



Warren's story

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The years I've spent working in Child Safety have broken me in ways I cannot even find the words to describe.

I have seen some horrendous things happen to children – but the fact that children then experience systemic abuse within the Department's own placement system is unacceptable.

I think if the general public knew how the system functions – and how dire the lack of placements and accommodation options are they would be appalled and outraged that this is happening in Australia.

If they knew about...

- The number of homeless children and young people.
- The young people actually being encouraged to self-place with the very family members that they were removed from – because there is nowhere else for them to go.
- That young girls will seek out sexual relationships with adult men or engage in sex work just to have a place to stay.
- If they knew about children being placed together who should not be co-tenanted for their own safety – but are placed together anyway – because there is no other option. I could tell so many stories about how I have seen this go terribly but would run out of space.
- That young people will disclose abuse in their kinship placements and beg for another placement but then you get told it's "good enough", "better than a resi" and we should be glad the kids are with kin.
- If they knew that young people exit state care every single day and immediately become homeless.

I also feel like it is trauma in itself for a child to know they are coming into care – or their placement has broken down – and they come into the Child Safety office to wait for a placement and they may be waiting for many hours on end.

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You can't tell them when they will have a home to go to. You can't tell them where they will live. You can't tell them how long they will be there – or even is any guarantee of being placed with siblings. They must feel so unloved and alone in those moments that they are waiting in a government office waiting for someone to take them – with no power or choice in what is happening to them. It is heart breaking.

This really isn't good enough.

We need to do better.

Re the placement system – I will add that there are some decent resi providers. There are some fantastic youth workers. However most resi's are staffed by inexperienced and checked out workers who are not equipped to manage complex behaviours. The young people feel no connection to resi workers on shift. In some placements young people can go a month (or more) without seeing the same youth worker. So it's not really surprising they would choose an unsafe environment with friends/family over a placement.

I don't know what the answer is but I would love to see professional foster carers being explored as an alternative to resi care. Specialised social housing programs for children leaving care – from 16+ would be a great start.

Additional kin mapping workers and more CPA's would also help to divert children from foster/resi placements into kinship placements.