

# Child Safety Commission of Inquiry



## Lacy'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.

If you would like support, please visit the Commission's [Contact & Support page](#) or reach out to a trusted person or a relevant support service.

---

My name is Lacy, and I have been a foster carer in Queensland for more than ■ years.

I am submitting this document as part of the Child Protection System Inquiry to share my personal experiences, insights, and concerns based on over two decades of fostering. My goal is to highlight systemic issues within Child Safety and to propose constructive suggestions for reform that prioritise *the best interests of children* and better support carers.

### 1. About Me

I began fostering with a deep commitment to providing safe, loving, and stable homes for children in need. Over the years, I have experienced both the incredible rewards and growing frustrations that come with the role.

While I remain passionate about caring for children, the current system has become increasingly disheartening. If I were entering the system today, I would walk away. The culture within Child Safety is bureaucratic, dismissive, and often critical of carers rather than collaborative.

Carers like my husband and me have decades of collective knowledge that should be valued, yet we are treated as though our opinions are irrelevant. Some caseworkers are wonderful, but overall, the system lacks respect, empathy, and consistency.

We need recognition, understanding, and support—not judgment or neglect. At present, it feels as if common sense has disappeared and accountability within the system is almost non-existent. Too often, decisions seem driven by policy rather than human compassion or genuine child-centered care.

### 2. Permanency

# Child Safety Commission of Inquiry



True permanency in Queensland’s child protection system is extremely difficult to achieve. While PCOs (Permanent Care Orders) and LTGOs (Long-Term Guardianship Orders) exist, obtaining these outcomes is challenging, and there is growing concern that such orders are increasingly revoked.

Children cannot thrive while living in fear of being moved. Two of the children in my care, aged ■ and ■, have been with me for ■ years. It took eight years to secure their PCOs. The ■-year-old, after years of broken promises and instability, now struggles deeply with trust and emotional security and a long list of diagnoses including ADHD, ASD, BPD and ASPD.

Once the department determines a child will not return to their biological family, Child Safety should transfer management of the case. Long-term stable placements should be managed by fostering agencies or a restructured Adoption and Permanency Service, allowing Child Safety to focus on intervention and crisis care, which is its core purpose.

The path to obtaining a PCO for my children was an extremely distressing process, marked by broken promises and unnecessary delays. There was little to no accountability for the mistakes made by Child Safety. As you can imagine, this eight-year process involved a significant amount of information and could easily form a submission of its own. I am happy to provide a detailed timeline and outline of the challenges faced at a later stage if it would assist in achieving better outcomes for long-term stability and future policy improvements.

### **3. Early Intervention**

Early intervention is essential to breaking generational cycles of trauma and neglect. Unfortunately, in Queensland, the system remains reactive rather than proactive.

Iceland offers a powerful example of effective child protection. Their focus on early intervention, education, and integrated family services has made them a global leader in child wellbeing. By contrast, Queensland often prioritises reunification to gather “evidence” instead of prioritising safety.

The principle of “*the best interests of the child*” has been lost. While reunification may be the right outcome for some families, it cannot be the default outcome for all. Forced reuniting often fails and leads to deeper trauma. Prevention through education and early family support—starting from early childhood education—would help families before crises occur and teach children about safety, emotions, and self-worth. A truly child-focused system listens to children, prioritises their needs, and supports parents simultaneously rather than sacrificing one for the other.

# Child Safety Commission of Inquiry



## 4. If I Were the Child Safety Minister for a Day

If given the opportunity to lead reform, I would implement the following systemic changes:

1. Amend the Child Protection Act: Align the Act to child-first principles rather than reunification-based directives.
2. Employment as a Reunification Requirement: Require parents to hold a job, training, or volunteer position before children can return home, promoting stability and responsibility.
3. Cross-Role Experience:
  - a. CSOs should complete short-term foster care placements to gain firsthand understanding.
  - b. Carers should experience the CSO role on a short-term basis to foster collaboration and empathy.
4. Recognition and Celebration of Carers: Reinstate appreciation events, calls of gratitude, and recognition programs. Simple gestures of thanks would mean a great deal.
5. Professionalise Foster Care: Transition fostering into a paid, professional career with training, superannuation, leave entitlements, and trauma support.
6. Transfer Long-Term Case Management: Allow agencies to manage stable long-term placements, freeing Child Safety staff to handle crisis intervention.
7. Prioritise LTGO/PCO Orders: Make permanency the first option for suitable placements.
8. Introduce Shared Care Options: Allow carers and parents to share care when possible, maintaining children's family connections.
9. Retention over Recruitment: Focus on keeping experienced carers and staff by improving working conditions and respect rather than solely recruiting new ones.
10. Financial Support Review:
  - a. Reassess payment rates relative to the true cost of raising a child.
  - b. Allow carers to operate under ABNs for legitimate expense claims.
11. Remove Means Testing: Stop means testing for Family Tax Benefit and related payments for carers.
12. Reinstate the Guiding Principle: Bring back "*the best interests of the child*" as the system's foundation.

## 5. First Nations Children

This area requires respect, verification, and sensitivity.

# Child Safety Commission of Inquiry



My husband identifies as Aboriginal, a fact he disclosed to the department many times before it was finally acknowledged. This delay was distressing and unnecessary.

We currently care for two children whose parents claim Aboriginal heritage but cannot substantiate it. Yet, Child Safety continues to enforce cultural principles without evidence, which risks confusion and harm.

Cultural identity is vital, but accurate identification is equally important. Proper research, consultation, and community engagement must be prioritised so that children develop a genuine, secure connection with their heritage.

## **6. Conclusion**

Over my ■ years as a carer, I have witnessed two major inquiries into the child protection system—yet little has changed because recommendations are rarely implemented.

If meaningful reform doesn't occur, carers will continue leaving the system in large numbers, and the future of out-of-home care will be at risk. Without committed carers, we may return to institutional models like orphanages, which would be a devastating step backward.

Foster carers are the heart of this system. We do what we do out of love and compassion, but we also deserve recognition, respect, and genuine support. Above all, we need a system that truly operates *in the best interests of the child*.

Thank you for considering my submission.

I would welcome the opportunity to provide further information or participate in discussions with the Inquiry.