



FamilyVoice Australia

Submission to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry into Adoption and Child Safety September 2025

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1. Introduction

FamilyVoice Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Queensland Parliamentary Inquiry into Adoption and Child Safety.

The question at the heart of this inquiry is simple: *What is the best and safest environment in which a vulnerable child can grow up?*

Decades of research provide a clear answer. The Christchurch Health and Development Study (Fergusson, 1998) found that adoption delivers strong benefits, particularly for children from high-risk biological backgrounds.ⁱ Adopted children consistently enter more stable and caring environments and show lower risks of social and psychological problems than peers left in unstable or neglectful family settings.

Adoption is not a panacea, but it has been, and can again be, a powerful means of giving children permanence, safety, and hope.

2. Why Adoption is Neglected in Queensland

Despite the evidence, adoption in Queensland remains vanishingly rare. Several factors contribute to this neglect:

(a) An entrenched anti-adoption culture

Bureaucratic resistance to adoption is widespread. Scholars such as Dr Jeremy Sammut (Centre for Independent Studies) have long documented the failures of Australia's child protection system: over-emphasis on "family preservation," lengthy delays in removing children from unsafe homes, and reliance on unstable foster care that fails to provide permanence.ⁱⁱ

(b) Fears of a "Second Stolen Generation"

Understandable historical sensitivities regarding Indigenous families have created paralysis in decision-making. While cultural connection is important, it cannot outweigh a child's right to

safety. Queensland's crisis in child protection speaks volumes: as *The Courier Mail* reported (23 July 2025), more than 780 children are currently missing from state care. This reflects a system unable to keep children safe, let alone provide the stability they desperately need.ⁱⁱⁱ

(c) Over-commitment to “family preservation” at all costs

Child protection policy often prioritises parents' rights over children's welfare. Intensive taxpayer-funded interventions rarely resolve entrenched problems such as addiction, domestic violence, and chronic neglect. Meanwhile, children languish in uncertainty, cycling through placements, and losing their chance at a stable family.^{iv}

(d) Avoidance of the reality of parental failure

Too often, the rights of abusive or neglectful parents outweigh the rights of children. Former Senator Bob Day summarised the imbalance succinctly: “The rights of abusive parents seem to outweigh the rights of abused children.”^v Until we recognise that some parents are simply unable or unwilling to provide safe care, adoption will remain unfairly stigmatised and children will continue to suffer.

3. Case Study – The Human Cost of Systemic Failure

Policy debates can sometimes feel abstract, but the lived experience of families tells the real story.

One Queensland carer, ██████████, has raised her nephew ██████████ since infancy. Despite clear evidence of his mother's inability to provide safe care, the Department of Child Safety repeatedly attempted to re-unify ██████████ with her. As a result, ██████████ endured trauma, multiple foster placements, and now struggles with PTSD, ADHD, and behavioural challenges.^{vi}

Cass fought for years to secure stability for ██████████ Her story highlights three systemic failures:

1. **Delayed removal** – despite a clear history of neglect, ██████████ was left in unsafe conditions for 18 months.
2. **Disregard for kinship carers** – relatives able and willing to care were overlooked.
3. **Bureaucratic inflexibility** – rigid processes overshadowed common sense, prolonging Franky's suffering.

This case, while deeply personal, illustrates the broader truth: children need stability and permanency early in life. Adoption provides that pathway.

4. Positive Outcomes of Adoption

Contrary to fears, adoption has consistently produced positive outcomes for children and families. Roslyn Phillips' *Whatever Happened to the Adoption Option?* (2025) records testimonies of adopted children and adoptive parents alike^{vii}:

- Adopted children speak of being “chosen,” “hand-picked,” and given “identity and inheritance.”
- Parents testify to profound bonds of love, describing adoption as both challenging and deeply enriching.
- Longitudinal studies show adoption provides higher stability and wellbeing outcomes than prolonged foster or residential care.^{viii}

When adoption is carried out carefully, transparently, and with support, it changes lives for the better.

5. Conclusion

Queensland's near-elimination of adoption has failed children. The evidence shows that:

- The current system leaves many children in unsafe or unstable environments.
- Prolonged reliance on foster care without permanency undermines children's development.
- Adoption offers a proven, life-changing alternative that prioritises the child's right to stability and love.

The time has come for Queensland to restore adoption as a real and respected pathway for children in need.

6. Recommendations

FamilyVoice Australia recommends that the Queensland Government:

1. **Rebalance child protection priorities** – place the child's right to safety and stability above parental “rights” where there is clear evidence of abuse or neglect.
2. **Normalise adoption** – adopt a policy stance that views adoption as a positive, permanent solution, not a “last resort.”
3. **Strengthen community involvement** – establish local adoption and child safety advisory groups within each electorate, drawing on trusted community organisations (churches, charities, service clubs, health professionals).

4. **Improve screening and matching** – create a streamlined, transparent vetting process to identify suitable adoptive families and match them with children in need.
5. **Provide ongoing support** – ensure adoptive families receive practical and psychological support, with clear avenues for appeals or adjustments where placements are challenged.

If implemented, these reforms would deliver better outcomes for children, empower communities, and reduce reliance on overstretched bureaucracies.

Final Statement:

Children cannot wait. Their safety, stability, and future must come first. Adoption, responsibly re-introduced, offers Queensland’s most vulnerable children what they most desperately need — a permanent, loving family.

ⁱ Fergusson, D.M., et al. (1998). *The Christchurch Health and Development Study*. University of Otago.

ⁱⁱ Sammut, J. (2011). *The Madness of Australian Child Protection: Why Adoption Will Rescue Australia’s Underclass Children*. CIS Policy Monograph 123.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Courier Mail*, 23 July 2025, “780 Children Missing from Queensland State Care.”

^{iv} Australian Institute of Family Studies (2022). *Child Protection and Family Support Systems: A Review of Evidence*.

^v Bob Day, cited in *The Australian*, 2015, “Child Protection Debate: Parents’ Rights vs Children’s Safety.”

^{vi} Evidence provided by Queensland kinship carers (confidential submission, 2024).

^{vii} Phillips, R. (2025). *Whatever Happened to the Adoption Option?* FamilyVoice Publications.

^{viii} Triseliotis, J. (2002). *Long-term Foster Care or Adoption?* *Child & Family Social Work*, 7(1), 23–33.