

As Eye See It
Victorian project report 2013–14

As

see it.

An exhibition of black and white photographs
taken by children and young people
living in Out of Home Care

As Eye See It



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All the children and young people who so honestly shared their experiences through their words and photographs.

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Executive summary

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the *Victorian Charter of Rights and Responsibilities*, and the *Charter for Children in Out of Home Care* express the rights of children and young people to have a say, to be heard and/or be consulted. Unfortunately, there are still limited opportunities for children and young people living in Out of Home Care to have a say. The challenge for those working with and caring for these children and young people is to find effective and appropriate means through which to do this.

With the limited opportunities for children's voices to be heard, there is also inadequate public understanding of what the Out of Home Care sector is, how it operates and the realities for the children and young people who live within it. Responses from members of the public who visited the *As Eye See It* exhibition (presented in Appendix Two) demonstrate the impact that the experiences of children and young people in Out of Home Care can have on an unaware public.

Whilst the *As Eye See It* project is not a direct feedback method regarding individual programs, or the broader Out of Home Care system, it does provide an opportunity for children and young people to express something about their lives, their experiences and the world as they see it.

In 2012, 15,351 young people surveyed by Mission Australia rated friendships, family relationships and study as the three most valuable elements in their lives¹. When reflecting on the question '*What is most important in your life?*', children and young people participating in *As Eye See It* most commonly referred to friendships, family relationships and fun. Whilst both groups referred to friends and family, it is important to consider the context of these relationships: most children or young people living in Out of Home Care have experienced the affects of trauma and/or neglect, removal from their families and placement into care.

While categorising the responses from participants in *As Eye See It* has posed some challenges, there remain two standout themes: 'Fun' and 'Connection to Friends and Family'. In 'Fun', participants describe numerous activities, places, toys and sports they enjoy. As might be expected, 'Connection to Friends and Family' includes workers, permanent carers, foster carers and respite carers, as well as blood relatives and friends. The journey to making these connections with others, how these people have affected their lives and the reason why they are so important are highlighted in a number of the quotes presented in this report, three of which are included below:

'What can (I) really say about my brother? He always seems to make me laugh and even when he is annoying me, he always seems to make me smile.'

'I hope you enjoy getting an insight into what I love most, My Family.'

'Residential Life. You know that feeling you get when you lose someone so important to you? Well guess what, I know that exact feeling. I lost my best friend, the most important person in my life, my Mum. My heart broke in to a million pieces. I understand that my mum has passed but I know she is with me every single day. I can see her within me, I look just like her and I hope when I am older that I am half of what she was.'

In reviewing what participants of *As Eye See It* included when asked to present '*What is most important to you?*', it is also relevant to look at what they didn't include. The third most valued issue in the Mission Australia survey of 15,351 young people (the vast majority of whom live at home and attend full-time school) was school or study satisfaction. Whilst it is not useful to compare this data to the *As Eye See It* data, as we did not survey all children and young people in care, the low level of importance placed on study/education (5 of 380 photographs) by participants is not surprising, considering the low level of school attainment for children and young people in Out of Home Care². We know that the effects of trauma and neglect make it incredibly challenging for many children and young people to attend mainstream schooling³.

Regarding how participants felt about their photographs, 68 per cent of the total 380 photographs were tagged with positive emotions and the most popular of these was happy at 17 per cent. Whilst this data seems positive overall, it also raises additional questions. For instance, is it that children and young people who feel positive about life are more motivated to engage in the *As Eye See It* project? Is it the framing of the activity, which asks participants to reflect on '*What is important to you?*' Is this data reflective of the human experience more generally? Or is there some other reason?

In providing a report on the *As Eye See It* project, we hope to encourage further discussion and consideration of what participants are saying about their experiences in Out of Home Care. Admittedly, these are the experiences of a small group of young people in care; however, they certainly provoke further contemplation. The experiences described and the images presented paint a picture of a care system that provides necessary supports for most participants, but is unable to meet the needs of others. At the very least, we hope that reading the words of this year's young participants highlights the need for more projects like this, which provide children and young people with the opportunity to share what is important in their lives.

Introduction

As Eye See It is a black and white photographic project specifically for children and young people living in Out of Home Care, including foster care, kinship care and residential care. Participants are provided with cameras and given two weeks to take pictures of things that are important to them. Of those pictures, they are asked to select five, and to provide a sixth photograph of their right eye, in close up. In addition to the photographs, each child or young person is asked to write a screed describing the photographs, explaining what they are trying to say with their images, or talking more generally about what is important in their world. This collection of photographs and written pieces is then launched at a public exhibition to display the work of the participants, raising awareness about the Out of Home Care system and providing an insight into the worlds of those who live in it.

The *As Eye See It* project and exhibition aims to:

- Provide children and young people living in Out of Home Care with a creative means of expression for the issues that are important to them;
- Raise awareness in the broader community of the Out of Home Care sector; and
- Bring Out of Home Care agencies together in a collaborative forum to work towards a shared goal.

The Victorian *As Eye See It* project and exhibition is now in its third year, following an exhibition in 2009–10 and in 2011–12. Between 2011–12, an additional four states and two territories adopted the project under the leadership of their local Children's Commissioner with the support of local Out of Home Care providers. Information regarding these projects is documented in the *As Eye See It National Report 2011–12*, which is available through the Commission for Children and Young People in Victoria.

Background

In 2008, staff at Salvation Army Westcare identified a need to provide young people living in Out of Home Care with an opportunity to express what is important to them and what it is like being in care. Westcare then approached the Office of the Child Safety Commissioner (now The Commission for Children and Young People) with a proposal for young people living in Out of Home Care to participate in a photographic exhibition. Bernie Geary, the Child Safety Commissioner (now the Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People), encouraged the idea of agencies coming together in a collaborative forum with a shared goal, and personally supported the proposal as a way of:

- Allowing children and young people to express how they see their life and what is important to them through the lens of a camera;

- Enabling children and young people's voices to be heard through the use of a powerful medium such as photography; and
- Bringing about greater public understanding of children's experiences in care.

In February 2009, the black and white photographs of 76 children and young people from ten Out of Home Care provider agencies, CREATE Foundation and the Department of Human Services were exhibited at Federation Square.

In September 2011, the black and white photographs of 65 children and young people from twelve Out of Home Care provider agencies, CREATE Foundation and the Department of Human Services were exhibited at Federation Square.

The 2009–10 and 2011–12 projects were a success on many fronts. They proved a great example of cross-sector collaboration; enabled the voices of some of our most marginalised young people to be heard in a public forum; provided an activity that built on the connections between staff, carers and young people; and communicated messages about the experience of care that had never before been heard so clearly.

As Eye See It 2013–14

The third Victorian *As Eye See It* Exhibition was launched on 4 September 2013 at Federation Square, during Child Protection Week. 76 children and young people from twenty Community Service Organisations and CREATE Foundation participated, submitting 380 photographs. The exhibition was launched by Gill Callister, Secretary to the Department of Human Services. The Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People, Mr Bernie Geary OAM, and the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Mr Andrew Jackomos, jointly hosted the event.

Many of the children and young people who participated in the *As Eye See It* Project attended the launch with their carers, supporters, friends and family. Directly following the launch, the CREATE Foundation hosted a celebratory boat cruise along the Yarra for the children and young people who had participated. The cruise, which was supported by the Commission for Children and Young People and Berry Street, gave the 35 young photographers who attended a chance to talk to each other, share their experiences about the project and celebrate their achievement.

This years' project and exhibition saw a 60 per cent increase in the number of participating partner organisations. The number of participants increased by eleven and there were 55 additional photographs. Participants used 242 subject tags and 169 emotion tags to describe their photographs. The photographers ranged in age from 8–22 years, consisting of slightly

more female participants than male, and had experiences in foster care, kinship care and residential care amongst them.

Interpreting the messages from children and young people

In 2011, the *As Eye See It* Project Steering Committee resolved to improve the methodology for reading and interpreting the messages of children and young people participating in *As Eye See It*. The new methodology reduced the need for adults to interpret participants' photographs by asking participants themselves to provide a subject, emotion and numeric tag with their photographs, in addition to their written descriptions. These steps were taken to provide an additional means of understanding what children and young people were communicating, whilst preserving this *creative* means of expression.

Anecdotal evidence from participating Community Service Organisations suggests that providing a creative outlet for expression supports the engagement of children and young people who would not otherwise participate in an alternate feedback process, such as a qualitative interview or an online survey. The tagging approach is **not** designed as an academic research methodology through which definitive conclusions can be reached. However, it does provide some opportunity to identify themes emerging from the photographs. This report aims to provide an exploration of some of the issues raised by the children and young people participating in *As Eye See It* project.

In order to provide a framework in which to explore what participants have said is important to them, the findings are categorised according to the sixteen rights articulated in the Victorian *Charter for Children in Out of Home Care*. These rights include: Safety; Health and Wellbeing; Childhood and Respect; Aboriginal Culture; Support in Difficult Times; Privacy; Access to a Worker; Connection to Friends and Family; Placement/Home; Fun; Traditions and Religion; Education; Life Skills; and Leaving Care. These rights were also used in the development of the subject tags referred to below.

