



Cherie's story

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I am writing to you as a mother who is devastated by a failure in the child safety system a failure that has caused irreparable harm to not only my son but also to a child that was meant to be protected while in the State's care. On Saturday, my 14-year-old disabled son was sexually assaulted by a child who was in the care of the state.

The older teen was under a 24-hour supervision order due to previous behaviours, yet he was repeatedly left unsupervised in the community. Witnesses have reported that even when carers were present, they were disengaged, distracted by their phones, and not fulfilling their duty to actively supervise. I've also witnessed on occasion both of the supervisors fall asleep or buy an alcoholic beverage for themselves.

My son is trusting, vulnerable, and entirely reliant on the adults around him for safety. The trauma he has experienced could have been completely prevented if proper care had been taken. Yet, no one has been held accountable for these failings. The adults tasked with protecting Child A and the system designed to safeguard children failed my son and Child A, leaving them both to bear the consequences of their negligence. Child A sat in the watch house alone while my son now struggles with having been sexually assaulted.

It is further alarming that those responsible for the Child A may have encouraged him not to admit wrongdoing, seemingly to shield themselves from responsibility. As a mother, it is unimaginable to see my child as well as Child A suffer due to preventable failures by the very people entrusted with protecting children.

I contacted Child Safety, but the response was poor and dismissive, adding to my distress and frustration.

I am asking for:

- **A full and transparent investigation** into how this situation occurred.
- **Accountability for those responsible** for supervising the Child A.
- **Urgent reform of supervision and child protection procedures** to ensure no other child is left vulnerable in this way.

Child Safety Commission of Inquiry



I am angry, angry at the systemic failings that are allowed to continue in the Department of Child Safety. The department has farmed out its responsibility to subcontractors, leaving the most vulnerable children in the hands of companies that are more concerned with cutting corners than protecting lives. Investigations are handed over, yet there's no real disclosure of what actually happens. Unless there's a serious breach, everything is kept quiet, hushed up, swept under the carpet.

Where is the accountability? Where is the care? Background checks are rushed through like a tick and flick exercise, and people with drug and alcohol problems, with no qualifications, are being placed in positions of trust. They're being paid as though they hold tertiary qualifications yet many don't. If you're paying tertiary-level wages, then a tertiary-level qualification should be mandatory.

What makes it worse is that some companies are subcontracting the work again, pushing responsibility onto sole traders. It's convenient for them because if something goes wrong, they just shrug. It doesn't fall on their head, it doesn't fall on their insurance. Children's lives are treated like paperwork, and the system is built to ensure no one is held accountable.

This isn't just about a broken system. It's about children who suffer every day because of it. And until there is proper oversight, real qualifications, and genuine accountability, nothing will change.

As a mother, I cannot overstate the impact this has had on my son and our family. I urge the Department to take immediate and meaningful action to prevent such failures in the future. I was a foster child and grew up in the system. Being in foster care felt like being unwanted luggage shifted from house to house, never staying long enough to feel safe, never having anyone who truly wanted me. I learned quickly not to expect love, because it usually ended with me being kicked out right before Christmas or my birthday, just so the carers didn't have to buy anything. Those days that were meant to feel special only reminded me that I didn't matter.

The worst part wasn't even the moving, it was the silence. Hardly ever being visited by a case manager, never having anyone check in, never feeling like someone actually saw me. I grew up believing I was invisible.

But the truth is, it only takes one person to change everything. One person who actually cares, who stays, who shows you you're worth something. For me, that never really happened in care. And when I look at Child A's situation, I see the same story playing out. The people responsible for him don't really care. My only hope is that, before he transitions out, Child A finds that one person, the one who sees him, believes in him, and refuses to let go. Because sometimes one person really is enough to save a life.