



Family Inclusion Network

Parents' priorities

*“We’re not here for ourselves.
We’re here for our children”*

General Submission
made by the Family Inclusion Network (FIN)
to the Child Safety Commission of Inquiry

March 2026

Child Safety Commission of Inquiry – General Call for Submissions

Parents' priorities

“We’re not here for ourselves. We’re here for our children”

In partnership with the Family Inclusion Network (FIN)

March 2026

(Acknowledgement – the title for our Submission is a quote from a founding parent-member of the Queensland Parents Advisory Committee. It is permanently illustrated in the [Charter of Rights for Parents](#). It is a sentiment that still needs to be repeated.)

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List of Recommendations – Family Inclusion Network (FIN)

Below is a further list of our recommendations relevant to the Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry.

Please also note Recommendations in **three (3) other Submissions** regarding:

- the Litigation System
- the Complaints System
- the Residential Care system

Recommendations – Parent Survey – page 10

1. The departmental 2025 Survey of Parents **should be published** on the Department’s website for ongoing comparison.
2. The Commission of Inquiry should consider the departmental 2025 Survey of Parents findings, and **use the findings as a foundational lens** through which to consider its discoveries and recommendations. (Note – this survey is distinct from the QFCC parent survey from 2023.)
3. Periodically re-conduct the departmental **Survey of Parents involved in the Child Safety system** – using the tool, methods and suggested next steps as developed collaboratively with parents between 2023 and 2025.

Recommendations – Solutions suggested by parents – see page 12

4. Continue the embedded, ongoing statewide **parents’ advisory committee** (the Queensland Parents Advisory Committee since 2019).
5. **Fully implement the Charter of Rights for Parents** involved with the child protection system in Qld (2022), by including it in relevant legislation, policies and procedures.
6. Continue mandatory, **parent-led training for new CSOs** (that began in 2024) with commensurate recurrent funding.
7. Prioritise **“Early support & resourcing” for families** that is early and ongoing, and that is **trauma-informed** (eg. resourcing, practical in-home support, and specialist services incl. **DFV, housing, health, disability...**)
[Parent Priority 1]

8. **Mandate legal representation for parents** with improved legal processes including mandatory, skilled legal professionals for parents **from start to finish + ongoing**. (eg. the *interdisciplinary law offices, NYC* – lawyers in an interdisciplinary team that also includes social workers and parents with lived experience)
[Parent Priority 2]

Refer specifically to the detailed Recommendations in the 2024 and 2026 Submissions from the Family Inclusion Network (FIN) – regarding the litigation system.

February 2026

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-CP-Litigation-Submission-Jan-2026-FINAL.pdf>

August 2024 URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/FIN-CP-Litigation-Review-Parent-Consultation-Report-2024.pdf>

9. **Improve mechanisms for accountability** including the (above Recommended) implementation of the *Charter of Rights for Parents*; the (separately Recommended) overhaul of the *Complaints system*; and the (above Recommended) continuation of the *Annual parent survey* begun in 2025 (see page 10).
[Parent Priority 3]

Refer specifically Recommendations in the 2023 and 2026 Submissions from the Family Inclusion Network (FIN) regarding the Complaints System.

August 2025

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/images/FINAL-Inquiry-Complaints-FINseq.pdf>

January 2023

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/Parents-Views-on-Child-Safety-Complaints-Process.pdf>

10. **Paid parent advocates**. Parents with lived experience of the child protection system are a hidden support resource for other parents and families. We recommend the **creation of a statewide network of parents working as systems and individual advocates**, as part of interdisciplinary teams.
[Parent Priority 4]

As per the Recommendation from Micah Projects (2026) – from page 23 – this implementation must **include training, support, supervision and employment pathways for lived-experience peer-workers and/or advocates**.

Recommendations – ‘Early support and resourcing’ for families – see page 17

11. **Significantly increase investment in Family Support and Specialised Support** services that:
- recognise poverty and ‘cost of living’ pressures
 - include flexible resourcing to help families
 - include in-home outreach

- are specialised support services (not simply information and referral services)
- are available for all families – particularly if they have experienced the removal of a child/ren and are currently experiencing Child Protection Litigation processes
- two-Generational (for the parents and the children – separately and together)
- multi-disciplinary – from within a ‘Child and Family Hubs’ – multidisciplinary mean integrated investment and commitment across government – including Families, Child Safety, Housing, Health, Education and Employment – providing
 - Supportive housing for families
 - Family support and intensive family support services
 - Specialist Domestic Violence Services
 - Specialist multi-disciplinary services for young parents
 - Therapeutic services for individuals and children

Recommendations – Reunification

12. Fully commit to the Child Protection Act’s principle that **family (and therefore reunification) must be the focus of the child protection system** and the litigation model. Also to use the **‘least intrusive’ options**, and to provide families with post-reunification support so the family can heal from their experience.
13. After a child is removed - **parents need support to process the trauma and to then begin to implement the various requirements placed on them** in order to have their child returned. This requires a **specialised reunification program** provided by specialised reunification workers in the community sector.
14. Provide therapeutic services – for both child and parent – to **understand and respond to the emotional impacts and consequences** of children being removed (and reunified).
15. Regularly **publish detailed performance data in relation to reunification**.

