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| Permanent care order |
| Information for young people |

A permanent care order has been made for you by the Children's Court and means you belong now with your permanent carers.

The order makes your carers your permanent care parents. They have parental responsibility for you. They have all the rights and responsibilities a parent usually has. They can make the same decisions as any parent. No one else has parental responsibility for you anymore.

Unless the Court has said they don’t, your permanent care parents also have to make sure you know where you come from and help you keep connections with the culture and family you were born into.

The Court will have taken into account your views and wishes, and the views of everyone else before making the order.

Once a permanent care order is made, Child Protection has no reason to stay involved.

## How long does a permanent care order last?

A permanent care order lasts until you turn 18 years of age (or marry, if that happens first).

## Where will I live?

You will live with your permanent care parents. If you have brothers and sisters in care, every effort will be made to keep you together. If you can’t live together, you should be able to see them. This will usually be a condition on the permanent care order.

## Charter for children in care

Ask your child protection worker for a copy of the *Charter for Children in Out-of-Home Care.* It explains what you can expect when living with carers.

## Can I see my parents?

Most children and young people find it helps to keep in touch with their birth parents when they have permanent care parents. A permanent care order usually includes conditions about how often your parents can see you. When the order is first made, this can be up to four times a year. Your permanent care parents can agree to more contact if that would be good for you. The Court is able order that you do not have contact with someone. This doesn’t happen very often, but when it does it is because the Court has decided this is needed to protect you.

The Court can also order contact with other people who are important to you. This might be sisters and brothers or grandparents or anyone else significant to you.

Your permanent care parents will have to follow any contact conditions. They will need to work out contact plans. Just like in any family, contact with people that is not court-ordered will be up to your permanent care parents to decide about. They will work these things out with you.

## Can a permanent care order be varied (changed) or revoked (cancelled)?

You, a sibling of yours, your parents, your permanent carers and DHHS may apply to vary or revoke the permanent care order.

Your parents can only apply if the Court lets them. And they can only apply to vary the order in the first 12 months if contact condition has not been obeyed.

If a parent wants to apply to vary or revoke a permanent care order the Court has to put your best interests first. It will think about where you are up to in your life. And whether things with your permanent care family might be upset. The Court has to think about whether there have been any big changes for you or your parents.

The Court can ask DHHS for a report about your circumstances to help decide what is in your best interests.

If an application goes ahead, the Court will want to know what you think. If you are 10 or older, you will have your own lawyer. The order will not be varied or revoked unless the Court is convinced it is in your best interests.

## Where can I get legal advice?

Enquires about legal assistance may be made to:

* the lawyer who represented you at Court
* Victoria Legal Aid, Melbourne, telephone 1300 792 387
* the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-op Ltd, telephone 1800 064 865
* Djirra (formerly known as Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service Victoria), telephone 1800 105 303

## Contact information

The child protection worker’s name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Their contact number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Their Department of Health and Human Services’ office: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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