



Liberal National Party's proposals for overhauling Queensland's
child protection system

Survey Findings

*On the proposal to increase use of adoption through a
new triage model with permanency order targets*

29 September 2020



ChildProtectionPeak



PeakCare
Queensland Inc.

Thank you to all who took time from their busy schedules to respond to our survey about the Liberal National Party's (LNP's) proposals for overhauling the child protection system. We trust that you have made a valuable and constructive contribution to the further development and refinement of the policy platforms of Queensland's political parties. We look forward to the informed discussion and debate the survey findings will generate. Following on from our report providing an overview of the survey findings, this is the third in the series of detailed reports with this one addressing the LNP's proposal to increase use of adoption through a new triage model with permanency order targets.



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Contents

Introduction	6
About this report and the reports to follow	6
About the survey respondents	6
About the strength of the survey	6
Overall response	7
Responses by stakeholder groups.....	10
Employees of PeakCare Member organisations.....	10
Employees of QATSICPP Member organisations.....	14
Employees of non-Member non-government organisations	16
Employees of Government agencies	23
Employees of peak bodies, industry and representative groups	30
Academics	33
Private consultants and employees of consultancy or training organisations.....	34
Parents (and other family members) with a lived experience of the child protection system	36
Young people (under 25 years) with a lived experience of the child protection system	37
Older people (over 25 years) with a lived experience of the child protection system.....	38
Foster Carers.....	39
Kinship Carers	42
Others	43

Introduction

Following the announcement on 17 June 2020 of the Liberal National Party's (LNP's) [plans for overhauling Queensland's child protection system](#), PeakCare Queensland Inc. (PeakCare) and the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) conducted a survey to gauge stakeholders' views about the plans. The survey was released on 19 June and closed on 10 July 2020.

PeakCare and QATSICPP will look for similar opportunities to seek feedback about the policy platforms of other political parties as they are released.

About this report and the reports to follow

An [overview of the survey findings](#) was released on 24 August 2020. More detailed reports about the survey findings released since then include:

- [On the question of re-naming the Child Safety Department, the Child Protection Force](#)
- [On the proposal to extend payments to Foster Carers until children in their care turn 21](#)

This report addresses the question included in our survey – *The LNP proposes to “increase the use of adoption through a new triage model with permanency order targets and new KPI's, with a priority for vulnerable children under three years of age”. Do you agree with this proposal?*

About the survey respondents

In total, 1,998 people responded to the survey from across 13 identified stakeholder groups including:

Survey respondent stakeholder groups	No (%)
Employees of non-government organisations including:	811 (40.82%)
• PeakCare Member organisation employees	289 (14.54%)
• QATSICPP Member organisation employees	63 (3.17%)
• Non-Member NGO employees	459 (23.10%)
Employees of Government agencies	633 (31.86%)
Employees of peak bodies or other industry or representative groups	56 (2.82%)
Academics	38 (1.91%)

Private consultants or employees of private consultancy or training organisations	42 (2.11%)
Parents (or other family members) with a lived experience of the child protection system	65 (3.27%)
Young people (under 25) with a lived experience of the child protection system	15 (0.75%)
Older people (over 25) with a lived experience of the child protection system	42 (2.11%)
Foster Carers	121 (6.09%)
Kinship Carers	35 (1.76%)
Others	129 (6.49%)

Eleven survey respondents skipped the question requesting them to identify the group to which they belonged.

The 129 survey respondents who identified as belonging to the 'others' category described themselves as follows:

Interested community member (e.g. parent, concerned citizen, “just an ordinary person”)	39
Retired, semi-retired or former employee of either a government or non-government agency or both	33
Member of a particular professional or occupational group (eg. a barrister, allied health professional)	18
Member of two or more of the listed groups	14
Relative or friend of a Carer or employee of a government or non-government organisation	13
Non-specified connection with child protection system	6
Former Foster Carer	4
Friend of a person who was formerly in care	2

About the strength of the survey

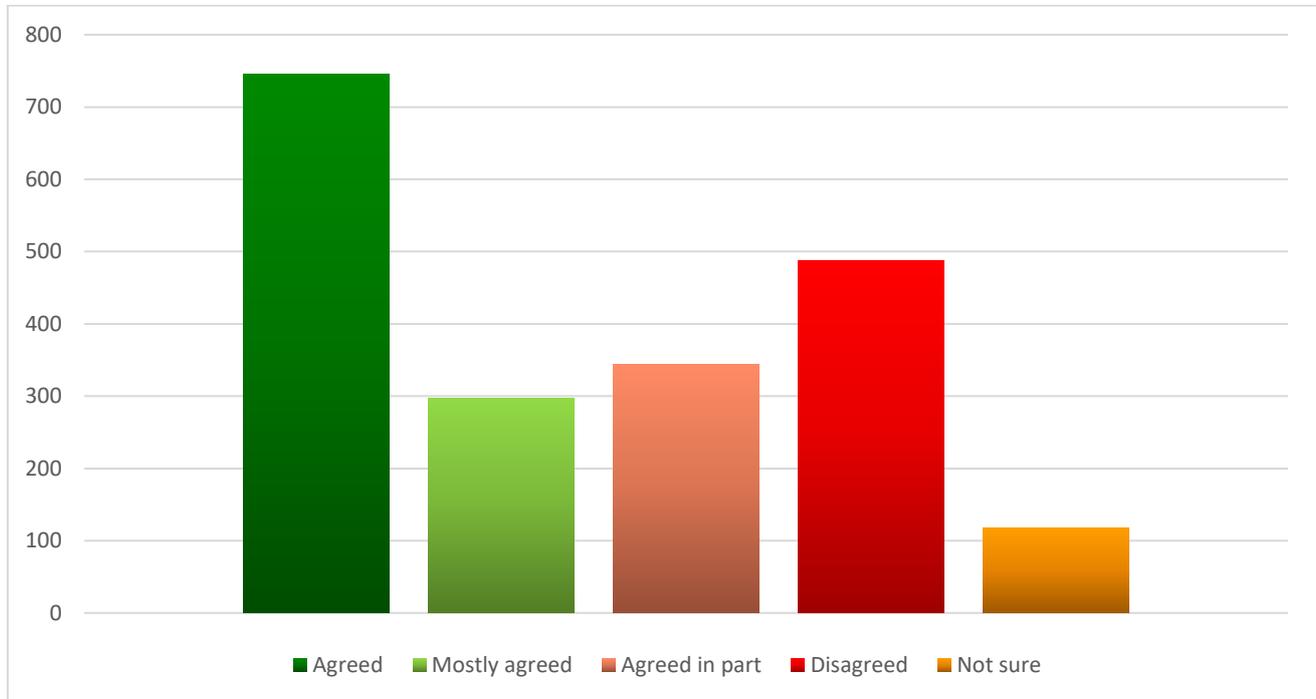
As noted in the overview report, the respondents to the survey are not a representative sample and therefore the results cannot be generalised to specific stakeholder groups or stakeholders as a whole. The strength of the survey and its findings lies in the diversity of views that have been collected from within and across stakeholder groups. This provides a rich source of data to generate debate about how to best protect children, promote their development and well-being, and support their families.

Overall response

Of the 1,998 survey respondents, 1,990 answered, and 8 'skipped', this question. Most who answered the question agreed (37.44%) or mostly agreed (14.92%) with this proposal.

Specifically, of the 1,990 respondents who answered this question:

- 745 (37.44%) agreed with the proposal
- 297 (14.92%) mostly agreed
- 344 (17.92%) agreed only in part
- 487 (24.47%) disagreed, and
- 117 (5.88%) indicated that they were not sure



Widely divergent views were held both within and across stakeholder groups, more so in relation to this proposal than any of the other LNP proposals.

A majority of respondents (i.e. 50% or more) within 7 of the 13 stakeholder groups agreed or mostly agreed with the proposal:

- Employees of non-government organisations that are not members of either PeakCare or QATSICPP (60.88%)
- Parents (or other family members) with a lived experience of the child protection system (53.85%)
- Young people (under 25) with a lived experience of the child protection system (53.34%)
- Older people (over 25) with a lived experience of the child protection system (66.66%)
- Foster Carers (85.13%)
- Kinship Carers (80%)
- Others (56.59%)

Employees of PeakCare member organisations were more likely to agree or mostly agree with the proposal (46.53%), but their number was too few to

constitute a majority (i.e. 50% or more) of the respondents within this stakeholder group.

A majority of respondents (i.e. 50% or more) within 5 of the 13 stakeholder groups disagreed or agreed only in part with the proposal:

- Employees of QATSICPP member organisations (74.60%)
- Employees of peak bodies or other industry or representative groups (51.78%)
- Employees of government agencies (50%)
- Academics (52.64%)
- Consultants or employees of private consultancy or training services (59.52%)

Noting that not all respondents provided additional comments, a review of the comments that were entered into the survey identified the following key themes.

Enhancing stability and permanence

Most of the respondents who agreed or mostly agreed with this proposal across most stakeholder groups commented on their perceived benefits of the

proposal in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided for children.

Why prioritise children under three?

Some respondents who agreed or mostly agreed with the proposal commented on the relevance of prioritising children aged under three years due to the attachment and developmental needs of this age group. Others queried why this age group should be prioritised over others. A few commented that adoption should be limited to older children who have the maturity to make an informed decision about whether or not they wished to be adopted.

Prioritising children's needs over those of parents

Some respondents who agreed or mostly agreed with the proposal commented that its acceptance would enable children's needs to be prioritised over those of parents, with a few noting that parents are currently receiving 'too many chances'.

Reducing pressure on the system

Some respondents within a few stakeholder groups commented that increased use of adoption and permanency orders would ease pressure on the child protection system by increasing the number of people who would be prepared to offer their homes to children, thereby alleviating pressures arising from the current shortage of foster carers. Some also commented that acceptance of the proposal would allow financial, staffing and other resources to be re-directed away from these children to others who are engaged with the child protection system.

Adoption is no guarantee of permanence

Amongst those who did not agree or agreed only in part with the proposal, many commented that adoption does not guarantee permanence or stability for children. Some noted the additional harm caused to children when their care is relinquished by their adoptive parents.

When adopted children grow older

Many respondents who disagreed or agreed only in part with the proposal commented on difficulties that can be experienced by adopted children as they grow into teenage years and the challenges

this poses to their adoptive parents and the sustainability of their care.

The history and legacy of past adoption policies and practice

Many of the respondents who disagreed or agreed only in part with the proposal commented on the need to not forget lessons learned from past adoption policies and practices with references made, in particular, to the Stolen Generations and 'Forced Adoptions'. A few respondents commented that contemporary adoption practices do not replicate past practices and they should not influence consideration of the current proposal.

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Irrespective of the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the proposal, many from across most stakeholder groups commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Many commented that adoption was not a suitable option for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children unless, as noted by a few, a child is adopted by 'blood kin'.

A few respondents commented that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should not be exempted from the proposal or no differences should be applied to adoption of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children by non-Indigenous kin.

Implications of severing legal ties with siblings and other family members

Amongst those who disagreed or agreed only in part with the proposal, some respondents commented on the potential implications of adoption severing children's legal and ties with siblings and other family members.

The rights of children and parents, and the question of consent

Amongst those who disagreed or agreed only in part with the proposal some stated concerns about adoption potentially breaching the human or legal rights of children and/ or parents. Others stated that adoption should only be undertaken with the consent of the parent and/ or child.

Maintaining a child's connections with family and the option of 'open adoption'

Amongst those who agreed or mostly agreed with the proposal, many commented on a need for adopted children to maintain contact with their 'biological families' and their preference for 'open adoptions'.

A few stated a different view and commented that ongoing contact with parents following adoption was problematic to a child's attachment to their adoptive family. A few commented that contact with parents should cease after the child has been adopted.

Availability, motivation and capacity of persons to become adoptive carers

Some respondents across a number of stakeholder groups commented on the availability of persons to become adoptive carers, and the financial and other supports that would be needed to assist these carers in meeting the needs of their adopted children, especially during their teenage years. A few respondents questioned the motivation of some people who may wish to perform the role and commented on the selection processes that would need to be put in place to ensure the suitability of the prospective carers.

A few respondents commented on the negative impact on children if they were to be removed from the care of their Foster Carers in order to be placed with an adoptive family.

Permanency options that are already in place

Amongst those who disagreed or agreed only partly with the proposal, many respondents commented on permanency options including adoption, that are already in place. Some noted that recently introduced legislation and approaches to achieving permanency are either working well or need more time to fully take effect before other changes are introduced.

Others commented that while these new approaches have been introduced, further legislative, procedural and/ or attitudinal changes are needed to bring these changes into full effect.

Other approaches to achieving permanence and stability

Amongst those who disagreed or agreed only in part with the proposal, many respondents commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children's care that they regarded as preferable to the focus

being placed on adoption. In particular, these respondents commented on the need to remain focussed on efforts made to preserve children's care within their family and/ or to reunify children with their parents wherever possible.

Some commented that, where it may not be possible for children to remain in the care of their parents, preference should be given to the engagement of kin in providing for their care.

One respondent commented that it would be better to focus on improving the quality of foster care.

Another respondent commented on their preference for increased use of 'shared care' arrangements.

'No' to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

Irrespective of the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with increased use of adoption and/ or other permanency options, many objected to the proposed establishment of permanency order targets and KPIs. These respondents commented that decisions of this type should be made based on an individualised assessment of children's needs and not driven by a requirement to meet a target number. Many commented that the use of target numbers and KPIs was contrary to decisions being made based on the best interests of the child.

Look to research, the evidence-base and the experiences of other jurisdictions

Many respondents commented on the need to examine existing research and the current evidence-base and/ or the advisability of conducting further research. Some respondents commented on the need to consider the experience of other jurisdictions.

In particular, a number of respondents recommended an examination of adoption policy and practices used in the United Kingdom. Some commented that the United Kingdom's system demonstrated an effective use of adoption, while others contended that this system was producing poor outcomes for children.

The remainder of this report sets out the responses of each of the stakeholder groups.

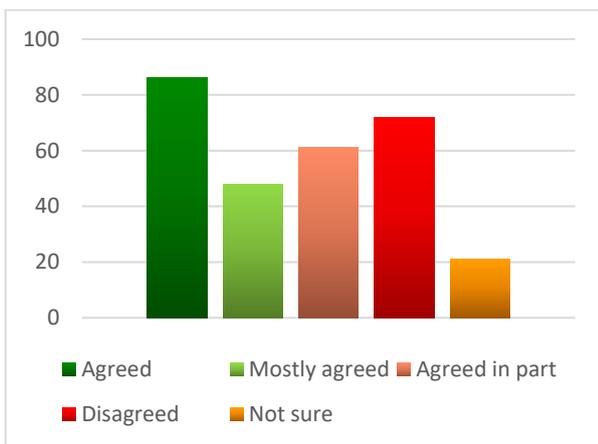
Responses by stakeholder groups

Employees of PeakCare Member organisations

Of the 288 employees of PeakCare Member organisations who answered this question:

- 86 (29.86%) agreed with this proposal
- 48 (16.67%) mostly agreed
- 61 (21.18%) agreed only in part
- 72 (25.00%) disagreed, and
- 21 (7.29%) indicated that they were not sure

One respondent skipped this question.



