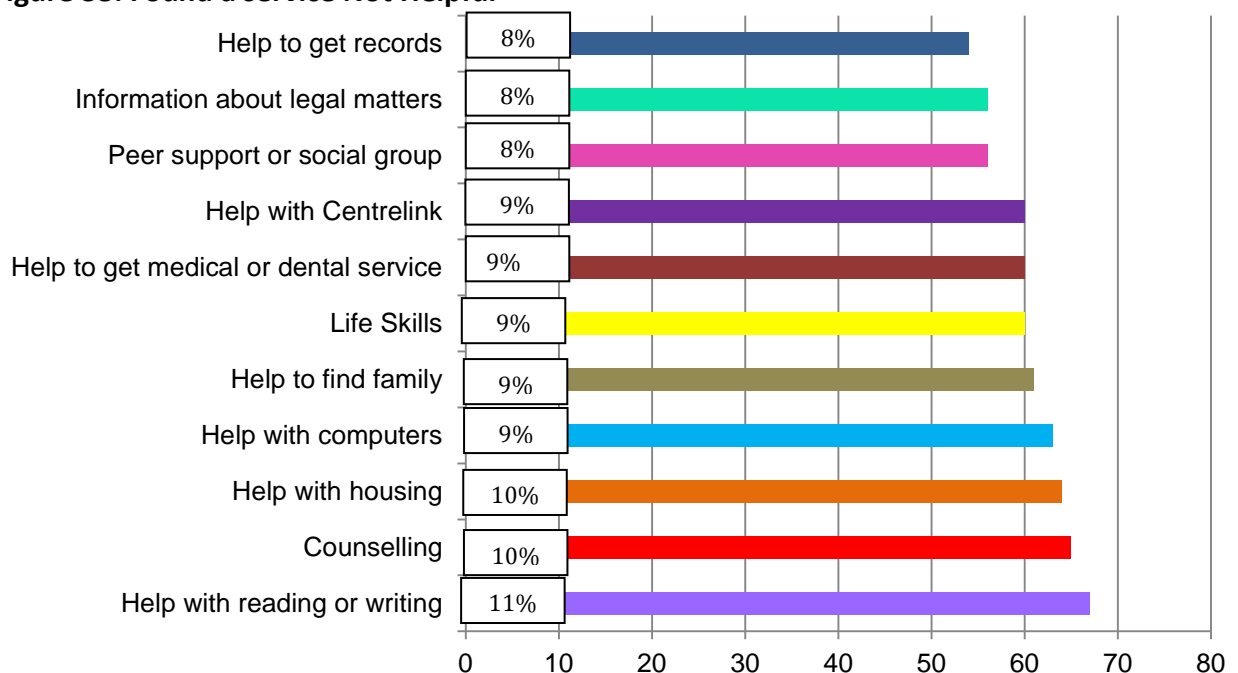
Those most frequently remarked in the sample were counselling (256 respondents), access to records (188 respondents), legal matters (150 respondents), and support groups (146 respondents) as illustrated in Figure 37. At present, in calculating a positive score, we have added the scores for a ‘bit helpful’, ‘helpful’ and ‘very helpful.’

**Figure 37: Found a service Very Helpful, Helpful or a Bit Helpful**



This is in contrast to Figure 38 (below) for respondents who marked ‘not helpful.’ It is evident that CLAN and other service providers need to conduct more research to understand why so many people find a service helpful while many others do not. One respondent noted that, *‘services are not useful as we have to keep trying to explain over and over again to different people about our situations. We are left misunderstood through ignorance, authoritarian figures, made to feel bad - it is re-traumatising.’*

**Figure 38: Found a service Not Helpful**



Other comments outlining what stopped respondents from using services including:

- *‘It can bring up painful memories’*
- *‘Services have a very bureaucratic approach. There is a lack of understanding and do not consider Care Leaver’s input’*
- *‘Too scared to ask and frightened they will say no or won’t have the time’*

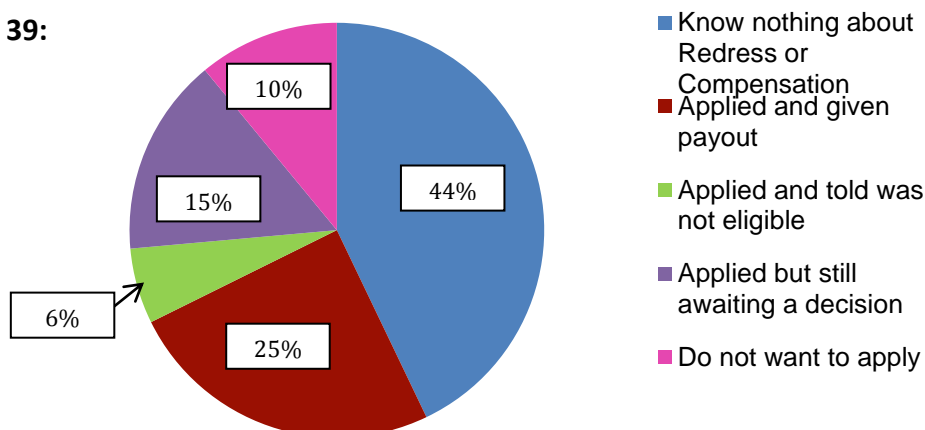
When respondents were asked what stops Care Leavers using such services it was evident there were five recurring factors:

- **Information Barriers:** Over 115 respondents said comments similar to *‘I did not know about how to access services’*
- **Practical Barriers:** 106 respondents mentioned distance and travel as services did not exist where they lived or that they were living in a different state to where they were raised; ineligibility, cost and time were also significant factors. One respondent said *‘services for people raised in a particular state, but have moved to another state do not exist. I was brought up in Victoria and now live in Western Australia. What can I access?’*
- **Emotional or psychological barriers:** Over 50% the respondents said feelings of shame or fear were dominant as it had reminded them of their childhood and brought back painful memories. Other factors included stress, mental health, self-esteem, pride and lack of social skills. A respondent outlined that accessing services *‘reminds me of my lost childhood and I see it as going backwards not forwards’*. Some respondents stated they prefer to speak to other Care Leavers as they feel they are more understanding of their needs as one respondent noted *‘when I speak to another Homie I feel there is a mutual understanding’*
- **Service provider barriers:** 45 respondents said that they did not trust or lacked confidence in service providers. One respondent said they *‘do not want to go to any government run agencies - they have already ruined my life once’*. Other respondents said that they preferred to only deal with other Care Leavers.
- **Don’t need service:** Some 39 respondents said using services was a *‘waste of time.’*

## REDRESS APPLICATIONS AND OUTCOMES

Given the public nature of the redress debates, the most surprising finding was that 211 respondents said they did not know anything about redress or any form of compensation.

**Figure 39:**



Of the 121 respondents who received compensation or redress, 46% of respondents received payouts from churches and charities (including the Salvation Army, Uniting Church, Sisters of Mercy and Christian Brothers) and 22% received payouts from the Queensland Redress Scheme and 3% from the Tasmanian Redress Scheme. The remaining 29% said they received a payout but did not specify where it was from.

Some 28 respondents said they were ineligible to apply for Redress. Of that 21% applied to the Queensland Redress Scheme, 7% from the Tasmanian Redress Scheme and 4% from the Western Australian Redress Scheme.

The remaining respondents were deemed ineligible by other avenues such as solicitors etc. Some of the reasons for this were that lawyers said they were unable to pursue a case because of lack of evidence or that the claim would not succeed on its own but needed a group of people to bring their cases forward as a class action.

Not all the redress schemes have progressed to the point of making final decisions. In that context 75 respondents said they applied for some form of compensation but were still waiting for the outcome. The majority of those still awaiting an outcome (31 respondents) were waiting to hear back from the Western Australian Redress Scheme which at the time of this survey had made very few decisions.

The 55 respondents who said they did not or could not apply for any form of redress outlined an array of reasons including:

#### THERE IS NO REDRESS SCHEME OR IT DOESN'T APPLY

- *'New South Wales does not have a Redress scheme'*
- *'Victoria does not have a Redress scheme'*
- *'I currently live in Tasmania and am a Victorian state ward and there is no redress yet. I don't have the finances to sue privately'*
- *'There is no acknowledgement of private placement children'*

#### EMOTIONAL ISSUES

- *'Embarrassment'*
- *'Psychological difficulty'*
- *'I feel I will suffer and bring up bad memories'*
- *'We will be asked to dredge up everything and I am not ready for this'*
- *'A long drawn out process that is hurtful and not forthcoming'*
- *'Too much hassle'*
- *'I felt like my world fell apart when I learnt that Western Australian redress had been cut to nearly half. Why would they do that to people who have suffered and still suffering'*

## LACK OF KNOWLEDGE

- *'I don't know what to do - and Queensland had a payout before I knew about it'*
- *'Don't know how to do it'*
- *'Lack of help'*

## PROBLEMS OF EVIDENCE

- *'They will not believe me'*
- *'My lawyer wants written confirmation from my adopted brother. He doesn't want to get involved as the court did not accept thoughts and opinions of social workers that wrote about my foster parents'*
- *'The people concerned are all dead'*
- *'My files cannot be found'*
- *'I was not a state ward and have no records'*

## COSTS INVOLVED

- *'Victoria won't pay and if I lose my claim I will have to pay the costs'*
- *'Cannot find a lawyer that will take my case'*
- *'I am already struggling financially so I cannot afford to do it on my own'*

## STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS – EITHER REAL OR PERCEIVED

- *'My lawyer advised me I should have applied by the time I was 21 years old and it is too late now'*
- *'Statute of limitation for sexual abuse - I was abused by adoptive father and brother'*

