



QUEENSLAND CHILD PROTECTION
COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Statement of Witness

<i>Name of Witness</i>	Grant Lloyd Thomson
<i>Date of Birth</i>	[REDACTED]
<i>Address and contact details</i>	[REDACTED]
<i>Occupation</i>	Forensic Social Worker, Registered Mental Health Practitioner & Counsellor
<i>Officer taking statement</i>	
<i>Date taken</i>	Friday 26 th October 2012

I, Grant Lloyd Thomson state;

- Request for Redaction:** I note that I maintain a professional office associated with my private address. Therefore, due to the nature of my work in the child protection field, I respectfully request that my stated address and contact details be redacted from any publication of this written submission and from any subsequent direct statement that I might make before the Inquiry.
- Summary of Formal Qualifications:** Since 2008, I have worked in full time private practice as a registered mental health practitioner and accredited counsellor and clinical supervisor. I hold the following formal qualifications: a Masters degree in Counselling from the University of Queensland; a First Class Honours degree in Social Work from the University of Queensland; and a Bachelor of Arts (Modern History) from the University of Queensland. I am an accredited mental health social worker with the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), a clinical member of the Queensland Counselling Association (QCA), and a registered member of the Psychotherapists and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA). I have previously held tutoring positions at the University of Queensland (School of Social Work and Applied Behavioural Sciences & School of Psychology's Masters of Counselling program) and the University of the Sunshine Coast (School of Social Work, Undergraduate Social Work program). I hold additional qualifications in mediation and workplace training and further, from 1982 until 1988 I served as a police officer with the Queensland Police Service. In 1985, I was selected to undertake additional specialist training at the Australian Police College and qualified as a criminal

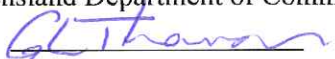
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intelligence analyst. I hold additional awards from the Commonwealth of Australia and the Royal Humane Society of Australasia. I have previously worked for over 10 years in the non-profit sector with people with a disability – most notably acquired brain injuries, intellectual impairments, physical and sensory disabilities and chronic mental health issues. I have spent many years working as a counsellor and mental health practitioner in the non-profit sector and in private practice. A full extract of my Curriculum Vitae outlining additional professional employment and experience relevant to this my statement to the Inquiry is provided at **Attachment 1.**

3. **Additional Informal Experience:** I also note that although I identify as a non-indigenous Australian, for over thirty years I have maintained a close and direct association with several remote, indigenous, traditional villages in the Trobriand Islands (Kiriwina Isl., Milne Bay Province) of Papua New Guinea and am related by extended family marriage to several families within that community. Both my children and I also have traditional clan names denoting rank as selected by a matriarchal elder of the clan. Whilst I do not seek to overestimate the significance of these relationships in terms of my current professional practice, the chance to reside periodically over three decades within this traditional and self-sufficient community has provided me with a relatively unique opportunity to observe the structure, complexity and importance of extended kinship networks in at least one non-Australian indigenous community, and has been an opportunity to observe some of the cultural, social, economic, and health challenges facing 21st traditional Indigenous communities. I have therefore certainly attempted to bring this limited understanding to my own work when commissioned to undertake social assessments in matters involving families from other Pacific cultures residing in Australia, and to a lesser extent, during any assessments with family members and children identifying as Indigenous Australians. I again reiterate that although I make this statement in good faith regarding the importance of taking into account extended kinship ties and cultural adoptions in child protection matters, I am in no manner attempting to portray myself as possessing any direct or intimate knowledge of the historic or contemporary experiences of Australia's Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities.
4. **Mix of Private Practice:** Whilst I continue to accept a limited number of private referrals and GP (Medicare Mental Health Plan) referrals to work with individual clients experiencing a range of mental health conditions and functional impairments, since late 2008 the great majority of my practice has centred upon undertaking private commissions to provide independent Social Assessment Reports for: (1) child protection applications before the Children's Court &; (2) 'reviewable decisions' before the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) involving the Queensland Department of Communities' (Child Safety Section) case management

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of child protection matters. Additionally, I have also completed a small number of Family Assessment Reports for matters before the Family Court.

5. Experience Writing Social Assessment Reports:

- 5.1. Since 2008, I have completed approximately 125 Social Assessment Reports involving several hundred children and young people across Queensland who have been subject to formal custody or guardianship applications by the Department of Communities. I would conservatively estimate that collectively, I have written between three and four million words in those reports and interviewed well over 1500 adults and children during several thousand hours of recorded assessment interviews throughout urban and rural Queensland.
- 5.2. Approximately twenty percent (20%) of these cases have involved Indigenous families from across various Queensland locations (e.g. Brisbane, Logan, Beenleigh, Toowoomba, Warwick, Beaudesert, Gympie, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Kingaroy, Cherbourg, Monto, Townsville, Cairns, Mt Isa, Dajarra, and Doomadgee) and rural NSW, and I ordinarily take any opportunity to interview any Indigenous or non-Indigenous family member or child/ren in their own community and home.
- 5.3. I have undertaken multiple interviews in both high and low security prisons, and have experience conducting assessment interviews using Vietnamese, Han Chinese, Samoan, Tongan and AUSLAN interpreters. In this respect, as a full time forensic assessor in private practice specializing in independent child protection assessments, I would estimate that due to the volume of work I have undertaken, my practice holds one of the largest private archives of material in this state, representing a wide variety of child protection applications managed by the Department over the past five years.
- 5.4. I specifically note that whilst I have provided numerous reports supporting various child protection applications and case management interventions by the Department, I have also provided numerous reports where I have been critical of some of the Department's case management interventions and processes – particularly when I have formed an opinion that those decisions or examples of poor quality case management have been to the detriment or risk of a child in care. I will review several case examples identifying some of those concerns later in this submission.

- 6. Social Assessment Report Process:** At the request of the Commission of Inquiry, I have been asked to provide a detailed summary of the processes involved in producing a Social Assessment Report. In that respect, I note the following points:

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6.1. Referral Pathways for Social Assessment Reports: At present there are generally only two commissioning pathways: the Department of Communities (Child Safety Services Centres) & Legal Aid Queensland based/funded Separate Representatives. On some occasions, I have been commissioned by a young person's Direct Representative to produce a 'Views and Wishes' report. However, in my experience these 'Views and Wishes' assessment commissions occur infrequently. This is I think unfortunate as they ordinarily yield quite timely and case critical information within a relatively short assessment and writing timeframe and for quite a low level of investment by LAQ. They also provide an excellent opportunity for the young person to express their opinions in detail in a non-threatening environment.


6.1.1. When the Department commissions an independent Social Assessment Report, Departmental officers will usually do so for one of four (4) reasons:

6.1.1.1. At the direction of a Children's Court Magistrate in the case of a contested application where further clarification on additional social or clinical matters is required prior to a Court Ordered Conference or hearing; or

6.1.1.2. In order to seek independent expert verification/opinion with respect to the suitability of a current child protection application and/or the suitability of case management planning (i.e. safe parental contact options; foster or kinship care placement stability; opinions on psychological attachment and childhood developmental concerns; interpretation and practical application of neuropsychology assessments/ forensic psychology assessments/ psychiatric assessments; & any other matter the report writer considers relevant during the examination of the matter.); or

6.1.1.3. In a limited number of cases, the Department will sometimes commission a private social assessment report in the early stages of case managing an exceptionally complex matter in order to seek expert guidance regarding the suitability of certain case management options for the child/ren in care. This will usually be the case when the Department may be: considering the viability of making future (i.e. 6-12 months in advance) applications for Short Term Custody/Guardianship orders; Long Term Guardianship orders; officers may be considering reunification to a parent; or officers may be reviewing a possible carer placement transfer for a child or sibling group. In this respect, Departmental officers may be already reviewing a number of specific options but will commission the report as a means of testing if there are

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any significant flaws in their case management or if there is a radically alternative option they may have overlooked. I would view this type of commission as the mark of an insightful and proactive CSO, Team Leader, Manager or Court Coordinator who is seeking genuine alternatives to their current strategies of managing the family and children. I am of the opinion that the willingness to commission this type of social assessment report is specific to a limited number of Child Safety Service Centres who are attempting to break out of a cycle of reactive short term case planning. This reactive approach is usually driven by their perception of operating within in an adversarial child protection system.