Recommendations – Parents unique perspective recognised with a statewide peak body – see page 20

16. Parents currently experiencing the Child Safety system are the only stakeholders without permanent, statewide representation. Parents should be recognised as a central stakeholder – and comparative support should be afforded them. A **parents-in-partnership, non-government statewide peak body should be established**. Note, however, parents are not a homogenous group: **parents who have experienced the initial intervention of Child Safety first-hand (and sometimes the removal of their child or children) are a specific and unique group**.

Introduction

Currently there is a significant **imbalance of power** in the processes that remove children.

Many consider the child protection system's defining characteristic is 'anti parent'. That is, **parents have been cast as the enemy or the pariah**, while the state and carers are seen as the child's saviour and protector.

FIN acknowledges and values our past and present relationships with allies and peaks in this area of work: the CREATE Foundation, the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP), Queensland Foster and Kinship Care, QCOSS, and PeakCare. As well as other deeply appreciated allies including the Queensland Families and Child Commission, the Queensland Disability Network, Community Living Association, the University of Queensland (particularly Professor Karen Healy), and other significant departmental and sector allies.

We are grateful for the inimitable leadership of Karyn Walsh, and the decades of nurturing and mentorship within our organisation, Micah Projects Ltd.

After 20 years of advocacy, the Family Inclusion Network (FIN) would like to think this attitude and culture is changing.

We have seen great advancements since the '[Carmody Inquiry](#)' (*Taking Responsibility: A Roadmap for Queensland Child Protection*) in 2012/2013: The funding of a small systems-advocacy program in Southeast Queensland; the creation and embedding of the statewide Queensland Parents Advisory Committee; and the development of a Charter of Rights for Parents. Unfortunately, the gains slowed. With some exceptions, parents' evidence-based suggestions for improvement have been unheeded over recent years.

Parents' views as a stakeholder in the Child Safety system remain disproportionately low decades on from the Forde Inquiry ([Commission of Inquiry into abuse of children in Institutions in 1999](#)). It is therefore **difficult not to conclude that "the system" holds a firm bias that does not value parents and families as stakeholders in their children's lives.**

As we state often, there are but a small number of stakeholder groups in this system:

- Children and young people
- **Parents and families** *
- The state and its workforce – including contracted workforces
- Carers

Parents have historically been excluded or under-represented. A **renewed "families focus"** in Queensland gives us much cause for optimism.

This time there can be change. We can honour and learn from **the lessons of the past** and partner to unlock the **unique skills and resources parents offer** at all levels.

*“It is an ‘us’ and ‘them’ thing ... but it can be what’s needed.
It was time to get that wake-up call.”*

“They made me step into my power”

“People change...”

*“Maybe we’re the ones! Maybe we’re breaking that cycle,
stopping our children from having the lives we had, or our mother had...”*

(Parents 2018-2025)

Celebrating our impact:

Parents influencing improvements in the system

In Australia, for nearly 20 years, parents, their allies, and Family Inclusion Networks (FINs) have been tirelessly advocating since the **first National FIN Roundtable in Brisbane in 2007**.

While parents remain an under-utilised stakeholder group, we are encouraged by our growing and enduring **shared strength**. Together we continue to patiently and persistently offer unique insights and innovations.

FIN Southeast Queensland (SEQ) first obtained government funding in 2015.

Key deliverables by parents influencing the Child Safety system in Queensland:

- The **Queensland Parents' Advisory Committee** (the QPAC) – established in 2019, parents have since met regularly with the Minister and government executives
- **Charter of Rights for Parents** – parents and FIN co-wrote the Charter with the Department and the Qld Human Rights Commission (2022)
- **Parent Advocacy Training in 2023 and 2025** – training runs for 3 hours a week over 14 weeks. Parents leave feeling empowered and encouraged to contribute in their communities to achieve change
- **Child Safety Officer (CSO) training** – parents co-wrote a training module for all new CSOs that has been co-facilitated by parents **to more than 400 staff** since it began as an unfunded initiative in **July 2024**
- **Students on placement** – parents have held Q&A sessions with **more than 150 students on placement** in two departmental regions (since 2023)
- **Leaders' conversations** – in 2024, parents held Q&A sessions with around **60 departmental Team**
- **Leaders and other emerging leaders** in the Brisbane Moreton Bay Region
- **Inaugural Child Safety Parent Survey** – parents and FIN joined a working group to create, promote, and analyse the first survey of its kind in Australia (2024-25)
- **Casual employment of Parent Advocates in systems advocacy** – since 2023, a small pool of casual workers with lived experience have been employed in systems advocacy work. Examples of their work include delivering a workshop to 21 workers about the Charter of Rights, speaking at national and international conferences, and facilitating monthly 'parent chats'
- **Stakeholder for consultations and reviews** – more than 60 parents have contributed to consultations including Child Protection Litigation Model (2021 and 2024), Residential Care (2023), improving intake (2021), case plans (2022), family time (2024), and legislative reviews such as the sunset review of Child Protection Regulation (2023), and Child Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (2020)

The survey of parents experiencing the Child Safety system

“I think it’s so important that the survey is pushed as hard as possible to the commission...” (Parent 2025)

One of the most promising and inclusive initiatives of the past three years was the opportunity to co-create and embed **regular surveying of the views and experiences of parents involved in the Child Safety system**.

