



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

Survey Findings

*On the proposal that a second positive drug test will
lead to children being placed in foster care under a
no second chances model*

12 October 2020



Thank you to all who took time from their busy schedules to respond to our survey about the Liberal National Party'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 sixth in the series of detailed reports that addresses the proposal that a second positive drug test of a parent will lead to their children being placed in foster care under a no second-chance model.



Lindsay Wegener
Executive Director



Garth Morgan
A/ Chief Executive Officer



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	6
Responses by stakeholder groups.....	9
Employees of PeakCare Member organisations.....	9
Employees of QATSICPP Member organisations.....	12
Employees of non-Member non-government organisations	14
Employees of Government agencies	18
Employees of peak bodies, industry and representative groups	23
Academics.....	24
Private consultants and employees of consultancy or training organisations.....	25
Parents (and other family members) with a lived experience of the child protection system	27
Young people (under 25 years) with a lived experience of the child protection system	28
Older people (over 25 years) with a lived experience of the child protection system.....	29
Foster Carers.....	30
Kinship Carers	31
Others	32

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 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](#)
- [On the proposal to increase use of adoption through a new triage model with permanency order targets](#)

This report addresses the question included in our survey – *The LNP proposes that “a second positive test will lead to children being placed in foster care under a no-second chances model because the cycle of drug abuse must be broken”. Do you agree with this proposal?*

This report is best read in conjunction with the following reports that address related topics:

- [On the proposal for random compulsory drug tests for people on Intervention with Parental Agreements](#)
- [On the proposal that positive drug tests will require parents to participate in a drug rehabilitation service](#)

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

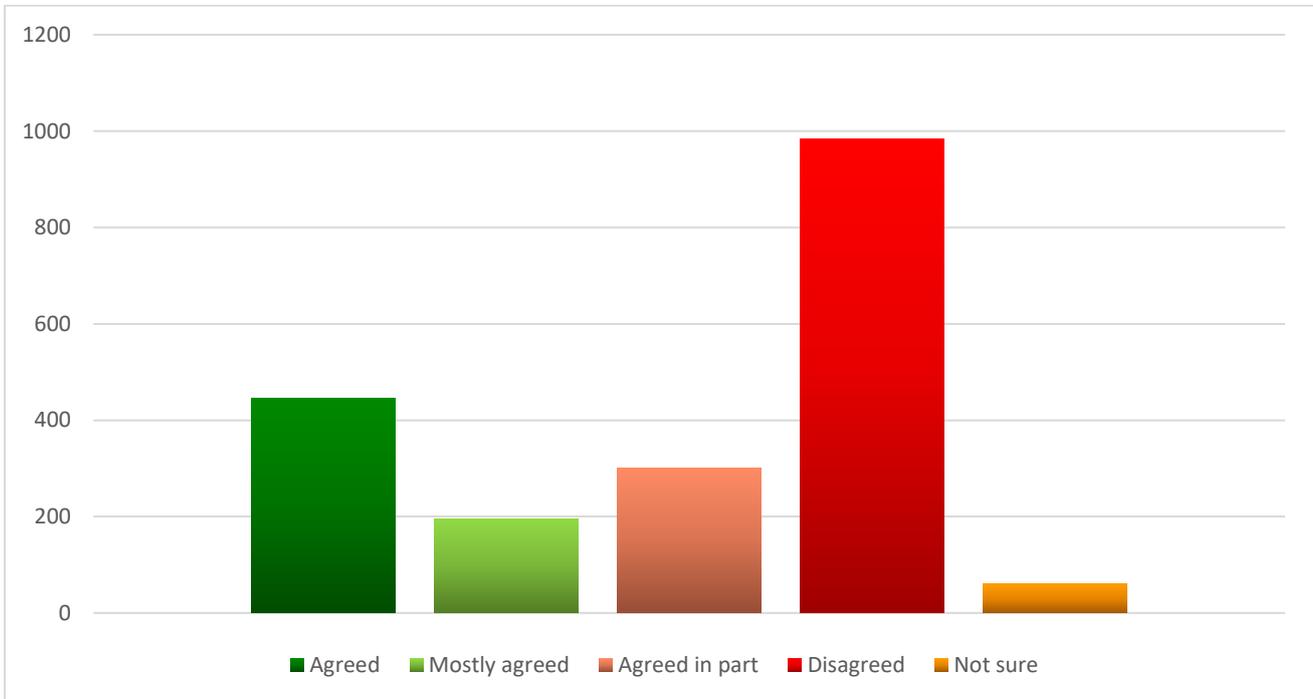
As noted in the overview report, the respondents to the survey are not a representative sample and therefore the results cannot be generalised to specific stakeholder groups or stakeholders as a whole. The strength of the survey and its findings lies in the diversity of views that have been collected 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, 1,985 answered, and 13 'skipped', this question. Most who answered the question disagreed (49.57%) or agreed only in part (15.11%) with this proposal.

Specifically, of the 1,985 respondents who answered this question:

- 446 (22.47%) agreed with the proposal
- 195 (9.82%) mostly agreed
- 300 (15.11%) agreed only in part
- 984 (49.57%) disagreed, and
- 60 (3.02%) indicated that they were not sure



A majority of respondents (i.e. 50% or more) within 10 of the 13 stakeholder groups disagreed or agreed only in part with the proposal.

A majority of respondents (i.e. 50% or more) within 3 of the 13 stakeholder groups agreed or mostly agreed with the proposal. They included:

- older people (over 25 years) with a lived experience of the child protection system
- Foster Carers, and
- Kinship Carers

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

- Removing children from their parents' care more often results in further trauma and is perpetuating the cycle of intergenerational trauma
- A parent's substance abuse issue does not automatically determine that they are unsafe or at risk of harm. Many respondents from all stakeholder groups noted that assessments

were required to consider the family's context and safety planning that either had or could be implemented to keep children safe in their parents' care

- The severe shortage of foster carers and the impact that this proposed policy would have on the increase of children requiring placements. Respondents also highlighted the volume of children under the age of 10 being placed in residential care settings where they are unable to form attachments to a single caregiver, siblings being separated and the lack of family finding to assess suitable family to provide care should it be deemed unsafe to remain in their parents' care
- A new 'Stolen Generation' of Queensland children. Concerns were noted that the proposed policy may result in many children being forcibly removed from their parents when they are not necessarily unsafe or at risk of harm
- Providing families access to support services and in-home care to upskill and educate

parents to be able to safely care for their children

Respondents often highlighted the benefits of early intervention to address concerns before the risk is high enough to warrant statutory intervention:

- *This punitive and unkind approach further disempowers very vulnerable and traumatised people and blames them. We are in the helping professions and others who want a just and equitable society need to STAND UP to this kind of bullying and injustice. These statements masquerade as being the 'view of the people'. I don't want Queensland to be this kind of people. I want this state to be a state of kind people who help each other out. I want us to be a people who recognise privilege and oppression and I want us to be people who use our privilege to ally with those who are oppressed*
- *The removal of a child from their parents results in the children experiencing further significant trauma and emotional harm. It is not the parental drug misuse that is the issue, it is how the parental drug misuse impacts on the parents' capacity to provide adequate care and protection. Additionally, there is a gross shortage of foster carers, let alone foster carers who are able to provide quality care to these vulnerable damaged children. There are far too many children in residential settings which is costing taxpayers a fortune. The answer is not in removing the children from their parents care, the answer is to be able to work collaboratively with families and be able to provide families with intensive support to address the issues resulting in drug misuse. Safety planning with families to address their drug use and working with families to reduce and eradicate drug use*

Throughout the stakeholder groups there was also an underlying thread of concern about inequality,

that this policy was more likely to negatively impact families of a lower socio-economic standing, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities and families where there is also mental health and domestic violence issues due to drugs often being used to self-medicate:

- *This policy just punishes children and parents who are already struggling. I wonder if the same rule would apply to a high-profile member of the community who could afford a nanny?*
- *For equity – the policy should be that anyone who has a child is drug tested. Would the politicians come up with this idea if it could impact them also? Would the general public agree if their drug use were also going to risk their children coming into care? Highly elitist policy*
- *Stolen generation for every single Queensland. This policy will institutionalise another generation*
- *I'm sure plenty of middle-class parents abuse drugs but are able to make arrangements for their children to be cared for and don't fear child removal. This seems like further measures for surveillance and control of poor families in the community*
- *Strongly hints of elitism and racism. If this is applied to all of society, given the principle here, is that drug use is highly problematic and children should be removed where this is evident; the rates of children coming into care will escalate exponentially, even in high-income earning families*

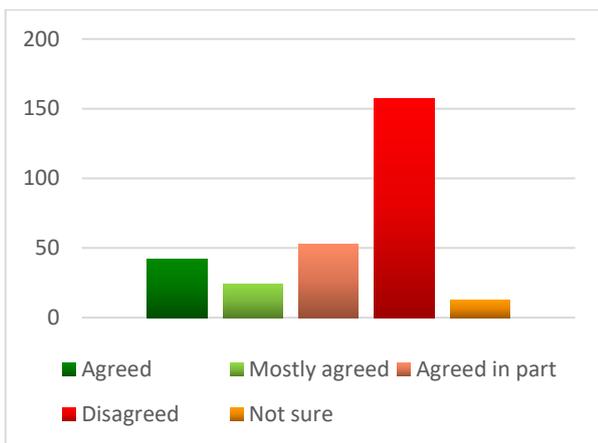
The remainder of this report sets out the responses of each of the stakeholder groups.