Figure 3 displays the high percentage of participants who chose to assign their own subject tags rather than those provided. This large variety of tags used provides a considerable challenge in making any general statements about the messages from children and young people. Again, the broad categories of the *Charter for Children in Out of Home Care* provide some method for discussing the important issues raised by the participants of *As Eye See It*.

Due to the *artistic* nature of the project, every effort is made to provide ample direct quotes when reflecting on the messages of children and young people. All the photographs included in the exhibition are printed in the 2013 *As Eye See It* catalogue, which should be viewed in conjunction with this report. The catalogue is available through the Commission for Children and Young People.

In 2013, the Project Steering Committee added an extra component to the *As Eye See It* project by seeking to obtain public feedback on the project. A detailed discussion of this is included in Appendix Two: Public Opinion.

Methodology

After selecting the images they wanted to submit, participants were asked to apply three 'tags' to each image (excluding the shot of their right eye):

- **A subject tag to identify what the image represents.** Participants were offered a range of subject tags, which loosely correspond with the rights listed in the *Charter for Children in Out of Home Care*. Due to the broad nature of the rights listed in the Charter, most of the subjects that participants referred to could be categorised in this way. Young people were also given space to add their own subject tags if they did not feel those available were appropriate to their image.
- **An emotion tag to indicate what emotion(s) the photograph aroused in them.** A range of emotion tags, representing both positive and negative emotions, was provided to the participants. Again, young people were encouraged to create their own emotion tags if needed.
- **A numerical tag to indicate the level at which the participant felt the emotion.** One represented a low level of the selected emotion, and five represented a high level.

In compiling this report, the tagging data was entered onto an online survey in order to simplify the data analysis.

A full list of the tags provided to the participants, as well as those they created, is provided in Appendix One.

Throughout this report, subject tags are marked in green, emotion tags in red and explanatory screed from the participants in blue.

Voices of children and young people

Overview

The four graphs displayed in this section represent every emotion tag and subject tag used by participants during this project. The graphs provide a general overview of the photographs collectively. Also within this section are a number of the photographs and themes that do not feature in the Data Breakdown, as well as some specific examples of photographs and tags that are representative of the classification process.

There were 380 photographs submitted in total; for each photograph, participants could select as many tags as they needed. Specifically, there were 169 different emotion tags and 242 subject tags used, including 142 personalised tags that were created by participants themselves.

When using a personalised subject tag, participants selected '*Something else*' from the prescribed list and then created their own tag. The graphs below include the tag '*Something else*', which actually demonstrates the number of personalised tags used by participants. Each personalised tag is listed in Figure 3.

Figure 1 lists each of the emotion tags used by participants and compares how popular they were overall.

Figure 2 displays the subject tags that participants could choose from when tagging their photograph. The graph displays the strong preference shown by participants to provide their own tags, rather than use those provided. Whilst not captured in this project, it would be interesting to look at the process that participants used when selecting the language they think best explains their photograph.

As presented in Figure 2, there were over 200 photographs tagged with personalised subject tags. In Figure 3, for ease of understanding, the writers have loosely grouped these subject tags under the broad categories articulated in the *Charter for Children in Out of Home Care*. It is important to remember that these photographs have been placed into these categories by someone other than the participant, and therefore, may not be considered entirely accurate.

To provide additional context, described below are some examples of subject tags that we have categorised using the rights in the *Charter for Children in Out of Home Care*. For example, a personalised subject tag, '*My little sister*' – in addition to the following information from the screed: 'My sister wasn't always living with me; a year ago she moved out and got placed in a different unit' – was placed in the '*Connection to Friends and Family*' category.

The second example includes a photograph titled OUR BACKYARD and had the personalised subject tags '*I like being in the backyard where I can run around*' and '*I like playing on the trampoline*'. The photograph had

the following emotion tags: '*Free*' and '*Amused*' (both level 5) and '*Excited*' (level 4), and was placed in the '*Fun*' category.

In order to gain an overall picture of the general themes by which participants tagged their photographs, Figure 4 combines subject tags selected by participants from the list provided, as well as the personalised tags shown in Figure 3, that were created by the participants. The tags below have all been categorised under the broad categories of the *Charter for Children in Out of Home Care*. This provides a snapshot of the most popular themes described by participants.

In reviewing the data, a prominent thread throughout the data is the reference to pets/animals. Due to the varied reasons that pets and animals were included, the 36 photographs that relate to pets/animals, whether in the tagging form or in the photograph itself, can be found throughout the section of this report titled Data Breakdown. When referring to pets/animals, the most commonly used subject tags were '*Having fun*' and '*Stuff I like doing*'. Except for the sections that were rarely used by participants, pets and animals appear in every section.

Inevitably, when looking at all the information provided by participants, there were photographs that were too abstract to fit under the rights of the *Charter for Children in Out of Home Care*. These photographs, of which there were four, are discussed below and provide specific examples of what the reader will not find within the following sections of the report. These four photographs could not be understood using the *Charter for Children in Out of Home Care* themes due to the combination of abstract subject tags and minimal written information.

The first is a photograph titled THE PALM: the image was of a hand outstretched holding a leaf. The emotion tag was '*Hygienic*'. The second photograph was of a cigarette packet titled SMOKING; the emotion tag was '*Weak*' (level 5) and the subject tag was '*Being in care*'. The third photograph was titled TOWN and had the subject tags '*There might be something out there*' and '*How big the world is*'. The emotion tag was '*Alive*' (level five). Lastly, a photograph titled I CAN SEE THINGS THAT MAYBE YOU CAN'T had the subject tag '*In this world I can see the truth behind the lies but can you?*' and the emotions tags were '*Alone*' and '*Wise*' (both level three). Whilst the writers acknowledge that the interpretation of any photograph is subjective, besides these four examples photographs were categorised according to the tags that participants provided.