6.1.1.4. When an appeal against a Departmental case management decision has been lodged before the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal. In this respect, the Department will sometimes commission an updated social assessment report to independently review the circumstances surrounding the issue in dispute (usually in relation to a foster placement decision or parental contact) and the overall viability of their 'reviewable decision'.

6.1.2. When a report is commissioned by a Separate Representative or an Independent Representative, there are three (3) primary reasons for engaging the report writer:

6.1.2.1. When a Separate Representative has been recently appointed by the Children's Court to represent the child/ren in a contested child protection matter they will frequently seek an independent social assessment report to: review the information contained in the Department's own materials (affidavits, case plans, previous social or psychological assessments, etc...) & to then take a detailed case history from the parents, carers, Department and children. On the basis of that independent review, the report writer will then provide a series of recommendations regarding the suitability of the current child protection applications and additional commentary related to specific issues of case management with the family members and the subject child/ren. The recommendations by the report writer are not binding on any party but in a contested matter the report writer will usually be provided with an opportunity to argue the logic and theory behind the recommendations and can be expected to do so vigorously. Alternatively, it is the responsibility of the Separate Representative to determine the style of expert assessment report that suits the particular needs of the case at the time. Therefore, it should be noted that whilst the social assessment report is often a central piece of evidence in any contested child protection matter,

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it may be equally important for the Separate Representative (or the Department for that matter) to consider whether it would not be more relevant to engage either a psychiatrist or a psychologist to prepare a specialist report.

6.1.2.2. The Separate Representative will sometimes request an 'Updated Social Assessment Report' in order to review any recent changes to case management, parental engagement in reunification attempts, or to review specific changes or deteriorations in a child or sibling group's presentation. Although these are usually seen as simple 'addendum' reports to the initial social assessment report, in reality they can often be longer and more complex in their content and recommendations, as they not only have to take into account any new case management history, assessment interviews and other recent professional clinical reports on the parents or children, but also need to compare and contrast this new information with all of the preceding evidence and information.

6.1.2.3. As previously stated, an Independent Representative may sometimes commission what is usually referred to as a 'Views and Wishes Report' from the social assessor. This is a style of modified social assessment interview with a young person who is subject to a child protection application. This report takes a detailed personal history from the young person's perspective and seeks to determine the 'views and wishes' of the young person in relation to the Department's application. I have generally found that interviews with young people who have a history of experiencing some form of cumulative family-related abuse or trauma throughout their lives and who also have a long history of experience living as a child in care, have a great capacity to make many insightful and often quite moving statements about those childhood experiences. The report writer will also attempt to determine to what extent the young person understands the nature of the proceedings, and on the basis of that assessment, if they are then able to reliably instruct their Independent Representative. In those cases I will also provide opinion on whether the young person should be given leave to directly address the Court. I note for purposes of clarification, that the term 'young person' is generally concomitant with the term 'adolescent'.

6.2. Agreement to Undertake the Assessment Report and Quotes:

6.2.1. Accepting the Commission:

6.2.1.1. Well-qualified and experienced social assessment report writers are in relatively short supply in Queensland. The main

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reasons for this is that the work is time consuming, theoretically complex, often involves working with emotionally upset family members, requires a capacity to present and argue a professional opinion in court and is poorly paid. A fairly constant theme expressed by the Department and Separate Representatives is that they often struggle to find suitable assessors to undertake their report writing commissions. In many cases, the Department or the Separate Representative will seek an adjournment for several months in order to secure the services of an experienced report writer rather than engage a report writer of unknown or questionable reliability.

6.2.1.2. In other cases where a filing date for court is non-negotiable, they are essentially forced to accept the services of the first available report writer who has a vacancy to complete the work by the due date.

6.2.1.3. In my own practice, I would estimate that in any given 12 month period I turn away almost as many requests to undertake a commission as I accept and my assessment calendar is consistently fully-booked three to five months in advance. Unfortunately, the inherent risk of engaging an inexperienced, unsupervised or poorly qualified social assessor, is the possibility of obtaining a poor quality report that does not adequately test the Departmental allegations of harm, contains factual and deductive errors, contains recommendations that may be based upon insubstantial assessment interviews or limited clinical observations, demonstrate poor analytical interpretation of the data collected, and demonstrate the faulty application of several primary bodies of psychological theory relevant to child protection matters (i.e. attachment theory; trauma theory; loss and grief theory; family systems theory; family violence theory; comorbidity; and disability issues). This may result in an incomplete or inaccurate hypothesis formulation and a series of flawed recommendations with sometimes disastrous implications for the family, the subject children and siblings, extended family members and carers. There have been several occasions where I have initially been unavailable to undertake a specific commission, only to be contacted by the same Departmental office several months later requesting that I undertake a new assessment after questions have been raised about the quality or the viability of the previous report writer. This will usually also mean that the Department may have wasted several thousand dollars on a report that may not only be worthless but may later also be used to create doubt as to the veracity of any new report.

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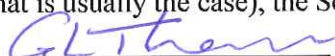


6.2.1.4. Alternately, after discussing some of the basic details of a case, I may also determine that the Department does not require a Social Assessment Report at that stage and instead, I will recommend that it may be more relevant for them to either delay the commission for several months whilst they continue to work with the family, or I may recommend that they pursue another expert report from a more relevant discipline (i.e. psychiatric; neuropsychological; forensic psychological assessment; occupational therapy; paediatric, etc...). In this respect, my experience has been that it is usually more relevant for the Department to commission a Social Assessment Report either right at the beginning of an assessment phase, when officers might have very limited knowledge of a family that has been identified with quite significant child protection concerns, or alternately, towards the end of a long case management phase where there have been several expert assessment reports on individual members of the family. In this last case, the Social Assessment Report usually functions as a useful tool to collate the various expert written opinions detailing specific issues of functioning or parental risk, and then cross-references those opinions with the level of perceived insight of the parents into the child protection concerns in order to arrive at a final set of evidence-based recommendations.

6.2.2. Legal Aid Queensland (LAQ) Quotes and Schedule of Fees for Report Writers:

6.2.2.1. When a report is commissioned by LAQ, the report writer is not required to provide a written quote. There is a fixed rate of fees, primarily the \$1450-00 (+GST) grant of aid for the report that is meant to cover any administration duties, phone calls and emails; reading the usually voluminous affidavits and case files; conducting one full day of assessment interviews; and writing up the final report. For reason of personal safety and the safety of my family, I usually make a point of not accepting commissions in my own area of residence. However, even if this was not the case, this type of work is quite specialized and the demand for these types of reports is Queensland wide. Therefore, as I travel to all of my assessment interviews and clinical observations for social assessment reports rather than requiring the interviewees to attend my office, the LAQ Separate Representatives will always obtain a grant of aid for travel by motor vehicle or plane. Private motor vehicle use is calculated at \$60-00 per hour of travel + \$0.60 per kilometre. On occasions when it is determined that the matter cannot be reasonably assessed over just the one day of interviews (and that is usually the case), the Separate Representative will apply for a 'Complex

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Grant of Aid' plus accommodation for that night. Accommodation is usually calculated at \$150-00 per night depending on the location – this does not include any additional per diem allowance for meals or other incidental expenses. Complex Grants of Aid are calculated at \$90-00 per hour and it is seldom that approval for the 'Grant of Aid' covers the actual additional hours of interviewing on the second or third days. Updated Social Assessment Reports pay \$800-00 (+GST) for the entire process of reading, interviewing and writing the report + any approved travel allowances. This amount is of course ridiculous and does not even approach the amount of work involved.


