

that is early and ongoing,
practical and flexible

MICAH PROJECTS



Breaking Social Isolation
Building Community

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This Time

Families need support that is
early and ongoing, practical and flexible

Submission by Micah Projects
to the Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry

29 March 2026

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Micah Projects

Micah Projects is a not-for-profit organisation committed to providing services and opportunities in the community to create justice and respond to injustice.

Vision Statement

To create justice and respond to injustice in the lives of individuals, women, children and families – while promoting equality, inclusion and acceptance.

Purpose Statement

We do this by providing responsive services; by promoting equity, equality, safety and inclusion; and by validating the importance of recovery, healing and justice for individuals, families and communities including the impact of present and intergenerational trauma and redress.

A voice for justice

We believe that every child and adult has the right to a home, healthcare, safety, education, income, dignity, and meaningful connection.

For almost 30 years, we have been working to break down the barriers that exclude people from accessing these foundational human rights and put an end to social injustice.

Together with our community and government partners, we provide wrap-around support services tailored to each person's needs and capacity, and advocate for meaningful change.

Our evidence-based approach enables us to have an impact where it counts for people and the community, so we might one day end cycles of hardship and disadvantage.

Our Values in Action

Our practice values guide our organisational culture, how we work in our teams, and how we support children, young people, and adults.

Our values in action:

- people, family, and community
- collaboration and partnership
- participation and choice
- culture, difference, and diversity
- dignity and respect
- rights, equality, and justice
- quality service
- learning, growth, and change.

Micah Projects has a unique viewpoint in Queensland

For 30 years, the people who we work alongside at Micah Projects, the people who have experienced the family support and child protection systems (of yesterday and today) have been generous in sharing their lived experiences. We have participated together in the community-building work of advocacy that seeks to end cycles of hardship and disadvantage.

Micah Projects, through Lotus Support Services, is the leading supporter of people who have experienced childhood abuse in an institutional setting or out-of-home care, often referred to as Forgotten Australians, and care leavers in Queensland. Micah Projects has been supporting people who have experienced childhood abuse in an institutional setting or out-of-home care and care leavers for over 30 years. Micah Projects was the first organisation in Queensland to formally support people who have experienced childhood abuse in an institutional setting or out-of-home care and care leavers.

For decades adults who were separated or removed from their families as children have told us they were denied information about what had happened and why; and they were also denied relationships with their families and communities. These significant gaps in knowledge and belonging are then often missing for a lifetime (or for generations).

They (and we) expected decision-makers to do better over the decades since. Unfortunately, parents involved with the Child Safety system today tell us the same thing.

Parents, families and children have a human right to family: If children are not able to have contact with their family (for a short or long period), they (and their family) are entitled to **written information about the decision, and the processes that led to it**. Decision-makers must be accountable for providing this so that **everyone can clearly understand what occurred and why**.

The statutory system has knowingly continued to breach or limit human rights, it must therefore plan to continue supporting people to “reclaim identity, heal from trauma, find community, expose injustice, and advocate for systemic change, so, together, we might say, '**never again**'.

'Never again' is the *call to action* now passed to the Commission.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is the collated list of recommendations from Micah Projects that are relevant to the Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry:

History repeating and ‘unfinished business’ ([see page 15](#))

Recommendations

1. Parents, families and children have a human right to family: If children are not able to have contact with their family (for a short or long period), they (and their family) are entitled to **written information about the decision, and the processes that led to it, so that everyone can clearly understand what occurred and why.**
2. **Support services** (like Lotus Place and others) are required to **support survivors of past removal and historical institutional childhood abuse** to “reclaim identity, heal from trauma, find community, expose injustice, and advocate for systemic change so, together, we might say, **'never again'**.”
3. Parents currently experiencing the Child Safety system are the only stakeholders without permanent, statewide representation. **Parents should be recognised as a central stakeholder** – and comparative support should be afforded them. **A statewide peak body for parents experiencing the Child Safety system should be established.**
4. The 2026 Inquiry recommendations should **explicitly consider the 300 existing recommendations from previous reviews and inquiries.** If those recommendations remain evidence-based and fit-for-purpose – and are unfinished– they should be **integrated (alongside a progress report) with the new recommendations.**

The Two-Generation Approach ([see page 21](#)) |

Child and Family Hubs’ plus in-home outreach work ([see page 23](#))

Recommendation

5. Roll out **multi-disciplinary Child and Family Hubs** across Queensland – using a **‘two-generation’ approach** and including **in-home outreach work.** This would be an integrated investment and commitment across government – including Families, Child Safety, Housing, Health, Education and Employment.

Australia's first pilot of the 'Family Connections' program ([see page 25](#))

Recommendation

6. **Extend Australia's first pilot of the 'Family Connections' program** by funding the two sites (in Brisbane and Caboolture) for 2-5 years. This would include:
 - an increase in staffing to enable four (4) practitioners per site
 - one (1) practitioner dedicated to support parents with reunification
 - a showcase for the wider family support networks in Queensland to share practice-use knowledge gained from the Common Assessment Tool; and
 - Maintain the First Nations cultural specialist

'Early Intervention' is the answer. But at the same time – intensive and specialist services are desperately needed ([see page 26](#))

Recommendations

7. **Children and families need increased family support services – from 'soft entry' services through to intensive and specialist services** – that is, substantial increases for services and workforces such as:
 - Supportive housing for families
 - Family support and intensive family support services
 - Specialist Domestic Violence Services
 - Specialist multi-disciplinary services for young parents
 - Therapeutic services for individuals and children
8. The **child and family support workforces need access to skilling, support and career paths**: including evidence-based communities of practice, professional development, supervision, and coaching.
9. Address the capacity and capability of the service continuum to **respond when, and from wherever, a person seeks support**.

Poverty – and other vulnerabilities that put families at risk – need interdisciplinary responses ([see page 26](#)) | A 'rising tide' does not lift all boats ([see page 29](#))

Recommendation

10. Recognise the urgent need to **explicitly support parents and families who experience poverty and/or other vulnerabilities** by allocating explicit investments or initiatives, for example: Establish an 'Early Years Vulnerable Child and Family Investment Fund'; and/or create a 'Vulnerable Early Years and Family Wellbeing Unit'; and/or establish a 'Vulnerable Early Years and Family Wellbeing Centre for Excellence'.

Parents' experiences of the intersection of the Domestic and Family Violence **and** the Child Protection systems in Queensland ([see page 31](#)) | “Domestic Violence Exposure: 68% of children in care were exposed to domestic violence” ([see page 32](#))

Recommendations

11. Develop a considered plan for ensuring **sufficient specialist DFV support** is available, in an integrated and collaborative manner such as co-location and embedded models with Child Safety, across the continuum of services.
12. Address the capacity and capability of the DFV service continuum to **respond when, and from wherever, a person seeks support.**
13. Enhance the capacity of the Department's DFV specialist services to –
 - develop and resource explicit practices to **ensure parents are supported in coping with, and recovering from, the impact of DFV and subsequent Child Safety intervention;** and
 - **support parents to champion their rights to improve systems** where they are at a disadvantage, including the criminal justice system.
14. Train, support and fund the **parents who have lived-experience of the Child Safety and DFV systems to participate** in the reforms (from co-design through to implementation) by expanding existing groups or programs such as the Family Inclusion Network.
15. Expand the scope of current funded **perpetrator intervention programs to meet the needs of parents, families and their children;** by ensuring that victims advocacy, children's specialist support, and individual case management occurs with those causing harm. A broader range of options will better meet the needs of children and families than the currently limited, one-size stipulation to “attend a perpetrator program” as a requirement of many Child Safety case plans and conferences.

Peer workers in multi-disciplinary teams – understanding, mentoring, encouraging ([see page 34](#))

Recommendation

16. Implement a training, support, supervision and employment pathway for **lived-experience peer-workers and/or advocates.** This is a currently untapped resource to support parents and families experiencing the child protection system. Internationally, multi-disciplinary teams with parent peer-workers have been a contributing factor in reducing children's time in out-of-home care.

Healing and reunification ([see page 36](#))

Recommendations

17. There must be full commitment to the Child Protection Act's principle that **family (and therefore reunification) must be the focus of the child protection system** and the litigation model. Also to use the **'least intrusive' options**, and to provide families with post-reunification support so the family can heal from their experience.
18. Immediately after a child is removed - **parents need support to process the trauma and to then begin to implement the various requirements placed on them** in order to have their child returned. This requires a specialised reunification program provided by specialised reunification workers in the community sector.
19. Therapeutic services should be provided – for both child and parent – to **understand and respond to the emotional impacts and consequences** of children being removed (and reunified).
20. The department should regularly **publish detailed performance data in relation to reunification**.
21. Alongside the *Charter of rights for a child in care (Child Protection Act 1999)*; the *Charter of Rights for Parents involved with the child protection system in Queensland* should be **legislated and fully implemented to embed parents' rights**.

