

**CARER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICE (CISS)  
MID YEAR RESULTS**



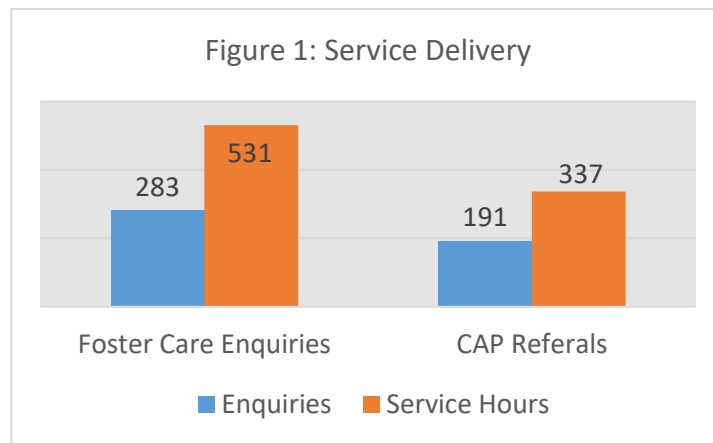
**JULY – DECEMBER 2022**

Between 1 July – 31 December 2022 the Carer Information & Support Service (CISS) responded to and closed 283 foster care enquiries, delivering 531 hours of service.

In addition, the Carer Assistance Program (CAP) received 191 referrals, delivering 337 hours of therapeutic support to foster and permanent carers & adoptive parents.

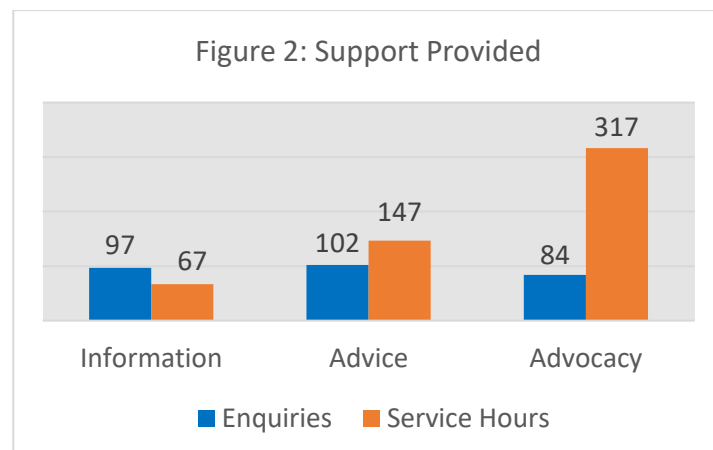
There has been a steady increase in the (CAP) referrals and very positive feedback in relation to the benefits for service users.

While some issues are relevant across both foster carers and permanent carers , it would appear many of their challenges and stresses are quite different .



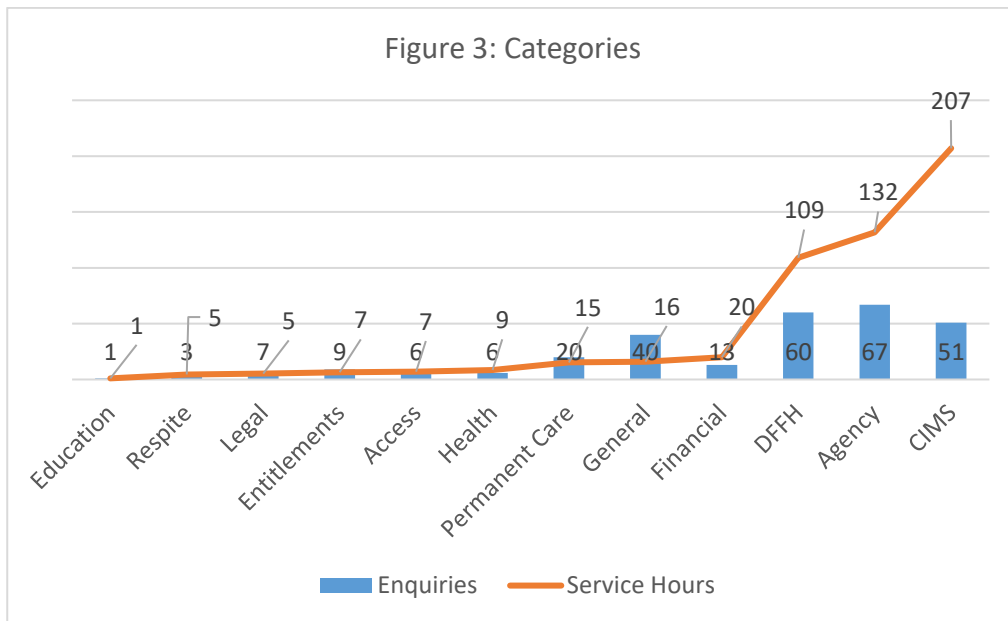
**Support Provided**

Of the 283 Foster care enquiries, the CISS Team provided Information to 97 enquiries (67 hours), Advice to 102 enquiries (147 hours) and Advocacy to 84 enquiries (317 hours).



