

## Out of Home Care Costs and Pricing

Allambi Care is an Out-of-Home Care Service provider that started as a provider of homelessness services in 1981. From there Allambi has organically grown into a multi-disciplined service provider that operates across the Central Coast, Newcastle and the Hunter, the Northern Rivers regions of NSW, and the Southern Region of Victoria.

Allambi offers a range of programs and support in Out of Home Care including residential care, foster care, supported independent living, and family preservation. Allambi also has a number of auxiliary programs which were developed to meet the needs of the people we support and care for. We provide services through an evidence-informed model of care called the Needs-Based Restorative Framework.

Ipart was seeking a response to the interim report into out-of-home care costs and pricing on four specific questions. As a service provider, Allambi would like to provide responses and some further insight.

### Question 2.

What examples of wrap-around services does your organisation / District provide to children in your care that have contributed to their improved well-being?

Allambi has developed a number of auxiliary programs to meet the needs of the people we support. All of these programs were developed to positively impact an individual's physical, mental, and/or social well-being. This includes therapeutic clinical support, allied health support, Learning Without Walls, Family Search and Engagement, Cultural Support, and tutoring programs.

Currently, in Allambi's Foster Care program, we have the following percentage of our young people engaged in each of these supports;

Service	% of young people engaged
Psychiatry	27%
Counselling	12%
Behaviour Support	23%
Speech Therapy	3%
Play Therapy	11%

The need for these supports is assessed using Allambi Care's Needs-Based Restorative Framework and based on the Individually Assessed Needs of the young person. Where applicable Allambi accesses public supports available to these young people, such as Medicare and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, to assist with funding these supports. However, if the young person is not eligible to access any of these, or cannot obtain access to these services at the frequency and level required for their specific needs, Allambi's policy is that these supports are paid for by Allambi as it is not feasible for the carer to pay these out of their carer allowance and still be able to fund the needs of the young person in their care.

Social determinants of health such as education have both short and long-term benefits on wellbeing and Allambi recognise the importance of this for the young people we care for. In Allambi's Foster Care program, 99% of children or young people are engaged in education. Allambi recognise that school can be a challenge for some children in out-of-home care due to fractured education histories and disjointed schooling engagement and developed a tutoring program to help support those children to close this gap in their education. Currently, 13% of our young people in foster care are accessing the tutoring program and one of the young people who we support is accessing our Learning without Walls program which allows for flexibility in the delivery of their learning whilst they work towards reintegration into a more mainstream educational setting. Ensuring consistency and continuity in a young person's learning helps to support carers and placements by building on the child or young person's mastery, sense of belonging, and independence, as well as broadening their community network.

Maintaining a consistent school environment is important to the young people we care for, and at times this can be a barrier for carers depending on the individual needs of that child at the time. To support this Allambi currently provide carers and young people with an average of 15 school transport shifts per week, reducing the impact on carers and their personal commitments.

Maintaining family and significant connections is integral to a young person's wellbeing and is something that is often disrupted by entering Out-of-Home Care. Allambi prides itself on maintaining consistent family time for the young people we support. In our foster care program, 94% of children and young people are having consistent family time. To support carers and ensure our young people have positive and quality family time, Allambi has a dedicated team of family time workers who provide supervision and guidance to young people and their family. 61% of children and young people in our foster care program are supported by our team of family time workers. This reduces the impact on the carer and ensures that young people can maintain connections. Those young people who are not supported by family time workers is reflective of their individual circumstances where family time may not require supervision, or the carer is working towards guardianship.

Allambi also offer carers an array of training courses to support them in their role as carers, including the following;

- Needs-Based Restorative Framework
- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Families
- Trust Based Relational Interventions
- Tuning into Teens
- Connecting Families
- Cultural Awareness

To further support the carers and the stability of the young person's placement Allambi provides consistent respite with approximately 66% of the children and young people in our foster care program attending regular respite (monthly or fortnightly). Respite is available for all children and young people, however some carers choose not to send the children to respite.

Allambi also creates opportunities for carers to be acknowledged and network with other carers which helps to build natural support networks. Allambi organise events for carers so their efforts can be acknowledged within the Allambi Community. This increases carers' sense of belonging to the Allambi community, and the community of Foster Carers.

All of the additional wrap-around services that Allambi provides to the young people and carers we support, encourage stability and longevity within the foster care placement, by both addressing the children and young people's well-being and trauma-related needs, as well as the needs of the carer for continued learning, a sense of community and practical support. This is reflected in Allambi's low numbers of placement breakdowns with only one young person entering a High-Cost Emergency Accommodation placement. The wrap-around services and supports demonstrate a valuable return on investment through placement stability and continuity of care for young people.

#### **Question 4**

What activities and costs are involved in ensuring a smooth transition of Aboriginal children to ACCO's?

To date, the transfer to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations has required a significant resource investment from Allambi in terms of time and finances. There have been numerous requests to pull together information for the Department of Communities and Justice, several additional meetings with the department, requests from the Office of Children's Guardian, additional meetings with carers, duplicative documentation, and time investment in uploading documents to child story. In addition to this, transfer of carer files to an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation is required once a release of information document is signed.

Allambi has had an additional finance staff member to manage the additional administrative burden, and an additional 0.5 FTE of a Foster Care worker to continue progressing with the transfer without impacting on the service our current carers and young people receive.

Allambi Care also loses the foster carer once a transition occurs. The recruitment and assessment costs related to each carer is substantial and is lost once they are transitioned, with high spends on advertising costs and an average of \$8,000 for the assessment process per carer.