6.2.2.2. Let me be clear in making the following point to the Inquiry – There is no profit and limited financial benefit for any report writer in private practice to prepare good quality social assessment reports for LAQ. Most professional report writers (social assessments/ family reports/ psychological assessments/ compensation claim assessments/ medico-legal assessments/ forensic reports, etc...) are essentially private practitioners (and therefore small business people) who are also operating a mixed practice (i.e. private counselling and psychotherapy, Employment Assistance Schemes (EAS), referrals from Department of Veterans Affairs, health insurance related services, corporate training and consulting, publishing, private mediation, research, clinical supervision, expert assessments, etc...) attempting to provide quality and ethical services for a reasonable price, whilst also engaging in some level of altruistic community building.

6.2.2.3. As I keep my business overheads relatively low, I am able to invoice my private counselling and rebated 'mental health' clients between \$120 and \$150 per hour (incl GST). If I expected to receive the same relatively modest rate of reimbursement for a social assessment report, the LAQ funded Social Assessment Report would only pay for between approximately 10 and 12 hours of my professional time.

6.2.2.4. By way of contrast, a conservative estimate of the number of hours I would spend on a pretty basic LAQ funded report is as follows: administration, phone calls and emails (1 hr); reading referral materials (3 hrs); one full day of interviews (8 hrs); writing (25-30 hrs); proof reading and finalizing the affidavit (3 hrs) = 40 - 45 hours or just over one equivalent full time week.

6.2.2.5. Therefore, even if one was to make some adjustment to the figures by accepting the reasonable argument that there are no

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private practitioners who are able to invoice 100% of their time at work, the 'shortfall' between the amount of work undertaken and the amount the report writer is actually reimbursed is still quite substantial and I would estimate that any report writer preparing what I would consider to be an adequate social assessment report for LAQ is really privately subsidizing the child protection community in Queensland.

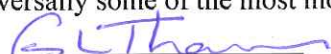
6.2.2.6. In this respect, I regard any commissions I undertake with LAQ as equivalent to my pro bono work and if I had to rely upon report writing commissions from LAQ-funded sources I would be out of business. I therefore attempt to maintain one-third of my reports based directly with the LAQ Child Protection Team in Brisbane and two-thirds with the Department in order to cover expenses, when in reality I could probably populate almost one hundred percent of my professional calendar with Departmental commissions that pay two and three times as much.

6.2.2.7. I have prepared numerous reports for LAQ over the past five years that have involved well over 100 hours of: document review, interviewing, writing and analysis, resulting in 25,000 and 30,000 word reports. Within reason, I draw no professional distinction between the amount of time I devote to a relatively well-paid Departmental assessment report and the amount of time I devote to completing an LAQ assessment report.

6.2.2.8. Every case involves by its very nature, a child or children who have suffered some form of critical loss or trauma and therefore every case deserves to be treated critically and with exceptional care. There can be no exceptions to this rule. One does so knowing that the reports are often influential in determining the welfare of alienated and stigmatized children and that the outcomes of the report will almost certainly influence much of the life course of the children and families involved. Unfortunately, the decision not to take on LAQ commissions has already been made by many well-qualified, experienced and gifted clinicians as one by one, they come to the conclusion that they literally cannot afford to undertake assessments despite the potential to safeguard some of our community's most vulnerable families and children.

6.2.2.9. There are however some intrinsic non-commercial advantages in undertaking LAQ funded reports. No lawyer that I have ever met elected to specialize in child protection matters because they found it to be a lucrative proposition. Separate and Independent Representatives are universally some of the most motivated and socially conscionable professionals I

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have met in over 30 years of working in a variety of community, private and government models of service delivery in Queensland.


6.2.2.10. On a practical level, Separate and Independent Representatives understand their fundamental role is to act in the best interests of the child and to that end they are tenacious in pursuing that outcome over and above any sense of allowing themselves to be intimidated by the Department, in the same way that the majority of parents, extended family members, foster carers, kinship carers, and clinicians often feel overwhelmed when they find themselves in the child protection system and attempting to oppose what they see as a fairly monolithic and impregnable structure.

6.2.2.11. In that respect, when I go to the trouble of making a series of complex recommendations that might differ fundamentally from the Department's own application or case management plans, I can usually be confident that the Separate Representative will consider supporting my position in any pre-trial negotiations, or at least until I have the opportunity to appear in Court and pursue my own argument in my evidence-in-chief and under cross examination. Therefore, the opportunity to contribute to a legitimate review process that, when appropriate, attempts to even at least partially moderate the power and authority of the Department is a significant advantage that fits well within my own practice framework and usually tends to override what my accountant would probably attempt to persuade me to be sound business decisions.

6.2.2.12. Whilst it is certainly possible and ethically imperative for a report writer to periodically '*take on*' the Department and oppose a particular child protection application when the writer is of the opinion that it is not in the child's best interests, it is more challenging to do so when one has accepted a direct commission from the Department, rather than through a Separate Representative. On those occasions, the report writer can generally expect to fight that particular battle alone all the way through to a contested hearing.

6.2.2.13. Separate and Independent Representatives also provide detailed and relevant case referrals to the commissioned report writer that outlines the chronology of events and provides a useful summary of the most relevant child protection concerns. Separate Representatives also routinely provide a detailed request of just what is required in terms of specific issues and questions that should be addressed within the social assessment report.

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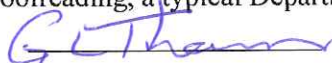
6.2.3. Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) Quotes and Schedule of Fees for Report Writers:

6.2.3.1. The Department has been far more reasonable in its recognition that good quality and detailed social assessment reports deserve to be paid at a level that reflects at least in part, the amount of work that goes into providing them with the final set of recommendations.

6.2.3.2. I would also propose that officers from the Child Safety Service Centre commissioning the report, particularly the Court Coordinators, are mindful that if they are able to secure a social assessor with a reliable reputation for producing independent, quality, and detailed reports that have a record of being well-received by the legal community and the courts, then if that completed social assessment report does in fact ultimately support the Department's own child protection applications, there is a good probability that the Department will secure its application. The Department of course understands the caveat to that reasoning, and it is that during an independent report writer's own assessment and investigation of the matter, they may identify a number of shortcomings in the case management or the Department's reasoning for applying for the order. This may not only result in a recommendation from the report writer for an alternative application or even the withdrawal of the application, but may result in formal criticism of the Department's interventions.

6.2.3.3. With regard to the provision of quotes, I typically provide an itemized four page document outlining the estimated costs of each stage of the report process and information outlining my responsibilities and what I expect from the Departmental officer in terms of the 'Terms of Reference', organising the schedule of interviews, provision of Departmental records, and my estimated completion date for the report. The final quoted estimate is still not an accurate reflection of the actual time spent preparing the report but Departmental officers are usually more willing to accept that it will usually take up to three (and sometimes four) days of intensive interviewing (e.g. 15 – 20 individuals) and clinical observations of the parents and carers with the children to complete the assessment phase of the report. One is also able to factor in additional writing hours for complex matters involving cases of between five and ten children with additional levels of disability and behavioural challenges. Therefore, depending on the estimate of hours for combined reading, travel, assessments, writing and proofreading, a typical Departmental report would pay between \$4000-00 and

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\$8000-00 and take in total between 70 and 120 hours to complete. Whilst this does provide the opportunity to pursue writing social assessment reports on a relatively full-time basis, the hourly rate does not approach levels commensurate with other styles of private practice. In this respect, even for Departmental commissions I still only use an hourly rate of \$90-00 when I write the quotes.

6.2.3.4. I would also note that due to the rather intense nature of the subject matter and the pressure to provide complex reports that are predictably systematically analysed and criticized in an adversarial legal environment, it is not really surprising that so many psychologists, psychiatrists, mental health social workers and counsellors elect not to engage in professional report writing in child protection matters.

