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**CHILD SAFETY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
STATE OF QUEENSLAND
PROACTIVE STATEMENT 13**

STATEMENT OF KEARIN CHARLES CORCORAN

I, Kearin Charles Corcoran, care of Crown Law, Level 11, 50 Ann Street, Brisbane, a Detective Sergeant of Police in the State of Queensland state as follows:

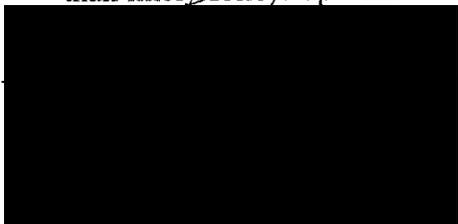
Experience in QPS relevant to the Child Safety System

1. I am a Detective Sergeant of Police and the Officer in Charge of the Tablelands Child Protection and Investigation Unit.
2. I have served in the Queensland Police Service (**QPS**) for approximately thirty-one (31) years, primarily in plain-clothes roles including the Tablelands Child Protection and Investigation Unit (**CPIU**) and the Criminal Investigation Branch (**CIB**) at Charleville and Petrie. My career has also included uniformed duties at Ipswich and Charleville, along with postings at smaller regional stations such as Mount Garnet and Herberton. These roles have provided me with extensive operational experience across both metropolitan and regional environments, with exposure to and contact with First Nations People and communities. I have also performed relieving duties as the Far North District (**FND**) Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (**SCAN**) representative for the Cape, Tablelands and Torres Strait areas.
3. The Tablelands CPIU was initially established and stationed at Atherton Police Station because the local Child Safety Service Centre (**CSSC**) was based in Atherton. It is currently staffed by a Detective Sergeant (Officer in Charge) and seven investigators, having been expanded from four investigators in September 2023 following a workload review in 2018 which identified the office was understaffed and resulted in approval for additional resources.

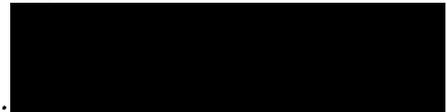
4. The Tablelands District (formerly Mareeba District) CPIU is a unique model from a QPS CPIU perspective. Other CPIU offices have responsibility for child protection matters and youth justice matters. The Tablelands CPIU does not have responsibility for youth justice matters, which are the local responsibility of the Tablelands CIB. It only has responsibility for child protection matters and local management of reportable child sex offenders.

Distances covered by Tablelands CIPU and impact on operational matters

5. The area of responsibility for Tablelands CPIU and child protection investigations is the Tablelands Patrol Group (TPG), covering a geographical area from Chillagoe to the north, Kuranda to the east, and Croydon to the west. In addition to this area, we also have responsibility for Cooktown, Hope Vale, Laura & Wujal Wujal (Cairns Country Northern Patrol Group) and Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw (Cape Patrol Group). The combined area is approximately 218,789 square kilometres. In comparison, the State of Victoria is approximately 227,444 square kilometres.
6. There are vast distances involved in policing operations of the Tablelands CPIU. For example, some of the distances include:
 - a) Atherton to Croydon: 443km = 5 hours (sealed road)
 - b) Atherton to Kowanyama: 548km = 6.5 hours (sealed & unsealed road)
 - c) Atherton to Pormpuraaw: 631km = 7.5 hours (sealed & unsealed road)
7. Due to distance and the fact that some roads are unsealed and often affected due to seasonal weather, CPIU are often required to seek the assistance of local uniformed police to secure initial versions and evidence before investigators can be deployed. Depending on the seriousness of the complaint, available staff and resources may be factors which delay deployment to the community.
8. Depending on the urgency of the deployment Child Safety may not be able to attend due to operational availability and the remote location. There has not been a joint investigation with Child Safety, in my time as Officer in Charge. Child Safety will more than likely follow up with the family on their next deployment to the community.