Responses by stakeholder groups

Employees of PeakCare Member organisations

Of the 289 employees of PeakCare Member organisations who answered this question:

- 42 (14.53%) agreed with this proposal
- 24 (8.30%) mostly agreed
- 53 (18.34%) agreed only in part
- 157 (54.33%) disagreed, and
- 13 (4.50%) indicated that they were not sure



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

Assessment of risk due to parental drug use

Many respondents highlighted concerns that children may be unnecessarily placed into care based on two positive drug screens without a comprehensive risk assessment to determine if they are in need of care and protection:

- *Definitely not. Question needs to be are the kids safe or at risk*
- *The impact of drugs on function in parenting needs to be the decision for removing children not simply taking drugs*
- *The drug abuse has to have a significant impairment on the parent's ability to parent and provide adequate care. If there is a significant decline in the care and protection of the children due to drug use and not necessarily other factors, then yes agree on removal*
- *The focus should be on the needs of the child, the parent's capacity, and support system that is available*

- *Assessing risk to children requires a holistic assessment which also considers protective factors. Not all children are at risk of harm or harmed when parents use illicit drugs. Placing a child in foster care when there are no other risk or harm factors is in itself causes harm towards a child. The trauma associated with the placing of a child in care needs to be carefully considered. A parent using drugs does not mean the child has been or will be harmed*
- *This is a blunt instrument which makes broad assumptions, not the least of which is that parents who take drugs are unable to provide 'good enough' parenting. Research shows that it is not necessarily the case. The decision to remove children from their parents is complex and requires consideration of a number of different factors, not just whether they have failed a second drug test. This does also not take into consideration why the parent has failed the test currently. Not taking the test is deemed to be a positive result will that still be the case?*
- *Harm and risk to children should be assessed, not just positive testing to substances. A blanket rule could be harmful and keeping families together should still be the focus. Placing children in foster care doesn't just solve everything for them and will cause further trauma due to the removal of the from the family*
- *Blanket rules are not effective children should be centred in the decision making. Some parents who use substances still provide effective care for their children. Many parents who use substances are not under scrutiny by the Department. Removing children is not always the best choice, some substance abuse may be a coping mechanism for other life stresses and parents should be supported to change their coping not penalised for it*
- *This is crazy, there are many parents that use illicit substances and meet accepted parenting standards. Removing children causes trauma which can lead to substance abuse later in life. Removing is NOT the answer, we don't have enough carers now, we will need old style institutions to house all the children*

Removal of children based on 'No Second Chances Model' and the impact for children and parents

Many respondents noted their concerns about the negative impacts and further trauma caused to children and their parents. Many respondents cited research on the long-term impacts for children in care and that removing children based on two positive test results may lead to another cycle of trauma, where substance misuse is used to self-medicate:

- *Absolutely not. World evidence is clear that life outcomes for young people in out of home care are compromised and that investing in early intervention and prevention programmes for a sustained period of time, is a far better investment than removal of child for family. Ludicrous suggestion!*
- *Highly dangerous policy with negative consequences for children and families. Intergenerational trauma, complex family issues need to be considered. Early and enduring support to families is needed, not hard mandatory measures*
- *This would be extremely harmful to children because removing a child from their parents care is punishing the child not the parents. The process is incredibly punitive. Why is there no consideration for more money to be spent on drug rehabilitation?*
- *This approach does not take into consideration the systemic trauma of removal and being a child in care. A significant amount of the work I did as a therapist with children was in relation to the systemic trauma associated with coming into care, separate to abuse experienced in foster care. A blanket approach is not appropriate. The decision to remove the child from their family of origin and to place him in foster care needs to be done with great amounts of consideration; that includes the risk of harm happening at home versus the impact of being removed from your family, and the subsequent systemic impacts*
- *The current ICE pandemic is having a significant impact on the children in our community. This is not solely that a parent is under the influence of drugs - unknown people come to the home, drug paraphernalia around the home including needles, violence and associated crime, parents unable to meet the needs of the children while under the influence, increase risk of violence, leaving children unsupervised to obtain or use*

drugs, money being spent on drugs and not essentials. The emotional impact and neglect of the children of those using drugs is often overlooked, as this is not immediately noticeable, and the child often slips through the cracks. These children miss opportunities to engage and build a safe secure attachment with their caregiver/parent as they are not in the mind-frame for providing a loving safe and nurturing environment

- *While drug abuse is a child protection issue, the evidence provides clear knowledge that removing children has long term negative effects, including drug abuse, so essentially you will 'solve' one problem only to create another. It isn't breaking the cycle, just lengthening it*
- *The long-term effects of the removal of children and placement in foster care need to be carefully considered. The focus should be on supporting parents to heal and recover, with interim placements, until parents are able to be reunified with their children. We need to spend more taxpayer money on support services without taking hard-line approaches to others who are struggling. The proposed no second chance model is punitive and elitist. If we care about the parents, we will support them by providing more caseworkers and specialist workers and child safety to provide one-on-one support*

Foster care system at capacity

Most respondents commented that the current foster care system is at capacity and frequently very young children are inappropriately entering residential care. Great concerns were held that they system would crumble if this proposed policy were to be implemented:

- *It will be difficult to find enough foster carers to be able to offer placements to children particularly family groups of children*
- *I completely agree that the cycle of drug abuse must be broken, my concern is that implementing such a black and white stance will not allow for all the shades of grey and will put an additional strain on an already overwhelmed foster care system*
- *There are not currently enough foster placements for the children young people in care now. It is extremely difficult to find people*

with the appropriate skills who are willing to become foster carers

- *No! We do not need to go back to a punitive approach where we don't have enough foster carers or funding to be able to place children if they were to be removed under this approach*
- *If this was to be passed it would need to have a 'kin lens' behind it, ensuring that we are meeting the cultural and connective needs of our children*
- *Firstly, there aren't enough foster care placements for this to be a reality. Secondly, drug abuse exists on a continuum, just like alcohol abuse. If we simply look at two positive tests that prove that a child needs to be severed from their parents' care, we are failing to look at the systemic issues at play. If punishing people was effective, the prison system recidivism rates would be extremely low. Children should be involved in the planning of their own lives and parents supported to make safer choices*
- *I agree, but the foster care system cannot handle that the way it is. We do not have enough carers to take the children currently coming in. Already so many under the age of 10 end up in ressy care. We lose foster carers due to the way they are treated by the Department and the lack of resources approved to help children get the support they need whilst in care*
- *Where are these foster carers? The focus needs to be on prevention and early intervention. These are quick headline grabbing ideas that will result in increased pressure on the out of home care system. Standards will be lowered on approving carers in order to meet this demand, and therefore creating even more problems. Don't rush - consult the NGO partners*

One respondent further added in relation to children in foster care, a view that adoption should be considered for children whose parents continue to have substance abuse issues:

- *Children should be given the opportunity for adoption after a period of time. They are constantly retraumatised and put in great danger and risk when we keep giving parents too many chances. This is at the cost of the child and is not child protection but Department of parents' rights*

Support for parents who lapse/relapse

Many respondents highlighted that lapse/relapse is a part of the rehabilitation process. Further concerns were voiced that this policy may then create the next generation with substance abuse issues due to the trauma of being removed from their parents' care:

- *Absolutely not. This is a ridiculous proposal that doesn't reflect good practise within a child protection model. Children feel loved by their parents, and this is more important for healthy development than a test result. Children need to be in a home where they identify as their family, where they are safe and have a strong sense of belonging. Many children are harmed within the foster care system, and the foster care system is struggling to cope with the amount of children in out of home care placements. This rule would create more problems. You would be better funding more drug intervention services that do outreach an in-home services to support parents around their drug use*
- *This is absolutely draconian! This does not recognise trauma; parents' own family history and that they are doing their best at times. This will create more trauma for children and kids are not commodities that you can remove and just place in another family. It is not always drugs that are the issue. Many families that will be subject to this intervention will be Aboriginal families and children and this will create a new stolen generation. We need programmes and in-home support to turn families around*
- *Absolutely not. Who does this benefit? The aim should be to keep children with their families, as much as possible, with support provided to the family to be able to safely parent their child. The concept of a no second chance model shows no understanding of the complex nature of addiction*
- *This is based on a philosophy that people don't change. People can and do change and we should all be given that opportunity. This is ridiculously punitive and does not allow hope. Break the cycle by getting drugs off the street!*
- *This may not be in the best interest of the child and could be seen as a human rights breach*
- *How will this break the cycle of drug use? The parents will use more drugs, as a result of the trauma, then they will have more kids to add to the child protection system. Child protection*

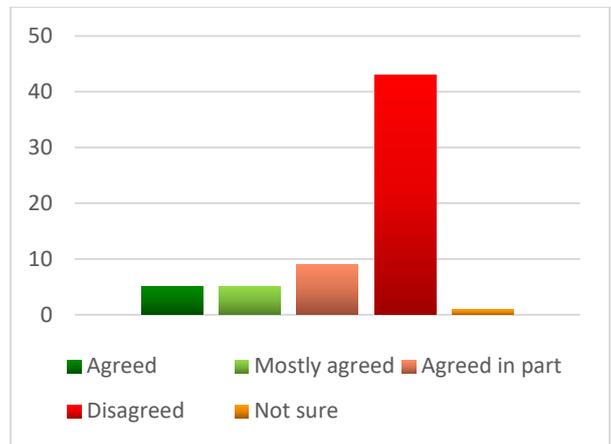
needs to not be about punishing parents, but around educating and helping them access supports. Most parents want to do the right thing but often find boundaries in their way (poverty, disabilities etc). Why not help them and break the cycle? People use drugs for a reason, rather than trying to punish it out of them how about offering supports to solve the problem once and for all. Foster care is not a nice place for children they have no single parenting figure or home this can often be more damaging than being with their parents

- *There are not enough placements for this to occur. This will lead to another generation of institutional betrayal*
- *Drug abuse is a complicated treatment consideration and research shows that relapse is likely, even whilst getting treatment. This enforcement policy is likely to set people up for failure before they even get started. Create a system where people have a chance of succeeding, put money to into meaningful relational solutions to rebuild strong families and stop destructive cycles*
- *Absolutely disagree, this is dangerous and repeating the past policies of forced removal. Parents are capable of change and resources need to be placed in non-stigmatising family services. Look at all the reports on the impact of removal*
- *Draconian and disastrous. Any model that eliminates the possibility of a response based on choice judgement and discretion is flawed*

Employees of QATSICPP Member organisations

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

- 5 (7.94%) agreed with the proposal
- 5 (7.94%) mostly agreed
- 9 (14.29%) agreed only in part
- 43 (68.25%) disagreed, and
- 1 (1.59%) indicated that they were not sure



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

25 of the comments were totally in disagreement with the proposed policy with the main themes expressed in one respondent's comment:

- *1) This doesn't reflect an understanding of addiction and how it is treated/overcome 2) There aren't enough foster carers now 3) People need help not punishment 4) Kids want to be with their families 5) The system cannot meet the needs of the children they currently have in care 6) This is not in line with the principles of the Child Protection Act*

Further themes and comments are provided below:

Individualised risk assessments to prevent another Stolen Generation (no blanket rule)

Many respondents commented that by having mandatory outcomes that this will lead to children coming into care unnecessarily:

- *Totally disagree!!!! Trying to control the 'human factor' in this process is highly unfair. This becomes not about fixing a human issue but more to do with getting political approval for the LNP to be seen to be doing a good job. The end result, however, will be further trauma in the community and a further stolen generation in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. You can't undo a history of trauma by this clinical and unforgiving approach*
- *A blanket policy across all families does not take into account specific circumstances and could potentially lead to children and young people entering the system unnecessarily and worse the continuation of another stolen generation*