Measurement framework, data-driven change, and common assessment tools ([see page 38](#))

Recommendations

22. Measure the reform's outcomes using an **established, evidence-based, cross-sector, cross-jurisdictional framework** – like 'The Nest, Australia's wellbeing framework for children and young people'.
23. Seek opportunities in the non-Government sector to **better collaborate using data** to enhance visibility for evidence-based solutions, policies and strategies. For example - [Brisbane Zero Snapshot 2024-25](#) for Families with Children Experiencing Homelessness.
24. Begin **using common language, practices, and tools** (to more effectively match service responses with families' needs). Examples include:
 - the QLD DFV Common Risk and Safety Framework
 - the Australian Homelessness Vulnerability Triage Tool (AHVTT)
 - the Common Assessment Tool being trialled by Family Connections ([see page 26](#))

Investing to transform needs significant transition or “hump” funding ([see page 41](#))

Recommendation

25. The system cannot simultaneously “stop doing this” and “start doing that” so explicit transition or “hump” funding is required. Investment and implementation plans must **recognise the true-cost of the collaboration and culture-change activities** necessary for the reform, as well as the true-cost of service-delivery.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS AGAINST THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Commission’s Terms of Reference	Micah Projects’ Key Points
<p>Reforming the Residential Care System: investigate models of care and the factors contributing to the growth and reliance on a billion-dollar residential care sector.</p>	<p>Residential Care See FIN’s previous submission regarding Residential Care which collates the views, experiences and suggestions of parents whose children have lived in Residential Care. As a small, funded team of 3.5FTE in Brisbane, FIN is not a ‘<i>statewide peak body representing parents</i>’. FIN does what it can, within resourcing, to support parents to bring their unique insights into reforms. FIN advocated strongly to be consulted during the 2023-2024 Residential Care reform discussions; and was the only stakeholder group excluded from the ‘Residential Roadmap’ steering group.</p>
<p>Analyse residential care in the historical context since the Carmody Inquiry and the increase in the use of Individual Placement Support Services and residential care.</p>	<p>Residential care in the historical context Micah Projects is uniquely positioned to comment on the historical context of residential and institutional care, having advocated alongside former residents since the Forde Inquiry in 1999. Micah Projects’ Lotus Place is a Queensland-wide service that has been supporting people through the Historical Abuse Network over 30 years.</p> <p><i>“The continued re-examination does not demonstrate accountability, value for money, nor respect for those individuals who, in good faith, have taken the time (over years and decades) to contribute their time, experiences and suggestions for improvement. The continued request for their input, particularly with no support, has been disappointing.”</i></p> <p>Micah Projects Lotus Place would be happy to provide access to written reports (listed at the end of this Submission) and/or to meet to discuss this further.</p>
<p>Repairing a broken system: reviewing the effectiveness of Queensland’s Child Safety system to keep children safe.</p>	<p>Repairing a broken system Micah Projects has written dozens of advocacy submissions about the child protection system over the years. We have also crafted many pro-active proposals (some of which have gained funding). These have been summarised and listed in this Submission. In “repairing a broken system” we urge the Commission to recommend broad investment for all parts of the system, particularly the community sector, to better support families through local, community-based, multidisciplinary and co-located child and family hubs – including outreach.</p>

Commission's Terms of Reference	Micah Projects' Key Points
	<p>Through this Submission to the Commission of Inquiry, Micah Projects has now made a further 25 recommendations. In summary, the five key themes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights and procedural fairness for parents and families; • Explicit recognition that families are impacted by poverty and other multiple vulnerabilities, and these require a dedicated suite of responses • Preservation of families through child and family hubs, intensive family support, and specialist services – available when parents need them • A reunification and healing focus – including specialised 'reunification' teams in the non-government sector – including post-reunification support for children and families to heal from the trauma of separation; and • Embedded roles and advocacy processes for people with lived-experience of the system.
<p>Tertiary child protection interventions, including adoption, case management, service standards, and decision-making frameworks.</p>	<p>Adoption We note the Terms of Reference briefly mention 'adoption'. The Commission hearings did not seem to discuss adoption in depth. Where adoption was mentioned, it was in the context of the statutory hierarchy of permanency options, and the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle where adoption is explicitly identified as a last-resort option. We are interested in the outcomes from the Commission and the recent roundtable held by the government on this topic (see page 35).</p>
<p>The ability for information sharing across relevant agencies.</p>	<p>Information sharing Note the experiences of implementing other cross-jurisdictional information sharing reforms and be realistic about complexity, timeframes and the resultant increase in referrals to support and specialist services. Ensure support and specialist services can increase their capacity and capability to meet the increased demand created by information sharing and increased referrals.</p>
<p>Investigate the role of third parties including peak bodies and oversight bodies and their interaction with the Department and Minister in pursuit of system improvement, and any issues related to funding, reporting and their role in the media to ensure</p>	<p>Peak bodies and oversight bodies In regard to oversight bodies – using Complaints and Appealable Decisions as one example – there are four separate entities currently playing roles in these time-consuming, complex processes. As such there is great opportunity improve (see FIN's Submission regarding Complaints).</p> <p>In regard to peak bodies – there are three parties to the proceedings in Child Safety Litigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State • Parents *

Commission’s Terms of Reference	Micah Projects’ Key Points
integrity and accountability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child <p>Parents are the only stakeholders without permanent, statewide representation in the form of peak body representation. Parents should be recognised as a central stakeholder – and comparative support should be afforded them. A statewide peak body for parents experiencing the Child Safety system should be established.</p>
Review the effectiveness of the existing Complaints Process.	<p>Complaints Process. See FIN’s Submission regarding Complaints – parents have been calling for an independent complaints body and fairer, accountable and more streamlined processes for many years.</p>
Safer Children: failures both systemic and policy that have impeded the ability of the Department responsible for the Child Safety portfolio (the Department) to provide support to families and protection to children at risk of harm in Queensland.	<p>Safer Children Parents care deeply about their children – and consistently speak about their concerns for the quality of care their children receive and their access to therapeutic services.</p> <p>Support to families and protection to children at risk of harm It is an understandable but sad reality that Inquiries and governments continue to focus on the deficits in “the system” rather than imagining an entirely different approach. The scale of the investment and complexity, alongside the emotive subject matter distracts from the evidence that, for the most part, children belong at home, children will return home, and many children and their families are traumatised by child protection processes.</p> <p>Bold solutions to some of the “crises” of Residential Care and foster care would be to redirect a large portion of the resources currently spent on removal and out-of-home care into supporting families and their children – in their own homes.</p> <p>In this Submission, Micah Projects’ discusses effective models currently operating in Queensland - such as ‘Keeping Families Together’ (see page 19) and ‘Family Connections’ (page 25).</p>
Safer Communities: evaluate the effectiveness of the Department as a corporate parent and whether it is able to meet community expectations around parenting.	<p>Safer communities When the government announced the Commission of Inquiry it was reported that “68% of children in care were exposed to domestic violence”.</p> <p>This is why our Submission features experiences and recommendations related to Domestic and Family Violence (see from page 30). Micah Projects is able to see the patterns, barriers, and opportunities differently from most service-providers because we provide DFV <i>and</i> child and family support services.</p>

Commission’s Terms of Reference	Micah Projects’ Key Points
	<p>Improving responses to Domestic and Family Violence is central to creating safer communities.</p> <p>Safer communities are also created by building community connection.</p> <p>All recommendations in this Submission highlight the importance of local-community-based services that are flexible and available where and when the person needs them.</p> <p>Further examples of building community:</p> <p>Young people who are in care, benefit from flexible community connections through non-government services – including after-hours, outreach, transport and case work services such as Brisbane Emergency Response Outreach Service (BEROS). Community Living Association and Micah Project’s outreach and support service for young people aged 12-18 who are in care and are self-placing.</p> <p>Family Pathways Program: Provides short-term holistic support to families to reduce a young male’s use of adolescent-to-parent violence towards their female protective caregiver in the home.</p>
<p>Legislative Reform: reviewing Queensland legislation about the protection of children, including the Child Protection Act 1999 and Adoption Act 2009.</p>	<p>Legislative Reform</p> <p>See FIN’s Submission regarding the Child Protection Litigation Model – its two major recommendation being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement mandatory legal representation (throughout the process and beyond) to uphold parents’ rights and ensure accountability of all parties; and • Implement multidisciplinary law offices in the Queensland Community Sector. Parents need a new model of legal service delivery. This should be through interdisciplinary (or multidisciplinary) law offices across Queensland. These would be similar to those in New York City: lawyers work in a team that also includes social workers providing support and peer workers who are parents with lived experience. This model would be block funded and delivered by community legal centres and/or First Nations’ legal services; they would be co located with a non-government family support service

History repeating and ‘unfinished business’

Many people with lived experience of the system have been distressed since the announcement of another Inquiry, about the media reports this has stirred, and more recently about the shortened duration of the Inquiry. The views expressed to us are summarised as:

The continued re-examination does not demonstrate accountability, value for money, nor respect for those individuals who, in good faith, have taken the time (over years and decades) to contribute their experiences and suggestions for improvement. The continued request for input, particularly with no support, has been disappointing.

Many peaks and advocates have noted that Queensland’s child protection system has been examined many times – with **more than 20 Inquiries, audits and reviews over the past 25 years and around 300 recommendations**. Within this, there have been three major Inquiries:

- [The ‘Forde Inquiry’](#) – *Commission of Inquiry into abuse of children in Institutions* – in 1999 – 42 recommendations.
- [The ‘CMC Inquiry’](#) – *Protecting children: An inquiry into abuse of children in foster care* – in 2004 – with 110 recommendations.
- [‘The Carmody Inquiry’](#) – *Taking Responsibility: A Roadmap for Queensland Child Protection* – in 2012/13 – with 121 recommendations.

Much of the well-intentioned work to implement these recommendations remains **‘unfinished business’** (a phrase used by the Historic Abuse Network in 2015 as it advocated for reform accountability). Long-time advocates continue to call on governments to integrate and implement the existing recommendations from successive reports.