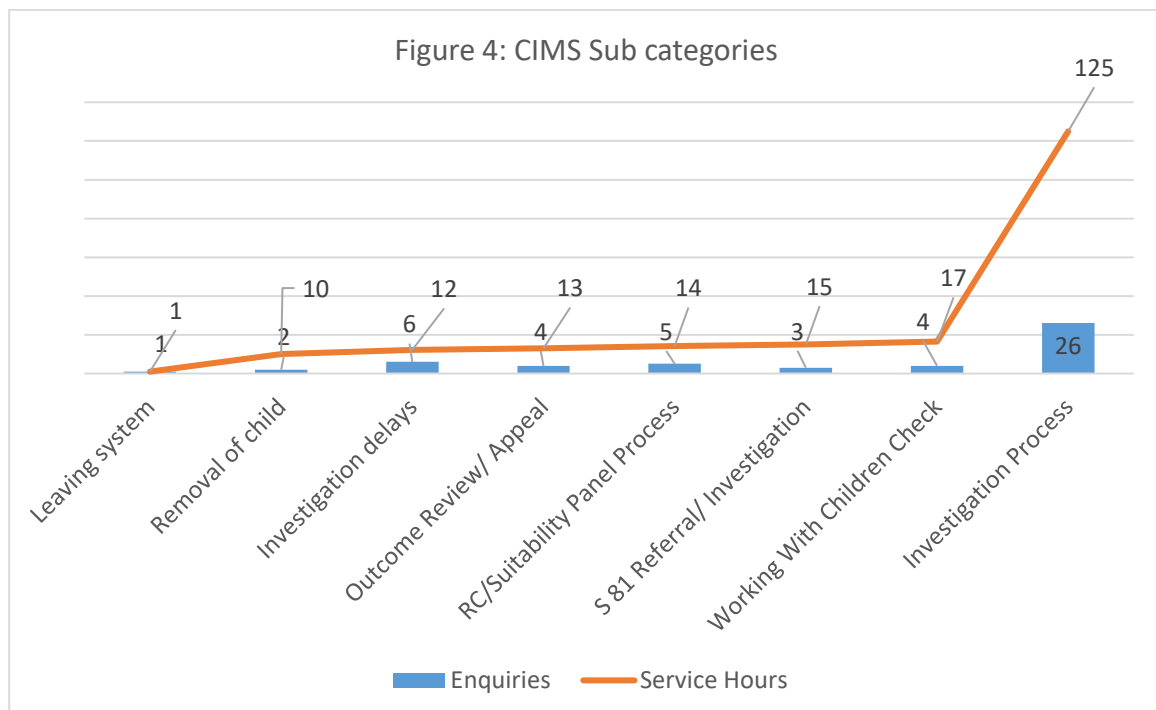
**Categories**

The most significant categories of foster care enquiries and associated support related to DFFH, Agency and CIMS.



**CIMS**

The most significant component of CIMS support continues to be in relation to CIMS investigations. The team provide support to many carers while they wait for the investigation to commence, through to receiving an outcome of an investigation.



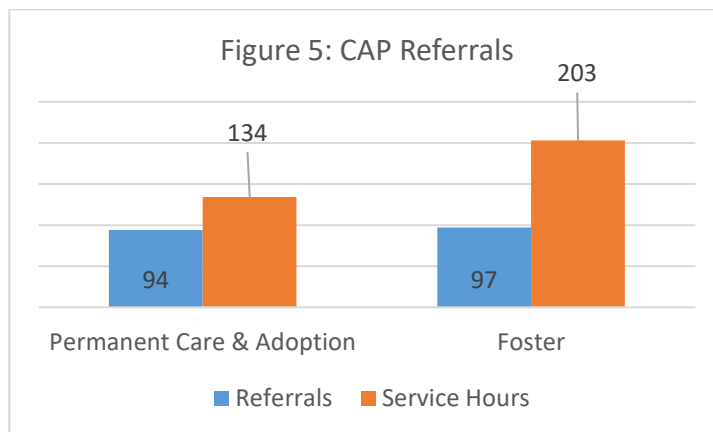
One area that continues to be challenging is when carers are interviewed by police. This seems to lengthen the time of the investigation. FCAV recommend developing a protocol and refining the process of police investigations for carers. DFFHS are in discussion with Victorian Police.

The FCAV presented to the CIMS Community of Practice Forum Working Group in December 2022 showcasing the CIMS experience for carers.

