

I believe That the Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Restrictions on the Making of Protection Orders) Bill 2015 be referred to the Legal and Social Issues Committee for inquiry, consideration and report by 4 August 2015, and in particular the Committee examine the extent to which the Bill along with current legislation will protect vulnerable children. As a kinship carer grandparent for my ten year old grandson I am extremely concerned about this bill.

I believe that this bill takes us back to the dark old days where adoption away from kin was seen as a solution to care of children .

As a grandparent caring for my grandson I see his journey into developing an understanding of his own identity. My grandson doesn't see his parents . His mother is dead and his father has mental health and addiction issues which prevent him playing a positive role in my grandson's life. Indeed, my grandson has only seen his father for six hours in the last five years, all of which was in supervised access.

I took on the formal care of my grandson when he was two. Prior to this I was a frequent informal carer. He came to me with trauma issues and attachment issues both of which are very common in children who are at risk.

I believe that his development and overcoming of these issues has been largely due to the fact that he stayed with people who were his people - that he was not adopted out. Separation from parents is painful, separation from all aspects of identity is much much worse. we cannot replace his parents but we are his family and hold his history and are the key to his story and his identity. I see him asking what he did wrong and why his parents didn't love him enough to stay around and care for him. He has had many issues of identity and trust to overcome. I believe being placed with kin has helped him to overcome and understand his past.

I believe that his development into a kind, compassionate and musically gifted child has been facilitated by me being able to answer questions about his parents and his own history. By him being able to develop an understanding that while they were unable to parent him, he was and is a much loved part of a wider family unit. He needs this information and support and connection to kin to develop his own independent identity and to deal with the trauma of loss and abuse which is a large part of the lives of many of these children. He needs us as his biological extended family to help him understand his story and to prevent the loss of identity that can happen when children do not live with their parents.

i can not believe that the lessons of history which are evident in the history of adoption have not been heeded in this proposed bill. Kinship care is care of children by people who have a pre existing genetic, social and relational attachment to the child and this attachment is usually reciprocated. Kinship care needs to have priority in the hierarchy of options for children removed from their parents.

i ask each member of this committee how they would feel if their own grandchildren were adopted away from their family and they had no say in this decision. You would feel outraged, as you should. The correct hierarchy for the placement of children needs to be where children are able to understand and come to terms with their identity issues.

I ask the committee to ensure that long term or permanent kinship care is the preferred option for children who can not live with their parents. I also urge the committee to understand the importance of involving families in particular grand parents in long term decisions about these children's future.

I believe that this This bill has serious flaws that are of concern to all grandparents.

I ask the committee to urgently amend the bill to ensure that

1 kinship care is the first option for child placement.

2 family and grandparents not just DHHS are involved in decisions for long term care and support of children removed from families.

Regards

Rosemary Higgins