



Francisca's story

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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.

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My name is Francisca, and I am a former Child Safety staff member.

I am writing to raise significant concerns regarding the governance, transparency, and accountability of how complaints are managed by the Department of Child Safety.

While the Department's official website provides a framework for handling complaints, in practice this system lacks robustness, transparency, and effectiveness. It fails to provide confidence that complaints are managed with the seriousness and impartiality that vulnerable children and families deserve.

Complaints Handling and Dismissal of Concerns

I am personally aware of multiple individuals who have attempted to lodge complaints at their local Child Safety Service Centre, only to have their concerns ignored or summarily dismissed. In many cases, Centre management have actively deflected attention away from staff conduct and instead questioned the behaviour or credibility of the parent or carer raising the issue.

Even when complaints have been escalated to regional offices or raised with local Members of Parliament or the Minister, they have not been taken seriously. This reflects a broader culture where internal accountability appears weak, and community concerns are disregarded.

Culture of Superiority and Power Imbalance

There is a pervasive culture within Child Safety that prioritizes authority and control over genuine engagement and child-centred practice. Parents, carers, and even partner agencies are often treated with condescension or suspicion, rather than as allies in the protection and welfare of children.

Bullying behaviour from Child Safety Officers is a common experience, and there is a widespread perception that the child's best interests are secondary to procedural compliance and staff convenience. Despite the existence of oversight mechanisms, such as Community Visitors from the Office of the Public Guardian, Child Safety staff frequently ignore guidance from these and other professionals, including medical practitioners and partner agencies.

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The system often treats children as "cases" rather than individuals with needs, relationships, and emotional wellbeing.

Parents' Experience

There is currently no independent or accessible mechanism for parents to request a meaningful review of decisions made under the Child Protection continuum. When reviews are conducted, they are typically internal and result in the original decision being upheld without genuine reconsideration.

Parents who request a change in their assigned Child Safety Officer (CSO)—even when raising serious concerns—are routinely denied. The system is structured in a way that leaves many parents feeling powerless and set up to fail. Inconsistent decision-making is a recurring problem, and accountability is minimal.

Carers' Experience

Carers too often experience fear of retaliation if they raise complaints or concerns about Child Safety staff. Many report being unable to contact their assigned CSO or receiving little to no notice for home visits. Communications are frequently unreturned, and guidance regarding critical processes is vague or absent.

One carer I am aware of endured a series of short-notice and unannounced home visits, as well as unanswered phone calls and emails. When the child in their care was admitted to hospital, the carer received no support or instruction from Child Safety about the appropriate protocol. The Department was unaware of the hospitalisation for several days. Following this, the carer was warned that a "critical incident" had occurred because they failed to inform Child Safety—despite the lack of prior guidance. The carer now fears a potential Standard of Care review and the removal of the child, who has been in their care for most of the child's life.

There are also instances where children are removed from long-term carers with no warning or communication. The relationship between carers and Child Safety is tenuous and often fear-driven, particularly because carers know the Department holds disproportionate power and the Queensland Foster and Kinship Care (QFKC) body has limited authority to support them in serious disputes.

Kinship Carer Example

I would like to bring to the Commission's attention a concerning incident involving a kinship carer. In this case, a regional Child Safety Service Centre acted on a request from a coastal Centre to remove five children from their grandmother—who had been their long-term kinship carer—due to a decision in the Magistrates Court.

The children were placed with a parent who had minimal involvement in their lives for several years. The grandmother received no prior notice or communication about the removal. The children were collected directly from their school and daycare by Child Safety Officers. The trauma caused to these children, who were abruptly

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removed from a stable and loving environment, was profound. This carer had been a strong advocate for the children and acted in their best interests, yet she was excluded from the decision-making process entirely.

Conclusion

The current complaints and oversight framework within Child Safety is failing children, families, and carers. The Department operates with minimal external accountability, and there are serious cultural and systemic issues that must be addressed:

- Complaints are routinely ignored or dismissed.
- Internal cultures of superiority, power misuse, and bullying are widespread.
- Genuine concerns from parents, carers, and professionals are minimised or ignored.
- Children are being removed from placements without transparency or due process.
- There is no effective, independent mechanism for reviewing decisions or holding Child Safety accountable.

I respectfully urge the Commission to investigate these issues thoroughly and to recommend the establishment of independent, transparent, and trauma-informed oversight mechanisms to ensure the voices of children, carers, and families are heard—and acted upon.

Sincerely,

Francisca.