

**QUEENSLAND CHILD PROTECTION
COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**

Date: 16.10.2012Exhibit number: 81

STATEMENT OF PAUL CLIFFORD GARRAHY

I, **PAUL CLIFFORD GARRAHY**, of c/- 42-44 Simpson Street, Mount Isa in the State of Queensland, Acting Director Government Coordination, solemnly and sincerely affirm and declare:

1. I am acting as Director Government Coordination, North Queensland Region, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs between the period 01 April 2011 up to and including 19 October 2012.
2. I hold a Bachelor of Social Work from Charles Sturt University and a Bachelor of Social Science from the University of Newcastle.
3. My substantive position is Manager, Gulf Child Safety Service Centre (Gulf CSSC), Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (the department). I have been appointed to this position since 27 January 2010. Prior to this appointment I was Manager Caboolture Child Service Centre from October 2008 to January 2010. Between 1999 and 2008 I held a number of positions in the NSW child protection service system including Caseworker, Team Leader, and Manager Client Services.

ROLE

4. The purpose of my role, as the Manager of Gulf CSSC is to lead and manage the CSSC in the delivery of high quality child protection services to clients and communities serviced by the CSSC through the implementation of quality case management systems, practices, standards and service delivery framework, the establishment of enduring productive partnerships with carers, the community, the public and non-government sectors, and the ongoing professional development and management of staff.
5. My duties and activities include:
 - Providing leadership and management in the delivery of high quality child protection services to clients and communities.
 - Fostering a culture and philosophy of frontline service delivery, cooperation, team work, high quality people management, commitment to excellence and a professional ethic
 - Actively participating in and, where appropriate, leading local area forums with government and non-government stakeholders.
 - Allocating, prioritising and performing work tasks in accordance with departmental procedures and statutory, financial and administrative delegations.
 - Ensuring that staff and physical and financial resources are effectively managed to give effect to relevant legislation, government policies and contemporary best practice standards.
 - Providing proactive high level support, advice and information to the Regional Director in relation to the development of the CSSCs delivery strategies, performance agreements, staff training and support strategies and improvement strategies.
 - Developing enduring service delivery partnerships between the public and non-government sectors to enhance cross-sectoral participation, training and development and the delivery and co-ordination of local child protection services.

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Request: Gulf CSSC (Mt Isa hearing)

INTRODUCTION

6. The following statement has been prepared to inform the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry during the Mt Isa hearing dates of 15 October 2012 to 18 October 2012.
7. The information provided has been done so on the advice from the relevant business units responsible for management of the applicable areas.

OTHER ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

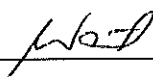
Service delivery – how well is child protection functioning?

8. Gulf CSSC comprises two Child Protection Orders (CPO) teams. There are three specialist positions and one Administrative team. Gulf and Mount Isa CSSC have two joint teams including a combined Investigation and Assessment Team and a Youth Initiative Team. The Gulf Manager has core responsibility for the oversight of the joint Investigation and Assessment Team.
9. The North Queensland Regional Intake Service (NQRIS) located in Townsville is the primary contact for community members, government and non-government agencies to report suspicions of harm, or potential risk of harm, for children and young people. This service operates between the hours of 9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours this function is performed by the Child Safety After Hours Service.
10. Placement services are provided by the Northern Region Placement Services Unit (PSU) which has a hub co-located with Gulf and Mount Isa CSSCs. Care Pathways are the primary provider of placement and support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Act for KiDS provides short term placement options in Doomadgee through their Safe House and Mission Australia provides short term placement options in Mornington Island through their Safe House.
11. Gulf CSSC has 24 full time equivalent (FTE) team members. This includes eight Child Safety Officers, six Child Safety Support Officers, three Team Leaders, one Senior Practitioner, one Court Coordinator, one Family Group Meeting Convenor, one Business Support Officer, one Information and Administration officer, one Administration Officer, and one Manager.
12. Gulf CSSC covers the communities of Normanton, Karumba, Burketown, Doomadgee, and Mornington Island (Gununa). The CSSC has one Child Safety Support Officer (CSSO) appointed in Normanton and is currently recruiting for a CSSO on Mornington Island (current vacancy). Doomadgee and Mornington Island are identified as discreet Indigenous communities.
13. Of the 24 FTE positions within the Gulf CSSC, 22 FTE positions are physically located in Mount Isa, with one CSSO position based on Mornington Island and one CSSO in Normanton. Gulf CSSC has an office in Mornington Island and Normanton.
14. Team members travel to the communities by road during the dry season and by air during the wet season when roads are closed. All travel to Mornington Island is by air.

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15. Gulf CSSC has access to Recognised Entity (RE) services. The RE participates in decisions made by Child Safety Services regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people throughout each phase of the statutory child protection system.
16. Gulf CSSC partners with other government and non government agencies to work alongside children, young people and their families in addressing the presenting issues that have led to departmental involvement. Partnerships and collaboration with other agencies, both government and non government, are critical in terms of achieving enhanced outcomes for children and families engaged with Child Safety Services. Examples include the Suspected Child Abuse and Network (SCAN) team, partnership with Care Pathways, Act for KiDS Doomadgee Safe House, and engagement with Community Elders and leaders.
17. Gulf CSSC has the internal resources it requires to perform its core functions of investigation and assessment through the continuum to ongoing intervention. Delivering services in remote communities can be complex and challenging throughout the continuum. Service providers generally work effectively together to meet the needs of the children, young people and families with whom the department is involved.
18. The existing child protection system intervenes when a certain threshold of risk has been reached, or is likely to be reached, however intervention at this point in time will not be as effective in addressing the needs of children, young people and their families had there been earlier intervention. This is particularly apparent in the communities of Mornington Island and Doomadgee where there is a significant focus on 'Closing the Gap' in Indigenous disadvantage and where child protection concerns must be seen in a wider context of disadvantage being experienced across the community. In this context, risks that may be reported to Child Safety Services may be of significant concern, however in some cases such risks may not be in any way to do with a parent's lack of willingness or desire to provide a safe nurturing environment for their children. In such situations a wider understanding of the issues being faced by these families is required and a broader level of intervention and support at an earlier stage is required.

