

# Evaluation of the LINKS Trauma Healing Service

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# Acknowledgement of Country

The Parenting Research Centre acknowledges and respects the diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this country and the Elders of the past and present.



# Acknowledging contributors

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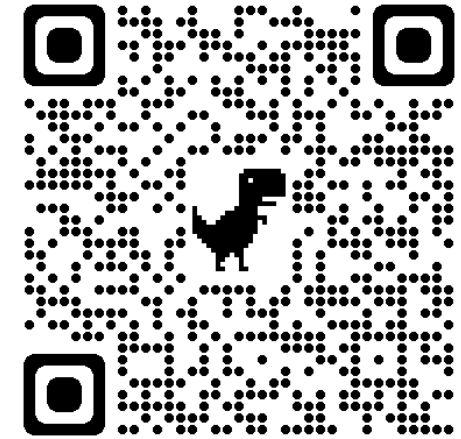
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## **Expert Advisory Group**

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## **LINKS staff, youth & carers**

## **DCJ staff**



## LINKS Aims

- increase stability of OOHC placements
- respond to trauma and other underlying causes of child abuse and neglect
- decrease trauma symptoms and improve psychological wellbeing of CYP and carers

## Evaluation Aims

- examine success of LINKS in improving client outcomes
- understanding the experiences of clients and carers exposed to the program
- examine cost-effectiveness of LINKS



# Evaluation Methods

## Design:

- Process, outcome and economic evaluation
- Hybrid effectiveness-implementation design (Bernet et al., 2013)
- Between-groups repeated-measures quasi-experimental design for the outcome evaluation: matched comparison group
- Cost-effectiveness analysis for economic evaluation



# Evaluation Methods

## Data:

- 23 staff interviews; 27 carer interviews
- Pre-post (& 6-12 month f/up) data from LINKS service records:
  - trauma symptoms (TSCC, TSCYC)
  - children's behavioural and emotional functioning (SDQ)
  - children's psychological wellbeing (PWI-SC & HoNOSCA)
  - Carer capacity & wellbeing (PWI-A & PSS)
  - Carer report of child hospital visits, school attendance, justice contacts
- LINKS service receipt data & staff fidelity data
- DCJ/LINKS cost data (e.g. financial reports)
- DCJ data on RoSH reports & placements including for a matched comparison sample



# Findings - Referrals

- 415 referrals, 47% Aboriginal, <17 year olds
- 343 accepted into LINKS, 264 started receiving a service before end 2019
- 208 exited before end 2019, 108 successfully completed 1+ program
- 7% not accepted as they did not meet referral criteria (e.g., not in placement) or they declined service.



