

Sarah Wilson

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Submission on the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026

To whom it may concern,

My name is Sarah, I am a concerned constituent and community services worker.

I am deeply troubled about the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026, which fails to help the children it claims to protect.

I believe all children should be given the chance to thrive, but the amendments to this Bill mean that children and families could be irreparably harmed due to lowering of the threshold and prioritisation of permanency over reunification.

Below, I will list my main concerns with the changes to this Bill:

The Bill prioritises permanency in institutional care, over reunification with family. This is worrying because we know that in order for children to thrive they must have care and connection to their families and culture. We cannot risk another generation of children forced into institutional care who lose culture, their sense of self and are left traumatised. The Bill will harm children more than it will benefit them by focussing on separating families over reunifying them. Not only will it harm children and families today, but this will have an everlasting flow on effect for generations to come.

The Bill lowers the threshold for entrance into the child protection, justice, policing and welfare systems. Lowering the threshold is dangerous because it will capture a larger proportion of community members who may be dealing with poverty-related issues, or families already struggling with housing, disability or access to mental health services. In essence, the Bill would lower the threshold and penalise kids and families struggling with issues that will be worsened by child removal.

Further, all community legal services have called for this Bill to be scrapped, including NAAJA, NAAFLS, Top end women's legal service, and many more. The committee should listen to experts.

There are better solutions. The money being pumped into jails would be better served growing the community sector, housing stock and mental health services to support families, and benefit communities.

In summary, I do not believe this Bill addresses the underlying causes driving child protection involvement in the Northern Territory.

Instead, we are concerned the Bill:

- lowers the threshold for intervention into families;

- increases pathways and permanency into long-term care;
- fails to adequately address poverty, housing instability and service shortages;
- risks causing further harm to vulnerable children, families and communities.

The Northern Territory Government is under pressure to scrap the Bill. It must undertake genuine consultation with Aboriginal organisations, community services, legal services, frontline workers and affected communities to develop evidence-based reforms that keep children safe by strengthening families and communities rather than expanding punitive intervention.

Regards,

Sarah Wilson