

# The Carer Project

**Submission to the Inquiry into the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in the removal and placement of Aboriginal children in South Australia.**

**February 2023**

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## **1. What would you like to tell the Commissioner about your experience with the removal and placement of Aboriginal children in South Australia?**

Foster and kinship carers would like to work with the Aboriginal community to get clarity around the placement of children with Aboriginal heritage. Carers report that Aboriginal children who were settled and considered permanent family members with non-Aboriginal carers were removed (with no further contact to be had with the Carer- sometimes having been the Carer for years). The Aboriginal children were then sent to relatives they did not know and carers report the placement broke down and the children were not returned to them (as they should have been under the Placement Principles) but then placed in Resi Care. These are not one off stories.

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## **2. How were Aboriginal family and community involved in discussion and decisions about the care and placement of the child(ren)?**

It appears that when a new caseworker at DCP takes over from another worker, they start the files all over again without considering how settled the child is, how engaged the Carer is with the Aboriginal community etc. Carers have not reported any consultation opportunities with the Aboriginal community.

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## **3. In your experience what worked well?**

Carers report they have just been told the child is being removed to an Aboriginal relative. We need an open dialogue as to what type of placements the Aboriginal community sees as positive for children of Aboriginal heritage.

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## **4. In your experience what didn't work well?**

Removing Aboriginal children from families (carers) who were providing a stable life with all the linkages to the Aboriginal community being requested of them. Only to have a new placement break

down and find out the child was moved to Resi care.

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**5. What do you think can be done to improve things?**

We need an open dialogue. Many carers grieve the loss of their Aboriginal child as they believed the placement was long-term. It has traumatized their children who can't understand why a "brother or sister" has been removed and never to be communicated with again. This appears to go against the Attachment Principles promoted by DCP.

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**6. Is there anything else you would like to tell the Commissioner?**

The Carer Project is a movement of foster and kinship carers looking to improve carer circumstances thereby improving the lives of children in care. Another important aspect we would appreciate the Aboriginal community's support is getting carer standing in the courts. Kinship carers do not have standing in the Reunification and Youth Court, yet many times they know the circumstances of the child's issues better than anyone.