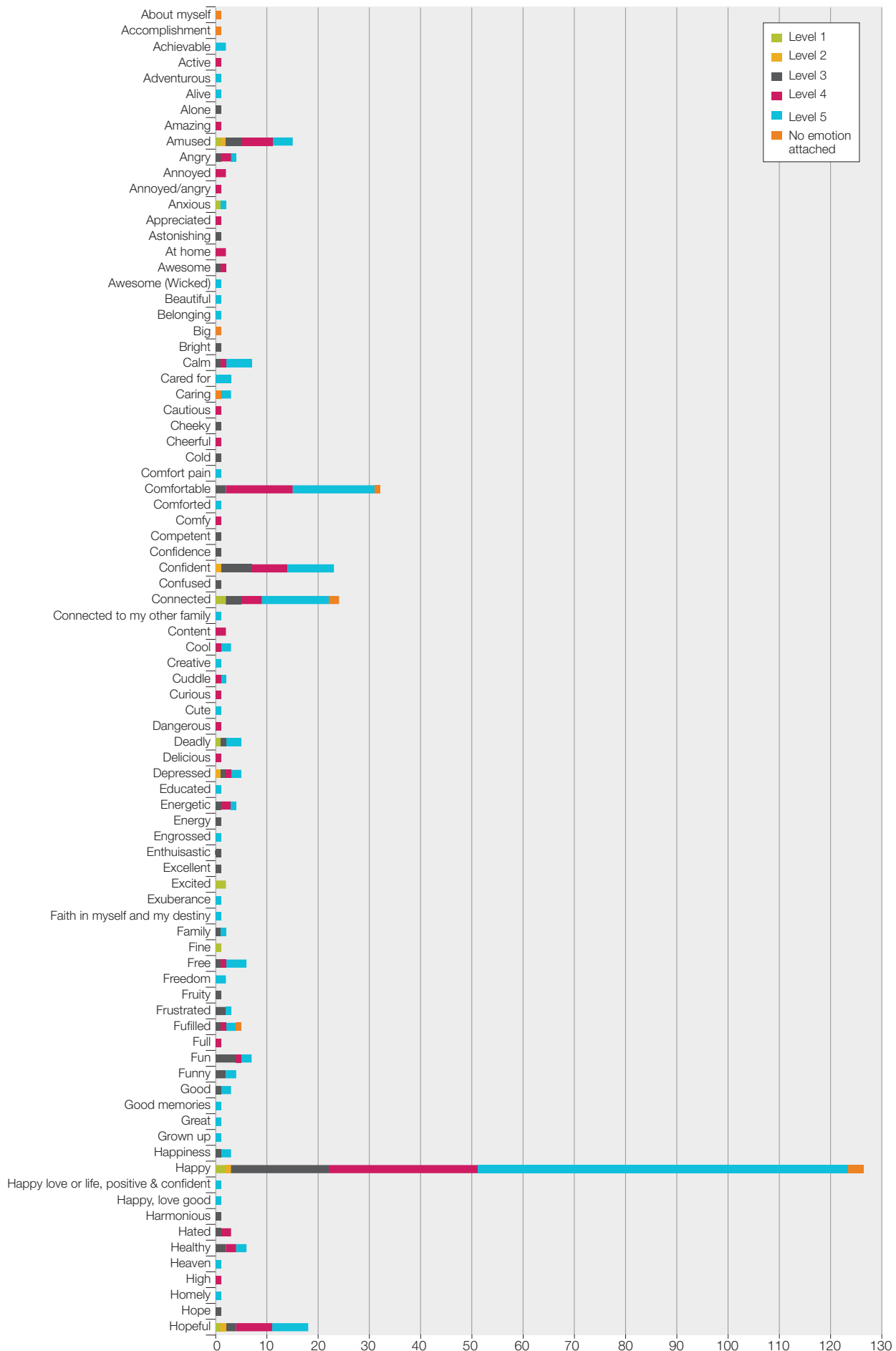
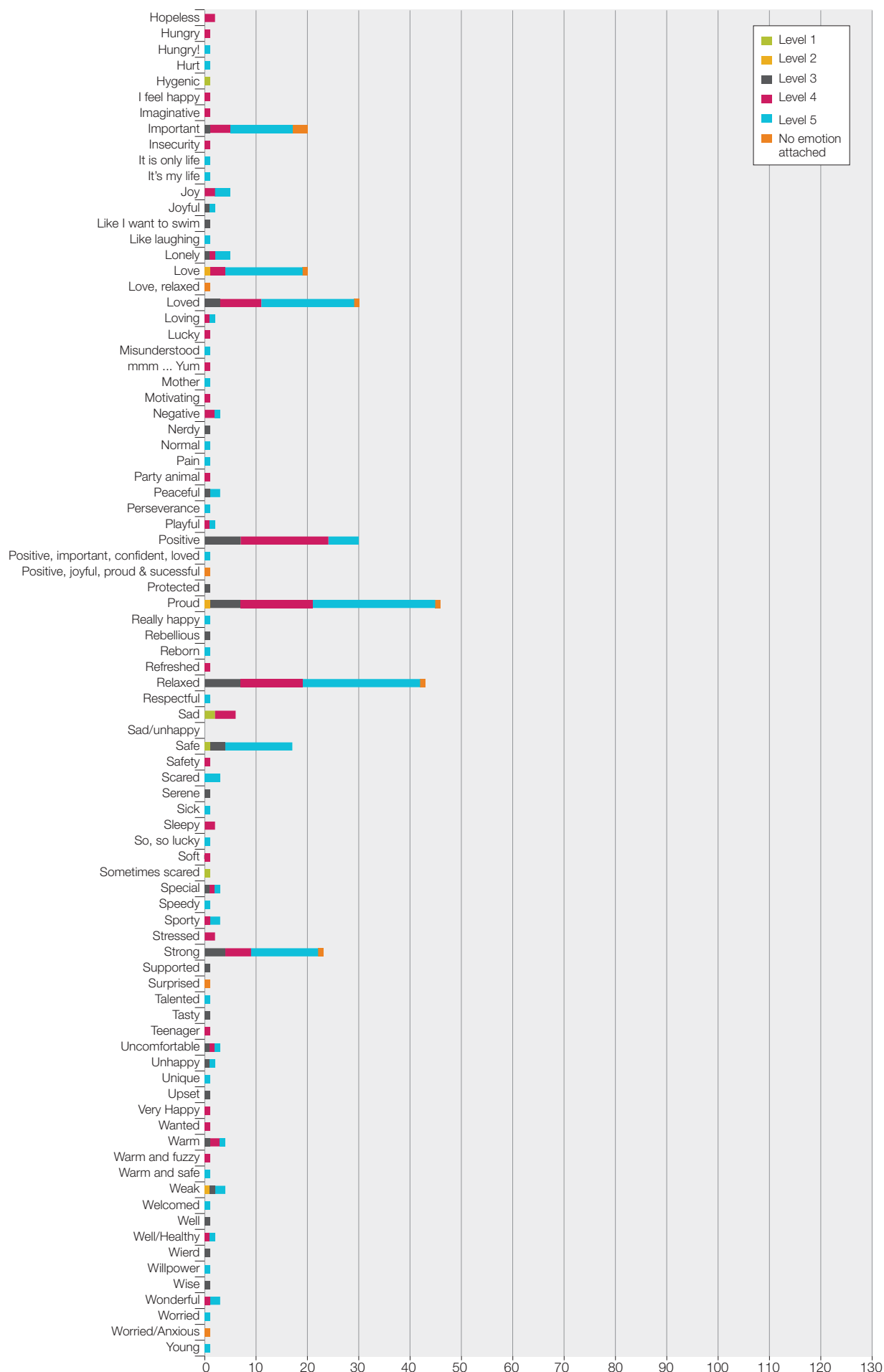


Figure 1: Emotion tags assigned to photographs by participants



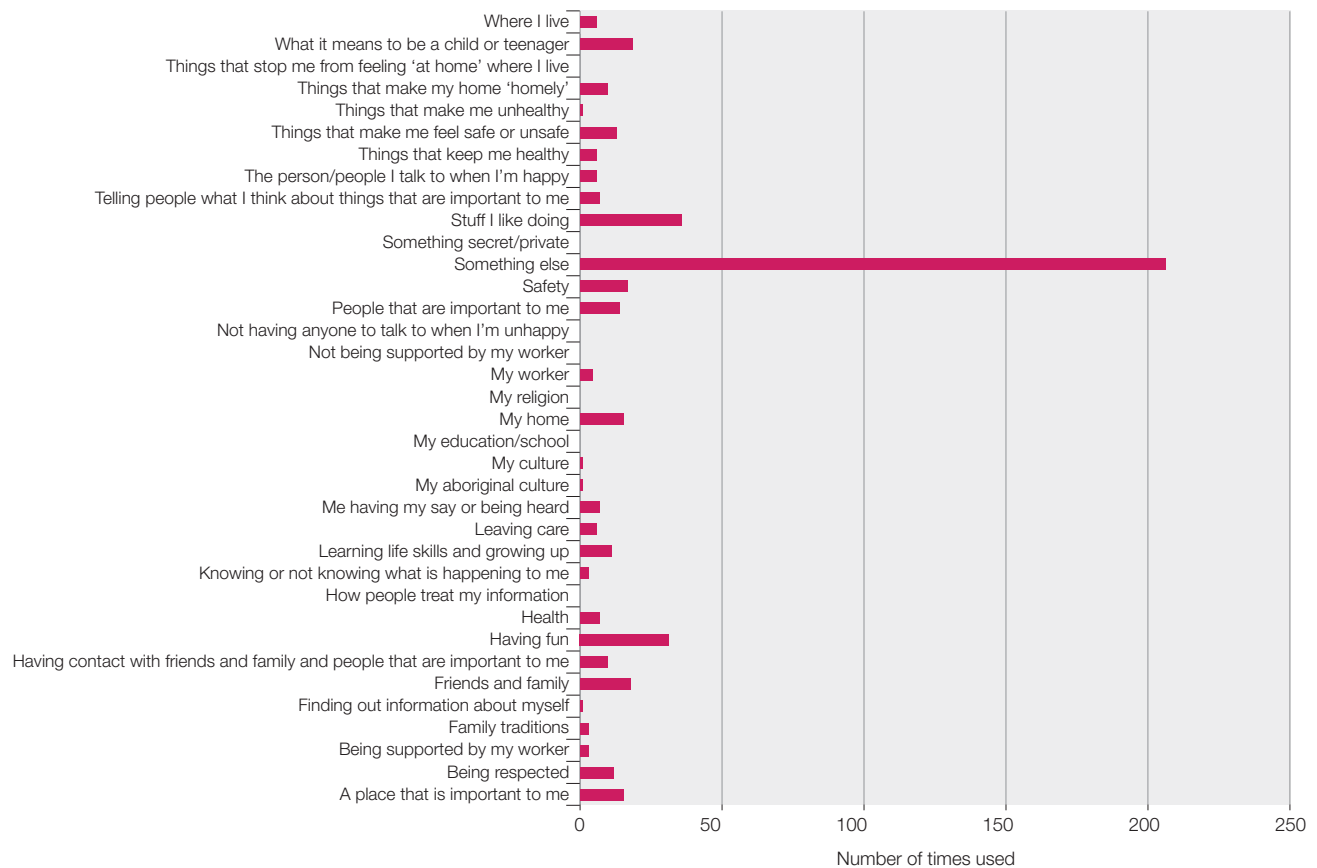


Figure 2: Subject tags assigned to photographs by participants

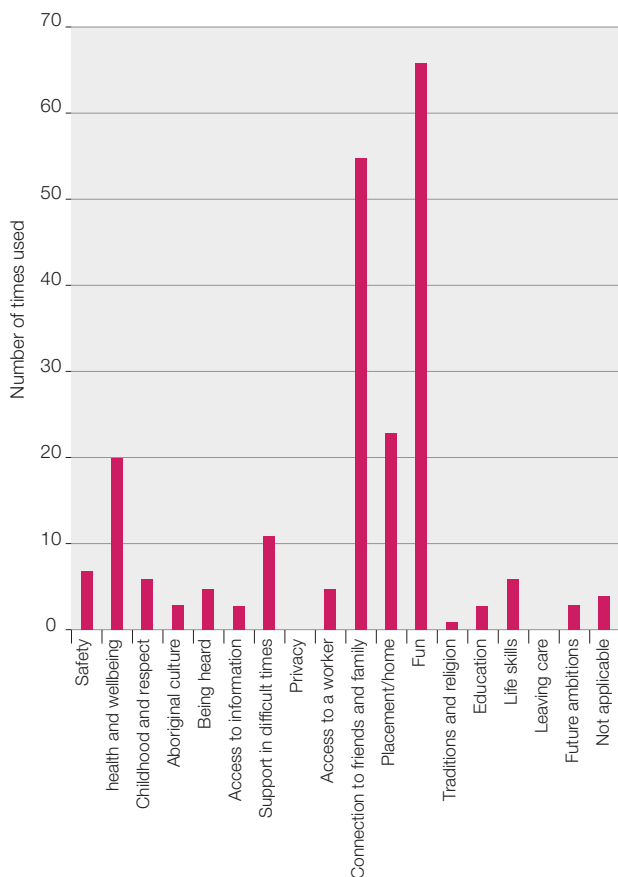


Figure 3: 'Something else' tags grouped under the rights in the Charter for Children in Out of Home Care

