



## Submission to the Independent Commission of Inquiry into the Child Safety System in Queensland 2025

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### Introduction

As forwarded to numerous Federal Members of Parliament, the establishment of a Federal Minister for Children must now be a national priority, including leadership on long-overdue Working With Children Check (WWCC) reform.

Drawing on over 20 years of lived experience and voluntary advocacy, I have been working to advance reforms that improve safety, oversight, and support for children across Australia, including in early childhood education and care, out-of-home care, and the broader child protection system, including residential care facilities.

My work has connected me with Foster and Kinship Carers, advocates, and others in multiple states including Queensland, allowing me to understand both shared challenges and effective practices nationwide.

The urgent need for national reform has again been highlighted by recent disclosures of child sexual abuse within the early childhood education and care sector. This is yet another devastating reminder of systemic failures in protecting children.

This submission asks that the Commission considers and advocates for the following two policies to be accepted federally:

#### Proposal 1: Establish a Minister for Children(attached)

Foster and Kinship Carers generally do not contact Ministers until they have exhausted all avenues within their child protection department. There is currently no independent complaints or investigation mechanism with the power to intervene, enforce accountability, or apply

consequences to workers. The toxic culture within departments, coupled with a failure to genuinely address concerns for children, is ultimately failing the children themselves.

Based on extensive feedback from Foster and Kinship Carers, current State Ministers for Child Protection often fail to genuinely engage with Carers when matters of concern are raised.

Examples include:

- Children being denied funding for essential supports, assessments, medical or allied health care, or dental care.
- Children being placed in unsafe or traumatic situations during family contact, or conversely, essential care and support not being implemented by workers.
- Reunifications carried out against the advice of treating professionals, often resulting in crisis and harm to children.
- Children missing out on their right to an education due to discrimination and lack of adequate support, particularly those in residential care instead of well-supported family-based placements where Carers ensure school attendance and advocacy.
- Consultation processes that are tokenistic rather than meaningful. Carers report that these are often superficial 'tick-box' exercises rather than genuine engagement.

Rationale

- A Minister for Children would provide oversight across relevant portfolios, including Child Protection, Health, Education, and Disability.
- This office would ensure that when issues are ignored or mishandled, there is a clear avenue to escalate concerns, resolve matters, and apply accountability to Ministers.
- Child Protection departments are currently failing to consistently adhere to policy, practice frameworks, and legislation, often with no accountability or consequences. This must change.
- Genuine consultation and collaboration with Carers must involve active listening, transparency, and meaningful action, not tokenism.
- Queensland has an opportunity to lead nationally by demonstrating that reforms can prioritise children's rights, wellbeing, and safety.
- Children's lives depend on a system that genuinely values Carer input and acts on it.

## Proposal 2: Establish a National Framework for Carer Recognition and Support(attached)

Queensland could lead the way by establishing a quality framework now that reflects these principles. A national commitment to recognising and supporting Foster and Kinship Carers is urgently required. Carers continue to bear significant responsibilities without adequate support, recognition, or rights, often filling gaps left by government systems.

Volunteer Foster and Kinship Carers are the only volunteers in society who bear the financial burden of those they provide care for on behalf of the State. This is unjust and unsustainable.

These proposals are grounded in real-world experience and shaped by the voices of Carers, children, and families. Crucially, better supporting Carers will also reduce our reliance on

residential care, a model that too often fails to meet children's needs and places them at further risk.

- Ensure consistent financial and practical support for Carers across all jurisdictions.
- Genuinely acknowledge and welcome Carers as essential partners in child safety, healing, and wellbeing, recognising their expertise and central role in children's lives.
- Provide Carers with legislated rights, ensuring they are treated with respect, transparency, and fairness in all departmental interactions and decisions.
- Establish independent advocacy mechanisms for Carers, ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making processes and systemic reforms.
- Create external oversight for child protection departments, with authority to intervene, review, and overturn decisions where required, and to apply accountability and consequence when children's best interests are not upheld.
- Promote the retention of experienced Carers and reduce turnover caused by burnout, financial strain, and systemic neglect.
- Uphold children's rights by ensuring that those who care for them are properly supported, equipped, and empowered to meet their needs.
- Save taxpayers millions of dollars by supporting Carers and prioritising family-based care over residential care. In South Australia, it is estimated that residential care costs taxpayers at least \$700,000 per child per year, while Carers receive a modest contribution of about \$14,000 per year, a stark indicator of both inefficiency and inequity. We could assume that the figures are no better in Queensland.