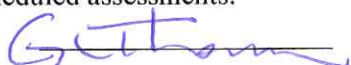
6.3. Written Referral from the Commissioning Body:

6.3.1. As previously noted, the case referral or 'Terms of Reference' is meant to be a formal document outlining in detail: the background to the report's commission; a list of relevant family members, children, carers, Departmental officers and treating clinicians; a chronology of events; an accurate list of documents released to the report writer; and most importantly, a precise list of instructions to the writer outlining specific areas of inquiry and investigation that need to be addressed in the completed report.

6.3.2. Separate and Independent Representatives provide uniformly excellent referrals that address each of these points. Again, I suspect it is probably due to the fact that they have a clear understanding of the legal processes involved and comprehend that in many respects, a good quality referral will set out part of the structure of a good quality report.

6.3.3. Departmental referrals are not always inadequate, ill-conceived and poorly drafted affairs but their benchmark is so predictably low in approximately 75% of cases that when a good quality referral is forwarded by a Child Safety Officer or Team Leader prior to my undertaking the assessment interview, one does take notice. I do forward an electronic referral template along with the quote for the commissioning CSO to complete but these are usually returned only partially completed, and those sections that are attempted, predictably contain a 'cut and paste' from one of the more recent case plans or affidavits. In that respect, one is normally left attempting to second-guess just what the Department is attempting to achieve by commissioning the report in the first place. On several occasions Departmental officers have not even managed to get around to completing the written referral or forwarding their own materials for me to review prior to the assessment interviews. On those occasions I have had no hesitation in cancelling the scheduled assessments.

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6.4. Review of Departmental and Respondents' Documents:

- 6.4.1. In order to undertake relevant assessment interviews, I rely upon the commissioning agent to identify and forward to my office copies of all relevant filed materials and Departmental records associated with the case management of the matter. This will typically include: historic and current affidavits; Queensland and interstate police records of convictions (juvenile and adult); drug and alcohol pathology reports; case plans for the subject children; any previous social assessment reports; psychological or psychiatric assessments; school records for the children; clinical notes from children's counsellors; paediatric reports; medical records; copies of relevant emails and correspondence; and copies of any relevant Departmental case note summaries. I never assume that what I'm reading is accurate but at least it provides me with the opportunity to begin constructing a series of additional questions to pose to the various family members, children, carers and Departmental staff.
- 6.4.2. Once again, commissions from Separate Representatives always result in the lawyer undertaking an on-site file inspection at the Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC) and as a result of that file inspection, I will usually receive several folders of properly indexed materials well before the assessment interviews.
- 6.4.3. Whilst the Department is generally reluctant to factor in an additional payment (\$1200) for me to undertake my own file inspection as a separate trip to their office, they are usually quite open to my reviewing their records on the days of the assessment interviews. Unfortunately I require the material prior to the assessments and so I provide detailed instructions to the Department identifying the specific types of materials and records required. Whilst this usually results in a surfeit of records comprising of between several hundred pages to several thousand pages of documents, it is typically uncollated and unmarked and one is left to wade through the material in an attempt to make some sense of the contents.
- 6.4.4. Irrespective of who sends the materials, reviewing the documents takes a minimum of three to four hours and during that time I will begin to construct a series of hypotheses to test during the assessment interviews.

6.5. Assessment Interviews:

- 6.5.1. General:** If at all possible, I prefer to undertake the assessment interviews at the various individual's own homes. It usually reduces the participant's level of anxiety about taking part in the assessment and provides the assessor with the opportunity to place many of the participant's comments in context with their surroundings. It is not an

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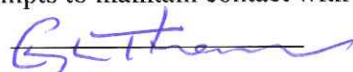
opportunity to conduct a home safety inspection. Unfortunately, arranging home visits for all participants in a report is not always possible given some of the time constraints associated with available funding and therefore many assessments take place in relatively sterile and secure interview rooms at CSSC centres across Queensland. I've conducted hundreds of interviews in these government rooms from Mt Isa to Mermaid Beach and apart from the paint chips and carpet stains, you get the disconcerting feeling you are still in the same room. Apart from the convenience they offer, another consideration is one of safety for the report writer when one needs to undertake an interview with a person who may have a history of substantial violence. Other interview venues have been prisons, community centres, Brisbane and regional Legal Aid Queensland offices, private practice rooms in Brisbane, and occasionally at some family members' requests, at parks and coffee shops. I note that I have spoken to other Queensland report writers on the subject of venues and home visits, and whilst opinions remain divided, there is at least some validity in the argument that more opportunity needs to be provided to ensure that the majority of assessments and interviews are home-based for the primary participants (parents, children and carers).

6.5.2. Parents:

6.5.2.1. Interviews with the mother, father and possibly their current partners take the longest in the assessment process. If the parents are still in a relationship, I will interview them separately and then jointly over anywhere from 3 to 7 hours.

6.5.2.2. Standard areas of review include: introduction and ethical notifications regarding informed consent, non-confidentiality and the voluntary nature of the interview; obtaining permission to record the interview; current living circumstances (accommodation/ income/ debt/ employment/ relationship/ immediate health or mental health concerns); mental status exam; family genogram; childhood and adolescent history (particularly of any instances of alleged sexual/ physical/ or emotional abuse or instances of reported trauma); schooling and employment; financial history; substance abuse history; medical history and medications; mental health history and possibly questions regarding any suicidal intent; forensic history; previous relationships and children; relationship history with the other parent and particularly the history of family violence or alleged instances of abuse; birth and early childhood of the subject child/ren or other siblings; child protection history with the Department; attempts to maintain contact with the children, achieve reunification and address

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case plans; parent's assessment of the subject child's current stability and overall development; personal plans for the future; 'strengths' assessment; capacity to engage with the community; capacity to sustain supportive networks and extended family links; & the parent's hopes for the future welfare of the subject child/ren.

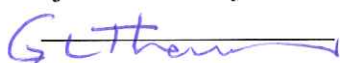
6.5.2.3. Interviews with parents and children are never predictable in their length or the quality of information they provide. Preparing for and conducting the interviews with parents and children is not simply a matter of barraging them with a list of questions to answer. Successful assessment interviews are usually based upon the clinician's participation in many thousands of hours of counselling and therapy with their own clients and applying that knowledge and skill set to work with the parent or child to not only discuss information relevant to the case but also to do so in a manner that minimizes the level of re-traumatisation that may be experienced. I have lost count of the number of times parents and children have made new disclosures of sexual, physical and emotional abuse, and when appropriate I have personally made notifications to both the Department and the police on the basis of those new disclosures.

6.5.3. Foster or Kinship Carers: Provided it is offered genuinely, there is one short statement that any assessor can make at the outset of any interview with a foster carer or kinship carer that will almost immediately provide them with a level of assurance that the assessor at least partially understands their situation as a carer:

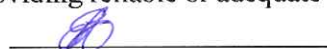
"In my experience carers retain the majority of the responsibility of caring for the child but have very few rights regarding the welfare of the child."

Carers will smile and nod vigorously and then settle into a steady pattern of relating a detailed history of care with the child or sibling group. In this respect, carers provide one of the most important windows to the internal life of the subject child in care and provided the assessor knows the right questions to ask in terms of possible childhood behaviours and developmental issues, a great deal of insight can be gleaned from the carers if the child has been at the placement for a substantial period. Key areas of enquiry also include the level of support and contact from the Department, any ability to maintain contact with the parents, a summary of contact regimes between the child and the parents or extended family, and a summary of any subjective behavioural changes for the child over the course of the placement or before/after contact with a parent. Additionally, one is also testing for any indications of distress or ambivalence in the carers and making clinical observations of the degree of attachment between the carer and the subject child. Sadly, not all carers are capable of providing reliable or adequate

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care for children who have often experienced substantial levels of abuse or neglect and who may be demonstrating a whole range of challenging behaviours. Over the years I have developed an enormous amount of empathy for carers and I am of the opinion that it is really the thousands of public and kinship foster carers who are the real backbone of the child protection community in Queensland, and not necessarily the Department – although their part is of course critical.

