

## Permanency planning

### Children and young people in statutory out-of-home care

The promotion of safety and wellbeing of children and young people through stable and permanent placements has always been a part of out-of-home care practice and the *Children and Young Person's (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (the Act 1998).

In October 2014 Safe Home for Life Reforms strengthened the role of permanency planning as part of casework for children and young people in out of home care. Permanency is to be planned in keeping with children and young people's individual circumstances, a thorough assessment of their needs, in consideration of their views and the views of family and in serving their best interests.

Section 10A of the Act 1998 provides permanency principles and a clear hierarchy of permanency options to be considered for children and young people.

- Restoration to family
- Guardianship by a relative or kin or other suitable person
- For the child to be adopted (except in the case of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child or young person)
- To be placed under the parental responsibility of the Minister

Permanency planning and the associated casework is to commence when a child or young person enters care. A care order may identify the permanent care option to be explored for a child or young person. In situations where placements have been stable and ongoing, the agency, child or young person, parents or carers may identify a permanency option to be explored.

A key part of case planning, case review and casework that supports permanency planning is how agencies support, monitor and assess a placement's readiness to progress to a permanent care arrangement. An important consideration is a placements capacity to meet the short and long term needs of a child or young person, without the case management and supervision of a designated agency.

The NSW Child Safe Standard for Permanent Care identify procedure that must underpin this area of service for children and young people, and these are defined across a number of the Standards.

Examples include Standard 13 that requires permanent placement principles to be applied to all placement decisions, with implications for how agencies undertake the initial assessment of needs and how these inform placement matching decisions. Standard 14 requires each child to have a case plan that includes a permanent placement plan with clear tasks to achieve permanency planning goals. Standard 18 identifies authorisation requirements for carers, guardians and prospective adoptive parents.