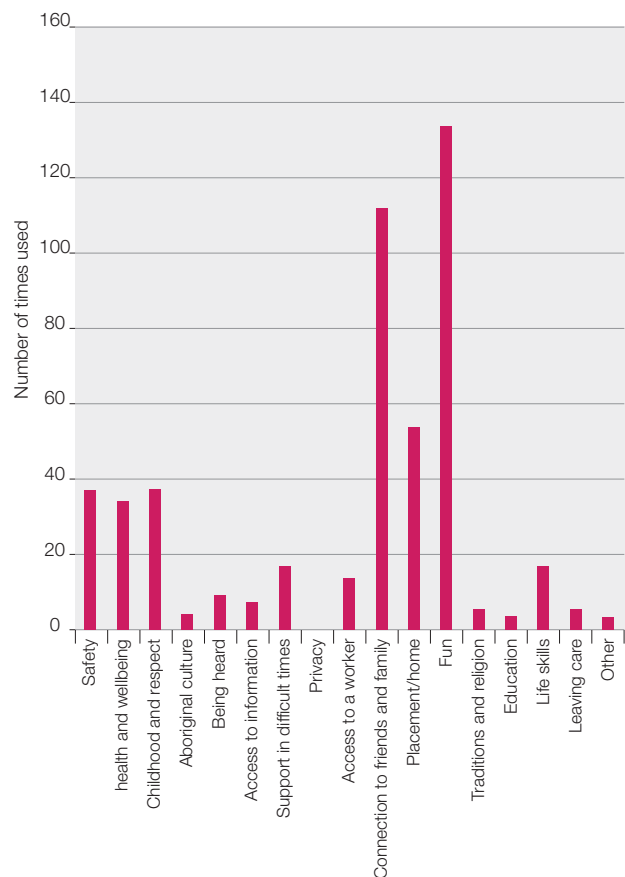


Figure 4: Combined 'Something else' and other subject tags, grouped under the rights of the Charter for Children in Out of Home Care

The messages of children and young people in relation to the *Charter for Children in Out of Home Care*

1. Safety

'As a child or young person in care, I need to be safe and feel safe.'

Overall *'Safety'* was the third most commonly used subject tag, after *'Fun'* and *'Connection to Friends and Family'*. There were 47 photographs that related to *'Safety'* and participants used various tags such as, *'Safety'*, *'Things that make me feel safe'*, *'Safe'*, *'Feeling safe'*, *'Being safe'*, and *'People that make me feel safe'*. Also discussed below are photographs where participants have used the emotion tag *'Safe'*.

Of the photographs that were tagged by participants as *'Safety'*, images included: a trampoline, the moon, a dark hallway, a KFC uniform, socks, bedroom and a young person's boyfriend. Emotion tags used were mostly positive, with *'Safe'* and *'Happy'* being the most used.

One young person who used the subject tag *'Safety'* spoke about the struggle of living in Out of Home Care. Their photograph was of a dark hallway with minimal light at the end of the corridor. They used the following emotion tags: *'Frustrated'*, *'Scared'*, *'Uncomfortable'*, *'Weak'*, *'Negative'*, *'Depressed'*, *'Anxious'* and *'Lonely'* (all level five). Their screed read:

'As I saw life. How I felt life. Dark but still not enough light. Not enough power to light my world. Scared, angry, sadness filled my life. Slowly and painfully losing my path. Can hardly see, Struggling to keep breathing ...'

Some participants chose to assign their own subject tags to their photographs. These tags generally related to people and places that make participants feel safe and included the following images: a residential care worker, a bed, a participant's mother and a skate park.

There were five photographs related to the subject *'Safety'* that were of animals. The images included: two photographs of cats, a horse with a participant's worker, a turtle and a young person holding a chicken. The most frequently used emotion tag related to these photographs of animals was *'Happy'*, which was used four times. All other emotion tags related to this theme were used once (*'Love'*, *'Loved'*, *'Cold'*, *'Comfortable'*, *'Positive'*, *'Strong'*, *'Confident'*, *'Free'*, *'Important'*, *'Like I want to swim'*, and *'Safe'*).

The images that were tagged by participants as *'Things that make me feel safe or unsafe'* included: a bottle of iced tea, a young person's home, a cat with its paw outstretched and the moon at night.

A photograph titled GET AWAY, although not tagged *'Feeling safe or unsafe'*, had the emotion tag of *'Free'* (level five), and the young person wrote of having the need for a space of their own:

'This photo is about my place to go when my mind is busy. This is where I go when I need a little time or space to myself. I feel comfortable and warm in my room.'

Figure 5 indicates the range of emotions that were felt in relation to *'Safety'*. There were 54 emotion tags used to represent participant's emotions, of which 38 of them were positive.

2. Health and wellbeing

'As a child or young person in care, I need to stay healthy and well and go to a doctor, dentist or other professional for help when I need to.'

There were 24 photographs that were related to *'Health and Wellbeing'*.

Seven photographs were tagged *'Health'*. Images included: a fridge full of food, a soccer ball, sport trophies, candles, a tree, and a girl patting a horse. Emotion tags for these were characteristically positive, and the most commonly used emotion tags were: *'Comfortable'*, *'Confident'*, *'Happy'*, *'Hopeful'*, *'Positive'*, *'Strong'* and *'Well/healthy'*.

Sixteen photographs were related to health and mentioned *'Being healthy'*, *'Health to keep my energy up'* or *'Being active'* in their subject tags. Image content in these photographs included: a tennis racquet, food, a tree, mints, nail polish, a bed, a girl playing netball, a basketball ring and a fish.

One photograph was tagged with *'Things that make me feel unhealthy'*. The photograph of a cigarette packet was titled DYING SLOWLY. Emotions tagged with this image were *'Angry'* (level four) and *'Upset'* (level three), as is evident in the screed below:

'This makes me angry and upset because I know this is killing me slowly.'

3. Childhood and respect

'As a child or young person in care, I need to be allowed to be a child and treated with respect.'

In total, 28 photographs related to *'Childhood and Respect'*. The majority of the photographs were tagged 'Being respected' and *'What it means to be a child/teenager'*. Photographs included: lions at the zoo, nail polish, a Teddy Bear's Picnic, Facebook, ice-cream and two hands holding onto each other. Emotion tags were mostly positive; **'Happy'** was used fifteen times, **'Confident'** was used eight times, and **'Excited'** was used six times.

There were four photographs that participants assigned their own subject tags to that related to *'Childhood and Respect'*. One, titled FAMILY LOVE, had the emotion tag **'Respectful'** (level 5). The second photograph, titled FAMILY HOME, had the subject tag *'What it means to be a child'* with the following emotion tags: **'Scared'** (level 5), **'Hopeless'**, **'Negative'** (both level 4), **'Happy'** and **'Hated'** (both level 3).

Two photos were tagged negatively in relation to the subject *'Respect'*. One of those participants wrote the following in their screed:

'What about children like me that are in foster care? We don't have the same stable life style as everyday children, we are

