



18 August 2017

Acting Research Director  
Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane QLD 4000

## Children, Youth and Families

Churches of Christ Care  
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Dear Director,

### **RE: *Working with Children Legislation (Indigenous Communities) Amendment Bill 2017***

Churches of Christ Care welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the *Working with Children Legislation (Indigenous Communities) Amendment Bill 2017*. We welcome and support this amendment and its' potential to increase access to kinship carers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Churches of Christ Care offers a broad range of services to children, young people and families throughout Queensland. These services include early learning and care, family support, out-of-home care and transition to independence programs, with support provided based on the needs and interests of individual communities.

#### **Community impacts**

In our experience, the blue card and criminal history check process can be a barrier when identifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers. This is partly due to limited community knowledge of the blue card system and the nature of offences that disqualify someone. So when a family member is needed to look after children, they might not volunteer because they believe they will be unsuccessful in obtaining a blue card due to a past offence.

Creating a new blue card framework that empowers Indigenous communities through Community Justice Groups supports greater transparency of the approval and decision-making process. When paired with strong community engagement and simpler information around decision-making for past criminal offences, this amendment will contribute to greater uptake of kinship carer roles.

A more inclusive blue card process will also result in a greater uptake of broader carer roles. This will improve Indigenous employment opportunities within remote communities and will have a positive economic impact for children, families and the community.

#### **Review mechanisms**

Churches of Christ Care notes that Community Justice Groups are best placed to provide insight into community members who are applying for blue cards. In terms of reviewing these decisions and ensuring a transparent process, we support a six to 12 monthly review of legislative changes, focusing on impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and communities.

*Bringing the light of Christ into communities*



**Bill title**

Churches of Christ Care recommends changing the term “Indigenous” in the title of the Bill to “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander”, which would align with terminology used across other Queensland legislation.

Overall, Churches of Christ Care supports these amendments, but strongly recommends they are accompanied by an appropriately resourced community engagement and education program. If you have any further questions regarding our submission, you can contact me on \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_

Yours sincerely,

Leanne Rutherford  
General Manager – Children, Youth and Families