In the closing weeks of the Inquiry, parents have told Micah Projects’ Family Inclusion Network (FIN) that they are appreciative that many of their words have been submitted. However, there is great disappointment about the lack of one-on-one support for people to have their say; and about the truncated timeframe for the Inquiry:

- *“No idea what to say in my submission.... or why my involvement will make any difference to the current Child Safety system”*
- *“depressed yes very. 3 inquiries in 12 years”*
- *“parents with a disability were not mentioned - we got swept under the rug”.*

Recommendations

1. Parents, families and children have a human right to family: If children are not able to have contact with their family (for a short or long period), they (and their family) are entitled to **written information about the decision, and the processes that led to it, so that everyone can clearly understand what occurred and why.**

2. **Support services** be required to support people who have experienced child abuse in an institutional setting, including out-of-home care, to “reclaim identity, heal from trauma, find community, expose injustice, and advocate for systemic change, so, together, we might say, 'never again'. (Lotus Place provides an example of such services.)
3. The 2026 Inquiry recommendations should **explicitly consider the 300 existing recommendations from previous reviews and inquiries**. If those recommendations remain evidence-based and fit-for-purpose – and are unfinished – they should be **integrated (alongside a progress report) with the new recommendations**.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL

Improvements and innovation to celebrate!

While much does remain 'unfinished business' – many improvements and innovations have occurred (and are still occurring) that provide the supports needed to achieve safety for children, respect for parents, and to keep families together. The following pages outline Micah Projects' cross-sector, child and family-centred initiatives that are demonstrating successes for children, parents, families, communities – and our sector.

Micah Projects' Early Intervention and Perinatal programs

Young Mothers for Young Women (YMYW): Providing early intervention for young pregnant and parenting women, their children and partners for women under the age of 26 (Brisbane) and under the age of 20 (Caboolture and Redcliffe). YMYW is designed around a two generational approach, meaning the focus is on both parents and children - working together to strengthen the whole family unit. Whether it's pregnancy support, child health services, parenting education, or occasional care, the approach helps families access the resources and connections they need to break cycles of disadvantage and trauma. Young fathers are also supported to pursue their goals and gain skills through targeted support.

Family Connections: An 18-month early intervention program based on the USA Family Connections Program developed by Diane DePanfilis' evidence-based program. It supports families to build their capacity, harness their strengths, and reduce parental stressors that impact Child Safety and overall family functioning by offering tailored, in-home family support.

Family Connections is in partnership with the University of Queensland School of Social Work and Midwifery and is funded by Queensland Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety.

Healthy and Safe Start: Supporting vulnerable, high-risk pregnant women, birthing people, and their families, with focuses on perinatal health and pregnancy with women and babies. The program also supports pregnant and parenting women experiencing domestic and family violence and homelessness into safety, stability and recovery. It is supported by the Paul Ramsay Foundation.

Wellspring Women, Children and Families Hubs

Wellspring is based on a collaborative network of integrated services that support and respond to **women, children and families** experiencing **poverty and adversity**, including **homelessness, domestic and family violence** and **health inequities**. Micah Projects' **Wellspring Hub** in **Hawthorne** – delivering innovative support to families in various ways since 2018 – provides a safe, trauma-informed space where families can thrive, connect, and feel supported.

Funders, partners and collaborators include Queensland Health, Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety, Hand Heart Pocket, and Paul Ramsay Foundation.

Wellspring Women and Girls' Health Hub, Caboolture

Wellspring Women and Girls' Health Hub, Caboolture

Improving health and social outcomes

In early 2025, Micah Projects opened a new **Women and Girls' Health Hub** at Caboolture, funded by Queensland Health. In partnership with our community partners, we work alongside women and girls to help solve problems, navigate systems and provide services that support health and wellbeing, with a focus on people who experience barriers to care, isolation and discrimination.

The hub offers a welcoming, private, women-friendly space for health and related services and includes medical, nursing, counselling social support and specialist services.

Thank you to community partners delivering services:

- True, relationships and reproductive health
- Women's Health and Equality Queensland
- Respect Inc.



Connecting women and girls to resources, opportunities and providing tailored age-appropriate supports

Social support, providing services for homelessness, domestic violence, and mental health.

Community connection through group programs.

Holistic support, including wellbeing and mindfulness activities.

Clinical Care through collaboration in clinic, outreach, nurse-led.

Funders, partners and collaborators

True, Women's Health & Equality Queensland, Respect Inc., Queensland Health, Caboolture Community Care, Queensland Police Service, CADA, Footprints, Children's Health Queensland, Jabani Jinna Indigenous Corporation

Domestic and Family Violence – Integrated Programs

Family Pathways Program: Providing short-term holistic support to families to reduce a young male's use of adolescent-to-parent violence towards their female protective caregiver in the home.

Children and Young People (CYP): Promoting the safety and wellbeing of children, and caregivers who have experienced domestic and family violence by providing child-focused, trauma-informed support.

Specialist domestic & family violence services – from crisis to recovery

Confidential support and advocacy: To community members from diverse backgrounds, mostly women. Providing access to support and increased safety from intimate partner or family violence.

Men's behaviour change groups: Providing an opportunity to reflect on beliefs, attitudes, value and choices leading to using violence, whilst offering victim survivors an opportunity for support and safety.

High risk and specialist team: Enhancing safety, and strengthening protection and support for women and their children.

Specialist DFV services: Referrals to safe, stable accommodation and refuge; Psychoeducation and information; Risk assessment and safety planning; Support and advocacy.

Housing – Supportive Housing, Wrap-around Support, Integrated Services and Community

Supportive Housing, Hope Street: Tenancy and wrap around support to help people maintain long term and permanent housing at Brisbane Common Ground.

Keeping Families Together: Using the two-generational approach parents and children across the Brisbane region are supported to have a home through the 'Housing First' approach and by adapting supportive housing.

Homestay: Preventing homelessness by working with Micah Projects' Homelessness Hub, supporting families transition from homelessness to home outreach. Dedicated team responding to pregnant and parenting women and children under 5 years. Supporting individuals through the Housing and Homeless Hub and Street to Home.

Brisbane Housing Connectors: Providing planned support and advocacy to support women to access and sustain housing safely as they recover from domestic and family violence.

Safer Lives Mobile Service (SLMS): Delivering 24/7 support through crisis accommodation and housing pathways in collaboration with DV Connect, Queensland Police Service, and hospitals for women and family members leaving domestic violence.

Brisbane Emergency Response Outreach (BEROS): A component of a partnership with Community Living Association, Micah Projects (after hours) and Department of Families, Seniors, Disability and Child Safety. Supporting young people in care of the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety through safe and after-hours support across Brisbane, Moreton Bay and Sunshine Coast.

Financial counselling: Helping rebuild financial stability after abusive relationships, with funding from Australian Financial Foundation.

Lotus Services Healing and Justice

Lotus Place works with people who have experienced institutional childhood abuse in church and government institutions and community agencies or associations and prioritising out of home care. We recognise that many people who were in institutional and out-of-home care as children, experienced physical, psychological, sexual and/or spiritual abuse, and are seeking support in living with consequences and access to justice.

A safe place to access peer support and services in Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville.

Support and advocacy: For recognition of past abuse and the ongoing impact of trauma over a lifetime. Outreach peer support to nearby communities.

Find and Connect services: Helping people with record searches and genealogical family tracing.

Peer Groups: Held across nine Queensland communities: Atherton Tablelands, Bundaberg, Cairns, Charters Towers, Gold Coast, Gympie, Mackay, Moreton Bay, The Burdekin.

Local Care Program: An innovative pilot initiative that provides long-term healing and recovery support for victim-survivors of domestic, family, and sexual violence, including childhood sexual abuse. This work is delivered through a consortium comprising Centre for Women & Co, YFS and Micah Projects.

Family Inclusion Network

Australia's first Ministerial Committee with Parents who have experienced the child protection system. In 2019, Queensland became the first State to create a such a committee. The purpose of the *Queensland Parents Advisory Committee* ("the QPAC") is to provide parent leadership that creates and maintains (a) a voice for parents as stakeholders in the child protection system including targeted and specialist services for families; and (b) a platform for parents' participation in developing government policies and practices in those systems to improve outcomes for children and families.

Charter of Rights for Parents, alongside the *Charter of rights for a child in care (Child Protection Act 1999)* Queensland became just the second state to develop a similar charter for parents. In 2022 the *Charter of Rights for Parents involved with the child protection system in Queensland* was launched.

Peer groups where parents chat with other parents about navigating the child protection, legal, and out-of-home-care systems.

Read more in Micah Projects' Impact Report - [20251030 MPIR2025.indd](#)

WHAT'S NEEDED NEXT

The Two-Generation Approach

The Two-Generation Approach focuses on the needs of the parent and the child both together and separately. Responses focus on not only a core family violence or homelessness issue, but on preventing longer term impacts on the child. Children need to be supported in their own right with trauma-informed, child-centred responses, not treated as an extension of the parent. Additionally, children will need longer term responses beyond the support period usually offered to people who are homeless or victims of domestic and family violence.

