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Committee Secretary  
Health, Communities, Disability Services, and  
Domestic Violence Prevention Committee  
Email: [hcdsdfvpc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:hcdsdfvpc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretary

### Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill 2017

UnitingCare Queensland welcomes the opportunity to comment on the *Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill 2017* and to further support the work of the Queensland Government to improve the safety, wellbeing and life outcomes for Queensland children and their families.

UnitingCare Queensland is a leading provider of community services across the state, including specialist child and family supports and child protection services. We provide foster and kinship and residential out-of-home care services and our comments on the *Reform Bill* are informed by our experience of providing these services and our understanding of the opportunities and challenges posed by Queensland's Child Protection system for children, young people and their families and for services providers and their workforces.

In our response to the review of *Queensland's Child Protection Act 1999* we advocated for provisions to provide greater permanency and stability for children in out-of-home care during placement and for the rest of their lives. We believe that the *Reform Bill* brings forward those provisions, in particular for case plans to include **permanency goals** and access to **permanent care orders**.

**Reunification** will likely be a permanency goal for the majority of children and young people in out-of-home care. It is our experience that parents need significant and sometime on-going support to enable safe and successful reunification and we believe that the Reform Bill could have included a greater emphasis on the importance of **reunification planning and support for parents**.

The development of a **contemporary information sharing regime** which focuses on and balances children's safety and wellbeing is foundational to the ability of service providers like ourselves to best care for children and young people in out-of-home care. A full understanding of a child's history, including trauma, mental and physical health issues, and current family connections, kinship and community support better enables us to provide individualised therapeutic care.


The increased legislative emphasis on **safe care and connection** for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to their families, communities and culture is critical and UnitingCare Queensland is ready to support operationalisation of this strengthened approach.

**Our Values:** Compassion • Respect • Justice • Working Together • Leading through Learning

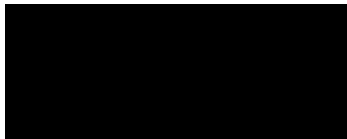
We suggest that further consideration is given and action taken to ensure that connection to family, community and culture is included in case plans for all children and young people in the out-of-home care. In particular, for children, young people and families from **culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds**.

UnitingCare Queensland has long called for reform of the **transition from care process** and the availability of greater support for young people moving towards independence. The Reform Bill makes welcome steps to strengthen Queensland's ability to help young people exiting care to achieve and sustain safe and healthy independent lives and we suggest that a dedicated resource is established within the Department of Child Safety, Communities and Disability Services to operationalise these provisions and support long-term provision of new services.

UnitingCare Queensland continues its commitment and action to further the safety and wellbeing of children and young people across the state. As such we again wish to highlight to the Committee that while the legislative framework is critical to that work it cannot, in and of itself, prevent child abuse and neglect nor keep families together safely. It is the practices and policies that flow from legislation that will achieve this, supported by consistent interpretation and application.

If you have any questions about the issues raised in this submission please contact Nina MacKenzie, Engagement and Development Manager, 

Yours sincerely



Brent McCracken  
**Group Executive**  
Child and Family Services