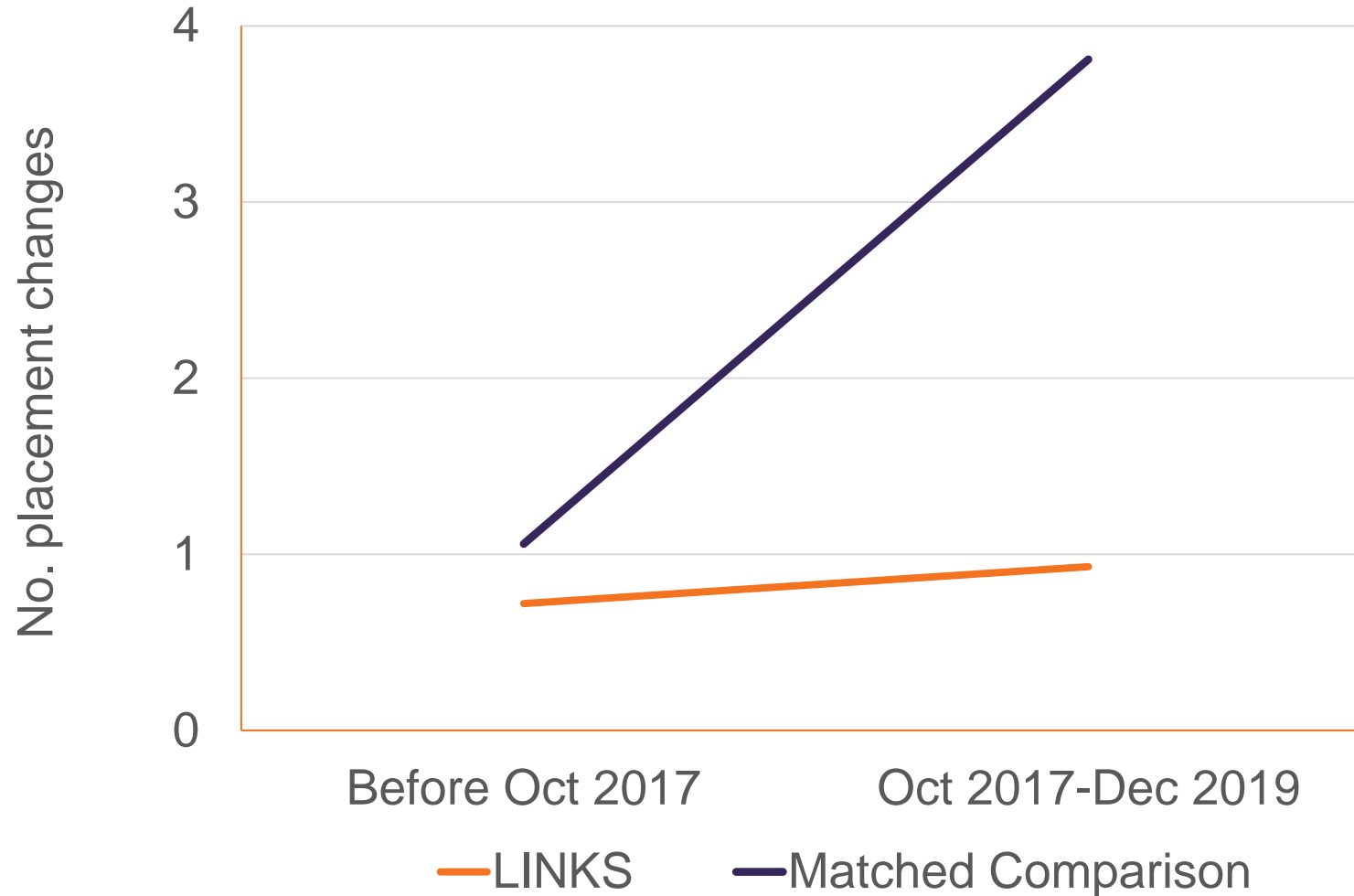
# Findings – Experiences of the service

- 54% allocated to TF-CBT, 35% to TIK or TIK(T), 17% to PCIT, 17% to EMDR
- High satisfaction among staff, carers & children
- Filling a gap
- Positive outcomes
- Cultural adaptation
- Flexible
- Relationship-based
- Role of LINKS in supporting cultural needs of Aboriginal children?