FIN heartily congratulates the Queensland Department for this initiative: to seek parents’ views and for committing resources to a sophisticated, independent and co-designed survey-process developed with the **Social Research Centre**.

Social Research Centre: <https://srcentre.com.au/>

Findings of Parent Survey

In late 2025, the findings of the inaugural Parent Survey were presented to, and discussed with, a working group that included parent members of FIN and the QPAC. These findings have not yet been made public. It is therefore not appropriate for FIN to describe them in this Submission. (We imagine the Commission will have sought the Parent Survey findings report from the Department; we make this an explicit recommendation in this Submission.)

Our recommendation is that the Commission use the findings as a foundational lens through which to consider its discoveries and its recommendations.

Scope and aims of the Parent Survey

The *Queensland Child Safety Parent Survey* was open to parents 18 years and over who had been involved in child protection matters within the last 5 years.

The Parent Survey aimed to:

- provide valuable insights into the experiences of parents in the child protection system
- inform policy decisions; and
- drive positive changes for parents and children in the system

The survey was structured around the *Charter of Rights for parents involved with the child protection system in Queensland*. It was designed to:

- allow parents to anonymously and safely express their views and opinions on the child protection process
- assess whether parents felt adequately informed about their rights, responsibilities and available support services as per the Charter of rights; and
- identify systemic issues that may impact negatively on the rights of parents and their ability to actively participate in decision making processes

Background and development of the Parent Survey

The idea of a formal survey of parents was first supported by FIN and the Queensland Parents' Advisory Committee (the QPAC) in August 2023. A working group (with FIN parent members and allies) commenced seven months later, in March 2024. After an 18-month process, the inaugural survey was launched on 24 February 2025. The survey closed on 30 June 2025 with 210 responses. The final report was presented to the internal working group (and its parent-members) in late 2025.

"I am so grateful to be a part of this important work. Proud to have been a part of this process and thank you for the opportunity!" (Parent 2025)

Lessons learned and proposed next steps for Parent Survey

The Department's 'closure report' cited the following lessons learned and suggested next steps:

- Use the findings to inform service and program improvements [regardless of the publication of survey findings]
- The co-design process with an independent agency worked well, fostering trust and collaboration
- Continue the partnership with FIN and the QPAC
- Consider the next iteration of survey at the time of approval
- Future surveys should include qualitative approaches such as interviewing parents and options to address gaps in representation
- Consider including parents under 18 years in future surveys

Recommendations – Parent Survey

1. The departmental 2025 Survey of Parents **should be published** on the Department's website for ongoing comparison.
2. The Commission of Inquiry should consider the departmental 2025 Survey of Parents **findings**, and **use the findings as a foundational lens** through which to consider its discoveries and recommendations.
(Note – this survey is different from the QFCC parent survey from 2023.)
3. Periodically re-conduct the departmental **Survey of Parents involved in the Child Safety system** – using the tool, methods and suggested next steps as developed collaboratively with parents between 2023 and 2025.

ISSUES experienced by parents | and parents' PRIORITIES for change

Over the years, FIN has worked with parent-members on many specific consultations and topic-specific projects. More broadly, FIN maintains a **list of the key issues and experiences as described by parents** consistently. The following list was developed in 2018, and last updated in consultation with parents in 2024.

Key issues experienced by parents

1. Lack of **respect**. No relationship is built with me
2. **Loss of identity**, othering: losing my lifelong role as a parent
3. Lack of **support** and resources
4. **Information** about me is inaccurate or misinterpreted
5. **Information** about my child is inaccurate or misinterpreted
6. **Timeframes** are excessively long and confusing
7. System is really **confusing**
8. **Legal support** and resources not available
9. Lack of **accountability, responsibility, and transparency**
10. Poor and vague **communication**

Parents' solutions for system improvement

To address these issues, FIN and parent-members continue to advocate focused on key priorities that are informed by parents lived-experience, as well as other evidence and innovation in Queensland, across Australia and internationally.

FIN takes the opportunity of this Submission to the Inquiry to re-iterate these suggestions.

The following are “givens” already achieved by FIN and parent-members. It is vital that these remain part of the system in the future and are commensurably resourced:

“The givens...”

- An embedded, ongoing statewide **parents' advisory committee** (2019)
- Co-developed a **Charter of Rights for Parents** involved with the child protection system in Qld (2022)
- Mandatory, **parent-led training for new CSOs** (2024) that is *recurrently funded*.

and also...

