



Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA - Inc
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Ms. April Lawrie
Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People
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**Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA 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**

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and respect the traditional lands of the Kurna people, their attachment and relationship to Country, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We extend this respect to the traditional custodians of land beyond the Adelaide region and the Greater Adelaide Plains, and acknowledge the cultural authority of Aboriginal peoples. CF&KC-SA acknowledges that sovereignty was never ceded, and supports the need for a constitutionally entrenched First Nations voice.

About us

Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA Inc. (CF&KC-SA) is the independent peak representative body for South Australia's approved foster and kinship carers (Carers). We are a not-for-profit, membership-based organisation, and provide a *free* advocacy service to South Australia's entire foster and kinship Carer community, one that includes more than 3,000 individuals. Our organisation carries out two main functions: individual advocacy and systemic advocacy. We began over 20 years ago, and for many years, this advocacy service was run voluntarily by Carers, for Carers. In July 2018 (after a rigorous tender process) the Department for Child Protection (DCP) awarded us with triennial funding to run the very first *funded* foster and kinship Carer Advocacy Service situated in South Australia. In July 2021,

the same department afforded us additional funding to continue our important work for another three years. For full details of our organisation's work, primary functions, activities, and achievements, please visit our website at www.cfc-sa.org.au.

Why we are making a submission

Our submission is motivated by strong anecdotal and empirical evidence that relate to this Inquiry's Terms of Reference. All evidence is drawn from our individual and systemic advocacy work, which is to support and advocate for family-based Carers who care for children and young people under the Guardianship of the Chief Executive. At the time of writing, our organisation holds more than 1,100 members who are predominantly Carers and include multiple stakeholders. We have also employed staff who, prior to joining CF&KC-SA, worked in roles within the child protection system such as residential care, respite care services, and the DCP itself; they bring with them immense experience and wisdom to the organisation's core functions. Having supported more than 1,657 Carers or their representatives since July 2018, we have observed and reported on a broad spectrum of challenges and issues related to our local child protection system, and our work is recognised and used by the DCP Kinship Team and many of the states foster care agencies subcontracted to attract, support, manage, and retain Carers. All evidence within this submission was collected via our individual advocacy observations, data from our casefiles, connection events for Carers, annual survey results, academic research, former participation in consultation requests, a consultation for this Inquiry, and more, as evidenced below. Given we are the peak representative body for Carers, our submission is a sound and credible contribution to your Inquiry.

Credibility statement to participate in the Inquiry

CF&KC-SA is keenly aware of the over representation of Aboriginal children and young people in out of home care under guardianship of the Chief Executive. CF&KC-SA is also aware there are not enough Aboriginal Carers across South Australia to care for all Aboriginal young people entering the child protection system. We are committed to ensuring the voice of our states Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Carers caring for Aboriginal children is fulsomely represented. It is our position that all family based Carers are the lifeblood of the child protection system. We are grateful and hold deep respect for all Carers who open their hearts and homes to young people needing a safe, supported and loving environment to thrive.

Our advocacy work provides a unique window into to the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP), how it relates to its five pillars, and the Terms of Reference for this Inquiry. This window offers both a broad point of view, and includes Carer experiences that are crucial to illustrate with the Inquiry. We are grateful for the opportunity to share what Carers have told us about their experiences and what we as an organisation have learnt over the

years, and feel privileged to make this submission on behalf of our members and Carers across South Australia. A detailed overview of our advocacy and support work is showcased below to provide credibility for our submission. These include:

- Reference groups to hear directly from Carers about matters they find most challenging (i.e. care concerns, respite, superannuation, Carer payments, parental entitlements, navigating the education system, and the Statement of Commitment with SA Foster and Kinship Carers).
- Subsidised opportunities for Carer members to undertake a Diploma of, and/or Certificate IV in, Community Services including a graduation ceremony traditionally hosted at Parliament House with the Minister for Child Protection in attendance.
- Regular information sessions based on what Carers need (either virtual or face to face).
- Two Carer led support groups (i.e. the Grief and Transition group, and Kinship Carers' support group).
- Delivering the National Foster and Kinship Care conference (2021), which attracted over 400 delegates and across Australia.
- Free access to our Advocacy and Support Service (5 business days a week, 9am to 5pm).
- Free access to our Connect and Inform Service (5 business days a week, 9am to 5pm).
- Opportunities for Carers to take part in public consultation requests facilitated by our organisation.
- Membership of the National Foster & Kinship Care Collective (a national committee that includes the interstate peak foster and kinship carer bodies).
- Our Annual open board meetings.
- Our Annual General Meetings.
- Our regular Family Fun Days.
- Our Annual Recharge Connection events.

