

City Women's Submission to Queensland Child Protection Inquiry Nov 2012-11-24

City Women is based in Toowoomba, Qld and is an umbrella organisation for over 20 programs that are helping women and girls in the city of Toowoomba. It was founded in 2005 & has been running for a total of 7 years. Several of our programs are aimed at girls between 11-17 years of age. Some of the more well known programs running are Bella Magazine, Emily's Voice, Collective Shout, The Gap, Shine & Serious Fun. For the last 10 years we have been running camps, school programs, Friday night programs for girls and just this year have opened a residential program for young women between 16-19.

In this paper,

- City Women want to show support for the Barnardos Submission, to release long term foster care children to be adopted by families & couples within Queensland
- That through working alongside foster care children we have seen the damage the continual change in placement of children from home to home impacts on these children emotionally.
- Although City Women's experience arises from our involvement with girls, the movement for stable home lives provided through adoption for ALL children regardless of gender would be an important and necessary change.

City Women were excited and encouraged to read the recent Barnardos (2012) Submission to Child Safety, Barnardos (2012) research outlines that 'long term care' in the state system does not provide the foster child with a stable long term home, rather that these children can be shifted from home to home until they are 18yrs. Barnardos (2012) latest press release discusses one foster care girl who until Barnardos (2012) organised her adoption, had been through 22 foster homes by the age of 8. This fact of foster care children receiving many temporary homes is not uncommon in City Women's experience with foster care children.

During the last decade, City Women have been involved in young women's lives from various backgrounds. Over the years we have had a number of foster care girls involved with our organisations. Many of these children have been through several homes by the time they have reached their teenage years (one of our girls was in her 14th home at the age of 12). During our involvement with foster care girls we've seen firsthand the damage that the use of many temporary homes have on girls. We believe that the isolation caused by the movement of foster children contributes to poor decision making on the child's behalf, the children think only for the now and not for

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their tomorrow and these choices often result in unwanted pregnancies, bad life choices with drugs and alcohol, higher rates of law breaking. Although we realise multiple homes are not the only source of bad decision making impacting on these children lives, that issues such as previous abuse, generational cycles, mistrust of adults; all impact heavily on the make up of a child however all the more reason these children should be placed in a permanent home through adoption.

When City Women are involved in working with foster care girls through our programs, we can provide mentors and stable people to assist with daily life. However it has been heart wrenching when they are torn away from our community and relocated because they need to go to a new foster home. Quite often we will never have contact with them again and they will have been isolated from any positive choices they have been previously working towards in their life.

City Women want to point out that Child Safety has done great work for children and will continue to do so, however City Women believe that there are yet more ways to help long term foster children. We understand that there are more children than foster parents, more problems with families in Queensland than Child Safety have staff. Open Adoption as outlined in the Barnardos (2012) submission would give these children a stable long term home & assist the foster children by planting them within a community.

Barnardos (2012) National Adoption Awareness Week found at http://www.barnardos.org.au/barnardos/html/national_adoption_awareness_week.cfm

Barnardos Australia Submission to Queensland Child Protection Inquiry (2012) found at http://www.childprotectioninquiry.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/162384/Barnardos_Australia_Voigt_Louise.pdf

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