



CHILD SAFETY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY CAIRNS PUBLIC HEARING

LIST OF ISSUES

Below is a list of the issues that the Commission intends to explore at its public hearing in Cairns. These issues have emerged from the Commission's early interrogation of the [terms of reference](#), the public engagement and scoping work it has conducted both in Brisbane and regional Queensland to date, and its review of submissions received to date from interested parties. This list may be amended in advance of the Cairns hearing. Other issues may also arise in the running of the hearing.

The Commission invites submissions on the below issues in the context of the region of Far North Queensland. Submissions are sought to inform the work of the Commission generally, and to assist it to focus its evidence at the Cairns hearing on pressing regional issues. Any such submission should be provided to the Commission via its [website](#) or by email to info@childsafetyinquiry.qld.gov.au, by 4pm, **Monday 25 August 2025**.

PLEASE NOTE: The below is not a comprehensive list of all the matters that arise from the terms of reference, or all the matters into which the Commission will inquire, either through public hearings in locations throughout Queensland or otherwise. The below matters reflect the emerging issues, concerns and tensions that have arisen in the initial stages of the Commission's work and warrant being explored and scrutinised in public. This list may be amended prior to or during the Cairns Hearing

A. REGIONAL CHILD SAFETY CHALLENGES

1. What are the particular challenges facing participants in the child safety system in the Far North Queensland region?
2. What are the perspectives of children and young people in Far North Queensland who are, or have been, in state care within this region.

B. CARMODY IMPLEMENTATION

3. The extent to which the recommendations made in the *Taking Responsibility: A Roadmap for Queensland Child Protection* final report (**Carmody Inquiry**) have been implemented and the impact any such implementation has had on the child safety system in Queensland.

C. INCREASE IN THE NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN, AND THE COST OF, THE CHILD SAFETY SYSTEM

4. Since the Carmody Inquiry, what have been the proximate causes of the increases in:
 - a. the number of children in state care, and, in particular, in non-family based residential care?



- b. the increase in the cost of the provision of child safety services, particularly in respect of non-family based residential care and the use of Individualised Placement and Support?
5. Why are these increases (numbers and costs) proportionately larger in Queensland compared to elsewhere in Australia?
6. What are the most effective methods of abating the need for child safety services?

D. DISCONNECT BETWEEN DUTY AND AUTHORITY

7. What are the limits upon carers exercising authority over children and young people in their care, particularly in respect of matters such as decision making, discipline, boundary-setting, containment and the use of restrictive practices generally?
8. What are the practical consequences experienced by carers that arise from the imposition of these limitations?
9. To what extent do these limitations conflict with the goals of:
 - a. reunification; and/or
 - b. nurturing the child or young person so as to prepare them as far as practicable to live a functional, meaningful and healthy life within the Queensland community or elsewhere.
10. What training and other guidance do carers receive about their authority and its limitations?

E. RESIDENTIAL CARE

Under 12s in non-family based residential case

11. For what reasons are non-family based residential care being used as a model to care for children for whom it was not designed (i.e. children under 12, including infants)?
12. Is non-family based residential care being used for placements of children under 12 in circumstances where the relevant contract with a service provider does not allow for the care of children under 12?
13. Has the use of non-family based residential care for children under 12 led to negative outcomes that could likely have been avoided if those children were placed in a family-based model of care?
14. To what extent are children being placed in non-family based residential care because of the unavailability of foster or kinship carers?
15. What does the Department (whether by contractual terms or otherwise) require from a non-family based residential care provider (licensed or unlicensed) in



respect of minimum training and/or skills of its staff who are responsible for the day-to-day care of children under 12 (particularly in respect of infants, toddlers and pre-school aged children), at a licensed or unlicensed non-family based residential care facility?