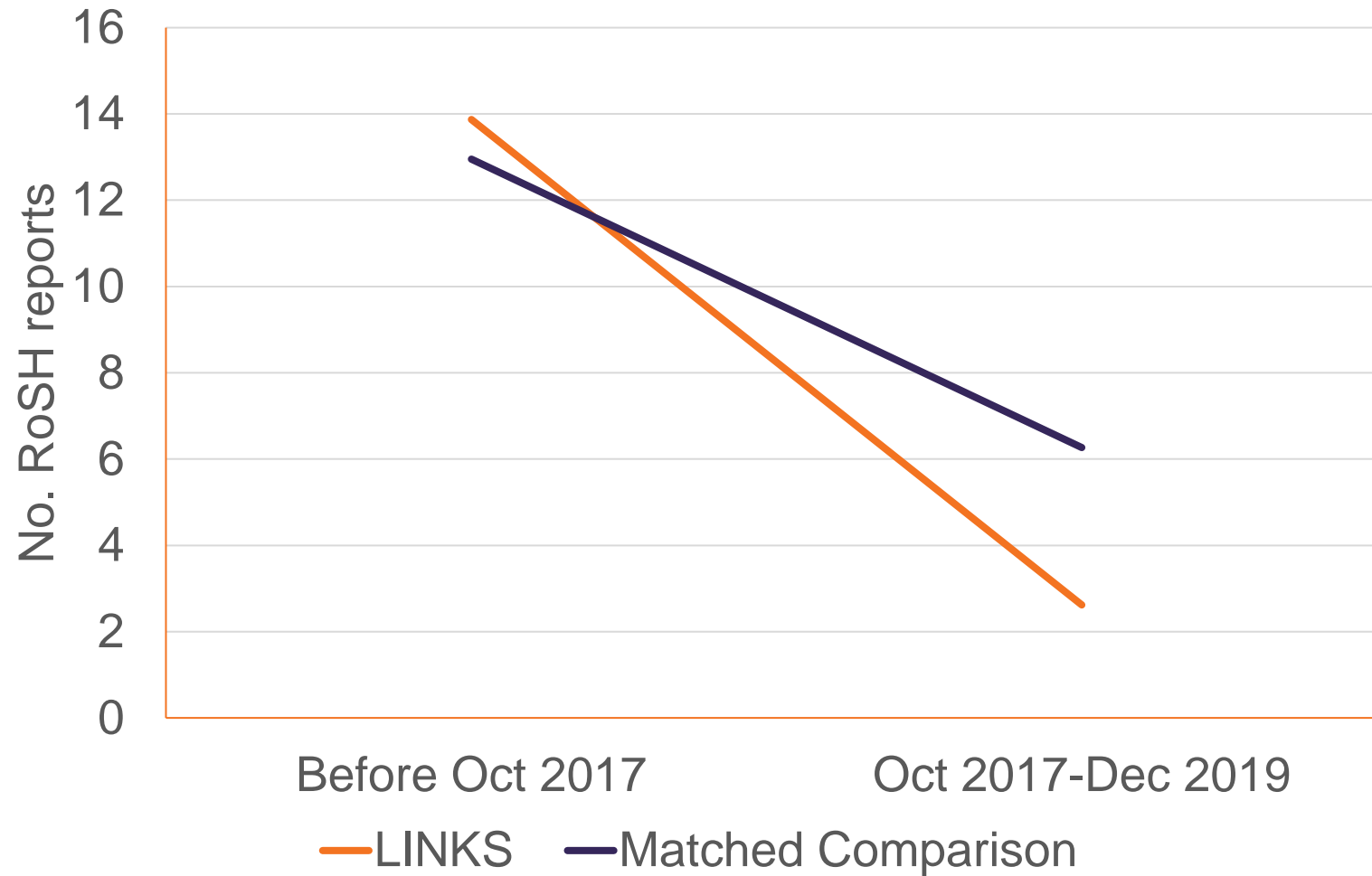
# Findings – Placement stability



LINKS clients had significantly ( $p < .001$ ) better improvement in placement stability than the matched comparison group, and this treatment effect was in the moderate to large range



# Findings – Risk of Significant Harm



LINKS clients had a steeper decline in RoSH reports than the matched comparison group, although this difference between groups was not statistically significant ( $p=.062$ )

# Other findings

- No differences in restoration rates (4-5%)
- Of the 108 'completers', 59 achieved treatment goals & 39 made progress
- Reduction in disruptive behaviour problems ( $p < .05$ , moderate effect)
- Reduction in socio-emotional difficulties ( $p < .05$ , moderate effect)
- Improved relationships with peers ( $p < .001$ , large effect)
- Improvements in general health & social functioning ( $p < .001$ , large effect)
- Reduction in posttraumatic stress ( $p < .05$ , large effect)
- Fewer school suspensions ( $p < .05$ , moderate effect)
- Fewer court appearances ( $p < .01$ , moderate effect)
- Improvements in carer wellbeing ( $p < .05$ , moderate effect)
- Potential cost savings of \$3,305 for each future placement breakdown



