



ADOPTION AND PERMANENT CARE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Currently in WA there are five possible pathways for providing a permanent home for a child:

- Local adoption
- Intercountry adoption
- Adoption from foster care
- Long-term foster care
- Special guardianship

ADOPTION

The Department for Child Protection and Family Support (the Department) is the only agency able to arrange adoptions in Western Australia.

LOCAL ADOPTION

Children requiring local adoption have been voluntarily relinquished by their birth parents. Usually these children are infants, and increasingly, the children being relinquished for adoption have varying degrees of special needs.

In Western Australia, birth parents who have relinquished their child for adoption are involved in the selection of adoptive parents for their children.

INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

The Department also manages the applications and assessments for those applying to adopt children through one of Australia's intercountry adoption programs.

The role of the Department is to ensure that those applying to adopt children through these programs meet the requirements for adoption, that they have received the appropriate training and information, and to ensure that appropriate post-adoption support is received.

COSTS

There are administrative and legal costs relating to a local and intercountry adoption in Western Australia.

Additionally intercountry adoption involves costs such as airfares when you travel to meet and bring home your child, and visa and immigration fees.

For both local and intercountry adoption you should also factor in the time you will spend away from the workforce in order to support, and form a relationship with, your adopted child when they return home with you.

APPLYING TO ADOPT A CHILD

In WA when you apply to adopt a child you can indicate a preference for either intercountry and local adoption, or for both.

You must meet the following criteria:

- Applicant must be over 18 years.
- If in a marriage or de facto relationship, the relationship must have existed for at least 3 years.
- If applying as a couple at least one person must be an Australian citizen and the other a citizen of a country that gives similar rights to adopted persons.
- Applicant must be a resident and domiciled in Western Australia.

If you wish to be approved for intercountry adoption you will need to indicate which country you are applying to, and meet the eligibility requirements for that country as well as the requirements for WA.

The process for adopting a child locally or from overseas is:

- Attend a general Information session conducted by the Department
- Attend two or three education sessions (depending on whether it is an intercountry or local adoption)
- Lodge an Expression of Interest with the Department
- Lodge a Formal Application with the Department
- Complete an Assessment prepared by an assessor
- Once approved prepare profile for either local, intercountry or both



Once approved, your name will be added to the approved register of applicants. The register does not operate as a 'waiting list' as it is not the length of time since a family was approved to adopt which determines whether they are chosen as adoptive parents for a particular child.

PERMANENCY PLANNING

The numbers of children adopted through both the local and intercountry adoption programs are very low. The Government of Western Australia is encouraging prospective adoptive parents to consider alternate ways of providing permanent homes to children who cannot safely live at home: permanent foster care, special guardianship, and adoption from foster care.

If it has been decided that a child cannot be safely returned to their parents, the Department will seek the most appropriate permanent care arrangement for the child.

The first step is to become a permanent foster carer which, if in the best interests of the child, can eventually lead either to becoming the legal guardian of a child, or to adoption from foster care.



FOSTER CARE

Permanent foster care provides a child with a permanent, safe and loving home at least until they reach the age of 18. Parental responsibility of the child remains with the Department, but the foster carer provides day to day care.

Foster carers receive a fortnightly subsidy towards the cost of looking after a foster child, as well as other supports to help meet the child's needs.

APPLY TO BECOME A PERMANENT FOSTER CARER

To apply to become a foster carer, you must first obtain an information pack either by telephoning Fostering and Adoption Service on 1800 182 178, or completing the Fostering enquiry form online.

Once you have read the information pack the steps are:

1. Attend an information session
2. Submit an expression of interest
3. Meet with a social worker, usually at your home.
4. Complete and submit an application (including references, medical and police checks)
5. Undergo assessment by a social worker, including several home visits
6. Attend training

If you are approved, you will receive a letter confirming your approval and be asked to sign an agreement with the Department.

You can also apply to become a foster carer with an accredited agency through a similar process. See the Adopt Change website for a list of WA based foster care agencies.

SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP

In some cases, carers are able to assume parental responsibility of a child until they turn 18. The carer needs to have been caring for the child for at least two years. This is called a Protection Order (Special Guardianship). The Order may include conditions about contact between the child and the child's parent or other significant persons.

ADOPTION FROM FOSTER CARE

Carer adoption is another option available to create a stable home for life for children.

If a child has lived with a carer for at least two consecutive years, that carer is able to apply to adopt that child.

Before making an application to the Family Court of Western Australia for an adoption order, the Chief Executive Officer of the Department needs to approve the placement of the child with you with a view to adoption. An adoption order will only be made by the court if it is satisfied that adoption is preferable to other orders the courts are able to make.

MORE INFORMATION

For information and to apply for local and intercountry adoption, and to become a long-term foster carer, phone the WA Fostering and Adoption Service on **1800 182 178**, or visit the Departments [website](#).

For a list of accredited adoption agencies in WA visit the [WA Agencies](#) page.

Intercountry Adoption Australia provides information on [partner countries](#) and eligibility requirements.

Visit the Adopt Change [WA Support Services](#) page for WA based support organisations for adoptive parents, and long-term and permanent carers.