Licensing arrangements for non-family based residential care providers

16. Are there different standards of care imposed upon service providers depending on their Child Safety licensing status?
17. In what circumstances will the Department use an unlicensed non-family based residential care service provider?
18. Are there additional risks involved in placement of children or young people with unlicensed providers? If so:
 - a. what are the risks that have been identified by the Department;
 - b. how are these risks taken into account in placement decisions; and
 - c. how are these risks practically managed on an everyday basis?
19. What market forces have led to the Department using unlicensed providers to house children and young people in care?

Recruitment for sexual exploitation and criminal activities

20. Is lack of governance and supervision by residential care providers creating opportunities for the recruitment of children and young people for sexual exploitation and/or criminal activities?

F. FAMILY-BASED CARE (FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARE)

21. The factors that are contributing to the decline in the recruitment and retention of foster carers, including:
 - a. Financial impost of being a volunteer;
 - b. Lack of certainty regarding tenure of care, including by reason of the reunification principle;
 - c. Exclusion of foster carers from key decisions about a child in their care, including in respect of removal;
 - d. Experiencing a lack of support (including respite care) from the Department;
 - e. Experiencing a lack of transparency by the Department;
 - f. Experiencing a lack of consultation by the Department;
 - g. Experiencing poor communication and/or 'gate-keeping' of information by the Department;
 - h. Limitations on the ability of foster carers to use restrictive practices;
 - i. Limitations on foster carer's ability to make decisions on behalf of the child;



- j. Fears of reprisal action by the Department if legitimate safety concerns are raised.
22. What foster care recruitment attempts (including pilot programs) have been implemented by the Department since the Carmody Inquiry and with what measure of success?
23. The factors that are contributing to the decline in the recruitment and retention of kinship carers including:
- a. Financial impost of being a volunteer;
 - b. Advanced age or ill-health of suitable kin;
 - c. Lack of adequate housing/space;
 - d. Lack of ability to obtain a Blue Card;
 - e. An inability to provide sufficient separation from the individual or individuals who represents the risk to the child or young person which was the proximate cause of the removal of the child or young person;
 - f. Exclusion of kinship carers from key decisions about a child in their care, including in respect of removal;
 - g. Experiencing a lack of support from the Department;
 - h. Experiencing a lack of transparency by the Department;
 - i. Experiencing a lack of consultation by the Department;
 - j. Experiencing poor communication and/or 'gate-keeping' of information by the Department?
 - k. Restrictions on the ability of kinship carers to use restrictive practices;
 - l. Limitations on kinship carer's ability to make decisions on behalf of the child;
 - m. Fears of reprisal action by the Department if legitimate safety concerns are raised.
24. What kinship care recruitment attempts (including pilot programs) have been implemented by the Department since the Carmody Inquiry and with what measure of success?
25. What are the principal reasons for potential kinship carers having their applications for a Blue Card system rejected?

G. THE REUNIFICATION PRINCIPLE

26. Does the prioritisation of the reunification principle contribute or detract from the goal of promoting permanency, long-term stability and security for children and young people in care?



27. What are the challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are placed in care, particularly in regional and remote areas, in maintaining connection to family, country and culture?
28. What are the primary barriers to reunification?
29. Are residential care placements undermining the ability for children or young persons to be reunified with their families?
30. What are the proximate causes of failed reunification?
31. Is reunification being pursued in circumstances where it is not reasonably foreseeable that this goal can be met?
32. Is reunification pursued in circumstances where it is not in the best interests of the child?

H. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Over-representation in the child safety system

33. What are the proximate causes for the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders children and young people in care?
34. Why has the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders children and young people not only failed to abate since the Carmody Inquiry, but, in fact, grown?
35. Which system responses of the Department do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities wish to challenge and what practical system changes do such communities consider are required?
36. What is meant by the term “culturally safe” when used in the context of the provision of child safety services, pathways and processes, and against what criteria is this concept measured by:
 - a. The Department; and
 - b. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and their members?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement Principle

37. What effect is the application (or lack of application) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle (s 5C(2)) having on the outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care?
38. To what extent does the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement Principle conflict with other principles set out in ss 5A to 5BA and, to the extent of any conflict, how does the Department resolve any conflict of priorities?

