

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

The importance of culture and community

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care face unique challenges. Many of these stem from the damage to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities as a result of white settlement. Previous government policies, such as the systematic removal of Aboriginal children from their families, communities, land and heritage have also been contributing factors.

The trauma and loss experienced by the 'stolen' children and their families has had a major impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and has been passed from one generation to the next.

The current over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people within the child protection system is a major concern to the Department of Child Safety. We are committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to keep Indigenous children within their own families and communities wherever possible.



The *Child Protection Act 1999* requires the department to ensure that services provided to Indigenous children and young people are culturally appropriate. Section 83 of the Act gives effect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. This principle requires Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to be cared for in an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community, whenever possible. It is important for everyone who works with Indigenous children and young people, including foster carers and kinship carers, to be aware of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and the need for the children and young people to be connected with their culture and community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

Under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, the Department of Child Safety has a responsibility to consider placing an Indigenous child or young person with, in order of priority:

- a member of the child or young person's family
- a member of the child or young person's community or language group
- another Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander who is familiar with the child or young person's community or language group
- another Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander.

In placing an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child or young person outside of the home, the Department of Child Safety must involve a Recognised Entity to assist decision making in the best interests of the child or young person.



Recognised Entities are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations or individuals mandated by their communities and approved and funded by the Department of Child Safety to provide cultural and family advice in Indigenous child protection matters. The fact sheet *Recognised Entities* provides more information about Recognised Entities and their role.

Placement with non-Indigenous carers

In some cases it may be necessary to place a child or young person in the care of a family member or other person who is not an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. Before doing so, the department will consult with a Recognised Entity and consider whether the person is committed to:

- helping maintain contact between the child or young person and their parents and other family members

- helping the child or young person to maintain contact with their community or language group
- helping the child or young person maintain a connection with their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture
- preserving and building the child or young person's Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity.

These requirements also apply when children and young people are placed in a non-government licensed care service, such as a residential care facility.

For more information about Recognised Entities, contact the Department of Child Safety on **1800 811 810** or **3224 8045**. You can also call the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Partnership on **3255 3604**.

If you have any questions about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle or caring for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people, contact your local Child Safety Service Centre.

For more information visit www.childsafety.qld.gov.au