- *This is punitive and may not be in the best interest of the child. These decisions need to be made on a case by case basis - not a strict rule for all parents*
- *I think a case by case system needs to be looked at here. In some cases, a mother's drug taking may be caused or exacerbated by domestic violence, these scenarios need to be managed differently*
- *Are children actually unsafe?*
- *Family arrangements not department arrangements or orders*

Cycle of addiction

Many respondents commented that drug use is a health issue and should not be punished as it takes time to break the cycle of addiction:

- *No this is punitive. Addiction is a health issue. Many addicts attempt to stop and relapse*
- *This does not fit with the cycle of addiction models where relapse is a normal part of recovery*
- *Such an initiative seems punitive and would punish people for what is essentially a health issue*
- *Absolutely disagree most people reducing, or quitting substances use lapse at some point during the journey*
- *No, that is ludicrous. Perhaps sexual abuse perpetrated by parents could warrant this response, however, let's try mandatory rehab first and see how they go. Addiction can't be overcome in a short timeframe*

Impact of drug use on parenting and safety planning

Many respondents stated that testing positive to illicit substances does not indicate that parenting capacity or protective skills are not present. The consensus was that to determine if children should be removed from their parents' care that an extensive risk assessment is required:

- *Again, a second random drug test does not equally measure the functionality of protective parenting skills. I think it's a stupid idea to propose children are forcibly removed because of two random drug tests coming back with positive signs of substances. This reduces the complexities and circumstances around the substance use and the intentions of parents, as*

having only two chances to be sober parents. It also doesn't give room to explore all the safety factors the parents have put in place for substance use away from the children

- *No because the parent may be using safely and providing a safe and nurturing home to the child. Removing the child from their secure attachment may cause enough trauma to lead to the need of escapism with substance use. It's limited and unhelpful thinking demonstrated in this proposal*
- *I disagree because if there are suitable family members you can safety plan with around drug use. Providing the parents have the capacity to call family and family check on the children on a regular basis*
- *Each family's situation will need to be closely monitored and assessed. Understanding holistically of each family's needs*

Foster care system

Many respondents commented on their disapproval that children are removed after a second positive drug test result, citing an overwhelmed system that does not provide the therapeutic care that is required:

- *Absolutely disgusting practise and proposal. So, because you relapse, you are never able to parent your children again? Be prepared for an increase in drug use, suicide, crime then. Who is going to raise all these kids? We don't have enough foster carers now, and our kinship options can't get blue cards due to another system that doesn't work. This is the prime example why politicians and Police can't make decisions about families. Social workers, psychologists and community people can make these decisions WITH a family because they understand addiction and relapse and TRAUMA*
- *It appears that no consideration has been given to what happens behind this front-end decision. The current foster/kinship care climate is already overwhelmed, and placements are almost non-existent. It would be beneficial to discuss the current and recent historic exodus of care entities from the system and what needs to occur to reduce this in attract carer entities to continue to offer placements for vulnerable children. There would also be some benefit into exploring how support can be given to whole of*

families in a supportive and caring environment that supports a whole family healing

- *The out of home care system across Australia cannot cope with the children who are in care at present - children have high needs and cares are not well supported or trained to provide therapeutic care for these children, as well as parents and carers who need to still be supported to have a relationship with the children. The relationship between children and their birth parents needs to be developed in such a way that there is an appropriate option to suit the unique needs of children*
- *NO! It can take a few years for people to get their act together. The foster system as it stands is not good and likelihood of further harm to children is greater in foster care*

Agreement with proposed policy (with conditions)

2 respondents who commented were in partial agreement with the proposed policy:

- *Depends on usage and the functioning of the parent/s on the drugs. If both parents are under the influence at the same time*
- *Depends if they are placed in a good home and this should be reviewed on individual circumstances*

Support services and reunification

A few respondents noted that support is required to create change for families and there are insufficient services who can assist:

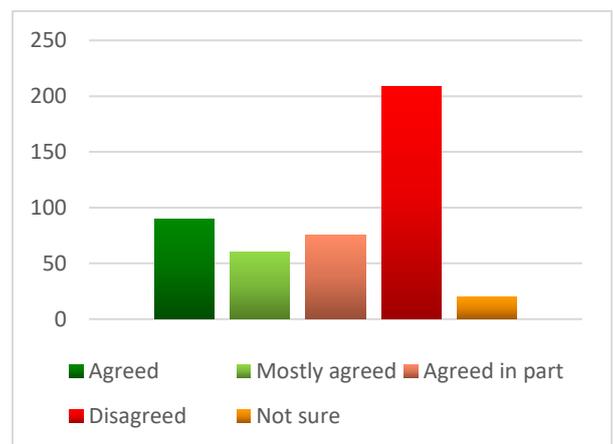
- *Put the support services in to support the families. There are not enough places available in foster care for this to happen. Support services need to help the families and we also need more rehabs to be included*
- *There is nothing mentioned about cultural support in these matters*
- *But what happens if the parents have made changes to their lives? What will happen when the parents have the opportunity for a reunification?*

Employees of non-Member non-government organisations

Of the 454 employees of non-government organisations that are not Members of either PeakCare or QATSICPP who answered this question:

- 90 (19.82%) agreed with the proposal
- 60 (13.22%) mostly agreed
- 75 (16.52%) agreed only in part
- 209 (46.04%) disagreed, and
- 20 (4.41%) indicated that they were not sure

Five respondents skipped this question.



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

Impact of the removal of children from their parents' care

Whilst some respondents agreed with the proposed policy and some disagreed, the vast majority who commented were in agreement that children being placed in out of home care experience a high level of trauma and should only be placed in care when they have been assessed to be unsafe and at high risk of harm:

- *I think removing children based on a second failed drug test would need to be at contextual decision. Often experiences for children in alternative care options are no better than being in the care of their problematic biological parent. Being removed from their parents' care is traumatic for a child, foster care/residential care can be traumatic for a child therefore context would need to contribute to this decision making*

- *Strongly disagree because even if you remove children from the immediate issue then the likelihood of the young person becoming an addict is quite high as you have created another trauma on top of the traumas already sustained*
- *This kind of proposal is what will lead to another stolen generation. The state is not a good parent - the children and young people that exit care are generally not supported well and have little connection to their family of origin or community*
- *This would create more systematic trauma for the children. Family support networks need to be utilised in this circumstance*
- *I don't think there is a one size fits all solution and that the decision should be based upon the needs of the family and the risk assessment process for the case. The proposal could lead to children being placed into foster care unnecessarily which could have significant negative impacts on the children. Foster care should be considered when it is the safest option for the child*
- *Children need stability throughout childhood so the sooner children are placed into a stable family (foster care or adoption) the better it will be for the child's mental and emotional health*
- *The danger is becoming too rigid. Each person's circumstances need to be evaluated. This will also place an even greater strain on the foster care system where there are not enough ar. placement options already. This also doesn't take into account the irreversible effect that separating children from parents and from siblings has on a child. The psychological and mental health impacts will be enormous*

Support for parents to break the addiction

Many respondents commented on the cycle of addiction and the necessity for specialised services, early intervention, and in-home support:

- *This is the recipe for creating a second stolen generation and the literature clearly shows how much damage resulted from the first time we took away large numbers of children from their families. If you want to intervene in the cycle of drug use focus on education, early intervention and access to healthcare. Increase the number of sessions under the mental health care plan to at least 25 sessions a year. Increase the funding*

for community services including safe injecting rooms, AOD psychoeducation and parenting courses. Make completing a Circle of Security course standard during prenatal care for first time parents. Do not remove children simply due to a positive drug test. What about the parents who have an undiagnosed mental health concern for which they cannot afford treatment? Would we treat a cancer patient this way? What about a single parent with a broken leg? A high functioning parent using illicit substances from a harm minimisation approach can provide a safe, nurturing and loving environment for their children. Why is it so abhorrent to the government that we treat people with some medical conditions differently to the way we do others? Afterall, addiction and mental health concerns are so intertwined, they become difficult to separate. Mental health concerns and addictions are medical concerns and require treatment and support in order to heal

- *When people are using drugs, it is common for them to lapse or relapse before being able to make permanent changes. Many people use drugs to numb emotional pain and trauma and this is not something that can be resolved quickly. Having their children removed due to a second positive test could be considered too harsh and very punitive*
- *Many of the parents have their own trauma and require support with this. Many do not have the support from family or their wider network. I feel this is a tough measure and is something that should be monitored and assessed to ascertain the impact on the child and the impact on the parent's capacity to care for the child. In- home support might be a preferred option in trying to engage parents in community-based programmes such as substance misuse support programmes and counselling*
- *People trying to stop illicit drug use will relapse at times. They need support not a big stick. By doing this you are going to increase the number of children in care 100 times. Believe me children in care are not supported and cared for as they should be (the foster system is struggling!); Increase that number and children in care will be second class citizens*

- *Substance use is a system of wider complex biopsychosocial issues that are occurring within a family system. Punitive measures will alienate parents from being honest and seeking assistance. Recovery from substance use can take time and the majority of drug users often have a background of complex trauma which requires a multi systemic approach to treat effectively*
- *Highly aggressive, in house support should be provided for psychoeducation around drug use and its long-lasting impacts as well as the crisis services being made available. Circumstantial cases where life is at risk then yes*

Foster care system

Some respondents held concerns for the current shortage of placements available to children in care and the instability for many children having multiple placements impacting on their ability to form attachments:

- *I agree that there needs to be a stronger approach to substance misuse by parents. My MAJOR concern with this is it there are not enough foster carers as is and young children are being placed in residential care. By implementing a no second chance rule, more and more children will be placed into residential care models. This cannot go forward without significant changes to funding and support for foster care and residential placements. If funding and support is not increased in this area, this proposal is useless and will harm their children more*
- *Children should be placed with family first and foster care as a last resort. The Department of Child Safety is supposed to follow this model already, but this is not always the case. Proper sourcing of family connections needs to be a crucial part of this stage*
- *A lifetime drug habit is hard to break - parents will ultimately fail if they have two chances. This will lead to a flood of children entering out of home care which will completely CRIPPLE the system - we already have children who experience of upwards of 15 placements within their first year of care. This creates SYSTEM ABUSE and causes harm to children*
- *This is too harsh. Taking children from families should be an absolute last resort. We currently have a placement crisis and extreme volumes of children are being taken into care. The system*

cannot keep up with the volume of interventions as is. It will mean babies and young children will be placed into residential care which is highly detrimental

- *It won't happen, again, because there are not enough resources. Until the Department looks at foster care as a job and pays them what they should be paid there will never be enough carers. The amount of people who would test positive a second time would be HUGE!!!! And that's not even taking into account the parents who just refused to UT*

