Statement below from The Benevolent Society in response to Deputy Coroner Jane Bentley's recommendation for adoption to be "routinely and genuinely" considered for children in out-of-home care, following the inquest into the death of Mason Jet Lee, and the subsequent backing of this option by the Federal Government's Assistant Children and Families Minister, Michelle Landry.

The Benevolent Society operates Post Adoption Support Queensland (PASQ), which provides information and support for people affected by adoption.

Media Statement
9 June 2020

Statement attributable to: Leith Sterling, Executive Director, Child & Family, The Benevolent Society:

"There is no greater priority for a society than to ensure that every child develops well. All children have the right to grow up in an environment free from neglect and abuse.

"The failure to protect children from chronic maltreatment has devastating and tragic effects, as we have seen in Mason Jet Lee's very sad case. The individual and best interests of the child must be paramount in any decision-making about care, whether it is for the short-term or more permanent options.

"All the available evidence tells us that we need to get the right support in early to prevent problems before they develop. The Coroner's report also includes recommendations around adoption. Here we would urge caution based on three decades of supporting people who have experienced the adoption process."

"If a child is unable to live safely with their family of origin or kin, adoption may be one option for achieving stability and permanence, provided that the best interests of the child are the primary consideration. The Benevolent Society does not support adoption as a 'routine' option within the out-of-home care system.

"Adoption has lifelong impacts and always involves loss and grief for children and families. The Benevolent Society recognises that the impacts of past adoption practices in Australia are significant, and continue to profoundly affect the lives of many people. There is a risk that prioritising legal permanency at the expense of relational permanency fails to consider the unique needs and best interests of individual children, and may block pathways to ongoing relationships with family and kin.

"The issue that should be the main focus for all levels of government is the large numbers of children in out-of-home care. Efforts should be on supporting at-risk families and preventing the need for children to enter the child protection system in the first place. Evidence clearly demonstrates that it is far better to intervene early to prevent problems occurring than to try to address them once they've become entrenched."

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About The Benevolent Society
The Benevolent Society is Australia's first charity, working as a catalyst for social justice and change for over 200 years. Founded in 1813, The Benevolent Society advocates for a better life for all Australians, and provides in-home services for older Australians, and people with disability, as well as providing programs in family support and early intervention. We help people age well and live their best lives, staying in their homes wherever possible. For more information, please visit www.benevolent.org.au, on Facebook/thebenevolentsociety or on Twitter - @BenevolentAU

About The Benevolent Society's Post Adoption Support Queensland
Since 2009, Post Adoption Support QLD (PASQ) has provided information and support for people affected by adoption. This includes people who have been adopted, parents, siblings, partners and others who have been separated from family by adoption. PASQ also supports professionals to understand the adoption experience. Counselling is offered across adoption-related issues for individuals, couples and families. Intermediary Services offer a third-party professional to help with search and reunion, including approaching birth relatives on your behalf and support around contact. Therapeutic groups and retreats increase wellbeing and connection to community, and access to information and resources.