

Submission Regarding Out of Home Care, Child Rights in Australia.



**Submission Addressed to:
Commissioner Megan Mitchell
The Human Rights Commission
GPO Box 5218 Sydney NSW 2000**

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Introduction

Every five years Australia is required to report to the UN Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The most recent Australian Child Rights 2016 progress report, prepared by the Australian rights taskforce, brings attention to the experiences of Australia's most vulnerable children to hold the Australian Government to account on its commitment to the CRC. The aim of which, according to the report is to (Australian Child Rights Taskforce, 2016):

...build a better world for children. It calls on governments to take responsibility for children by addressing specific aspects of child well-being and development – such as health, education, protection and participation....

After 39 inquiries, reviews and royal commissions into child safety over the past decade, the report reveals that violence remains a very real part of childhood for an ever-increasing number of young Australians.

The family preservation model has underpinned child safety policy and practice nationally since the CRC was ratified. With targeted prevention, early intervention and family support services aiming to keep children safe at home. However, as will be seen, the evidence to support the family preservation approach is minimal to the point of being non-existent. The high levels of re-reports, multiple substantiations, multiple reunification attempts, instability in care and high levels of intergenerational dysfunction, suggest the tragic outcome for many children is permanent developmental damage and poor life-long well-being.

Strangely, the task force recommends more of the status quo: Increased funding for early intervention and family support services. This begs the question: Is the task force making recommendations based on evidential data or ideology? To explore this question, this work reviews the report findings in detail, to understand what the data shows and what foundation their recommendations have.

If key recommendations are flawed, there are serious consequences for our most vulnerable citizens. It is imperative that we seek outcomes that place children at the heart of child protection policy, supported by uncomfortable truth rather than condemn them to poor life outcomes to support a reassuring lie.

After a thorough review of available evidence, this response advocates for greater use of open adoption as a permanency option for abused and neglected children, who cannot be reunified with their parents within child appropriate timelines. Children have a right to be protected from harm and provided with stable, loving families. This the CRC recognises is the foundation for their full and harmonious development. Timely open adoption will support Governments to meet many of their CRC obligations and build a better world for children.

Violence against children is pervasive and constitutes a fundamental breach of their human rights.

The CRC report reveals that violence tragically remains a very real part of childhood for an ever-increasing number of young Australians. Article 19 of the CRC requires governments to ensure that children are properly cared for and protected from violence, abuse and neglect (Australian Child Rights Taskforce, 2016). The report highlights the reality that the impact of direct and/or indirect violence on children is pervasive, and constitutes a fundamental breach of their human rights. What is especially concerning is the statement made by the honourable Alastair Nicholson chair of Children's rights international in his opening remarks, who said successive Australian Governments have consistently breached the CRC and show every intention of continuing to do so.

Indeed, in 1990 when Australia ratified the CRC, one aspiration was to achieve a comprehensive response to the prevalence of violence experienced by children within the family environment and improve the understanding of bodily integrity and dignity denied children yet afforded to adults (Australian Child Rights Taskforce, 2016). However, this most recent CRC report highlights that there has been a dramatic increase in notifications and responses from child protection systems nationally over the last 25 years, as well as substantial increases in the numbers of children requiring out-of-home-care (OOHC). The task force is stating that state and territory child protection systems in Australia cannot sustain the current demand for investigation and response.

The report, therefore, emphasised the importance of preventing and protecting Australia's children from violence. The report further outlines how children who experience or witness violence risk ever increasing harm to their development, with far-reaching social and economic costs. The task force found that there is a risk of children repeating the behaviours they witnessed and/or suffered. The report states that the single biggest predictor of children becoming either perpetrators or victims of family violence in adulthood is whether they grew up in a violent home. A recent news article by Carolyn Curtis, CEO of the Australian Centre for Social Innovation supports this finding; she claims that 90% of adults who abuse or neglect their children were abused and neglected themselves (Curtis, 2016). Furthermore, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Child protection statistics suggest:

"Increases in the number of children in OOHC may be related to the increasingly complex family situations of children associated with parental substance abuse, mental health and family violence. Intergenerational cycles of abuse may also contribute to the growth in numbers of children in OOHC. These factors can also affect the length of time children remain in care." (AIHW, 2011-2012)

This demonstrates the need for timely intervention to protect children from prolonged exposure to abuse and neglect to prevent continuing cycles of violence.