Impact on parenting

Some respondents highlighted that not all parents who have substance abuse issues are placing their children at risk. Risk assessments were noted to be the required test to determine if a child was removed from their parents' care:

- *It is possible to use substances in a stable manner without major adverse social, physical or psychological impacts. Substance use in this context means that parents who use substances may never have any adverse impacts of their substance use on the children or family unit until drug testing identified them as a drug user and mandates the additional burden of compulsory intervention and the removal of their children. There is a serious undersupply issue for both specialist drug rehabilitation services for parents and for foster carers. Where were these children go if the services and foster care is simply not available? Additionally, data demonstrates that children often experience more harm once in foster care and this places children at unnecessary necessary risk of harm that would otherwise not have occurred. This echoes the same policy as removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in to care. Are we attempting to create a second wave of forcibly stolen generations based on people's use of substances regardless of whether they experience harm to children or family unit as a result of that use?"*
- *If this occurs it will likely result in the needless removal of thousands more children and the child protection system will not cope. A drug abuser does not mean a child abuser - they are not one in the same. Children should only enter care because they are at significant risk of harm and a parent returning a positive drug test does*

not equate to a child being at risk of harm. Risk assessments should take place rather than mandatory removal

- I don't think it is as simple as failing two drug tests and your children are taken away from you for good. I feel that just focusing on drug use is short-sighted and not looking at the bigger picture. The focus should be on the harm caused to the children by drug addicted parents. If child abuse is occurring the children need to be taken away and given stability and love. Just because someone is addicted to drugs does not mean they are abusing or harming their children*
- Although drug and alcohol issues are sometimes a concern for high risk families this does not always mean it is the issue that is placing the children risk of harm or that they have been harmed. Entrenched poverty, homelessness, mental health, the lack of support/care options and other issues are underlying drug and alcohol problems, and no second chances model will create further problems with our system and foster care placements*

Agreement with proposed policy

Some respondents agreed with the proposed policy stating that they believe that the child's safety is paramount:

- Yes, and on that note how about bringing compulsory sterilisation for males and females so they don't continue populating the world with children they'll never be able to care for and in so costing the country billions of dollars every single year. I'm all for Human Rights but what about the poor innocent children's rights? They have done none of this and the overall problem is with the system - it favours the parents and not the children*
 - Child safety and security needs are paramount. There is always an opportunity for parents to reverse orders in the future*
 - I agree with this initially however if the parent has rehabilitated and is proven to have clear testing. I believe they should have a fair chance at having their children back in their care*
 - These are our most vulnerable children, and they need not to be at risk. They are entitled to be in a safe nurturing environment. Parents need to be given opportunity to seek support but when they don't the children need to be removed*
- These children need a chance to break away from their parents/guardians/carers if they cannot stay clean. Children and foster carer's form an amazing bond and it is constantly disrupted by two lenient regulations around parent/carers access to these children. They are so confused and misguided when these plans change constantly*

Disagree with proposed policy

Many respondents disagreed with the policy stating that it is draconian and punitive, and the trauma sustained by the child will have far more negative consequences:

- Bahahahahaha.... Then you'll have to fix the foster system too! Also is a residential setting better than a home setting for teenagers and those not of "desirable" foster age? This idea is preposterous and again you need to address the reasons for drug use. If you don't have the services and expert staff to do that, this will just see more kids in the foster system with disrupted/ interrupted attachment styles resulting in higher youth mental health (in which there is NO SYSTEMATIC SUPPORT) perpetuating dysfunctional patterns in their own families. Harm/risk reduction in drug use is what you need to look at*
- Strongly disagree! We know that putting a child into out of home care is the single most traumatic thing we can do. It's not black and white in most cases*
- No second chance model = extremely punitive and authoritarian. This places more pressure on resources and will lead to more disruption and trauma for children. Also, this does not recognise the difficult journey for parents with substance use who may test positive but are otherwise engaged with treatment programmes and actively working with services towards their recovery*
- Substance misuse is not 'go to rehab you're cured and never use again' scenario. People relapse numerous times on their road to recovery. Once again, no knowledge in this complex field. Where will the government find foster carers? There is already a shortage for foster carers and an entire new demographic similar to the stolen generation will emerge. Creating more mental health issues and thus more substance misuse. Yet again showing*

what damage could be done when policies such as these are developed by people with no knowledge in the field!

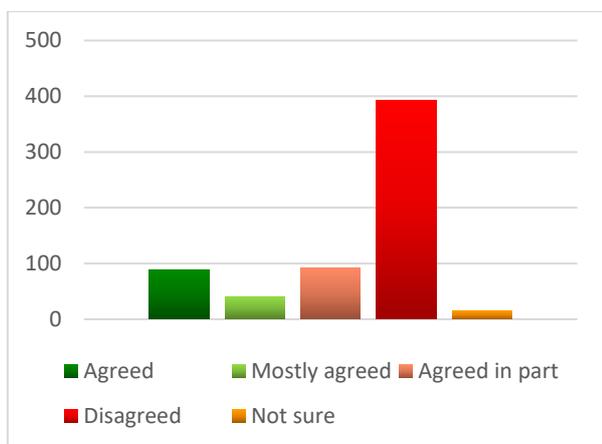
- *THIS IS DISGUSTING!!! I literally cannot even stomach this question in order to write a coherent response*
- *Strongly disagree!! It does not even address the fact that learning new skills and ways of being always has lapses and setbacks. Once again it seems a draconian measure to disadvantage the vulnerable populations*

Employees of Government agencies

Of the 629 employees of Government agencies who answered this question:

- 88 (13.99%) agreed with the proposal
- 40 (6.36%) mostly agreed
- 92 (14.63%) agreed only in part
- 393 (62.48%) disagreed, and
- 16 (2.54%) indicated that they were not sure

Four respondents skipped this question.



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

Current out of home care system

The majority of respondents made comments relating to the current out of home care system including foster carers, kinship carers and residential care (ressy). Whilst most of this group disagreed with the proposed policy, even those agreeing stated that the biggest barrier for this policy is the lack of placements for children who could provide trauma informed care:

- *We do not have enough foster care or residentials to meet our current placement requirements. Children under the age of 6 are being placed in residentials due to no family-based placements being available. Older children are having to be put in hotels with youth workers because we don't have enough residentials. You cannot remove children for two positive tests without having an extremely large pool of available placements as this proposal would significantly increase the number of children being brought into care. Placement instability adds to our children's trauma and their mental health. Most often, the Department's inability to provide a safe and stable placement creates our high-risk teenagers*
- *There are not sufficient foster care placements for children currently requiring care. It is not uncommon to be waiting well after 8:00 PM for a placement due to limited options and having to transport children across hundreds of kilometres to access placements for just one night*
- *This is a punitive model that suggests that children are always better off in foster care and unfortunately our foster care system has many flaws. We also don't have the number of foster carers we currently require and if even more children were coming into care, we would start seeing more children placed in residential care, due to not having other placements available. Residential care may result in more harm to the children's physical, emotional and mental well-being. This proposal also underestimates the importance of family and the research that shows the positive impacts that can come from working with our families, rather than placing children in a flawed out of home care system*
- *Absolutely not. This proposal is ill conceived and ill-informed. International child protection research and numerous commissions of inquiries over the past several decades have proven conclusively that the state makes a very poor parent. Also, removal of children from their families of origin and placing them in foster care does not guarantee that they themselves will lead a drug free life. Research and testimony from adults who were children in care and children and young people who have recently left the child protection system, clearly tells us that removal from their family of origin is likely to be traumatic, damage emotional attachment*

and cause massive disruption to children, resulting in high levels of mental health issues. Children in care are also vulnerable to abuse in care, as being proven time and time again by inquiries which examined removal policies and practises, There is also a huge financial cost in removing children from their families and growing the out of home care sector. Work towards change takes time and if there is a view that child safety does not have a practice of taking children into care, or taking them into care promptly enough, current data in Queensland showing the rising number of children in care should be examined

- This is appalling, ill-informed and ignorant idea. We currently have a broken system where we do not have enough placement options for children deemed at risk. This shifts the focus on the parent's behaviour, punishing the parents and taking away from the children and the children's needs
- No - addiction is a serious illness and children in foster care's lives aren't necessarily better. More support from the start and early family mapping to build support around children and for children to be placed with family instead
- Siblings are being separated and systemic trauma is occurring regularly which does have an impact on the child's emotional growth and stability
- This is likely to impact parents completing substance testing in the first place. The biggest concern is that currently the out of home care system is in crisis and there are already children subject to Departmental intervention who have no idea where they're staying night to night. There is limited existing placements for our children and such a scheme will only continue to drown a vastly under service system. This will mostly impact the children who are being removed from homes, although unsafe, and then place them in a system that has no capacity to provide a stable roof over their head, let alone consistency and nurturing care environments
- Has thought been given to how these children would be placed? The placement system is so broken that the children are more likely to be abused and neglected in care than their own, less than ideal, homes. That is, if you can find a placement. There are so many children under 12 in residential and being put in hotels now or

being bounced around from emergency placement to emergency placement each night. There are children who have been in care for two weeks and have had eight placements

Removal based on safety and risk assessments

The overwhelming view expressed by the majority of respondents was that drug use does not always equate to a child being at risk of harm and that assessments to determine the impact the parental drug use is having on the children should be the basis for bringing children into care:

- I do not believe that it is appropriate to implement a one size fits all approach to parental drug use in child protection cases. The Department currently makes thorough assessments in relation to parents' drug use, and the impacts that their drug use has or will likely have on the children into the future. Children should be removed from their parent's care, if and only if, the parents' drug and alcohol use is deemed to have caused harm or pose an unacceptable risk of harm to the children in the future
- How the drug use is impacting on parenting is more important than just a positive test
- A case by case approach must be maintained with risk to the child or children at the forefront of decision making. To remove children, recognising the trauma inflicted by family separation. (Again, focus must be on developing policy and practise informed by research to drive change)
- I don't support mandatory removals for two positive drug tests because it is shifting the focus away from the children's well-being. Drug use may not necessarily mean that a person is unable to care for their child. The focus needs to be on the children's well-being and whether the parent is able and willing to care for the child, not on test results in isolation. Drug use is one relevant factor, but people's lives are complex and not one test can show whether a person is willing and able to care for their child
- Just because a parent is using drugs doesn't mean that it impacts SIGNIFICANTLY on the child's safety as per the Child Protection Act. This could be a way to intrusive for some families. Some parents can also put in safety measures such as grandma looks after the child

when the parent uses. Research shows where safe, a child is always better with their family