We conduct an annual survey to hear from SA's foster and kinship Carers and have done so for the last 5 years. The survey reveals invaluable information about local Carer experiences (both positive and negative) and underscores areas we must address to improve experiences and outcomes in foster and kinship care. For example:

- Carers want adequate psychological, economic, and cultural support from support agencies and the DCP.
- Carers want processes and procedures that help Carers to provide safe, secure, and long-term placements.
- Carers want the care concerns process to be a fair and just practice.

- Carers want child protection workers to always consult them before making decisions.
- Carers want increased opportunities to connect their child or young person to culture.
- Carers want adequate support to meet their foster/kinship child or young person's needs.
- Carers want easy and frequent access to respite care.
- Carers want consistent, transparent, and respectful communication from the Department for Child Protection.
- Carers want adequate support for managing their foster/kinship child or young person's complex and challenging behaviour.

We address the systemic issues carers have raised with us by projecting the carer voice in the following ways:

- We participate in committees, reference groups, parliamentary and departmental public consultation requests (i.e., legislation reviews, Inquiries, royal commissions), and DCP related policy and procedure reviews and updates. For example, *we provided a 54 paged submission to the Independent Inquiry into Foster & Kinship Care in May 2022, and included input and suggestions on the child protection system from Aboriginal Carers and non-Aboriginal Carers caring for Aboriginal children and young people.*
- We establish and maintain bipartisan relationships with Parliamentarians, their advisors, Chief Executives for agencies, peak bodies, and departments, and other policy/decision-makers.
- We publish and share internal research, media releases and communications on foster and kinship care related issues, trends, and campaigns.
- We engage in research opportunities with undergraduate research interns and Honours students, Master and PhD candidates, and professional academics; this has led to the publication of peer-reviewed scholarly works (all research aims to improve foster and kinship care matters by driving or informing policy, procedures, and/or laws).
- We encourage a respected and understood Carer community and child protection system that is free of stigma and stereotypes related to the long-lasting historical prejudices against foster and kinship carers and the children and young people in their care.

Structure of our submission

We have structured our submission to first share Carer experiences and then provide findings and recommendations that reflect on those experiences in relation to the Terms of Reference. The recommendations aim to meet the Terms of Reference to the best of our ability, and are directly informed by the following items:

- Our submitted 54 page agency submission to the 2022 Independent Inquiry into Foster and Kinship Care.
- Our submitted group submission to the 2022 Independent Inquiry into Foster and Kinship Care re: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers caring for Aboriginal children and young people in foster/kinship care.
- Our submitted group submission to the 2022 Independent Inquiry into Foster and Kinship Care re: non-Aboriginal carers caring for Aboriginal children and young people in foster/kinship care.
- Our recent group consultation to hear from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal carers caring for Aboriginal children and young people re: the Inquiry into the ATSI CPP in the removal and placement of Aboriginal children in South Australia.
- Our evidence collected as part of being the peak advocacy body for foster and kinship carers.

What we want the Commissioner to know about carer experiences in relation to the Inquiry Terms of Reference

Term of Reference (a)

Removal of Aboriginal children (including the provision of support to family and kin prior to removal and for reunification)

With regard to the Terms of Reference (a), Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal foster and kinship Carers reported the ATSI CPP was not upheld by the DCP before the removal of the Aboriginal children in their care. Rather, the ATSI CPP was treated as a “tick box requirement” that did not support Carers to connect their children and young people to culture as intended.

Two Carers shared their experience of asking the DCP to support a vulnerable family member in order to prevent their children from entering care:

Carer 1:

I had been trying to gain support for the mother of two Aboriginal children by ringing the DCP. I'd been making reports to try get the support she needed, but the DCP removed both the children. They even claimed they had supported her, but they chose to put the children into care. When looking at the support for those identified as at risk, they, in my experience, didn't provide any of the interventions that were meant to occur.