104 of the respondents within this stakeholder group commented on their responses.

Enhancing stability and permanence

Most of the respondents who agreed or mostly agreed with this proposal commented on perceived benefits in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *This would give the children the stability they need*
- *... if the family are not able to step up and do what's required to safely care for their children then I feel that we should be giving the children their right which is to know each day that they will be safe and loved with the same person and wake up safe in their own bed not facing so much uncertainty*
- *Predictability and permanency are essential for good developmental outcomes. I have seen many foster children moved from house to house and struggle with being wanted and valued*
- *Young people do benefit from permanency... stop the high number of placements that kids have*

- *Adoption can build identity and a sense of belonging and security*
- *Any child who survives repeated abuse and neglect in infancy is in serious long-term trouble; better to provide the opportunity for long term love and security if it's within our power to do so*

Why prioritise children under three?

One respondent commented on the relevance of prioritising children aged under three years due to their attachment and developmental needs. Some others queried why this age group should be prioritised over others:

- *If a child is under the age of three it is learning to attach with those who are caring for it. It is also a time of great developmental change. Early years are so important, if a child is in a safe and consistent environment they have a better future*
- *Why only under 3?*
- *It should be available for all ages*
- *What is also needed is stability for older children. Many older children are placed in care for extended periods and also benefit from permanency decisions*
- *All children, all ages*

Prioritising children's needs over those of parents

A few respondents commented that acceptance of the proposal would enable children's needs to be prioritised over those of parents, with parents currently receiving 'too many chances':

- *By returning them to biological parents, we are prioritizing the needs of the parents not the child*
- *Parents are given too many chances while children are repeatedly abused and traumatised*
- *Parenting can no longer be seen as a right, but the privilege that it is and if a defenceless child is not enough for you to give up a habit, then you don't deserve to have a child*

Reducing pressure on the system

A few respondents commented that increased use of adoption and permanency orders would ease pressure on the child protection system by increasing

the number of people who would be prepared to offer their homes to children:

- *It would increase the number of foster carers who are currently afraid to attach to a child only to have them removed*
- *Permanency orders would create a new wave of people willing to work with the child protection system as failed reunification is one of a carer's biggest fears/barriers*
- *So many parents who would love to adopt*

Adoption is no guarantee of permanence

Amongst those who disagreed or agreed only in part with the proposal, many commented that adoption does not guarantee permanence or stability for children, some noting the additional harm caused to children when their care is relinquished by their adoptive parents:

- *Not all children who are adopted have supportive, safe, happy, healthy families who meet their needs. It also means that the parents of these young people lose all hope of having their child back in their care. Many children in care, all they long for is to be back with their families. Not all adoption and foster care placements are safe or in the child's best interest*
- *The adoption statistics that I have seen are very misleading as the number of children adopted returning to the care system appears to be under-reported as a high number of children having adoption arrangements breakdown do not return to the care system but do not necessarily have appropriate care arrangements in place i.e. couch surfing or other temporary self-placements, they just don't come back to the attention of the child protection system*
- *I have worked in other jurisdictions where children have been adopted very quickly and then these adoptions have broken down because of the child's trauma which impacts their behaviour*
- *Our agency has seen at least three cases of 'failed' adoptions in recent years with parents 'returning' the children by sending them into care with devastating impacts on the children concerned. One child was an overseas adoption. Another was in care in another jurisdiction at an early age, then adopted, came to Queensland with their family and now, ten years later, has*

been rejected and is the subject of Child Safety intervention

When adopted children grow older

A few respondents commented on difficulties that can be experienced by adopted children as they grow older and the challenges this poses to their adoptive parents and the sustainability of their care:

- *I have seen young people adopted at an early age returned to the system once the adoption fails as a teenager*

The history and legacy of past adoption policies and practice

Many respondents commented on the legacy of past adoption policies and practices and the need to not forget the lessons learned:

- *Given past practices and the trauma of separation, adoption should not be seen as a solution*
- *Need to look at historical adoption practices - this is not the answer. Invest in finding family programs and supporting kinship relationships where children are unable to be at home*
- *Adoption is final and doesn't give parents the opportunity to address their issues. We should not forget the lessons learned from the Forde Inquiry and Forgotten Australians inquiry*
- *We only need to look to the government's apology for forced adoptions, and hear the stories of those now adult children taken away from their parents, to see that this is a system that doesn't work. Permanency options where children are in long term guardianship orders affords for greater connection to their birth families which regardless of the reasons for removal, all children want and deserve access to*
- *This will just create another generation that have been exposed to forced removal and disrupted connection from family, kin, culture and country*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Many respondents commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *It is dangerous territory indeed if considered for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.*

- *Inflexible legal measures to achieve permanent care may actually serve to sever the connections for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their permanent identity, breaking bonds that are critical to their stability of identity while in care and in their adult life*
- *Be careful you are not re-enacting the Stolen Generation!!*
- *This must also be viewed through an appropriate cultural lens and lessons of past forced removal of children must surely be kept top of mind*
- *The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle would absolutely have to be followed and Indigenous consultants be involved along with the extended family*

Implications of severing legal ties with siblings and other family members

Some respondents commented on the potential implications of adoption severing children's legal ties with siblings and other family members:

- *Adoption would possibly separate siblings and would hurt young people further*
- *The current adoption laws sever the child's connection to their birth parents, siblings, grandparents and extended family. In this time there is no room for outdated protocols that only serve to cause further trauma, displacement and familial rupture for children and parents*

The rights of children and parents, and the question of consent

Some respondents stated concerns about adoption potentially breaching the rights of children and/ or parents. Other stated that adoption should only be undertaken with the consent of the parent and/ or child:

- *Adoption should only occur where parents consent to relinquishment of their parental rights, or where a young person is committed to this outcome for themselves*
- *Adoption is already an option, any further non-consenting adoptions ... are a breach of a child's and family's human rights*

Maintaining a child's connections with family and the option of 'open adoption'

Amongst those who agreed or mostly agreed with the proposal, many commented on a need for adopted

children to maintain contact with their 'biological families' and their preference for 'open adoptions':

- *Permanency planning is better for the kids, must keep connection with the biological family though for the children's own sense of identity and belonging. Carer has guardianship, but child belongs to both their biological family and the carer*
- *This would need careful design and be based on a model of open adoption so that children always know and interact with their family of origin if possible*
- *There is a need to increase the number of adoptions, however open adoptions would need to be explored*

Availability, motivation and capacity of persons to become adoptive carers

Some commented on the availability of persons to become adoptive carers, and the financial and other supports that would be needed to assist these carers. A few respondents questioned the motivation of some people who may wish to perform the role and commented on the selection processes that would need to be put in place to ensure the suitability of the prospective carers:

- *I agree for placement stability, but carers need to be able to demonstrate they can work with the biological family and manage contact between the child and their birth family*
- *This is not reversible... for many kids who will be put up for adoption, it is traumatic... they will be kids with special needs due to trauma and most adoptive families are not equipped to handle this*
- *Adoptive parents must be provided with continued support, including financial support if they are caring for long-term order foster children*
- *Pushing carers into adoption without support for caring for traumatised children is a huge load to bear alone. if adoption is sought, the systems to support children who have been traumatised need to be put in place to support families*
- *Only if the people who are adopting are doing it for the child's best interest and not for their own interests*
- *My only concern would be around the vetting of parents who wish to adopt. Unfortunately there are a number of carers who are not suitable to have children in their long-term care*

- *You would need a different application process to general foster care which focuses on reunification and would need to focus on permanency for the older age group 6 years and over*

Permanency options that are already in place

A number of respondents commented on permanency options including adoption, that are already in place. Some noted that recently introduced legislation and approaches to achieving permanency are either working well or need more time to fully take effect before other changes are introduced:

- *The new legislation promoting permanency with STC, LTG and PCO orders is working well and there is still the security of child safety if required.*
- *Adoption should be the last option, there are better options in place currently, e.g PCO and LTG-O*
- *This can happen now, when children are at risk. I would worry about children being selected for adoption and then the circumstances made to fit the proposal*
- *Unsure what would be different for children given introduction of PCOs that parents can't appeal*

Some commented that while these new approaches have been introduced, further changes need to occur to assist their implementation:

- *Child Safety already has a Permanent Care Order which, in theory, is a good permanency option, however they don't appear to be using it*
- *Permanency is already an option in the suite of services...The current system requires concurrent planning 1) for reunification 2) for permanency. We are not seeing any of the current policy being enacted*

Other approaches to achieving permanence and stability

Many respondents commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children's care that they regarded as preferable to the focus being placed on adoption:

- *Permanency and stability should always be considered however this does not mean adoption is the go to*
- *The conversation needs to shift away from an outcome like adoption and focus on stability of*

placements for children. While permanent placement options are important and part of a suite of options for families and children - they are not appropriate in many cases, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander families or families from CALD backgrounds. Let's unpack what causes placement breakdown and concentrate on mechanisms to support families to keep their children at home - before spending time on the adoption issue

- *The focus (where possible) should be on supporting families to stay safe and together. These ideas are only going to create further generations of trauma and disconnection*
- *The focus of energy and resources should be directed to prevention / early intervention and family restoration, not permanent removal of children*
- *How many governments have proposed this? It doesn't work. Addressing the wicked issues that lead to a lack of safety for children and young people in their family home is the only way this will be solved*

Some commented that, where it may not be possible for children to remain in the care of their parents, preference should be given to the engagement of kin in providing for their care:

- *Adoption should always be considered as part of a suite of permanency options. However the hierarchy of kin should always come first... informed by comprehensive family mapping as well as robust assessment of the family completed in a timescale that meets their needs - not the courts or the social workers*

One respondent commented that it would be better to focus on improving the quality of foster care:

- *I think putting more money into getting better qualified foster carers is probably more important, who understand fully what they are taking on, and be given better training in trauma in children and the impacts of this on their behaviour*

Another respondent commented on their preference for increased use of 'shared care':

- *... would also like to see increased consideration of shared care arrangements*

'No' to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

Irrespective of the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with increased use of adoption and/ or other permanency options, many objected to the proposed established of permanency order targets and KPIs:

- *I agree that adoption should be pursued as a possible outcome for children on long-term orders until they turn 18, but only where this is absolutely thoroughly investigated and assessed by a number of professionals to be for the best for the child themselves. I do not believe, however, that this should be fast-tracked through a triage service, or be anywhere in the vicinity of KPIs. This would be a gross misuse of power to push a child through an adoption process where they might otherwise be able to reconcile with their family after some intervention with the goal of meeting KPIs*
- *The notion of having targets and KPIs completely flies in the face of best interests of the child considerations, and the Child Placement Principle. It is a simplistic and naïve view of adoption that disregards the lifelong impacts for people effected by adoption, in areas such as identity, loss, grief, attachment, trauma, relationships and mental health*
- *KPIs and targets are good business tools but are misplaced in family and child related services... Need to be really clear here. We are speaking about children and their families. Interventions that last a lifetime have not produced good outcomes - check history and Hansard for comments in both state and federal governments*
- *Having targets for 'forced adoptions' is an appalling concept: it is about the child, not the numbers to be achieved. It will also potentially move the focus from trying to work with the family and parents very early in the piece. Every case is different and must be looked at accordingly*
- *You can't put a KPI on permanency orders. Families can and do make significant changes to work towards getting their children back, and with this approach you might as well not bother working with the families. Stupid really.*
- *I agree that adoption should be considered more openly in Queensland. However this needs to be a case by case system and not a blanket approach. KPIs never help anyone and adoption KPIs will cause more harm to kids who may*

have been able to go home but instead are adopted out so that the KPI can be met

- *You can't have targets and KPIs when you are dealing with children's long-term stability. Decision making needs to be made based on the child's long-term stability needs and the parents' willingness and ability to make change in a timely manner. The court also dictates when orders are made - additional pressure around KPIs puts undue stress on the workers*

Look to research, the evidence-base and the experiences of other jurisdictions

A number of respondents commented on the need to examine existing research and the current evidence-base and/or the advisability of conducting further research:

- *Where is the evidence and research in support of the proposal?*
- *Permanency for children is crucial ... must be researched based around the optimal arrangements for child's long term well being (i.e. closed, open, family contact, etc)*
- *The long-term effects and damage to children who grow up not knowing their family or origin, culture or community have been well documented by reports and research*
- *Adoption has its own issues. In other countries many children who are adopted have Foetal Alcohol Syndrome. This is a complex issue and requires a complex response. This is not a complex response to this issue*

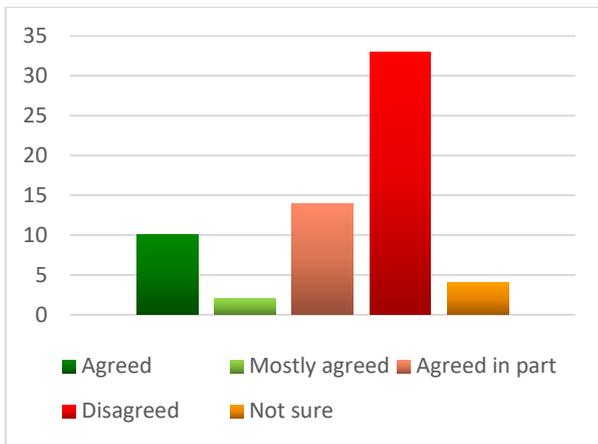
One respondent suggested that consideration be given to the experiences of the United Kingdom:

- *Look at the UK model*

Employees of QATSICPP Member organisations

Of the 63 employees of QATSICPP Member organisations who answered this question:

- 10 (15.87%) agreed with the proposal
- 2 (3.17%) mostly agreed
- 14 (22.22%) agreed only in part
- 33 (52.38%) disagreed, and
- 4 (6.35%) indicated that they were not sure



22 of the respondents within this stakeholder group commented on their responses.

Enhancing stability and permanence

A few of the respondents who agreed or mostly agreed with this proposal commented on perceived benefits in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *Children need families. If their biological parents aren't going to do the job right, someone needs to and they deserve to not have to pick up after the parents' mess over and over for the rest of the child's life*
- *YES! Let's stop children being churned through the system with multiple placements and reunification attempts. Give them a chance at a stable and loving home where they can form real, solid attachments*

Prioritising needs of parents over those of children

One respondent commented that acceptance of the proposal would enable children's needs to be prioritised over those of parents:

- *The current system is not at all child centred and caters more for the needs of parents and carers than the children*

When adopted children grow older

Some respondents commented on difficulties that can be experienced by adopted children as they grow older and the challenges this poses to their adoptive parents and the sustainability of their care:

- *Have you ever thought of what will happen if children are not given the opportunity to know who their family is? It might be ok at this level, but*

as a human in a teen life we will start to think about belonging. Do I fit in this family? Why don't I feel that I belong? Who am I? Why am I feeling this way?

