

Table 5: Types of research publications from literature search by type of maltreatment (N = 353)

	Maltreatment Types Addressed						TOTAL
	Sexual Abuse	Physical Abuse	Psychological Abuse	Physical Neglect	Witnessing family violence	All maltreatment types	
Program evaluation							
Prevention programs for children	19	13	13	14	13	13	20
Tertiary intervention programs for child victims	26	13	16	10	13	10	30
Child-focused programs within adult-oriented services	10	9	7	7	11	7	13
Family support programs	34	33	32	32	34	32	36
Parent education programs	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Community education programs	13	12	12	12	12	12	13
Statutory Child Protection Services	79	76	74	74	74	74	82
Specialist/innovative Child Protection Service programs	14	15	14	15	16	14	17
Other Child Protection Research							
Reporting abuse & neglect	29	24	24	24	24	24	30
Approaches to risk assessment	22	19	19	19	20	19	23
Identification of risk factors for child maltreatment	45	41	38	39	39	38	48
Community & professional attitudes to child abuse & neglect	56	45	42	42	42	42	61
Prevalence/incidence of abuse & neglect	33	26	25	25	25	25	34
Methodological/theoretical issues in measurement or prevention	30	29	28	28	30	28	35
Treatment of adult offenders	11	2	2	2	3	2	11
Treatment of adolescent offenders	8	2	2	2	2	2	8
Customer service surveys of specific prevention programs or services	19	15	15	15	15	15	19
Policy analysis or government reports	65	49	49	49	51	49	67

B. Research infrastructure and funding

4. Geographic breakdown of location of research

Table 6 provides a state-by-state breakdown of the location of each research project and clearly indicates that Queensland was the state with the greatest number of respondents to the audit, especially from government departments. One possible explanation for this is that it reflects a serious commitment to child protection research by a state that has come under criticism from internal reviews (such as the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) report), and has undergone significant restructuring. The audit data did not, however, provide us with evidence of whether or not the CMC has affected the level of child protection research. Of the 54 Queensland-based projects, 15 were listed as commencing prior to 2003 (when the CMC was underway) and four projects as starting in 2003-4, with an additional 11 ongoing projects without a listed commencement date. Thirty-five audit entries were missing significant details, including commencement dates, so it is not possible to conclude that the CMC has driven significantly more child protection research in Queensland.

It was not within the scope of the audit to investigate, but based on the descriptions provided in their responses, a number of audit entries also appear to be policy or service system reform documents *per se*, rather than *research analysis* of policies or government reports.

Queensland is the only state with a department exclusively focused on child safety. All other states or territories have their child protection functions located within a broader department of human or community services (Bromfield and Higgins 2005). Although this may have influenced the results, it could

also reflect a greater level of knowledge by departmental staff about the audit and its importance, or a commitment by departmental staff to publicising and disseminating the research that is going on in their department. The existence of key research centres in Queensland Universities (particularly the team led by Professor Ros Thorpe at James Cook University) may also have played an important role in the level of child protection-related research contributed to the audit from Queensland.

It is also possible that other states and territories may be doing a similar amount of research, but failed to include it in the audit. A significant amount of self-selection may have occurred. Some states/territories that did not have complete information on a project (including commencement date) may have elected not to submit an audit entry, whereas other states entered projects even though there was little detail provided. It is likely that the differences between states/territories apparent in this audit may reflect the varying levels of participation in the audit as much as actual differences in past or current research activities.

Some jurisdictions have recently established external research collaborations or have funded external research centres, which may enhance their research capacity. For example, the Australian Capital Territory has recently funded the creation of the Institute of Child Protection Studies at the Australian Catholic University, and the Western Australian Department of Community Development supports the University of Western Australia Research Unit for Vulnerable Children and Families.

The small number of research projects in Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania, and the absence of any projects reported for the Northern Territory in part reflect the smaller populations of those states, and therefore their lesser capacity to fund and engage in research projects. Notwithstanding this, the number of projects included in the audit from these states and territories suggests there may be room for improvement in either *developing* or *communicating* a research culture in the child protection and child abuse prevention fields, including opportunities such as the current audit to disseminate past and current research activities.

Table 6: Research by state/territory and organisations where conducted*

	Universities	Government departments	Research Institutes	Agencies	Inter-agency & other collaborations	Total by State	% of total
QLD	27	38	1	4	0	54	40%
NSW	19	5	1	8	2	27	20%
VIC	18	9	3	5	0	24	18%
WA	4	9	0	2	2	14	10%
SA	11	0	0	1	0	11	8%
ACT	2	1	0	0	0	3	2%
TAS	2	0	0	0	0	2	1%
NT	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%

* Includes projects carried out over multiple organisations. For those conducted across multiple states/territories, only the primary state where the research was based is included.

