

Sisters Inside Inc.

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Sisters Inside Inc. is an independent community organisation which exists to advocate for the human rights of women in the criminal justice system

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Email: lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

To the Committee Secretary,

Sisters Inside supports the legislators' objective to decrease the number of children subject to long-term guardianship orders.

Sisters Inside supports the amendment to prioritise a child's placement with family, extended family or a suitable person above adoption and guardianship of the chief executive.

We submit that the best way to achieve these objectives is to direct resources and supports to parents, families, kin and the community.

Comments on the amendments to s 5BA(4)

- **s 5BA(4)(a)** We agree that the first preference must be for a child to be cared for by their family.
- **s 5BA(4)(b)** We agree that the second preference should be for a child to be cared for by family or another suitable person.
 1. We suggest using the wording of the New South Wales Act: 'a relative, kin or other suitable person.'¹ Incorporating the class of 'kin' would be more responsive to the traditional social relationships in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
 2. We suggest incorporating the preference for a child to be cared for by a member of their local community so they can maintain a connection to social networks and experience minimal disruption.
- **s 5BA(4)(c)** We do not support prioritising adoption above guardianship of the chief executive.
 1. We submit that in the majority of circumstances, permanent severance between a child and their family is not the best outcome for the child, family or the community.
 2. We submit that this principle will disproportionately affect mothers in prison. Mothers in prison deserve the benefit of time to stabilise, access counselling and work on themselves. We must allow the opportunity for re-connection between mothers and children separated by the State.

Comment on the amendments to s 51VAA

- It is appropriate that the chief executive must review the case plan for long-term guardianship orders and consider alternative options for achieving permanency for the child.

¹ New South Wales Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 s 10A(3)(b).

Conclusion

The objectives of this Bill will best be achieved by empowering and supporting people already connected to the child to assume or resume guardianship.

We thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debbie Kilroy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Debbie Kilroy

CEO

Sisters Inside Inc.