

**WE
LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS
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01 October 2021

Committee Secretary
Community Support and Services Committee
Child Protection Reform and other Legislation
Amendment Bill 2021
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane QLD 4000
CSSC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

On behalf of Life Without Barriers, I present a submission to the Community Support and Services Committee relating to the Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 for your consideration. Our submission acknowledges the Queensland Government's commitment to better support children and young people in care and to streamline, clarify and improve processes, as part of the Supporting Families Changing Futures reform program.

As stated in the submission, Life Without Barriers is committed to supporting the best possible outcomes for children and young people in out of home care, both within our organisation's activities and as a public policy matter.

We trust that the submission is of use to the Committee's work.

If you have any further questions or require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carly Jacobitz".

Carly Jacobitz
Director – Child Youth and Family Queensland

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Submission to the Queensland Parliament's Community Support and Services Committee consideration of the Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021

The Queensland Parliament's Community Support and Services Committee is interested in receiving feedback on the recently introduced Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 (Bill).

About Life Without Barriers

Life Without Barriers is a charitable organisation supporting approximately 23,000 people in over 400 communities across Australia. We provide people with the services and assistance they need so they can achieve their goals and maximise their opportunities to participate in the community. Life Without Barriers partners with communities, elders, governments and other stakeholders to support people so they can achieve positive long-term change. We offer services to people with disability; children, young people and families; people with mental health needs; refugees and people seeking asylum; and people who are homeless.

Life Without Barriers directly supports around 5000 children and young people across our services and have close to 3000 foster and kinships carers as part of our community.

We are operating under the following vision statement:

"We are dedicated to providing children, young people and families with the right services at the right time to prevent, intervene early, and break the cycle of disadvantage, so that we can change their life trajectories and support them to thrive".

Life Without Barriers employs over 8,000 staff and is responsible for annual funding of approximately \$700 million. As an organisation whose legacy began on forging services for people where they simply did not exist previously, we are deeply committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.

Comments on the Bill

Life Without Barriers strongly supports the Bill's intention to:

- reinforce children's rights in the legislative framework
- strengthen children's voices in decisions that affect them
- streamline, clarify and improve the regulation of care

Life Without Barriers has long supported the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) since it came into force in 1990 and has continuously advocated for the rights of the child to be included during the development and amendments of all State, Territory and Federal Government legislation.

Life Without Barriers is encouraged by the Bill's focus on ensuring that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principles are further embedded into this legislation by the addition of Section 5C(2). It is anticipated that the inclusion of the prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection principles will further support the reduction of the high number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Out of Home Care (OOHC).

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Life Without Barriers continuously observes the distressing rate of Aboriginal children entering care and has recently announced a new partnership with SNAICC (the national non-governmental peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children) that will support a historic commitment from Life Without Barriers to transfer our OOHHC services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island children to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-control within 10 years. We believe that culturally-appropriate services designed, led and delivered by community controlled organisations will result in more positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Life Without Barriers is also pleased to see the Bill focus on “strengthening children’s voices”, and “streamlining, clarifying and improving the regulation of care”.

Life Without Barriers is supportive of the creation of a Queensland Carers’ Register, similar to the one established in New South Wales, as recommended by the Royal Commission as we also believe that this will contribute to making safer environments for children in foster, kinship and residential care settings.

As stated above, Life Without Barriers is a national organisation that supports children and young people in OOHHC services across Australia. We are therefore supportive of improving information sharing provisions and, in line with the Royal Commission’s recommendations, support the establishment of the Working With Children Check National Reference System (WWCC NRS) and the Queensland Government participating in the nation-wide initiative.

Life Without Barriers relies on foster and kinship carers to provide family like Carer arrangements for children who are unable to live safely with their parents. It is disappointing that visitors to carer households will be required to have a blue card prior to visiting and staying. This will disproportionately impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households. We would recommend that visitors should be allowed to stay following a “suitability” assessment by the Department and contingent on a current application for a blue card.