

Enduring Responsibility Orders

Enduring Parental Responsibility (EPR) orders are administered through the Adoptions and Permanent Care unit — part of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support within the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services (DHCS).

What is an Enduring Parental Responsibility (EPR) order?

An EPR order transfers all of the Chief Executive's parental responsibilities, including residency, to the nominated carers.

Upon the granting of an EPR order, the Chief Executive has no further involvement in the child's life, and the carers are responsible for making all decisions, both day-to-day and long-term for the child.

Who is an EPR order for?

Not all children in the care of the Chief Executive can benefit from the provisions of an EPR order. An EPR is most suited for:

- Children or young people who are in the long term care of the Chief Executive.
- Children or young people who have been with the nominated carers for a continuous period of two years, or for a total of two years over the last three years.
- Children or young people who are in agreement with the plan for them to become a permanent member of their carer's family. (This will be age dependent).
- Children or young people who have carers willing and able to provide for their permanent care.
- Children or young people who are in very settled placements and who have predictable and supportive birth family contact arrangements.
- Children or young people who have birth family who are in agreement of the plan to seek an EPR.

Benefits for the child or young person

All children have a right to stability, security and a sense of belonging. Children need to know where they are going to be living, with whom and for how long. For children to develop an integrated sense of self, they need to have the security of being with people who carry their past for them, love them in the present and can help to plan for their futures.

For most children this stability and permanence is provided in their parents' home. Children who are unable to live with their parents still need the benefit of settled and stable living arrangements.

- An EPR order provides the opportunity for the child or young person to develop the stability and permanence they need to develop the sense of security, identity and resilience essential to their wellbeing.

Benefits for the carer

- An Enduring Parental Responsibility order allows carers to exercise the day-to-day and long-term parental responsibility for the child or young person in their care.
- Carers can make all decisions for the child or young person and do not have to seek permission from the agency or from the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support (OCYFS).

- An EPR is particularly appropriate for carers who are able and committed to establishing a permanent family arrangement for the child or young person in their care.
- Carers can be confident that they will not be financially disadvantaged by an EPR order and will be able to seek support if and when they need to from the Post Order Support Service (POSS).

Benefits for birth parents

- Birth parents are consulted and involved in the plan to seek an EPR order for their children.
- Birth parents can then be confident that an EPR will provide settled and stable arrangements for their child/ren.
- The established patterns for contact arrangements, which are in place under previous orders, will continue when an EPR is granted.
- An EPR order requires that the child is helped to preserve their biological identity and original language, culture and religion.
- An EPR order does not alter the nature of the legal relationships between a child or young person and their biological family.
- An EPR order will work best when the carer and birth parent have a mutually respectful relationship and are confident that they can work together for the benefit of the child or young person.

Key features of an EPR order

- Provides the child or young person with a permanent order until 18 years
- Gives full parental responsibility to the carers
- Removes the requirements for statutory involvement.
- Normalises the life experiences for the child/ young person.
- The order can be financially supported
- Post order support services will be available if requested by the parties involved.

If you are a carer interested in EPR

You should first speak with your caseworker or agency worker to make sure you know as much as you need to know about EPRs.

You will then need to complete an application form and will be asked to undertake background checks, such as police, medical reviews and provide contacts of people who will provide character references for you.

The next step is the assessment process; this means that OCYFS staff will spend time talking to you and other family members about your experience over the last few years, your expectations, strengths and vulnerabilities and assess your capacity as a family unit to provide a permanent family for the child / young person in your care.

Staff will look at the support that you may need to ensure that you can competently look after the child or young person until they are 18.

Staff will also spend time with the child or young person to ensure they understand what an EPR means, and to ensure that their views are properly heard.

If, after the assessment there is agreement that an EPR is the best option for the child or young person, a report will be lodged in court requesting that an EPR order is made in favour of the carers.

If an EPR order is granted

- Care and Protection Services and your foster care agency (if involved) will withdraw over a period of three months.
- An EPR financial allowance will be paid to assist you in providing the care for the child/young person
- Support services will also be available to you at your request through the Post Order Support Service, which is part of the Adoptions and Permanent Care Unit within DHCS.

More information?

Contact the ACT Adoptions and Permanent Care Unit

phone: 6207 1335

fax: 6207 8888 email: adoptions@act.gov.au

www.dhcs.act.gov.au