Delegated authority

39. What effect has the devolving of delegated authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations had on the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care?



I. REMOVAL OF NEWBORN CHILDREN

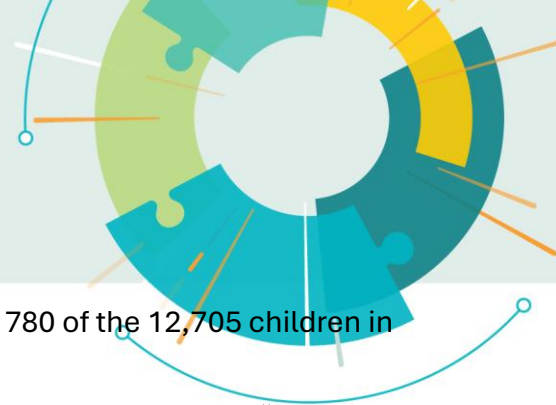
40. What factors, assessed against what criteria, result in the Department seeking temporary assessment orders (or other orders) under the Child Protection Act 1999 to remove newborn children from their mothers?
41. To what extent does any practice of removing a newborn child from the mother act as a disincentive for expectant mothers to seek medical care during pregnancy, and with what consequences?
42. What notice is provided to the mother of a newborn child of the Department's decision to seek orders under the Child Protection Act 1999 for the removal of a newborn child from her care?
43. What support is provided to pregnant mothers, in respect of whom the Department holds child safety concerns, with a view to mitigating child safety risks and avoiding the prospect of removal at birth?
44. What information is given to the mother of a newborn child of any right she has to legal representation in any legal proceedings in respect of the proposed removal of a newborn child from her care?

J. COMPLAINTS, CONCERNS AND FEEDBACK

45. By what processes are the following classes of person able to raise a complaint, concern or feedback (complaint) to the Department:
 - a. children and young people;
 - b. parents of children and young people in care;
 - c. foster and kinship carers; and
 - d. non-family based residential care support workers.
46. What are the experiences of interested parties in raising complaints with the Department?
47. To what extent does the Department consider that complaints of residential care support workers fall outside its remit because:
 - a. These complaints are properly directed at the non-family based residential care provider; and/or
 - b. the Department deems such issues to be workplace issue and thus the jurisdiction of statutory bodies such as WorkSafe.
48. What are the arguments for and against an independent complaints body?

K. "SELF-PLACING" OR MISSING CHILDREN IN CARE

49. What approach does the Department take to children and young people who leave their Department-approved placement?
50. The findings of the Department's emergency audit announced by Minister for the Department, the Honourable Amanda Camm, in July 2025, following reports that the



Department could not account for the whereabouts of 780 of the 12,705 children in state care.

51. Is the Department aware of any links between children and young people “self-placing” and the committing of criminal offences and/or exposure to sexual-exploitation?
52. What limitations are placed on the Department in dealing with children or young people who are “self-placing”?
53. What is the experience of the Queensland Police Service with children and young people who “self-place”, including as a result of Operation Kalahari?

L. MODELS OF CARE

54. What are the current gaps in the models of care, including in respect of:
 - a. ‘secure’ care;
 - b. therapeutic residential care;
 - c. children and young people with complex needs;
 - d. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander safe houses;
 - e. supported independent living;
 - f. reunification homes; and
 - g. respite care.

M. DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS IN THE CHILD SAFETY SYSTEM

55. What does “success” look like for children and young person who have been made the subject of orders under the Child Protection Act 1999 because they did not have a parent who was willing and able to protect them, from the perspective of:
 - a. children and young people in care;
 - b. the Department;
 - c. other government agencies;
 - d. carers
 - e. parents;
 - f. peak bodies and their members;
 - g. oversight agencies.