6.5.4. The Subject Children:

6.5.4.1.


The opportunity to regularly spend time talking and playing with children in the custody or guardianship of the Department is probably best described as ‘bitter-sweet’ as the conversations can be alternately quite joyful or almost overwhelmingly sad. Irrespective of the content, it is always a privilege to spend time with these children and young people. It has occurred to me that whilst the Inquiry is certainly concerned with the central theme of ‘child protection’, there has probably been relatively limited scope over the course of the various statements and submissions to review any practical examples of just what children may need to be protected from or how children interpret some of the events in their family’s life. To that end, I have selected at random, a handful of children’s ‘voices’ or statements from some reports I have produced over the past few years:

“Aboriginal means that you are brown and you have a different sort of flag pole... the red is our blood... the yellow is the sun... and the black is our skin and my Grandpa said that our blood is thicker than water”. (6 yr female).

“... Mum is in my life but she’s not my main feature... she is just not stable enough... I know that... school, church, home life... there is not really room for anybody else”. (14 yr female)

She stated there had been many occasions when she had gone to sleep at night and not been sure if her mother (chronic mental health issues and a history of serious suicide attempts) would still be alive in the morning, “... every night when I was in Grade five to (Grade) seven I always used to make sure that I told her that I loved her before I went to bed because I didn’t know if she’d be there in the morning”. (13 yr female).

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█████ stated with respect to her mother, "... I think that it would be safe to live with her because I know she is not going to do anything bad... I know she has changed her mind and she is going to do everything nice and she has rules for the house and she is going to do a better job looking after us than what she did... I reckon she is going to be a better mum." (9 yr female)

█████ stated she was not personally aware why she could not reside with the mother and noted, "... █████ (CSO Ms █████) just says that it's because mum and █████ (█████) were fighting and they think that mum cannot look after us properly and because █████ threw a glass at our mum... Mum started bleeding and I started screaming because I can hear smashing everywhere and then mum told me to get the phone but then █████ grabbed my hand and so then I called my Nan who lives █████... So we stayed there for a couple of days and then █████ settled down and we went back... And then one night the Department just came and picked us up from home... We didn't even know who they were." (13yr female)

"... Dad would abuse her... He would get a chair and he smashed her on the face and she had this big black eye... And then as we grew up... Dad would threaten her but not touch her". (16yr female)

█████ stated he was of the opinion that if he was to observe his father becoming violent with any member of his family [three younger siblings] now, "... I reckon I could protect them if he was to do it". █████ stated he was also of the opinion that his mother would still be willing to attempt to protect the children from their father, "... But I don't know if she is strong enough". █████ stated he knew his mother would attempt to protect the children because he had seen her attempt to protect them in the past, "... But she gets hurt... But sometimes she is not there... It is a two-storey house and sometimes she will be downstairs and dad will be upstairs... And if he tries to belt the little ones then she cannot get upstairs fast enough to stop it... Or dad will push her away... But not too hard [█████ uses both hands with palms up and pushes away as an example]." (15yr male).

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█████ stated that the only person who was angry with her for telling the story about the sexual abuse, "... is me... I am angry with myself because if I didn't tell the story I would be with my family and I would be home [begins to cry]... I got a bit angry at the park when I was waiting for dad... and after they left I was walking along kicking sticks just to calm myself down... if I had [just] gone home [and not spoken of the sexual abuse] it would be just like it never happened". (Female 10)

█████ said that he had arrived at 'Mum and Dad's' (foster carers) on █████. I asked him how he remembered the specific date and he told me, "It's easy because I always celebrate it... cause I never been to a foster home before where I had five brothers and sisters". I asked him if could remember his time at the other foster homes and he shook his head sadly and said, "Oh...evil-kenevil... I belted them up". He said he 'didn't belt up' [the current foster carers █████ and █████], "... because they are loving and caring... they give me good food and clothes... don't open that cupboard cause the food will just fall from the sky" (indicates kitchen cupboard on wall and laughs). He went on to say that having lots of good food in the house was important to him. At the end of the interview I asked him how he might feel if his sisters ever started having contact with either █████ (biological mother) or her new baby and he said, "... I wouldn't be jealous at all... I'd say 'Good on ya'... I wouldn't want to see that ugly looking woman". (Male 12)

█████ agreed that sometimes their mother had good intentions trying to re-establish a stable life but that this did not always happen for her. In this respect both █████ and █████ stated they knew about their mother consenting to a six-month custody order and that this meant they would be able to continue to stay with the approved kinship carers. █████ then began crying and stated, "... It is just that it is a really hard decision and you know that she is your mother and you love her and you have been brought up with her but you also know that it would be more stable and you would get so much more done... And now my grades have gone up and I am so much more healthier and everything is so much better for me there... So it is a really hard decision." (Female 16)

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I asked [REDACTED] why she was not living with her mother and she stated, *"Because [REDACTED]'s dad sexually assaulted me"*. She then went on to say that she did not want to return to live with her mother as she could not trust that [REDACTED] would not get back together with [REDACTED], *"... she'll just keep going back with [REDACTED]... even at the moment... as soon as he gets out of jail she's just going to find him and get back together... she keeps going with the naughty men"*. She said that the thought of her mother and [REDACTED] getting back together, *"... upsets me"* and went on to state that she would like to see her father again as she remembers how he had tried to protect her from [REDACTED], *"... he took me to his house"*. (Female 10)

'She stated she knew that [REDACTED] was not her biological father and she did not want to have any contact with him. She said that she was "over" talking about what it was like living with [REDACTED]. She said she remembers [REDACTED] yelling at her a lot and being hit by him and she remembers being locked in her room a lot. She said she would mostly sleep while she was locked in her room and that there was nothing to do as she had only her bed and a cupboard. She remembers only having a bucket in her bedroom to 'poo and wee' into at the [REDACTED] home. She thinks she was punished more than her brother [REDACTED] [older brother] and she was aware that this did not happen to [REDACTED] [younger sister]. She said that what happened has not affected her relationship with her sister [REDACTED] and she knew when she was living with [REDACTED] that her little sister "adored me... she always wanted to be with me but she couldn't because I was locked in my room nearly every second of the day and so when [REDACTED] [stepfather] used to go to bed she [baby sister] used to get a chair and stand next to my room... I used to have a peaking hole... I made a hole [in the wall] so I could talk to them [mother and little sister] when [REDACTED] [stepfather] used to be asleep... he wouldn't let my mum out of the room either... I think he used to give her drugs or something because she would always be really sick... the hole used to be in the wall because [REDACTED] used to slam the door and it made a hole... I used to talk to Mum and stuff [through the hole in the wall]... sometimes she would give me money [through the hole] and I would be able to jump out the window." (Female 12)

[REDACTED] stated she would ideally like to live with her mother but over the years of watching her mother struggle with life she had realised that her mother was not physically or emotionally capable of looking after either her or [REDACTED] or

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particularly after the two younger children – [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], *"... it's too far now... she can fix some things but not everything... she's never going to be healthy enough to look after us... I know that... [REDACTED] knows that... [REDACTED] doesn't know that yet... she's still in major hope that she's going to go home... she's (mother) just mentally and physically unhealthy... yeah drugs and stuff".* Regarding her mother's mental health issues, [REDACTED] stated that she thought her mother had bipolar disorder, anxiety and depression and that if her mother took illegal drugs together with her prescription drugs they would *"... clash and she just gets mood swings and affects the way she behaves... everything that she does affects the way she can look after us... you just don't know within two seconds how she's going to go like that".* (Female 14)

