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MEDIA RELEASE

Children, Youth & Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Bill 2014 – where does adoption fit?

VANISH Inc. is a Victorian service for those adults who have been adopted as children and has been working with the 'lived' experience of mothers, fathers and adoptees for 25 years. Coleen Clare their manager stated today: "It is not ok that the Children, Youth and Families Bill is being amended this week without any consultation with the adoption community when it escalates adoption as a choice for parents who are unable to care for their children. Government needs to be aware of the lifelong loss of identity, grief and trauma that adoption often causes." She went on to say "Here in our work we see the pain every day. Government must fully meet their responsibilities to resource support for troubled parents, fragmented families and struggling carers before it uses adoption."

VANISH applauds moves to strengthen out of home care and place children who cannot live safely at home with carers who are fully resourced to look after them well. Coleen went on to say, "The amazing workers in child protection and out of home care need to be fully resourced to do their job and this includes the carers and the workers in the Children's Court. Our system for vulnerable children has to have a 'one door' policy for kinship, foster, residential and permanent care. The most vulnerable children in the state deserve more funding to provide a complete range of wraparound therapeutic help. Their parents need ongoing expert help. We should not have children bouncing through multiple placements and good workers and carers distraught for lack of resources."

When adoption is recommended 'in the best interests of the child' it is absolutely essential that the child officially maintains their birth name, full detailed knowledge of their conception and heritage and ongoing connection to their mother and when possible father. Preferably this will be in face to face contact fully supported by carers and professionals. Where for safety or other reasons personal contact is not possible, regular written communication should be provided and at the very least detailed information on what has happened to the child's parent/s. This contact should be provided at all the key developmental life stages and especially as the child reaches young adulthood.

Coleen concluded: "Adoption is not the answer to childlessness, poverty or abortion and it should not be considered as a solution to the failings of implementation associated with the current Victorian permanent care system."

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