- *This process needs to be extremely sensitive ensuring that children are not adopted to families that results in a disconnection from family members and their own identity. The end result most often when the child becomes a teenager is that poor choices are often made while searching for a sense of belonging outside of their foster family*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Most respondents commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *Every child has a family - unless the adoption is initiated by a parent to a family member that they have identified - ADOPTION IS NOT AN OPTION FOR Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Sounds like a proposal for the stolen generation to happen again*
- *Although there are some positives of utilising an adoption framework by scaffolding a system based on this, it would be expected that we will see a return of high adoption numbers, and numerous children growing up without knowledge or experience of their birth family. Additionally, without the experience of a biological family, especially for Indigenous families, we will again see a reduction in cultural identity and acknowledgement, which begs us to question, is this a nicer wrapped version of the Stolen Generation?*
- *We already have a stolen generation and now we are going to steal their culture, family and connections from them as well. I strongly disagree*
- *This puts Indigenous families at the mercy of a system that will create a second wave of stolen generation children*
- *Adopting out children is not addressing trauma. More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will have loss of connection and culture by being adopted out*
- *Ensure no repeat of the stolen generation. Must adhere to strict placement principle*

Implications of severing legal ties with siblings and other family members

Some respondents commented on the potential implications of adoption severing children's legal ties with siblings and other family members:

- *Adoption means a lack of contact not just with 'unsafe parents' but with grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and siblings. Situations can change so quickly but children's desire for familial identity remains throughout their life. Adopting children who have a chance to be with their family of origin at such a young age restricts this and endangers it*

The rights of children and parents, and the question of consent

One respondent stated concerns about adoption potentially breaching the rights of children:

- *Yes, I agree young people deserve a permanent and secure home. No, I don't agree that children's rights to their biological family be severed*

Permanency options that are already in place

One respondent commented on permanency planning processes that are already in place:

- *Permanency planning already exists*

Other approaches to achieving permanence and stability

Some respondents commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children's care that they regarded as preferable to the focus being placed on adoption:

- *Adoption should only be an option in exceptional circumstances after all family-based placement options have been exhausted and it is in the best long-term interests of the child. Provisions must be made to support the child to maintain a connection to their family and their culture*
- *A focus on permanency through adoption will lead to a short cut in working towards prevention and restoration of children to their families. There is a need for intensive interventions to support parents to make the necessary changes to create safety for children because many parents can make the changes and children deserve the opportunity to be with their kin*

'No' to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

Irrespective of the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with increased use of adoption and/ or other permanency options, some objected to the proposed established of permanency order targets and KPIs:

- *Making adopting easier would be great but not under a KPI structure*
- *I find it abhorrent that the statements include a focus on targets and KPIs which is totally void of the human factor. This just makes it easier for the LNP to get the numbers to show they have done a good job - it's stats driven. The hard work needs to be done to heal children and support families to move from dysfunctional to functional*

Look to research, the evidence-base and the experiences of other jurisdictions

Some respondents commented on the need to examine existing research and the current evidence-base and/or the need to conduct further research:

- *Research has already demonstrated that adoption does not work and the adopting parents return the children back to child protection services as they mature. Also, this would be completely inappropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and would immediately discount a lot of family being able to adopt due to their past circumstances*
- *Can I click strongly disagree? Decades of research shows us that children thrive best when living with their family of origin or close kin and their needs are met 'good enough'. They thrive better even in poverty and stressful situations with 'safe' family of origin than in wealthy carer placements. Since we've been conducting research into the care experiences of young people, they have stated clearly and in a majority of cases that they want to feel that they belong and wanted, and want to be with their family*

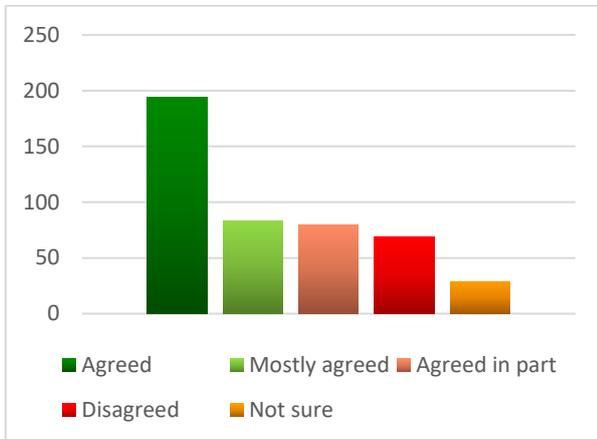
Employees of non-Member non-government organisations

Of the 455 employees of non-government organisations that are not Members of either PeakCare or QATSICPP who answered this question:

- 194 (42.64%) agreed with the proposal

- 83 (18.24%) mostly agreed
- 80 (17.58%) agreed only in part
- 69 (15.16%) disagreed, and
- 29 (6.37%) indicated that they were not sure

Four respondents skipped this question.



117 of the respondents within this stakeholder group commented on their responses.

Enhancing stability and permanence

Most of the respondents who agreed or mostly agreed with this proposal commented on the perceived benefits in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *YES, I've worked with many children who've been in care since they were babies and they've lived in hundreds of homes and residential care services! Most feel they would've been better left at home as they have NO sense of belonging and feel 100% rejection*
- *Yes, I do think that adoption should become more accessible for foster carers who are caring for children on a LTCO. So the children can grow up in a more stable and secure family environment without having 'a kid in care' label placed upon them*
- *Children need a stable home environment. Being placed in multiple carer homes and continual attempts at reunification only contribute to instability and further trauma*
- *Yes, I think a lot of children need to go on permanency orders to give them a chance at having a good life, they didn't ask to be born into generational family abuse or neglect and if people are willing to give them a better life, this should definitely be taken into account as it in the child's*

best interest, but as with everything it is case by case basis

- *YES! More adoption options for carers, and more supports around sustainable relationships*
- *Absolutely adoption needs to be on the table to consider for the most vulnerable children who will never have that option for reunification with their biological parents. So many amazing adults in Australia that would love to adopt within the country and support our younger generation, with no discrimination to culture, sexual preferences, single, married, defacto but heavily screened of cause - but quickly - these past experiences of waiting 5-8yrs for adoption is just heartbreaking for those that are wanting to be parents through this process. Fantastic idea, thank you...*
- *My experience in Queensland child protection highlighted the lack of permanency planning for children entering care. The making of three and four two-year orders was nonsensical and offered no sense of security or permanence for children. This proposal is closely aligned with a practice to make a determination that a parent is not able to meet the needs of their child sooner rather than later. It will also require significant change in culture and practice to incorporate the use of permanency and adoption as viable outcomes for children and families*
- *Children should have a 'forever' home with loving and nurturing care givers rather than be impacted by multiple carers and separations which has a traumatic impact on children. We know that a strong attachment bond is a predicator of better outcomes for children. And this can only happen if children remain within a steady and stable family unit with a primary carer - and forges a reciprocal response in the carers who are certain that the child will be their child to raise without the anxiety of whether separation will occur*
- *Permanent stable placements enable carers to build better attachments without the threat of having a child leave their care. It also enables children to feel safe and secure*

Why prioritise children under three?

Some respondents commented on the relevance of prioritising children aged under three years due to the attachment and developmental needs of this age group. Some others queried why this age group should be prioritised over others:

- *Make it age 5, give the kids a chance*
- *This proposal links from the Carmody report around children bouncing in and out of care and importance of attachment and early positive relationships and should be increased to at least 5 years old*
- *Under 1 year would be better so that there is less damage to the developmental stages of the child*
- *Not sure why under 3 years is a priority - this should be for all children. In fact, children 6-12 years should actually be the priority as they are harder to place in homes*
- *I don't know why it is just for children under the age of three. Any child who the system knows will not have a parent willing and able to care for them should be able to be considered for adoption*
- *There also needs to be an option for children to be adopted before they turn 18 if they ask to. Children have been very upset when they ask once out of the system and are told at the courthouse that they cannot be adopted as an adult*

Prioritising children's needs over those of parents

A few respondents commented that acceptance of the proposal would enable children's needs to be prioritised over those of parents:

- *If it is demonstrated that the parents are unable to do what they need to do within a reasonable timescale then long-term planning needs to be done for a child... Children should not be expected to wait for the parents' timescale. Furthermore, I have seen children go into care, be reunified with their parents and then return into care. This has been traumatic for a number of children and their behaviours evidence this*
- *This also needs to eliminate any chance of the biological family being able to take their child back after the adoption has been finalised*

Reducing pressure on the system

A few respondents commented that increased use of adoption and permanency orders would ease pressure on the child protection system by increasing the number of people who would be prepared to offer their homes to children:

- *Adoption would be great as some children grow up to love the carers who look after them and consider them their parents. More adoption options would help the system*

- *Fully agree with adoption. I believe this would take some pressure off the foster care sector*
- *Children would benefit from adoption as they will then have stability in their lives and the families would then take on the responsibility of caring for the child including the financials*

Adoption is no guarantee of permanence

A few respondents commented that adoption does not guarantee permanence or stability for children, some noting the additional harm caused to children when their care is relinquished by their adoptive parents:

- *Even children in adoption are returned*
- *Talk to adults who were adopted as children and they will tell you about the harm it has caused. Adoption does not secure a child's future. There are many placements of children who have been with the same foster carer since birth and when they get to teen years the carer can no longer care for them. What happens to that child who has lost their biological family, then their adoptive family?*

When adopted children grow older

A number of respondents commented on difficulties that can be experienced by adopted children as they grow older and the challenges this poses to their adoptive parents and the sustainability of their care:

- *I agree to a point, I am concerned about children being separated just because of their age, children under three also have traumatic experiences and this might not come out until later years, what happens then when the children become hard to handle?*
- *Adoption of children from care is extremely fraught. The impacts of harm (abuse, neglect) begin at birth and only escalate as a child ages regardless of the age at which the child was removed from the source of harm. Adoption would allow the government to remove critical supports from children and their adoptive parents leaving them less able to address issues that are likely to crystalize later in the child's life*
- *Thought needs to be given to the impact to children finding out when they are old enough that their parents are still living. This is just not as black and white as people think*

- *There have been studies done that although adoption may provide permanency in placement, sometimes it is not until children are older that other significant issues arise, that are not always apparent with a child under 3. Also, as a child gets older their identity becomes paramount, and sometimes it is only through culture and family connection that this can be obtained*
- *This scares me that children may never have contact with their biological families, putting children at risk of identity crisis when they become adults*

The history and legacy of past adoption policies and practice

A few respondents commented on the history and legacy of past adoption policies and practices and the need to not forget the lessons learned:

- *Did we not learn what this does to a child's identity from the past experiences of the Indigenous populations or children born out of wedlock?*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Many respondents commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *Adoption for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities means that they have a small window to work through generational trauma at the hands of the governments throughout Queensland/Australian history. With adoption, it means that the people adopting the young people do not have to continue to support the young people culturally, with family, lore or connection to country. How do we continue to support these young people with their identity if there is nothing in place to explain why this is a must?*
- *This era is already being labelled a 'modern stolen generation'. I don't see how more fostering and adoption will solve that*
- *Indigenous children should not be adopted by non-Indigenous carers. As evidence suggests the detrimental impacts for our children who are removed from their families and are denied the opportunity to know, access or practise their culture; later in life, this leave these children with severe identity issues. The goal for Aboriginal and*

Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care should always be to reunify them with parents, family or be placed with Indigenous carers. Despite our children being on LTG orders, the Department has the responsibility to continue to source culturally appropriate placements

- *Family connection is incredibly important for positive identity formation and wellbeing. Adoption will strip children of any connection to their family of origin. This would be particularly devastating for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families*
- *I do not agree that adoption should occur for any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children, given the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are already displaced from their families*

Implications of severing legal ties with siblings and other family members

Some respondents commented on the potential implications of adoption severing children's legal ties with siblings and other family members:

- *What about the family and siblings of these children?*
- *Absolutely not. There are far better permanency options that adoption. Adoption legally severs one's social and legal identity*

The rights of children and parents, and the question of consent

Some respondents stated concerns about adoption potentially breaching the rights of children and/ or parents. Many stated that adoption should only be undertaken with the consent of the parent and/ or child:

- *An experience of safety and stability and 'permanency' is critical for children and young people in care. Any permanent care arrangement outside of family of origin should ONLY be considered after the parent/family caregiver has been given every opportunity to make the necessary changes to ensure the child or young person is safe and well in their care. I have yet to see the system refined to the point where I would consider this is happening routinely and would worry that children would be placed for adoption prematurely and in violation of their (and their family's) rights*

- *I do not think we have the right to adopt out a child unless the parent wishes this to happen, not just because the child will be in foster care*
- *It feels to me like that is an easier road than trying to work through an order with a parent. Adoption really is permanent... parents no longer have any rights at all over the children. I won't ever agree to that UNLESS a parent says yes*
- *This is not an appropriate course of action unless the parents fully consent and provide continued consent over a number of years, or the parents are deceased and there is no living relatives in the child's life to maintain a relationship with the child*
- *If all other options, i.e. kinship care, have been explored, and if parents have capacity to consent to this*
- *Only if the child agrees to this and has the capacity to say so*
- *I agree adoption is right in some circumstances, but this needs to be considered very carefully. the rights of the child and their need for connection is paramount*
- *Who get to choose which children get removed from parents and adopted out permanently? Who get to choose which parents lose their human right to parent a child? Who get to choose which parents are not given the supports, opportunities and time to make and sustain these changes? Parents who have children removed against their will and who want children, will most likely just turn around and have another child placing them into the same 'at risk' environment and placing extra strain on this system. Or are we going to implement mandatory sterilisation to ensure that parents cannot have any more children and place them at risk?*
- *This is a complicated and complex issue. Stability is essential for all children, particularly young children. However, taking away children permanently from parents creates a whole different set of issues, trauma, grief and loss...People making these decisions need to be mindful not to blame and penalise (particularly women) in domestic violence relationships. People can change. Losing parental rights through adoption MUST NOT be made from a punitive perspective. I am fearful women are going to be significantly harmed by such as proposal*

Maintaining a child's connections with family and the option of 'open adoption'

Amongst those who agreed or mostly agreed with the proposal, many commented on a need for adopted children to maintain contact with their 'biological family' and their preference for 'open adoptions':

- *It depends on the type of adoption - children still need to be able to see their birth parents regularly (in most circumstances) and need connection with their kin and relatives*
- *Giving a child the stability of a permanent home to stop the uncertainty of potential reunification to families unable to provide proper care is not beneficial. Possibly using open adoption might be the way to go. Parents can be a part of their lives going forward but they have the stability of their adopted family*
- *As long as carers are able to maintain good connection between the child and all members of their family of origin*
- *I've seen many carers make promises to parents about maintaining contact with extended family and quite often it falls through. Children deserve more and unless parents make an informed decision about adoption, their child deserves to know their family of origin*
- *Must be clear and enforceable goals and rules ensuring Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (and children of other diverse cultures and religions) maintain connections to their heritage, to ensure their identity is undisrupted during vital years of development*
- *While stability is important to children and their development, and this should be prioritised, not sure if cutting of links with biological family and support systems such as Child Safety will necessarily be in the best interest of the children- especially when one takes cultural needs into consideration*