Carer 2:

My sister was trying to get better but we had no support to make this possible. There was meant to be a transition to help her. Instead, there's trauma from being removed. The DCP wreck lives. They did not listen. My nephew was three and half when he went into care [5 years ago]. I know that my nephew was traumatised

because he was removed from a safe place. What's challenging is the DCP did not support us. We haven't had the medical and financial support we needed either...They don't accept your knowledge, or lived experience. They treat you like you're an abusive parent. When I ask for help, they don't help, and then I'm treated like a bad parent when things get difficult.

The decision to remove Aboriginal children, rather than to support the birth families, was made *after* the birth families sought supports. Carers raised concern that decisions such as these highlights the systemic assumptions made about Aboriginal families, Carers, and their abilities to provide and maintain safe and secure care for their own children and young people. Foster and kinship Carers caring for Aboriginal children shared with CF&KC-SA their bone deep fear of having their children removed at any time during placement, expressing a feeling of constant high alert that the Aboriginal children in their care would be taken from them without good reason.

An Aboriginal kinship Carer shared:

I will take a day off work the day before DCP social workers come to visit, so the house is really clean and tidy, and so I am not judged racially. I fear a box of toys on the floor, or books on the table will get me reported. It's different for Aboriginal families, we are always trying to prove we can parent.

We draw attention to the DCP "Bias in Child Protection Practice, Practice Paper 1 of 9 V1 November 2021", which states the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* must inform all decision making, with the safety of children and young people being the paramount consideration and that robust assessment (is) informed by Aboriginal Placement principles. The Practice Paper also states practitioners must make defensible decisions based on careful consideration of each child or young person's unique needs and circumstances and be able to articulate the rationales for their decisions.

Our submission supports the need to acknowledge, and be aware of, the potential for cultural bias when working with children and young people and families from cultural backgrounds that are different to the practitioner's. When working with Aboriginal families, it is imperative practitioners acknowledge and recognise the strengths that exist within Aboriginal families and communities. For example, it is common for Aboriginal children to receive care from multiple caregivers and to experience security in these relationships. The opportunity to develop these relationships supports and maintains an Aboriginal child's emotional health throughout their lives.

To conclude this part of the Terms of Reference, one Carer expressed the "DCP did [not] do much scoping" after the DCP's decision to remove their Aboriginal kinship child after a care concern was raised against them. Unfortunately, this led to their Aboriginal kinship child being placed into residential care. This DCP decision has brought upon the child immense trauma and disconnection with family, community, and culture. This brings us now to the next Term of Reference (b) whereby we report on Carers' experiences with the child protection system in relation to this exact issue.

Term of Reference (b)

Placement of Aboriginal children once removed (including connection with family, community and culture)

With reference to the Terms of Reference (b) many Carers we consulted who care for Aboriginal children and young people, report that the child protection system (including the DCP and their support agencies) fail to consistently support Carers to connect their Aboriginal children to family, community, and culture once removed and throughout their entire caring journey.

Carers who participated in the consultation for this Inquiry and our former group submissions to the 2022 Independent Inquiry into Foster and Kinship Care, expressed the DCP and agency workers regularly present as not understanding Aboriginal protocol, sensitivity, kinship structures, nor have cultural awareness, despite reports and confirmation they receive cultural training within their practice. The same is said for their knowledge and understanding of the ATSI CPP within the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*.

According to Carers, a prime example is contact visits between the children and young people and their biological family, commonly held in cold and sterile DCP locations that are culturally unsafe. Carers stressed the need to use and prioritise culturally safe spaces such as Neporendi Community Centre and Tandanya for these purposes, as articulated in recommendation 3 below.

Additionally, Aboriginal Carers caring for Aboriginal children felt racially judged whilst providing care, scrutinised for their parenting style and, regrettably felt they personally played an active part in a welfare and child protection system that has undermined and misunderstood Aboriginal culture and community for decades. Carers **“feel judged through a white parenting lens”** and **“insufficiently resourced to raise their children successfully.”**

As one Aboriginal Carer said since agreeing to kinship care:

I regret shaking hands with the system. It's safer to shut up than say anything at all.