1. **Early support and resourcing**
 - Early and ongoing support that is **trauma-informed** (eg. resourcing, practical in-home support, and specialist services incl. **DFV, housing, health, disability...**)
2. **Mandatory legal representation**
 - Improved legal processes including mandatory, skilled legal professionals for parents **from start** to finish + ongoing. (eg. the *interdisciplinary law offices, NYC* – lawyers in an interdisciplinary team that also includes social workers and parents with lived experience)
3. **Improved mechanisms for accountability**
 - Charter of Rights for Parents implementation regularly reviewed
 - Complaints system improvements
 - Annual parent survey
4. **Paid parent advocates**
 - Parents are seen as stakeholders – seen, heard, and regarded
 - Systems advocates, with lived experience, working as a statewide network
 - Individual advocates, with lived experience, as part of an interdisciplinary team team that supports parents

Source: Family Inclusion Network 2018 and 2024

[Shared Strength:](#)

[Parents taking their place at the table](#) – **December 2019**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/201910-SharedStrength-online.pdf>

Key Issues

(Updated 2024)



- 1 Lack of **respect**. No relationship is built with me
- 2 **Loss of identity**, othering: losing my lifelong role as a parent
- 3 Lack of **support** and resources
- 4 **Information** about me is inaccurate or misinterpreted
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- 6 **Timeframes** are excessively long and confusing
- 7 System is really **confusing**
- 8 **Legal support** and resources not available
- 9 Lack of **accountability, responsibility, and transparency**
- 10 Poor and vague **communication**

Parent Priorities

(Updated 2024)

The “givens” achieved

- An embedded, ongoing statewide **parents’ advisory committee** (2019)
- Co-developed a **Charter of Rights for Parents** involved with the child protection system in Qld (2022)
- Commenced mandatory, **parent-led training for new Child Safety Officers** (2024)



Our suggestions for improvement

1. **Early support & resourcing**
 - » Early and ongoing support that is **trauma-informed** (e.g. resourcing, practical in-home support, and specialist services incl. DFV, housing, health, disability...)
2. **Mandatory legal representation**
 - » Improved legal processes including mandatory, skilled legal professionals for parents from start to finish + ongoing. (e.g. the interdisciplinary law offices, NYC – lawyers in an interdisciplinary team that also includes social workers and parents with lived experience)
3. **Improved mechanisms for accountability**
 - » *Charter of Rights for Parents* implementation regularly reviewed
 - » Complaints system improvements
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4. **Paid parent advocates**
 - » Parents are seen as stakeholders – seen, heard, and regarded
 - » Systems advocates, with lived experience, working as a statewide network
 - » Individual advocates, with lived experience, as part of an interdisciplinary team that supports parents

Recommendations – Solutions suggested by parents for system improvement

4. Continue the embedded, ongoing statewide **parents' advisory committee** (the Queensland Parents Advisory Committee since 2019).

5. **Fully implement the Charter of Rights for Parents** involved with the child protection system in Qld (2022), by including it in relevant legislation, policies and procedures.

6. Continue mandatory, **parent-led training for new CSOs** (that began in 2024) with commensurate recurrent funding.

7. Prioritise **'Early support and resourcing' for families** that is early and ongoing, and that is **trauma-informed** (eg. resourcing, practical in-home support, and specialist services incl. **DFV, housing, health, disability...**)
[Parent Priority 1]

8. **Mandate legal representation for parents** with improved legal processes including mandatory, skilled legal professionals for parents **from start to finish + ongoing**. (eg. the *interdisciplinary law offices, NYC* – lawyers in an interdisciplinary team that also includes social workers and parents with lived experience)
[Parent Priority 2]

Refer specifically to the detailed Recommendations in the 2024 and 2026 Submissions from the Family Inclusion Network (FIN) – regarding the litigation system.

- *February 2026*
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrktt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-CP-Litigation-Submission-Jan-2026-FINAL.pdf>
- *August 2024* URL: <https://d2yuko1qrktt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/FIN-CP-Litigation-Review-Parent-Consultation-Report-2024.pdf>

9. **Improve mechanisms for accountability** including the (above Recommended) implementation of the *Charter of Rights for Parents*; the (separately Recommended) overhaul of the *Complaints system*; and the (above Recommended) continuation of the *Annual parent survey* begun in 2025 (see page 10).
[Parent Priority 3]

Refer specifically Recommendations in the 2023 and 2026 Submissions from the Family Inclusion Network (FIN) regarding the Complaints System.

- *August 2025*
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrktt9v.cloudfront.net/live/images/FINAL-Inquiry-Complaints-FINseq.pdf>
- *January 2023*
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrktt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/Parents-Views-on-Child-Safety-Complaints-Process.pdf>

10. **Paid parent advocates:** Parents with lived experience of the child protection system are a hidden support resource for other parents and families. We recommend the **creation of a statewide network of parents working as systems and individual advocates**, as part of interdisciplinary teams.
[Parent Priority 4]

As per the Recommendation from Micah Projects (2026) – from page 23 – this implementation must **include training, support, supervision and employment pathways for lived-experience peer-workers and/or advocates.**

‘Early support and resourcing’ for families | Parent support IS support for the child

“I rang the department and QPS over 60 times in two months... to start protective parenting... the burnout and problems happen so quickly... and by the time you get to that point, months later – you just can’t anymore. Then they took two undiagnosed children.” (parent, 2025)

“... I asked for support... realising I didn’t quite have the stamina to be everything that my [children] needed. ... I had become our only productive support network. I had the whole world on my shoulders... and when I crumbled underneath it, they took my children away.” (parent, 2022)

A 2023 University of Queensland Study confirmed our experience: that is “Birth parents ... can provide emotional and practical supports for their children. However “beyond attempts at reunification, support for birth parents to build and maintain relationships with their children are rare”.