5. Types of organisations conducting research

Universities account for the largest proportion of the research being conducted. Table 6 shows the breakdown by type of organisation where research is conducted in each state and territory. In addition, Table 7 shows the number of projects where respondents to the audit selected more than one organisational type, indicating a low number of collaborative projects. However, when they do occur, it is most likely to be collaboration between universities and either government departments or agencies.

Tables 6 and 7 both show that the number of interagency collaborations, or collaborations between an agency and another type of institution is very low. This is quite concerning, given the important role that universities play in the research community in Australia. As centres of academic excellence, they are most likely to have access to the latest literature, theory development, data, analytic techniques, and expertise in evaluation; however university staff are also constrained by funding and pressures from other duties, such as teaching and administrative responsibilities. Agencies are likely

to have personnel with the ‘on the ground’ experience of program development and implementation and other aspects of service delivery. It would appear from these results that this is an opportunity for fruitful research partnerships that is not as yet being adequately exploited in Australia.

Table 7: Number of research projects by organisation where conducted and collaborations

Organisation type	Frequency		In collaboration with			
	Total	Total (%)	Universities	Government Departments	Research Institutes	Agencies
Universities	83	61%				
Government departments/hospitals	65	48%	21			
Research institutes	5	4%	3	1		
Agencies	20	15%	12	6	2	
Other (including inter-agency collaborations)	4	3%	2	1	0	0

Note: Percentages add to more than 100% as respondents could indicate more than one organisational affiliation for each project.

6. Level of funding

Table 8 provides a summary of the funding reported by respondents to the audit. Many of the projects did not list the level of funding, and only few identified ‘in kind’ support offered by institutions or organisations hosting the researchers and their activities.

Table 8: Levels of funding (N = 47)

Range:	
Minimum	\$526
Maximum	\$477,857
Mean	\$112,843
Median	\$40,612
Total	\$5,303,637

Only 47 of the respondents (35 per cent) indicated the level of funding (grant or ‘in kind’ assistance) for their research. The overall level of funding for the projects identified in the audit for the decade 1995-2004 was \$5.3 million.

In its Report on Government Services 2004, the Productivity Commission estimated the annual cost of running the eight statutory child protection and out-of-home care systems in Australia was \$899 million in 2002-03 (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2005a, b). The total cost of the child protection and out-of-home care systems in Australia for 1995-2004 is estimated to be \$6.9 billion.⁵ This does not include the significant expenditure by non-government agencies and the philanthropic sector on prevention or other non-statutory early intervention activities. In comparison to the cost of the service sector, the amount of money reported to be spent on research—as reflected in responses to this audit—is very small.

There are some important caveats to this analysis of research funding. The level of funding for research reported here is likely to be a significant underestimation of the full extent of research

5 As data are not available back to 1995, the cost of the statutory service system needs to be estimated. In order to make it comparable with the costing of research in this audit (which are reported in actual dollars spent at the time, and not adjusted for inflation), the cost of the service systems needs to be estimated in actual dollars at the time, rather than in current dollars (allowing for inflation). If the mid-point in the decade (1995-2004) is taken as the average annual rate for the period (1999-2000) and multiplied by 10, the total cost of the child protection and out-of-home care systems in Australia for the 10-year period (1995-2004) is estimated to be \$6.9 billion. The cost of the out-of-home care sector is included in these calculations, as the level of success in preventing harm to children directly influences the need for out-of-home care - and the out-of-home care sector is part of the continuum of child protection services.

expenditure on child protection, as many projects did not include ‘in-kind’ costs (e.g., where research staff time was already funded by a university or other institution), and the audit significantly under-represents the full extent of research outputs when compared with a literature search for publications in the same period. Given that the number of research publications identified through the literature search outnumbered the audit entries by a ratio of 2.6:1, if the level of funding identified in the current audit is multiplied by 2.6, it still only represents \$13.8 million.

Even allowing for the significant underestimation of the extent and costing of research, the figures identified in this audit show that the amount of money spent on research in the child protection field is very small, particularly when compared with the massive ongoing investment per annum in the service sector.

