

What Child Protection Might Say and Why



There are some common things child protection workers say. To fight for your rights, it is helpful to know why child protection says these things.

In this tip sheet, we talk about:

- Things child protection might say when they are making a decision about a child.
- Things child protection might say when a child is in out-of-home care.

When making a decision about a child, child protection might say:

“We are concerned about the ‘best interests’ of the child”

This means:

- The child’s wellbeing, safety and rights come first for child protection.
- Child protection is thinking about how adult choices will impact children (now and in the future).

Why may they say this?

- The ‘best interests of the child’ phrase comes from a human rights document that has been put into Australian laws.
- Child protection sees children as the most important person to help. This is because children need extra care and support. Children, especially babies, need adults for everything.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and child protection workers might have different ideas about what is best for children.

See our tip sheet **‘The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle’**.

Disclaimer: This resource is part of a research project and is subject to change. Updated 17/03/2025. V.1.2.

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“The child’s safety is paramount”

This means:

- ⦿ Child protection thinks nothing should harm a child.
- ⦿ Children should have everything to keep them safe:

Physically

Emotionally

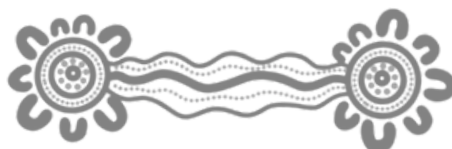
Mentally

TIP!

See our tip sheet ‘**Safety Planning**’ for a list of things child protection might see as a ‘red’ flag.

“The past is the greatest predictor of the future”

This means:



- ⦿ Child protection may look into what has happened in the past to help guess what could happen in the future.

Why may they say this?

- ⦿ Child protection might want to see what has changed between the past and now.
- ⦿ Child protection might only have old information.

TIP!

Keep your own notes to share your side of the story with a lawyer or a magistrate.

If you show that you are trying, that predicts the future, too.

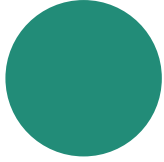
You can use the 5 W's to help you write notes clearly



WHO:

Who did you speak to?

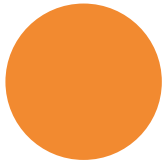
E.g., Aboriginal Health Liaison Officer, Mary Smith.



WHEN:

When did you do this?

21/06/2023 at 1.35 pm



WHERE:

Phone call



WHY:

Why did you talk to them?

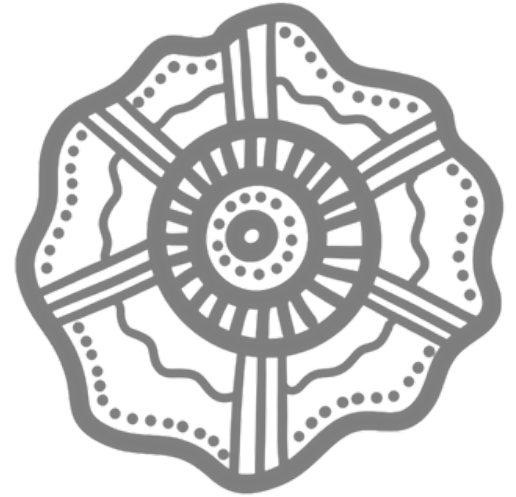
I asked Mary to call me about housing options.



WHAT:

What happened?

Mary asked if she could put in a referral for me to *Housing Australia*. I said yes. She said someone should call me next week to talk about...



“Harm and risk factors are not being addressed”

This means:

- ⦿ Child protection does not think what they are worried about is getting better.

Why may they say this?

- ⦿ To let you know they do not think things are getting better.

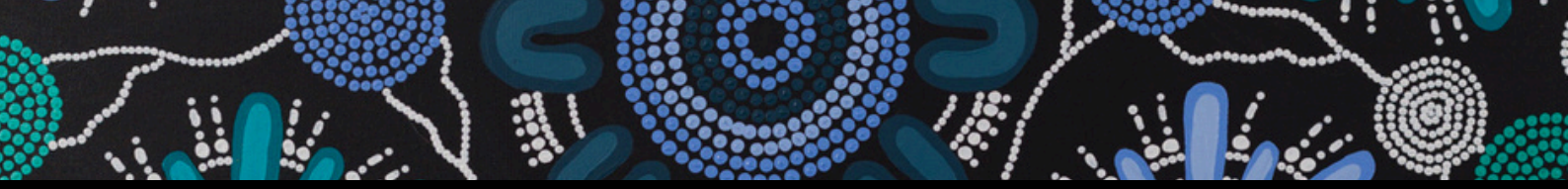


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There is a difference between harm and risk. Child protection should be clear about what they think is a harm and what they think is a risk.

TIP!

- Harm is something that has already happened.
- Risk is something that might happen in the future to cause harm.

Lots of things can be a risk, but a risk **can also be managed**.
See our tip sheet '**Safety Planning**'.



When a child is in out-of-home care, child protection might say:

 **“We are focusing on stability and routines”**

This means:

- ⦿ Child protection may say this because they are worried about too many changes being harmful to bub.

Why may they say this?

- ⦿ This is something that child protection may say when a child has been taken into out-of-care, or
- ⦿ When the family asks to see their child who lives in out-of-home care.

But for many, the change of taking bub away from their parents or community is harmful too.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, removal can also impact connection to culture.

See our tip sheet '**The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle**'.

