



Lost in the Cycle: What We Learnt From You

Thank you to everyone who participated in this study. Our research is not possible without people finding time in their busy lives to speak with us and share their experiences.

What We Did



We spoke with 20 people who work in or support the FIFO sector, including managers, industry regulators, and representatives from support organisations. We asked about the needs of FIFO families, the support currently available, and what affects its delivery. This document summarises what we found.

What We Found



Our findings highlighted three key areas: (1) FIFO families face challenges in staying connected and managing responsibilities, (2) most support is oriented towards workers but not their families, and (3) structural limitations and attitudes about organisational responsibility are barriers to providing support.

Challenges FIFO Families Experience

- **Family connectedness** is disrupted by worker fatigue, frequent/prolonged absences, and missing key events like birthdays and holidays.
- Non-travelling partners face **burnout** while balancing caregiving, household upkeep, and professional responsibilities on their own.
- Workers struggle to re-enter **family routines**, either taking over responsibilities or neglecting them to become the 'fun' parent.



Existing Support Opportunities

- **Education opportunities** are mostly available for workers as inductions. They focus on the impact of FIFO work, financial planning, and tips for success.
- Opportunities to **strengthen family/community ties** include family days and local gatherings, both of which are valued but held infrequently.
- Some company **mental health** services, like EAPs, are available to families, but most target workers through on-site peer support, education, and training.



Barriers to Support

- **Industry attitudes** reflect uncertainty about organisational responsibility for family wellbeing. Support was reportedly dismissed as tokenistic or burdensome across the industry, with broader issues deemed too difficult to address.
- **Remote round-the-clock operations** constrain support, as workers have limited time beyond immediate responsibilities. Family days disrupt operations, and costs discourage funding programs beyond workers' immediate needs.





What Can Help

Interviews identified three key opportunities for support: (1) equitable access to education and mental health services, (2) greater family and community connection, and (3) clearer organisational responsibility for family wellbeing.

Access to Education & Mental Health



- Extend education on family impacts, mental health and financial management to families.
- Provide family-specific guidance on routines, quality time, and communication during stressful periods, particularly for new FIFO families.
- Deliver education online to maximise accessibility and cost-effectiveness.

Improve Family/Community Connection



- Programs and policies that foster family and community connection are valuable but often infrequent, costly, and operationally disruptive.
- Online social networks offer an accessible alternative by connecting families with others who share similar experiences.

Clearer Organisational Responsibility



- Ambiguity around organisational responsibility limits support, as its provision often depends on employer attitudes. Policy frameworks should therefore establish consistent responsibility for family wellbeing.
- Although government inquiries have driven substantial policy change, but they are difficult to initiate. Change can also emerge through coordinated advocacy, leadership, and evidence-building.

What's Next?



We are currently co-designing a **free online support resource for families**. The resource aims to help families build the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to thrive in FIFO working arrangements. The resource will be available in December 2026.

How Can You Contact Us?



If you have any questions or feedback or would like a full copy of our publication, please contact Dr Vincent Mancini at vincent.mancini@thekids.org.au