

MEDIA RELEASE

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New reforms bring permanency closer to home

Barnardos Australia has welcomed the NSW government's planned introduction of a landmark child protection bill into parliament this week.

The Amendments to the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act and the Adoption Act will streamline processes to provide vulnerable children with much-needed permanency as quickly as possible.

Barnardos Australia CEO Deirdre Cheers expressed her support for the reforms at today's announcement by Minister for Family and Community Services, Pru Goward at NSW Parliament House:

"Children cannot wait for adult time frames for decisions to be made about their future. We welcome these reforms that will introduce child-centred timeframes for children." Ms Cheers said.

The Bill will give birth parents and extended family members an opportunity to resolve child protection risks before their child is placed in care through Family Group Conferencing in order to avoid the removal of children from their families.

"Barnardos supports thousands of vulnerable children every year," Ms Cheers said.

"Approximately one third of the children in our care are restored home to their families quickly and safely and we acknowledge the government's support to continue this vital work to keep children with their families whenever possible."

"Another third of our children will be looked after by extended family and we work hard to make that happen quickly. Dispute resolution will give extended families the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process for the care of their children."

"For children whom the courts have ruled cannot return home safely, we believe open adoption offers them the only opportunity of a stable and permanent family for life, which is something all children need and deserve."

The government's proposed reforms also include streamlining court processes for guardianship and open adoption to ensure a permanent home for every child within two years.

Barnardos was a key contributor in the public consultation process led by the discussion paper, Shaping A Better Child Protection System, released in October 2017. The reforms are due to be introduced into parliament today and debated when parliament resumes in November.

For media interviews with Barnardos CEO Deirdre Cheers or an adoptive family please contact:
Irene Saunders: Ph: 02 9218 2344 or 0410 503 232 isaunders@barnardos.org.au

About Barnardos Australia

Barnardos Australia is a leading non-government, non-denominational, child safety and family care organisation which has provided services for vulnerable children, young people and their families in Australia since 1883. We work with highly vulnerable children and young people to provide a safe home and permanent relationships for all their childhood. We care for children exposed to physical, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as neglect, exploitation and homelessness. As one of the nation's leading child protection charities, Barnardos vision is that all children and young people will have caring families where they can grow safely and fulfil their potential, as we believe all children deserve a safe and stable home. www.barnardos.org.au