A group of non-Aboriginal Carers provided input into the CF&KC-SA submission to the 2022 Independent Inquiry into Foster and Kinship Care. This group included non-Aboriginal kinship carers and non-Aboriginal foster Carers caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. It is recognised that the decision to place Aboriginal children with non-Aboriginal carers who are not kin, is at the bottom of the scoping hierarchy, however non-Aboriginal Carers of Aboriginal children and young people we consulted report they understand the deep and important responsibility bestowed upon them to ensure their children and young people are connected to culture, country and community. Unfortunately, throughout their caring journey, these Carers reported strong deficits in

both the DCP and their support agency's ability to meaningfully support Carers with connecting their children and young people to culture, country, and community including:

- The DCP inadequately utilising the family scoping unit in the initial stages of placing an Aboriginal child or young person.
- There is a lack of resourcing and support provided to Carers trying to help their Aboriginal children and young people to connect to culture, country and community.
- Agency and support workers are not educated sufficiently in how to connect children and young people to culture, and do not understand the complexity of this process for non-Aboriginal Carers.
- The DCP and support agencies have insufficient numbers of Aboriginal workers.
- There is widespread confusion around the Long Term Guardianship (LTG) process and how it should be executed in an Aboriginal context.
- The DCP either avoids discussing LTG with Carers, or states clearly it cannot progress when the child they care for is Aboriginal. These non-Aboriginal Carers reported being fully committed to their young person's safe connection to culture, community and country, but also wanted to plan for their family's future by using the LTG model in order to create permanency and security for the child or young person in their care.
- The LTG application process for non-Aboriginal Carers caring for Aboriginal children is not transparent, and regularly presents with inconsistencies amongst Carers. Carers call for the process to be clearly articulated in writing, for all priority partners to refer to, in order to ensure the process is fair and in the best interest of Aboriginal children or young person at the centre of care.
- There is substantial concern regarding connection to country for young people, not just across state jurisdictions but most importantly across First Nation's country jurisdictions (i.e. language, social and naming groups as identified on the AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia).

The DCP came and had a meeting eventually, but it was months and months before there was a proper meeting with support to cultural connection. I am a massive supporter of connection to culture but the cultural connection training offered in the DCP office was not about deep connection...The mother's grandfather was from the Stolen Generation, so he does not know where he comes from and so the mother doesn't either. The DCP have never done the research to find out where the mother belongs or came from. The cultural training was really shallow...

Connection has not occurred well at all. A good thing that happened was they let me be the person who facilitated access to my daughter's Aboriginal family. It made it more natural and less clinical. It worked very well, but none of that has happened since my young person was removed from my care.

When it came to participation, they always decided what she needed. I'm kept at arm's length most of the time. My participation in any decision making is nil. My young person's voice is not fully heard, and it's all diluted in the translation to the workers, from person to person... You are not recognised for your knowledge and experience for caring for your young person.

I don't feel like there was any community representative input. There was a Principle Aboriginal Consultant (PAC) involved, but it did not eventuate into a proper case design. The PAC shortly changed into a new PAC, as well. There has not been a care or case plan meeting that I've been directly involved in.

The quotes above highlight the child protection system's many failures to ensure each of the 5 pillars attached to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, is upheld and respected.

A summary of Carer input against each ATSI CPP Pillar is outlined below:

Pillar 1 Prevention: protecting children's rights to grow up in family, community and culture by redressing the causes of child protection intervention and family

Carers state there must be a whole of government, early intervention approach to support Aboriginal families thrive. All elements of early intervention support must be provided in a culturally safe manner with an authentic foundation of Aboriginal culture.

Carers call for high quality, mandatory and consistent cultural training for all members of the child protection workforce, with the ultimate "preventative" goal of wrap around holistic support for Aboriginal families.

Pillar 2 Partnership: ensuring the participation of community representatives in service design, delivery and individual case decisions

Carers report they do not feel Aboriginal community representatives are regularly and genuinely engaged in service design for their children and young people when they enter care. Aboriginal Carers state there is an overwhelming fear removal of their young person will happen "again and again" and that welfare checks (both announced and unannounced) by the DCP have a significant regressive impact of children and young people and their Carers.

Carers call for immediate, authentic and mandatory consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives at the beginning of any decision making and case management process regarding Aboriginal children and young people entering care and those already in care. This

is in addition to the compulsory attendance for all child protection workers in quality culturally sensitive training to guide case management practice.

