A more stable and permanent home for the Territory’s vulnerable children

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The Parliament today passed legislation to establish a new permanent care option which will allow for a more stable upbringing for children in care.

Minister for Children and Families John Elferink said a Permanent Care Order aims to offer a more permanent option for children who are unable to be reunited with family.

“A Permanent Care Order will be in effect until the child is 18 years and allows a carer to make everyday decisions about the individual in their care, such as providing approval for a child to attend a school excursion or travel on a family holiday,” Mr Elferink said.

“This new type of order transfers parental rights to a third party, in a very similar way to adoption, however, unlike adoption, a Permanent Care Order will not change a child’s surname, birth certificate, birthrights or entitlements.

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

“Children will be asked for consent where it is appropriate and there will be a thorough assessment of those families that want to be considered for this type of Order.

“I feel strongly that these orders are an important option for some children; children who deserve a family without the constant involvement of a government department in their lives.

“Children who are taken into care have already been subject to abuse, neglect and/or trauma and it is important that they are provided with a long-term stable environment moving into adulthood,” Mr Elferink said.

There are currently over 500 children in the Northern Territory in care that will be in care for their whole childhood.

Children on long term orders under the Care and Protection of Children Act will be eligible to access the order.
CREATE Foundation, the peak consumer body for children and young people in care, consults independently with children and young people with a care experience, who have told CREATE that placement stability is very important.

“Permanent care is one of many approaches that may achieve stability, yet there is no one-size fits all solution,” CREATE Chief Executive, Ms Jacqui Reed said.

“Every child's situation must be reviewed individually. Children and young people have a right to be involved in any decisions made about their lives and we appreciate this being incorporated into the legislation.”

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