### NDIS and the Rights of Children in Care.

While the NDIS is a Federal matter, children in out-of-home care are being significantly impacted by Child Protection departmental staff who are either not competent in NDIS processes or unwilling to prioritise children's needs. This failure is resulting in children being disadvantaged, with their disability and safety needs neglected.

A report from a snap poll conducted on a private Carers forum is attached to this submission, highlighting the ways children and young people in care are being disadvantaged through systemic neglect, administrative incompetence, and a lack of accountability.

These failures represent a clear breach of Australia's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Despite these breaches, there are currently no consequences for those responsible.

### Conclusion

The establishment of a Federal Minister for Children and a National Framework for Carer Recognition and Support would together provide the structural change needed to strengthen accountability, improve child safety, and rebuild trust across all levels of the child protection system. These reforms would give children, Carers, and families what they have long been denied: a system that listens, responds, and acts in their best interests.



## Recognising and Supporting Foster and Kinship Carers Across Australia

### Overview

Australia's foster and kinship carers play a critical role in the lives of children impacted by trauma, abuse, neglect, and family violence. These carers, who provide 24/7 care as volunteers, offer stability, healing, and connection for some of our most vulnerable children. Yet they remain undervalued, under-supported, and excluded from key decisions that directly affect them and the children in their care.

Despite being essential partners in the child protection system, carers are not treated as part of the professional care team. They are expected to carry enormous emotional, practical, and financial burdens without proper recognition, inclusion, or compensation. No other group of volunteers is asked to do so much while receiving so little support in return.

This is a national issue that demands urgent attention, systemic reform, and accountability.

I propose a national policy commitment to formally recognise, respect, protect, and adequately support volunteer foster and kinship carers, underpinned by legislative rights, financial fairness, and meaningful inclusion in all decisions impacting them and the children they care for.

### Policy Objectives

- **Recognition:** Formally recognise and acknowledge foster and kinship carers as key stakeholders and essential partners in the child protection system, deserving of respect, professional inclusion, genuine partnership, and fair treatment.
- **Legislative Rights:** Enshrine carer rights in legislation, including their right to be involved in decision-making, to advocate without fear of retribution, access to transparent appeal mechanisms and be treated with fairness, dignity, and procedural justice.
- **Financial Fairness:** Ensure carers are not left out-of-pocket or financially disadvantaged for providing vital care that keeps vulnerable children safe, supported, and connected to the community. Carer payments must cover the actual cost of raising a child, and superannuation contributions should acknowledge the long-term sacrifice of care work.
- **Inclusive Practice:** Guarantee that carers have a genuine seat at the table in all planning, case reviews, and decisions affecting the children in their care, including the right to choose representation from bodies that reflect and are aligned with their views and lived experience, and ensure meaningful and respectful consultation.
- **Independent Oversight:** Establish truly independent oversight bodies in every jurisdiction to uphold carer and child rights, investigate complaints, and ensure accountability across all state and territory child protection systems. These bodies must provide carers with a safe, trusted pathway to raise concerns and drive systemic reform where failures occur.
- **Support and Training:** Provide high-quality, nationally consistent training and ensure access to respite, mental health support, and trauma-informed specialist services tailored to the children's needs.
- **Cultural Support and Identity:** Ensure that foster and kinship carers receive the training, resources, and support necessary to help children maintain and connect with their cultural identities. This includes facilitating access to cultural practices, language preservation, and community connections. Carers should be supported in understanding and respecting the cultural backgrounds of the children in their care, fostering a sense of belonging and emotional wellbeing.
- **Medical, Disability, and Palliative Care Support:** Ensure foster and kinship carers who care for children with high medical needs, disabilities, or palliative care requirements are backed by a dedicated and responsive multidisciplinary support team. This includes timely access to specialist

services, equipment, case coordination, and streamlined processes to prevent delays in care. Carers must be supported to navigate complex systems without being burdened, and children must not be disadvantaged due to bureaucratic delays or lack of tailored support.

- **Collaboration and Consultation:** Genuine and ongoing collaboration must include the direct involvement of carers themselves, not just peak bodies or representatives. Carers must have a seat at the table when shaping policies, practices, and reforms at both state and federal levels. Genuine support for carers cannot be defined without them. Only carers can truly articulate what meaningful support looks like, and they must be directly involved in co-designing the oversight structures, complaint pathways, and support systems intended to serve them.
- **Tax and Superannuation Support:** Introduce targeted tax relief and superannuation contributions to reduce long-term financial disadvantage for carers.

