

Child Safety Commission of Inquiry



Rubin'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 am writing as the partner of a mother who, over the past few years, has fought to advocate for and protect her two young children from their biological father's abusive behaviour.

To say that I have been disappointed by systems that supposedly exist to protect victims from abuse would be a profound understatement. To claim that my grievances stem from disagreeable judgements would erroneously imply that any fair and due process has taken place. When discussing systemic failure of this nature the elephant in the room is that the degree of dysfunction present within the Department of Child Safety is not an isolated phenomena - *it permeates every corner of the ecosystem intended to protect victims from abuse*. In many cases the status quo not only fails to protect, but it also actively affords a platform from which abusers may punish and further traumatise victims. In my observation, sclerotic workplace culture(s) underpin the maladaptive attitudes of influential individuals and critical decision-makers, leaving processes vulnerable to manipulation and acts of bad faith. Chaos and dysfunction are capitalised on to evade and displace accountability.

In matters of victim protection, of notably the protection of vulnerable children, from abuse it is inarguably unacceptable for a society to ignore such shortcomings. In my belief, this transcends an argument of moral consensus - *it poses an existential threat to the fabric of society*. We are raising future generations who, on one hand, are fed social and educational narratives advocating empathy, emotional awareness, and community trust, yet on the other hand are ignored, gaslit and punished for speaking out against abusive behaviour. What message does this send? As a first-hand witness to the psychological impact this has, I am deeply concerned. Victims are learning that they cannot trust authority; that mechanisms of support are at best ornamental, and at worst dangerous. The sad truth is that I am unable to, in good faith, counter such logic.

In far too many cases systemic dysfunction, such as is ever-present in the Department of Child Safety, act as a force multiplier for systems abuse. This is at a level where it is not simply a question of poor judgement to be remedied through training or workflow adjustment, it is a question of whether the roles and responsibilities of involved persons *are even being performed*. Irrefutable evidence and deductive reasoning are discarded in favour of pathways of least resistance. The genuine wellbeing of children is ignored in favour of career posturing and cognitive biases. Systemic abuse occurs across a '*death-by-a-thousand-cuts*' model, where weak points are identified and exploited by abusers; where each manifest failure is intentionally utilised to cultivate and reinforce a false narrative to be

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weaponised against victims. Such behaviour is, in my opinion, often actively enabled by parties that stand to profit from the status quo. At best these systems have become unknowing tools of abuse, at worst they have become active participants in an industry of misery and destruction.

I write this statement as a call to action, a plea to any individual or group capable of putting an end to this madness. I write with the weight of almost-certainty that in a decade's time someone else will be making the same plea, as others have made decades before me.

"Stupidity is a more dangerous enemy of the good than malice. One may protest against evil; it can be exposed and, if need be, prevented by use of force. Evil always carries within itself the germ of its own subversion in that it leaves behind at least a sense of unease in human beings. Against stupidity we are defenseless." - Dietrich Bonhoeffer