A few respondents expressed different views about children maintaining contact with their parents:

- *Children removed in infancy until their 18th birthday should go to a family and never see their parents again. Research shows that contact with the parents and not being able to form solid attachments from birth is extremely detrimental to the health, wellbeing and mental health of the child when they reach the age of about 12 years. I don't know why Queensland doesn't have easier*

adoptions in place already. It chews up carers and placements for other children who can be reunified to their parents

- *Is it best for children to be retraumatised every time they have to see the perpetrators of their trauma, so the parents have their rights met? No, I think that if the parents do the work and really prove, not just jump through the hoops, that they are changed, then they get the right to see the children. If no, then the children should be allowed to live the life of safety with the carers that have cared for them*

Another respondent commented on changes required to ensure that children and their adoptive parents are kept safe during contact with family members:

- *The restraints around visitations need to be looked at to ensure children and adoptive parents are kept safe*

Availability, motivation and capacity of persons to become adoptive carers

Some commented on the availability of suitable persons to become adoptive carers, and the financial and other supports that would be needed to assist these carers. A few respondents questioned the motivation of some people who may wish to perform the role and commented on the selection processes that would need to be put in place:

- *They have tried this in the past and it didn't work.... we can't get enough foster carers let alone trying to find people who want to adopt children with significant trauma*
- *It should be easier to adopt and keep children safe and give them a safe home, even if it is not with their biological parents. However, the quality of parenting for adoptive families should also be well researched, not sure how well this is done at the moment*
- *Concept would be good as long as the adoption parents are screened and trained in trauma and responses for children in care*
- *It is my understanding that if a family does adopt a young person that family then loses all supports offered through child safety, this does not seem fair as these young people generally require more assistance through life*
- *Ruptured attachments can have severe consequences for children longitudinally - careful*

consideration is required -adoptive parents should undergo special training to understand the attachment needs of these children to ensue successful outcomes

- *I agree if the parents adopting the children are given ongoing support and advice around managing trauma behaviours and attachment issues that often are experiences with the adoption process*
- *If you adopt a child, you don't always know the trauma behaviours that may manifest years after the adoption. In adoptions, there is no support or ongoing training so there is a risk that children will be relinquished if adopters are not provided ongoing support*
- *I believe carers will need support long term. Carers often have attachment disruptions themselves and it impacts the placement stability when triggered*
- *The adoption process would need to be tight to ensure adoptive parents are not also a risk to the children. Having targets and KPIs could undermine the process*
- *If children are adopted, do the 'adoptive parents' drop off the radar? What if a child goes into another bad home?*
- *Stability and consistency for children is paramount, as long as there is robust and regular checks of those potential adoptive parents. I am aware of cases where long term foster carers are regularly using foster money to buy clothes and essentials for their own children, taking drugs and neglecting and being cold to fostered children*
- *Good in theory. The issue is carers don't want to lose supports and money*

One respondent commented that:

- *More adoption needs to happen with less government involvement once the kid has been rehomed into a safe environment*

Another respondent commented that the processes used to allow foster carers to adopt should be altered in order to reduce the potential for children in their care to be removed and placed with adoptive carers:

- *Lower adoption processes so foster carers have the opportunity to care long term for children in their care without fears that children will be removed from them and placed with adoptive parents*

Permanency options that are already in place

Some respondents commented on permanency options including adoption, that are already in place. A few noted that recently introduced legislation and approaches to achieving permanency need more time to fully take effect before other changes are introduced. Others stated their views about other changes that should be made to the current system:

- *This is already being done by the current Government*
- *Permanency planning is something that Child Safety is starting to warm up to but slow processes around resubmitting court applications in order to seek guardianship or permanency to Carers halts the process and often leads to being overlooked or not valued highly enough. Additional support needs to be given to this process to ensure the child protection system moves children towards permanency and alleviates some stressors on the system*
- *The PCOs haven't even been around for 2 years. Give it more of a chance and educate our carers and Child Safety Officers about what it means and whether they are eligible. Most carers think it's too difficult to get LTGO or PCO orders as the Department looks after it and it takes a ridiculous amount of time*
- *Department keeps saying they will do this, more often happens that children on long term orders are returned to parents than adopted*
- *The Department is reluctant now to do permanency orders as the parents have to work alongside of carers - needs more alignment with practice and the legislative arm of the Department. Depends on the criteria for adoption whether this is a viable option. Will not be if young inexperienced workers are the decision makers*
- *I think this will be tricky - it is already significantly difficult getting LTG-O and PCOs through the court let alone adoption*
- *It sounds good in theory however the reality is that the process takes so long and has so many hurdles that in the last 20 years I have personally seen no adoptions go through*
- *1.5years of PCOs coming in and we have two in the whole of Queensland. We on the ground are battling managers for amazingly matched long-term placements to move to PVO with zero success*

Other approaches to achieving stability

Many respondents commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children's care that they regarded as preferable to the focus being placed on adoption:

- *Adoption is already there. But not something to focus on. Let's try to create a system that will work to break the cycle and get kids out of care. Use brain science to focus on first 1,000 days in family, not out of family*
- *The focus and support efforts should be about reunification and supporting parents so children can return safely to their care*
- *I understand the need for stability for children 3 years old and under, however this does not give the parents much time to change before permanent measures are introduced. What needs to be recognised is the intergenerational trauma a lot of parents have gone through themselves. No parent is perfect, and their parents weren't perfect- so why expect someone to be perfect as soon as they have a baby?*
- *So parents can never work with the Department to make their homes safe enough for their child's return? No thanks. What happens if the parents get their lives back on track? Or one of the parents? I think adoption at that young age is a big call*
- *People can and do turn their lives around and by using adoption to place young children under 3 into a permanent home does not give parents sufficient time to make life changing decisions and actions, especially those who also suffer from mental health issues as well*
- *Children should stay with family where possible, if not parents then all options within the extended family should be looked at*
- *We need a continuum of care options available to carers and families. We need more family exploration models to ensure that there is absolutely no family available, kinship care options, intensive therapeutic accommodation options, holistic family support models...*
- *Parents should still be given time to demonstrate their ability to work towards reunification over a 1-2 year period, before long term or permanent options are considered*

'No' to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

Irrespective of the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with increased use of adoption and/ or other permanency options, many objected to the proposed established of permanency order targets and KPIs:

- *I believe that adoption and permanency arrangements should be explored earlier in a child's time in care and revisited more often. I do not believe that KPIs will provide the right motivation for this to occur and will instead lead to rushed decisions and more children re-entering care with more trauma and experiences of rejection*
- *No child's safety or reunification should be about targets. It should be about the best interests of the child*
- *Adoptions could be used more frequently, however I see that having KPIs is dangerous and not in the best interests of children and families*
- *Permanency order targets and KPIs usually lead to meeting bureaucratic requirements rather than the needs of individual families*
- *Adoption and permanency can RARELY be determined at a triage phase and should NEVER be subject to targets or ceiling numerical specifications*

Look to research, the evidence-base and the experiences of other jurisdictions

A number of respondents commented on the need to examine existing research and the current evidence-base and/or the need for more information:

- *There needs to be good evidence-based practice around all of this and each individual situation addressed as an individual situation not a blanket ruling*
- *I don't disagree with adoption but this seems to be a knee jerk reaction and not thought out. I'd need to know a LOT more information*

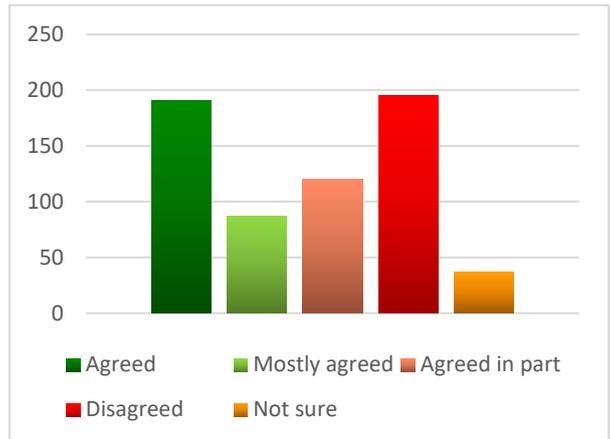
Employees of Government agencies

Of the 630 employees of Government agencies who answered this question:

- 191 (30.32%) agreed with the proposal
- 87 (13.81%) mostly agreed

- 120 (19.05%) agreed only in part
- 195 (30.95%) disagreed, and
- 37 (5.87%) indicated that they were not sure

Three respondents skipped this question.



234 of the respondents within this stakeholder group commented on their responses.

Enhancing stability and permanence

Most of the respondents who agreed or mostly agreed with this proposal commented on the perceived benefits in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *Adoption gives certainty and hope for both the child and the adopting family*
- *Continuity of care and permanent placements are very important for these young lives*
- *How wonderful to get kids out of this environment and into a secure long-term family*
- *Adoption rates in Queensland are some of the lowest in the country and long-term carers should be given the option to formally adopt children to provide children with stability and a sense of belonging*
- *This would be a wonderful opportunity for parents and children to be able to become a family unit. Currently children in care go back to abusive parents once they turn 18 because they haven't been given any opportunities*
- *The evidence of the first 1000 days is clear. We need to get in earlier and help this vulnerable cohort. This should not preclude relationships with the birth parent but will allow the child to develop in a secure stable environment in the most important years for development*
- *Yes - all the research points to early secure attachments for infants and young children. This is*

best supported with permanency planning as early as possible

Why prioritise children under three?

Some respondents commented on the relevance of prioritising children aged under three years due to the attachment and developmental needs of this age group. Some others queried why this age group should be prioritised over others:

- *Attachment research indicates children should be in the care of their long-term carer by age 2*
- *More investigation as to the effects of trauma on children of all ages needs to occur so that the recommended age (3 years, 5 years?) of the cut-off for children potentially being placed with adoptive parents can be found. Too young and you restrict this potentially valuable option for so many kids, too old and you risk breakdown of placements due to trauma-based behaviours*
- *Clearly the earlier the better for all aged children. Caution needs to be observed re: age-related decisions. It is a misconception and oversimplified that children under 3 will be less effected due to their earlier developmental stage at the time of the trauma/ disrupted attachment*
- *Let's not forget that older young people (3+) deserve and have a right to permanency and stability in their care environments too. We could also question if 3 years is sufficient for a parent to adequately show that they are not able to provide safe and stable care for their child given the current deficits in our system*
- *I think this shouldn't just be priorities for children under three, but be a viable option for all children if reunification is not reasonably achievable within 2 years*

Prioritising children's needs over those of parents

Two respondents commented that the proposal required children's needs to be prioritised over those of parents:

- *Until you remove the requirement for the parents to participate in pre-adoptive counselling there will never be adoptions. These parents are so dysfunctional they would NEVER turn up or participate to the level required. Take that requirement out altogether. If Child Safety deem a child suitable for adoption and the parents have not engaged, then a submission to the Magistrate's court should be sufficient to allow*

adoption to proceed. However, the Magistrates need to be trained to understand that it is in the child best interests. They are often 'parent-focused' and this prevents a child having a better outcome. Perhaps an independent assessor can review the cases for adoption and support the matter for Child Safety

- *Only if they put children's rights before parents'*

Reducing pressure on the system

A few respondents commented that increased use of adoption and permanency orders would ease pressure on the child protection system by increasing the number of people who would be prepared to offer their homes to children:

- *Due to the shortage of foster care placements for children, this would likely increase the availability of placements for children as some would be placed into permanent care arrangements*
- *I believe it would also help with the crisis in the shortage of foster carers*
- *I think we will see a lot more interest in people wanting to care for our kids if adoption is an option*
- *We need to have open adoption here so many of our long-term guardianship children can be adopted and see parents four times a year, this would clear a lot of children from our department*

Adoption is no guarantee of permanence

Amongst those who disagreed or mostly disagreed with the proposal, many respondents commented that adoption does not guarantee permanence or stability for children, with some noting the increased harm caused to children when their care is relinquished:

- *This suggestion assumes that adopted children have good outcomes, and that the commitment of the adopting parent to the children will be maintained over the child's life*
- *The stability of placements for children on long term guardianship to their carers is frequently destabilised when they reach adolescence because their desire to seek a sense of identity and reconnection to family is not adequately supported. This is highly detrimental to their long-term emotional stability*
- *Adoption does not equal better outcomes for children and young people. In fact, many parents*

I have worked with who have a drug addiction or mental health concerns are adopted!

- *Unfortunately we already see way too many children on LTG-O coming back into care because their guardian carers are either not providing adequate care, are not able to continue caring for them and/or report that the children have more trauma and behavioural issues than they can manage*
- *Many carers relinquish even young children. It would be 10,000 times worse if they adopted them and then relinquished*

When adopted children grow older

Many respondents commented on difficulties that can be experienced by adopted children as they grow older and the challenges this poses to their adoptive parents and the sustainability of their care:

- *We know that children who are subject to LTG-O and LTG-CE are relinquished by carers who struggle to care for a child who may not have displayed any trauma responses as a younger child, but who have them emerge as they approach adolescence. This is true even for children who have been in their placement as early as 2-3 years - we know that they will need care and support that is trauma-sensitive and responsive that most middle-class, well intentioned families are actually not that well equipped for. We know that children who have experienced abuse and neglect need more than the love of a good family. Caring for a child who has been in foster care requires a very specific skill set*
- *Behavioural and psychological problems may not be apparent at 3 years of age so this will increase the risk of carers adopting children when they are younger only to uncover challenges when they are older that may then impact on the security of the placement and increase risk of relinquishing care and the child coming back to system*
- *Due to the trauma and its effects I think a lot of these 'adoptions' would break down as the child gets older and they would be returned to care as teens. Look at the research around adoptions in general. It's not a fix without implications. Let the child decide when they are old enough if they want this LIFE LONG option to occur*

- *The impacts in adolescence for young people who are disconnected is significant. I worry that there will be an increase in relinquishments when challenges arise as a result of trauma or developmental disabilities such as FASD that become more evident as children move through school. It is common for biological family members to come forward after children have been in care for several years. Adoption at an earlier stage would prevent many children from being able to be placed with family, or even for their family to be able to locate them*

The history and legacy of past adoption policies and practice

Many respondents commented on the history and legacy of past adoption policies and practices and the need to not forget the lessons learned:

- *Adoption requires two consenting birth parents. If you do not respect a parent's consent, this is a slippery slope to forced adoption.... let's not repeat that tragedy*
- *This is an appalling suggestion, which shows no insight or understanding of the history of stolen generation or decades-old practices of forced adoption in this country and the impact of those practices on children and their parents*
- *This seems like we are going back to the days of forced adoptions and the stolen generation and we all know how well that worked out*
- *As a country and as a state we have only just apologised for previous policies of removing and adopting out children unnecessarily. This is another dangerous concept that is not child focussed at all*
- *Adoption requires consent from birth parents at present. Most birth parents are not willing to completely relinquish their ties with their child and therefore do not consent to adoption. If this decision were to be made by a court there would need to be sufficient safeguards in place to ensure that we are not copying the behaviours of the 1950s and 1960s of removing children from parents deemed to not be good enough*
- *Adoption has not been a very effective way to protect vulnerable children in the past and we are still reacting to the horrendous long-term impacts of forced adoption and the stolen generations*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Many respondents commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *Yes, but not for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Indigenous people have been through enough*
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people will always want to go home to their country, to know their culture and people. I DISAGREE that my children and young people can be taken away from family and culture as this is their birth right*
- *Adoption changes the legal parents of a child - it is a life-changing decision and has major implications for children. How would we do this for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children without significantly undermining their identity? We would potentially have children in our community who would not know who they were related to if they were adopted and would have a reduced opportunity for contact with kin*
- *This does not reflect the Child Placement Principles which are fundamental to Child Safety's work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Permanency and stability are a priority but this proposal would be damaging and is contrary to the principles in the legislation*
- *This is a truly facile response to a challenging situation. It is also totally unacceptable and inappropriate to consider this as a general concept for Aboriginal children, especially where the PCO/LTG-O/AO is for permanent care, long-term guardianship to other or adoption where the other party is not themselves Aboriginal or a part of that child's extended family. For any enlightenment, I would suggest a reading/re-reading of the HREOC Report 'Bringing Them Home'!*
- *STRONGLY DISAGREE!!! You cannot have white families adopting any child from any other culture. Even aboriginal families from different mobs/clans is not right*
- *No adoption or permanency orders for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, arrangements with "BLOOD KIN" can be agreed to, not the current Government Kinship understanding*

- *Crazy white, privileged, middle class values sit behind this idea*

Implications of severing legal ties with siblings and other family members

Some respondents commented on the potential implications of adoption severing children's legal ties with siblings and other family members:

- *One concern I do have is where you have a sibling group. Is the proposal to separate the younger children from the older ones, and will young children be separated from other under 3-year old siblings when people only want to adopt just one child?*
- *This will see the destruction of family units where siblings lose contact with one another, and children lose contact with parents who have been willing, but unable to care for them for a range of reasons*
- *While I agree that all children need and deserve a stable childhood, I don't agree with severing legal ties with biological families - it affects the children, parents, grandparents, siblings, wider family. Children need to know where they come from - children search for their roots and identities*
- *This will increase siblings being separated and make it harder for them to be reunited in the future*
- *Adoption is one part of a spectrum and if it severs legal ties to siblings and other family members could do lifelong harm*

The rights of children and parents, and the question of consent

Some respondents stated concerns about adoption potentially breaching the rights of children and/ or parents. Other stated that adoption should only be undertaken with the consent of the parent:

- *I am professionally and ethically opposed to what I see as forced adoption of children without providing children and their parents appropriate opportunities to address the identified child protection concerns*
- *I do not agree with forced adoption - parents should consent to this as it permanently breaks parental ties*
- *Only if this is voluntary adoption. The child's family doesn't stop being their family because they are in care*

- *We should still require informed, voluntary consent for adoption (unless there are grounds for dispensation of the need for consent)*

Maintaining a child's connections with family and the option of 'open adoption'

Amongst those who agreed or mostly agreed with the proposal, many commented on a need for adopted children to maintain contact with their 'biological family' and their preference for 'open adoptions':

- *Should be open adoptions so children don't lose touch with their biological families*
- *As long as they were open adoptions and children had access to all information and be able to identify where they came from and have an understanding of their family heritage*
- *Strong consideration needs to be made for open adoptions with familial contact. Adopted children will always have problems with being away from biological family and the sense of rejection that goes with adoption*
- *Children deserve connection with their birth parents as part of their identity development and attachment needs. Three years is not long enough to ascertain this with all the court work that occurs in this time period. It also goes completely against our practice framework*
- *Children and young people have a right to know and develop relationships with their family - this is their identity, their sense of belonging. Even if it is not safe to live with their parents, we must ensure - for the long-term benefit of the child - that we maintain a connection with their parents and family*
- *Unfortunately, the children we already have on LTG-O and PCO are rarely having regular family contact or connection to their family and identity, including siblings that are in care. I think children would have much less family connection and contact if they were adopted*

Availability, motivation and capacity of persons to become adoptive carers

Many respondents commented on the availability of suitable persons to become adoptive carers, and the financial and other supports that would be needed to assist these carers. A few respondents questioned the motivation of some people who may wish to perform the role and some commented on the selection and training processes that would need to be put in place:

- *These children have experienced trauma which alters their cognitive and behavioural functioning, will these adoptive parents be prepared to manage that and pay for appropriate therapy?*
- *Adoptive parents need to be trauma -informed and understand the long standing challenges their adopted child may face (e.g. beginning with potential in-utero adversity impacting on their neurobiological development - long term impact on social, cognitive, speech and language, impulse control, emotion regulation development etc). Please get advice from mental health professionals working in the field to guide political change*
- *Only if specialist therapeutic foster care is set up and nurtured for these very young children*
- *What checks would be done on the adoptive parents? These would need to be much more robust than current foster carer assessments because we are talking about 'permanent' placements*
- *Children in care, even babies and under 3s are very much impacted by their trauma history and can be significantly harder to manage than the average child. As such, if adoption were to be an option, I think the adopting parents would need to be eligible to receive a lot of support (not \$\$\$)*
- *The majority of foster carers are unfortunately far too concerned with receiving payments rather than nurturing children and young people's development. Quality standards must be introduced for foster carers*
- *We need to be cautious around carer skill level in being able to maintain family links and meet young children's needs into the future and through adolescence. Kids often re-enter the system when they become teenagers as the guardian relinquishes*
- *People getting these kids need to be experienced in dealing with children who have had significant trauma history. Just because they are in a family unit does not mean that their worries, fears or behaviours just disappear. What happens if the adoption breaks down?*
- *The issue is that many fostering parents are not eligible to adopt, and/or that adoption would remove supports for particularly high needs children that the carers depend on*
- *People are not wanting adoption because of the increased financial burden that children inevitably*

come with. Always follow the money first to realise the issues

- In order to be able to have Permanency order KPIs we have to have quality permanent carers available to be placed with children which can only happen with much better quality recruitment, training assessment and support of carers in line with the services provided to adoptive parent applicants. There is a huge discrepancy between foster carer assessments and adoption assessments - however there are many very high quality people available who only want to be adoptive parents that would be fantastic permanent foster carers as evidenced by the My Home Initiative in Qld managed by the Adoption Service from 2016- 2020 but recently defunded

Permanency options that are already in place

A number of respondents commented on permanency options including adoption, that are already in place. Some noted that recently introduced legislation and approaches to achieving permanency are either working well or need more time to fully take effect before other changes are introduced:

- Is this different to the current model?
- The legislation amendments made in late 2018 has meant a move to more permanent options for children in the child protection system and these are just starting to have an impact. There should be further reviews of this process before moving to an even more intrusive intervention like adoption. Adoption is not a simple solution that will solve the issues surrounding the child protection system
- Work in this area has commenced through recent legislation amendments. The amendments have not been in place long enough to gather supporting evidence as to effectiveness
- The LTG - O covers this. Adoption needs consent from parents and the whole Adoptions Act would need to be changed which is unnecessary because we already have the means to assign guardianship to a long-term carer - the LTG-O
- We already consider permanency for our children. Most of our court matters don't get to long term guardianship stage until the children are at least 2 years old. Does the public understand that they would not be adopting newborn babies but toddlers or older?

- There are three less intrusive orders that can ensure permanency for a child under current legislation. The adoption laws in Queensland are difficult to navigate so this would need to be changed as well to work in with any child protection changes
- I agree that there needs to be more of an emphasis on permanency for children in Queensland, given the new legislation and new permanent care order this is supposed to address this issue, however management and magistrates need to be on board with this as well to ensure that PCO's are endorsed and granted
- For this to work you need to resource a Permanency Care Team that does the file review and assessment work to identify which children and their circumstances would be suitable to proceed to a Permanent Care Order or indeed through to an Adoption option. Currently this work sits purely on top of the already existing Child Safety Officer role - and in the context of the daily demand of the front line Child Safety Officer role, little time is left for devoting to this critical piece of work
- The amount of work that this requires needs to be looked into. Bring DCPL, OCFOS and court services in line with each other then this would be ideal. All Child Safety Officers want permanency for their kids but again the work load and having to sit behind a desk rather than being out making these assessments hinder and prolongs the process of applying for PCO's
- This is already implemented however most parents do not want to have their children adopted out. The current adoption model requires parental consent. It also displaces children and will cause more issues down the track, particularly with social media when they can connect with their parents later on. Focus should be on identifying how systemic the child protection concerns are and how realistic reunification is
- Law would need to change to allow for children to be adopted without parental consent

Other approaches to achieving stability

Many respondents commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children's care that they regarded as preferable to the focus being placed on adoption:

- *This is such a controversial topic. Yes, I do agree that adoption should be used more but I also agree that other forms of permanent care may be more appropriate. Often children in the child protection system just want to belong and know they are staying where they are. If there is absolutely no chance the child will be reunified then adoption may be an option*
- *The best place for children is with their families and the system should be about providing support to families to make this happen, not thinking adoption solves everything. Adoptive parents can be abusive and neglectful too!*
- *I think permanency within the wider familial and social network should be the focus. More resources should be allocated to family finding - I think there should be teams devoted to this work only. My experience has been that carers seeking permanency options have a poor understanding and commitment to nurturing ongoing familial connection and relations*
- *Adoption is not an end in itself. It is only one of many options to support children's wellbeing, and child safety workers should not be required to pursue this option over others that may better support children's wellbeing. Children have a right to their family (parents, siblings and extended family), community and to maintain their culture. Adoption severs children's ties to all these things, and should only be pursued as a last resort. We have seen before the devastating effects of forced adoptions on children, their families and their communities especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The trauma caused still reverberates today and has not been healed. We should not be going down this path again*

'No' to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

Irrespective of the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with increased use of adoption and/ or other permanency options, many objected to the proposed established of permanency order targets and KPIs:

- *Agree with increase of adoption but not because it is to meet KPIs*
- *Strongly, strongly disagree. Adoption and permanency options cannot be based on targets and KPIs - they have to be based on clear assessment of need and the best interests of the*

child. This proposal could pressure practitioners to seek orders based on KPI requirements rather than assessed need

- *Increasing KPIs will only result in increased adoptions, rather than meaningful and suitable living situations for children. It will not make children safer*
- *I don't believe that adoption should have a KPI attached and it may negatively impact the exploration of kinship placements and active reunification efforts*
- *Targets and KPI for permanency and adoption. These are children's lives. Do you go out and find more kids to adopt if you haven't met the target??*
- *Sounds like a terrible plan to have KPIs in a child protection setting ... I agree with the increased use of adoption as a measure to sit alongside others, however with respect to individual circumstances for the children. Permanency planning is critical particularly in the early years, however permanency order targets and KPIs sounds like it's going too far*
- *The appropriate action for any child should never be determined by KPIs. The introduction of the DCPL means that there is already oversight of Child Safety's assessments of what orders are appropriate*

Look to research, the evidence-base and the experiences of other jurisdictions

A number of respondents commented on the need to examine existing research and the current evidence-base and/or the need to conduct further research:

- *Look into the research around the impact of children being adopted out and hear their voices instead of making these decisions for them*
- *Trial programs have resulted in a very low uptake rate from potential adoptive parents to provide long term care to children in the child protection system*
- *The research shows that when these children are teenagers they're going to seek information and connection to their family of origin anyway. I think the orders we already have available are adequate for permanency planning*
- *Adoptions statistics don't necessarily support that adoption is a permanent solution, particularly for children who have already experienced trauma and where we consider connection to biological*

family is still best practice for the child's sense of identity

- *There needs to be a detailed study into the effects of adoption prior to the enactment of any proposals*
- *This needs to be researched and looked at in depth rather than put it in place as a band aid solution*
- *One of the challenges with this focus on permanency is that it tends to ignore the evidence base about identity. Both evidence bases are extremely valid and useful. The one about providing this type of permanency to little children is commonly championed by professions like doctors and lawyers - and they commonly completely ignore the EQUALLY valid evidence base about identity and belonging to the family you are born to (regardless of the challenges of that family). Further - we not very long ago apologised to generations of people who suffered as the result of adoption policy. We should be very careful about these cavalier and superficial 'answers'*
- *There needs to be an open conversation with families, children, child safety staff, peaks about adoption. Many people hold strong views on adoption, many of which are outdated and misinformed. Adoption has proven to provide children with long term, stable and secure upbringings, with many still in regular contact with their families. There is no reason to not have an open conversation with families about adoption being a permanency option for their child*
- *This proposal identifies a lack of knowledge of the current system, cultural knowledge and impacts of previous government policies. Research, evidence and lived experiences of people who were adopted do not support the assumption that adoption provides legal, relational and physical permanency - ongoing connection to family is important and families may be denied that right through this proposal*

A number of respondents suggested that consideration be given to the experiences of other jurisdictions. In particular, reference was made by some to the United Kingdom with widely contrasting views expressed about the effectiveness of its adoption policies and practice:

- *My understanding is that jurisdictions where adoption is available have better outcomes for the adopted children, than where foster care is always*

subject to a sense of temporariness and family of origin reunification efforts

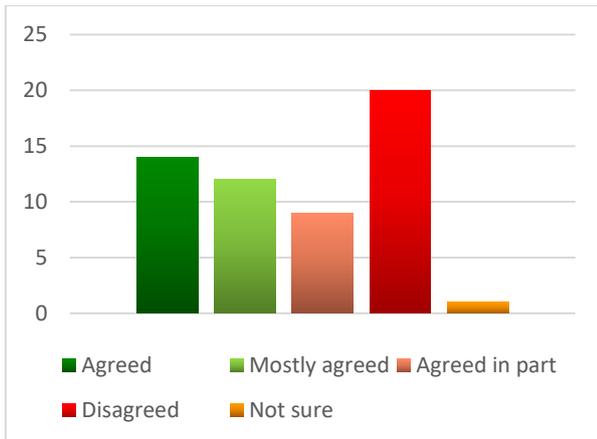
- *I do feel that the adoption laws in Australia are unworkable for many loving and caring people in the community who would make wonderful parents to an abused child. Possibly, as a country we could adopt laws from America which appear to be more workable*
- *Has sufficient research been conducted looking at other child protection systems across the world where adoption is used?*
- *In jurisdictions overseas where adoption is forced as a priority, there isn't a significantly improved outcome for children. Where we have placement breakdowns here, they have adoption breakdowns*
- *There are extreme cases where parents are never going to be able to parent, but continue to have children despite knowing that Child Safety will remove every one. In these cases I do believe there is an avenue for adoption. I have worked in this system in London in approximately 1997, where children were placed for adoption by the responsible town borough if the circumstances were such that the parents would never be able to parent them and there was no extended family available to provide care to 18 years*
- *This model is already in use in the UK and has some success in ensuring permanency for children. However, in the UK, child protection proceedings have been limited to 6 months which is not always sufficient time for parenting and other assessments to be conducted*
- *This may solve the problem when the child is young, however in places like the UK where they use adoption - you see the after affects in the teenage years. Increased offending and high-risk behaviours as they are confused about their identity*
- *The British child protection system has showed how badly forced adoption works out for most kids, it leads to drug use and gang membership, it's very highly researched*

Employees of peak bodies, industry and representative groups

Of the 56 employees of peak bodies, industry and representative groups who answered this question:

- 14 (25.00%) agreed with this proposal

- 12 (21.43%) mostly agreed
- 9 (16.07%) agreed only in part
- 20 (35.71%) disagreed, and
- 1 (1.79%) indicated that they were not sure



23 of the respondents within this stakeholder commented on their responses.