- *The presence of drugs in a parent's system is only part of the story. It is the behaviour or the impact of the substance use which needs to be understood and assessed, in the context of many other factors. Drug addiction is a very complex medical, social and personal issue that impacts individuals in many ways. A one size fits all approach is not going to work. There would need to be much better availability to remote and regional areas for accessibility to rehabilitation services first for this to be possible*
- *There are many factors that determine whether a child is at risk of significant harm including the child's own abilities an independence. A parent using ice may still be providing 'good enough' care*

Impacts of removal on children and parents

Many respondents commented on the negative impacts and the continuation of intergenerational trauma by removing children from their parents' care. Many comments were made regarding research that shows the poor outcomes of children in care:

- *The outcomes for children placed in at a home care are horrific. This is ill informed and not child focused. This will lead to children being traumatised and cause long-term irreparable damage*
- *This presupposes that a) it will be successful of itself in breaking the cycle and b) that the foster care system has both the capacity to meet the need and is a safer, better alternative; when it is known that for the majority of children being able to remain safely with their family of origin is the most helpful option for them to develop into happy, healthy, whole individuals ready to take their place in the world. This is evidenced not only through studies throughout Australia but also from overseas jurisdictions as well*
- *There is an emotional impact of children coming into care. At times, the trauma of coming into care can equal the trauma of being in parental care. This is not a result of actual harm being perpetrated but by the impact of being removed from their parents, living with people who are foreign to them and having limited access to family. This approach punishes the children as much as the parents and will lead to further social cost as the children reach adulthood*

- *The percentage of children and young people that successfully reunify to at least one parent once entering the child protection system is sadly very low. The government needs to work on preventing children coming into the foster care system, not putting in place strategies that significantly increase the number of children and young people that will enter the system*
- *This will not break the cycle of drug abuse. Removing children from parents would likely increase the parents drug use, reducing their chance of the children being reunified to their care. The care system is so broken that outcomes for kids are often no better than remaining in their families care*
- *What about the cycle of intergenerational trauma? When these children get removed, as proposed, who is going to take them? We already have nowhere for children to go and have 5-year olds in residential settings. We are at the CSSC until 11:00 PM with children waiting for a placement. A group of three siblings are usually sent to three different placements often on opposite sides of the region*
- *Placing children in foster care must be a last resort. There is as there is so much more emotional harm that can result from moving a child from their family of origin. Their safety is paramount they should never be a one size fits all approach*
- *This is based on a fallacy that there are wealth of foster carers ready to take these children and able to provide them with better outcomes. The act of removing a child, even when warranted, creates lasting trauma for a child. Money invested in increasing drug testing would be better spent increasing foster care placements and supports provided to foster carers*
- *It MUST be asked whether the removal from home is more or less damaging to the child than the drug use by the parent. This cannot be a blanket rule and sounds like it has been conceived by someone with little to no knowledge of attachment and what disrupted attachment does to a child. It also indicates complete ignorance to the availability of foster parents which is a constant issue with the current levels of care required let alone for more children*

Support for parents

Many respondents highlighted that parents require support to address their substance misuse issues and removing their children will likely lead to the children remaining in care. Many comments were also made that Child Safety Officers are able to safety plan with parents to support them safely care for their children whilst they are reducing their substance use:

- *Disagree completely – ‘because the cycle of drug abuse must be broken’, is silly if anything it makes more sense to read, ‘because the cycle of child abuse must be broken’. Removing a child rarely breaks the cycle of drug abuse for a parent in fact, if the threat of a child’s removal doesn’t break addiction, it is clear that they are either not going to break it or they don’t have the tools to do so. It is rare for a parent not to love their child or want them in their care - willpower and desire alone is not enough to break the drug habits. Parents need specialised ongoing and lengthy support to do this bringing more children into care will not break this*
- *The government needs to have a more holistic approach. Drug rehab centres where clients can take their children, keep their attachment and seek help*
- *Change will take time, even with the most motivated parents. Most people relapse a few times before they can stop altogether, people who are genuinely attempting to change would do better with support. Safety plans such that if they go ‘off the rails’ usually due to increased psychosocial stresses, they can access supports to keep their children safe so they can resolve the issues and resume their attempts at employing alternative coping strategies*
- *More needs to be done to prevent child safety getting involved. More proactive work rather than reactive*
- *The underlying causes driving cycles of drug abuse need to be addressed. It is possible for Child Safety to work with parents to keep their children safe, whilst they are recovering from alcohol and drug abuse. This is assessed on a contextual basis and with an effective safety plan which makes provisions for building safety and support networks, so children do not have to be exposed to the parents use/relapse. This is preferable to traumatising children and families especially when our care system is already overburdened and there is well documented evidence of children cycling through placements.*

We should be focusing on building the fabric of society rather than breaking it down with reactive knee jerk reaction which only serve to increase the workload at the tertiary end of child safety

- *This approach only serves to promote lack of honesty openness and transparency. Families are going to be more honest about their substance misuse if they don't feel judged and there are realistic expectations about their recovery. Many parents’ substance misuse is associated with their own trauma and is a coping mechanism. Removing their children if unnecessary, is only going to ostracise them and drive problematic behaviours further*
- *Child safety is not a punitive process where the children become punished (removed) due to parental addiction. Increasing suitably skilled services would be better use of money than otherwise would be needed for foster care*
- *Parental substance use needs to be seen in the context of other complicating factors, such as mental health, limited social networks, intergenerational trauma and domestic violence. Until there are sufficient services to address these issues in a preventative capacity with appropriate cultural capacity, responding only to drug use will not be beneficial for the children in the long term*
- *I disagree this is not an evidence-based approach. Research clearly points to harm minimisation approaches as having greater traction than the than that of enforced abstinence. It also doesn't take into account how people recover from addiction nor does it take into account the reasons people use substances*
- *Removing children does not break the cycle of drug use it creates stress, anxiety, shame and guilt and that leads to more drug use to cope. More support services are needed*
- *This is a grossly misinformed proposal that is wrong on so many levels. This will lead to issues of trauma and pain and a generation of children who could have successfully been supported to remain safely with their parents, through the implementation of family and professional support*

A new stolen generation, human rights and legislation

Some respondents commented that the proposed policy would lead to a new generation of 'stolen children', breach the human rights of children and contravene the Child Protection Act 1999:

- *We have to create adequate support for people with addictions first, just removing kids will create another wave of stolen generation. Foster care is not perfect either*
- *Where possible we need to assist parents through rehabilitation. How are we contributing to a second stolen generation if this proposal is implemented?*
- *This is extremely damaging and disruptive to children. Many parents using drugs are still able to provide better care than an overburdened placement system - new stolen generation!*
- *Removing generation after generation of Indigenous children due to one form or another of parental substance misuse while blatantly refusing to acknowledge their collective pleas for addressing systemic racism and prejudice and to have their trauma in history acknowledged as a society this is a collective point of shame. We cannot equate to be addressing societal and individual circumstances. We cannot separate them either when designing child protection policies*
- *Tell me how the system can support this. This is aggressive, not child focused and against people's human rights. Certainly not in line with the child protection paramount principle - to make decisions in the best interests of the children now and into the future*
- *Breach of human rights, no evidence base and a simplistic policy!*
- *No second chances is in complete contrast to a framework for practice that is strength based and collaborative (working as per Carmody recommendations)*
- *This suggestion is contrary to the principles of the Child Protection Act 1999 and does not reflect an understanding of the complexities of drug and alcohol use and its interface with child protection. Additionally, this proposal shows no cultural considerations into the impact this would have on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families*
- *This also wouldn't reflect the current child protection legislation requirements in QLD.*

Where it can't be proven that the drug use is having a significant impact on parenting and the safety of children the legislation wouldn't support removal

- *The judicial system needs an overhaul in this regard. If this becomes law then magistrates will have to follow it, but at this stage it is more discretionary for the magistrates to agree with placing a child in care under such circumstances*
- *The court would never grant orders in these circumstances, it's very punitive and not in the spirit of natural justice*
- *Studies show that drug addiction is a health condition You would need to overhaul the health system and the judicial system to impose greater sanctions on drug possession and trafficking. You cannot remove children from parents if other areas within the government are not as strict. If there is going to be any changes to drugs this would be a health, courts, police and child safety reform. A big body of work but long time overdue given the significant number of parents that use methamphetamines*

Agree with proposed policy (but....)

A few respondents agreed with the proposed policy of the 'no second chances' model however had additional thoughts about other actions that they believed would need to be implemented:

- *I feel this is a good idea as far as removing the child, but I don't feel that this should be a permanent decision. If the parent does end the cycle of drug abuse down the track*
- *People generally choose their addiction over children – will lead to significant increases in the number of children in care though. Who's going to care for them?*
- *Only if there are adequate numbers of specialist programmes available to support, to realistically engage the adults. There can be no barriers between them receiving timely addiction treatment if losing their children depends on it*
- *Yes, parents who are under the influence of an unmonitored substance cannot provide appropriate support to children in their care*
- *Agree, however, significant investment needs to be placed in this area to ensure that parents have access to rehab/detox when they are ready/required. No point implementing this*

unless the infrastructure is there to support families, current wait times are a deterrent for parents and result in more children entering and remaining in out of home care for longer than they need to

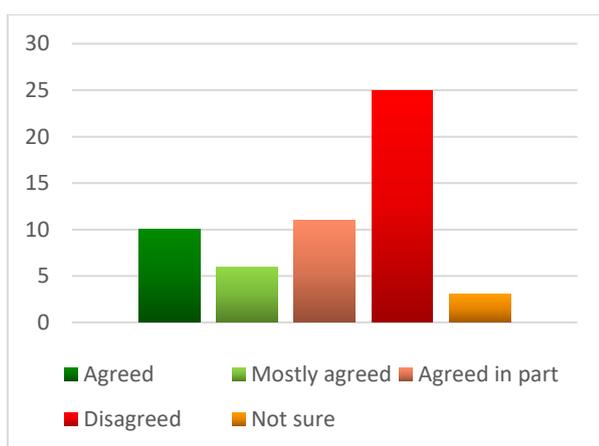
- *For a proposed amount of time to give parents time to engage and learn new parenting skills*
- *I agree that children should be removed on a second positive drug test, but there should be a chance for reunification if the parent can demonstrate that they can stay clean for a period of time*
- *Methamphetamines makes for dangerous and erratic parenting and no child deserves to be left with parents who use such drugs*
- *One chance! Stop paying their Centrelink and see how things change!*

Employees of peak bodies, Industry, and representative groups

Of the 55 employees of peak bodies, industry and representative groups who answered this question:

- 10 (18.18%) agreed with this proposal
- 6 (10.91%) mostly agreed
- 11 (20%) agreed only in part
- 25 (45.45%) disagreed, and
- 3 (5.45%) indicated that they were not sure

One respondent skipped this question.