The approach **requires investment in a coordinated system of trauma-informed supports and services that will meet the needs of the family, the parent and the child. These services can buffer the impact of the trauma and stressors before the family is overwhelmed**

The two-Generation focused system of coordinated, trauma-informed services is a service system that shapes better futures for children by responding to the adverse experiences that impact on their health and wellbeing - particularly in the first 2000 days. Services are trauma-informed and coordinated, responding to the prevalence of **poverty, childhood trauma for mothers, their partners and their children, domestic, sexual and family violence, homelessness and mental health challenges.**

The system invests in **age-appropriate services for children in their own right**, understands and can respond to children's trauma, **focuses on recovery and works collaboratively to support child and family.** It includes:

- integrated services
- health and wellbeing
- housing, income and economic security
- early childhood development and therapeutic care
- access to Justice.

The Two-Generation Approach

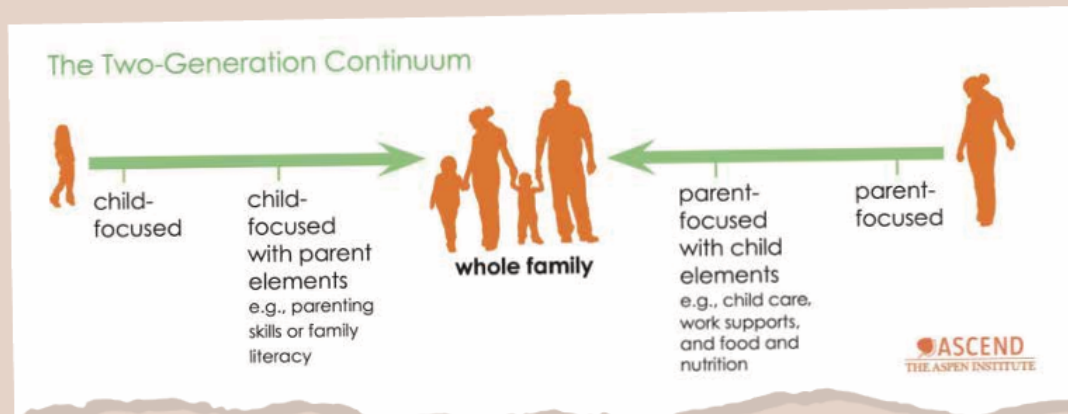
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Opposite: Two generations, working together.

Photography, Katie Bennett.



Child-focused

- Early learning, education and care
- Mental health and psychological support
- Physical health support
- Development screening
- Improvement in self-esteem and trust building

Family Outcomes

- Safety and stability
- Nurturing and supportive relationships
- Accessing needed services
- Healthy
- Children meeting developmental milestones

Parent-focused

- Stable housing
- Safety planning
- Parenting and family support
- Mental health support
- Employment, education and training
- Access to justice
- Therapeutic, family-based counselling
- Health and nutrition

https://www.micahprojects.org.au/media/yf0okjfu/20231009_webfirst2000days.pdf

‘Child and Family Hubs’ plus In-home outreach work

For a range of reasons, many families struggle to feel comfortable visiting group programs or traditional, centre-based and/or ‘mainstream’ services. For example:

- they cannot afford or cannot access the transport or childminding needed to ‘get to the centre’
- they are not comfortable with the service because their disability, diversity, and/or cultural needs are not met
- they feel intimidated or judged by services based on past experience; and
- **primarily in this space – they are terrified of seeking help because their vulnerability is assessed by ‘the system’ as a risk-factor and they deeply fear notification to Child Safety and/or other systems.**

A broader range of family support options are needed.

Parents with **disability, families with children displaying complex behaviours, many younger-parents, families from a range of language and cultural backgrounds, and families living in poverty** are likely to be more-effectively supported through more flexible service models.

‘Child and Family Hubs’ bring together a range of services to support families and children **who have experienced poverty and adversity, including homelessness, domestic and family violence and health inequities.**

Many needs are more effectively addressed through **a combination of in-home outreach work AND a safe hub** where parents can connect with peers and specialist services without judgement.

Micah Projects has developed several such programs, drawing on international evidence to inform our service design and delivery.

For example, our work with **young parent-led families is informed by the Parents as Teachers model**, with a focus on **timely developmental assessments for children** and **capacity building for parents** in an integrated multi-disciplinary team setting.

Through co-location or networks, the Hubs and their partner organisations provide services in the Hub, offsite at external partner facilities, or via outreach.

Key components of a child and family hub include:

- family friendly entry into the hub
- parenting support
- wellbeing coordination
- co-location
- mapped referral pathways
- parent peer-led learning
- workforce development
- multidisciplinary case discussions
- partnerships with families and communities.



Micah Projects' First 2000 Days

<https://www.micahprojects.org.au/resources/resources/publications/the-first-2000-days>

Recommendation

4. Roll out **multi-disciplinary Child and Family Hubs** across Queensland – using a **‘two-generation’ approach** and including **in-home outreach work**. This would be an integrated investment and commitment across government – including Families, Child Safety, Housing, Health, Education and Employment.

Australia's first pilot of the 'Family Connections' program

“Recognises and responds to the interplay of contexts which may impede a family's ability to thrive...”

In 2024-25, Micah Projects was funded to establish the first Australian adaptation of the **Family Connections** program, a [pilot initiative](#) focused on keeping children safe and supporting families facing severe disadvantage, child protection risks, and homelessness in Brisbane and Caboolture. This [evidence-based, strengths-based approach](#) provides in-home support, advocacy, and [peer work](#) to strengthen family relationships.

The service has so far been delivered to approximately 60 families experiencing disadvantage and adversity across Brisbane and Caboolture.

Based on preliminary insights, there are emerging indications that:

- There is a strong and urgent need for a holistic and integrated family support program, with many families **experiencing concurrent crisis**.
- Taking an ecosystem - rather than siloed - approach **recognises and responds to the interplay of contexts** which may impede a family's ability to thrive.
- **Broad eligibility criteria** allow families to engage and build capacity in systems navigation *despite limited access to specialist services, with long waitlists for services providing support for mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and housing.*
- Supporting families through a flexible, family-centred, strengths-based approach works to build family capacities without waiting for their circumstances to stabilise, enhancing protective factors for children at risk.
- The approach works best when sufficient time has been taken to build trust and rapport.

These early indications suggest that the Family Connections pilot appears to have benefited from ensuring that the practitioners:

- have access to frequent coaching and supervision
- hold caseloads suitable for intensive and holistic support
- undertake training relevant to the contexts in which they are working
- can access brokerage have access to Cultural Advisors who have been able to provide cultural support and guidance.

To be effective, there are strong indications that the Family Connections program:

- needs to operate as a voluntary, consent-based intake process
- allows families the flexibility to engage as and when they are ready and able

- **includes support to address concrete needs** alongside building their capacities, rather than waiting for these concrete needs to be first addressed is **embedded within an organisation that has longstanding trusting relationships with communities and services.**

*University of Queensland
Evaluating the Implementation of the Family Connections Pilot
Preliminary Findings – Sept 2025*

Recommendation

5. **Extend Australia’s first pilot of the ‘Family Connections’ program** by funding the two sites (in Brisbane and Caboolture) for 2-5 years. This would include:
 - an increase in staffing to enable four (4) practitioners per site
 - one (1) practitioner dedicated to support parents with reunification
 - a showcase for the wider family support networks in Queensland to share practice-use knowledge gained from the Common Assessment Tool
 - maintain the First Nations cultural specialist.

Family Connections - the Common Assessment Tool

Micah Projects acknowledges the work and development of the Common Assessment Tool by the NSW Government and Curijo.

Micah Projects acknowledges the privilege of utilising this tool, made possible through the support of the NSW Department Communities and Justice (DCJ).

Curijo is a majority Aboriginal-owned organisation and was engaged by NSW DCJ to develop the Common Assessment Tool (CAT). While the final version of the CAT has been edited by Micah Projects and NSW DCJ, it is based on the work of Curijo. In November 2023, Curijo moved to become an Aboriginal and female-owned and led company.

‘Early Intervention’ is the answer. But at the same time, Intensive and Specialist Services are desperately needed

For decades Micah Projects has called for increased ‘early intervention’ to better support families. We **continue to advocate strongly for this much-needed shift.**

At the same time, it is important to understand the nuances of the system (and the needs of the users of the system). Investment **along the continuum must remain appropriately balanced.**

A significant proportion of people who need support will not simply *come forward to receive* our well-intentioned ‘early intervention.’ A great many people will not be visible and/or will not be able to seek or accept common ‘early intervention’ for a range of reasons (such as inability to afford transport or childcare, fear of judgement or notification, language and cultural barriers, disability, or mental health challenges).

We acknowledge that the Child Safety system, the Domestic and Family Violence system, and the Youth Justice systems have benefited from some welcome increases in universal ‘prevention’ services, and targeted ‘early intervention’ services. For example:

- universal Kindergarten, play group, and “TripleP” parenting courses
- community awareness of child protection being “everyone’s business”
- improvements in the understanding of Domestic and Family Violence
- better acceptance of the importance of mental health and wellbeing
- enhancements in the capacity and capability of systems to recognise signs of power, control, and/or abuse
- improved understanding and common language
- increased information sharing

However, for the **Child Safety system**, and the **Domestic and Family Violence systems** in particular, these improvements (more community awareness, professionals better trained to recognise signs, investments and enhancements to give families more information and provide more referrals **onto existing family support services**) have predictably resulted in **increased demand for, and pressure on, the family support system.**

Recommendations

In addition to welcomed and vital increases in prevention and early intervention investment, we recommend:

6. **Children and families need increased family support services – from ‘soft entry’ services through to intensive and specialist services** – that is, substantial increases for services and workforces such as:
 - supportive housing for families
 - family support and intensive family support services
 - specialist Domestic Violence Services
 - specialist multi-disciplinary services for young parents
 - therapeutic services for individuals and children.
7. **The child and family support workforces need access to skilling, support and career paths**, including evidence-based communities of practice, professional development, supervision, and coaching.
8. Address the capacity and capability of the service continuum to **respond when, and from wherever, a person seeks support.**

Micah Projects’ Keeping Families Together (KFT)

KFT (also known as SH4F) is a 12-month program providing stable housing and intensive support to vulnerable families with young children.