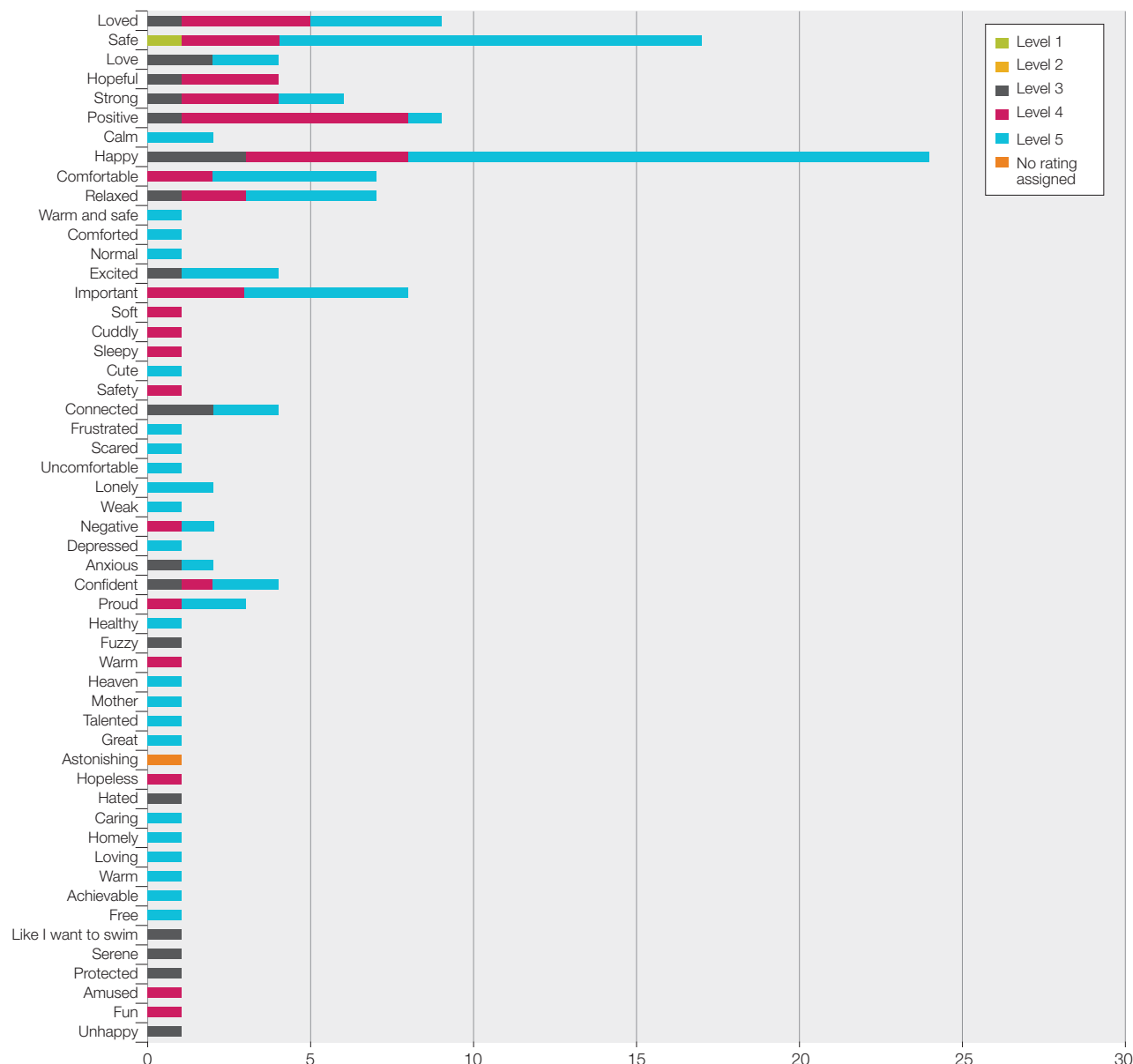


Figure 5: Emotions Connected to Images related to *'Safety'* and *'Being Safe'*

owned by people we have never even met, we have people in suits and fancy clothes come in and out of our life (DHS).

How are we supposed to feel normal when other children at school never have to experience what we go through?’

The screed below was tagged by a participant as *‘Being respected’*:

‘... to have power and to be strong is to have confidence in yourself. I walk with pride in myself and I am very proud of who I am ... I have courage in myself and towards others. I will help out my friends whenever they need and put in 100% effort from my heart.’

4. Aboriginal culture

‘As a child or young person in care, I need, if I am an Aboriginal child, to feel proud and strong in my own culture.’

There were ten young people who identified as Indigenous. There was also one participant who did not identify as Indigenous, however, made mention of their Aboriginal culture in their photographs. Although there was only one photograph that used the supplied tag, *‘My Aboriginal culture’*, there were a further six photographs that made mention of Indigenous heritage. The photograph tagged *‘My Aboriginal culture’* included two flags, one of the Aboriginal flag and one celebrating NAIDOC week in Geelong. The emotions listed were all positive and included: **‘Proud’**, **‘Awesome (wicked)’**, **‘Happy’**, **‘Strong’** and **‘Hopeful’** (all level five). The screed read:

‘This photo reminds me of my culture and having fun with my family.’

The six remaining photographs that made mention of participants’ Indigenous heritage consisted of various images such as: Aboriginal artwork; a young person with their mother and younger brother; a poem; a lounge with an Aboriginal flag hanging on the wall; a photograph of a meeting place; and a mobile phone. The emotion tags for these photographs were positive, except for one that had the emotion tag **‘Sometimes scared’** (level one).

One participant’s screed read:

‘I’m Aboriginal. The X family is well known – we’re good drawers, we’re great singers and we’re great comedians. Aboriginal culture includes paintings – there are lots of paintings. I will tell you some; dot painting, animal painting and life painting. Aboriginal culture is important to me because we were the first people in Australia.’

Figure 6, below, highlights the emotions that were used to express participants’ Indigenous culture.

5. Being heard

‘As a child or young person in care, I need to have a say and be heard.’

There were 25 photographs that related to *‘Being Heard’*. Within this broad category, participants used the subject tags: *‘Telling people what I think about things that are important to me’* and *‘Me having my say or being heard’*. They also included personalised tags such as: *‘Stuff I like doing’*, *‘My favourite colour’*, *‘The car I want to buy’*, *‘Food’*, *‘Eating’*, *‘Things that make me happy’*, *‘Chocolate’*, *‘My favourite brand and colour’* and *‘My favourite shoes’*. The emphasis of many of the personalised tags motivated the writers of this report to

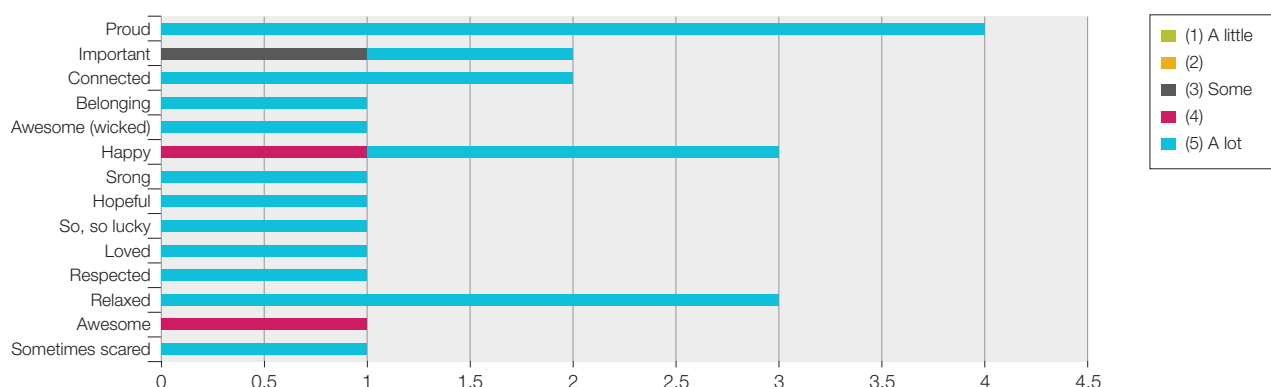


Figure 6: Emotions connected to images mentioning *Indigenous culture*

create a separate category titled *'Things I like/don't like doing'*, which is included below.

Six photographs were tagged *'Telling people what I think about things that are important to me'*. Image content in these photographs included a stuffed toy, the view from a young person's apartment, a guitar and a dog. All of the emotion tags that were used were positive, and all were level three or higher.

One photograph, included under *'Being Heard'*, had the personalised subject tag *'I don't like trees being cut down'* and included a high level of negative emotions.

Another young person wrote about their experience of being in care and addressed the misconceptions relating to Out of Home Care:

'Things are not easy being a kid in care and I understand that there is a huge misconception of the idea of what a kid in care is. I'm proof that we aren't all horrible people. We have a story and there is a reason that we are in care. But it is by far something that people shouldn't judge us on.'

Things I like/don't like

Following an in-depth analysis of the data it was decided to add *'Things I like/don't like'* as a subsection under *'Being Heard'*. Many participants have shared photographs and stories about things they like/don't like. Eleven photographs were given personalised subject tags such as *'Things I like doing'*, *'Things I like'*, *'Stuff I like ...'*, as described below.

Four of the photographs from this section were of animals. These all expressed strong levels of positive emotion (*'Happy'*, *'Freedom'*, and *'Cuddle'*). Only one photograph of some chickens and ducks was tagged negatively (*'Annoyed'*, *'Angry'*) as the young person wrote that: 'they annoy me because of the sounds they make.' Three photographs of Nike shoes were also included in this category, with positive emotions tagged: *'Happy'*, *'Excited'* and *'Comfortable'* (all level five).

One photograph of a blue sky included the emotion tags *'Calm'* and *'Happy'* (both level five), which is highlighted in the young persons screed, below:

'The photo of the sky is actually blue and this represents my favourite colour. I'm not sure why it is, I guess because it makes me feel calm.'

Two photographs of food were allocated to this category, one titled CHOCOLATE and the other titled FOOD; again, positive emotion tags were used (*'Delicious'*, *'Full'* and *'Hungry'*).

6. Access to information

'As a child or young person in care, I need to be provided with information.'

There were five photographs that were related to *'Access to Information'*; these were tagged *'Finding out information about myself'*, *'Knowing or not knowing what is happening to me'* and *'Not knowing'*. Four of these were tagged with negative emotions and expose some of the experiences and feelings that children and young people have as a result of living in Out of Home Care. There were three photographs that were tagged *'Knowing or not knowing what is happening to me'*. These photographs consisted of a participant looking down at their feet, a person on a swing set, and two Indigenous flags. The only positive emotions tagged were in regard to the two Indigenous flags.

There was one photograph that was tagged *'Not knowing'* and was included in this category. The photograph of a dark, unlit hallway had the emotion tags of *'Lonely'* and *'Depressed'* (both level five), which is further highlighted in their screed below:

'As I saw life. How I felt life. Dark but still not enough light. Not enough power to light my world. Scared, angry, sadness filled my life. Slowly and painfully losing my path.'