"He [male 11] stated he did not like calling [stepfather] Mr [REDACTED] 'Dad' but just thought of him as "him". I asked some questions around his memories of having Mr [REDACTED] as a step-father and he stated that [stepfather] Mr [REDACTED] would yell a lot at them and "... hurt us... he hits...". At this point[male 11] [REDACTED] broke down in tears and after a few moments stated he did not like talking about this as it brought up lots of memories of what used to happen in the home with [stepfather] Mr [REDACTED]. [Short break in interview]. He stated he thought they [he and his younger siblings] were all in care now because his mother had allowed [stepfather] Mr [REDACTED] back into the family home and stated, "*I knew it was a bad thing when it happened... I just knew that there had been a lot of stuff happen and I just got this tingle running down my spine... every time I even hear him I get scared*". Again, it is important to note that throughout this conversation [male 11] [REDACTED] was extremely tearful and upset and if anyone doubts for a moment the full impact of the pain and suffering this child has endured as a result of that abuse I can assure them that listening to the digital recording of the interview would likely assuage those doubts."
(Male 11)

"[REDACTED] (Female 15yrs) stated that just after they had moved into the new family home at [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] "*There was mud all through the carpet downstairs and she [mother suffering from a psychosis] told me to scrub it but apparently I was not doing it properly and that was when she beat me... She kneed me in the back and she whipped me with some coat-hangers and she slapped me*

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around a few times and she told me that she was going to do ridiculous things like put shit in my mouth ... And I told the girls (younger sisters aged 11 & 6) not to come downstairs and this was the day when we left as soon as mum left the house and she also punched me in the face... There were a couple of other things but those were the ones that I remember because I had the marks from those."
(Female 15yrs)

"[REDACTED] (Female 15yrs) stated that she had never expected to be put in a position where she would need to choose moving away from their mother's home at the age of 15, "... I always thought that I would keep living with mum for a very long time... But you get to an age where you look back and because me and my sisters had been in foster homes so many times and because we do have those memories of being knocked around a fair bit... I do not want that for [REDACTED] [younger sister aged 8] because she is so fragile. So it is kind of like my protective instinct taking over because this is not okay." (Female 15yrs)

6.5.4.2. Clinical assessment interviews with children and young people need to take into account the following points: their chronological age; their developmental issues – particularly with respect to issues of speech and communication; the history of alleged physical/emotional/sexual abuse and psychological trauma; reported or perceived intellectual functioning; level of psychological attachment to a primary carer; subjective levels of emotional distress throughout the interview; body language; and any issues of disability. Depending on those variables, the assessor will need to tailor at pretty short notice the style and range of enquiry clinically and ethically relevant to the circumstances.

6.5.4.3. I have on several occasions elected not to proceed with any level of conversation about their history, current life or future plans when I have formed an opinion that to do so would cause unreasonable distress. On the whole, my experience has been that most children do have an age-appropriate or developmentally-appropriate understanding of why I am visiting with them and why they are talking with me. I therefore encourage them to set the boundaries about what they are & what they are not comfortable discussing.

6.5.4.4. In the end, if the child or young person does not wish to discuss past events, then playing games, drawing and talking about school and sport and friends is a perfectly acceptable outcome if it provides

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the opportunity for the assessor to remain in relatively close proximity to the child in order to understand some of their fundamental drives and ambitions. There is of course no compulsion for any child or young person to offer any comment during their time with me and I will always spend time at the beginning of an interview discussing and testing their understanding of issues around consent and confidentiality.

6.5.4.5. When they do offer comment about their interpretation of events and what it is they hope for their own futures and the futures of their family, it often occurs spontaneously or with very minimal prompting as they can gauge if the assessor is genuinely interested in their welfare and will provide them with an opportunity to talk in a non-judgemental environment. Therefore when they do open up, they are capable of making some powerful and insightful observations as I hope the previous extracts may have demonstrated.

6.5.5. Departmental Staff: I attempt to keep my interviews with Departmental staff relatively brief and to the point (60-90mins) as the Department is the one organisation that has ample opportunity to present its own position in numerous affidavits and attachments. Therefore my primary motivation in interviewing Child Safety Officers, Team Leaders, Senior Practitioners and Child Safety Support Officers is to seek further clarification regarding why they ultimately require the Court to grant an intrusive child protection order for the child/ren. I will also review the officer's knowledge of the child/ren – particularly relating to the circumstances of the child/ren's placement, contact routine with the parents, and any educational, medical, developmental or behavioural concerns. I am fairly vigorous in pursuing any potential anomalies in the Department's case management, particularly in terms of how the Department has attempted to achieve reunification with between the parents and child/ren, or if I may be of the opinion that a child in the Department's care requires specific treatment or support and is not provided with suitable access to those services. Departmental officers have a tough job to perform but they are also Government employees who accept professional responsibility for the welfare of the children in their Department's care and if it comes down to a choice between my overlooking or dismissing an anomaly in proper case management, and having to ask some awkward questions of CSOs in interviews, then highlighting those concerns in a report, then my responsibility will be to the child every time.

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6.5.6. Recognised Entities: In the event that either of the parents or the children identify as Indigenous, the report writer will as a matter of course, conduct an interview with the local Recognised Entity which may be working with the family. In some cases the Recognised Entity will have a thorough knowledge of the family and the children and may therefore be able to provide useful insights into the circumstances of the child protection matter and provide suggestions regarding reunification planning, contact schedules and opportunities for cultural development and growth. On other occasions, their knowledge of the family and children may be quite limited and is usually due to a reluctance on the part of the parents to engage with the Recognised Entity.

6.5.7. Other Professionals – teachers, mental health workers, probation officers, counsellors, children’s therapists, community workers: These are typically ancillary interviews to gain some additional insights into the functional capacity of the parents or children. The majority of these interviews are conducted by phone during the final stages of the report’s completion. Limited time is devoted to these interviews as they will often have an opportunity of submitting their own affidavit or will have already drafted a short report that the Department will have annexed as an attachment to their own affidavits.

6.5.8. Clinical Observations: In addition to the assessment interviews and the review of the available documentation, I am routinely requested to comment on the level and style of emotional and psychological attachment between the child and his/her parents, and the foster or kinship carers. I am also usually requested to make observations around the child’s general emotional and physical presentation and on the basis of those observations, invited to provide any necessary recommendations regarding possible interventions or further specialist assessment.

6.6. Report Writing:

6.6.1. The actual report writing process is a frustrating combination of approximately 70% tedious review and summarization of the many hours of digitally recorded assessment interviews, and approximately 30% of what can sometimes be the most intellectually challenging and complex balancing of multiple psycho/social/physical variables across three generations and involving up to seven and 10 children, and three and four parents due to the blending of some family systems.

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6.6.2. In terms of listening to the digital records for content and quotes, a reasonable ratio of interview time to review time is 1hr : 2.5hrs. There is no compulsion for a report writer to use digital recordings but I am of the opinion that their use does add significantly to the accuracy of the report and it is relevant to note that one of the most frequent complaints I hear from parents, carers and the children themselves is that they are 'tired' of the Department not listening to them or of getting their statements wrong.

6.6.3. I am of the opinion that a good proportion of parents electing to contest child protection applications do so on the basis that they do not believe officers from the Department have understood their position or have deliberately misrepresented the facts concerning the substantiated child protection concerns. They will therefore often feel compelled to 'fight' the Department's application for Custody or Guardianship in an effort to ensure their experiences have been properly heard by a Magistrate and in an effort to demonstrate to their children that they still love them in spite of the allegations and child protection history. I will often receive anecdotal feedback from parents, carers, extended family members and children, that their opportunity to take part in a detailed clinical interview for the social assessment report has also been one of the first times they have felt 'heard' in the whole child protection process.

