



Minister for Communities, Women and Youth
Minister for Child Safety
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

Your reference: Petition 2706-17
Our reference: COM 03649-2017

1 William Street Brisbane 4000
GPO Box 806 Brisbane
Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7500
Email communities@ministerial.qld.gov.au

25 AUG 2017

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

LAID UPON THE TABLE OF THE HOUSE	
No:	5517T1490
04 SEP 2017	
MP:	FENTIMAN
Clerk's Signature:	

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition number 2706-17, tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 13 June 2017, requesting the introduction of laws to provide greater certainty and safety for children in contact with the child protection system in Queensland.

I provided an initial response to this petition on 13 July 2017, a copy of which is enclosed for your reference. I am now in a position to provide further advice regarding the matter.

I am very pleased to advise that on 9 August 2017, I introduced the Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill 2017 into the Legislative Assembly.

This Bill includes the proposed amendments to the *Child Protection Act 1999* that I outlined in *The next chapter in child protection legislation for Queensland: Directions statement*, which was released on 23 July 2017. A copy of that statement is attached and can be found at <https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/about-us/legislation/child-safety-legislation-reform>.

The Bill proposes priority changes to Queensland's child protection laws to improve the lives of children and young people who are involved in the child protection system.

In particular, the proposed changes will provide:

- permanency and stability for children in out-of-home care, now and throughout their lives, including support when they leave care
- greater focus on the safe care of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and connection with their families, cultures and communities
- a contemporary information sharing framework for organisations, providing support to children and their families, to share relevant information to better meet children's safety and wellbeing needs.

Importantly, changes include limiting the total duration of successive short-term child protection orders to a maximum of two years unless it is in the best interests of a child. The new two-year limit on short-term orders will promote timely decision-making for children and is being supported by other changes, including new permanency principles and requirements that every child's case plan includes permanency goals and actions for achieving those goals.

For children requiring long-term out-of-home care, there will also be a new type of court order (a permanent care order) available as an option to better provide a stable and secure family arrangement for a child. A permanent care order offers an additional option for a child or young person to be part of a family environment with minimal intrusion and, most importantly, provides ongoing stability. Young people who are in, or have been in, the care system strongly supported the introduction of this type of order during consultation on the review of the *Child Protection Act 1999*, as a means of providing them with the security they need to reach their full potential.

During the review of the *Child Protection Act 1999*, stakeholders, including children and families, told us these amendments were important to better meet the needs of children and young people involved in the child protection system.

Following my interim reply to petition number 2706–17 tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 13 June 2017, I would be grateful if you could provide this final response to the petitioners for their information.

Yours sincerely



Shannon Fentiman MP
Minister for Communities, Women and Youth
Minister for Child Safety
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

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13 JUL 2017

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of Parliament
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition number 2706-17 tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 13 June 2017 requesting the introduction of laws to provide greater certainty and safety for children in contact with the child protection system in Queensland. Please accept this letter as my response to this petition.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication shown by the principal petitioner, Mr Jay Whatley, in organising this petition to advocate on behalf of children and young people. I am also in the process of responding to an earlier email from Ms Summer Whatley regarding permanency in care, and which references this petition.

The Queensland Government is committed to implementing the recommendations made by the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry to improve Queensland's child protection and family support system through its *Supporting Families Changing Futures* reform program. A comprehensive review of the *Child Protection Act 1999* is a key commitment of the reform program.

The Queensland Government recognises that child safety generates robust debate across the community. The government considers genuine and wide-ranging consultation is necessary to develop contemporary child protection legislation that will meet community expectations, and help ensure Queensland's children and young people are safe, protected and able to reach their full potential. The review of the Act commenced in September 2015 with a six-month public consultation on the discussion paper *Supporting families and protecting children in Queensland: a new legislative framework* to start a conversation with the people of Queensland about the laws we need in place to keep children and young people safe and allow them to thrive.

A second stage of statewide consultation commenced in October 2016 focusing on options for legislative reform in response to feedback from the first stage of consultation, presented in *The next chapter in child protection legislation for Queensland: Options paper*. The Options Paper included a dedicated topic on improving permanency outcomes for children and young people and set out options for legislative change. All the requests made by the petition have been considered by the review and tested during consultation.

A wide range of people and organisations expressed their views on the proposed options for new legislation, including children and young people, parents, carers, peak bodies, service providers, legal professionals, educational institutions, government advisory groups and our government partners.

During the consultation, stakeholders gave their clear support to prioritising and enabling permanency and stability for children in the child protection system. This means enabling stable arrangements that allow for a child or young person's ongoing productive relationships with significant people in their lives, and healthy development. In particular, children and young people expressed views that permanency arrangements are critically important for their emotional wellbeing, as stability helps them to feel settled at school and that they are part of a family.

In response to strong stakeholder feedback, a growing evidence base and analysis of recent permanency reforms in a number of other Australian and international jurisdictions, the government is in the process of developing contemporary child protection legislation to help ensure Queensland's children and young people are provided with safe and stable care arrangements.

At the completion of that process, I will write to you updating this response to the petition. I would appreciate the reply also being shared with the principal petitioner.

Again, I commend Mr Whatley and the signatories to this petition on their commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people in contact with the statutory child protection system. Please be assured, I have noted the opinions expressed in this petition.

If you require any further information or assistance in relation to this matter, please contact Ms Cynthia Kennedy, Chief of Staff, on 3719 7500.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Shannon Fentiman', written in a cursive style.

Shannon Fentiman MP
Minister for Communities, Women and Youth
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