One photograph was tagged *'Finding out information about myself'* and included giraffes, zebras and an emu. The emotion tags connected were *'Happy'* (level five), *'Proud'* (level three) and *'Connected'* (level one). The participant included the following description in their screed:

'... even though there are many different animals they are similar to people, and can be friends. Everyone needs to have friends ... friendship is essential to all living things in the world. The photo shows that animals do not judge and don't need to all look alike, this shows that there is multiculturalism in the animal community just like this country with its people. These animals have the freedom, which humans do as well; there are a lot of similarities.'

This photograph highlights the challenges that are evident when using this method of data collection and analysis. The relationship between the subject tag, the screed and the image is highly subjective, however, provides a good opportunity to reflect on the message of the participant.

Town, Claudine



Matchbox cars, Daytone



My Horse, Jungala



Chloe



7. Support in difficult times

'As a child or young person in care, I need to tell someone if I am unhappy.'

Overall there were 23 photographs that were related to *'Support in Difficult Times'* and included the following subject tags: *'The person/people I talk to when I'm unhappy'*; *'Not having anyone to talk to when I'm unhappy'*; *'Not being supported'*; and *'Supporting myself'*.

Six photographs were tagged *'The person/people I talk to when I'm unhappy'*. The images included: a participant's boyfriend, a bedroom wall, a participant's mother, and a worker with a horse. The emotion tags connected to these photographs were all positive and were all rated level three or higher.

Of the 15 photographs that had personalised tags, four expressed a sense of being supported. These photographs included a participant's aunty (*'The one who was always there'*); a participant's shadow (*'Supporting myself'*); a *'Snuggly teddy'* ('It makes me feel like someone I love is lying down with me') and letters from a friend, as highlighted in the screed below:

'These are some letters that my friend gave me. They are important to me because I know she is always there for me.'

Eleven of the photographs with personalised tags related to not receiving support in difficult times. Not surprisingly, many of these photographs had negative emotions attached. These photographs included: a participant's shadow, a dark corridor, a hand holding a cigarette lighter and a grave that had the subject tag *'Important in my life people dying'*.

8. Privacy

'As a child or young person in care, I need to know information about me will only be shared in order to help people look after me.'

Similar to the 2011–12 *As Eye See It* project, there were no images tagged with *'Something secret/private'*.

There were some photographs of bedrooms and homes; however, they did allude to the importance of young people having their own private space, of which a detailed discussion is incorporated under the section on *'Safety'*.

9. Access to a worker

'As a child or young person in care, I need to have a worker who is there for me.'

There were 13 photographs that related to *'Access to a Worker'*.

Seven photographs were tagged either *'My worker'* or *'Being supported by my worker'*. Image content varied and contained young people with their workers, carers and pets. Another photograph contained a teddy bear and a mobile phone. All emotions that were related to these photographs were positive, and were tagged level three or higher. Interestingly, there were three photographs that were tagged *'My worker'* with the dual tag *'Friends and family'*.

There were five photographs to which participants had assigned their own subject tags and that related to feeling supported by workers. For instance, a photograph of a residential care unit staff roster was tagged *'I can look forward to doing different activities with different staff'*, and a photograph of a backyard had the subject tag *'I play hide and seek with the staff in the backyard'*. Again, these photographs carried positive emotion tags.

One photograph, of a young person's worker, had the emotion tag of *'Normal'* assigned to it; the screed read:

'All of the pictures I took mean a lot to me, my favourite staff member is Dev and I get very happy when I know he is coming to work. I want to live with Dev. Dev has an awesome blue BMW and I love it.'

The screeds listed below signify how these particular participants feel supported by their workers:

'I like spending time with my carers. One of the other special things we do is have foot spas and paint my nails. This makes me feel special and pretty.'

'In my home I feel safe when I know what staff are coming on and I get to do special activities with them all.'

'I have realised that all this time I have been at my residential unit ... it feels like home, and to me it is. The staff helped me so much and they treat me like a family, I feel so safe and where I belong.'

10. Connection to friends and family

'As a child or young person in care, I need to keep in contact with my family, friends and people and places that matter to me.'

This was the second most popular theme overall, with 95 photographs related to *'Connection to Friends and Family'*. Numerous photographs in this section had multiple subject tags per photograph, meaning that the figure above may not match the breakdown below. The discussion below is separated into three commonly used subject areas: *'Places'*, *'People'* and *'Contact with People'*.

Places of importance

Fifteen photographs were tagged *'A place that is important to me'*. Image content related either to the young person's house (driveway, bedroom, and backyard) or being outdoors (trees, skate parks and bridges). Emotion tags were all positive, with *'Happy'*, *'Relaxed'* and *'Comfortable'* being the most commonly used.

'This is a photo of my home, I took it because I love it here and I love the people here.'

There were nine photographs that participants assigned their own subject tags to and related to places of importance. Images included: Flinders Street, a river, Granddad's place, a grave of a young person's mother, the beach, a cruise ship and a skate park. Participants' emotions in connection to these images were strongly positive, with *'Happy'* being the most common emotion selected.

'(Grave) reminds me of my real mum.'

Friends, family and other people of importance

Thirty-two photographs were tagged *'Friends and family'* or *'People that are important to me'*. Images consisted of: a young person's home, worker, brother, a ring, and a baby's jumpsuit, amongst others. Emotion tags used were mostly positive, with *'Love'*, *'Happy'* and *'Loved'* being the most frequently used.

The screeds below highlight the importance of family and friends to specific participants:

'The (picture) frame represents my life and in particular my relationships with people in the past, the present and the future. To me, connections are very important and are also things I need to work on, but I also wouldn't change any of the

experiences and interactions I've had with people up until this point.'

'You're so tiny but so amazing, you're my son and I will always love you, no matter what.'

Five photographs had negative emotional tags, and were used to express the absence of, or being hurt by, friends, family members and other people of importance:

'My brother who died. He (has) left an impact for life.'

There were 23 photographs with personalised subject tags that related broadly to *'Friends, Families and Other People of Importance'*. Images were primarily of family members and possessions that reminded young people of their family, such as dolls, letters and photographs. Emotion tags used were positive, apart from two photographs that were tagged with *'Sad'* and related to family members passing away.

Animals and pets were represented in three photographs. The subject tags below highlight the importance of pets for these participants:

'My love for animals especially my own.'

'Dogs are man's best friends (and some girl's best friends). Dogs are my favourite animals – I don't like cats. Animals are very important to the world.'

Having contact with my friends and family and people that are important to me

Ten photographs were tagged with *'Having contact with friends and family and people that are important to me'*. Images consisted of a young person's best friend, a mobile phone, a young person playing football, and a bedroom wall, amongst others. Emotion tags were mostly positive and included *'Safety'*, *'Excited'*, *'Connected'* and *'Strong'*.

One photograph of a photo frame was tagged *'Worried/anxious'* and *'Strong'*; the screed read:

'To me, connections are very important and are also things I need to work on, but I also wouldn't change any of the experiences and interactions I've had with people up until this point. Even though I've had bad times, all of the bonds I've made and broken, the ones that I may have had no choice in; have all made me who I am today.'

Music for my ears, Claudia



Holding hands, Tysha



There were seven photographs to which participants assigned their own subject tags and related to having contact with friends and family. Images included a nose piercing, a participant's mother, and carers. One participant, who included a photo of their socks, wrote of being connected to people who are important to them and care for them. This is evident in their screed below:

'My socks are important to me because they cover my toes which I think looks funny. And to me having lots of socks means I am cared for.'

11. Placement/Home

'As a child or young person in care, I need careful thought being given to where I will live so I will have a home that feels like a home.'

There were 45 photographs that were related to *'Placement/Home'*. Again, there were a few photographs in this section that had multiple subject tags per photograph, meaning that the figure above may not match the breakdown below.

Twenty-one photographs were tagged *'Where I live'* or *'My home'*. Images included: the view from a young person's house, a carer's home, a dog, a 'twisted tree' and flowers growing. Emotions tags were strongly positive, with *'Happy'*, *'Hopeful'* and *'Comfortable'* being the most commonly used.

There were two photographs that were negatively tagged; image content consisted of a family home and a young person riding a skateboard at a skate park. Emotion tags used were: *'Sometimes scared'* (level one), *'Hated'* (level three), *'Happy'* (level three), *'Hopeful'* (level five) and *'Proud'* (level five). Screeds included:

'This is the house where I was born, this house means a lot to me because it was the last house my family was all living together in.'

'This is my wonderful previous carer's house. I learnt so much in this house and I am thankful that I was able to live there and learn what I did.'

There were 13 photographs with personalised subject tags. These related to *'Where I live/My home'*. Images included a trampoline, a lounge room and a driveway, just to name a few. Emotions expressed were all positive and included: *'Welcomed'*, *'Comfortable'*, *'Relaxed'*, *'At home'* and *'Calm'*.

Fifteen photographs were tagged *'Things that make my home 'homely''* or something very similar. Images included: animals, a residential care unit staff roster, a TV, and a puzzle. Emotion tags were once again positive, with *'Happy'*, *'Healthy'*, *'Important'*, *'Connected'* and *'Relaxed'* being the most frequently used.