Pillar 3 Placement: placing children in out of home care in accordance with the Principles established hierarchy

Carers report there is inconsistency in the placement of their young people in accordance with the ATSI CPP hierarchy, often kin/family are not scoped or considered, or supported to become approved Carers of their family.

Carers state even if they do receive “family based carer approval” and achieve all required checks and balances, their parenting is still overly scrutinised irrespective of how many children, grandchildren and great grandchildren they may have raised. Carers report their parenting is constantly judged through a “white lens” by child protection workers.

Carers call for the mandatory scoping of family as kinship Carers and the genuine support and assistance from the DCP to achieve approval, in a culturally safe manner. This is in addition to the compulsory attendance for all child protection workers in quality culturally sensitive training to guide case management practice.

Pillar 4 Participation: ensuring the participation of children, parents and family members in decisions regarding care and protection of their children

Carers state that the participation of children and their biological families, regarding their young person’s care and protection, is minimal at best. Carers unanimously agree it is crucial for young people to participate in their care planning needs, and in the instance they are too young to do so, that their Carer participate.

Carers report the impact of the DCP not facilitating their young person’s participation in their care planning is a breakdown of trust and reinforces the culture of “doing to and not with” young people. Carers believe tasks such as family access should be regular, consistent, fun, inclusive, culturally safe and above all, led by the needs and best interests of the young person.

Carers call for culturally safe and culturally informed engagement with children and young people, to hear first-hand what their needs are. This engagement must be immediate, regular and authentic and delivered in a culturally safe manner. It is crucial case planning regarding the young person must consider the voice of the young person, their family and Carers.

Pillar 5 Connection: maintaining and supporting connections to family, community and culture and country for children in out of home care

Carers unanimously agree that connection to culture for their young people is inconsistent and in many instances absent. Some Carers report this function is executed well, with agencies putting in

place robust plans and services to connect to community and culture. Other Carers share the concept of connection is spoken of at case planning, yet does not come to fruition, thus negatively impacting the young person. Possible reasons for the inconsistency include a combination of factors such as resourcing, staffing and service availability.

Non-Aboriginal Carers report feeling unsupported in their efforts to connect their young people to culture, community and country. They feel DCP and support agencies are not educated sufficiently in how to connect young people to culture, and do not understand the complexity of this process for Non-Aboriginal Carers.

Carers call for immediate cultural connection planning for Aboriginal young people as soon as they enter care. Connection to culture is a right. It is crucial this right to access cultural connection, to community and to land, is facilitated as a mandatory requirement for Aboriginal young people. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Carers must be included in this planning and the required resourcing and support implemented to facilitate this outcome for the young person on a regular basis.

Additional recommendations

In addition to the direct feedback relating to the ATSICPP presented above, we include a summary of recommendations based on Carer input, crucial the Inquiry consider. These include:

1. That the DCP and all support agencies ensure support for Aboriginal Carers is ongoing, consistent, non-judgemental, culturally safe and competent.
2. That the DCP and all support agencies ensure their workforce includes highly trained specialist workers who understand Aboriginal Carers and the issues they face whilst providing care.
3. That the DCP ensure Aboriginal services and cultural spaces available across SA (i.e. Neporendi Centre, Tandanya, the Living Kurna Cultural Centre) are recommended and used for meetings and contact visits for Aboriginal Carers and their children and young people.
4. That the DCP are sufficiently resourced to ensure every Aboriginal child or young person, at first point of entering the child protection system, is always provided thorough family scoping and their genogram in order to maintain their connection with family, community and culture.
5. That the DCP and all support agencies actively hear the families' and Carers' Aboriginal voice, and appreciate and validate their experiences as Carers.
6. That all support agencies ensure that all support for Aboriginal Carers is consistent and transparent, that negotiations with social workers are underpinned by culturally

appropriate and safe policies and procedures, and not based on a Carer's ability to speak up, or the social worker's subjective frame of reference/cultural bias.