### **Why Reform is Urgent**

- **Burnout and Attrition:** Foster and kinship carers face high levels of burnout, leading many to leave the system. Adequate, genuine support is needed to retain and recruit carers, reducing reliance on residential care and ensuring the best outcomes for children and young people.
- **Financial Strain:** Carers struggle financially, often unable to maintain stable employment due to caregiving responsibilities. They frequently use their own resources to meet children's needs, deepening their financial hardship.
- **Exclusion from Decision-Making:** Despite being the primary caregivers with the most comprehensive understanding of the children, carers are often excluded from case planning and key decision-making, which impacts the child's care and outcomes.
- **Lack of Independent Advocacy:** Carers face a serious lack of independent advocacy and oversight mechanisms, leaving them vulnerable when treated unfairly or when a child's wellbeing is at risk. Without safe, trusted pathways to raise concerns free from fear of reprisal, both carers and the children they support remain exposed in a system that too often lacks accountability and fails to protect those it should serve.
- **Inconsistent State Systems:** Carer rights and support vary significantly between jurisdictions, leading to postcode-based inequality that further disadvantages children and families.

### **Key Recommendations**

1. **National Framework for Carer Rights:** Develop and legislate a national carer charter to standardise rights and responsibilities across all jurisdictions. This must be developed in direct partnership with foster and kinship carers, various carer advocacy groups, not solely through peak bodies or individuals whose positions or personal interests may not accurately represent the voices and lived experiences of carers on the ground.
2. **Carer Inclusion in Decision-Making:** Legally mandate carer involvement in all case planning and reviews relating to the child in their care.
3. **Independent Advocacy and Complaints Body:** Establish independent authorities in each state and territory to hear and investigate carer concerns, with clear powers to act on findings and uphold the rights of both carers and children. These bodies must operate free from departmental or political influence and be supported by a federally mandated oversight framework to ensure national consistency, transparency, and accountability across all jurisdictions. No jurisdiction should be able to dismiss or bury concerns and federal oversight must guarantee that every complaint is taken seriously, investigated thoroughly, and leads to real consequences where systems fail.



4. **Financial Equity for Carers:** Review and revise carer payments to ensure they fully reflect the true costs of care, fully covering expenses and relieving carers from being financially burdened. Carers should not be left out-of-pocket for the essential care they provide, and superannuation contributions should be included to acknowledge their long-term commitment and sacrifices. No other volunteer is forced to fund the needs of those they provide care for.
5. **A National Carer Council:** Establish a National Carer Council composed exclusively of foster and kinship carers and people with lived experience, explicitly excluding current members of state carers councils and peak body staff. This council will provide independent, grassroots advice to governments on policy, reform, and carer needs, ensuring authentic representation free from organisational or political influence.

## **Conclusion**

Foster and kinship carers are essential to the child protection system, bringing invaluable expertise, knowledge, and unwavering dedication to their roles. They are not just volunteers but lived-experience experts who deserve full recognition for their exceptional experience, training and commitment. It is essential that carers are not only acknowledged but treated with the respect and support they deserve. Carers make immense personal sacrifices, often at the expense of their social lives, relationships, financial stability, career opportunities, and overall quality of life, to provide safety, stability, and healing for children. Behind every placement are individuals who give up jobs, holidays, social connections, and their own wellbeing to meet the complex needs of children who have experienced trauma. These sacrifices are made quietly and often without recognition, yet they are the foundation on which many children's lives are rebuilt. This selflessness must not be taken for granted or overlooked in policy and practice. Listening to carers and involving them in decision-making is not merely a courtesy; it is fundamental to the wellbeing and long-term stability of the children in their care. Supporting carers properly is also key to retention as without meaningful support, we risk losing the very people who make safe, stable, and healing environments possible for vulnerable children. We must move beyond superficial gestures and commit to meaningful, real, systemic change that fully values carers as essential partners in protecting and healing Australia's most vulnerable children.

