

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED PLAN (SOPP)

A Resource for Parents written by Family Inclusion Strategies Hunter Peer Parent Expert

A Summary of Proposed Plan (SOPP) in NSW DCJ is a short document for the Children's Court outlining DCJ's initial plan for a child in care, focusing on restoring them with parents by detailing required changes (like addressing immediate perceived risks) and **family strengths**, linked to a Family Action Plan for Change (FAP) which details specific tasks for parents to complete to ensure that DCJ believe in a child's safety, aiming for restoration (or long term orders for child to stay in care) within 24 months (or 12months if child is under 1 year old) but can change as new info emerges or depending on how the timeframes are interpreted. <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/service-providers/oohc-and-permanency-support-services/permanency-case-management-policy/pcmp-rules-and-practice-guidance/permanency-case-planning/collaborating-in-permanency-case-planning-.html>

Key Aspects of the SOPP

- **Purpose:** To tell the court the department's best guess at where a child will live long term, usually aiming for the child's return home in the begining (restoration).
- **Content:** Identifies safety concerns, lists actions parents must take (Family Action Plan for Change), and proposes childrens living arrangements.
- **Collaboration:** Developed with the child, **parents**, family, and service providers. (The SOPP should be developed with you.)
- **Flexibility:** It's a proposal, **not final**; it gets updated as circumstances change or new information comes in.
- **Connection to FAP:** The SOPP sets the goals, and the FAP details the specific, measurable tasks parents need to achieve for restoration, with regular reviews (every 30-90 days).
- **Legal Requirement:** Supposed to be filed within 14 days of an interim order in care proceedings
- **Cultural Consideration:** For Aboriginal children, cultural care plans are integral, focusing on identity and belonging, using Aboriginal family-led decision-making.

The SOPP is said to be DCJ's starting point for a child's future, emphasizing family reunification wherever possible, guided by clear, collaborative action plans and court oversight. A parent's experience of a SOPP can be the opposite and can be devastating to read. Wherever possible get support to read the SOPP, talk with your solicitor about any concerns. They can be hard to understand especially if you don't agree with what's written and when what's written is taken out of context.

The SOPP details the minimum changes the parent will need to make to remove DCJ from your life. You should always have a copy. Get legal support ASAP.

"Reading the SOPP felt like reading a stranger's version of my life. All the worries were listed, but none of the context. Ordinary parenting struggles were written in a way that made them sound dangerous. I didn't recognise myself or my parenting in that document, but I could already see how powerful it was going to be."

"That SOPP followed me into every meeting after that. Even when things changed, even when I addressed the concerns, the language in that first document stayed. It felt like the case was already decided by the time I finished reading it. Once something is written down like that, it feels permanent even when it's wrong."

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