



Andy's story

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I have been a carer for almost 10 years. In this time, I have had multiple things happen that are ludicrous, including dropping a child off for contact just to be called an hour later and being told the child was reunified, reunifying a child to a perpetrator who had put her older brother into the hospital a few months prior. But what I wanted to bring before you for your attention today is about a child that we currently have in our care.

We have had this child in our care for [REDACTED] years - she is [REDACTED]. During this time her case has been before the court, or QCAT consistently, without ceasing. We have been in the courts again for [REDACTED] trying to obtain guardianship. Child Safety recommended a PCO just to keep the child safe from the mother and her abuse of the court system, so that is what we are going for. When the mother was informed she said, and I quote "I won't agree to that as I can't lose control". And yes, you read that right, abuse of the court system. Child Safety, DCPL, and multiple other agencies have labelled it as abuse of the court system. Unfortunately, there is nothing we, as carers, can do, as we have no rights.

The case is not progressing, they have set, at minimum, 5 final hearings, and have pushed them all back – including adjourning one on the first day of the final hearing. The mother has been able to find every loophole she can to delay the hearing. She has been proven mentally unstable, has had multiple parenting capacity assessments done (which have all been written against her ever raising a child), and still continues to delay things. The little one in our care hasn't seen her in over a year because of all the trauma, she can't handle visits, as soon as she has a visit with her mum she begins to self harm.

The court system is absolutely failing this child, her stability and her rights to a speedy hearing and safety. How? Because not only is the mother abusing the court system, she's also abusing myself and my husband by continually putting false allegations against us, slandering us to everyone she can, reporting us to the police multiple times, and she's even gone as far as to falsely report us to blue card, with heinous accusations. Now, not only is our blue card under investigation, but her child and another child in our home face the risk of being destabilised.

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As a carer I have no rights to defend myself. When we went to the police to ask what could be done about the false accusations and harassment we were told she is legally harassing us and we can't do anything. The amount of trauma this has put myself, my husband, and my children through is unbearable and if it wasn't for the little ones in our care we would have quit months, nay years, ago.

We have no rights to stand up for our foster child and make sure that she is safe and stable. We have no rights to protect ourselves, our children, or the children in our care. We also have no rights to advocate for best practice in the courts for the children in our care. We don't even have the right to block this person from repeatedly stalking us online, giving our info out without our consent, and continue to affect our mental health and wellbeing. I've had to seek therapy (thank goodness for [REDACTED] and their counselling service) solely because of the treatment I have undergone from this mother.

Child Safety has been amazing, they have supported us and the child. They have kept us safe and made sure the child has stability with us. But that is never a guarantee, stability is never 100% guaranteed. The court system is failing our children. This little ones father has begged the magistrate to hold the final hearing, his mental health is so poor because of this, and the mother is continuing to use this process to also abuse him. How can this be considered best practice? How can this be considered normal? How can we make sure that carers have rights, and a voice, are heard and can actively affectively advocate for the children in their care? How can we advocate for the courts to stop this circus and focus on the best interest of the child, not the best interest of the mentally unstable adult who is simply trying to delay things as a form of control?