

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Project Title: *Understanding school attendance challenges among young people in out-of-home care (OOHC): Young people's perspectives*

MUHREC Project ID: 49961

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Introduction

Please read this Explanatory Statement carefully before deciding whether to participate in this research project. If you would like more information about any part of the study, you are encouraged to contact the researchers using the email addresses provided above. This research has received approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC), reference number 49961.

Your Consent

This Explanatory Statement outlines the details and procedures involved in the research and is designed to support your decision about whether to take part.

If, after reading this information, you decide you might like to participate, you can click the link at the end of this page to go to a short sign-up form. This form will ask for your preferred contact details. The student investigator will then contact you to answer any questions you may have and to arrange a suitable time for your interview.

After this discussion, you will be asked to complete a Consent Form to confirm your understanding and indicate your decision about participating. You may keep a copy of this Explanatory Statement for your records.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Choosing not to participate will not affect any services or support you receive. You may withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and you may skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

If you are under 18, your carer or guardian will also be asked to provide their consent before you can participate. You will also be asked to provide your own assent (your agreement) before taking part. Even if an adult gives permission, your choice always comes first, and you can say no at any time.

Purpose and Background

You are being invited to take part in this research project because you are a young person who has experience living in out-of-home care (OOHC) and you have found it hard to go to school at some point.

This study forms part of the student investigator's PhD at Monash University. It aims to explore the experiences and perspectives of young people, focusing on what makes school attendance difficult, what helps, and what gets in the way.

Young people in OOHC often face unique challenges, and their voices are rarely included in research about school attendance challenges (sometimes referred to in research as 'school refusal'). By sharing your experiences, you will help build a clearer understanding of the supports that matter most, the barriers that need attention, and the changes that could make school feel safer, more welcoming, and easier to attend.

Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Young people who choose to participate may come from a wide range of cultural, linguistic, and personal backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, young people from refugee or migrant backgrounds, and those with diverse identities, abilities, and lived experiences.

Cultural safety and inclusion will be prioritised throughout the study by:

- Using respectful, strengths-based, and non-deficit language
- Supporting choice and control in how young people take part
- Ensuring interview questions and recruitment materials are reviewed by Monash University's Indigenous research advisory group
- Inviting a small group of young adults to complete the full interview early and provide feedback on the clarity and cultural safety of the questions - these interviews will form part of the formal data collection, even if minor updates are made to the interview guide based on their feedback
- Making adjustments where needed to ensure the study is accessible, culturally safe, and inclusive for all participants

Every effort will be made to ensure that the interview process feels comfortable, respectful, and appropriate for all young people who choose to take part.

Procedures

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Provide your contact details through a short sign-up form so the student investigator can get in touch with you.
- Accept a phone call from the student investigator, who will answer any questions you may have, confirm whether you would like to take part, and (if you are 16-17 years old) collect your carer or guardian's contact details.
- Review and sign the appropriate consent form (and, if you are 16-17 years old, your carer or guardian will also be asked to complete their consent form, and you will be asked to provide your own assent) before the interview.
- Take part in a one-on-one interview with the student investigator on Zoom. Online interviews are used so that young people across Australia can participate in the same way, regardless of where they live.
- Look through the interview questions before the interview, as these will be sent to you in advance.
- Participate in an interview that is expected to take 45-60 minutes. You can skip any questions, take a break, or stop the interview at any time.

A small number of young adults may be invited to complete the interview early as part of a pilot group. Pilot participants complete the interview as usual and then have the opportunity to provide feedback on whether the questions felt clear, respectful, and culturally safe. If the interview schedule remains unchanged, their interview will be included in the main study. If any questions are revised, they may be invited to answer a small number of additional questions so their feedback can be incorporated.

With your permission, the interview will be recorded to allow for accurate transcription. Zoom automatically creates a video file when recording, but only the audio component will be used for transcription. Transcription will be completed using Monash University's secure Zoom AI Companion transcription tool, which does not retain data or use it for model training. Once the transcript has been checked for accuracy, both the original audio file and the automatically generated video file will be deleted. All data will be treated confidentially, and only the de-identified transcripts (the research data) will be stored securely for five years (for 18-25yr old participants) or 15yrs (from the time 16-17yr old participants turn 18) in accordance with Monash University and Public Record Office Victoria (PROS 16/07) requirements.