6.6.4. In that respect, one of the strongest arguments favouring such long and detailed social assessment reports is that when the report is written and then used as the basis for negotiations at the compulsory pre-hearing Court Ordered Conference, the parties are then able to negotiate from their respective positions as accurately portrayed in the report, as opposed to relying on the Department's own filed material which is usually pretty contentious and not always accurate. The majority of contested matters are resolved by either parental consent or negotiation prior to proceeding to a contested hearing.

6.7. Affidavit & Filing: In cases where the Department has commissioned a report in relation to a current child report application I will have the report witnessed by a Justice of the Peace and attached to an Affidavit and Certificate of Exhibit. Depending on the commissioning agent, after I have forwarded my one copy of the report to the Separate Representative or the Department, it is then their responsibility to ensure that sufficient copies are made and distributed to the various parties. In the case of a respondent party with a significant intellectual disability or literacy issues, I will ordinarily make a formal recommendation for the Department or the Separate Representative to take reasonable steps to ensure that a responsible person reads and accurately summarizes the main points of the report.

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6.8. Providing Expert Evidence in Contested Matters: The majority of child protection matters tend to resolve through negotiation by the date of the scheduled contested Children's Court hearing. I would ordinarily receive a subpoena to give evidence in approximately 30% of cases but would only be called to give evidence in 5% - 10% of cases. The majority of professional expert witnesses prefer to give evidence by phone as it is more cost-effective, however, if possible I prefer giving evidence in person. This is primarily due to the length and complexity of the social assessment reports and the relative difficulty of conveying that complexity by phone – particularly when the social assessment is usually the only professional report that attempts to address the inter-subjectivity of every member of the immediate family as well as reviewing issues that often include systemic issues of chronic disability, mental health issues, family violence, substance abuse, emotional/ physical/ sexual abuse, intergenerational trauma, attachment and behavioural disorders and past or current criminal histories.

7. General Observations and Recommendations:

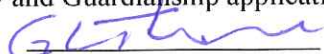
7.1. Social Assessment Reports:

7.1.1. Whilst the social assessment report writer has no formal authority in the child protection system and can only make a series of written recommendations to the various parties (the Department, Separate/Independent Representative; the Court; the parents; service providers; carers, etc...), I am of the opinion that a well-written, detailed, analytical report based on a thorough (critical) review of the Department's presented evidence and the parents, carers and children's assessment interviews is probably one of the more persuasive and influential documents available to the Children's Court.

7.1.2. Under the current adversarial system of intrusive removals of children and their traumatic separation from their parents, I think the social assessment report still continues to be a useful tool that provides parents and carers with an opportunity to have an independent voice within a court system that seems heavily weighted in the favour of the Department.

7.1.3. However, as a social worker employed at the end of the continuum that focuses on protecting children from their parents by separating them from their parents and supporting recommendations to place them with foster carers, one sometimes despairs at the current system's limited capacity to consider other alternatives. In that respect, I look forward to reviewing the range of early intervention models that may be proposed by the Inquiry because at the moment these are in exceptionally short supply. As an specialist social assessor who probably undertakes more independent reviews of Departmental Custody and Guardianship applications than any other person in Queensland, this limited

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absence of state-wide, good quality, research validated intervention models to address the issues of violence, substance abuse and mental health issues will continue to be one of the primary reasons why I am so often left with no other option than to consider supporting the Department's applications even when I am convinced that the quality of case management by the Department has at times been quite woeful. I note my further comments at Case Example 1 (see Attachment 2) as further support to these statements.

7.1.4.Recommendation: As well as providing independent feedback to the identified parties, Social Assessment Reports may also serve as an additional layer of informal review of Departmental interventions and case planning. In the event that possible criticisms of the Department's processes also need to be highlighted at the operational level, the social assessment report could be further adapted as a tool to bring those concerns before any external independent body of review.

7.1.5.Recommendation: Whilst there will likely be an ongoing requirement for social assessment reports to be commissioned from the private sector due to the need to access writers from a wide range of specialist qualifications, I am of the opinion that consideration should be given to setting up a Report Writing Unit within the Queensland Children's Court. Whilst I would envisage this Unit would employ a core group of mobile report writers who may be based at the Children's Court in Brisbane, it would also be relevant to set up a state-wide registry of qualified Social Assessment Report Writers. I would anticipate that this could be similar to the current arrangement at the Family Court of Australia where there are 'in-house' family report writers/ consultants and a coordinator who manages a list of 'Regulation 7 Family Report Writers and Consultants'. This would provide a much greater opportunity to standardize the overall quality of social assessment reports across Queensland and to establish a central registry of social assessment report writers and possibly other specialist report writers (psychiatric, psychological, etc...). This would also hopefully result in a reduction of waiting time for commissioned reports and therefore expedite the progression of cases in the court system. I would also note that the establishment of such a central registry and a specialized Report Writing Unit within the auspices of the Children's Court would also provide an opportunity to arrange for some much needed in-service training and professional clinical supervision for report writers. I particularly reinforce the importance of regular clinical supervision for report writers/practitioners as the work is quite isolating by its nature and there is a significant cumulative emotional burden for the report writer who is exposed to some pretty traumatic first-hand accounts of serious abuse and trauma of children and parents on a weekly basis.

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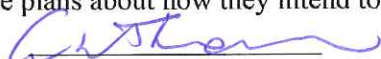


7.1.6.Recommendation: It makes little sense for any authority to commission a costly social assessment report that essentially has the report writer (who is usually also an experienced practitioner or therapist) undertake a series of very intrusive interviews with family members and children, only to create a '*snap shot*' assessment of the family that is biased to that specific point in time and results in the report writer having very little to nil involvement in the matter until the next updated assessment report might be commissioned one or two years down the track. I am of the opinion that there exists a relatively '*natural*' fit between the report writer and the Separate Representative where the assessor might be considered to be in a position to offer authoritative comment on ongoing issues of attachment, trauma and family systems theory as relevant to a specific case, whilst the Separate Representative is in a position to offer commentary on issues of legal process and legislation. In that respect, whilst it would be important for both the report writer and the Separate Representative to maintain their own independent status, I believe there would be considerable merit in developing a system where both roles might be able to complement each other to the overall benefit of the child/ren in question. I understand a similar system may currently operate with some success in the United Kingdom.

7.1.7.Recommendation: As per my review of the payments schedule for social assessment report by Legal Aid Queensland, unless there is a radical overhaul of these grants of aid, I would anticipate that more and more qualified private practitioners with years of experience in this field will simply withdraw from any involvement in report writing. This is a process that has actually been going on for some time. I note that when I state '*radical overhaul*' I mean that even if the current payment system was immediately doubled in all grant categories it would still represent a significant shortfall in terms of payments to private practitioners from other available income streams.

7.1.8.Recommendation: As I note earlier in the report, I am of the opinion that foster carers and kinship carers represent the real backbone of the child protection community in Queensland. Whilst the Department, the Court, legal representatives and therapeutic support services all have an integral part to play in protecting children and young people from harm, when it has been determined that children do need to be removed, it is the carers (both foster and kinship) who take on the 24 hour a day responsibility of providing a safe and secure environment for some of our society's most vulnerable members. The greatest complaint I receive from carers is that they do not receive sufficient information from the Department about the nature of the proceedings involving the child and that this then impacts on the carer's own ability to make adequate plans about how they intend to attempt to care for the child or respond to the

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child's needs – which are often quite behaviourally challenging and complex. The result of this lack of communication and basic disrespect of the carer's own rights is probably the greatest single reason why so many carers often feel abandoned by the Department and at risk of 'burn-out'. This has been ameliorated somewhat by the transfer of most foster carers to public foster care agencies, but the fundamental issue of the Department's basic lack of communication with carers continues unabated. I note that I have included these comments under the heading of 'Recommendation' but truthfully I am unsure how the Department is going to address this issue as it is really related to the internal culture of the Department and what I see as a lack of regard of the real importance of foster carers in the child protection system. Until this issue is properly addressed, I suspect that many families in the Queensland community who have considered the possibility of becoming foster carers will continue to shy away from this opportunity.