12. Fun

'As a child or young person in care, I need to have fun and do activities that I enjoy.'

'Fun' was the most commonly used subject area, with 120 photographs.

There were 58 photographs that were tagged *'Having fun'* or *'Stuff I like doing'*, making these the two most commonly used subject tags. Photographs included sports (i.e. basketball, tennis), technology (i.e. computer games, Xbox and TV), board games and playing music. Out of the 163 emotion tags used, there were only seven that were negative.

There were 62 photographs to which participants assigned their own subject tags and related to the theme of *'Fun'*. Examples include:

- *'I like to jump on the trampoline. I do it when the other kids are not home. It calms me down and it's lots of fun!'*
- *'My favourite car on the X-Box game'*
- *'Fun in our house'*
- *'Free time'*
- *'Rewards for my great behaviour at school and at home'*
- *'Fun day with Family'*
- *'I like being in the backyard where I can run around'*
- *'I like playing on the trampoline'*
- *'I play hide and seek with the staff in the backyard'*
- *'I love to play basketball. I'm very good at it.'*
- *'My Matchbox Cars; I make tracks and streets for them to drive on using arts and crafts.'*
- *'My Ballet Shoes'*

Images consisted of activities such as trampolining, bike riding, going on holiday, and going to the beach. The participants engaged in activities with carers, workers and family members. Emotion tags were again mostly positive, with *'Happy'*, *'Proud'* and *'Comfortable'* being the most commonly used. The screeds below refer to the fun participants have as well as the impact that their lived experience has on their notions of fun.

'I can look forward to doing different activities with different staff.'

'I've found that drawing helps calm me down when I'm in a messy situation and it's something that I've always poured my heart into. Give me some paper, pencils and an eraser and I'm set for life!'

Ten photographs that were tagged '*Having fun*' or '*Stuff I like doing*' were of pets and animals, indicating the enjoyment they bring to these children and young people.

13. Traditions and religion

'As a child or young person in care, I need to be able to take part in family traditions and be able to learn about and be involved with cultural and religious groups that are important to me.'

All of the photographs that related to culture were also tagged '*Aboriginal Culture*' and were taken by Aboriginal participants; as such, a detailed analysis of those can be found in section four, Aboriginal Culture.

Although not tagged as '*Religion*', one photograph was interpreted to be loosely under this theme. Titled LETTING GOD SHINE IN YOUR LIFE AND ENJOY LIFE, the photograph consisted of mountains with the sun shining in the background. The emotion tags used included '*Happy*', '*Love of Life*', '*Positive*' and '*Confident*' (level five), as shown in the screed below:

'This picture is of a sunset. It makes me feel happy, love of life, positive and confident. This picture is about letting God shine into your life and enjoying life.'

Two photographs were tagged '*Family traditions*'. One was of a bottle of iced tea and the other was a participant's lounge room, with an Aboriginal flag on the wall. Emotion tags connected to these images were '*Happy*', '*Amused*', '*Excited*' and '*Relaxed*', all level three or above.

14. Education

'As a child or young person in care, I need to be provided with the best possible education and training.'

There were five photographs with personalised subject tags that related to the theme of '*Education*'. One photograph, of a packet of donuts, inspired the participant to write about how they enjoy studying food tech at school, and how they are aware of nutrition. A photograph of an iPad symbolised positive learning to another participant, and how it helps them have fun and relax.

Three of the photographs all had the consistent theme of books, and how they educate and inform. All three images had positive emotion themes attached, signifying the importance of education for these participants.

The screeds included below relate to educational skills or studies:

'My TV and laptop are important to me because they connect me with the community and I also like playing games and having a good set up. I was given these things through leaving care brokerage, which will help me in the future with my studies and to feel normal.'

'I started piercing myself 5 & 1/2 years ago and I taught myself how to do piercing like a professional. Sometimes I do other people's piercings.'

15. Life skills

'As a child or young person in care, I need to be able to develop life skills and grow up to become the best person I can.'

Eleven photographs were tagged '*Learning life skills and growing up*'. All emotion tags used in this section were overwhelmingly positive; participants reported feeling '*Talented*', '*Refreshed*', '*Confident*' and '*Important*'.

Of the 11 photographs in this section, there were six with personalised subject tags. The photograph themes were similar to those tagged above and showcased pictures of trees, baking and learning new recipes. Again, the emotions connected to these images were positive including '*Hopeful*', '*Positive*', '*Excited*' and '*Proud*'.

The quotes below highlight these positive emotions:

'... A tree is always developing, I am too. In the photo there is a small tree at the front and behind is the large (tree) to show growth and character. Every day I learn something new. There is no tree the same in the world, this is like people who are individual. It is important to me to be yourself and proud of who you are.'

'This is the view from my new apartment. I come from resi and living in this apartment I now feel more 'normal'. I like looking at this view because I now feel free.'

16. Leaving care

'As a child or young person in care, I need help in preparing myself to leave care and support after I leave care.'

Five photographs were tagged '*Leaving care*'. Images consisted of animals, a bridge and a young person's home, amongst others. Emotion tags were mostly positive, with '*Happy*' and '*Excited*' being the most frequently used.

One photograph was assigned a personalised subject tag and related to '*Leaving care*'. The young person wrote of the future they can now dream about thanks to the support of their carers. Emotion tags used were '*Excited*' and '*Hopeful*' (both level four).

Interestingly, the age of participants who spoke of leaving care was quite varied. The youngest person to tag a photograph '*Leaving care*' was 12 years old, and they used the emotion tags '*Happy*' and '*Excited*'. The eldest participant to tag a photograph '*Leaving care*' was 17 years old, and the emotions they used to describe leaving care were '*Safe*', '*Happy*', '*Comfortable*' and '*Relaxed*'.



My shadow my follower, Jordan

Conclusion

The standout ‘tags’ or themes in the 2013 *As Eye See It* Exhibition were ‘*Fun*’ and ‘*Connection to Friends and Family*’. These statements of appreciation and positivity were a pleasing discovery, demonstrating the power of relationships (with both carers and birth family) for participants in this year’s *As Eye See It* exhibition.

Whilst the vast majority of emotions documented were positive, the negative emotions such as loss, vulnerability, fear and hopelessness call attention to the needs of children and young people living in Out of Home Care. Even in the photographs that were tagged with positive emotions, there was often a sense of overcoming, or living with, difficult circumstances and traumatic life events.

The public responses, captured in Appendix Two, highlight the *strength* that was conveyed by the children and young people who exhibited their photographs in *As Eye See It*. The opportunity for children and young people living in Out of Home Care to communicate their experiences to the public is an incredibly important part of building community awareness of what it is like to live in Out of Home Care.

By providing this report, we hope to have encouraged further discussion and consideration of what participants have said about their experiences in Out of Home Care. The images and written descriptions portray a care system that, while positive for the majority, does not always meet the needs of children and young people living within it. We trust that reading the words of young participants has highlighted the need for more projects like this that provide children and young people with the opportunity to share what is important in their lives.



Appendix 1 – Tagging

The following emotion tag options were provided to young people:

This photo makes me feel ...	
Positive	Confident
Hopeless	Negative
Bored	Vulnerable
Happy	Comfortable
Uncomfortable	Hate
Strong	Threatened
Embarrassed	Proud
Love	Worried/Anxious
Depressed	Connected
Sad/Unhappy	Important
Annoyed/Angry	Amused
Weak	Lonely
Loved	Relaxed
Hopeful	Scared
Frustrated	Fulfilled
Excited	Well/Healthy
Stressed	Deadly
Hated	

This is how much I feel that emotion ...
1 (A little bit)
2
3 (Some)
4
5 (A lot)

This photo is about ...	
Safety	Things that make me feel safe or unsafe
Health	Things that keep me healthy
Being respected	What it means to me to be a child or teenager
My Aboriginal culture	Me having my say or being heard
Telling people what I think about things that are important to me	Finding out information about myself
How people treat my information	The person/people I talk to when I'm unhappy
Not having anyone to talk to when I'm unhappy	Knowing or not knowing what is happening to me
My worker	Being supported by my worker
Friends and family	Having contact with my friends and family and people that are important to me
A place that is important to me	People that are important to me
Where I live	My home
Things that make my home 'homely'	Family traditions
My culture	My religion
Having fun	Stuff I like doing
My education/school	Learning life skills and growing up
Leaving care	Not being supported by my worker
Things that make me unhealthy	Things that stop me from feeling 'at home' where I live
Something else (add description)	Something secret/private

Emotion tags:

In addition to the provided tags, young people created the following emotion tags: *About myself, Accomplishment, Achievable, Active, Adventurous, Alive, Alone, Amazing, Angry, Annoyed, Anxious, Appreciated, Astonishing, At home, Awesome, Awesome (wicked), Beautiful, Belonging, Big, Bright, Calm, Cared for, Caring, Cautious, Cheeky, Cheerful, Cold, Comfort pain, Comforted, Comfy, Competent, Confidence, Confused, Connected to my other family, Content, Cool, Creative, Cuddle, Curious, Cute, Dangerous, Delicious, Depressed, Educated, Energetic, Energy, Engrossed, Enthusiastic, Excellent, Exuberance, Faith in myself and my destiny, Family, Fine, Free, Freedom, Fruity, Full, Fun, Funny, Good, Good memories, Great, Grown up, Happiness, Happy love or life, positive & confident, Happy, love good, Harmonious, Healthy, Heaven, High, Homely, Hope, Hungry, Hungry!, Hurt, Hygienic, I feel happy, Imaginative, Insecurity, It is only life, It's my life, Joy, Joyful, Like I want to swim, Like laughing, Love, relaxed, Loving, Lucky, Misunderstood, Mmm ... yum, Mother, Motivating, Nerdy, Normal, Pain, Party animal, Peaceful, Perseverance, Playful, Positive, important, confident, loved, Positive, joyful, proud & successful, Protected, Really happy, Rebellious, Reborn, Refreshed, Respectful, Sad, Safe, Safety, Serene, Sick, Sleepy, So, so lucky, Soft, Sometimes scared, Special, Speedy, Sporty, Supported, Surprised, Talented, Tasty, Teenager, Unhappy, Unique, Upset, Very happy, Wanted, Warm, Warm and fuzzy, Warm and safe, Welcomed, Well, Weird, Willpower, Wise, Wonderful, Worried, Young.*

Subject tags:

Young people used a broad range of their own words, phrases and descriptions to apply meaning to the pictures they had taken when the provided tags were not appropriate. Their tags can be loosely divided into themes:

Pets/animals

- 'This picture is of our chickens and ducks; They annoy me because of all the sounds they make.'
- 'This is Princess, she is in a horse program called horses for hope. She is a paint horse and she is gorgeous.'
- 'My dog Bosh.'
- 'My love for animals especially my own.'

Friends/Family

- 'Only thing I have from Mum'
- 'Reminds me of my 'real mum''
- 'My bike I was given from my dad; I love riding it everywhere; Feeling free'

- '#wishmynannawasstillhere; #family; #Melbourne; #Home'
- 'My mother passed away when I was 9'
- 'Family means alot to me'
- 'If you look at the picture each straw is coming from a different direction but in the end they end up in the same place. Meaning that even though I'm not living at home with my own family I'm still destined for something great.'

Fun

- 'I like to jump on the trampoline. I do it when the other kids are not home. It calms me down and it's lots of fun!'
- 'My favourite car on the X-Box game; Fun in our house; free time, Rewards for my great behaviour at school and at home'
- 'Fun day with Family'
- 'I like being in the backyard where I can run around; I like playing on the trampoline; I play hide and seek with the staff in the backyard'
- 'I love to play basketball. I'm very good at it.'
- 'My Matchbox Cars; I make tracks and streets for them to drive on using arts and crafts.'
- 'My Ballet Shoes'

Home/placement

- 'No more cold house at night time, not even in winter.'
- '#feelslikehome #mybestfriend #neveralone'
- 'I never had food in my house, nothing to eat'
- 'The light in my life from being in my current placement'
- 'A welcoming scene leading to my home'
- 'When I sleep in my room I feel really lonely because it's always quiet'
- 'Our unit safe, where all our money is kept; I love the thought of being able to open it; It's good to know our money is safe so we can buy enough food and some toys.'

Self

- 'It's about me'
- 'Mushrooms make me sad; I can't even write the word mushrooms or eat them; I feel like I'm going to be sick for the rest of my life'
- 'I'm just another star in the sky but you don't see me because you don't notice me or you don't care or maybe you're just ignoring the fact that I'm there. I can't be ignored forever because I'll scream if I have to, so I'm noticeable and not invisible.'

- ‘Making Decisions about which path I will take’
- ‘I like this photo because it’s eye-catching and vibrant and gregarious and happy – the way I try to present myself in society.’
- ‘This photo is about my place to go when my mind is busy’
- ‘I am expecting a son in 3 or 4 months. This is my baby bump at 25 weeks along. At the moment he looks like he’s going to be a small boy.’

Reflection

- ‘Being grateful for what you have; Being proud of your family; My family protecting me; Being sad and happy in certain times’
- ‘Me relaxing and thinking about life by myself’

Workers/carers

- ‘I remember my second day in care with my old foster carer. We were looking at two-dollar dream catchers; however I had my eye on the big beautiful blue one. I then attempted a sidelong look at the price, it was marked \$15. My carer noticed me looking at it, and asked me if I liked that one. I told her not to worry as it was too expensive but she said she’d buy it for me.’
- ‘My favourite carer; I love Dev and miss him when he is not at work; Good times with Dev; I want to leave here and live with Dev’
- ‘My relationship with my carers; Security and being supported by my carers; Foster family’

Career/ambitions

- ‘My job at the Golf Range’
- ‘The car I want to buy’
- ‘What I want to do in the future’

Education

- ‘The Solar system and planets. The unknown outer space; my favourite books are about the solar system.’
- ‘My iPad helps me have fun and it relaxes me with the music on it; Positive learning’
- ‘Cooking, Learning’
- ‘#bookworm; #iloveread; #inmyownworld’

Appendix 2 – Public responses

Listening to public opinion

With the *As Eye See It* Project in its third year, the Project Steering Committee decided to revise how they had previously attempted to obtain the public's responses to the exhibition. At the exhibition, there were three statements that viewers could 'vote' on. Those three statements were:

- I've learnt more about what it means to live in Out of Home Care;
- I think there should be more opportunities to hear from children and young people in Out of Home Care; and
- I am motivated to investigate how I can support children and young people in Out of Home Care.

Members of the public were able to 'vote' on whichever statement they agreed with the most; this was done by putting a pebble in the corresponding jar. There was also a 'guest book' in which people could write comments if they chose to; a selection of these comments are listed below.

During the weeklong exhibit, 33 people left comments in the guest book and 826 votes were cast:

- I think there should be more opportunities to hear from children and young people in Out of Home Care received **310 votes**;
- I've learnt more about what it means to live in Out of Home Care received **306 votes**; and
- I am motivated to investigate how I can support children and young people in Out of Home Care received **210 votes**.

Comments from the public

'I have found the exhibition very empowering for children in care to express their life. As a foster care worker, I feel valued with the work we do for our vulnerable children in our community. The positive relationships between children and their foster carers are beautiful to hear.'

George Metasas (OZChild Services)

'Thank you for sharing your photos and stories. You guys rock!'

Anonymous

'I admire these young people – their views on their world are wonderful yet concerning – Thank you!'

Anonymous

'What a great project – has shown me what resi is really like – great having the jars and pebbles!'

Anonymous

'What a great exhibition, it is very touching emotionally. I hope the government will pour more money towards this organisation helping out.'

Nga.T.Kaiui

'This is a beautiful exhibition that gives me more encouragement to help the charity for homeless youth and individuals who are in need of love, shelter and food.'

Aida Bailey

'A very moving exhibition. On the election day my wish would be that whoever wins will have compassion enough to support children like these to become whole.'

Anonymous

'This exhibition was incredibly touching. An insight into the minds of the children who are involved. I was inspired by their optimism and love for life and the things that give their life meaning. I was feeling a bit upset and disappointed with life after going through a break up. The children's photography reminded me how precious life is. How through life's up and downs, we have to savour every minute we are given. Thank you to the organisers and the photographers for giving me hope for the present and our futures. Lots of love.'

Sam Hayward (aged 26)

'This exhibition shows the bravery and honesty of so many teenagers. Good on you all – you are impressive each and every one of you.'

Cheryl F.

'I have won photo competitions and don't enter them anymore because contribution is better than competition.'

David

'I would love to see this kind of exhibition come to Sydney (love heart).'

Anonymous

'Amazing expo, very inspiring!'

Anonymous

'Erhmegerd!'

Anonymous

'These young people exhibit such courage every day. Very moving exhibition. They deserve our support.'

Anonymous

'A great idea and very thought provoking images. I wish all the kids the best of life.'

Anonymous

'The words indicate how important a family or special friend can be.'

Anonymous

'Great idea of expressing private emotions!'

Anonymous

'Art is far more silent than structured. Tis honest and mastered by an honest and innocent eye!!!'

Anonymous

'I really found this exhibition inspiring and was surprised with the results from the pebble jars.'

Anonymous

'I though the exhibition was jolly good!'

Anonymous

'These kids are very brave and it is a great exhibition to highlight this bravery. Don't lose hope; the world sees and cares for you.'

Anonymous

'There is one thing that can't be removed from oneself – courage. No matter the struggles & hardship, courage is always there. This exhibition clearly shows this.'

Anonymous

'Absolutely incredibly amazing! It's about time I saw/found out what other young people thought about life Out of Home; love to see so much more. I believe the set up should've been placed closer together, making it more personal for the viewer :)'

Anonymous

'Lovely.'

Remy

'The display was very moving & extremely eye opening.'

Leanne

'The display shows both sides of what it's like to be in care and offers an insight to how tough it can be.'

Tay

'Thanks for giving these kids an opportunity to show their world.'

Robyn

'Some amazing stories made me smile, laugh and feel. Great to hear and see behind the stories!'

Anonymous

'Great display, stories and insight into another life, very touching. Makes me feel yes these organisations are important.'

Erin

'Thank you for this amazing exhibition that reveals the amazing insights and character of the children. The profound comment re: "My shadow keeps me company" is a fantastic comforting thought. Thanks!'

Anonymous

'Thank you guys for this important insight.'

Dom

References

1. Mission Australia 2012
2. Department of Human Services and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2011, *Out of Home Care Partnership Agreement*.