Possible Benefits to Participants

As a token of appreciation for your time and participation in the interview, you will receive a \$50 gift card.

Your contribution is also extremely valuable. By sharing your experiences, you will help researchers understand what these school attendance challenges feel like from the perspective of young people in OOHC. Your insights may help improve how schools, carers, and services support young people who find school attendance difficult. The findings may also inform future policies, training, and programs aimed at creating safer, more supportive, and more trauma-informed environments for young people.

Young people who choose to participate in the pilot group will also contribute to improving the clarity, accessibility, and cultural safety of the interview questions.

Risk

Talking about your experiences with school or OOHC may bring up difficult or upsetting memories. You are welcome to skip any questions or stop the interview at any time. If you become distressed or uncomfortable, the student investigator will pause the conversation and check in with you. The same options to pause, skip questions, or stop apply during the pilot process. You will also be provided with a list of support services at the end of this Explanatory Statement, should you wish to speak with someone after the interview.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be respected and upheld throughout all stages of this research project. You will be asked for your name and contact details only if you choose to participate. During the interview, you can decide whether or not to share any identifying information. Any identifying details you share will be removed during transcription, and all data will be fully de-identified before analysis or reporting. Only the audio component of the interview is used for transcription, and this is processed through Monash University's secure Zoom AI Companion transcription tool, which does not retain data or use it for model training. The audio and video recordings are deleted after the transcript has been checked for accuracy. Only the de-identified transcripts (the research data) are stored securely for the required retention period.

Any feedback you give about the interview questions will be de-identified and stored securely, but it won't be used as research data. Your interview itself will be included in the study.

Only members of the research team will have access to the data. De-identified transcripts will be stored securely in Monash-managed systems for the required retention period and then destroyed. Findings will be reported in a way that protects your privacy and the privacy of others. Data may be used in future research but will remain anonymous and fully de-identified.

You may withdraw your data up to seven (7) days after you receive a copy of your interview transcript. During this time, you can review the transcript and decide whether you would like any or all of your data withdrawn. After seven days, your transcript will be fully de-identified and the audio/video recording deleted, and it will no longer be possible to remove your data because we will not be able to identify which transcript belongs to you.

Your name and contact details will be stored securely with your consent form. These details are not used in the research, but they may need to be made available to Monash Finance if requested for audit purposes.

There are, however, limits to confidentiality. If during the interview you disclose information that suggests you or someone else is at immediate risk of harm, or if there is a legal obligation to report concerns about safety or wellbeing, the student investigator may need to share this information with appropriate services. Wherever possible, this will be discussed with you before any action is taken.

Results of Study

Preliminary results are expected to be available after August 2026. If you would like to receive information about the findings of this study, please contact the student investigator via email: amanda.oneil1@monash.edu

Further Information or Issues

If you would like more information or have any concerns related to this project, please contact the student investigator via email: amanda.oneil1@monash.edu

Other Issues

If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research, please contact the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee:

Executive Officer: Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee

Room 111, Building 3e

Research Office

Monash University VIC 3800

Email: muhrec@monash.edu

Tel: +61 3 9905 2052

Fax: +61 3 9905 3831

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. It's completely your choice whether you take part. If you decide that you're interested, you can share your contact details, and the student investigator will be in touch shortly.

SUPPORT SERVICES

If participating in this study brings up difficult feelings or memories, you are encouraged to reach out to a trusted adult, carer, caseworker, or one of the support services listed below. These services are available to young people across Australia and can offer support, guidance, or someone to talk to.

- **Kids Helpline** - 1800 55 1800
Free, confidential counselling for young people aged 5–25. Available by phone, webchat, or email.
Website: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>
- **Lifeline** - 13 11 14
24/7 crisis support. Offers confidential counselling and referrals for anyone experiencing emotional distress.
Website: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>
- **Beyond Blue** - 1300 22 4636
Support for anxiety, depression, and emotional wellbeing. Available via phone, webchat, and email.
Website: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>
- **Your OOHC caseworker or agency**
They can help you access support that is specific to your situation.
- **YARN** - 13 92 76
A culturally safe crisis support line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, available 24/7.
Website: <https://www.13yarn.org.au/>
- **Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, wellbeing, or community organisations**
These services can provide culturally safe support for young people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

You are welcome to contact the research team if you would like help identifying appropriate services.