The level of funding (\$5.3 million) for the 47 projects for which data were submitted is higher in total than the level of funding reported by the 91 out-of-home care research projects (\$3.9 million) identified by Cashmore and Ainsworth (2004) in the same period. Looking at the funding on a per-project basis, the funding levels appear to be significantly higher than those reported in the audit of out-of-home care research, particularly when looking at the mean (which is inflated, due to a few projects with very large amounts of funding). Instead, the median (\$40,612) is only moderately higher than that reported in Cashmore and Ainsworth’s audit of out-of-home care research (\$29,500). However in both audits there was considerable variability. The higher funding levels per project in the child protection research audit may reflect the focus on the investigatory crisis end of the system. The child protection system has greater numbers of children, and therefore the scope and cost of projects may be higher than in the out-of-home care sector.

7. Type of funding agencies

Table 9 provides a breakdown of the frequency with which different types of funding bodies supported research projects represented in the audit. The largest proportion of projects was funded by Commonwealth Research Granting Agencies (Australian Research Council Discovery, Australian Research Council Strategic Partnerships with Industry-Research and Training (SPIRT) or Linkage Grant Schemes, National Health & Medical Research Council, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, etc.). State/territory or local governments were the next most frequent source of funding. Both statutory child protection services and the child and family welfare agencies who implement many of the prevention and early intervention programs are the responsibilities of state/territories (Bromfield and Higgins 2005).

After commonwealth, state and local government funding, the next highest frequency as a funding source was universities. Around half of the university-funded projects omitted the actual grant amount. Of those that did include an amount, the range was from a small priming grant of \$526 to a scholarship worth \$17,800 (per annum). The mean for university funding alone is approx \$8,000. A small number of projects were funded by agencies, philanthropic trusts, or from other sources.

Type of funding body	Frequency (%)*
Commonwealth Research Granting Agencies - Total**	35 (26%)
State/Local Government	24 (18%)
Other (Agencies = 7, Self funded = 6, Others = 3)	16 (12%)
Universities***	11 (12%)
Philanthropic trusts	7 (5%)
ARC - non specific***	7 (5%)
NH&MRC***	5 (3.7%)
ARC - SPIRT/Linkage***	3 (2.2%)

* Number of projects as a percentage of the total projects submitted (NB: projects can include multiple types of funding agencies and includes in-kind contributions)
 ** Includes funding directly from Commonwealth Government Departments, ARC & NH&MRC
 *** Funding grants may include grants for higher degree by research programs such as PhD scholarships

8. Whether research was part of a degree program

Research conducted by students as part of a formal university degree program made up a substantial proportion of the projects submitted to the audit (39%), but this is still a potential area for growth, given the number of students doing honours, higher degree by research or professional masters/doctorates that include substantial research components. It will need to be supported, however, to encourage academics to engage partnerships and other opportunities to link their research students into evaluations of programs or other critical areas of research in the field of child protection.

Although the number of honours students in Australia is likely to be much higher than the number of doctoral students, the distribution of research submitted to the audit shows the reverse pattern: more doctoral students responded to the audit than did honours or masters students. This may reflect the greater ease of identifying larger doctoral research projects compared with those conducted as part of honours or masters research programs, especially in relation to projects undertaken up to a decade earlier.

Degree program	Frequency	
	<i>n</i> *	%**
Not applicable	83	61
Professional doctorates and PhDs	33	24
Masters	14	10
Honours	5	4

* Number of projects where degree program was indicated
 **Number of degree programs as a percentage of the total projects submitted

C. Type of research/methodology

9. Discipline area

Child protection and child abuse prevention is a truly interdisciplinary field. Health, education and social service professionals perform the practice elements. Research into child protection and child abuse prevention was undertaken by professionals from these and related disciplines. The multi-disciplinary nature of child protection and child abuse prevention is reflected in the breakdown of discipline areas identified by audit respondents.

The highest number of research projects was conducted in the field of social work, followed closely by social policy and psychology (see Table 11).

Discipline area	Frequency	
	<i>n</i> *	%**
Social work	40	37
Social policy	37	27
Psychology	33	24
Education	7	5
Sociology	5	4
Law	2	1
Other (includes health science, humanities, business)	11	8

* Number of projects indicating a nominated discipline area
 ** Number of discipline areas as a percentage of the total projects submitted

10. Sample type

Table 12 shows the source of data or 'informants' in each research project. Parents were the source of data in the largest proportion of projects (31%), followed by professionals – other than child protection workers or welfare/family support workers (29%). Children were the next largest group of informants, followed by child protection workers, then welfare/family support workers. There was also little focus