## FURTHER COMMENTS

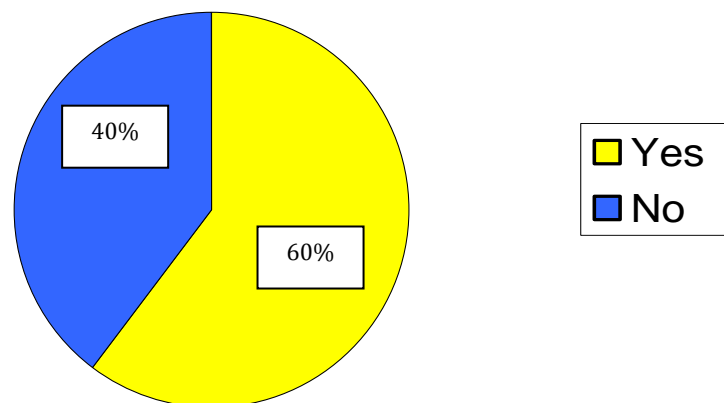
- *'My abusers deny the claims and everyone refuses to help me. They slam the door in my face'*
- *'I want Redress before I die'*
- *'The Salvos should also pay-up'*
- *'We should not have to keep proving what's the truth'*
- *'I was not aware that the Redress scheme was for Australians - I thought it was only for child migrants'*
- *'I never heard about Redress and compensation in WA so when the closing date had already finished I was too late to apply. I was told I couldn't apply. I feel as if my suffering did not mean anything to the government'*
- *'I feel money complicates things'*

## ACCESS TO CHILDHOOD RECORDS

60% of respondents have received their records in full or in part. Respondents who have not gained access to their records provided a variety of comments but the most consistent comments were along of the lines of:

- *'I was told files were destroyed or could not be located'*
- *'I have applied but am still waiting'*
- *'I don't want to and am not interested'*
- *'I am afraid to find out what is in them'*
- *'I don't know how to get them'*
- *'I did not realise I could get them'*
- *'Applied but told I couldn't due to 'privacy' issues'*
- *'The Home I was in no longer exists'*

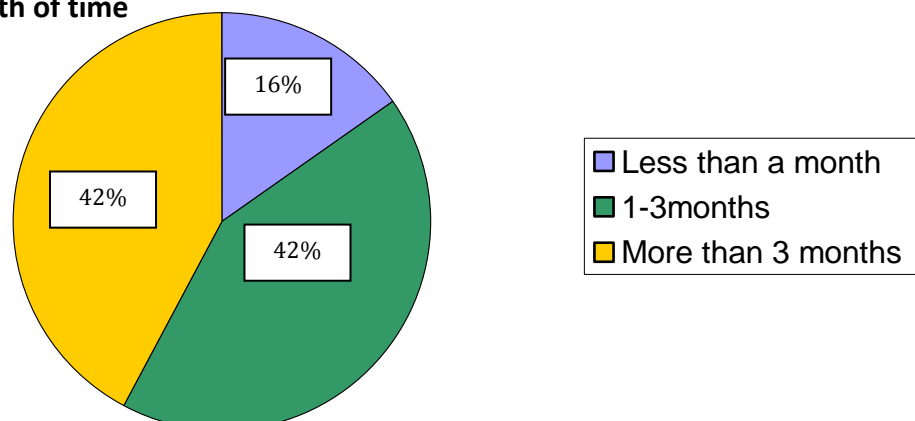
Figure 40: Receiving Records



## WAITING TIME FOR CHILDHOOD RECORDS.

It was evident that most respondents waited longer than regulations mandate for accessing records. New South Wales, Tasmania, Western Australia and Queensland Care Leavers are to receive their records within 6-8 weeks, 45 days for Victorian Care Leavers and 30 days for South Australian Care Leavers.

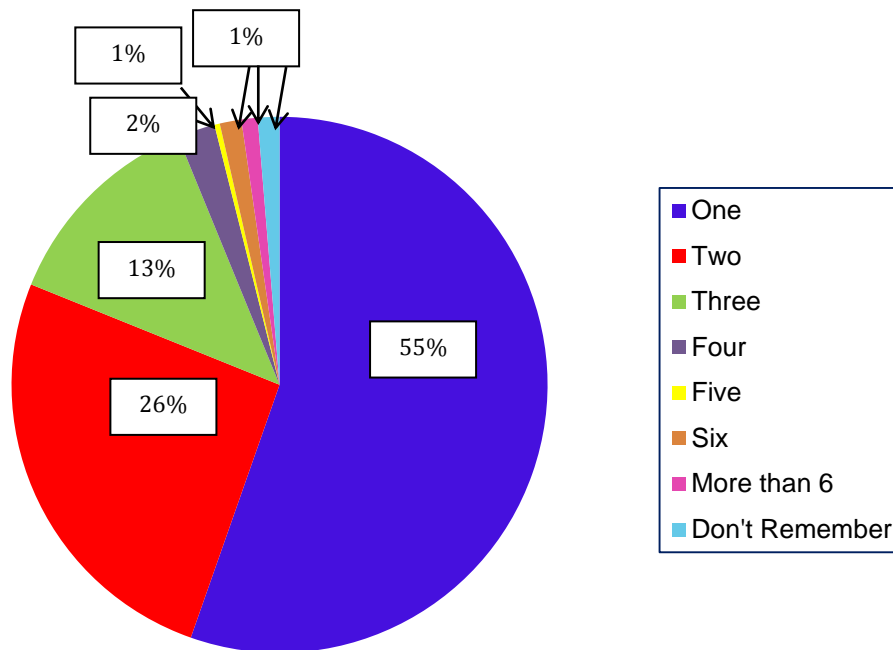
Figure 41: Length of time



- *‘When I was waiting for my records everyday was painful’*
- *‘When I applied the second time I called a month later to see how it was going and didn’t get a call back for 3 months’*
- *‘I was told I would get all my files in 2 months. I am still waiting months later’*

**Figure 42: How many agencies did you contact to get childhood records?**

67% of respondents went to 1 agency and 31% of respondents went to 2 or more agencies.