Raising a family can be incredibly challenging while navigating difficulties such as homelessness, housing stress or poverty.

In collaboration with Common Ground Queensland, the KFT program provides families with privately leased affordable housing and the support needed to create a stable, nurturing family environment.

The program is underpinned by the Parents as Teachers model — a non-stigmatising, strengths-based approach that equips parents with the knowledge they need to encourage their children's positive development.

It is funded by the Queensland Government Department of Housing and Public Works.

<https://www.micahprojects.org.au/support-services/supportive-housing/keeping-families-together>

Poverty (and other vulnerabilities that put families at risk) require interdisciplinary responses

Evidence shows children in families experiencing homelessness, poverty and disadvantage are most likely to have developmental concerns and least likely to access timely assessment and support. This is reinforced by our experience.

The intersection of housing instability, domestic and family violence, lack of access to child and mental health services, disengagement from education, and financial instability must be known and articulated to effectively respond to the challenges faced by vulnerable children.

Children who experience disadvantage have higher risk of developmental vulnerability than those not experiencing disadvantage according to 2024 research by the [Changing Children's Chances](#) team for the Australian Government Department of Education. Risk indicators for children's developmental vulnerability include low household incomes, being born to a teenage parent, household crowding and parental mental health issues.

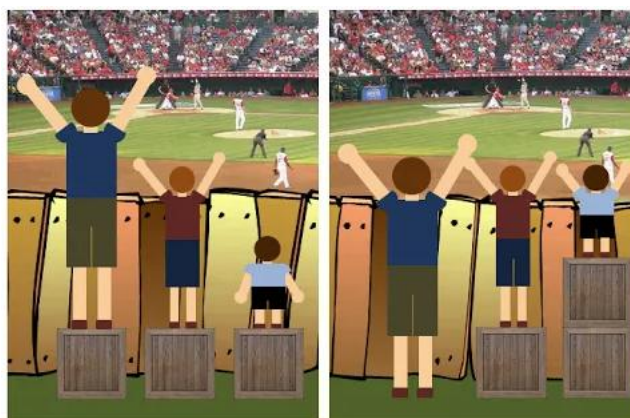
The scale is significant. Across Brisbane in 2024-25, we identified 1,230 families who experienced homelessness at some point in the year, including 673 children aged 0-4.

https://www.brisbanezero.org.au/media/aype5a4b/web_bz_homelessness_snapshot_fy24-25_families_v7.pdf

A 'rising tide' does not lift all boats

Despite the demonstrated effectiveness of 'prevention' and 'early intervention' services, **growth in these may not mean all families will 'rise with a shared tide' of increased resilience and wellbeing**. This is because some families start with less access and less opportunity than others.

This problem is our existing structural inequality: illustrated by the well-known "fence image" of equality versus equity:



Original image by CraSimig Froehle (2012)

<https://medium.com/@CRA1G/the-evolution-of-an-accidental-meme-ddc4e139e0e4>

The structural problem in inequity has become increasingly clear in an economic sense. With so many families now facing severe difficulties retaining the basics of housing and a liveable income. In economics, the appealing argument that the ‘rising tide lifts all boats’ was intended to communicate the notion that economic growth **benefits everyone**. However we now know that when the economy grows, the biggest gains go to the people who are already better off (through things like tax cuts, rising asset values, and higher investment returns). Meanwhile, income and living standards remain flat (or falling) for the more vulnerable families whom Micah Projects works with.

Returning to the family support services landscape – a similar argument has been that universal prevention services and some early intervention services will support and strengthen our **community as a whole**. The Commission’s recommended reform investment must however be mindful of biases and assumptions. Significant investment can be made to benefit many families; however those with the highest barriers (housing, income, health, education, gender, or job security) may not benefit as much as others.

Shared prosperity and equitable access and inclusion requires intentional policy choices that are more nuanced than the notion of the ‘rising tide’ lifting everyone equally.

Recommendation

9. Recognise the urgent need to **explicitly support parents and families with multiple vulnerabilities** by allocating explicit investments or initiatives, for example: establish an ‘Early Years Vulnerable Child and Family Investment Fund’; and/or create a ‘Vulnerable Early Years and Family Wellbeing Unit’; and/or establish a ‘Vulnerable Early Years and Family Wellbeing Centre for Excellence’.

Parents' experiences of the intersection of the Domestic and Family Violence **and** the Child Safety systems in Queensland

"I left one abusive relationship and ended up in another one with [Child Safety]."
(parent 2023)

Parents have long described the compounded challenges of navigating the Child Safety system **while also** experiencing Domestic and Family Violence (DFV). The Department of Child Safety has recognised this struggle in the past, and has previously invested in workforce and practice improvement, largely in the form of the *Safe and Together framework*, training and tools.

In 2023, Micah Projects' *Family Inclusion Network Southeast Queensland* (FINSEQ) consulted with 35 parents, asking them about **the intersection between Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) and Child Safety in Queensland**.

Parents spoke about experiencing judgment and system failures from the Department of Child Safety, police, legal and other services:

- *"Even when my children told the Department about sexual abuse, they stated contact is to continue and made orders for me to facilitate contact with our abuser even with an active DVO in place."*
- *"[The] perpetrator [was] given custody by Child Safety. He is not required to address his behaviour – I have to do all the work."*
- *"Police always questioned me in front of my abuser. Same with [the] CSO."*
- *"Legal Aid is a "lucky dip" - [they] removed themselves from [my] case two days prior [to court] as they did not believe I would win."*
- *"Children were forced into reunification with [their] abuser...despite cries for help prior to decisions and following."*
- *"Dads are automatically told to do a perpetrator program... whether or not they agree with that or if they can get into one. I firmly disagree with the referral to a DV course – and they say I'm not allowed to see my child/ren – even supervised – until I have."*

What did parents find helpful?

- Being believed and listened to by Child Safety and police, and not having their credibility questioned.
- Being viewed and trusted as a protective factor for their children.
- Being allowed space to parent without unnecessary interference.
- Access to emergency accommodation.
- Having opportunity to voice concerns to Child Safety without fear of repercussions.
- Systems prioritising family preservation and protecting the victim and children as a 'unit' rather than demonising both parents.
- Common sense and acceptance of life's realities rather than bureaucratic 'ticking of boxes'.
- Access to counselling or other support services.
- Positive connections with CSO and/or foster carer/s

Parents' suggestions for improvement

- Support families to access help when experiencing DFV rather than removing children immediately
- Increase specialised, accessible and free/affordable support services including resources dedicated to improving response times and funding preventative programs
- Genuinely trauma-informed practice required from workers supported by better education around DFV and its effects, particularly within First Nations communities
- Acknowledge the resilience and protective factors of parents
- Increased training for CSOs on the *Safe and Together* Model so that it is embedded in every service centre across Queensland
- Training to work with the whole family - the protective parent and ensuring the responsibility falls with the person who chooses to use violence

“Domestic Violence Exposure: 68% of children in care were exposed to domestic violence”

When the government announced the Commission of Inquiry it was reported that **“68% of children in care were exposed to domestic violence”**.

Consideration of the intersection of the Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) system and the Child Safety system is therefore foundational. While not mentioned in the Commission's Terms of Reference – the hearing transcripts do refer to DFV frequently. Micah Projects anticipates that many of the Commission's recommendations will relate to the DFV and Child Safety intersection. We therefore offer our insights as a service provider and systems advocate in both.

The current significant reforms across the Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) sector include increases in community awareness and understanding of DFV, and enhancements to the capacity and capability of systems to recognise signs of DFV. These reforms, ***happening at the same time***, are resulting in increased referrals in the response space. On top of that, the recognised need for increased information sharing is ***also impacting*** system response capacity and this is not accounted for in current resourcing (because the increase in need over time was predicted). These factors are placing **increasing pressure and demand on Specialist Domestic Violence Services, which is out-stripping capacity to respond**.

We know that **a significant proportion of victim survivors of Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) do not engage in service systems** or the criminal justice system: this has been acknowledged by the Commissions, Inquiries and reports.

Specifically in regard to the need for **improved information sharing**: we are missing a significant piece. In our practice experience the sharing of information alone is not sufficient for a shared understanding of risk and safety. We strongly advocate for intentional reform to **focus on enhancing the responses women receive in systems, so that they feel safe to disclose their experiences directly to those systems. We should be collectively striving for higher rates of consent from victim survivors to take the action considered necessary for protection**.

Victim survivors, children, young people, and their families **should receive the support they need when they first seek help**. Micah Projects has experience in, and is supportive of, co-locating DFV Specialist Practitioners within responding systems, we would welcome the opportunity to share lessons from these models and our experiences in embedding specialist workforces to support new and innovative practices.

Regarding 'early intervention' ... Given the recent [In Plain Sight](#) and [Annual Child Deaths Report](#), we need to be cautious about the conflation in language of **the system and support continuum**, and language of **early intervention and prevention**. It is being confused.

Micah Projects has unique practice and lived expertise to notice that each of the different "systems" (DFV, Child Safety, housing, health, disability support, education...) would place the same person or situation in a subtly different spot along their continuum of "prevention, early intervention and tertiary or crisis response".