7. That the DCP implement a culturally aware and safe organisational culture for Aboriginal workers to retain existing employees who are already culturally aware and safe.
8. That the Child Abuse Report Line apply a culturally appropriate lens when overseeing reports made about Aboriginal families.
9. That the DCP immediately set up children and young people with culturally appropriate counselling that employs narrative therapy (or another kind of culturally appropriate counselling).
10. That the DCP use assessment tools applied to Aboriginal peoples are culturally appropriate for, and carried out by, Aboriginal people.
11. That the DCP see, and respect, Aboriginal people as knowledgeable and capable of making informed decisions about their own lives and family members.
12. That the DCP and the Department for Education work together in order to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people.
13. That the DCP employees, and all other persons associated with the DCP (i.e. volunteers and students) receive sufficient education about Aboriginal peoples from both historical and contemporary perspectives, that this kind of education and training relates to the child protection system, is frequent and ongoing, and controlled by Aboriginal people.
14. That the DCP ensure its workforce has more than one Aboriginal representative in positions of leadership in order to apply a culturally informed and culturally safe decision-making process with checks and balances (as generally assumed in leadership positions).
15. That the DCP, when Aboriginal children and young people abscond their placements, both listen to and work with Carers to ensure their children and young people are safe.
16. That the DCP provide Aboriginal Carers and their children and young people with frequent and easy access to an *Aboriginal Culture Advisor* who would ensure the DCP both practices and respects cultural safety, protocol, and understanding of connection to culture and country at systemic and individual levels.
17. That the DCP secures additional supports or funding to ensure appropriate housing for larger family groups is accessible.
18. That the ATSICPP clearly defines the word *kin* to better assist scoping for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering care.
19. That a better quality of support be provided for non-Aboriginal Carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
20. That non-Aboriginal Carers for foster/kinship Aboriginal children and young people are supported by Aboriginal controlled organisations, not the DCP.

21. That every non-Aboriginal Carer to be provided with resources and support to ensure Aboriginal children in their care are connected to culture, community and country.
22. That every non-Aboriginal Carer and their Aboriginal child to be provided with access and support from an Aboriginal Worker from the DCP.
23. That the DCP implement an at risk team to respond to emergencies, which long-term, will help to maintain long lasting and secure placements.
24. That the DCP use family to support families with Aboriginal children and young people at risk of entering care.
25. That the option for a young person to remain in the home when they enter out of home care, and the biological parent(s) are removed in the first instance, so the young person is not immediately displaced.
26. At the first instance a young person enters out of home care, an immediate support team is brought in to provide support and guidance to the young person, understanding their routines, triggers and what works well.
27. That the DCP fund a support agency (or equivalent) to dedicate an advocate for the child or young person in care. The advocate would follow the child or young person all the way through their care experience and be independent of the DCP, from the beginning of their involvement in out of home care.
28. That the DCP update all policies and procedures clearly integrate cultural safety, protocol, awareness and sensitivity, including the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement Principle and its five pillars.
29. That the pathway to DCP Long Term Guardianship be transparent and available to non-Aboriginal Carers of Aboriginal children, particularly when the child or young person requests it and is in consultation with their biological family and is endorsed by community.

Listening to the child is necessary. Get them to write down what they want in their lives. When there is an emergency there should be an at risk team. [We] have proof of the child's lived experience. We need to find empowerment in the structure; bring in family to support at risk and vulnerable families. Right now, we are penalised for asking for, or needing help. This method has to change to improve outcomes for Aboriginal families.

These recommendations are direct reactions to the experiences shared by Carers and the CF&KC-SA Carer Advocacy team. It is crucial to note our feedback is considerate of Aboriginal Carers and non-Aboriginal Carers who open their hearts and homes to Aboriginal young people in family based care.

Conclusion

This submission finds Aboriginal Carers report feeling scrutinised for their parenting, unsupported by DCP and their support agencies, racially judged whilst providing care and undermined by the child protection system. Many Aboriginal Carers feel they are playing an active part in the very welfare system that has undermined their culture and community for decades. Aboriginal Carers reluctantly share the significant level of fear they feel when dealing with DCP and believe the Aboriginal Placement Principle is viewed as a 'tick box' requirement.

Additionally, non-Aboriginal Carers report deficits in support by both DCP and support agencies, impacting their ability to connect their young people meaningfully to culture, country and community. Non-Aboriginal Carers of Aboriginal children and young people understand the deep and important responsibility bestowed upon them to ensure their young people are connected to culture, country and community. The necessary supports required by non-Aboriginal Carers is a crucial element in ensuring Aboriginal young people they care for are safe, supported and connected to culture.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to your Inquiry and look forward to seeing your report and recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Endacott', written in a cursive style.

Fiona Endacott

Chief Executive Officer

Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA