



Madelyn's story

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Nothing in this story constitutes a finding of fact by the Commission of Inquiry. Instead, these stories have been published to show how people are experiencing the current child safety system in Queensland. Any views expressed are those of the person who shared their experience, not of the Commission of Inquiry.

Content warning: Some material may be distressing. These statements may include references to violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation, suicide, or self-harming behaviours, and may contain strong or confronting language. Some narratives may be about First Nations people who have passed away. Readers are encouraged to engage with this material in a way that supports their wellbeing.

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I wish to place on the record a matter that I believe the commission of inquiry must be aware of, as it demonstrates the very real human cost of systemic failures within ██████████ child safety.

Haylee was a foster carer who dedicated several years of her life to caring for vulnerable children. She did this out of commitment and compassion not obligation.

Like many carers, she entered the system trusting that ██████████ child safety would provide support, guidance and partnership.

Instead, Haylee experienced bullying, intimidation and a substantial lack of meaningful support from ██████████ child safety.

Rather than being treated as a valued carer, she was made to feel isolated, targeted and unsupported. This treatment did not occur in a single incident, but over time and had a damaging effect on her wellbeing.

Haylee took her own life.

I Believe it would be a serious failure of the inquiry to ignore the context in which this occurred.

I raise Haylee's experience because it represents more than an individual tragedy, I too have felt that pressure. It highlights the extreme risk posed by the system that fails to protect and support those it relies on. The inquiry must consider not only how children are affected by systemic failure, but also how carers are harmed. Sometimes with devastating outcomes.

Foster carers deserve to have their dignity, their voices to be heard and to be respected.

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As carers we carry a heavy mental load and often feel constant scrutiny and fear of allegations.

We also carry high responsibility load but we also have low control.

There is silence on carers' mental health which is putting all carers at risk.

When foster carers are attacked, isolated or dismissed, it can cause devastating consequences.

When our grief is not recognized, it doesn't just disappear, it turns inwards and we have to carry that burden alone for the rest of our lives.

Foster carers feel we have stay strong, show no weakness at all cost, because of the constant scrutiny, fear of allegations and fear of losing the children we have worked so hard to form positive attachment with.

Foster carers are not the enemy- we are the team. We are the pathway between supporting agencies and child safety.

We got to sleep at night with heavy loads on our minds and wake up with it in the morning.

We don't 'clock off' at the end of each day, yet we are just volunteers

Fosters carers depend on community; we need a safe space to debrief and grieve.

We need to know we are not alone then things go wrong.

When carers are not respected, heard or understood, we don't just struggle, we "burn out, withdraw and disappear from the system", Or in Haylee's case, from the world.

And in the end it is the children that lose everything AGAIN.

Foster carers should not be blamed when the system fails us and the children, we need support before crisis, not punished after.

With 12 years of experience as a foster carer under [REDACTED] child safety, I know that what I have experienced is not an isolated matter. I am aware of many carers across the region that share similar experiences, even if they feel unable or afraid to speak openly.

In my view there has been a significant and rapid decline in culture and practice and [REDACTED] child safety.

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I personally have been intimidated by staff, suggestions are made with no action, funding that's offered but not recieved and I believe this reflects a broader pattern where power is exercised over carers rather than support them.

Workers often work as though they are 'bigger' than carers, rather than recognizing that carers are experienced, skilled partners who hold day-to-day responsibilities for young people.

I believe this is a systemic issue that goes beyond my individual experiences and reflects a failure of leadership, accountability and respect within the [REDACTED] child safety center.