And this will often not reflect the experience of the victim survivor (or their children).

For example, a person's experience of DFV may be **un**reported to formal systems: a first criminal justice system involvement can be through a civil protection order process, but it then requires a breach of this order to be considered criminal. **This first breach is often considered "early intervention" inside a system**, but for the parent and their children this may in fact be a very long way into their experience of violence.

Put another way: Parents often report experiencing a cycle, which mirrors research, that takes on average seven (7) attempts to exit a violent relationship. Therefore, there must be **urgent investment into more whole-of-family support services** to meet the needs of the person whenever they seek support. Currently most services have rigid eligibility criteria related to 'where on the continuum' a person must be in order to access support.

Ultimately, our submissions over the years across the child protection/Child Safety and Domestic and Family Violence space validate the anticipated *Queensland DFV Strategy* approach to early intervention: that is, given the overwhelming experience of DFV for families known to the Child Safety service system in its entirety, families and children need **a considered plan for ensuring specialist DFV support is available across the continuum of services in an integrated and collaborative manner, whilst addressing capacity to respond when and from wherever a person seeks support**.

Recommendations

10. Develop a considered plan for ensuring **sufficient specialist DFV support** is available, in an integrated and collaborative manner such as co-location and embedded models with Child Safety, across the continuum of services.
11. Address the capacity and capability of the DFV service continuum to **respond when, and from wherever, a person seeks support**.

12. Enhance the capacity of the Department’s DFV specialist services to –
 - develop and resource explicit practices to **ensure parents are supported in coping with, and recovering from, the impact of DFV and subsequent Child Safety intervention**
 - **support parents to champion their rights to improve systems** where they are at a disadvantage, including the criminal justice system.
13. Train, support and fund **the parents who have lived-experience of both the Child Safety and DFV systems to participate in the reforms** (from co-design through to implementation) by expanding existing groups or programs such as the Family Inclusion Network.
14. Expand the scope of current funded **perpetrator intervention programs to meet the needs of parents, families and their children**; by ensuring that victims advocacy, children’s specialist support, and individual case management occurs with those causing harm. A broader range of options will better meet the needs of children and families than the currently limited, one-size stipulation to “attend a perpetrator program” as a requirement of many Child Safety case plans and conferences.

Peer workers in multi-disciplinary teams – understanding, mentoring, encouraging

At Micah Projects we see people as neighbours and citizens who are equal partners with us in addressing their needs and creating change in their lives. We invite and support people to participate in planning our services and giving us feedback.

We assist people to participate in civic activities and in their community. Above all we give people choices about whether they engage with us, how we will collaborate, and what steps they want to take in their own lives to connect with people to discover their own unique context of community and life experiences.

A highly-valued and effective way to participate and collaborate involves peer support – through groups, activities and communities. Where it is appropriate to the model, Micah Projects prioritises the inclusion of ‘peer-workers’ or victim/survivor/lived experience advocates: they can uniquely and demonstrably understand, mentor, and encourage.

Micah Projects experience in delivering **peer support to young pregnant women and young mothers** indicates that peer workers (that is, those of a similar age and mindset) bring authentic engagement, practical knowledge and offer a sense of community to young women faced with the challenge of early parenting. Evaluation also confirms that the young participants not only benefit from the advice received in training sessions but also forge invaluable long-term support relationships with each other and their peer workers.

Peer-workers or lived-experience advocates are also a valued addition **for victim/survivors of Domestic and Family Violence** and for **parents who are involved with the Child Safety system**.

Trained and supported peer-workers in the Domestic and Family Violence system

undertake a range of activities – from primary-prevention media and community-awareness opportunities sharing their experience of gender-based violence; through to training other professionals in the system; or working in peer-support roles within a multidisciplinary team.

Nationally and internationally, there are a variety of programs where **parents with lived experience are employed as peer workers in child protection**, with a growing evidence base for the implementation needs and efficacy of such programs. Micah Projects' Family Inclusion Network (FIN) has been trialling parent advocates to work exclusively as systems advocates however, parent-members advocate strongly and consistently for peer parent-workers to also be employed as individual advocates who can support families navigating the system.

Recommendation

15. Implement a training, support, supervision and employment pathway for **lived-experience peer-workers and/or advocates**. This is a currently latent resource for parents and families experiencing the child protection system. Internationally, multi-disciplinary teams with parent peer-workers have been a contributing factor in reducing children's time in out-of-home care.

Adoption

The Commission of Inquiry's Terms of Reference briefly mentions 'adoption'. Adoption does not appear to have been discussed in depth, according to the Commission's hearings transcripts.

The Government has made a commitment to prioritise the [Safe Communities policy platform](#). *"...prioritise increased resources for the Child Safety system to ensure each child can live in a safe and nurturing home... prioritise guidance, opportunity and discipline for children in Residential Care with the goal of supporting children into foster care **and adoption** when they're unable to be cared for by their parents...."*

<https://www.lnp.org.au/david-crisafulli/right-priorities/making-your-community-safer#:~:text=An%20LNP%20Government%20will%20prioritise,cared%20for%20by%20their%20parents>

A recent Government roundtable and subsequent communique also considered adoption.

Micah Projects was not part of this roundtable: we would welcome future discussion on this matter.

Queensland Government Adoption Roundtable, 18 February 2026

*“Participants discussed past learnings gained through lived experience of adoption and future opportunities for adoption reform and system improvement, including:
(excerpts)*

- *children not having a choice in decisions about their adoption and barriers to discharge of adoptions*
- *the need for accountability for the adopted person while they are a child including ongoing monitoring of health and wellbeing*
- *the need for additional “post adoption support” for the adopted person and ongoing access to specialised and therapeutic services*
- *simple and open adoption as options that provide permanency without legal separation between the parents and child*
- *parents of adoptees needing more choice and options...”*

https://www.families.qld.gov.au/_media/documents/adoption/adoption-roundtable-communicue-feb-26.pdf

Healing and Reunification

Individuals and families need to heal if they are to grow out of traumatic experiences and/or break generational cycles. Child Safety reform must therefore **ensure the ongoing viability of services that support survivors of past forced removal and historical institutional childhood abuse** to seek justice and redress, to create supportive connections, and to trace their origin, identities, spirit and communities.

Parents today also say they are damaged by these processes and experiences. However parents are more often **deeply concerned about their children’s experience of the Child Safety intervention or removal process – and its impact.**

*“It’s like the cyclone, the storm you go through.... Then the calm....
But then it passes – and it’s only me to clean up the mess.” (parent 2018)*

*“[the children] they’re home now but they’re having nightmares every night... they didn’t use to”
(parent 2020)*

*“There should be more transparent parenting goal plans with clearly stated goals and benefits
A roadmap for improvement. Parents need goals and things
they can look forward to.” (parent 2024)*

Micah Projects strongly advocates for improvement in reunification practices and the creation of dedicated reunification teams.

We know that, over the generations, many children and young people removed from their families and communities have had significant difficulty tracing their origins. However oftentimes they do find their way back to family (even if it is ‘eventually’ – after all the regulation and services have left).

- “up to **57% of children in care seek out their birth families** when they leave care in their late teens” (Kenrick et al., 2006; Salveron et al., 2010) – in Battle, 2014)
- “**longitudinal study of care leavers in the USA**, found that at 25–26 years of age, **94%** of the sample of 593 care-leavers reported feeling **very close or close to at least one biological family member**” (Courtney 2011 – cited in Healy 2023)

The government’s response to the recent “Children in Care Census 2024” shone some light on an aspect of this. The government stated, “772 vulnerable children were missing from their placements, including 27 under the age of 12, and 51 young offenders who were self-placing were out on bail.”

[Crisafulli Government acts following Census on missing kids in care- Ministerial Media Statements](https://performance.dcssds.qld.gov.au/media/documents/2024-children-in-care-census-full-report-for-publication.pdf)
[https://performance.dcssds.qld.gov.au/ media/documents/2024-children-in-care-census-full-report-for-publication.pdf](https://performance.dcssds.qld.gov.au/media/documents/2024-children-in-care-census-full-report-for-publication.pdf)

If we know that children will eventually return to family, or will ‘self-place’ with family, then it is a logical step to investment in specialised ‘reunification’ support teams. Parents have been asking for this. Parents’ experience of reunification is characterised by extended time delays, lack of clarity, sporadic communication, and frequent “goal post changing”.

Another less obvious ‘solution’ to improve reunification is **legal representation for parents**. As outlined below, a specific model of legal representation has been shown to reduce children’s time in foster/residential care. Micah Projects and its Family Inclusion Network (FIN) have repeatedly advocated for – and provided detailed submissions and proposals for – multidisciplinary legal representation for parents.

Understanding the effects of an interdisciplinary approach to parental representation in child welfare.

In 2019, a **large, published** study showed that “multidisciplinary representation reduced children’s time in foster care by nearly four fewer months during the 48 months following the petition filing, through faster early reunification outcomes, as compared to parents who were represented by solo practitioners”

Source: Guggenheim, Martin, Gerber, et al, ***Understanding the Effects of an Interdisciplinary Approach to Parental Representation in Child Welfare***. 2020.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2020.105163>.

Recommendations

- 16.** There must be full commitment to the Child Protection Act’s principle that **family (and therefore reunification) must be the focus of the child protection system** and the litigation model. Also to use the **‘least intrusive’ options**, and to provide families with post-reunification support so the family can heal from their experience.