Additionally, the report highlighted the lack of stability provided to children who are placed in out-of-home care (OOHC), due to substantiated harm, was repeatedly attributed to poor outcomes for young people who are then at higher risk of homelessness, mental and physical health problems, poor educational achievement and poverty. This failure to ensure

the safety, protection and stability of our most vulnerable children poses a significant barrier to Governments meeting their obligations.

The Impacts of Childhood Trauma and Instability in Care on Human Development and Life Outcomes?

Adverse experiences during crucial periods of brain development, especially during the first three years, can have a detrimental impact on an individual's overall long-term well-being (Brown & Ward, 2013; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007). Once the brain has adapted to its environment, the effects can be permanent and irreversible (Brown & Ward, 2013; Jordon & Sketchley, 2009). This means that interventions in later life are less likely to be effective (McLachlan, Gilfillan, & Gordon, 2013; Sammut D. J., 2014). Such research findings are especially important because the 2014-15 Australian data demonstrates that children are being admitted to care at younger ages for longer periods of time, with infants (children aged under 1) most likely to be receiving child protection services. Almost half (47%) of children admitted to orders in 2014–15 were aged between 0 and 4, reflecting the previously noted view that younger children are regarded as the most vulnerable (AIHW, 2015).

The pervasive and long-term impacts of childhood violence and instability in care identified by the task force are supported by a large body of evidence-based research. The evidence conclusively demonstrates that children who suffer chronic early abuse and neglect by their parents or caregiver have very poor life outcomes, which are extremely costly to the individual, their community and the economy. This is because chronic child maltreatment also referred to as toxic stress or cumulative harm, interrupts normal brain development leading to lifelong impairments in learning, behaviour, physical and mental health. Furthermore, children who are denied stable attachment relationships with a primary caregiver are very likely to have abnormal developmental processes and altered brain function, severely impairing the child's capacity to interact with others and form healthy relationships throughout life (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2012; Child Safety Services QLD, 2011; Connors, 2012; McDermott, Lee, Gassman, & Wallis, 2012; McEwen, 2012; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2011). Such adverse childhood experiences were repeatedly highlighted by the task force to impede children's educational and life opportunities, breaching our child rights obligations.

In chapter two, the report outlined that the number of care leavers transitioning into poverty and homelessness is extraordinarily high. Appallingly two-thirds of homeless youth were discovered to have been in some form of OOHC. The lack of stability in OOHC was identified by the task force as being a significant contributor to these poor outcomes for young people.

Chapter three is devoted to the right of all children to an education. The report claims Australia needs to do more to increase access to quality early childhood education. As it is well recognised that acquiring a good education has significant individual, economic, social and civil benefits for individuals, families and communities. Unfortunately, children who experience early trauma suffer developmental impairments in both learning and behaviour that inhibit their educational potential. Therefore, unless children are protected from harm,

they will lack the developmental processes and brain architecture to take advantage of any educational reform. The right to education hinges on the right to be free from violence (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009).

Another chapter examined the alarming overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in the youth criminal justice system and OOHC. They identify the awful reality that Indigenous children are twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable than non-Indigenous children. They believe this is due to Indigenous families being greatly impacted by intergenerational trauma. The high level of intergenerational trauma in many Indigenous communities may require a review of the Aboriginal child placement principle to ensure Indigenous children's right to harmonious development is prioritised. This is because, as 2010 *Growing them strong, together* Inquiry by Howard Bath, found there are fewer and fewer Aboriginal families able to provide substitute care and more and more children likely to require a placement (Bath, 2010). All Australian children regardless of race should have equal protection under the law to develop free from violence (Johns, 2011; Jarrett, 2013).

Chapter five looks at the health of Australian Children. The report acknowledged the growing understanding that childhood trauma plays in mental and physical health issues for children. A landmark study called *The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study* looked at the relationship between childhood abuse and household dysfunction and many of the leading causes of death in adults. They found *a strong relationship between the breadth of exposure to abuse or household dysfunction during childhood and multiple risk factors for several of the leading causes of death* (Felitti, et al., 1998). Not surprisingly the report found that children in OOHC have higher rates of poor physical and mental health outcomes, with inequities not resolved on entering care but often further compounded by frequent placements due to instability when in care.

