



School of Human Services and
Social Work

30 November 2012

The Hon Tim Carmody SC
Commissioner
Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry.

Logan campus, Griffith University
University Drive
Meadowbrook, Queensland 4131
Australia

Telephone +61 (0)7 3382 1201
Facsimile +61 (0)7 3382 1210

www.griffith.edu.au

Submission to the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry

Thank you so much for meeting with my colleagues and I at the Logan Campus of Griffith University. I hope that our informal meeting was useful and that our School can continue to contribute to a better child protection system for Queensland.

I have been watching with interest the hearings of the Commission chaired by you. There is a lot of information to process and synthesise into how this can inform a better child protection system for Queensland. I am writing to offer any further assistance to facilitate this aim.

I am a Professor of Social Work and Head of the School of Human Services and Social Work at Griffith University. I have worked in the area of child protection and gendered violence for more than twenty years as a researcher and practitioner. Recently I took up my current position having spent the last five years in the United Kingdom. I am new to Queensland and do not have detailed knowledge or experience of its child protection system. Therefore I do not feel adequately informed to comment on the local context. However, this brings one distinct advantage, which is, to comment from a more objective position using my international experience. I have worked extensively in the child protection field in humanitarian emergencies in Lebanon, Sudan, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Albania. In Australia and the United Kingdom I have been involved in large studies on the long term impact of child sexual abuse as well as service evaluation in Family Violence programs. I have also worked extensively with minority groups that are often on the margins of society.

One of my approaches is examining ways the community can become a vehicle for leadership and governance of child protection. The aim here is that child protection is a community responsibility rather than purely seen as a government concern. Indigenous children remain a very vulnerable group in Australia, and are over-represented in many clinical and institutional populations. This is also reflective of their adult counterparts. Control and leadership become central long-term protective factors for the long-term improvement of Indigenous Australians and this applies to Indigenous Child Protection. Non-Indigenous communities also have their own role to play in protecting children. Child Protection needs to be owned as a community issue and not a problem we simply refer to a state authority. Community Leadership is one mechanism for this to occur. This is one example of possible macro change that could be explored.

I am available to talk with you and your team again. Please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P. O'Leary".

Professor Patrick O'Leary
Head, School of Human Services and Social Work.