Respondents noted:

- *‘I was denied as a ward’*
- One respondent said that they were *‘shifted’* from agency to agency as they were told their files could not be located *‘due to privacy reasons’*.

Respondents were also asked whether they were charged any fees for their records. Of those who answered only 14% were charged with costs ranging from \$10-\$420. The majority of the charges went towards photocopying.

## **FEELINGS ON RECEIPT OF PERSONAL RECORDS**

It was evident from the majority of the respondents that they were disappointed, frustrated, angry or not satisfied with what they received.

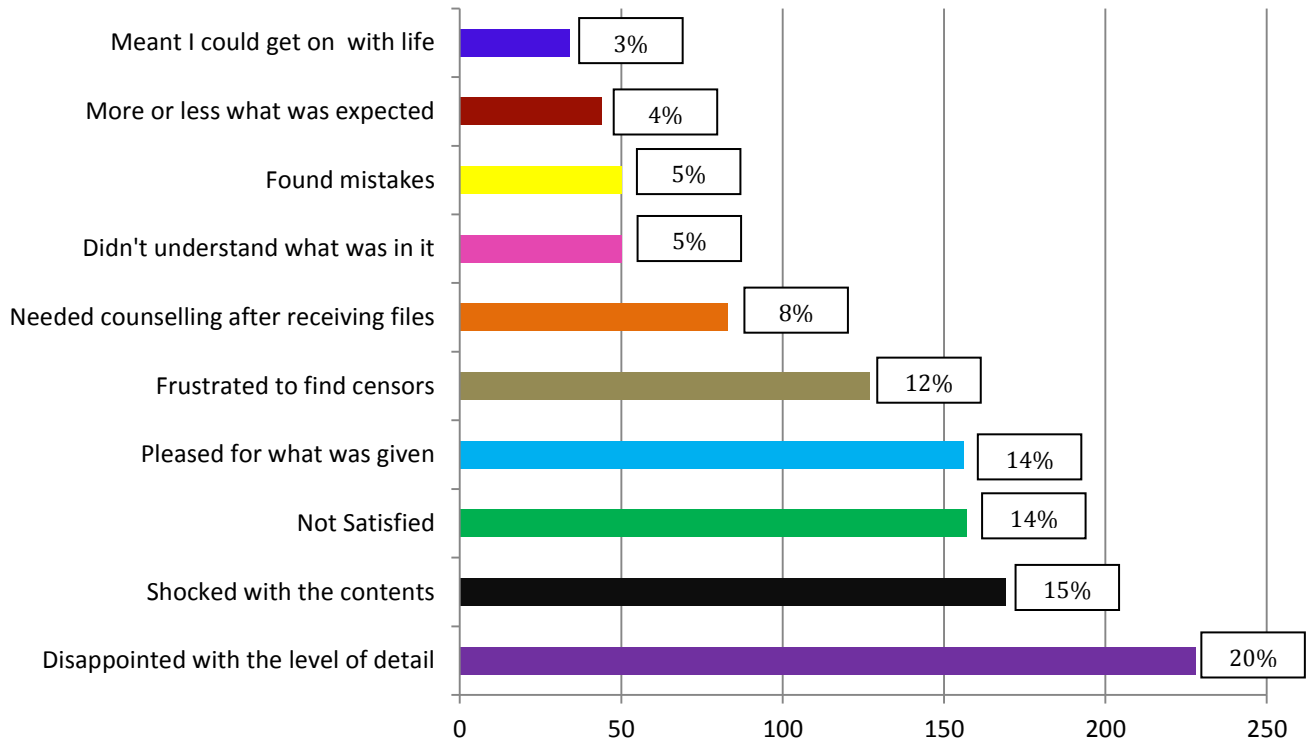
Nearly 60% of respondents said they were not offered or didn’t receive any form of counselling after reading their records.

One respondent said that *‘community and health services should provide a counsellor or someone to help read and understand files, as it is very stressful time in someone’s life’*.



Please note respondents marked more than one response.