The task force is correct that the impacts of trauma and instability in care are pervasive; impacting Government's ability to reduce rates of poverty, homelessness and Indigenous disadvantage; and improve educational achievements, mental and physical health outcomes. The chronic maltreatment many Australian children experience shapes the adults they become; impairs their capacity to live positive, fulfilling and purposeful lives, and can lead to generations of disadvantage (Goddard & Tucci, 2008; Sammut D. J., 2014). To paraphrase Professor Brett McDermott's (Director Mater Adolescent and Young Adult Centre at Mater Health Service), a statement from the recent Queensland Carmody Inquiry: If you want to wreck a human being you do so in the first few years of life (Guest, 2012).

To combat the ever-increasing numbers of children who are subjected to violence, abuse and neglect; and therefore requiring tertiary and unstable OOHC services; the task force recommended a robust increase in expenditure on early intervention and family support.

Does Evidence Support a Continued Increased Focus on Early Intervention, Prevention and Support Services as an Effective means of Securing Children's Right to be Free from Violence and Properly Cared for?

In Australia, there have been 39 inquiries, reviews and royal commissions in the last decade looking at how to prevent children suffering abuse and neglect (Curtis, 2016). The report claims these repeated child protection inquiries highlight government failure to ensure early intervention measures to address the causal factors of violence against children. They, therefore, claim more robust funding is required for targeted prevention, early intervention and family support services, to strengthen and support families with multiple complex issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, mental health problems, poverty and domestic violence so that they can keep their children safely at home.

Interestingly, over the past 25 years, research demonstrates there has been a continuing embrace of the public health approach to child protection policy. There is clear evidence that early intervention and family support services currently underpin policy and practice nationally. According to the (AIHW), Child Protection Australia statistics, (OOHC) is considered a last resort: Only in the presence of demonstrated "significant harm" and with the emphasis to keep children with families wherever possible (AIHW, 2015; Commonwealth of Australia, 2009)(Sammut J. , 2015). Indeed, national expenditure on family support has increased more than 300% since the CRC inception (AIHW , 2011-2012).

If family support services fail to address safety concerns, then children enter the OOHC care system. Extensive intervention services continue to be provided to parents to address their multiple complex issues, with the aim to pursue family reunification at all costs (Broadley, Goddard, & Tucci, 2014) (Broadley, 2014) (Sammut J. , 2015). Sadly as identified by the report and AIHW statistics, foster care is often unstable, with many children experiencing multiple placements and reunification attempts, further compounding harm (AIHW, 2015; CCYPCG, 2013; Roth, 2013).

In line with current practice and repeated inquiry findings, the report recommends even greater expenditure on early intervention and family support services as the solution to the increasing rates of abuse and neglect against children and instability in care. However, after at least 25 years of the public health model, the report states that there is insufficient data on children's experience of violence, the impacts or lasting effectiveness of interventions and support services. This is a disturbing finding and one that makes their claim; that more early intervention and support services will protect children; questionable. In fact, the evidence reveals the exact opposite.

Parents with multiple complex issues are currently given extensive support and almost limitless opportunities to change. However, evidence suggests their issues are difficult to resolve and highly susceptible to relapse (Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, 2013; Kenny & Higgins, 2015). Recent inquiries have established that in some Australian jurisdictions between one quarter and one-half of all notifications of harm are re-reports of unresolved child welfare concerns. NSW reporting data demonstrated that of the approximately 300,000 reports, nearly half were from the same 7,500 families, who made up multiple re-reports. (Sammut D. J., 2014) These children were identified and re-

identified up to 20 times. In Victoria the findings are similar. Two-thirds of reports are re-reports of unresolved child protection concerns. This indicates that mandatory reporting is effectively identifying and *re-identifying* the most at-risk children (Sammut D. J., 2014).

In 2008, NSW conducted the Wood Inquiry, by The Hon. James Wood AO QC who noted: *The evidence from our review demonstrates that the focus on family preservation and reunification has meant that they [children] have experienced high levels of adversity and disadvantage.* (Wood, 2008).