Kearin Charles Corcoran



Witness

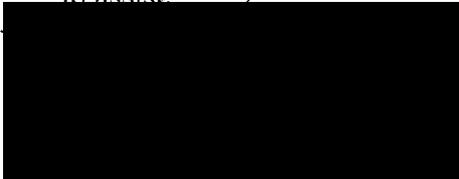
9. From a child protection and youth justice perspective, service delivery in remote communities remains significantly constrained by geographic location, limited infrastructure, and resource availability. In support of this perspective government presence in these locations is generally limited to key agencies such as:
- a) Queensland Police Service
 - b) Queensland Health
 - c) Education Queensland
 - d) Department of Justice
10. Child Safety and Youth Justice officers usually travel to these communities on a fly-in, fly-out basis, as required. In their absence, QPS may be called upon to provide logistical support by:
- a) Assisting with the service of Child Safety documents.
 - b) Conducting welfare checks on families if concerns are raised about potential breaches of Safety Plans.
11. If air travel is required, QPS will generally deploy by QPS Airwing however, in some instances there is a need to travel by commercial operator, or in rare instances a charter flight. Again, due to the fly-in and fly-out nature of these communities sometimes commercial availability is limited or not available.
12. Accommodation within remote communities is limited, with multiple service providers competing for scarce facilities. The Kowanyama Council operates a Domestic Violence (DV) Shelter, with which QPS maintains a strong partnership. This facility is occasionally used for short term placement of children when no other safe options exist. Due to funding limitations, provision of meals at the DV Shelter is not assured. On occasion, QPS has provided meals for children placed there. Act for Kids operate a Safe House in Kowanyama. and this initiative is funded by Child Safety; however, capacity constraints mean placement is not always available.
13. Support services for the community, both in relation to child protection issues and QPS referrals are very limited and operate on a fly-in and fly-out basis. This is very

challenging given that the common themes from a child protection perspective are issues that would benefit from more intensive support being available, such as:

- a) Long-term alcohol dependency – which impacts on daily care and protection needs not being met – food, supervision, attending school and medical appointments.
 - b) Domestic and Family Violence – which intersects with alcohol misuse and/dependency
 - c) Children’s use of alcohol and other drugs – commencing at a very young age.
 - d) Physical abuse – from family members, but not isolated to parents.
14. Despite their small size, remote communities present difficulties in locating children and witnesses who do not wish to be found. This can delay investigations and require additional follow-up by local police.
15. In matters of serious assaults and sexual assaults, victims are often transported to Cairns for medical treatment, Sexual Assault Investigation Kit (SAIK) collections, and respite from the community. Victims under 14 years of age are required to be examined by a paediatrician, located at the Cairns Base Hospital; with retrieval often provided by the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS). During the ‘wet season’ remote aboriginal communities such as Kowanyama and Pormpuraaw cannot be accessed by road.

Child safety systems and functions, and Tablelands CPIU response

16. Tablelands CPIU are required to manage and respond to child protection matters reported direct to the QPS by the general community, as well as referrals from the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (**Child Safety**), the Department of Education and Catholic Education Services. Based on the information provided to the Tablelands CPIU, all matters are assessed to determine the risk of harm and relative vulnerability of the children, before a response is prioritised. All responses require planning with available staff and resources. This is a large component of the daily operations of the Tablelands CPIU, which is also required to provide an investigative response to serious criminal investigations where there is no available CIB response, and to assist with other general calls for police services when other resources are not available to assist



Kearin Charles Corcoran



Witness

17. Assessments are conducted by experienced investigators, who determine what criminal offence may have been committed, the level of harm and the vulnerability of the children. Sometimes the referrals lack context and QPS needs to seek further information from the notifier to try to understand the allegation.
18. Where Child Safety has received a notification regarding child protection concerns, they will assign a response time pursuant to their internal policies and procedures. Although a matter may be determined by Child Safety policies and procedures to require a 24-hour response, this does not automatically equate to a 24-hour QPS response. For example, a delay in the QPS assessment process may occur in instances where QPS is obliged to request Notifier information from Child Safety (due to their policy '*Child Protection Act 1999 (CP Act) Section 186A – Identity of Notifier not to be Disclosed*'). A 24-hour QPS response will also consider if the child can be made safe depending on the time of the referral and available staff. It may also include whether the child is engaged at school and whether speaking to the child at school in a neutral environment will provide the best opportunity to gain full disclosures from the child, as per section of the 17 CP Act.
19. In some instances, QPS is the only agency able to respond with urgency, leading to situations where Child Safety finalise their assessment based on information obtained by QPS during our investigation. The concern with this approach is that QPS investigations are conducted for a different purpose to those undertaken by Child Safety.
20. Conversely, there are also instances where QPS cannot meet the response time assigned by Child Safety, and in such circumstances QPS will inform them. Where resourcing does not make it possible to respond within the timeframe allocated by Child Safety, or where QPS' assessment of urgency differs, QPS will nonetheless do their best to respond as quickly as possible bearing in mind the relative priority of the complaint and the risk to the child. In circumstances where QPS do not respond within 24 hours, QPS will notify Child Safety to ensure they are able to progress any risk-mitigation strategies they may determine as necessary (for example, safety planning).
21. Following assessment, the investigation phase commences. Investigators must identify the best opportunity to speak with the victim in circumstances that are most likely to result in the victim providing relevant disclosures. This might involve (for example) coordinating

the safety of the child until they can be spoken to at school without the presence of a parent or suspect.

22. The Tablelands CPIU maintains a strong working relationship with the Far North Queensland Child Safety Service Centre Enhanced Intake & Assessment Team (**I&A Team**). Through effective communication and joint planning, the Tablelands CPIU is able to provide assistance and facilitate support for the I&A Team in circumstances where the CPIU is not immediately available, or where a general duties presence is required for safety reasons. Although the I&A Team has historically been based in Cairns, they have recently established staff on the Tablelands. This development has significantly improved response times and enhanced the overall effectiveness of service delivery.
23. In contemporary policing, mobile electronic devices feature regularly and there is a significant time impost to download and analyse data, if evidence is available. With respect to CPIU investigations, there can often be considerable work undertaken in extracting and assessing high volumes of data, where at times the outcome may be either no offence is identified, or insufficient evidence is obtained to support the commencement of a prosecution. Further, during an investigation CPIU investigators will also address any child protection concerns identified and ensure the safety needs of the child and family are met. This is another time consuming and resource intensive function, which may include referring children and families to support services which are not necessarily readily available in the locality where the family resides.

Sorry Business

24. The Tablelands CPIU operational area includes several First Nations communities. At times, sorry business can impact upon community engagement and time frames for investigations.
25. Sorry Business is an important cultural practice within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, which includes the funeral but also aspects of the mourning period, family and community, ceremony, travel and respect, for which there is no defined timeframe.
26. It is not uncommon in our area of operation to have investigations affected by Sorry Business, and there is no specific time when this will end. Children often accompany

parents to other localities for Sorry Business. Sometimes parents and children may stay in other areas for an extended period. This can lead to delays with the investigation, and the necessity to negotiate contact with the child or families whilst acknowledging the cultural importance of Sorry Business. In my experience QPS staff use their best endeavours their best to respect this period, whilst balancing the risks to the child.

Child Safety After Hours support

27. In my experience, as Child Safety do not provide casework on a 24/7 service delivery model (business hours), acknowledging the After-Hours and Intake services operate differently to case workers, it is common to be provided with Child Safety referrals late on a Friday afternoon, matters which would otherwise be dealt with by Child Safety without QPS involvement. This includes cases where orders have been made requiring children to be located and taken to pre-arranged placements, or serving respondent parents with court orders obtained by Child Safety as the Department had been unable to effect service.
28. Similarly, after hours referrals from Child Safety task QPS with following-up children and families based on their assessment. While Child Safety After-Hours has a dedicated police-only phone line, there can be delays in being able to speak with an After-Hours staff member in a timely manner.
29. In some instances, Child Safety request assistance for “Safety Plans”, which are written agreements with the person responsible for the relevant children requiring them to agree to certain conditions therefore avoiding the need for removal until an assessment and investigation can be completed.
30. Often the QPS then become responsible for supporting the risk assessment by acting as a conduit between the After-Hours team and the family. This can often lead to the QPS conducting our own investigation into potential criminal offences, and any identified child protection concerns.
31. QPS are also called to assist after hours with children in care, in circumstances where they are absent from their placement and/or want to return to their placement. This can lead to multiple QPS sections attempting to co-ordinate or organise transport, impacting on resources.

I make this statement of my own free will believing its contents to be true and correct.

Dated



5TH

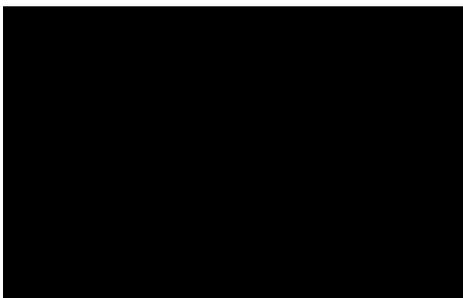
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SEPTEMBER

2025.



Kearin Charles Corcoran



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Page 8 of 8



WITNESS