Media Release

John Elferink, Member for Port Darwin
Minister for Children and Families

Safer and more stable homes for hundreds of Territory children

7 July 2015

The lives of hundreds of Territory children have been made safer and more stable now that amendments to the *Care and Protection of Children Act* have come into effect.

“Permanent Care Orders (PCO) are an important option for some children who deserve a stable and permanent family without the constant involvement of a government department in their lives.” Minister for Children and Families, John Elferink said.

A PCO is an order made by the Court which grants a person parental responsibility for a child under the age of 18.

“Children who are taken into Department of Children and Families (DCF) care have been subjected to abuse and the PCO is intended to provide a long-term stable environment for the child to grow and thrive.

“Every child’s situation is different and will be reviewed individually,” Minister Elferink said.

A PCO will be in effect until the child is 18 years old and allows a carer to make everyday decisions about the individual in their care.

Once the court grants the PCO the child is no longer a client of DCF.

Children who are on long-term orders under the *Care and Protection of Children Act* will be eligible to access the order. These are children where reunification with their families is not a practical option.

“A PCO retains the child’s birth identity and rights, and does not sever the bond between a child and their biological family.

“The Country Liberals Government encourages anyone who may be suitable, to consider becoming a foster carer. A number of people have already expressed interest in becoming permanent carers.”

“If you have room in your home and heart, fostering can be truly rewarding,” Minister Elferink said.
Further information regarding the PCO including eligibility criteria and carer assessment process is available [here](#).

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