The Wood report also found

...of the children who were the subject of a finding of substantiated neglect or risk of neglect in 2005/06, around 75% did not subsequently enter care. Even fewer entered care where the risk issues involved psychological harm, physical harm, sexual harm or risk of harm. The question as to what happened to these children and young persons is important and remains largely unanswered (Wood, 2008).

Furthermore, a 2013 NSW briefing paper on Permanency Planning and Adoption of Children in OOHC showed that more than 70% of children had been in care for 2 or more years with 60% experiencing 2 or more placements (Lenny Roth).

The recent Victorian 2012 Cummins inquiry, *Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children*, was undertaken following a 10-year re-structure that **increased government funding for intensive family support by 900%** (Sammut D. J., 2014; Wood, 2008). They found **no evidence that the increased spending had protected children**, reduced the incidence of abuse and neglect or decreased the pressure on the Victorian Child Protection Service (Wood, 2008). The report found that the significant incidence of recurring reports and multiple substantiations underline that statutory child protection services in and of themselves frequently **cannot** redress the multiple and chronic issues that are associated with child abuse and neglect (Cummins, 2012).

Additionally, Queensland data demonstrates only one-quarter of children admitted to OOHC were admitted for the first time, with the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian finding children experienced up to 20 reunification attempts (AIHW , 2011-2012; CCYPCG, 2013). 65% of children in care had been in care for two or more years (AIHW , 2011-2012). The recent 2014 Carmody Inquiry, *Taking responsibility: A Roadmap for Queensland Child Protection*, found that the reason for the expanding OOHC population was due to Queensland's current child protection focus being very heavily focused on family preservation (Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry, 2013).

In 2016 as outlined by the CRC report, there remains no reliable research showing that secondary prevention strategies of parent education and support are effective in changing entrenched patterns of parental violence against or neglect of children. Currently, available data do not support the continuation of this policy idea (Broadley, 2014; Goddard & Tucci, 2008; Narey, 2011) (Sammut J. , 2015).

The family preservation model places the rehabilitation of the parents, with increasingly complex family situations of substance abuse, mental health and family violence, above the

safety of the child. This idea has trivialised the importance of children's experience of recurrent assault, torture, deprivation of liberty, humiliation, fear, neglect and chaos, all of which guarantee tragic life outcomes, as mere "family dysfunction" (AIHW , 2011-2012; Aas, 2004; Sammut J. , 2009). Such treatment in any other setting would be considered a crime and a violation of HR (Thomas, 2013; Goddard & Tucci, 2008; Connors, 2012; Mudaly & Goddard, 2006).

Transforming people with multiple complex issues into competent parents is extremely difficult if not impossible if the research and statistical evidence is true. Former UK education Minister Michael Grove who successfully reframed the adoption debate stated that the preoccupation with parent's rights exposes children to "appalling neglect and criminal mistreatment. The tragic yet likely truth is that dysfunctional parents, often the product of the current preservation system, stay damaged and damage their children (Sammut J. , 2009; Cummins, 2012; Goddard & Tucci, 2008; Narey, 2011).

Article 6 of the CRC says children have the right to live a full life and Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily. Persisting with the same policy platform in the hope it will one day produce a different result, supports Mr Nicholson's claim that successive Australian Governments have consistently breached the CRC and show every intention of continuing to do so.

[Family Preservation is Perpetuating Pervasive Abuse, Neglect and Violence Against Children, Creating Intergeneration Dysfunction and Social Inequality.](#)

The reviewed evidence, supported by the CRC taskforce, clearly demonstrates the pervasive impacts of early trauma, risking ever increasing harm to children's development, with far-reaching social and economic costs. The delay in intervening to protect children, followed by a delay in achieving permanency is causing **permanent** damage to children's brains and having severe and long-term consequences. The damage affects all aspects of their future learning, behaviour and health (Brown & Ward, 2013; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2011; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2010).

The above research and statistics have demonstrated the intergenerational nature of dysfunction, supported by the task force concluded that the single biggest predictor of children becoming either perpetrators or victims of family violence in adulthood is whether they grew up in a violent home. Research has demonstrated that family support services aimed at fixing parental problems that stem from early chronic maltreatment are unlikely to be effective (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child , 2007; Department of Communities, 2010; Narey, 2011). The family preservation model, rather than focusing on building strong foundations for human development by keeping children in safe and stable homes, attempts to repair those broken by the very system.