Key regional examples of service delivery and the identification of any other key persons able to speak to the initiatives

19. The establishment of Safe Houses in Doomadgee and Mornington Island has facilitated the return of children to their community for family contact and progression towards reunification. Since the commencement of the Safe Houses within the two communities, the Gulf CSSC has actively worked alongside these services. Doomadgee Safe House has been successful in employing and training local community members and is being utilised very often for respite placements as well as for children returning home on reunification plans. Mornington Island Safe House has more recently become operational however it too has provided placement options that were not previously available. Both Safe Houses are viewed positively by the community.
20. Gulf CSSC has a strong focus on providing respectful services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and works closely with both the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs (DATSIMA) as well as the Regional Operations Centre (ROC).

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Agencies, government and non-government that partner with the Department of Communities in providing child protection services or related support services

21. Gulf CSSC works alongside many government and non government agencies to support families and protect children. Key agencies include, but are not limited to:

Non Government

- Doomadgee Safe House (Act for KIDS)
- Doomadgee Family Intervention Service (FIS) (Act for KIDS)
- Mornington Island Safe House (Mission Australia)
- Mornington Island Safe Haven/Women's Refuge (Mission Australia)
- Care Pathways
- Young People Ahead Inc
- Centrecare
- Cape York/Gulf Remote Area Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Child Care (RAATSICC)
- The Roman Catholic Trust Corporation for the Diocese of Townsville
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service

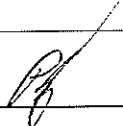
Government

- North West Hospital and Health Service
- Queensland Police Service
- Department of Housing and Public Works
- Department of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs (DATSIMA)
- Department of Education, Training and Employment
- Legal Aid
- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian
- Centrelink
- Mount Isa Regional Operations Centre
- Mornington Island Shire Council
- Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council

Current challenges – what needs to be fixed and what if any policies and procedures may be negatively impacting on the way business is conducted?

22. Gulf CSSC has in the past experienced challenges in recruiting and maintaining staff due to the remote location. In recent years these challenges have been reduced largely due to the department's capacity to offer the rural and remote incentives scheme.
23. It would not be uncommon for both government and non government services to experience fluctuations with staffing numbers as well as experience levels of staff. Whilst this could be said about any workforce within the state, the impact of such fluctuations and their regularity have a significant impact on client service delivery in small, remote communities where, for example, a delay in filling an individual family support worker position for a two month period will most certainly have an impact on an agency's ability to provide an effective service to a client.
24. Further, when considering the remote location of these communities and the known existing skills base, it can be seen that the positive community capacity development occurring in communities such as Mornington Island and Doomadgee under the *National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery* will not dramatically reduce the need for external (to

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community) skilled professionals in the short term, nor will it develop local level capacity (for example, qualified Social Workers or Psychologists from community) in the short term. However, the community capacity building currently occurring within Mornington Island and Doomadgee through services such as the Safe House will provide a platform for the skilling of community members to perform roles in areas that could be defined as early intervention and prevention.

25. Placement capacity in the form of available general Indigenous carers and kinship carers within the communities remains a challenge. The department has limited placement options within the Mornington Island and Doomadgee communities apart from the Safe Houses. Whilst the Safe Houses can provide short term placement options within community, there remains the need for longer term placement options. Unless carers are identified within community, a child or young person entering care for a period of time will need to be placed out of community in a location such as Mount Isa. Mount Isa also experiences challenges in recruiting Indigenous carers.
26. Known barriers that are often identified as challenges to recruiting carers within the communities includes Blue Card eligibility and processing of submissions (when required), and overcrowding of homes. These are certainly relevant to the communities with which Gulf CSSC works and significant effort is placed into identifying solutions to these barriers by the Placement Services Unit (PSU) and Gulf CSSC. However, there are other factors that impact on the ability to recruit the level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers required to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care. These factors include:
- Peoples experiences associated with the stolen generations may impact on them to the point where they are unable to care for children and/or do not want to be associated with the child protection or 'welfare' system due to past practices or experiences.
 - The actual numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care is disproportionate to the actual number of potential Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who may be able to provide care for these children. Availability of potential carers is reduced even further when considering that in Doomadgee, for example, approximately 45% of the population are aged 24 years or under, and in Mornington Island, approximately 51% of the population is aged 24 years and under.
 - Community members who are already facing significant social disadvantage may not feel they have the capacity to provide care for a child or young person despite a genuine willingness to want to assist.
27. Given the difficulties currently experienced in recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers, this is an area requiring further consideration. Community views of parenting and caring for children and young people would be critical to seek as would community views on alternative pathways for providing care for children and young people within community.

Declared before me at Mount Isa this 4th day of October 2012.



Waf.

J.P. QUAN Christine Lisa Watson.

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