Lisa O'Malley

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## **Establishment of a Federal Minister for Children**

### **Overview**

Australia is facing a national crisis in child wellbeing. Systems designed to support and protect children such as child protection, health, education, and justice are fragmented, under-resourced, and failing to meet the complex needs of our most vulnerable. In the past year alone, over half a million reports of child abuse, neglect, and family violence were recorded, equating to one report almost every minute. These alarming figures are just the tip of the iceberg.

These systems operate with little accountability, minimal consequence for failure, and no truly independent oversight. As a result, harm continues often unchecked while the voices of children, carers, and families remain unheard.

Recent high-profile abuse cases within childcare settings have further exposed dangerous systemic gaps in oversight, vetting, and accountability.

Children are falling through the cracks of siloed departments that lack coordination, transparency, and accountability. Health systems are overwhelmed, struggling to meet both the mental and physical needs of children in crisis. Child protection services remain reactive, often intervening only after irreversible harm has occurred. The failure to detect, prevent, or act on abuse within care environments, including early learning centres and residential care has highlighted the urgent need for proactive safeguarding mechanisms. Meanwhile, the justice system, particularly youth justice, continues to criminalise trauma instead of addressing its root cause through therapeutic and supportive responses. The children most at risk are the least heard, and the most invisible.

At the federal level, there is no central leadership or accountability for children's rights and wellbeing. The absence of a dedicated Federal Minister means decisions impacting children are scattered across portfolios, lacking cohesion, urgency, and clear responsibility. The wellbeing of children is too critical to remain a peripheral concern.

I propose the urgent establishment of a Federal Minister for Children, a leadership role responsible for championing the safety, development, and rights of all Australian children. This portfolio would drive coordinated national policy, ensure cross-sector collaboration, and provide strong oversight to improve outcomes for children across health, education, justice, and child protection systems. With focused leadership, we can begin to break down systemic barriers and put children at the centre of national decision-making where they rightfully belong.

### **Policy Objectives**

- **National Leadership:** Provide dedicated, centralised leadership on all issues impacting children across Australia, through a Federal Minister for Children.
- **System Reform:** Drive coordinated, cross-sector reform to address child abuse, neglect, family violence, youth justice, out-of-home care, mental health, disability, and education breaking down silos between state, territory, and federal responses.
- **Consultation & Collaboration:** Embed genuine consultation with children and young people, families, carers, service providers, First Nations communities, and sector experts to ensure policy is informed by lived experience and frontline expertise.
- **Prevention First:** Shift the national focus toward early intervention and prevention of harm, rather than crisis-driven responses, ensuring children and families receive support before trauma escalates.



- **Safe Care in Early Learning and Residential Care Settings:** Introduce and enforce nationally consistent child safety standards across all early learning and residential care environments. These must include zero tolerance for institutional abuse, mandatory staff training, and rigorous supervision to protect children in care.
- **Whistleblower Protections:** Establish and enforce strong, legally protected whistleblower frameworks across all child-related sectors. Workers, carers, and professionals must be able to report concerns without fear of retaliation, loss of employment, or being discredited.
- **Child Rights Focus:** Embed children's rights into legislation, policy, and practice, ensuring their right to safety, connection, development, and participation in decisions that affect them.
- **Support for Families:** Strengthen services that keep families safely together, including parenting support, housing, health, and income stability, to address root causes of child harm and reduce removals into care.
- **Independent Oversight & Accountability:** Establish truly independent oversight bodies in every state and territory to monitor all systems impacting children including child protection, youth justice, education, health, and care settings. These bodies must be free from internal bias, political influence, and corruption, with legislated powers to investigate, compel transparency, and act without fear or favour.
- **National Standards, Transparency & Consequences for Harm:** Ensure nationally consistent standards for data collection, mandatory investigations following abuse or critical incidents, public reporting of outcomes, and the enforcement of child-safe policies across all government-funded services. There must be real consequences when children are harmed no more cover-ups, no more silence.
- **National transparency and Accountability:** Ensure transparency and accountability across all systems impacting children through nationally consistent standards, data reporting, and independent monitoring mechanisms. This must include mandatory investigations and public reporting following abuse in institutional settings, and the implementation of enforceable child-safe policies across all government-funded services.
- **Equity in Childhood:** Ensure every child in Australia has the right to a safe, happy, and healthy childhood free from violence, abuse, neglect, and disadvantage and equal in opportunity to all others, no matter their background or circumstances.