This scoping review (of programs aimed at developing and supporting birth parents’ relationships with their children in circumstances other than for the purpose of reunification) found **only 12 pertinent studies internationally** (five of which were Australian).

Evidence: Scoping Review of Programs Supporting birth parents’ relationships with children following removal:

Themes | Types of Programs:

1. development of participants’ identities as parents. This is important given that “[f]or many their identity as parents has been significantly challenged and they struggle with how to deal with the loss”
2. incorporation of a strengths or empowerment perspective - peer-based parenting courses
3. recognised the vulnerability of birth parents. ... many times parents have experienced trauma themselves, often lifelong, and are socially and financially marginalised.
4. importance of providing emotional support to birth parents as they navigated the child protection system and re-established their identities as parents of children who had been removed. ... support parents in managing the powerful emotions that were associated with the removal of their children, these emotions include: grief, loss, anger and despair.
5. shared the goal of improving parent–child relationships though they varied in how this was achieved. Only three programs involved working with parents and children together

Healy, Karen; Venables, Jemma; and Walsh, Tamara (2023). doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.106961 [Supporting birth parents’ relationships with children following removal: A scoping review - ScienceDirect](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.106961)

As written, the Queensland Child Protection Act's purpose is family support for the child/children. The Act discusses the best interests of the child, **with their family having primary responsibility for their upbringing**. The Act stipulates that **the family should be supported if a child is removed**.

Despite this legislative requirement, successive governments and administrations have consistently failed to substantively respond to parents' calls for **better early intervention and family support**.

*"It often surprises people to learn that **parents who have had their children removed are not eligible for support services.**"*
(Family Inclusion Network, 2026)

Families' ability to live and thrive with their children is impacted by their access to (or lack of access to) a broad range of services.

The issues faced by families are well known: including access to housing, crisis homelessness services, domestic and family violence services, healthcare, disability support, early years education, support through the education systems, and parental access to education, employment and training.

It is important to note – the community services sector is constrained in its ability to deliver appropriate, flexible support to families because of the number of services in the community, and the constraints places on them.

Recommendations – 'Early support and resourcing' for families

11. Significant increased investment in Family Support and Specialised Support services that:

- recognise poverty and 'cost of living' pressures
- include flexible resourcing to help families
- include in-home outreach
- are specialised support services (not simply information and referral services)
- are available for all families – particularly if they have experienced the removal of a child/ren and are currently experiencing Child Protection Litigation processes
- two-Generational (for the parents and the children – separately and together)
- multi-disciplinary – from within a 'Child and Family Hubs' – multidisciplinary mean integrated investment and commitment across government – including Families, Child Safety, Housing, Health, Education and Employment – providing
 - Supportive housing for families
 - Family support and intensive family support services
 - Specialist Domestic Violence Services
 - Specialist multi-disciplinary services for young parents
 - Therapeutic services for individuals and children

Key Evidence: Parents do not receive support services if children are removed

It often surprises people to learn that parents who have had their children removed are not eligible for support services. They are offered group parenting courses (such as 123 Magic, or Circle of Security) and generally these are the only supports provided by Child Safety or Child Safety-funded NGOs once children have been removed. Parents therefore find themselves alone to source all the services and specialists they need and/or the supports listed on their Case Plan.

Depending on waitlists, some departmentally-funded family support services (eg. Intensive Family Support (IFS) or Family Intervention Service (FIS) may become available on the proviso the family is working towards reunification, or once they have been granted and maintain sufficient regular overnight visits.

The *Child Protection Act 1999* discusses the best interests of the child, with their family having primary responsibility for their upbringing, and the Act stipulates that **the family should be supported if a child is removed.**

Section 5B - ...

f) If a child is removed from their family, **support should be given to the child and the child's family for the purpose of allowing the child to return to the child's family** if the return is in the child's best interests.

Further Section 7 – the **Chief executive's functions** –

(1) For the proper and efficient administration of this Act, the chief executive's functions are—

- (a) providing, or helping provide, **information for parents** and other members of the community about the development of children and their safety needs; and
- (b) providing, or helping provide, **preventative and support services to strengthen and support families** and to reduce the incidence of harm to children; and
- (c) providing, or helping provide, **services to families to protect their children if a risk of harm has been identified**; and
- (d) providing, or helping provide, services for the protection of children and responding to allegations of harm to children; and ...

Source: FIN's 2026 Submission regarding the Litigation Model.

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-CP-Litigation-Submission-Jan-2026-FINAL.pdf>

Parents' unique perspective: We can be a resource for the system

In our experience, parents' advocacy **always** comes from the perspective of **deep love for their children**.

So it is perplexing that many people, at all levels of the system, appear to hold children's rights and "best interests" distinct from, and potentially in opposition to, the interests and needs of their parents and other family members (Ainsworth & Hansen, 2011; Healy, 2020).