Figure 43:



Other comments included:

- *'So much missing there was such little detail'*
- *'The records were not about me'*
- *'There were blanked out periods when I was in the Home'*
- *'Information wasn't truthful'*
- *'Very angry at their interpretation of events'*
- *'Everything written about me was by other people. I had no say in anything. Never asked. I didn't know these things were being written about me.'*
- *'I have many more questions I need answered'*
- *'There was unopened mail in my file and I was shocked that it was from my family. It was withheld for 60 years'*
- *'No medical records'*
- *'Missing medical and education records'*

It should be noted there were a large number of respondents (91 people) who reported their childhood records had been used against them in later life, including the records of juvenile offences used to reject otherwise acceptable job applications.

- *'False accusations used against me to lock me in various institutions'*

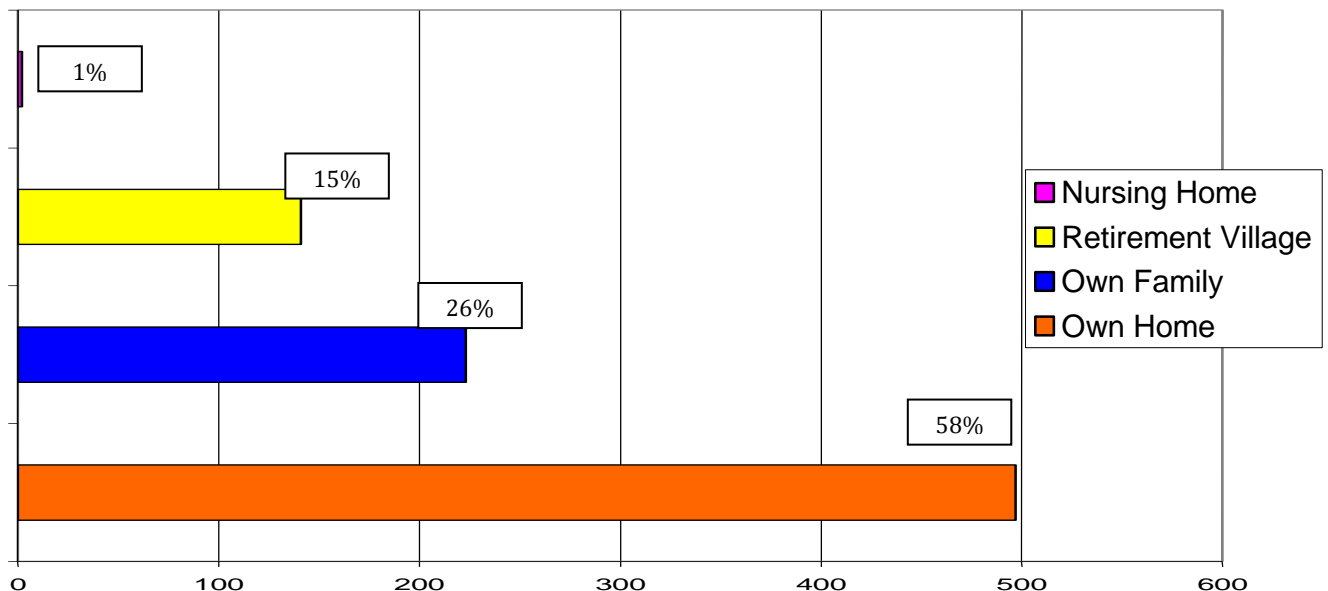
- *‘Without a birth certificate I have been discriminated against in jobs, Centrelink and other services’*
- *‘I have difficulty in keeping employment as I have a criminal record. Even though my parents should have been charged, not me’*
- *‘I was classified as “retarded”’*
- *‘False documents of my files were given to the foster parents of my children. It had very derogatory claims’*
- *‘The files will affect my redress and compensation application’*
- *‘My records state that I have a criminal record - through no fault of my own. I am constantly questioned when I apply for work’*

## PREFERRED PLACE TO LIVE IN OLD AGE

It should be noted that not all respondents filled all four options as asked by the survey's question. Some respondents only filled either one or two options and left other options blank. Blank responses were not included but added a 0 to the overall total.

Over 70% of respondents said they would want to live in their own home as their first preference followed by their own family, a retirement village and, as their last choice, a nursing home. The strength of feeling about living in your own home in old age can be seen by the fact that none of the respondents marked this option as their least preferred option.

**Figure 44: Most preferred place to live in old age**



As evident in Figure 44 respondents outlined they were happiest to live within their own home or live with their family.

Comments included:

- *My one and only choice'*
- *'I think I will be happiest here'*
- *'I have become very independent over the years and I can live happily on my own in my home'*
- *'I want to live my life seeing my grandchildren'*
- *'I don't want to live and die alone'*