#### **Case Study**

Allambi has put together a case study that demonstrates the lack of flexibility and tailoring to individual circumstances, particularly in the case of Case Coordination. The Case study depicts a young person we are supporting who self placed in another state with their family. Allambi is continuing to meet this young person's safety needs with costly flights and visits to another State, as there are issues with transferring case management responsibilities between State's. Whilst Allambi is holding the risk for this young person, there is no opportunity for Allambi to receive additional funding. The Department of Communities and Justice indicates that a young person receives a funding package that follows their journey through care, however in circumstances such as this where their funding is exhausted to meet their basic safety needs, Allambi continues to fund his support without receiving adequate financial support from The Department of Communities and Justice. Funding allocated to this young person has been exceeded which impacts on other young people's funding allocations. If funding was able to be

used flexibly across the program this would be mitigated, reducing the red tape for approvals and departmental administration into the way the organisation allocates their funds.

## **Case Study - Resourcing to support CYP interstate under a Not in Placement- Case Coordination arrangement**

### **Overview of CYP**

Ricky was born in 2006 and is of Aboriginal heritage. Ricky was removed from the care of his mother in 2009 and placed in Foster Care. After a few placement changes for varying reasons, Ricky entered the Allambi Care Residential Care program in 2016, where he remained until he transitioned to a Foster Care placement in 2018. Ricky left this Foster Care placement in 2021, after an incident involving Ricky intimidating his female carer. Ricky then moved to another Foster Care placement within Allambi whom he had an existing relationship with. Ricky remained in this placement until December 2022. When Ricky came to Allambi Care he had little connection to his birth family and culture, in particular his mother. Throughout Ricky's time with Allambi Care, the team supported him to reconnect with his paternal grandmother and paternal half-brother, which reached a point where unsupervised overnight stays were approved, resulting in him spending regular weekends and holiday periods at his grandmother's home. Ricky also reconnected with his mother over social media in November 2021. In November 2022, Allambi Care supported face to face family time between Ricky, his mother, and brothers which involved his Case Worker accompanying him to QLD and facilitating visits over a few days, Ricky had not seen his mother in person for many years, and had never met his younger brothers.

### **CYP's current placement situation**

In December 2022 Ricky's foster care placement broke down. Ricky independently caught a train to QLD and self-placed with his mother and younger brothers. Despite efforts over a number of weeks to get Ricky back to his foster care placement in Newcastle, Ricky informed his CW team that he wanted to stay in QLD with his family. This is when Allambi Care explored what options were available to ensure that Ricky continued to receive the support he needed, and to ensure his safety and wellbeing, during a very vulnerable time in his life. In addition to this, and due to being away from his foster care placement for more than 8 weeks, Ricky moved into the status of Not in Placement, resulting in Ricky's funding package changing to Case Coordination.

Ricky has been living in QLD since December 2022, due to the large distance from Allambi Care's operational area in Newcastle, NSW to QLD, it has been challenging to support Ricky whilst ensuring his safety and wellbeing. Since Ricky self-placed in QLD, Allambi Care have been seeking support (in the form of some in person contact with Ricky, and assistance with linking him into services such as health, education and employment), from a nearby service in QLD, through the process of an interstate request through Department of Communities and Justice's CFDU team. The first interstate request was submitted to HCC CFDU in January 2023. Ricky has moved back and forth from his mothers to extended family members, therefore each time he has moved an updated interstate request is required to be submitted. In 2023, Allambi Care with the support of DCJ managed to get a service in the area on board to engage and support Ricky, however the service only attempted one house visit which Ricky refused to engage in.

To ensure Ricky is safe and well, Allambi Care CW has been travelling to QLD bi-monthly where he spends a few days with Ricky, and supports him to access various services (e.g. getting a

learners permit, signing up to a vocational course or accessing Centrelink), as well as all case planning because Ricky remains under the parental responsibility of the Minister and Allambi Care need to continue meeting OCG and DCJ contractual requirements. Allambi Care CW also continues to support Ricky by contacting him weekly, and following up on anything that Ricky requires assistance with, including ongoing financial support to meet his needs.

Earlier in 2024, Ricky self-placed with his younger brother's paternal grandmother and aunty. Allambi Care CW/CM met the paternal grandmother and discussed going through a carer assessment to be authorised as Ricky's kinship carer. Allambi Care consulted with DCJ, and started exploring who and how a kinship assessment could be completed. Allambi Care started to get this underway by assisting the grandmother and aunty with probity checks for them and all household members, as well as requesting the assistance of Allambi Care's Northern NSW team to help with the kinship assessment. This took a significant amount of resources and time over a number of months, with the end goal being permanency and a positive outcome for Ricky. The kinship assessment never eventuated due to an incident that resulted in Ricky leaving the home and returning to his mother's home.

Due to concerns with the living environment at Ricky's mother's house, Allambi Care contacted QLD police with concerns and, once again, submitted an interstate request to HCC CFDU team, as it was identified that someone needed to be supporting Ricky closely at this time, to ensure his safety, welfare and wellbeing. Allambi Care CW urgently travelled to QLD to check in on Ricky and assess the living situation with his mother.

After a few months of increased support from Allambi Care CW team to encourage and support Ricky to engage in education and/or a vocational course, Ricky enrolled in a mechanical course through Centrelink.

Ricky is 3 months away from turning 18, so Allambi Care CW team have been putting their focus and attention towards assisting and preparing Ricky for leaving care and independence, ensuring he has a strong support network around him as he transitions into young adulthood. Allambi Care is working on a robust aftercare plan and financial plan, so Ricky has all the support he will need for a positive future.

This case study demonstrates our ongoing commitment to Ricky and his family through the continuation of intensive support under some of the most difficult circumstances, logistically and financially, whilst having to navigate processes and procedures in both the NSW and QLD child protection systems that do not align.