John Elferink  
Minister for Children and Families  

Providing a more stable and permanent home for children in care  

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"Permanent Care Orders will give full parental rights and responsibilities to carers, enabling the child to have a more stable upbringing," Mr Elferink said.

“The policy has already been adopted in jurisdictions across Australia and aims to promote a more permanent option for children who are unable to be reunited with family.

“Children who are taken into care have already been subject to considerable abuse, neglect and/or trauma, and every effort should be made to provide them with a stable environment to enjoy childhood.

“The Permanent Care Order will be in effect until the child is 18 years and will allow them to develop a strong connection to their carer family while still retaining links to their birth parents.

“At a young age, children want a sense of belonging and a normalised home life, and permanent care will provide this base for children in care.

“The need for a more permanent care option is backed up by studies which show that children in out-of-home care who are in stable consistent environments do better overall than children who experience multiple placements. Additionally, this is an option often sought by children in care and their carers.

“The Northern Territory Government will continue to introduce child protection policies and initiatives with the child’s best interest as a core focus.”

Unlike adoption however, the Permanent Care Order will not remove a child’s surname, take away birth rights and access to entitlements nor will it change the details of their birth certificate, ensuring that a child’s relationship with their birth parent and family is not severed.

A Permanent Care Order will also allow carers to make decisions for the care and wellbeing of the child, in the same way families can and do, instead of the current system which requires heavy departmental involvement.
Mr Elferink said the move will also alleviate caseloads for Department of Children and Families staff, freeing up resources to meet the needs of the most vulnerable children who require a more intensive service.

There are more than 900 children in out-of-home care in the Northern Territory, according to the 2013-14 Children’s Commissioner’s Annual Report released today. Of these, around 45 per cent will be in care until they are 18 years of age.

The legislative reforms to the *Care and Protection of Children Act* are expected to be debated in Parliament early next year.

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