Enhancing stability and permanence

A few respondents commented on the perceived benefits in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *Let's give children who have been identified as at risk, after careful consideration as to parents' possibility of recovery, a proper home so they are not labelled as a child in care. Just a child who is loved and will not have to have the stigma of having the label of a child in care*

One respondent commented that the opportunity to adopt should not be limited to Foster Carers:

- *Not just adoption for Foster parents, but parents within the communities who are not fortunate enough to conceive*

Why prioritise children under three?

One respondent queried whether prioritising children aged under three years gave sufficient opportunity for children to be reunified with their parents.

Another queried why this age group should be prioritised over others:

- *Adopting under 3 gives very limited opportunities for parents/families to demonstrate that they can make changes that will allow their child/ren to return to their care*
- *Adoption should be equal opportunity for children of all ages*

Adoption is no guarantee of permanence

One respondent commented that adoption does not guarantee permanence or stability for children:

- *There is a built-in assumption or judgement that children will be better off with adoptive parents, however, many situations of adoptions that have not been suitable or downright harmful to the child are known. Children who have been traumatised, have disabilities or are older (e.g. teenagers) are difficult to place in suitable adoptive situations that meet their needs so numbers will remain low (or if there is pressure placed on potential adoptees so KPIs and targets are met, then the chances of breakdown are greatly increased)*

When adopted children grow older

One respondent commented on difficulties that can be experienced by adopted children as they grow older and the challenges this poses to the sustainability of their care:

- *As long as there are measures put in place for the child or young person to get support if the adoptive parent relinquishes them later on*

The history and legacy of past adoption policies and practice

Some respondents commented on the history and legacy of past adoption policy and practices and the need to not forget the lessons learned:

- *Adoption has lifelong effects on people, totally breaks family bonds and denies a child's rights to identity. Adoption should not be considered, based on our history of evidence in Forced Adoption practices and Stolen Generations*
- *We must not return to a situation of forced adoptions that all the evidence suggests fails children and their families and we cannot repeat another Stolen Generation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Some respondents commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *Adoption is very complex in a system where 40% of young people are Aboriginal and/or Torres*

Strait Islander. These young people need support to remain connected to community, culture and land

- *I do wonder if this will lead to another stolen generation of children of all cultures*

Implications of severing legal ties with siblings and other family members

Some respondents commented on the potential implications of adoption severing children's legal ties with siblings and other family members:

- *The possibility of separating children from siblings and extended family members is alarming and again could profoundly impact a child's life forever*
- *Young people can lose connection with siblings and relatives*
- *Mason Lee had older siblings and if he had been adopted out, what would this adoption have meant for them and their mother in terms of ongoing contact?*

The rights of children and parents, and the question of consent

Some respondents stated concerns about adoption potentially breaching the rights of children and/or parents. Other stated that adoption should only be undertaken with the consent of the parent:

- *Adoption without parental consent increases childhood trauma, it is against my view of human rights*
- *Children under the Convention Rights of the Child have the right to know their parents. Biological parents should be given every assistance to try and become better and adoption used as a very last resort*

Maintaining a child's connections with family and the option of 'open adoption'

Some respondents commented on the implications of children having no contact with their 'biological family':

- *What would be the impact on children in later years being removed and having no contact with biological families?*

Permanency options that are already in place

A few respondents commented on permanency options including adoption, that are already in place.

Some commented on recently introduced legislation and approaches to achieving permanency:

- *The system already has a range of permanency orders that are not used effectively at the current time. If they were we would not be talking about adoption. The majority of our children are a part of a wider group and we always run the very real risk of detaching children from their family of origin with adoption as we have seen over and over in the past. We have LTGO and PCO orders which allow children and young people to have a felt part of the caring family while still being connected to family of origin which is essential for the child's emotional and psychological wellbeing*

One respondent commented about who should hold authority to make decisions about adoption:

- *Only if there were a panel in place to identify not just a Child Safety Service Centre or manager*

Other approaches to achieving stability

Many respondents commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children's care that they regarded as preferable to the focus being placed on adoption:

- *Adoption is trauma. Better to train and support parents*
- *The term Permanent Care Orders are less offensive to natural families. A very clear pathway and adequate support for natural families to make positive changes. Workshops and interactive group sessions need to be offered.... we can't lose sight of the fact that kids mostly want to be with their own family or extended family*
- *Adoption will be suitable in a few cases, but will not be the panacea. Other solutions for placement stability also must be considered*
- *All steps to find extended family members must be made first in case there is a possibility of the child being placed within the family*

'No' to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

Some respondents objected to the proposed established of permanency order targets and KPIs:

- *There is no place for targets and KPIs in deciding a permanent living arrangement for a child that will profoundly impact the rest of their lives*

Look to research, the evidence-base and the experiences of other jurisdictions

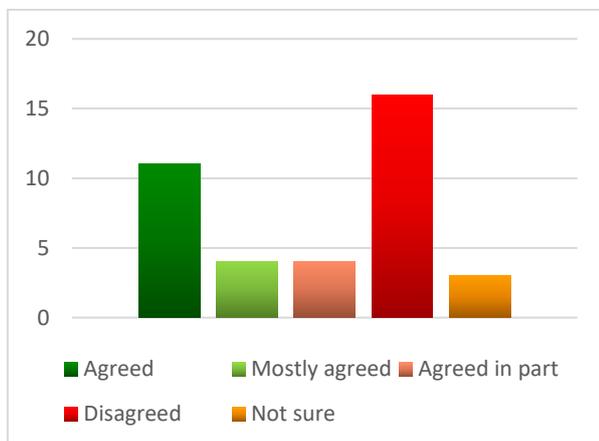
A few respondents commented on the need to examine existing research and the current evidence-base:

- *Not another Stolen Generation? Please try to keep kids in families wherever possible. Outcomes studies prove conclusively this gets best long-term outcomes*
- *I would agree that a review of the current adoption processes in Queensland and in other jurisdictions be explored, however the notion that every child under three be considered for adoption flies in the face of the current frameworks and evidence-based social practice geared at family reunification and connectedness*

Academics

Of the 38 academics who answered this question:

- 11 (28.95%) agreed with this proposal
- 4 (10.53%) mostly agreed
- 4 (10.53%) agreed only in part
- 16 (42.11%) disagreed, and
- 3 (7.89%) indicated they were not sure



14 of the respondents within this stakeholder group commented on their responses.

Enhancing stability and permanence

A few respondents commented on the perceived benefits of the proposal in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *These children deserve permanency and a stable home life. The current system works to keep families together but has a huge impact on the children, yo-yo between biological family and foster. The parents have rights but sometimes these rights need to be taken away. Once the parents get themselves to a healthy and safe place they could join their child's life again but in more of an aunt or uncle role???*

Why prioritise children under three?

One respondent commented on the time frames within decisions should be made about permanence. Another commented on limiting adoption to older children only:

- *I agree that long-term decisions about care should be made after a two-year period. Whether this is adoption or not will depend on the individual circumstances. However, a time frame does need to be set in order to give children long-term stability*
- *Support the parents to improve instead, and only allow adoptions of older children*

The history and legacy of past adoption policies and practice

A few respondents commented on a previous government policy and the need to not forget the lessons learned:

- *Remember 'One Chance at Childhood'. Need to let go of power and control*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

A few respondents commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *This would be completely inappropriate if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are adopted by Anglo-Australian families*
- *This is such a white privileged view, I don't even know where to start*

Permanency options that are already in place

One respondent commented on permanency options including adoption, that are already in place:

- *We have a new process for adoption that was introduced by the Carmody Inquiry – adoption as the evidence shown is not the silver bullet here, without greater focus on how we support families this becomes another generation of 'forced adoptions' and goes against the principles of the UNCROC and best practice*

Other approaches to achieving stability

One respondent commented on adoption not being a suitable option under any circumstance:

- *Taking a child away from its parents, NO MATTER THE CIRCUMSTANCES is the most traumatic thing you can do to a child and THE DAMAGE IS NOT REPAIRABLE*

'No' to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

One respondent objected to the proposed establishment of permanency order targets and KPIs:

- *Individual needs of child should determine adoption - not adoptions to meet a target*

Look to research, the evidence-base and the experiences of other jurisdictions

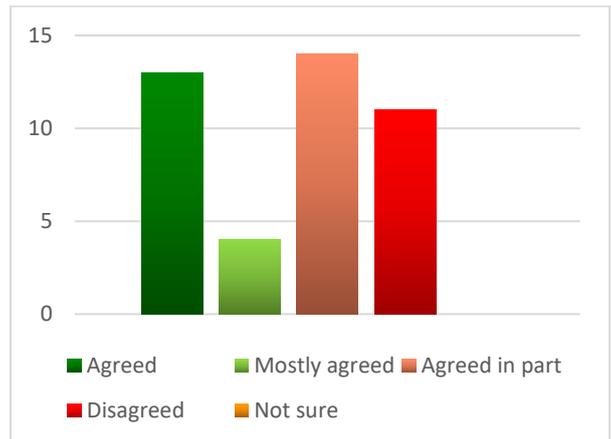
A number of respondents commented on the need to examine existing research and the evidence-base:

- *The adoption policy of the LNP is highly problematic, it needs to be more properly thought through. It is fundamentally wrong to make adoption - with its deeply personal consequences - into a political matter. How would it be decided what the targets are? Look to the evidence base.*
- *This model has been trialled in other countries and failed. Can we learn from past mistakes? Highlights a lack of clarity around attachment and trauma*
- *Candidly, I think it serves an agenda to conflate modern open-adoption practices with those used in the past. Recent comments by PeakCare reflect the views of one particular academic viewpoint and without context. I would suggest that adoption from care is one of many options that can be implemented in context*

Private consultants and employees of consultancy or training organisations

Of the 42 private consultants and employees of consultancy or training organisations, who answered this question:

- 13 (30.95%) agreed with the proposal
- 4 (9.52%) mostly agreed
- 14 (33.33%) agreed only in part, and
- 11 (26.19%) disagreed



20 of the respondents within this stakeholder group commented on their responses.

Enhancing stability and permanence

Two respondents commented on the perceived benefits of the proposal in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *Kids need and deserve stability*
- *Keep them away from the bad parents*

The history and legacy of past adoption policies and practice

One respondent commented on the history and legacy of past adoption policy and practices and the need to not forget the lessons learned:

- *Not the solution as it creates other social problems e.g. Royal Commission into babies removed from mothers and placed for adoption in 60s and 70s. Why constantly return to practices that failed in past?*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

A few respondents commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *Adoption is an option in appropriate circumstances - particularly where there is kith and kinship care. However we must avoid another stolen generation at all costs*
- *Caution is needed and family and cultural connection still has to be part of any long-term plan for children. We don't need another stolen generation*
- *While I certainly agree we need to consider adoption more quickly in some cases, there are many cases (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families) where this will have horrific impact upon them as a community. We will have another Stolen Generation, of people displaced from their family and community and culture*

Implications of severing legal ties with siblings and other family members

One respondent commented on the potential implications of adoption severing children's ties with their siblings:

- *We have to remember when children are in care, they often have siblings...who have a right to have contact with them. If they are adopted, this may sever those relationships*

The rights of children and parents, and the question of consent

One respondent stated concern that adoption should only proceed with the agreement of the parent and child:

- *Adoption severs legal ties. We know that humans have a need to know where they come from and want a sense of identity. If we become instrumental in severing legal ties we are just deepening the levels of grief, loss and trauma. I think selective use of adoption were it desired by ALL parties, including parents and the child, is most appropriate*

Maintaining a child's connections with family and the option of 'open adoption'

One respondent commented on a need for adopted children to maintain contact with their 'biological family':

- *With capacity for children to still remain connected to biological parents or family members to assist in identity formation*

Other approaches to achieving stability

A few respondents commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children's care that they regarded as preferable to the focus being placed on adoption:

- *Only after every effort has been made to work with the child's parent/s and appropriate support has been proven to have been provided (tried) with a view to family reunification first i.e. adoption not the first option*
- *There are permanency options available. Adoption doesn't create anything further for these children, but removes the obligation to ensure children know where they came from. This has potentially horrific outcomes for children's sense of identity*
- *The best interests of children lie in providing stability, continuity of relationships and a sense of permanency in their lives. Subject to their circumstances and those of their family, there is a range of ways in which this can be achieved. These include: working with parents to address underlying issues and improve their parenting capacity; working with extended family to identify members who can care for the child; supporting foster carers to provide long term care; transferring guardianship to a family member or foster carer; adoption. We know that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, connection to family, community and culture are critical in ensuring stability, continuity and permanency in their lives. Each of the options noted above currently exist and have a role to play in our child protection system. Yet none, in and of themselves, are 'the answer'. It is important to acknowledge that children are, and have previously been, harmed in each of these contexts. There is no easy panacea and no one solution! No response comes risk-free and no outcomes can be guaranteed*

'No' to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

One respondent objected to the proposed established of permanency order targets and KPIs:

- *I don't believe there should be targets and KPIs attached to this model as that takes away from the point of trying to find the best option for the specific child in question and leans more towards meeting targets and considering things from a numbers perspective. It is too clinical in that sense*

Look to research, the evidence-base and the experiences of other jurisdictions

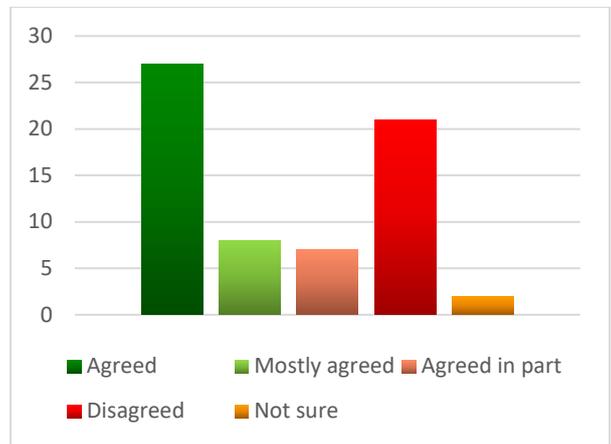
A number of respondents commented on the need to examine existing research and the current evidence-base:

- *Empirical evidence indicates that children frequently seek out birth parents when they are older. Children are entitled to know their culture, background, heritage and family history. The child should always come first*
- *Adoption already exists as an option. Deliberately aiming to increase the use of adoption, without attention to the needs of individual children, will result in adoption ghettos similar to what has been the experience in the US*
- *The proposal does not take into consideration research by organisations that have worked alongside people who have been adopted and their experiences. This proposal is damaging to individuals and families. Further resources for families and the Department of Child Safety would be of greater value for children, families and the overall community*

Parents (and other family members) with a lived experience of the child protection system

Of the 65 parents (or family members) with a lived experience of the child protection system who answered this question:

- 27 (41.54%) agreed with the proposal
- 8 (12.31%) mostly agreed
- 7 (10.77%) agreed only in part
- 21 (32.31%) disagreed, and
- 2 (3.08%) indicated that they were not sure



20 of the respondents within this stakeholder group commented on their responses.

