

## 2009 International Campbell Collaboration (C2) Colloquium

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### Submitter Information

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### Abstract Information

**Abstract Title:**

Developing a systematic map on foster care: an Australian example

**Format:**

Paper

**Themes:**

Child welfare

**Authors:**

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**Abstract:**

This presentation will examine the utility of a systematic map of foster care research, as a tool to engage with “users”, including policy-makers and researchers, to:

- Locate the available Australian research in the broader context of research conducted internationally;
- Examine the potential use of a searchable bibliographic database from the perspectives of different ‘users’;
- Identify priorities for narrower policy and practice-relevant systematic review questions;
- Contribute to the national research agenda by identifying gaps in research, areas where testing the transferability of international research to the Australian context may be required, and opportunities for possible collaborations and comparative studies both nationally and overseas.

The presentation draws on a current PhD study aimed at examining the nature of the current foster care literature and increasing the accessibility of research findings. The study has been developed from the perspective of an ‘insider researcher’ who currently holds a policy position in a statutory agency and within a context of systemic reform occurring in child protection specifically in the state of Queensland and Australia more broadly. The study is contextualised in child welfare research, a field characterised by new primary studies without a strong focus on the cumulation of past research results. This trend contributes to the fragmentation of the knowledge base and limits its applicability. Difficulties in accessing research are further compounded in Australia because of the lack of comprehensive local research and therefore a reliance on research conducted overseas. Faced with numerous reports and research studies that indicate that outcomes for children in foster care are poor, the need for a robust, consolidated knowledge base to inform effective practice is paramount and the current reform agendas being progressed by state and territory jurisdictions in Australia provide a crucial gateway to support policy and practice developments. The presentation commences with a brief overview of the background to the study, including rationale and aims. Preliminary findings from the research study are then presented, along with some of the methodological challenges encountered, including issues of scope, developing a robust search term strategy when different terminology is used across jurisdictions and developing topic areas to map the studies identified.

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