

# Child Safety Commission of Inquiry



## Jennifer's story

**Disclaimer:** This is the story of a person who shared their personal experience with the Commission of Inquiry through a submission or interview. The names in this story are pseudonyms and identifying details have been removed. The person who shared this experience may not have been a witness and their account is not evidence. They did not take an oath or affirmation before providing the story.

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

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

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I write to you not as a stakeholder, but as a carer, a mother, and someone who has given 22 years of my life to supporting children failed by the system. Across New South Wales and Queensland, I have cared for 53 children with complex trauma, disability, and behavioural challenges. What I have seen—and lived—should never be ignored.

Until recently, we were a household of 10, including 8 children, six of whom had trauma and high needs. We are still caring for five complex children—doing the work of a full multidisciplinary team daily, without adequate support or recognition.

Earlier this year, we made the heartbreaking decision to end an 11-year placement separating siblings after fighting to keep them together for over 11 years. This child was part of our family.

We fought for years for proper support—specialist input, which was being completely ignored, collaborative planning, and therapeutic stability. None came. The emotional and systemic neglect broke us, and eventually, we had no choice but to let go. That child was placed in residential care—not because we stopped caring, but because the system stopped responding.

For over five months, we have had no CSO contact or visits to our home. Not a single face-to-face conversation. Emails go unanswered. Phone calls are ignored. The silence is deafening—and dangerous. When contact has occurred in the past, it was often marked by overreach, lack of transparency, and blatant disrespect. Instead of working in partnership, some CSOs have acted in ways that undermined our role, disempowered us as carers, and added further trauma to already fragile situations.

In early 2023, one of our foster children caused \$3,000 damage to my daughter's car. My daughter—who has worked since the age of 14 while completing school and actively supporting the children in our care, opening her home—has been waiting over a year for justice. The department's offer of \$1,200 is an insult. Why should she be

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left to carry the cost for damage caused by a child in state care?

The system is broken—not just in process, but in heart. We are not simply carers. We are trauma specialists, advocates, protectors, and educators. And we are being driven to breaking point.

The lack of collaboration, the disrespect, the abandonment of basic communication—and the emotional and financial strain—it's too much. Families like ours are the glue holding this system together, and we are disintegrating under the pressure.