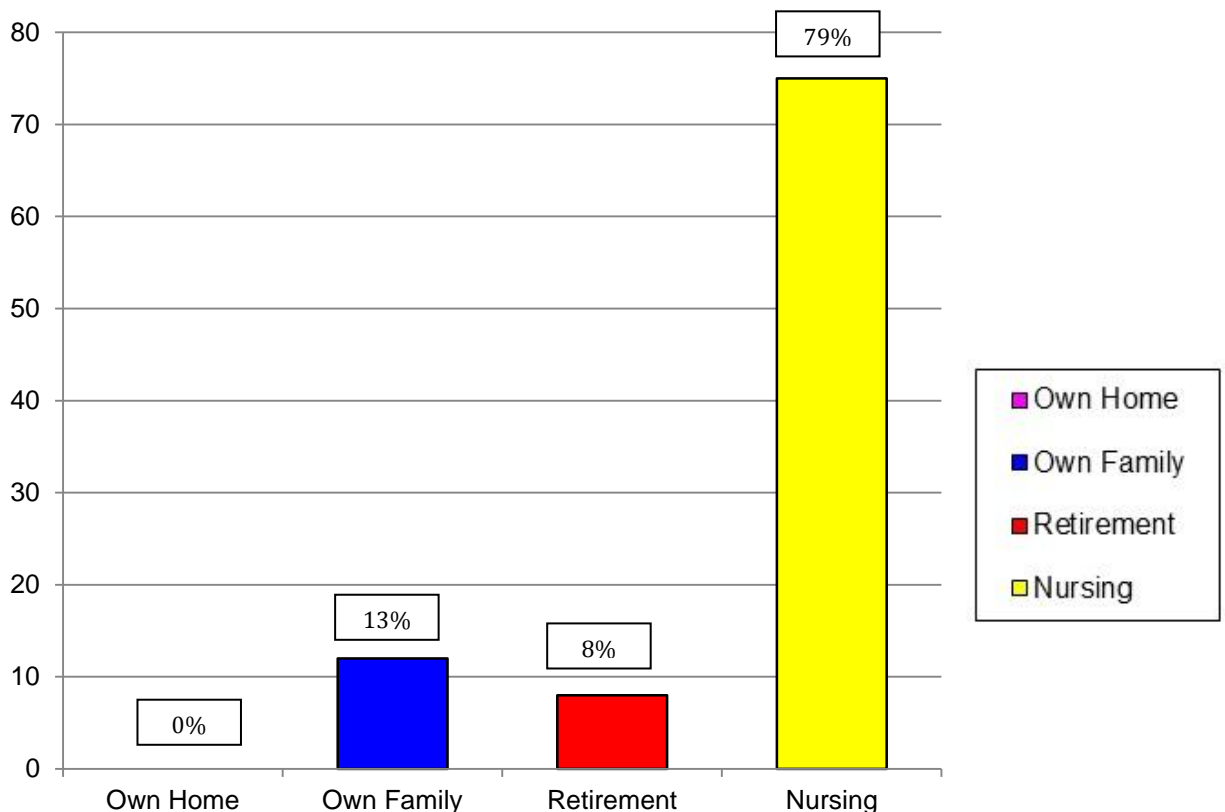
However some respondents were less optimistic about living with their family outlining:

- *'I don't want to be a burden on my family especially now as I am sick'*
- *'As I get older and older I get sicker and sicker and I do not expect my family and friends to take care of me. A retirement or nursing home is a safe option'*

Respondents outlined their strong desire to live in their own home and to be in close contact with family. This stands in stark contrast to the large number of respondents who chose a nursing home as their last option. This is illustrated in the next figure below.

**Figure 45: Least preferred place to live in old age**

Please note no respondents marked 'own home' as their last preference



Respondents described their great dislike of the prospect of going into a nursing home with comments like:

- *'I will never live in "care" again. I am scared of being abused again'*
- *'Institutionalisation'*
- *'If I can't take care of myself I will need to go to a nursing home. But I don't want to'*
- *'I have a fear of ending up like we started'*
- *'Realistically will probably end up in a nursing home'*
- *'I would rather die!'*
- *'I don't want to die in an institution'*
- *'I would rather live on the streets than in a nursing home'*

It was clear that the majority of the respondents found their own home the most popular option to live in during their older years.

Although there were not many respondents that outlined other options they would like to live in the most dominant responses included:

- Caravan – 24 respondents
- Granny flat– 22 respondents
- Housing Commission – 20 respondents
- Small place in rural/farming area – 15 respondents
- Living with friends – 15 respondents
- Travelling on a boat– 3 respondents

Although comments were limited those respondents who said they would like to live in other options because:

- *'In a caravan I can always travel to new and exciting places'*
- *'I want a place where my dogs can run around'*
- *'I would love to live anywhere that I can come and go as I please'*
- *'I can be free'*

## CHAPTER 7 – CLAN'S FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In July 2010 CLAN celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Acknowledging this, respondents were asked to consider what aspects of CLAN they would like to see improved and what factors they would like decreased in the future.

A significant number of respondents did not answer the question. Some of the respondents were new members and could not form a considered opinion about CLAN. The overwhelming response from most respondents was that they were content with the current levels of work CLAN had been doing.

Aspects of CLAN that members felt should be increased:

- **Lobbying churches and charities to provide a national apology and support for redress and services-** 32% of respondents felt lobbying needed to be increased.

*‘Churches and charities must pay for their sins. They should be pressured to take responsibility for their actions’*

*‘Groups like CLAN need donations from churches and charities to help us Homies get support’*

- **Working with government departments on Care Leavers issues-** 25% of respondents felt this needed to be increased.