Enhancing stability and permanence

A few respondents commented on the perceived benefits of the proposal in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *All children have the right to a permanent home and continual movement impedes children's development in relation to healthy attachment*
- *Absolute overhaul of the adoption system is required so that it's easier to adopt across the board. It's not even a real option at the moment for young pregnant mums. That needs to change*

The history and legacy of past adoption policies and practice

One respondent drew on their own experience as an adoptee in stating their disagreement with the proposal:

- *As a child of adoption I disagree with this*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

A few respondents commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *I think this model would severely affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Who would make this call about children being adopted?*
- *As long as this is not another repeat of the Stolen Generation. Communities and cultures are all different. It can NEVER be not a one size fits all framework*

Maintaining a child's connections with family and the option of 'open adoption'

One respondent commented on a need for adopted children to maintain contact with their 'biological family' and their preference for 'open adoptions':

- *Open adoption allows children to maintain relationships with birth family and community where safe and still enables children to have a safe home and family to belong to*

Other approaches to achieving stability

Many respondents commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children's care that they regarded as preferable to the focus being placed on adoption:

- *Children belong with family, this will just encourage more children to be adopted and lose family/community and cultural identity. Even if a parent is not suitable, most cases show a family member is suitable to care for the child*
- *You cannot take kids away from their families*
- *All parents make mistakes and need support to change not judgement*
- *I think it is dangerous to have this as a standard model. Not enough focus is given to individual children and families.*
- *Foster care can be made permanent and controlled - no need for adoption*
- *what sort of vetting' before saying 'we GIFT YOU THIS CHILD?'.... Abusive NEW PARENTS?*
- *There needs to be very strict protocols and procedures around these adoptions and only after ensuring there is no extended family e.g. grandparents who are willing to raise their grandchildren*

'No' to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

Irrespective of the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with increased use of adoption and/ or other permanency options, many objected to the proposed established of permanency order targets and KPIs:

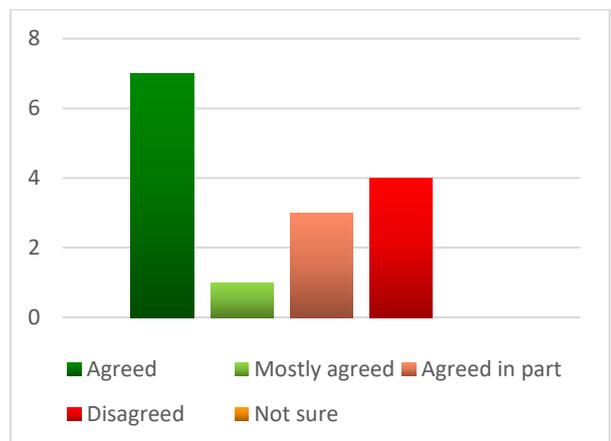
- *Vehemently disagree. The use of adoption in permanency planning is very sad and damaging to all involved. New targets and KPIs will only give the Department more powers to remove more children permanently from their families. This is a tragedy*

- *Don't make everything about numbers and number targets. These are kids and their lives you are dealing with!*
- *KPIs for complex human issues like this are an extremely bad idea. I don't agree with the terms permanency order targets and KPIs being used in relation to adoption and vulnerable children*
- *Without insight into what the indicators are for this, on face value this is a repugnant idea*

Young people (under 25 years) with a lived experience of the child protection system

Of the 15 young people (under 25 years) with a lived experience of the child protection system who answered this question:

- 7 (46.67%) agreed with this proposal
- 1 (6.67%) mostly agreed
- 3 (20.00%) agreed only in part, and
- 4 (26.67%) disagreed



6 of the respondents within this stakeholder group commented on their responses.

Enhancing stability and permanence

One respondent commented on the perceived benefits of the proposal in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *It's stupid how you can be kicked out when you turn 18 and have no family or name. I remember ages ago seeing a little girl who had just been put into care until she is 18. Heaps of people would have wanted to adopt her*

Why prioritise children under three?

One respondent commented on a concern about the appropriateness of prioritising children aged under three years:

- *Children under the age of 3 cannot participate in this decision or have understanding of the impacts this will have, such as loss of extended family, loss of culture, etc.*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

One respondent commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *Two words. Stolen generation. They also need to prove how they have checked in consistently with these adopted children and young people*

Other approaches to achieving stability

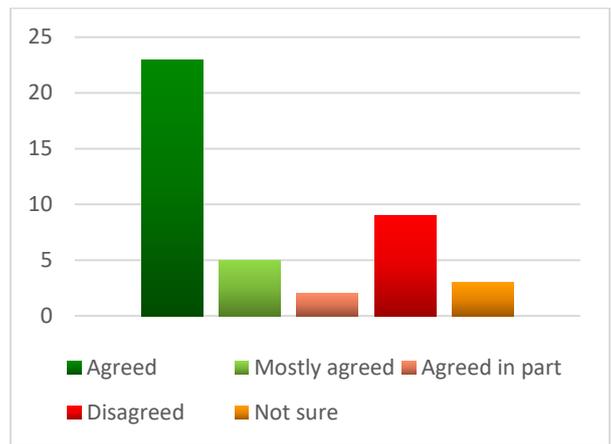
A few respondents commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children's care that they regarded as preferable to the focus being placed on adoption:

- *Adoption is painful too. Drugs are self-medicating trauma, we need to treat whole family systems and resource specific solutions for treating. Recognising family scapegoat system ... the real problem*
- *NO. There's no/very little oversight. This is awful and is not giving an adequate chance to parents to get their children back*
- *Make sure there are other suitable family members to look after a child. If not, then yes*

Older people (over 25 years) with a lived experience of the child protection system

Of the 42 older people (over 25 years) with a lived experience of the child protection system who answered this question:

- 23 (54.76%) agreed with this proposal
- 5 (11.90%) mostly agreed
- 2 (4.76%) agreed only in part, and
- 9 (21.43%) disagreed
- 3 (7.14%) indicated that they were not sure



14 of the respondents within this stakeholder group commented on their responses.

Enhancing stability and permanence

Many respondents who agreed or mostly agreed with this proposal commented on the perceived benefits in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *Small children being placed in an adoption situation will provide permanency and stability for the child and contribute to better outcomes for the child*
- *Fostering and a return by the courts to dysfunctional parents is not in the best interest of the children. Nor is ripping them from the love and security their foster families provided. Adoption works - being jerked away from a loving and secure foster family doesn't and only sets them up for failure later*
- *There needs to be more options for people who want to have children and for children to have the option to be adopted especially when so young! That would reduce the amount of children who end up with ongoing mental health problems and drug use etc.*
- *I believe that we have some great families out there who would be over the moon if they could adopt given the chance*

Why prioritise children under three?

One respondent queried why this age group should be prioritised over others:

- *Why put an age limit on it?*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

One respondent commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *Stolen generation. Any Indigenous children should be only done by an ALL Indigenous triage model*

The rights of children and parents, and the question of consent

One respondent stated concerns about adoption potentially breaching the human rights of children:

- *Focus on supporting the families. Adoption should be the last resort. It can bring lifelong separation, identity issues, heartache and suffering to all, when often more support given to the families could provide a more human option of keeping children with their God given families. Children have a right to live with their parents. It is a human rights issue*

Other approaches to achieving stability

One respondent commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children’s care that they regarded as preferable to the focus being placed on adoption:

- *I believe that many young children benefit from maintaining family relationships. Adoption could cause issues trying to balance a child's need for contact with natural family with the need for a child to fully integrate into their adopted family's family culture*

No to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

A few respondents objected to the proposed establishment of permanency order targets and KPIs:

- *KPIs for adoption?!? This is a terrible idea*
- *Once you introduce a ‘KPI’ and ‘target’ system, the child ceases to be an individual and becomes nothing more than a number. This is an absolutely hideous idea*

Look to research, the evidence-base and the experiences of other jurisdictions

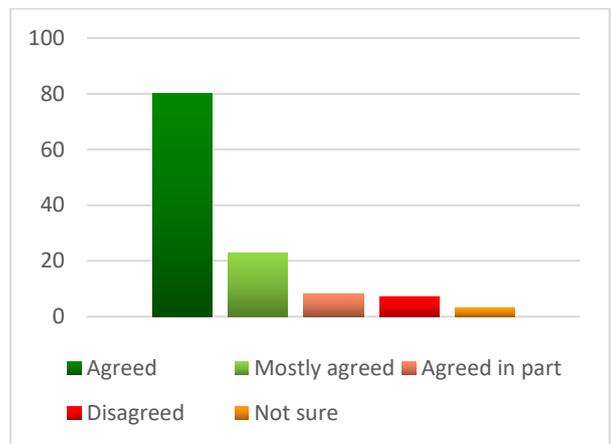
One respondent recommended that a trial be conducted:

- *Trial this, but at what criteria and risk to children’s mental health and long-term outcomes*

Foster Carers

Of the 121 Foster Carers who answered this question:

- 80 (66.12%) agreed with this proposal
- 23 (19.01%) mostly agreed
- 8 (6.61%) agreed only in part
- 7 (5.79%) disagreed, and
- 3 (2.48%) indicated that they were not sure



47 of the respondents within this stakeholder group commented on their responses.

Enhancing stability and permanence

Many of the respondents who agreed or mostly agreed with this proposal commented on the perceived benefits in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *Yes I would like to see an expansion of adoption as an option for children and young people and I would like to see a focus on permanency planning from an early point (i.e. within 6-12 months of entering the child protection system)*
- *This is overdue! So many children live life in limbo due to the constant threat of being moved. This is not child focused - carers should be given the option to adopt the children they care for without the constant worry and threats to move the children*

- *These little people need stability. Adoption would support this and allow the child to know they are part of a forever family*
- *Give these children a permanent loving home. There are many people desperate for a child of their own to love, adoption should be offered more and when people are having many children and all are removed from them, these children should be given to a new family for adoption rather than shunted around the foster system*
- *If parents already have children in care and continue to reproduce, that child at birth should be put up for instant adoption and NOT enter the child safety system at all. Give that child a good chance at a normal life and breaking the cycle*
- *Given current adoption rates in Queensland, this permanency option needs to be more readily discussed as a viable option. I have a child in my care who parents have sadly both deceased, there is no suitable kin. This child needs to belong, have permanency and have the best life without the stigma of being in care. Adoption can be a positive experience, it isn't always negative. What if Queensland led the way in some reforms, that from early intervention led to outcomes of less young people in residential homes and in the juvenile justice system. Imagine that*
- *Children have a small window to ensure their development is not curtailed with lifelong mental, social and physical impacts that are extremely costly to the individual and our community. When evidence based support programs fail to transform parents within child development timeframes then children should have the right to grow up in a safe secure and loving family to ensure they develop their potential free from violence neglect and unstable foster care*

Why prioritise children under three?

Some respondents queried why this age group should be prioritised over others:

- *But this needs to be for all children in care - not just for those under 3. I have had one child since 2 and another since birth. They are now older than 3 years but they deserve permanency now*
- *This should not be limited to under 3, do you not understand the instability and trauma those other children have been through, yet again a lower age limit like this throws aside the needs of children who have undergone consistent trauma*

- *I don't think the priority should only be on children under three years of age. Any age child is equally at risk and equally in need of adoption*

Reducing pressure on the system

One respondent commented that increased use of adoption and permanency orders would ease pressure on the child protection system:

- *It will remove children from the system and free up staff/money. It will also provide a stable environment for the children*

Adoption is no guarantee of permanence

One respondent commented that adoption does not guarantee permanence or stability for children:

- *It would need to be case by case. Adoption of children who have siblings and extended family who are involved, is not always the best outcome for them. Adoptions fail. Yes, people give the children back, it happens more than you think*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

A few respondents commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *First Nations people must be placed according to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement Principles*

Two respondents stated a different view:

- *It should be considered for Indigenous children also. There is still an over representation for these children in the system. We understand the 5 elements need to be met and we know they have the right to country and kin and we as white Australian foster parents of these children have no say in their lives and we are treated differently by the liaison officers in the department offices as we are not Indigenous*
- *All children need stable homes. This allows the carer also to relax and give 100% to the children instead of never knowing what is going to happen. This should be an option for all children no matter who they are or cultural boundaries*

Implications of severing legal ties with siblings and other family members

Some respondents commented on difficulties in adoptions proceeding due to reluctance for contact with siblings or other family members to be severed or other considerations that apply when a child's siblings are also in care:

- *Adoption will not work. These kids will always be allowed and will always want to have visits with their family. No adoption process in this century will stop them. Waste of time. Too heartbreaking for the families who think they will be helping forever*
- *Our girls are on long term orders. We want them forever. Child Safety Officer won't even consider long term to us because their other siblings are placed in other foster homes aren't being offered long term by their carers so our girls miss out*

The rights of children and parents, and the question of consent

One respondent stated that adoption should only be undertaken with the consent of the parent:

- *Adoption should always be the parents' choice. Become a Foster Carer and eventually you will get to keep children in your lives forever while helping other children out along the way*

Maintaining a child's connections with family and the option of 'open adoption'

Amongst those who agreed or mostly agreed with the proposal, some commented on a need for adopted children to maintain contact with their 'biological family' and their preference for 'open adoptions':

- *I agree with PCO for children. They deserve a sense of stability. However, I also feel that there needs to be some system in place to maintain biological ties and relationships where it is safe to do so*
- *Open adoption is certainly a viable permanent option*
- *Foster carers who have had children in their care from birth and love them as their own should be allowed to adopt giving permanent and stable homes - open adoption allows these children to still have contact with birth families*
- *Permanent care orders need to be easier to apply for if it is the right option for the child rather than going for adoption. But if that isn't an option I was wondering if open adoption should be what is*

considered? Then there is no loss to family and culture, a stable place for the child where they know they won't be removed but also less cost to the government

Availability, motivation and capacity of persons to become adoptive carers

Some commented on the training, financial and other supports that would be needed to assist the adoptive carers:

- *There must be financial supports for the adopters as the costs associated with caring for, loving and therapeutically supporting the children are significant*
- *Only if still financially supported. The complex needs of some children in care are not known until later*
- *There should also be some financial assistance with adoption as there is with fostering*
- *The reason why foster children aren't adopted is not because carers, families, workers and children don't want it to happen. It's because carers can't meet the requirements under the Act, usually financial or managing connections to both parents OR because the child has such high needs that the carer needs financial and professional support to look after them*
- *Adoption is an option but where does the finance come into it. Most people adopt because they cannot have children, my wife and I foster because we want to make a difference and give children the love and a sense of belonging. We foster 7 kids and will continue to help out our nation's children as everyone deserves a safe environment when growing up*
- *Many people fail to see how trauma impacts children under 3 years of age and think the child won't remember. Adoptive parents should have training and a minimum 2-years experience fostering so they have the skills to meet the long-term needs of an adoptive child*
- *Carers who are willing, most are, to adopt should still receive the carer re-imburement until they are 18 because that means the child can escape the cycle of foster care, be settled in their placement knowing that this is their home and still knowing they can see and communicate with their family if it is safe and if they want to. We want to adopt our girls but earn too much to get any child*

support or government allowances.... almost making it impossible for doing the best job in caring for the children

Some respondents commented on their concerns about children being moved from foster carers in order to be adopted by others:

- *Providing foster carers are given first option to adopt the child in their care, it is extremely detrimental to a child's emotional health to just remove them from carers so another party can adopt them*
- *Who will be available to adopt? Will young children be placed with foster carers and THEN moved again to adoptive parents? Or will carers be able to give care to a child who has formed attachments to them?*

Permanency options that are already in place

A number of respondents commented on permanency options including adoption, that are already in place. Some commented on changes needed to better implement recently introduced approaches to achieving permanency:

- *It sometimes only works in writing. The current guardianship or permanency sounds good, but is almost impossible to achieve as Child Safety have to make sure that the carer has an amazing relationship with both parents of the child and so it hardly ever is implemented*
- *The time spent in court getting orders needs to decrease. It shouldn't take 18 months to get an order for a child when there are already 5 kids removed with no improvement*
- *Permanent Care Orders seem to be a rarity as it is. This sounds like a whole lot of talk and very little action*
- *There are concerns that Child Safety has tried to circumvent permanency by returning children to families who aren't properly prepared and subsequently breakdown, returning the child to care, even more damaged*
- *Both children in our care have come from the hospital as newborns. They are now 3 and 8. We can't even get LTG-O let alone permanency even though we have been trying for years. We now have a lawyer involved. If they have to remain in department care until they are 18 they will both end up with mental health issues on top of trauma*

- *I have been a foster carer for 15yrs and permanency in Queensland is always an issue but honestly I don't see it changing. There needs to be a whole shift with this idea. I don't know any child safety service centres that will advocate for adoption. From my experience it's virtually impossible to even get guardianship to other*

Other approaches to achieving stability

One respondent commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children's care that they regarded as preferable to the focus being placed on adoption:

- *Adoption is not necessarily the right outcome for many kids in care. How would this proposal include the ongoing support needs of children who are adopted? Lifelong trauma and identity issues do not disappear*

'No' to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

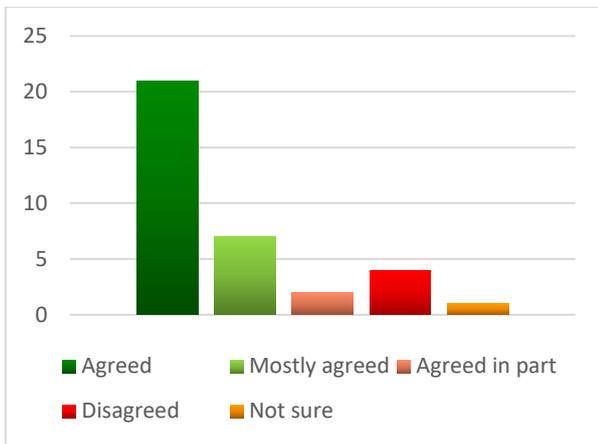
Irrespective of the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with increased use of adoption and/ or other permanency options, many objected to the proposed establishment of permanency order targets and KPIs:

- *I do not think the KPIs should be the main focus*
- *I find the idea of KPIs and adoption targets abhorrent*
- *The idea of KPIs for adoption is simplistic thinking and encourages poor outcomes for affected children. The focus should be on the best outcome for children regardless of what the intervention is*
- *I do not believe setting 'targets' is the way to go. Children should be placed for adoption only if it is in their best interest and NOT to meet KPIs*

Kinship Carers

Of the 35 Kinship Carers who answered this question:

- 21 (60.00%) agreed with the proposal
- 7 (20.00%) mostly agreed
- 2 (5.71%) agreed only in part
- 4 (11.43%) disagreed, and
- 1 (2.86%) indicated that they were not sure



10 of the respondents within this stakeholder group commented on their responses.

Enhancing stability and permanence

A few respondents commented on the perceived benefits in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *We don't have adoption at all. We barely have guardianship. It MUST be introduced. children deserve permanency*
- *There's plenty of humans who would love to adopt*

Reducing pressure on the system

One respondent commented that increased use of permanency orders would ease pressure on the child protection system:

- *Putting children on Permanency Orders or LTG-O, frees up resources for those children on Interim Orders and those who have been made known to the Department but are still in the investigation phase*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Two respondents commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *Very concerning when many children affected would be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander*
- *This is inhuman. What about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children? If you place them outside their family structure/ community they will be traumatised for the rest of their lives*

Availability, motivation and capacity of persons to become adoptive carers

One respondent queried the availability of persons to become adoptive carers:

- *Sounds great in theory- but where are all these adoptive parents coming from?*

Other approaches to achieving stability

Some respondents commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children's care that they regarded as preferable to the focus being placed on adoption:

- *There seems to be no understanding of what adoption means for children later in life and it would feel like parents were being threatened with adoption....'do this or else'. Hard to find this a socially acceptable way of treating parents/children or families*
- *Keeping kids out of the system will do wonders for their wellbeing. I don't want it to be a go to for young children. Parents need intensive support and intervention prior to adoption*
- *Parents can come good*
- *What about parents who go through rehab and are suitable to take their children back?*

'No' to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

One respondent objected to the proposed establishment of permanency order targets and KPIs:

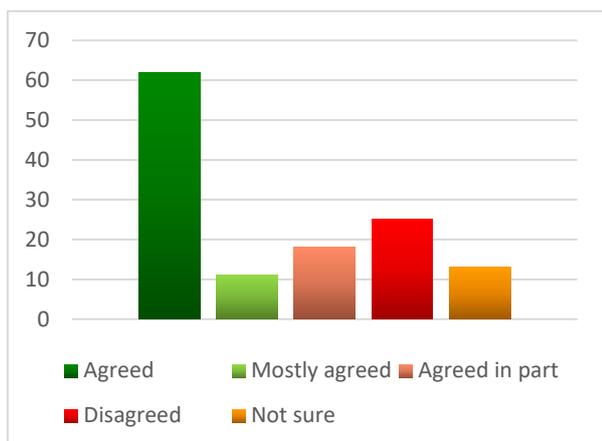
- *Targets and KPIs are not going to ensure the best outcome for the child. It will just force decisions to be made that meet the figures required. Have a decision making tree that results in short-term/long-term to CE/long-term to Other/Permanency Order and each decision must be justified as why it offers the best outcome for the child (not the statistics, not the parents, not the Department)*

Others

Of the 129 survey respondents who indicated that they did not belong to one of the aforementioned groups or who identified with multiple groups:

- 62 (48.06%) agreed with the proposal
- 11 (8.53%) mostly agreed

- 18 (13.95%) agreed only in part
- 25 (19.38%) disagreed, and
- 13 (0.08%) indicated that they were not sure



49 of respondent within this stakeholder group provided comments.

Enhancing stability and permanence

Most of the respondents who agreed or mostly agreed with this proposal commented on the perceived benefits in achieving permanence and greater stability in the care provided to children:

- *Our children need a sense of permanency and belonging*
- *Children need the security of a permanent home and caregivers/ parents*
- *Children need stability. There are so many good people/families out there who would love this opportunity*
- *It should not be so hard to adopt a child. It leaves families without children and children without families*
- *Adoption is the best option for children in long term placements where there is no chance of reunification*
- *Terrible examples of children being on short-term orders for 16 years waiting for parents to sort themselves - connection can be maintained but children should feel safe and confident that they have a home*
- *So much better than foster care until an adult - to actually be in a long-term loving family*

Why prioritise children under three?

One respondent commented on the relevance of prioritising children aged under three years due to the attachment and developmental needs of this age group. Some others queried why this age group should be prioritised over others:

- *Should not just be under 3-yrs old -but first option should be to kin first !! then foster parents - and non-aboriginal kin should be not be excluded because they are not Aboriginal - family is family*
- *Adoption should be opened up for all ages. There are too many children suffering at the hands of their parents and too many adults who want to give them a safe and loving home*
- *Also to give the option of adoption for long term cases older than 3yrs to give some kids a safe forever home*
- *Why only up to 3yo? All kids deserve a chance to live in a 'normal' home*

Prioritising children's needs over those of parents

A few respondents commented that the proposal enabled children's needs to be prioritised over those of parents, with parents currently receiving 'too many chances':

- *Parents are given too many opportunities that set these children up with false hope. Often the parents have been given ample opportunities and once the department is satisfied that this has been exhausted the damage is already done to the kids and they are then at an age that makes them harder to place... If the parents aren't willing to step up for their kids in a decent time frame or at least be working towards that then the decision needs to be made by others. While I am a huge advocate for reunification, sometimes we are doing it at the cost of the kids – even though it is for the kids*
- *The foster care system is absolutely abysmal. Children should automatically be offered via adoption if the parents have failed to have the children reunited under two short term orders*
- *So many people that would be willing to adopt these poor vulnerable children. Our adoption service needs overhaul as well because of total lack of availability of children to adopt because they are returned to parents as a priority and again placed in danger..... Protect the Children!! Not the parents*

Implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Many respondents commented on specific concerns they held about the use of adoption and/ or other permanency options in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children:

- *Adoption, particularly for indigenous people is too reminiscent of 'Stolen Generation'. Keeping them in their culture through family and kinship support gives better outcomes*
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will be worried about the continued loss of community. A continued stolen generation.*
- *Adoption should be an option for children likely to be in long term foster care, however, consideration must also be given to ethnicity and cultural values, and should not be used to extinguish Indigenous identity, in particular. Extended family reunion should be facilitated, with an adoption option*
- *Not for indigenous kids and for kids who have extended family or kinship networks. But where the system has engaged in 'real' and intensive, whatever it takes case work and sustained efforts for 2 years to reunite family, then it's time to give these kids a chance of permanent home and family*
- *Aboriginal children to be placed with family. Traditions are kinship system not adoption*

The rights of children and parents, and the question of consent

Some respondents stated concerns about adoption potentially breaching the rights of children and/ or parents. Other stated that adoption should only be undertaken with the consent of the parent and/ or child:

- *Adoption should be an option that is offered to parents and it is the parents of the children in care who should choose whether or not they want to try to heal their lives, or whether the child will have better opportunities with another family*
- *Forced adoptions are abhorrent and do not consider the unacceptable trauma that is caused by this. The state should not have the power to change a child's legal identity*

Maintaining a child's connections with family and the option of 'open adoption'

Amongst those who agreed or mostly agreed with the proposal, many commented on a need for adopted children to maintain contact with their 'biological family' and their preference for 'open adoptions':

- *Permanency is important and should be considered equally with supports for children to maintain connections with biological family under circumstances where children are never able to return home*
- *Open adoption is a great compromise for biological parents and foster families - where the biological parent has access (perhaps not overnight) to their child. The best-case scenario is being adopted by the foster family, but where this is not possible, day visits with strict conditions about safety and provision for the child should be in place. Again, it's not about hurting or damaging already hurting biological parents, but rather protecting innocent children*
- *Only when the parents are not able to be rehabilitated and the children will never be safe. I still believe the child should know the parents by supervised visits*

Availability, motivation and capacity of persons to become adoptive carers

Some commented on the availability of suitable persons to become adoptive carers, and the financial and other supports that would be needed to assist these carers. A few respondents questioned the motivation of some people who may wish to perform the role and commented on the selection processes that would need to be put in place:

- *Adoptees must be willing to then adopt a child with trauma. Adoptees most likely will not be open to this. If you are going to take on the care of a child or young person with a trauma history you need training and understanding around this, this would mean the child will be adequately supported with the hope they then do not then have child protection intervention as a parent*
- *Where are the people to adopt these children, severing birth rights we will end up like USA*
- *There are many paedophiles within these groups that protect each other. The staff would need to be certain that these adopted children are not going into a worse situation*

Permanency options that are already in place

A number of respondents commented on permanency options including adoption, that are already in place. Some noted that recently introduced legislation and approaches to achieving permanency are either working well or need more time to fully take effect before other changes are introduced:

- *Queensland already has Permanent Care Orders*
- *This is already somewhat happening. The dearth of viable placements or safe kin options is a key challenge for all child protection work in Queensland. It is a symptom of why so many children are part of the system, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families*
- *I've had a seven-week old for 4 years. Child Safety don't always make the correct decisions*
- *Why not have a specialised team that will support the increased use of the Permanent Carer Order?*

Other approaches to achieving stability

Many respondents commented on other approaches to achieving stability in children's care that they regarded as preferable to the focus being placed on adoption:

- *Many children in care are the children of parents who were also abused. The system needs to put more resources into healing the whole family, instead of ripping the children away from their kin. Heal the family and you will create a good legacy for the child in care, they will return to happy parents who are accepted into the community*
- *I do not believe that children should be denied the chance of reuniting with their parents if the parents can offer them a safe home in the future. Losing their children is often what the parents need to give up their addictions or rid themselves of unhealthy relationships*
- *Separating children from their parents should always be the last resort. This sounds far too much like using adoption to solve family issues instead of actually solving the problems*
- *Holistic avenues that allow families to heal and attempt better choices should first be considered, and time allowed for such change*

- *Reunification should always be the first goal for the children's sake. Adoption would however be preferred in a very small minority of cases*
- *We need a better foster care system. We need children to retain a sense of their identity and heritage and maintain connection with their parents*
- *How about education and some form of register for repeat offenders rather than just adopting out the child - fix the problem, don't band aid it*
- *Parent legal representation needs to be improved to reach 'due process and procedural fairness' thresholds. This suggestion lacks insight into where the systemic issues really are and demonstrates a simple solution for political purposes not a nuanced response which is what is required for a 'wicked problem'*
- *What does this look like? Will the child protection act be changed? Will the adoption act be changed? Have the LNP considered the process for adoption now and how this might look different? Are you effectively forcing adoption on families? Will these children be the new Stolen Generation? Think before you act*

'No' to life decisions being driven by target numbers and KPIs

Irrespective of the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with increased use of adoption and/ or other permanency options, many objected to the proposed established of permanency order targets and KPIs:

- *Targets suggest mandatory attitudes to reach a certain number. Permanency Orders have their place, but should not be based on quotas*
- *KPIs will not work across our Indigenous and CALD communities*
- *KPIs and targets? These are not car sales they are children!*
- *Red tape - like they need more KPIs*

Look to research, the evidence-base and the experiences of other jurisdictions

A few respondents commented on the need to examine existing research:

- *Adoption is not the answer. Research shows the impacts of adoption upon children's psychological development*