We know that children's and parents' human rights are complementary to each other. The pursuit of one particular right without regard to others is self-defeating and destructive. Human rights are not absolute – they can be limited by the rights of others if it's considered reasonable, proportionate, and justifiable.

We all have a human right to family.

For this reason, parents' voices – in the form of embedded and ongoing representation – must feature permanently in the Child Safety **and** the families systems.

Parents should be recognised as the central stakeholder that they are – and comparative support should be afforded them – including a **parents-in-partnership, non-government peak body in statewide form**.

International evidence: Parent advocacy has transformed systems

David Tobis is a leading advocate for change in child protection in the United States. He is the author of "From Pariahs to Partners" (Tobis, 2013); he visited FIN in Australia in 2019.

David Tobis highlights the **numbers of children in state care in New York reduced from 50,000 to 14,000 over 20 years**, largely as a consequence of parent advocacy. This is a vast improvement in the lives of many thousands of children and young people.

In regard to parent participation, he has argued that "initiatives that are genuinely parent led and willing to challenge current systems had the most potential to bring about change. Other initiatives, such as agency led parent advisory groups, will "tweak" the system and improve practice rather than drive fundamental change (Cocks, 2016.)

- Children Australia, 2014. Volume 39 Number 3 p.195. BOOKREVIEW "From Pariahs to Partner"
URL: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/children-australia/article/abs/from-pariahs-to-partnersdavid-tobis-2014/72A73584A7CDAF38B9DF3AFF5C7E52F4>
- Jessica Cocks, 2016. "If a community values it's children, it should cherish their parents. Family inclusion initiatives in child welfare, Churchill Report"
URL: <https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/fellow/jessica-cocks-nsw-2016/>

In regard to peak or representative bodies **parents** are the only stakeholders without permanent, statewide representation in the form of peak body representation. While the Family Inclusion Network (FIN) has been funded for 10 years to provide ‘systems advocacy’, it remains a Brisbane-based program.

FIN parent-members were enthusiastic about the inclusion of the word **“families” in the new government’s portfolio name** and consider that this is an opportunity to include the parent-perspective – particularly the specific and unique **perspective of the parents who experienced the initial intervention (and sometimes the removal of their child or children) by Child Safety first-hand.**

*“As a parent experiencing this system,
I have the right to be treated as an equal —
and nothing more or less.”
(Parent 2022)*

**Queensland continues to be a strong partner nationwide:
Family Inclusion Network Australia (FINA)**

FIN Southeast Queensland is a member of the Australia-wide network of like-programs.

The Family Inclusion Network Australia (FINA) is a small, volunteer-led network of independent groups across Australia. Each state-based group operates a little differently, but all include parents with lived experience of the child protection system.

In our different ways, we work with parents and families involved with (or affected by) child protection systems. (Sometimes called child welfare, child safety, docs, welfare, DCJ, etc.)

The following are contacts for different parts of Australia:

- Southeast Qld - [Family Inclusion Network South East Queensland](#)
- Hunter region, NSW - [Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter](#)
- Victoria - [Family Inclusion Network Victoria](#)
- Western Australia - [Family Inclusion Network Western Australia](#)
- South Australia - [Home - The Reily Foundation](#)

Recommendations – Reunification

12. There must be full commitment to the Child Protection Act’s principle that **family (and therefore reunification) must be the focus of the child protection system** and the litigation model. Also to use the **‘least intrusive’ options**, and to provide families with post-reunification support so the family can heal from their experience.

13. Immediately after a child is removed - **parents need support to process the trauma and to then begin to implement the various requirements placed on them** in order to have their child returned. This requires a specialised reunification program provided by specialised reunification workers in the community sector.
14. Therapeutic services should be provided – for both child and parent – to **understand and respond to the emotional impacts and consequences** of children being removed (and reunified).
15. The department should regularly **publish detailed performance data in relation to reunification.**

Recommendations – Parents unique perspective recognised with a statewide peak body

16. Parents currently experiencing the Child Safety system are the only stakeholders without permanent, statewide representation. Parents should be recognised as a central stakeholder – and comparative support should be afforded them. A **parents-in-partnership, non-government statewide peak body should be established.**
Note, however, parents are not a homogenous group: **parents who have experienced the initial intervention of Child Safety first-hand (and sometimes the removal of their child or children) are a specific and unique group.**

Micah Projects 2026 Recommendations – Supported by the Family Inclusion Network (FIN)

Below is the collated list of recommendations from Micah Projects that are relevant to the Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry:

History repeating and ‘unfinished business’ (see page [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))

Recommendations

1. Parents, families and children have a human right to family: If children are not able to have contact with their family (for a short or long period), they (and their family) are entitled to **written information about the decision, and the processes that led to it, so that everyone can clearly understand what occurred and why.**
2. **Support services** (like Lotus Place and others) are required to **support survivors of past removal and historical institutional childhood abuse** to “reclaim identity, heal from trauma, find community, expose injustice, and advocate for systemic change so, together, we might say, 'never again'.”
3. Parents currently experiencing the Child Safety system are the only stakeholders without permanent, statewide representation. **Parents should be recognised as a central stakeholder** – and comparative support should be afforded them. **A statewide peak body for parents experiencing the Child Safety system should be established.**
4. The 2026 Inquiry recommendations should **explicitly consider the 300 existing recommendations from previous reviews and inquiries.** If those recommendations remain evidence-based and fit-for-purpose – and are unfinished – they should be **integrated (alongside a progress report) with the new recommendations.**

The Two-Generation Approach (see page [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#)) |

Child and Family Hubs’ plus in-home outreach work (see page [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))

Recommendation

5. Roll out **multi-disciplinary Child and Family Hubs** across Queensland – using a **‘two-generation’ approach** and including **in-home outreach work.** This would be an integrated investment and commitment across government – including Families, Child Safety, Housing, Health, Education and Employment.