These findings contradict the taskforce view that the causal factors of violence against children are poverty, social inequality and societal failure to respond to parental mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence issues. The truth appears to be that the cause, of poverty, social inequality and the multiple complex issues facing many in our community is chronic childhood abuse and neglect (Narey, 2011)(Sammut J. , 2015).

Therefore the poor life outcomes for children in care; mental and physical health issues, unemployment, incarceration, drug and alcohol addiction, welfare dependency, social exclusion, teen pregnancy and homelessness, are not due to being removed, but a result of being removed too late. Then after experiencing appalling neglect and criminal mistreatment, they are subjected to an unstable system that further compounds harm (Goddard, Mudaly, & Frederick, 2011)(Sammut J. , 2015). This is especially important since data demonstrates children are being admitted to care at younger ages for longer periods of time, where the opportunity to ensure their full and harmonious development is greatest.

The cycle of prolonged maltreatment at home, removal as a last resort, and extended instability of “temporary” foster care involving multiple entries, exits and placements; that can consume entire childhoods; must be transformed. In practice, family preservation does not prevent child abuse and neglect. In reality, it puts children on a treadmill that destroys childhoods causing permanent developmental damage, perpetuates intergenerational dysfunction, disadvantage, and ultimately creates the next generation of damaged, disturbed, abusive and neglectful parents (Cummins, 2012; Narey, 2011)(Sammut J. , 2015).

The impact of childhood trauma and instability in care was repeatedly highlighted by the task force as impacting on Government’s ability to improve rates of poverty, homelessness, educational achievements, Indigenous disadvantage, mental and physical health outcomes. Failing to prioritise safe and stable family environments; that children need to build strong foundations for healthy development and productive lives; constitutes a serious human rights violation. It also puts our Nation’s future prosperity at risk due to the far-reaching social and economic costs identified by the CRC report.

[The Solution is Timely Permanent Decisions Through Open Adoption](#)

Future policy needs to be reflective of what is known. There is now mounting evidence of the effects early trauma has on brain development, as well as the paramount importance of stable attachment relationships for positive pro-social development. Researchers, reviews and inquiries, have called for permanent care for children in out of home care as a result of abuse and neglect be **vigorously pursued**. With such large numbers of children being identified at very young ages it is critical to secure **permanency** for children in a **timely** manner (CMC, 2004; Department of Child Safety, 2006; Keech, 2008; RANZCP, 2013) (Goddard & Tucci, 2008; Narey, 2011).

The importance of speeding up decision making after a child first comes to the attention of authorities was highlighted in the recent UK Narey Report on adoption, *Our blueprint for Britain’s lost children*. This was in response to research demonstrating that most parents who are going to significantly improve their ability to look after their children do so in the first six months of the child’s life. If that doesn’t happen, they argue we need to be bolder and quicker in making permanent decisions (Narey, 2011).

Permanent placement decisions are aimed at promoting stability and can be achieved through adoption or where this is not appropriate another permanent arrangement (Department of Communities, 2011; NSW DoCS, 2007). However, it is important to be aware that while retrospective studies show children in stable long-term foster care do well it is

difficult to predict stability in foster care. Timely open adoption achieves stable permanency for children without the uncertainty associated with foster care (Pike, 2014; Roth, 2013)

Adoption has also been acknowledged in a number of recent reports and inquiries. The QLD Carmody report recognised a large number of children “drifting” in and out of care and therefore suggested that rather than “unrealistically” pursuing reunification at all costs; churning children through multiple entries into care, multiple foster placements, and multiply failed reunions; alternatives to family preservation need to be pursued. The recommendation was that child protection caseworkers should be directed to “routinely consider and pursue adoption”, especially for very young children where the chances of successful reunification are slim (Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, 2013).

Similarly, the 2011 Cummins Inquiry recommended barriers to adoption of children from OOHC should be identified and eliminated. Furthermore, in 2015 Coroner ██████████ who undertook the coroner’s report into the death of ██████████ called for fundamental change recommending that “adoption should have a place in the alternative placement options in the child protection system (Cummins, 2012).