*‘Ensure mistakes of the past are never repeated by liaising with child protection services’*

*‘Educate all government departments about the real life issues surrounding Care Leavers’*

- **Lobbying politicians and government bodies with protests-** 23% of respondents felt this needed to be increased.

*‘Protests in all states’*

*‘We should do protests every week’*

- **Publicising reunions and other events-**19% of respondents felt this needed to be increased.

*‘Have more social outings like movies, day outings, bus trips’*

- **Seek to be represented on committees for Care Leaver issues-** 14% of respondents felt this needed to be increased.

*‘CLAN should lobby to categorise Forgotten Australians for community services as a special needs groups’*

*‘Gold card for health and medical items for future needs of ageing’*

Respondents were also encouraged to articulate anything that CLAN has not done and could implement in the future. Responses in order included:

- **Redress and services to be established in all states** - 44% of total respondents

*‘Recognition for past wrongs is very important ‘*

*‘With our numbers dying surely they can do more than just apologise?’*

- **Gold Health Card for all Care Leavers**, similar to the one administered for War Veterans – 36% of total respondents

*‘We need to be recognised as a special needs group’*

*‘We need to be treated for the physical and mental wrongs from our past’*

- **National apology from all churches and charities**, similar to the national apology by former Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd – 25% of total respondents

*‘The national apology was a step forward especially Malcolm Turnbull’s speech’*

*‘Kevin Rudd did the right thing’*

- **CLAN office to be established in every state** – 25% of total respondents

*‘Especially in rural areas for those that cannot get to the city’*

- **National services to be made in all states despite where Care Leavers were raised.** A Care Leaver service in every state where all Care Leavers regardless of where they grew up can access the services. – 5% of total respondents

*‘I was born and raised in NSW but cannot access services when I live outside of NSW!’*

## MEMBERSHIP

As CLAN does not receive guaranteed ongoing funding from state and federal governments it is highly dependent on membership fees and donations. The dominant responses (58% of people or 336 respondents) want to keep membership fees the same. A quarter of respondents want CLAN to continue charging for library fees.

The majority of the respondents were happy to keep the membership fees the same as indicated by comments such as:

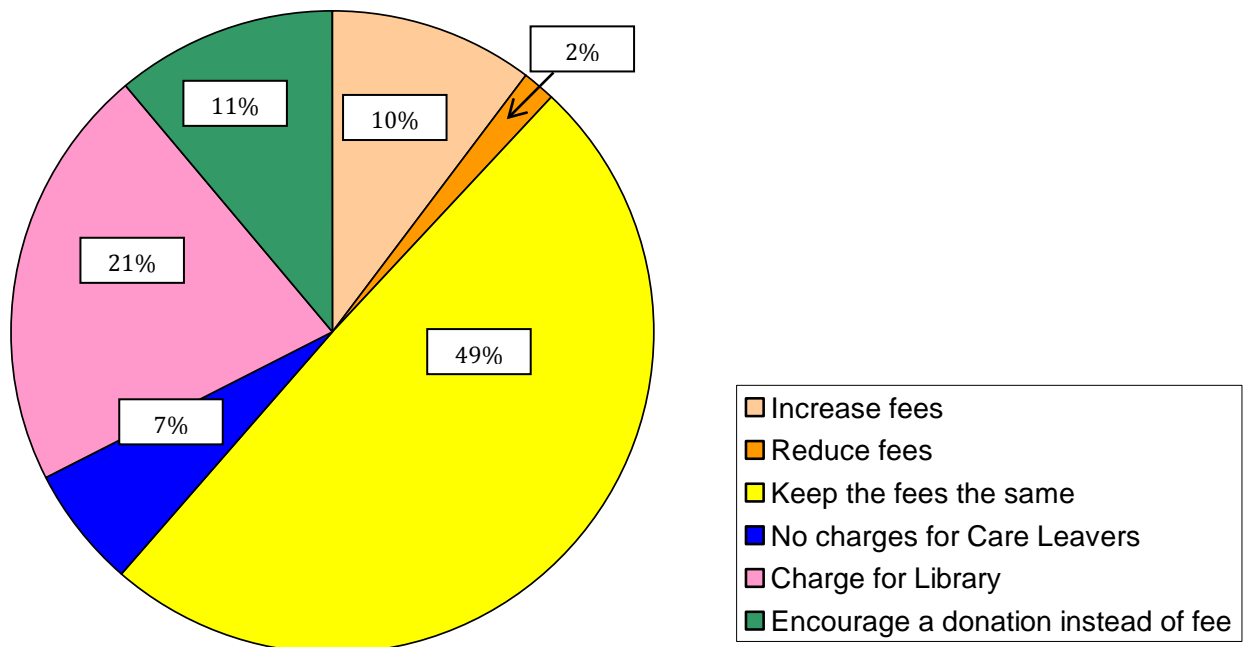
- *‘There is a need to pay for all the work put in’*
- *‘Government funding alone never has and probably never will be sufficient to run CLAN. We the members should feel privileged to pay such a miniscule fee’*
- *‘I like to donate as well as pay my membership to supplement others who cannot pay’*
- *‘CLAN should increase fees for employed only’*
- *‘When you are a member and pay for membership you feel a part of something’*