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

Foster care system

Many respondents held concerns that the foster care system would not be able to cope with the number of children that are likely to come into care because of this proposed policy:

- *I would like to ask the government where they think all these children are going to live, if they are removed because their parents have had two positive drug screens? The out of home care system is overwhelmed and the ability to approve kinship carers is restricted. The resources to source and assess kin come from the already overworked CSO's completing investigations or case management of these families*
- *Not sure there is enough carers to support this. There is already a shortage of foster carers*
- *Get trauma informed and where the hell will we place these children? Oh yes, the detention facility?? NOT!!*
- *Agree BUT you need to overhaul the foster care system. Biological parents even the abusive ones still get too much say over what the foster parents do. Please go and speak to a foster parent advisory group, it's disgraceful what these awesome people who step in, when parents can't or won't, have to go through*
- *If we are to implement the no second chance model, our child protection sector would not cope. Additional funding, infrastructure and support needs to be in place so that children who are removed are placed into a safe well-resourced home. The trauma relating to the removal is high and the options for our home care are limited and unsustainable*

Impact on the child

Many respondents commented on their concerns for the negative impact and trauma that children are likely to experience if they are removed from their parents' care.

- *Kids who go into foster care are traumatised by their removal this will not break the cycle, it will traumatise another generation who will not have the skills to parent because of the trauma*
- *The cycle has to be broken but the children are the foremost concern, removing children is sometimes super stressful to the children not the parents*

- *This policy completely flies in the face of current legislation policy and practise frameworks that the government and experts have been spending years building. This proposal is punitive and black and white which is not in line with social work practice and does not account for the massive margin of error a policy like this would carry and the massive amounts of harm it would inflict on children. Anyone who knows anything about drug addiction would know that removing someone's children would not eliminate drug use and that there is a lot of research around children with trauma who have grown up in the out of home care system who developed drug issues*
- *Traumatising children by removal from parents/family will not lead to better outcomes for them and there exists loads of evidence to support this view. It will also not assist the parents to break the pattern of drug use if they do not have their children with them. Often children can be the motivating reason to seek help for addictions. No second chances is a highly judgmental and punitive model that has no place in a just society that is working towards best outcomes for all its citizens. Stigmatising drives people away from supporting change, not closer to it*
- *This will cause more damage than not. Addiction is a disease; do you expect someone with depression to go to one counselling session and not have depression anymore? I believe you can put in consequences so that the parents understand the importance, but removing the child, even if the environment is safe, is causing further trauma to the child*
- *To me it always comes back to the impact on the child, this needs to be considered. Additionally, the type of drug is important if the drug use has a clear impact on the child, maybe this approach could be beneficial however*

Cycle of addiction

Some respondents disagreed with the no second chance model being an effective method to break the cycle of addiction:

- *This is not the way to break a cycle of misuse. Education and support for the family will see more sustainable change*
- *Cases need to be viewed in context. Many of these families need intensive support as they*

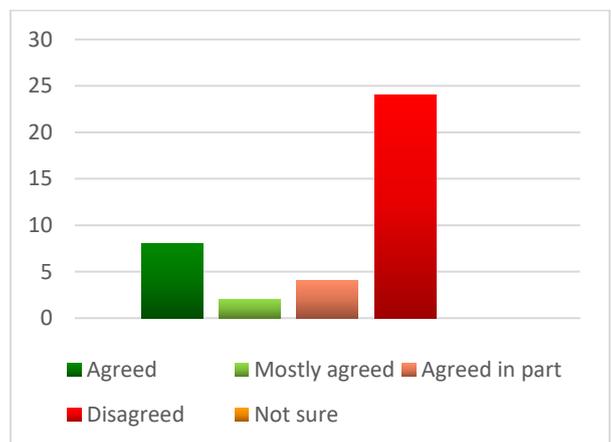
have often grown up in similar situations and need support to do better

- *I can recount many cases where sustained substance misuse was an issue and with hard work the families turned it around and the kids either remained in home or returned home. For some parents there is no hope but for most there is*
- *I don't believe this aligns with drug and alcohol medical research or with a research based harm minimisation approach. I believe that this policy could possibly separate some children from parents with drug issues where extensive support could have repaired the care and relationship. We must consult extensively with medical expertise and research in this area*
- *I don't believe this would work as addiction is rarely overcome the first or second time*

Academics

Of the 38 academics who answered this question:

- 8 (21.05%) agreed with this proposal
- 2 (5.26%) mostly agreed
- 4 (10.53%) agreed only in part, and
- 24 (63.16%) disagreed



11 of the respondents within this stakeholder group commented on their responses. Of the 11 comments several issues were raised with the proposed policy.

Purpose of the policy

A few respondents commented that this proposed policy would not break the cycle of addiction in accordance with its supposed purpose:

- *This model would do nothing for children and nothing for addiction and reflects high levels of poor education around drugs and addiction modelling*
- *Sorry, how will that break the cycle of drug abuse? Has anyone behind this ridiculous idea ever read a single piece of academia on the subject, like ever?*
- *Lacks in evidence based and is short term thinking. Strong hints of elitism and racism - if this is applied to all of society, given the principle here that drug use is highly problematic and children should be removed wherever this is evident, the rates of children coming into care would escalate exponentially*

Oppressive policy aimed at the socially marginalised

Some respondents felt as though the policy was aimed at families of a lower socio-economic background as wealthier families have the resources to arrange alternate care arrangements and less likely to be reported to Child Safety:

- *I'm sure plenty of middle-class parents abuse drugs but are able to make arrangements for their children to be cared for and don't fear child removal. This seems like further measures for surveillance and control of poor families in the community*
- *This is incredibly draconian. It is against the rights of the child - the UNCROC highlight the importance of a child's family in their lives, as does the CP Act and the Queensland HR Act. This will take us back decades, we don't address drug abuse by removing children, we address drug misuse by addressing the underlying reasons behind this. This punishing and punitive approach has no place in a western democratic country, it is actually quite insulting*
- *There are so many things wrong with this 1. Child Safety cannot break the cycle of drug abuse, that's the role of drug rehab services. 2. Children should be placed in care if there is not any other option to ensure their safety and wellbeing. This decision should be CHILD focused not parent focused. 3. There are insufficient foster placements available to meet the need*

now, where will children go? This is exactly why Carmody recommended strategies to reduce the demand on the foster care system. The foster care system would collapse entirely under this policy

- *Things are never black and white. Automatic application in the absence of understanding and evidence base is like a totalitarian state. Instead of Police, fund the judicial system effectively, so they can do the job that they already do, properly*

Support and services

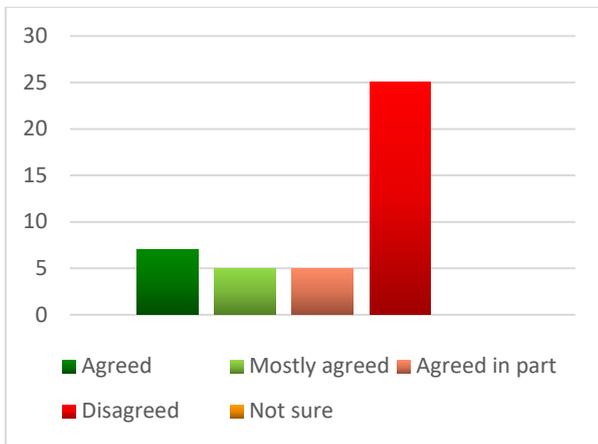
Some respondents felt that there are insufficient support services, especially rehabilitation services for parents to address their substance abuse issues:

- *Without sufficient rehab services this is a recipe for disaster*
- *Yo-yoing in and out of care and being left too long in bad situations has seen Resicare and extreme behaviours of children go through the roof. Some might see this as a stick but, at least this component is being backed up by a rehab programme*
- *Drug addiction is not a crime. If you want to solve a problem, get the drugs off the streets instead of criminalising people who are addicts. This is common sense stuff*
- *What about the parents who can parent appropriately with supports and use when the kids are with family on a weekend for instance?? Further, you would need the rehab services to support this.... There is evidence for many years about the number of adults and young people turned away from hospital rehab services....*

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:

- 7 (16.67%) agreed with the proposal
- 5 (11.90%) mostly agreed
- 5 (11.90%) agreed only in part, and
- 25 (59.52%) disagreed



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

Impact of removal of children

Many respondents commented on the trauma caused by removing children from their parents' care:

- *“Can I strongly disagree with this?! This blindly ignores the fact that many children are harmed in foster care and the very act of removing them from home can create far more trauma, than if they were left at home. Child removal should ALWAYS be based on a child's individual circumstances, vulnerabilities, and family context. It is also a guilt/punishment model that supposes that people have controls over their impulses. Drug addiction and child abuse are far more complex than this*
- *We cannot have a blanket ‘two strikes and you’re out rule’ as people aren't machines; everyone has different needs and issues, and they are complex and often intergenerational. We need to be focused on addressing the reasons why parents abuse drugs; not removing their children and having an increased risk of their children ending up with even more trauma because they've been removed. We cannot promise a perfect (or even better) outcome than if they are at home, with supports. In fact, the long-term outcomes for children in care are horrific, so if we cannot promise better, we need to do better to keep them at home*
- *Totally and completely disagree this is punitive and does not put children's needs first*
- *This shows no awareness of the scale of the problem and will create a stolen generation*

- *Strongly disagree - this is unlikely to be successful and will just cause more distress for the child and parent*
- *This is not helping parents or carers at all and will cause more trauma for the children*
- *This strategy in no way considers the impact on children, both of the parents drug use or removal from their family. Also, WHERE WILL ALL THESE CHILDREN BE PLACED???? The placement system is already struggling to meet the need*

Support for parents who misuse substances

A few respondents commented on the need for further support services including drug rehabilitation centres and in-home services:

- *I feel a preferred option would include parents receiving rehab rehabilitation and appropriately in-home support throughout ‘positive testing’ as opposed to removing children and/or young people (in-home support needed). Primarily because there are often pre-existing circumstances and/or conditions which need proper investigation, intervention and support i.e. domestic violence, family violence, poverty etc. Cycles (substance abuse) can and are broken when these and other issues are acknowledged and appropriately addressed*
- *Life is more complicated than that. Boy swallowed Universe should be required reading for all departmental staff and policymakers*
- *If adequate support is offered in the first attempt and they don't engage or take up the offer of help to change their addictions, then 100% yes*
- *It is really important to ensure the safety and welfare of children. It is also important that the wellbeing include supporting the ongoing life relationships with family members, inclusive of parents*
- *As long as there is capacity for immediate admission and support to rehab is available! What happens to parents who live regionally or far from rehab and supports?*
- *It's so much more complicated than that. This is simplifying a very complex issue. What about a reduction in use, what about a one off relapse but good protective factors and seeking help. Research shows that it takes a few goes and if parents are losing their kids after just one or two tests it will overload the system*