17. Immediately after a child is removed - **parents need support to process the trauma and to then begin to implement the various requirements placed on them** in order to have their child returned. This requires a specialised reunification program provided by specialised reunification workers in the community sector.
18. Therapeutic services should be provided – for both child and parent – to **understand and respond to the emotional impacts and consequences** of children being removed (and reunified).
19. The department should regularly **publish detailed performance data in relation to reunification**.
20. Alongside the *Charter of rights for a child in care (Child Protection Act 1999)*; the *Charter of Rights for Parents involved with the child protection system in Queensland* should be **legislated and fully implemented to embed parents’ rights**.
 - <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1999-010#sec.74>
 - https://www.families.qld.gov.au/_media/documents/supporting-families/charter-of-rights-for-parents.pdf
21. **Ensure the ongoing viability of services that support survivors of past forced removal and historical institutional childhood abuse** to seek justice and redress, to create supportive connections, and to trace their origin, identities, spirit and communities.

Measurement framework, data-driven change, and common assessment tools

The Commission of Inquiry presents a long-awaited opportunity to adopt an existing, evidence-based measurement framework, pursue data-driven change, and collaborate across the sector using common language, common practices and common assessment tools

Existing, evidence-based measurement framework

ARACY, in partnership with 150 organisations and the voices of over 4,000 children, young people, and experts, developed The Nest, Australia’s wellbeing framework for children and young people. The Nest shows that for a child to thrive their needs must be met in six key, interlocking dimensions:

1. Being Valued, Loved, and Safe
2. Having Material Basics

3. Being Healthy physically, mentally, emotionally
4. Learning within and outside the classroom
5. Participating in decisions, groups, and community
6. Having a Positive Sense of Identity and Culture

4

the common approach®

A practical way to improve the wellbeing of children, young people, and families

The diagram is a circular model with 'CHILD' at the center. It is divided into four quadrants representing domains of wellbeing:

- HEALTHY (Top Right):** Includes 'Family's physical health', 'Healthy eating', 'Sport or outdoor play', and 'Family's mental and emotional health'.
- PARTICIPATING (Right):** Includes 'Community clubs and groups', 'Family activities and games', 'Helps and is helped by friends and neighbours', 'Appropriate online activity', 'Family group decisions', and 'Social gatherings'.
- IDENTITY AND CULTURE (Bottom Right):** Includes 'Belonging positive sense of self', 'Positive cultural and spiritual identity', 'Family traditions', 'Family cultural, religious, or linguistic practices', 'Connection to community and culture', and 'Identity is respected and supported'.
- MATERIAL BASICS (Bottom Left):** Includes 'Feels provided for', 'Enough money for necessities', 'Family working or looking for work', 'Stable and suitable housing', 'Access to transport and local services', and 'Appropriate food and clothes'.

Surrounding these domains are four larger categories:

- VALUED, LOVED, AND SAFE (Top Left):** Includes 'Feels safe at school and in neighbourhood', 'Protects environment and climate', 'Trusting relationships', 'House is safe', 'Environmentally aware habits', and 'Positive family interactions'.
- LEARNING (Left):** Includes 'Learning activities outside of school', 'Unstructured play', 'School supports individual learning needs', 'Spends quality time with family', and 'Enjoys learning'.

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<https://www.micahprojects.org.au/resources/resources/publications/the-first-2000-days>

Data at all levels can effectively drive change

At the individual level - particularly where families experience multiple vulnerabilities - data provides critical insights into needs, demand, and timeliness of response. Data is central to triaging the most vulnerable, enabling more targeted and coordinated support, and advocating for overall system change. While the Department's UNIFY system is in its early days, there may be opportunities in the non-Government sector to better collaborate – **including through the use of data and common tools more effectively.**

Proven data-led approaches in the homelessness system “Brisbane Zero”

Brisbane Zero is part of the Advance to Zero national initiative of the Australian Alliance to End Homelessness, that support local collaborative efforts to end homelessness – one community at a time. It aims to end and prevent homelessness for individuals, youth and families with children, starting with those who are or have been sleeping rough. Through collaboration, data-driven insights, and advocacy around tailored housing solutions, we work towards preventing, reducing, and ending homelessness in our community.

In 2024-25, 1,230 families were identified as homeless in Brisbane by Brisbane Zero, including 2,125 children. On average, it had been 1 year and 4 months since they had a permanent place to live.

Collaborate using common language, practices and tools

Parents, families and their children are stressed by navigating the many ‘systems’ designed to help them. Each of these systems use different approaches, practices and tools. (And often the organisations, services and programs *within each system* uses different approaches, practices and tools.)

Shared understanding and language are critical for information sharing and collaborating towards effective results.

Common assessment or triage tools support targeted, child and family centred responses by identifying a family’s strengths and vulnerabilities, and the intensity of support required. This enables services to match responses with families’ needs. By using data rather than assumptions, resources are directed (or should be) where they can have the greatest impact on the family’s wellbeing.

Recommendations

22. Measure the reform's outcomes using an **established, evidence-based, cross-sector, cross-jurisdictional framework** – like 'The Nest, Australia's wellbeing framework for children and young people'.
23. Seek opportunities in the non-Government sector to **better collaborate using data** (to enhance visibility for evidence-based solutions, policies and strategies). For example, [Brisbane Zero Snapshot 2024-25](#) for Families with Children Experiencing Homelessness.
24. Begin **using common language, practices, and assessment tools** (to more effectively match service responses with families' needs). Examples include the:
 - QLD DFV Common Risk and Safety Framework
 - Australian Homelessness Vulnerability Triage Tool (AHVTT)
 - Common Assessment Tool being trialled by Family Connections (see page 26).

Transformation needs significant transition or “hump” funding

The time, collaboration, and economic investment needed for system transformation must be realistic.

Investment and implementation plans need to address all of the Recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, potentially also pre-existing commitments, and ideally pre-existing Recommendations.

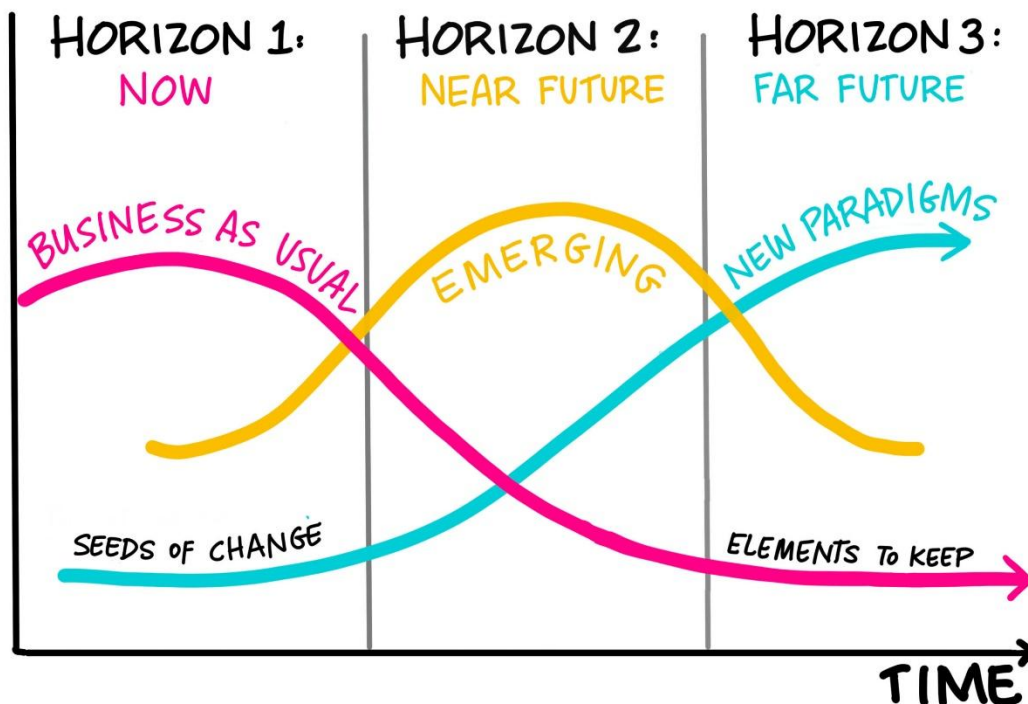
The transformation must recognise the true-cost of the collaboration and culture-change activities required, as well as the true-cost of service-delivery.

The 'three horizons' framework helps illustrate the central tenet that the system cannot simply “stop doing this” and “start doing that” – significant additional transition or “hump” funding is required.

A 'three horizons' approach would ensure investment, timeframes and expectations were relatively realistic, for instance:

- H1 - Current system - deconstruct and decommission the “broken system”
- H2 - Innovation - re-balance, re-design and move towards the future vision with concurrent funding for the transition phase
- H3 - Vision - implement and embed the “future system”.

THREE HORIZONS MODEL



Adapted from Sharpe

Frameworks Collection by finegood@sfu.ca | Illustrated by sam@drawingchange.com | © CC BY-NC-ND

<https://www.complexsystemsframeworks.ca/framework/three-horizons-model/>

For Queensland and the human services sector, this is particularly pertinent given several known events in the coming decade: including a key period for the non-government sector’s ‘portable long service leave’ implementation from 2028; the Queensland State Election in 2028; and the Brisbane Olympics in 2032.