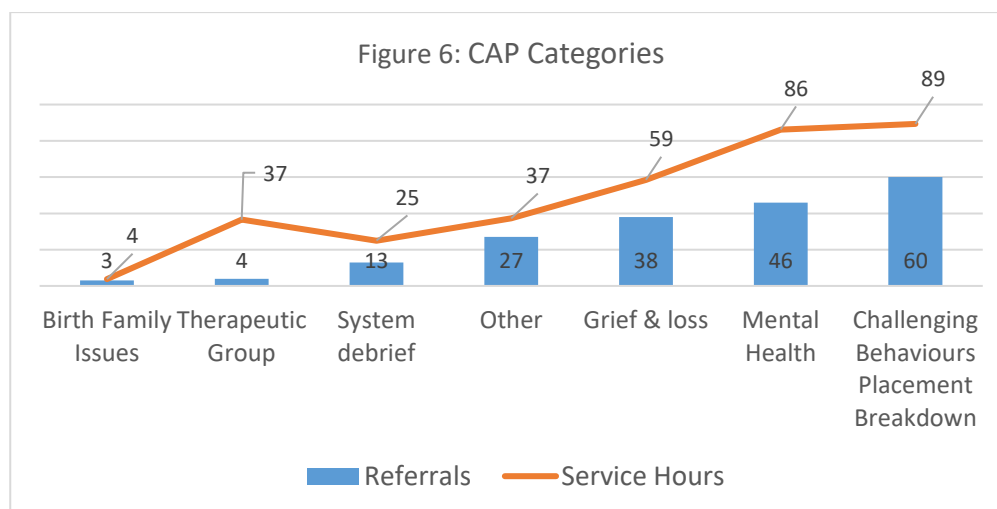
The CIMS review is continuing with the Department and they are meeting with FCAV in early 2023 to further discuss making improvements in the system.

### Care Assistance Program (CAP)

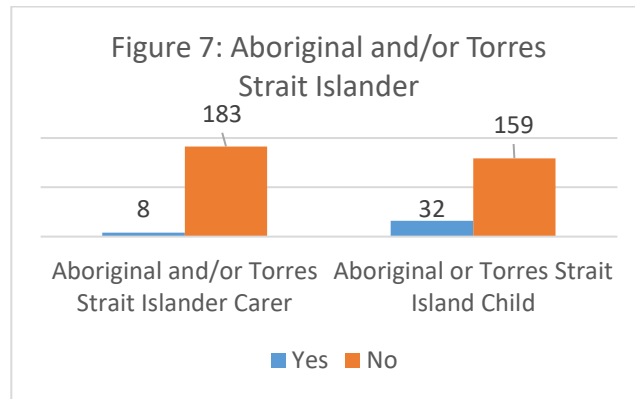
In July 2022, FCAV and Permanent Care and Adoptive Families (PCA Families) partnered to expand the existing CAP service to include services for permanent care, adoptive families and Family Law Court ordered carers.



Carers and Parents who have accessed this service have found it to be beneficial. Carers feel validated and have a space to clarify their purpose and intentions. They describe gaining a new way of relating with their children and young people, which included developing problem-solving skills and learning to feel more grounded while parenting. Parenting issues has been very significant for Permanent Carers and as a result a parenting specific therapeutic group will be offered to the sector in 2023.



There has been a rise in the number of carers with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children in their care accessing the CAP service, the program provides targeted support with an increased cultural lens. As a service, we are continuing to have discussions with Aboriginal Controlled Organizations to best meet the needs of these children and families.



Evaluations and feedback received indicate several carers who initially expressed their intention to leave the system chose to remain in their caring roles following receiving CAP support. This reinforces the program’s value in carer retention across the sector.

*“The CAP program has been instrumental to me and my family's mental health during the allegations process, without Tonya's understanding and support I don't know how/if we could have kept on as carers. The CAP program allowed me to express myself in an environment free of judgment and free from systematic fear that I otherwise would not have had. Having access to an agency-based support is still connected to the agency at a time when we as carers fear the system the most, CAP lends itself to us, for us without fear of the system, letting us truly let go and be heard. As a man, and this is not true of all men but definitely most, our friendship groups are more about distraction from life's realities. We don't tend to open up with each other and talk out our feelings and problems. CAP and Tonya have been a safe place for me to do just that, I didn't realize how much I was holding onto until I was given the chance to let go, sorry for that Tonya and thank you. Tonya was really able to hear me even when I couldn't find the right words and it felt like it came from a place of understanding from inside the fostering community unique to CAP therapeutic support. You are all a credit to your professions”*

During this reporting period the CAP service piloted a 4-week therapeutic support group focused on grief and loss, which received very positive feedback. Therapeutic group work is a meaningful and effective intervention and provides opportunities for carers to gain increased support from each other.

*“I gained so much from the four weeks and have so much admiration for the staff, what incredible women, so strong. The sessions were facilitated with such elegance, which really enabled me to explore my feelings. While I haven't made any decisions yet, I feel so much more connected and not as isolated with my experience. It is such a skill and gift that you have to be able to facilitate groups as you did, honestly it was amazing. Thank you so very much, you are incredible people”.*