Lack of Foster Carers

A few respondents stated that there are not enough placements for children, especially in consideration of the projected rise in numbers of the children who will require care if this policy was enacted:

- *We don't have the carers available within the system to support the number of children who could/would end up in care as a result of this policy*
- *Apart from the trauma a child experiences by being removed there are not enough foster care as we already have 6 year old's in residentials I live in central QLD and do foster care assessments and renewals. I've been doing renewals for carers who have already had nine children in their care. I have not done one new general assessment since I moved up here at the beginning of the year*
- *It's an absurd idea. There are insufficient foster carers and I have investigated many instances of abuse is to children who are being fostered. Outcomes for foster children are generally poor. Many high functioning individuals abuse drugs and alcohol my belief radar fly below the radar and do not abuse their children*

Impact of drug use on parenting

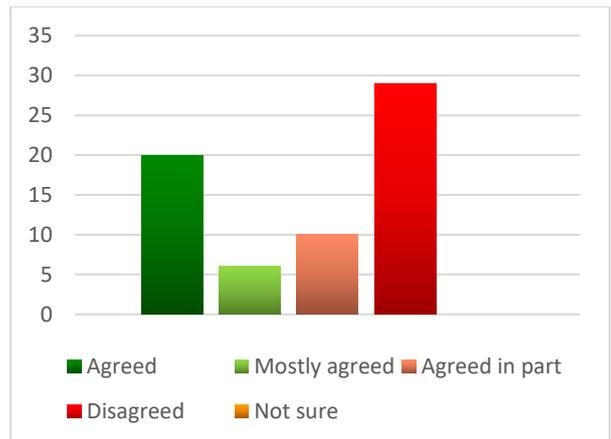
A few respondents stated that for removal to occur that an assessment needs to be completed to determine if they are at risk:

- *Dreadful idea. Need to take a case by case assessment. A positive test in its own right is not an indicator for if children are at significant risk.*
- *Context is everything*
- *Drug and alcohol use are significant factors in the harm of children. A more comprehensive approach is required to address these issues and the impact on children. In some instances, no testing is required to find that the child is in need of care and protection while in others, two positive tests would not require placement in foster care. This is a simplistic response to a complex problem*

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:

- 20 (30.77%) agreed with the proposal
- 6 (9.23%) mostly agreed
- 10 (15.38%) agreed only in part, and
- 29 (44.62%) disagreed



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

Support for the parent

Most respondents noted that parents require support to reduce their drug use and to be able to safely care for their children:

- *It takes time to be free of drugs and it must be understood that relapses will happen and most likely happen at times of high stress such as court times, meetings and DV situations*
- *I understand the basis of this, but parents need help and support not draconian law to remove more children from their parents*
- *How many children do you feel are going to end up getting caught in this rule?*
- *They need to look at support for abused parents in order for children to be safe with their family wherever possible*
- *If someone tests positive a second time what happened for the person to feel the need to continue to or simply use substances again?*
- *Children should only be removed under the most extreme cases where the parents are*

unable to provide to their needs, wellbeing, and development. There should be other frontline options possibly in-home support and counselling. It is often a mental health issue more than it is criminal which is the developing opinion

- Do not punish parents by taking away their children, the effect is devastating and long lasting. Education begins in the schools. A massive education programme will be far more beneficial than tearing families apart
- You can't break in addiction overnight, it takes time. They should they be given 12 months to sort themselves out - they have every right to fight for their children and fix what they have broken
- Targeted support and intervention for parents is needed

Disagree with the proposed policy

Many respondents commented that they did not agree with the proposed policy:

- I think this proposal runs a risk of way too many children being removed from families with nowhere else to go
- I think this strategy will lead to far more harm than good and the outcome (both long and short) would be devastating for the children and their parents
- A punishment system is not the answer
- I've never heard of anything so absurd
- Unreasonable!
- The problem I feel with this is, quitting drug use for some people can be much longer process than for others

Foster Care

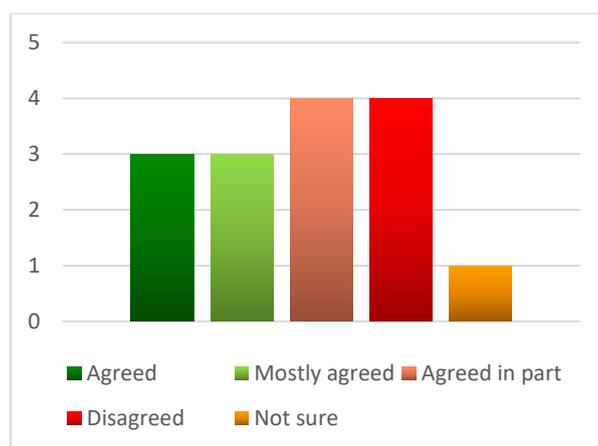
A few respondents held concerns that there are not sufficient quality foster carers:

- What quality of foster carer? Who is testing the foster carer?
- Family based placements with grandparents, aunts, uncles. Kinship care should be a priority rather than foster care
- An increase in foster care families would be needed

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:

- 3 (20%) agreed with this proposal
- 3 (20%) mostly agreed
- 4 (26.67%) agreed only in part
- 4 (26.67%) disagreed, and
- 1 (6.67%) indicated that they were not sure



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

Stolen Generation

1 respondent commented that they had concerns that with this policy that Queensland is heading towards another generation of stolen children:

- Two words. Stolen Generation. Not only for our Indigenous communities but every single Queenslander. Disgusting. Absolutely disgusting. Where the heck are they going to put these young people? We have no foster carers. Babies in residential services. This change will institutionalise children and young people in care

Trauma

One respondent commented on the reasons behind drug use:

- Drugs are self-medicating trauma; we need to treat the whole family systems. Family scapegoat systems are the real problem

Removal of children

One respondent commented on placing children in the foster care system:

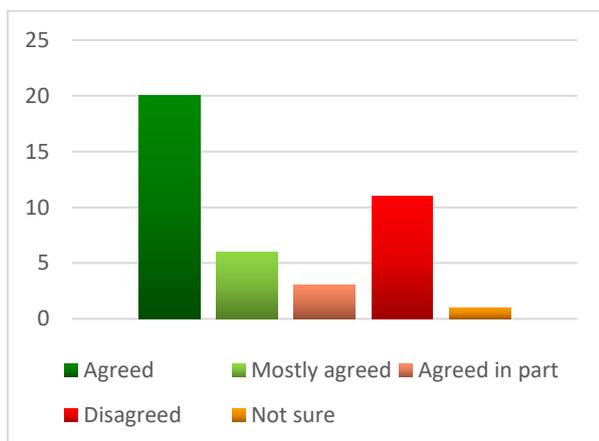
- *Should be placed with other family members if the parent is using so they aren't fully taken away from biological family members*

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

Of the 41 older people (over 25 years) with a lived experience of the child protection system who answered this question:

- 20 (48.78%) agreed with this proposal
- 6 (14.63%) mostly agreed
- 3 (7.32%) agreed only in part
- 11 (26.83%) disagreed, and
- 1 (2.44%) indicated that they were not sure

One respondent skipped this question.



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

Agreement with the proposed policy

50% of the respondents who entered comments agreed with the proposed policy:

- *Too many children have been lost or their lives ruined because parents have been given a second third or more chance*
- *Great idea but once again the resources are not in the community to support this work. There are not enough foster care placements and residential to fit additional children into the*

system. There is a real concern that young people entering the residential placement space are unfortunately coming into contact with well experienced minor criminals who encourage and teach young people to become criminalised, antisocial and dangerous individuals

- *Illicit drugs are a major contributor to child abuse*
- *Strong but consistent with the 'in the best interest of the child legislation'*
- *Foster care or alternate family care*
- *100% I think Australia needs to adopt the UK's way of working. Once the parents have failed to prove that they can care for their child or change, they lose all parental rights and the child should be able to be adopted, especially if they are under three years old. Those first 1000 days are so important and having the option of adoption could reduce many placements in the first few years*

Disagreement with the proposed policy

50% of the respondents who entered comments disagreed with the proposed policy:

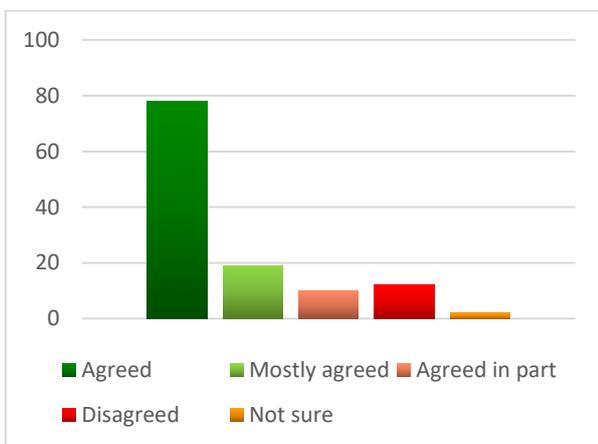
- *The cycle of drug abuse must be broken by the drug user, not by outside control. It cannot be done. Most drug users are suffering trauma and are self-medicating with legal or illegal drugs to cope. You cannot force healing only a loving, caring, and compassionate approach will bring slow incremental and lasting change to a drug user. It is foolish and a matter of ignoring the facts and history of drug use to think and act otherwise. LNP simply want to use force and power to make people change and sadly it is not in their power. They have to offer a model of care and understanding of the underlying reasons people used drugs if they want to bring change. Poverty, mental health issues, and trauma cannot be forcibly removed out of the drug user's life. It is a loving process takes time and patience - serve the families do not rule and try to control*
- *Do we want to remove more children? Children get abused in foster placements too*
- *I believe a more holistic approach needs to be taken here. Parents that are coached on a daily basis while the child or children remain in the custody of their biological parents*

- *No, fund the service centres to do random spot checks not warning parents first. Work more cohesively with parents not punitively, have counselling in the home for parents. Everyone deserves another chance; these kids need their families. Too many kids are destroyed psychologically by being removed permanently too quickly. Most parents are kids themselves – get services into the parents’ home*
- *Safety planning would be more suitable. Drug addicts will relapse*
- *Ensure any other safety security services are put in place for the family. Drug taking is the outcome of other problems as well as the cause*