Australia's first pilot of the 'Family Connections' program ([see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**](#))

Recommendation

6. **Extend Australia's first pilot of the 'Family Connections' program** by funding the two sites (in Brisbane and Caboolture) for 2-5 years. This would include:
 - an increase in staffing to enable four (4) practitioners per site
 - one (1) practitioner dedicated to support parents with reunification
 - a showcase for the wider family support networks in Queensland to share practice-use knowledge gained from the Common Assessment Tool; and
 - Maintain the First Nations cultural specialist

'Early Intervention' is the answer. But at the same time – intensive and specialist services are desperately needed ([see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**](#))

Recommendations

7. **Children and families need increased family support services – from 'soft entry' services through to intensive and specialist services** – that is, substantial increases for services and workforces such as:
 - Supportive housing for families
 - Family support and intensive family support services
 - Specialist Domestic Violence Services
 - Specialist multi-disciplinary services for young parents
 - Therapeutic services for individuals and children
8. **The child and family support workforces need access to skilling, support and career paths:** including evidence-based communities of practice, professional development, supervision, and coaching.
9. Address the capacity and capability of the service continuum to **respond when, and from wherever, a person seeks support.**

Poverty – and other vulnerabilities that put families at risk – need interdisciplinary responses ([see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**](#)) | A 'rising tide' does not lift all boats ([see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**](#))

Recommendation

10. Recognise the urgent need to **explicitly support parents and families who experience poverty and/or other vulnerabilities** by allocating explicit investments or initiatives, for example: Establish an 'Early Years Vulnerable Child and Family Investment Fund'; and/or

create a ‘Vulnerable Early Years and Family Wellbeing Unit’; and/or establish a ‘Vulnerable Early Years and Family Wellbeing Centre for Excellence’.

Parents’ experiences of the intersection of the Domestic and Family Violence **and** the Child Protection systems in Queensland (see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**) | “Domestic Violence Exposure:

68% of children in care were exposed to domestic violence” (see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**)

Recommendations

11. Develop a considered plan for ensuring **sufficient specialist DFV support** is available, in an integrated and collaborative manner such as co-location and embedded models with Child Safety, across the continuum of services.
12. Address the capacity and capability of the DFV service continuum to **respond when, and from wherever, a person seeks support.**
13. Enhance the capacity of the Department’s DFV specialist services to –
 - develop and resource explicit practices to **ensure parents are supported in coping with, and recovering from, the impact of DFV and subsequent Child Safety intervention;** and
 - support parents to champion their rights to improve systems** where they are at a disadvantage, including the criminal justice system.
14. Train, support and fund the **parents who have lived-experience of the Child Safety and DFV systems to participate** in the reforms (from co-design through to implementation) by expanding existing groups or programs such as the Family Inclusion Network.
15. Expand the scope of current funded **perpetrator intervention programs to meet the needs of parents, families and their children;** by ensuring that victims advocacy, children’s specialist support, and individual case management occurs with those causing harm. A broader range of options will better meet the needs of children and families than the currently limited, one-size stipulation to “attend a perpetrator program” as a requirement of many Child Safety case plans and conferences.

Peer workers in multi-disciplinary teams – understanding, mentoring, encouraging (see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**)

Recommendation

16. Implement a training, support, supervision and employment pathway for **lived-experience peer-workers and/or advocates.** This is a currently untapped resource to support parents and families experiencing the child protection system. Internationally, multi-disciplinary

teams with parent peer-workers have been a contributing factor in reducing children's time in out-of-home care.

Healing and reunification (see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**)

Recommendations

17. There must be full commitment to the Child Protection Act's principle that **family (and therefore reunification) must be the focus of the child protection system** and the litigation model. Also to use the **'least intrusive' options**, and to provide families with post-reunification support so the family can heal from their experience.
18. Immediately after a child is removed - **parents need support to process the trauma and to then begin to implement the various requirements placed on them** in order to have their child returned. This requires a specialised reunification program provided by specialised reunification workers in the community sector.
19. Therapeutic services should be provided – for both child and parent – to **understand and respond to the emotional impacts and consequences** of children being removed (and reunified).
20. The department should regularly **publish detailed performance data in relation to reunification.**
21. Alongside the [Charter of rights for a child in care \(Child Protection Act 1999\)](#); the [Charter of Rights for Parents involved with the child protection system in Queensland](#) should be **legislated and fully implemented to embed parents' rights.**

Measurement framework, data-driven change, and common assessment tools (see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**)

Recommendations

22. Measure the reform's outcomes using an **established, evidence-based, cross-sector, cross-jurisdictional framework** – like 'The Nest, Australia's wellbeing framework for children and young people'.