### **Why a Federal Minister for Children is Needed**

- Children are falling through the cracks of fragmented and inconsistent systems across states and territories particularly in child protection, health, education, justice, and housing.
- Current responses are crisis-driven, often too late to prevent harm, and delivered through siloed departments that fail to share responsibility or collaborate effectively.
- Children are underrepresented in policy and decision-making, despite being one of the most vulnerable groups in society. Their voices are rarely heard, and their needs are too often overlooked.

- There is no minister or independent authority responsible for ensuring state departments such as child protection and education are held accountable or that they implement recommendations from investigations, royal commissions, and inquiries.
- Lived-experience experts are routinely excluded from meaningful participation, while state ministers and departments often control the narrative, limiting transparency and genuine reform.
- State ministers must be held accountable to recuse themselves from decision-making where their personal opinions or interests risk excluding lived-experience experts or controlling the narrative for personal gain
- There is no single point of federal leadership or accountability for children's wellbeing, resulting in disjointed policies, inconsistent standards, and a lack of long-term national direction.
- The consequences are severe and long-lasting cycles of trauma, abuse, and disadvantage are continuing across generations. This is not just a social issue but a national emergency requiring urgent, coordinated action.

### **Key Responsibilities of the Federal Minister for Children**

1. Lead a National Child Wellbeing Strategy that drives coordinated, long-term improvements across child protection, health, education, justice, and housing sectors.
2. Facilitate collaboration between federal, state, and territory governments to align services and ensure all children receive consistent, high-quality support regardless of where they live.
3. Establish a National Children's Cabinet that includes the voices of carers, families, and other lived-experience experts to ensure policies are informed by real-world needs and challenges.
4. Embed the voices of children and young people in policymaking through structured, ongoing consultation and child-informed design.
5. Prioritise early intervention and prevention, investing in evidence-based programs that address abuse, neglect, family violence, and mental health.
6. Strengthen national data collection and reporting systems to monitor outcomes, identify service gaps, and support continuous improvement in child wellbeing.
7. Support and empower families, recognising that strong families are critical to child safety and development.
8. Ensure the Independent Children's Commissioner provides genuine oversight, advocates for children's rights and wellbeing of children, holds systems accountable, and ensures children's voices are central in policymaking.
9. Establish and enforce mandatory national child safety standards across all institutional settings including childcare, schools, disability services, and residential care with robust oversight, regular risk audits, public reporting of compliance and breaches, and enforceable consequences for failures.



10. Implement strong, legally protected whistleblower frameworks across all child-related services to enable safe, confidential reporting of abuse or neglect without fear of retaliation.
11. Mandate independent and transparent investigations of all abuse allegations, with public reporting of outcomes and systemic recommendations to prevent future harm.
12. Set national minimum qualifications and require ongoing trauma-informed training and supervision for all child-facing staff to ensure high standards of care and safety.
13. Prohibit single-staff shifts in residential care except in strictly risk-assessed and justified circumstances to reduce opportunities for abuse and enhance child protection.
14. Ensure foster and kinship carers are properly supported, valued, and protected from financial burden. Recognise them as vital volunteer contributors, entitled to appropriate rights, support, and respect on par with other formally recognised volunteer roles.

## **Conclusion**

Children deserve far more than symbolic recognition in policy—they deserve meaningful action, robust protection, and a powerful voice in the decisions that shape their lives. For too long, their needs have been sidelined, their safety compromised, and their futures jeopardised by systemic failures and political inaction.

Establishing a Federal Minister for Children is not just a policy decision, it is a moral imperative. It is a necessary response to repeated failures where children have been harmed or abused by the very systems meant to safeguard and protect them. It would represent a bold, long-overdue commitment to prioritising children at the national level, ensuring coordinated leadership, accountability, and genuine investment in their wellbeing.

This is our opportunity to draw a line in the sand and say, as a nation: we will no longer allow children to be invisible. We will protect them, we will listen to them, and we will act—decisively and urgently—to build a safer, fairer future for every Australian child and young person.

Finally, the staffing and qualifications within child protection departments must be urgently revisited. Social work qualifications alone often do not equip professionals with the specific skills needed to work effectively with children, families, and carers. Instead, recruiting individuals with lived experience and expertise, diplomas in community services, family and youth intervention, and trauma-informed training can bring the expertise necessary to make life-changing impacts and truly support vulnerable families.