Foster Carers

Of the 121 Foster Carers who answered this question:

- 78 (64.46%) agreed with this proposal
- 19 (15.70%) mostly agreed
- 10 (8.26%) agreed only in part
- 12 (9.92%) disagreed, and
- 2 (1.65%) indicated that they were not sure



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

Agreement with the proposed policy

Most respondents agreed with the proposed policy with strong views stated about drug use and parenting:

- *Only if these children are placed up for adoption and not left hanging in the foster care system*

- *How many children do we have to lose before this becomes law? No drugs if you want to parent*
- *Family and Kin must be considered as placement preferences to alleviate as much disruption and stress as possible for the children*
- *Children's lives need to be protected*
- *Why subject a child over and over again to give the parents chances? The children deserve a chance to settle*
- *The parents should have their Centrelink payments garnished to contribute towards the financial support of their children*
- *There's enough damage to these children already and someone needs to protect these kids somehow!!*
- *This will only work if you have a functioning alternate care system which we do not have currently. The current system is not equipped for a surge of children in care there are not enough foster carers to meet this need. Residential care for young children is a poor outcome*

Parenting capacity

Some respondents commented that the decision to remove a child should be on a case by case assessment to determine the parent’s capacity to put safety measures in place:

- *Drug testing does not clearly show that a person does not have capacity to care for their child. More comprehensive parental capacity assessments are required prior to removal of children. Removing children when a parent has two positive drug tests goes against the principles of the Act, as a parent might be willing and able to care for their child*
- *The question should be whether the children are in need of protection, not whether the parent is a substance user*
- *What other safety factors are around the child? Is there a sober parent or grandparent living with them? What time frames are being used, six months, a year, ever? Where all the new foster care is coming from? Ridiculous and unworkable!*
- *I think it needs to be looked at on a case by case basis*

Foster care system and further questions

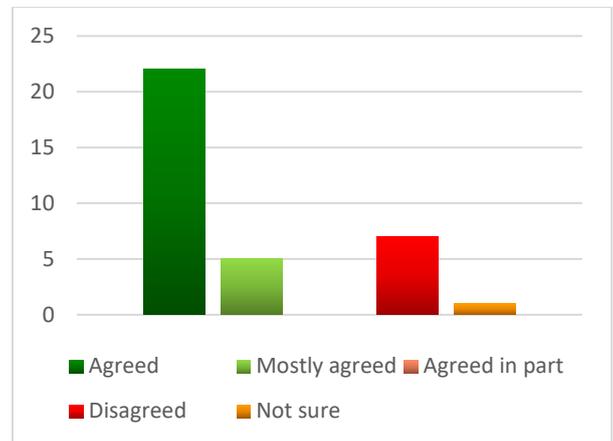
Many respondents made comments relating to the current foster care system and had questions regarding the specifics of the proposed policy:

- *You do not have anywhere near enough foster placements. Foster homes can no longer do the required job as kids can be given a phone by their parents and/or a bus ticket back. I can show you 12-year old's who now go back and sell drugs for the parents and the Department has no way to stop it*
- *Where do you think you get the carers from when they are treated so badly, and the intake is slowed right down because there aren't enough agency workers to support the system. And is it financially easier just to place those children into residential care? No child should live in residential, it just destroys their lives*
- *What happens if parents become clean?*
- *Put in foster care for how long? A week, a month a year or forever?*
- *Who is going to look after these children? What are the consequences for the children? This sounds diabolical*
- *This will never happen - my experience of Child Safety is that I see one excuse after another for abusers. What does no second chance mean? Is that no short term order but long term or guardianship?*
- *As long as the practices within foster care and the treatment of the VOLUNTEER foster carers is also overhauled*

Kinship Carers

Of the 35 Kinship Carers who answered this question:

- 22 (62.86%) agreed with the proposal
- 5 (14.29%) mostly agreed
- 0 (0%) agreed only in part
- 7 (20%) disagreed, and
- 1 (2.86%) indicated that they were not sure



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

Foster and Kinship Care

Many of the respondents made comments relating to foster care and kinship care. One respondent agreed with the policy stating that children will be provided greater stability in care than in the care of their parents:

- *This demonstrates the lack of understanding about fostering, kinship care or adoption that the LMP have. Where will all these kids end up? Queensland like other states does not have enough carers as it is*
- *I prefer that children be placed with a willing family member or close family friend if possible*
- *I know several foster parents using who don't get tested at all*
- *Absolutely - give our kids the much-needed stability. Not all kids should be reunified*

Support for parents

A number of respondents believe it would be more beneficial to support parents to access in-home support and children are better off remaining in their parents' care:

- *Children are best supported to remain in their family's home (when it is safe to do so) with the parents accessing in-home support of drug therapies, relapse programmes FIS and IFS services*
- *How about helping the parents get clean so they can care for their children. Also isn't the foster care system already overloaded? You would be just be putting kids at a risk of abuse*

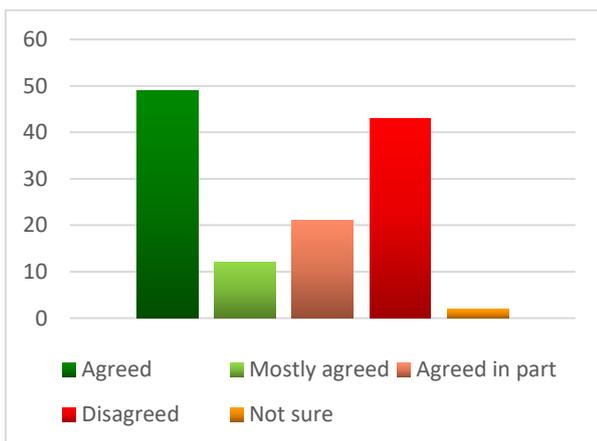
- Evidence shows that substance users will have a lapse or many lapses on their road to recovery. As long as they are participating in support programmes and trying to do the best for their child they need to be continuously supported through. Taking their children away isn't going to stop the drug use, it's going to exasperate it

Others

Of the 127 survey respondents who indicated that they did not belong to one of the previous groups or who identified with multiple groups:

- 49 (38.58%) agreed with the proposal
- 12 (9.45%) mostly agreed
- 21 (16.54%) agreed only in part
- 43 (33.86%) disagreed, and
- 2 (1.57%) indicated that they were not sure

Two respondents skipped this question.



58 of respondent within this stakeholder group provided comments.

Foster and Kinship Care

Many respondents held concerns for children who would be placed in foster or kinship care under this proposed model:

- *Where do you think the foster carers are going to come from? There is already a low number of foster carers now. Will this force be able to explore family to find suitable kin carers then to complete urgent kinship carer approvals? This will require an initial kin assessment completed and approved, ensure the new carer*

understands the standards of care, are referred and accepted with a carer agency all before it is then handed to it CSSC? There would need to be a very clear list of things to be completed before handing over so that the CSSC is then not finding backlog in 'setting up' new carers

- *Even saying this is an indication that this model fails to take into account the systemic trauma which is often MUCH worse than the trauma occurring for the child in the care of the parents. As a young person who was in care and subsequently now with 15 years' experience in work and child protection, working in the family law court context, the trauma experience in foster care had a longer lasting negative effect on adult functioning than the original family based trauma*
- *Kinship care should be the first option and family and extended family should be fully located. Foster care OK for emergency or second option only*
- *After all the stories I've been told by people who were placed in foster care, why do you assume they are safer in the care than in the care of their parents? There is not enough professional foster carers as there is - where are all these people going to come from?"*
- *Where are the placements to support this increase of removals? Another LNP suggestion was to increase payments to foster carers to incentivize more people to becoming foster carers. The foster care allowance is not a salary for foster carers, it is an allowance to provide funding for the child. Furthermore, incentivizing the FCA in this way would likely draw in persons who are not becoming foster carers in the best interests of children in out of home care*
- *Wholeheartedly agree - but new foster parent laws need to be enacted, too many children have come to harm under the care of them*
- *Abuse also happens in foster carers' homes*

Removal of children based on risk

Many comments were made relating to the need for risk assessments to determine if the children are in need of removal. Respondents cited that 'blanket rules' do not allow for professional judgement taking into consideration contextual information:

- *Only if the child is being harmed or at risk of harm. Blanket rules like this do not account for the complexity of cases. Professional and clinical reasoning and critical thinking of every individual cases is what is required to make sure children are receiving the right response at the right time to the degree necessary*
- *Under this model, state kidnapping is considered to be therapeutic. The crucial issue is whether or not children are at risk and that has not been considered in this question. It does not at all recognise the generational pattern, cycle of poverty stuff and the history of stolen and abused children of this country and its peoples. If this is done, then this intervention may seem like a continuation of that pattern*
- *No second chances model used when the risk of harm to the child is moderate to high*
- *It's a bit harsh. If the parents seem to have a placed appropriate mechanism such that there is not a serious risk of harm to the children, then this might be an overreaction*
- *Absolutely not. There are many high functioning parents who misuse legal and illegal drugs. What is required is a holistic assessment of risk in a network of practitioners who can support parents. Don't punish kids for parents' mistakes, above all else ensure they are safe*
- *Addiction is so much more complex. It is well researched as is the change process, the reason for removal needs to be based on risk and a proper assessment*
- *Drug use in and of itself isn't necessarily a significant child protection concern. The Child Protection Act 1999 states that the parental action or inaction must have caused significant harm or risk of significant harm to a child*

Impact of the policy on children

Many respondents commented on the impact of the proposed policy on children:

- *The model suggested here is providing children with no second chances and families with no second chances, rather than breaking the cycle of drug abuse, in fact intact families are thought to have some influence on positive outcomes for drug recovery. Take a hard line on trying to guide people into treatment by all means but this suggestion will cause lifelong irreversible trauma for children and families in my humble opinion, and further evidences why police officers should not have child protection powers in the absence of properly trained social workers and psychologists. Not to mention the further systemic trauma on Indigenous populations, many of whom have not even commenced to recover from the impact of the stolen generation! This is setting parents up to fail*
- *Yes, this is not about hurting people who are already down but rather about protecting innocent children*
- *Beware that children are not harmed during the period between the 1st and 2nd tests. Most illicit drugs lead to erratic and aggressive behaviour*
- *This is purely punitive and does nothing to resolve the child's problems*
- *Foster care impacts children more than their parents. Decisions should be made in a case by case basis*
- *The impact on children who could be removed unnecessarily and placed in foster care would be detrimental, without proper funding of services to support children later in life*