- *‘Everyone can afford to put \$1 a week away for 20 weeks’*
- *‘It is a reasonable price to pay for all the work that goes into running CLAN’*
- *‘I wouldn’t mind paying extra if needed’*

However other respondents indicated their dissatisfaction with the current membership fees with comments such as:

- *‘The government should pay for our fees’*
- *‘You should be able to pay what you can afford’*
- *‘There should be no fee for people in prison or nursing homes’*
- *‘The library should be free’*
- *‘Many Care Leavers are in the lowest socio-economic bracket and \$10 is a big deal. I didn’t join for 2 years because I had to prioritise other things’*

Figure 46: Membership fees



## CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION

While it would be dishonest to airbrush from history the many sad and sometimes even tragic childhoods and the hardships many Australian children endured in their own homes; it is fair to say that most Australians can look back with nostalgia on their early years and cherish the memories of growing up in a safe and generally happy family environment. The overwhelming majority of Australians could trust their parents to see them through their childhood, to be with them in times of adversity and to nurture them towards adulthood with guidance and love.

It is clear from this survey – as it was from the earlier survey and from the documented evidence in the Senate’s *Forgotten Australians* Report (2004) – that many older Care Leavers did not have such a fortunate childhood.

Many Care Leavers/Forgotten Australians have little but the saddest memories of their childhood years. They lost a child’s most precious resource – their family. They had no one to stand up for them, no one to love and nurture them, and in too many cases their child-like trust in the adults who were supposed to look after them was cruelly betrayed. In too many cases, the lack of love and the callous abuse in their formative years has coloured their approach to personal relationships throughout their adult lives.

While some CLAN members have been able to put the worst aspects of their childhoods behind them and have done very well in most aspects of their adult lives, many others cannot, and remain resentful of the way they were treated.

One respondent to this survey hit a chord which resonated with many: *‘a lot of us were treated as P.O.W.S. – prisoners of the welfare system’*.

This survey provides a snapshot of the loveless, cruel and deprived childhoods many children endured. Further, it shows that the impact of such a childhood persists well into adult life – at great personal cost. Many Care Leavers carry the weight of a traumatic and emotionally impoverished childhood that continues to hold them back in many areas of their life – including employment, housing, physical health and mental health well-being; and most importantly in the way they manage their personal relationships with family, friends and the general community.

The CLAN members who have participated in this survey had not only lost their parents, as well as their identity, been separated from their siblings, felt the feelings of abandonment and betrayal and the lack of love, the failure of the child welfare system to provide an alternative that was safe and nurturing. Many people left the ‘care’ system with little preparation for adulthood or parenthood and these factors have all combined to produce generations of adults who are socially excluded from mainstream society and are multiply disadvantaged citizens.

In the past decade or so, in response to the lobbying and advocacy of CLAN and others, some governments and some past and present providers including some of the churches and charities have become more sensitive to the need to try to repair the damage that has been done and to contribute to the healing process. There is a lot more to be done by all of these organisations to support the work of CLAN and the needs of all Australian Care Leavers.



Apologies from governments, churches and charities have assisted in getting Care Leavers' stories heard and are now believed. Those Care Leavers who have been able to access their records and the support services established in recent years have appreciated these developments. However, there is much scope for improvements particularly with respect to priority access to mainstream services such as health and dental health services, housing and aged care services.

Care Leavers want to have a say in how those improvements will come about. That is one of the reasons CLAN is so well regarded among Care Leavers: it is an organisation for Care Leavers run by Care Leavers. They know that, by the very nature of CLAN's operations and reason for being, they will be encouraged to tell their story, be heard, validated and treated with respect. Many respondents expressed the hope that a CLAN office could be opened in every state and territory in Australia. With the lack of ongoing funding CLAN receives this is unlikely to occur.

However, the issue of redress or compensation is, for most Care leavers the most important unresolved issue. Where compensation has been made available the processes of accessing payments are fraught with problems and the outcomes are inconsistent and inequitable. Moreover, the failure of the Victorian and New South Wales state governments to follow the lead of other states in providing redress schemes and the failure of churches and charities to see themselves as a part of the problem are matters of great disappointment for Care Leavers.

The overwhelming evidence from this survey indicates that the priorities for CLAN members are a national redress and compensation scheme for all Australian Care Leavers, a gold card and a greater awareness of Care Leaver experiences to avoid them repeating their traumatic experiences to various service providers.

CLAN hopes that the state and federal governments, churches and charities across Australia will use the findings of this survey and become better informed about Care Leaver issues and to support and advocate for the needs of older Care Leavers/Forgotten Australians.

CLAN and its members want all state and federal governments, churches and charities, to take responsibility and be held accountable for the damage done to the many thousands of Care Leaver's whose lives have been shattered from a childhood in 'care'.

Now is the time to end the discrimination that occurs regarding redress and compensation within this country- Justice and Redress for all Australian Care Leavers.

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