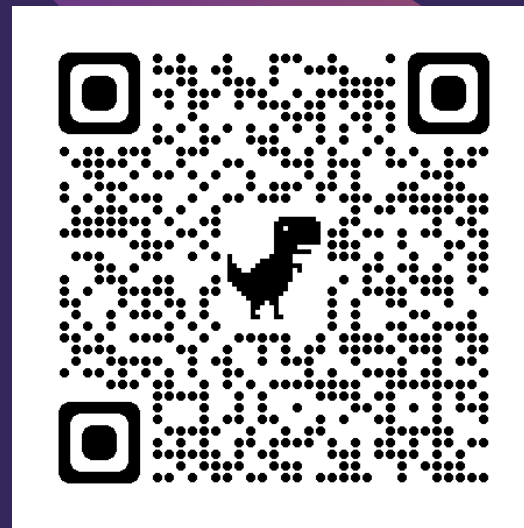
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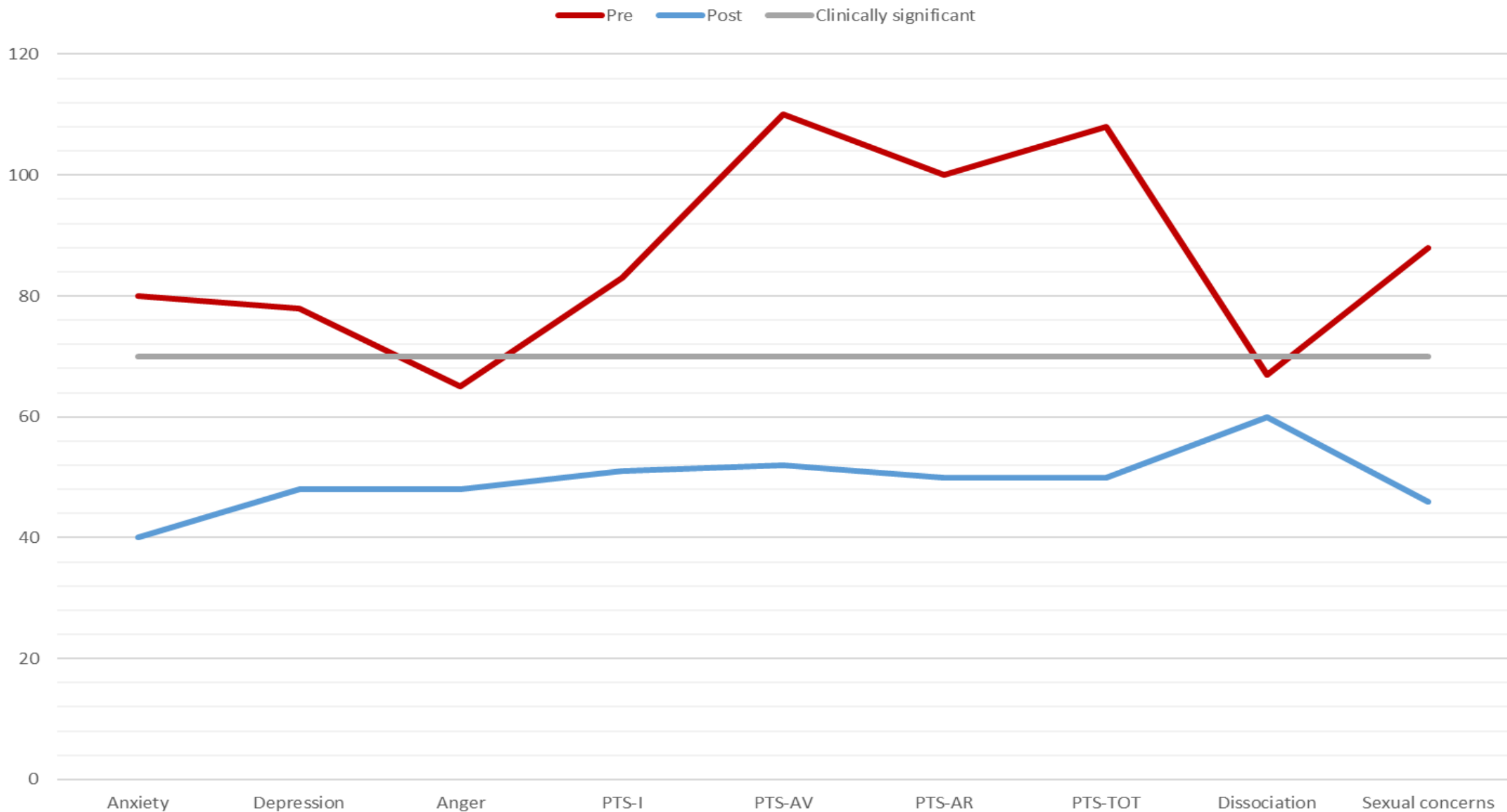
# Sam's Story

Sam was 9 years old and at the time of referral the case plan goal was for her to go home to her mum.

Behavioural symptoms of complex trauma:

- Complex grief
  - Suicidal ideation
  - Attachment disruption
  - Multiple school suspensions
  - Significant placement instability
  - Highly avoidant in therapy
- 
- TF-CBT, Occupational Therapy and Speech Pathology

# Sam's Trauma Symptoms Checklist for Young Children Results



# Where is Sam now?

- Sam lives at home with her mum
- Sam's sister has recently gone home too and things are going well
- Sam hasn't been suspended from school for over 12 months
- She's in the local soccer team

Sam says:

I am more confident and I get less angry

I don't have nightmares now