Micah Projects illustrates our own forward direction in this way – recognising “*the reality of constant change rather than a fixed pathway that becomes disconnected from external changing environments.... This framework captures the values including learning and innovation—rather than focusing only on performance outcomes. We acknowledge that lasting, systemic change cannot be achieved through the efforts of only one organisation. By regularly reflecting and adapting our evidence-based practices, we can create conditions to do more.*”

([Strategic Roadmap | Micah Projects](https://www.micahprojects.org.au/latest/news-and-events/news/strategic-roadmap) - <https://www.micahprojects.org.au/latest/news-and-events/news/strategic-roadmap>)

Recommendation

25. The system cannot simultaneously “stop doing this” and “start doing that” so explicit transition or “hump” funding is required. Investment and implementation plans must recognise the true-cost of the collaboration and culture-change activities necessary for the reform, as well as the true-cost of service-delivery

Conclusion

It has been 27 years since the Forde *Commission of Inquiry into abuse of children in Institutions* in Queensland.

We continue to acknowledge the lifetime impacts of abuse in institutional settings. While much work has been done, much much more is required to narrow the significant policy and service gaps that still exist.

This Submission is a summary of the expertise of Micah Projects: the people who deliver services every day of the year, and the participants we walk alongside **in the areas of child protection, family support, and Domestic and Family Violence**.

We respect and honour this wisdom and perspective by commending our Submission to the Commissioner for consideration.

REPORTS AND SUBMISSIONS BY MICAH PROJECTS ON CHILD PROTECTION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

Below we provide a list of some of Micah Projects' reports and submissions relevant to the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry. We have included a URL if the report is publicly available. Others are available on request to Bridget Kinch, Interim CEO, Micah Projects: bridget.kinch@micahprojects.org.au

MICAH PROJECTS – SELECTION OF RELEVANT REPORTS

- **[The First 2000 Days - Family and perinatal pathways for re-shaping the future](https://www.micahprojects.org.au/resources/resources/publications/the-first-2000-days)** – Micah Projects' framework for a safe, stable and healthy future for families and children under five affected by homelessness, domestic violence, poor mental health and addiction – **December 2023.**
URL: <https://www.micahprojects.org.au/resources/resources/publications/the-first-2000-days>
- **[Growing Together: two generation approaches with young parent-led families](https://www.micahprojects.org.au/resources/resources/publications/growing-together-two-generation-approaches-with-young-parent-led-families)** – November 2024.
URL: <https://www.micahprojects.org.au/resources/resources/publications/growing-together-two-generation-approaches-with-young-parent-led-families>
- **['Every Child, Every Woman: Healthy and Safe Start' Program Evaluation Final Report](https://www.micahprojects.org.au/resources/resources/publications/the-every-child-every-woman-healthy-and-safe-start-program)** – **September 2025**
URL: <https://www.micahprojects.org.au/resources/resources/publications/the-every-child-every-woman-healthy-and-safe-start-program>
- **[Keeping Families Together Study Report - Second Report](https://www.micahprojects.org.au/resources/resources/publications/keeping-families-together-study-report-second-report)** – **October 2024**
URL: <https://www.micahprojects.org.au/resources/resources/publications/keeping-families-together-study-report-second-report>
- **[Keeping Families Together Supportive Housing for Families Evaluation Report](#)** – **August 2022**
URL: [Keeping Families Together Supportive Housing for Families Evaluation Report | Micah Projects](#)
- **[Disability Royal Commission transcript – Micah Projects - Lotus Support Services](https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/sub10002645-micah-projects-lotus-support-services)** – December 2022.
URL: <https://disability.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/sub10002645-micah-projects-lotus-support-services>

LOTUS PLACE AND HISTORICAL ABUSE NETWORK

Lotus Place is a Queensland-wide service of Micah Projects with offices in Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville and providing outreach to surrounding communities across the State. We have supported people through the Historical Abuse Network over 30 years through support and advocacy in submissions and providing their voices to many Inquiries.

Below we provide a listing of some relevant reports and submissions relevant to the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry. These are available upon request to Bridget Kinch, Interim CEO, Micah Projects: bridget.kinch@micahprojects.org.au

- 1997 The investigation of Paedophilia by the Criminal Justice Commission
- 1999 Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Forde Inquiry and supporting victim survivors on the 2 year Monitoring Committee
- Commonwealth Senate Committees: Child Migrants, Forgotten Australians, Forced Adoptions
- Crime and Misconduct Commission Carmody report – provided submission and participated in partnership forums rolling the release of the Report
- Carmody Families report
- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Childhood Sexual Abuse
- National Redress Scheme – Micah Projects has a national redress team who have to date supported 1179 participants with redress enquiries (including supporting 666 people to lodge redress applications).

BRISBANE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICE

Brisbane Domestic Violence Service (BDVS) is the regional Domestic and Family Violence support service for people living in Brisbane. We provide a range of free and confidential services for people who are experiencing or are at risk of domestic and family violence.

Below we provide a listing of some relevant reports and submissions relevant to the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry. These are available upon request to Bridget Kinch, Interim CEO, Micah Projects: bridget.kinch@micahprojects.org.au

- **Brisbane Domestic Violence Service and Resound Victim Support Service consultation** – Resound Voices of Experience – **2025**
- **DFV Perpetrator Strategy Response** – Response to development of a Queensland domestic and family violence perpetrator strategy consultation paper – **October 2023**
- **Women's Safety and Justice Bill Response** – Submission to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce – **February 2023**

- **Police Inquiry into Domestic and Family Violence Responses** – Submission to the Commission of Inquiry to Examine Queensland Police Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence – **July 2022**

URL (not secure): <https://www.qpsdfvinquiry.qld.gov.au/public-hearings/assets/exhibits/week-3/karyn-walsh-attachment-1.pdf>

FAMILY INCLUSION NETWORK (FIN) SOUTHEAST QLD

Family Inclusion Network, Southeast Queensland (FIN) is a network of parents and their allies working to improve the child protection and family support system.

FIN brings together parents with lived (and living) experience, with government and non-government agencies, to work collaboratively on policies and issues that affect families experiencing the child protection system.

Below we provide links and copies of some relevant reports and submissions relevant to the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry.

- [Child protection litigation model and the legal process of applying for and making child protection orders](#) – Submission to the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland’s Child Safety System – **February 2026**
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-CP-Litigation-Submission-Jan-2026-FINAL.pdf>
- [Complaints system](#) – Submission to the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland’s Child Safety System – **August 2025**
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/images/FINAL-Inquiry-Complaints-FINseq.pdf>
- [Queensland Human Rights Act 2019](#) – Submission to 2024 review – **August 2024**
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Human-Rights-Act-review-2024-FINAL.pdf>
- [FIN CP Litigation review Parent Consultation Report](#) – Submission to ‘child protection Litigation Model’ Review 2024 – **August 2024**
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/FIN-CP-Litigation-Review-Parent-Consultation-Report-2024.pdf>
- [Queensland Residential Care System Review](#) – Submission to Residential Care Review 2023 – **October 2023**
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/images/FINseq-Submission-Residential-Care-Review-2023.pdf>
- [Sunset Review or child protection Regulation](#) – Submission to Sunset Review of child protection Regulation 2011 – **April 2023**
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/images/Sunset-Review-of-Child-Protection-Regulation-Submission.pdf>
- [Parents’ Views on Child Safety Complaints Process](#) – FIN Report – **January 2023**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/Parents-Views-on-Child-Safety-Complaints-Process.pdf>

- [‘We should not be punished for having a disability.’ Recommendations for reforms to child protection, Family Services and Disability Systems from Parents with a Disability](#) – Family Inclusion Network Australia, with input from Positive Powerful Parents Self Advocacy Group, submission to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability – **December 2022**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/Fitt-David-FINA-PPP-DRC-Report.pdf>

- [Charter of Rights for Parents involved with the child protection system in Queensland](#) – developed in a partnership between the Family Inclusion Networks (FIN) of Queensland, the Queensland Parents’ Advisory Committee (the QPAC) and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs – **June 2022**

URL: https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/Charter_of_Rights_Parents.pdf

- [Submission on the child protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020](#) – Submission to a Queensland Parliamentary Committee – **August 2020**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/images/2020-submission-CP-Act-adoption-FIN-FINAL.pdf>

- [Parents and the Child Safety system: Input regarding responses to COVID-19 \(Paper No.2\)](#) – FIN report – **April 2020**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-COVID-Paper-No.2-9-April-2020-FINAL.pdf>

- [Shared Strength: Parents taking their place at the table](#) – FIN report – **December 2019**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/201910-SharedStrength-online.pdf>

- [Rethinking Rights and Regulation: towards a stronger framework for protecting children and supporting families](#) – Submission to Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women on the Discussion Paper 2019 – **October 2019**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/Submission-FIN-submission-to-Rethinking-Rights-FINAL.pdf>

- [2018/19 Parent Forums: Experiences of Queensland parents in the child protection system](#) – FIN report – **February 2019**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/Notes-Parent-Forums-v12.pdf>

- [Parents’ Voices: Out-of-Home Care Reforms in Queensland](#) - Brisbane Partnerships (a partnership between Kyabra, Micah Projects, the Community Living Association and Jabiru) and FIN report – **November 2017**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/20171120-Parents-Voices-Out-Of-Home-Care-Reforms-in-QLD-2017.pdf>

- [child protection Reform Amendment Bill 2017](#) - Submission to the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic Violence Prevention Committee – **September 2017**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/Micah-Projects-FIN-submission-Child-Protection-Reform-Bill-2017.pdf>