

SHORT REPORT



What is a roundtable?

A group of people get together to talk about a topic that is important to them.



What did we talk about at our roundtable?

We talked about **child protection and out-of-home care** and how important it is to include parents, families and communities in how services and systems run and in the lives of their children when they are in out-of-home care.

During the day we talked about times when family inclusion is important:

Before children are removed	When children are removed	While children are in out-of-home care	Before children leave out-of-home care	After children return home from out-of-home care
Stopping children being removed and supporting families and communities to be safe and do well.	Improving legal processes and looking after families and communities who lose their children	Including families and communities in children’s lives and decisions about them	Helping families, communities and children prepare for the best possible return home	Helping kids, their families & communities to be safe and well when they are back together

All the time – across stages, services and systems

Including families and communities in deciding what laws, policies, and practices are best for families and communities and how they should be used.
 What is best for families and communities, according to them?

Who was at our roundtable?

Parents and family members were at the roundtable, including parent leaders from FISH, GMARNSW, AbSec, and Allambi. There were also people from different agencies who work with families, write policies, and make decisions about what happens in child protection and out-of-home care.



What is family inclusion?

Parents, community members, carers, workers and managers were recently asked what family inclusion means to them.¹ This is the definition of family inclusion that was created from the research and used at the roundtable:

Family inclusion is the active and meaningful participation by children, parents, family and kin in child protection processes at a policy and practice level so their ongoing valuable role in children’s lives and connections to their children are maintained and strengthened. Family inclusion is linked to improved outcomes for children including prevention, restoration, and relational permanence.

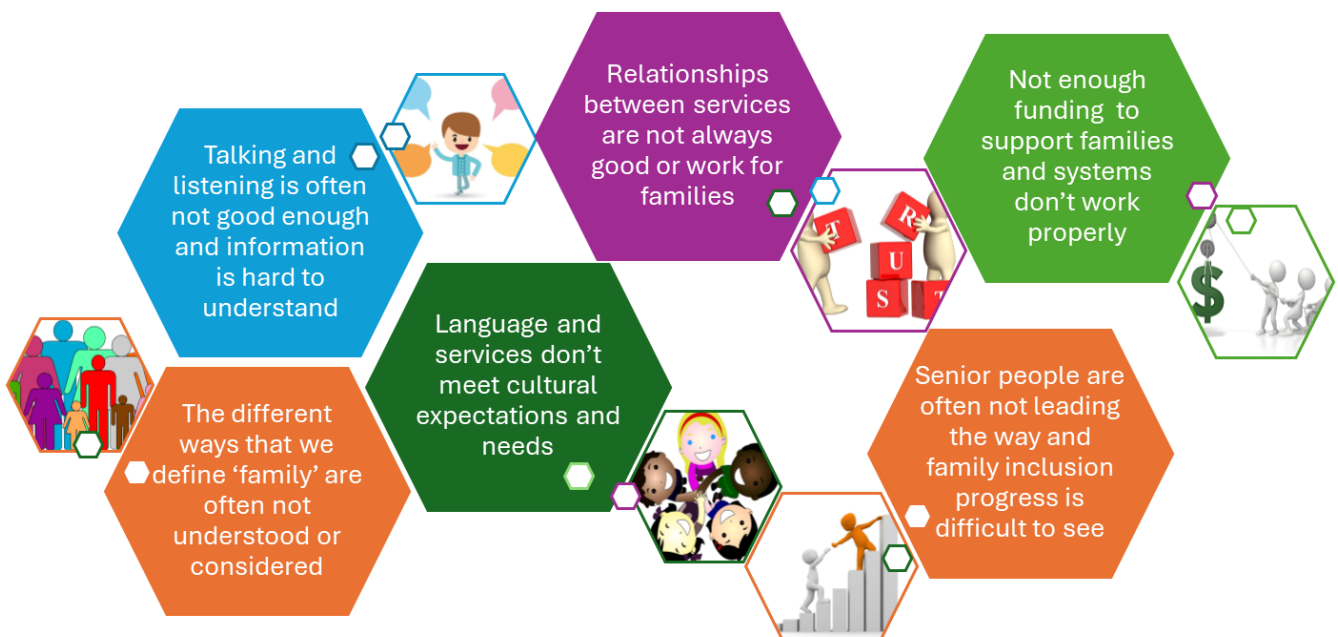
FISH & GMAR NSW are leaders in family inclusion

Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter Inc. and Grandmothers Against Removal NSW can lead other groups and services to make sure family inclusion is part of laws, policies, and practices with children and their families and communities.

This includes Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOS) working with families and communities who are critical to family inclusion.

What gaps and issues did we talk about?

There were lots of worries about what was NOT happening for children and their families and communities or what needed to be much better to keep them safe and well. Here are the most common gaps and issues we talked about:



¹ This was a research project conducted by a group of researchers with a large group of people involved in child protection and out-of-home care (Ross, N., Cocks, J., Foote, W., & Davies, K. (2023). <http://dx.doi.org/10.25817/sk7h-sy84>)

What ideas did we come up with to improve family inclusion?

Lots of ideas came up for the different stages that families go through with services and systems. Some big ideas that we think will improve family inclusion are:

- A system that checks and makes sure family inclusion is happening with families and communities in organisations.
- Local centres providing parent and family advocacy that are led by parents, families, and communities.
- Organisations employing workers and leaders who are family and community members with experience of child protection, out-of-home care, and child and family organisations.
- Research that asks children and young people what they think about family inclusion to help make policy and practice better.

See the full report for more detail on the ideas above plus a list of other ideas that we talked about at the Roundtable – FISH website, [our documents](#)



What do we hope will happen if these changes are made?

More family voice	Practice informed by lived experience
Families and communities need to be heard more in decisions and actions about keeping their children safe and practice and policy. Trauma-informed practice is critical.	Include the views of people with lived experience with other evidence when making decisions about what gets in the way of good family inclusion.
Community-led initiatives	Changes led from the top
Prioritise community-led approaches over interventions decided by organisations without direct experience to help trust and engagement of families and communities.	The most senior people in organisations must show commitment to family inclusion and drive change through role modelling in planning and directing their organisations and including families and communities at all steps.
Legal and institutional reforms	A bigger and stronger alliance promoting family inclusion
Family inclusion must be part of laws about safety and wellbeing for children, families, and communities. System and legal changes must be more family focused.	Extend the work already done by FISH and GMAR NSW with their amazing members, allies, and partners to get together and push for change and family inclusion to be experienced by everyone.

One participant said, If family meetings were more proactively encouraged and supported *with* the family, where the family actually understands what the meeting is and how it can help, how they can determine placement decisions and create a safety plan tailored for and by the family – as the experts in their own lives – it might have greater traction and remove the need for ANY statutory intervention in most cases

**Be part of an
alliance of people
committed to
family inclusion ...**