23. Seek opportunities in the non-Government sector to **better collaborate using data** to enhance visibility for evidence-based solutions, policies and strategies. For example - [Brisbane Zero Snapshot 2024-25](#) for Families with Children Experiencing Homelessness.

24. Begin **using common language, practices, and tools** (to more effectively match service responses with families' needs). Examples include:

- the QLD DFV Common Risk and Safety Framework
- the Australian Homelessness Vulnerability Triage Tool (AHVTT)
- the Common Assessment Tool being trialled by Family Connections (see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**)

Investing to transform needs significant transition or “hump” funding (see page **Error! Bookmark not defined.**)

Recommendation

25. The system cannot simultaneously “stop doing this” and “start doing that” so explicit transition or “hump” funding is required. Investment and implementation plans must **recognise the true-cost of the collaboration and culture-change activities** necessary for the reform, as well as the true-cost of service-delivery.

Attachment – Papers and Submissions relevant to the Commission

FAMILY INCLUSION NETWORK (FIN) SOUTHEAST QLD

Family Inclusion Network, Southeast Queensland (FIN) is a network of parents and their allies working to improve the child protection and family support system.

FIN brings together parents with lived (and living) experience, with government and non-government agencies, to work collaboratively on policies and issues that affect families experiencing the child protection system.

Below we provide links and copies of some relevant reports and submissions relevant to the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry.

- [Child protection litigation model and the legal process of applying for and making child protection orders](#) – Submission to the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland’s Child Safety System – **February 2026**
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-CP-Litigation-Submission-Jan-2026-FINAL.pdf>
- [Complaints system](#) – Submission to the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland’s Child Safety System – **August 2025**
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/images/FINAL-Inquiry-Complaints-FINseq.pdf>
- [Queensland Human Rights Act 2019](#) – Submission to 2024 review – **August 2024**
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Human-Rights-Act-review-2024-FINAL.pdf>
- [FIN CP Litigation review Parent Consultation Report](#) – Submission to ‘child protection Litigation Model’ Review 2024 – **August 2024**
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/FIN-CP-Litigation-Review-Parent-Consultation-Report-2024.pdf>
- [Queensland Residential Care System Review](#) – Submission to Residential Care Review 2023 – **October 2023**
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/images/FINseq-Submission-Residential-Care-Review-2023.pdf>
- [Sunset Review or child protection Regulation](#) – Submission to Sunset Review of child protection Regulation 2011 – **April 2023**
URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/images/Sunset-Review-of-Child-Protection-Regulation-Submission.pdf>
- [Parents’ Views on Child Safety Complaints Process](#) – FIN Report – **January 2023**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/Parents-Views-on-Child-Safety-Complaints-Process.pdf>

- [‘We should not be punished for having a disability.’ Recommendations for reforms to child protection, Family Services and Disability Systems from Parents with a Disability](#) – Family Inclusion Network Australia, with input from Positive Powerful Parents Self Advocacy Group, submission to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability – **December 2022**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/Fitt-David-FINA-PPP-DRC-Report.pdf>

- [Charter of Rights for Parents involved with the child protection system in Queensland](#) – developed in a partnership between the Family Inclusion Networks (FIN) of Queensland, the Queensland Parents’ Advisory Committee (the QPAC) and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs – **June 2022**

URL: https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/Charter_of_Rights_Parents.pdf

- [Submission on the child protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020](#) – Submission to a Queensland Parliamentary Committee – **August 2020**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/images/2020-submission-CP-Act-adoption-FIN-FINAL.pdf>

- [Parents and the Child Safety system: Input regarding responses to COVID-19 \(Paper No.2\)](#) – FIN report – **April 2020**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-COVID-Paper-No.2-9-April-2020-FINAL.pdf>

- [Shared Strength: Parents taking their place at the table](#) – FIN report – **December 2019**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/201910-SharedStrength-online.pdf>

- [Rethinking Rights and Regulation: towards a stronger framework for protecting children and supporting families](#) – Submission to Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women on the Discussion Paper 2019 – **October 2019**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/Submission-FIN-submission-to-Rethinking-Rights-FINAL.pdf>

- [2018/19 Parent Forums: Experiences of Queensland parents in the child protection system](#) – FIN report – **February 2019**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/Notes-Parent-Forums-v12.pdf>

- [Parents’ Voices: Out-of-Home Care Reforms in Queensland](#) - Brisbane Partnerships (a partnership between Kyabra, Micah Projects, the Community Living Association and Jabiru) and FIN report – **November 2017**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/20171120-Parents-Voices-Out-Of-Home-Care-Reforms-in-QLD-2017.pdf>

- [child protection Reform Amendment Bill 2017](#) - Submission to the Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic Violence Prevention Committee – **September 2017**

URL: <https://d2yuko1qrkt9v.cloudfront.net/live/docs/FIN-Resources/Micah-Projects-FIN-submission-Child-Protection-Reform-Bill-2017.pdf>