



30 November 2012

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

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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.