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Co-founder The Carer Project  
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The Carer Project is a volunteer-led advocacy and peer support initiative committed to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and the carers who support them. We are deeply concerned about the recent changes to the NDIS that came into effect on July 1, 2025, and the ongoing mismanagement of NDIS access, plans, and funding for children in out-of-home care.

Carers across Australia continue to raise serious issues that have not only gone unaddressed, but are worsening under the current reforms. Below is a summary of the key concerns raised by carers supporting children with disability in the child protection system:

### **Inadequate Involvement of Carers in NDIS Processes**

- Carers, the 24/7 experts in the child's life, are often excluded from NDIS planning, reviews, and communications.
- NDIS planners, DCP workers, and support coordinators frequently prepare plans without carer input, leading to inaccurate information and inadequate funding.
- Carers are often not informed whether a child has an NDIS plan, what services have been allocated, or when appointments and reviews occur.

### **Poor Plan Design and Administrative Failures**

- Outdated plans are routinely rolled over, failing to reflect a child's age, development, or evolving needs.
- When reassessments are finally conducted, previous reports are void, requiring expensive reassessments wasting precious participant funds.
- Many plans don't meet the child's goals or needs, leaving service providers unable to deliver appropriate support.

### **Access Barriers and Funding Cuts**

- Travel funding reductions significantly affect accessibility for participants and children who cannot tolerate hospital or busy public settings due to ASD, ADHD or other conditions. Regional and rural participants will be further disadvantaged by the reduction in funding critically impacting the availability of therapy and services in communities in very real need of sustainable support.
- Providers have increased the cost of services upon learning a child has an NDIS plan, depleting funding faster and reducing service hours.
- Some providers have indicated they will no longer support children with complex needs due to reduced funding and administrative complexities.

## **Denial of Critical Services and Equipment**

- Children have been denied essential items such as:
  - Wheelchairs and medical-grade safety beds
  - Access ramps, home and bathroom modifications
  - Vehicle modifications
  - Sensory and communication tools
- These denials impact safety, education access, and social/community inclusion.

## **Financial and Emotional Toll on Carers**

- Carers are constantly out of pocket, and their employment is often impacted due to the need to chase DCP, NDIS and service providers to fix errors.
- Carers are left feeling helpless, distressed, and frustrated, often blamed for the unmet needs that are due to systemic failure, and not their failure to meet the child's needs.

## **Misuse and Depletion of Participant Funds**

- DCP often engages with providers or charges services to the participant's plan without necessity or consultation, rapidly exhausting funds.
- No accountability exists when a child's plan is depleted and services are put on hold pending yet another review.

## **Accountability and Oversight Failures**

- False information leads to children being denied NDIS access.
- DCP workers lack adequate training to support or facilitate NDIS processes and show little understanding of complex disability needs.
- Carers are frequently charged for "no-shows" at appointments they weren't informed about.
- There is no independent oversight of DCP's handling of NDIS plans or funding use.
- The NDIS complaints process is ineffective, prioritising resolution over accountability or child safety.
- Service providers are rarely held accountable for fraud, misconduct, or placing participants at risk.



## **Trauma-Informed Services**

- Children and young people in care experience varying levels of trauma including PTSD, developmental trauma, and complex trauma, each presenting with its own unique signs, symptoms, and behaviours.
- These behaviours often overlap with or mimic those associated with ASD, ADHD, and other disabilities, yet trauma-related mental health injuries are not consistently recognised or funded under the NDIS.

### **What We Urge:**

1. Immediate review and reconsideration of the July 1 NDIS changes.
2. Mandatory involvement of carers in all planning and review processes.
3. Direct communication and information-sharing with carers regarding the child's plan, services, and appointments.
4. Independent oversight of DCP's NDIS involvement and an independent NDIS complaints and investigation process.
5. Policies to prevent service providers from inflating fees upon learning of NDIS funding.
6. Targeted consultation with foster and kinship carers to design a system that meets the real needs of vulnerable children.
7. The NDIS must broaden its scope to recognise trauma as a legitimate cause of disability, ensuring access to appropriate therapeutic services, supports, and equipment for children affected by trauma in out-of-home care.

Children in care are already some of the most disadvantaged in our community. The current NDIS structure is failing them and failing those who care for them. These changes are compounding trauma and stripping children of their right to timely, appropriate support.

We urge you to take this matter forward and help deliver a system where children's needs are prioritised, carers are respected, and public funds are used responsibly.

### **Lisa O'Malley**

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SA Dental Consumer Advisory Panel