NSW, in line with research evidence, has instituted the following timely decision-making guidelines to reflect children’s best interests:

Based on extensive research on permanency planning for children and young people in OOHC and emphasises the importance of a permanent, stable home for every child. Where a child is removed for their protection and wellbeing, a decision about whether restoration of the child to their birth family is a realistic possibility must not take longer than six months for children under 2, and not longer than 12 months for all other children and young people (NSW DoCS, 2007).

Furthermore, the NSW 2014 FACS: “Open Adoption and permanent placement principles fact sheet” highlight the **need for children to have the stability to fulfil their potential** and that the Act recognises this. Therefore, **adoption MUST** be considered before other placement options (NSW DoCS, 2007).

Timely permanence; through open adoption; will reduce the number of children in care. It will decrease the incidence of abuse and neglect, decrease intergenerational disadvantage and reduce the pressure on child protection from the multiple re-reports overwhelming the system (Australian Government, 2011; Australian Government, 2012; Roth, 2013; Wise, Bloomfield, & Higgins). Reducing demand is critical since the report concluded that state and territory child protection systems in Australia could not sustain the current demand for investigation and response.

Furthermore, the decrease in expenditure on OOHC will save billions of dollars both directly and indirectly, throughout these children’s lives. Rather than continuing to pour money into high need support services and residential care; for children who have suffered extensive trauma compounded by unstable care; permanency can offer the stability that governments cannot, physical relationships. (Australian Government, 2012; Foster Care Queensland, 2013) (Sammut J. , 2015)

Finally, adoption of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remains a culturally complex and sensitive issue. However, the report identified that Indigenous children are twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable as non-Indigenous children, due to the impact of intergenerational trauma. Therefore, if one accepts the premise that adoption offers the best outcomes for children in the child protection system, then maintaining a default position of excluding Indigenous children from this permanency option is likely to perpetuate the disadvantage gap (Harris, 2015) (Sammut J. , 2015). ██████████ stated it was outrageous to deny a child a chance of adoption because of a misguided belief that race or culture is more important than anything else (Sammut J. , 2015). Children of Indigenous heritage have the same right as all other children to be free from violence to ensure their right to full development. Without which they will not have the capability to actively participate in self-determining their communities.

Timely permanency through open Adoption is the answer to our national child protection crisis. Safe and stable family environments will make the 1990 aspiration to reduce the prevalence of violence experienced by children within the family environment and improve the understanding of bodily integrity and dignity denied children yet afforded adults, a reality (Narey, 2011; Pike, 2014)(Sammut J. , 2015). From this perspective adoption; rather than being about the desires of adults to form families; ensures the rights of children to survive and develop healthily. Adoption gives children whose parents are unable or unwilling to care for them, within child-centred timelines, the loving family environment required for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality.

Conclusion

To repeat the same action over and over again expecting a different result is the definition of insanity. Perplexingly, the CRC report, contrary to all the evidence, has continued to repeat the same mantra that thirty-nine other Inquiries have advocated. The evidence however resoundingly contradicts this view. With the outcomes of our next generation in the balance, it is paramount that we focus on evidence-based practice and create sustainable change in Australia's Child Protection.

Research has demonstrated the pervasive developmental damage chronic child maltreatment has on children's life outcomes. Furthermore, the evidence supporting the effectiveness of the family preservation model is minimal to the point of being non-existent. In fact, the causal factor of much of the social disadvantage and inequality plaguing many of our communities is a failure to provide abused and neglected children with timely safety and stability.

A fundamental change in our child protection practice that prioritises the child's safety and stability over ideology is required. Early removal of children where there is significant substantiated harm is necessary to prevent physical and mental harm due to prolonged trauma; especially considering infants (children aged under 1) are most likely to be receiving child protection services. Where it is not possible to reunify within child-centred time limits, the provision of safe and stable homes preferably through open adoption can prevent and even reverse the damaging effects of early toxic stress. Evidence suggests this is the best

way to provide vulnerable children with the right to survive and develop. As the CRC aims to *build a better world for children*, then open adoption is an effective way to meet this goal.

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