7.2. Adversarial Nature of the Child Protection System:

7.2.1. In practical terms, the Department is really attempting to operate two child protection systems in Queensland. Both systems have a legitimate role to play, however in their current format they are effectively mutually exclusive and make the very difficult job of the front-line child safety service staff even more difficult.

7.2.2. (System 1): On the one hand, Departmental officers are certainly encouraged to work proactively with family members and children to ensure that intrusive child protection applications are employed as the last resort to keep children safe. This is very much in keeping with most Departmental employees' core academic training and codes of ethics (e.g. social work, behavioural sciences, human services, psychology, counselling, etc...) and it's a core value of the Department's own vision.

7.2.3. (System 2): On the other hand, if or when officers reach a point when they determine that the parents have repeatedly demonstrated that proactive engagement may not be working and they are reaching a threshold where risk to the children is identified or anticipated, there is a perceptible switch to their role as evidence gatherers and investigators as they move towards the evidence gathering approach.

7.2.4. From the parents point of view, many of their initial conversations with their first case workers (particularly if children are under a voluntary care agreement) are about receiving fairly positive, genuine and encouraging statements from CSOs and Team Leaders indicating that the Department really just wants to promote the overall cohesion and viability of the family unit (i.e. System 1).

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7.2.5. Parents operating under a significant trauma or disability and with little experience of the Department will frequently accept these offers and often naively determine that the Departmental officer is somehow on their side – and even if they don't trust the worker many parents are fearful and suspicious of the Department's power and usually don't want to be seen to be uncooperative at this early phase of intervention (particularly if there is intergenerational experience of the child protection system and particularly if the parents are Indigenous).

7.2.6. Therefore, when or if the parent does experience a more serious setback or relapse in behaviour, they may confide in their caseworker – who is not only attempting to assist but is also formally recording all of this information '*just in case*' (i.e. System 2). I use the word '*naively*' reluctantly as it does imply that perhaps the Departmental officer is attempting to trick the parent into some false sense of security. I don't think this is actually the case but by this stage the clash between System 1 and System 2 is already well entrenched in the matter's case management.

7.2.7. Now the parents have received two conflicting messages: (1) '*We want to help you keep your family together*' & (2) '*We are actively collecting and collating information to potentially separate you from your kids*'. Some parents at this stage are quite capable of demonstrating to the Department that they can maintain a level of stability with limited encouragement and support (e.g. suitable housing and accommodation; abstinence from substance abuse; reduction or non-reportage of domestic or family violence; successful engagement with a family intervention service; attending a parenting skills programme such as PPP; attending relationship counselling or generic counselling; linking in with other community services and networks) and at the Department's satisfactory review, the family is usually exited from the system. I almost never get to see the families at this end of the continuum because my work at the other end of reviewing custodial child protection applications is almost universally concerned with the continuing clash of Systems 1 and 2.

7.2.8. For those parents who are not able or perhaps even unwilling to meet the expectations of the Department at the voluntary care agreement stage, the Department may move to invoke a range of involuntary interventions – Temporary Assessment Orders, Court Assessment Orders, Directive Orders, Supervision Orders, Custody Orders and Guardianship Orders. The message most parents receive at this point is: '*Work with us cooperatively on the case plan goals under a directive or short term order, or risk even more intrusive interventions*'. It is at this stage that the logic behind the dual system model descends into a bit of a farce because the parents now have one case worker who is attempting to convince the parents to work in the spirit of cooperation and child-

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centred outcomes whilst simultaneously recording nearly every failure by the parent to comply with the case plans.

7.2.9. It is a system that confuses the parents and frequently leads to a great level of anger and resentment against the Department. It is also a system that I'm sure must frustrate the frontline CSOs and Team Leaders as they are the ones who have to bear the brunt of distressed and angry parents. In this respect, I offer the following quote from Levy and Orlans (1999:215):

"The goal of keeping families together failed because the child welfare and mental health systems could not keep pace with the vast increase in drug abuse, poverty, violence, and resulting child maltreatment. The 'myth of family preservation' suggests that there have actually been two child welfare systems operating – one oriented toward preserving families, and the other toward removing children from maltreating homes. The reality is, it is impossible to keep families together when children are at risk for abuse and neglect. Removing a child from a dangerous environment, placing him or her in temporary foster care, then returning that child to abusive parents is not family preservation – it is insanity!"

7.2.10. This observation leads me to the first of two case examples and to several other recommendations to the Inquiry.

8. Case Example #1 - [2009] QChCM 001 McLaughlin M 26/06/2009:

8.1. A copy of Mr McLaughlin's 2009 judgement can be found at **Attachment 2** to this submission. I note that a copy of the judgement has also published on the Supreme Court of Queensland's Website - <http://www.sclqld.org.au/qjudgment/2009/QCHCM/+000>

8.2. **Background Summary:** The case had been subject to several previous assessments by other report writers, however in 2009 Separate Representative Ms Leah Harrap, from the Child Protection Team, Legal Aid Queensland, Brisbane commissioned me to prepare a new Social Assessment Report in order to obtain independent guidance regarding the suitability of the applications and other matters related to general case management. The Department had by then lodged applications for Long Term Guardianship for the couple's four young children on grounds related to significant mental health issues for the father, significant intellectual impairment for the mother, neglect and issues of risk of violence. The application was contested by the parents and proceeded to a four-day hearing at Ipswich Children's Court before His Honour, Mr McLaughlin.

8.3. Some Points drawn from the Judgement:

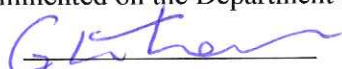
8.3.1. Quality of Evidence in Departmental Affidavits:

8.3.1.1.

At paragraphs 17 - 25 Mr McLaughlin

commented on the Department's practice of including both substantiated and

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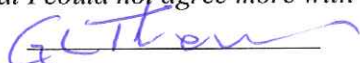
unsubstantiated child protection concerns in affidavits to support their arguments related to harm or risk of harm. He questioned whether there was any probative value in including these unsubstantiated concerns in the Department's argument. Mr McLaughlin also stated that he was uncertain how the Department assessed whether or not a child concern report was eventually classified as either substantiated or unsubstantiated and noted that the Department's position was essentially that the Court should accept the Department's judgement without much in the way of any other supporting evidence. Mr McLaughlin commented that the right to confidentiality of informers was enshrined in the Act but also noted that this tended to undermine the reliability of the information and reinforced these points again at paragraphs 25 to 27. Mr McLaughlin stated at paragraph 28 that if he was only to rely upon the evidence of the Department he would not have hesitated in dismissing the application.

8.3.1.2. I am of the opinion that this criticism was certainly warranted and not an isolated incident. From my own experience of reviewing many Departmental affidavits, the problems associated with rather poor quality evidence gathering and the appearance of questionable and often unsupported allegations in affidavits that is presented as supposedly reliable is probably best described as endemic. In this respect, in many affidavits filed by the Department, there appears to be a fundamental misapprehension by Departmental officers as to what constitutes reasonable inclusion of reliable and supportable information in their affidavits. For my own part, when I am preparing my own material for a social assessment report, and particularly in my final observations, conclusions and recommendations, I attempt as much as possible to distance myself from the Department's original materials and attempt to rely principally on the information I have gathered in my own assessment interviews.

8.3.2.Capacity of the Department to Respond to Judicial Criticism:

8.3.2.1. At paragraph 70, Mr McLaughlin read out a portion of my own observations and recommendations from the Social Assessment Report (2009). My comments in the report detailed a pretty stiff criticism of the Department's handling of the matter – particularly my opinion of how the Department often fails to respond adequately or, I think, even fairly and ethically with people with significant disabilities. At paragraph 71 Mr McLaughlin stated: *"I pause to stop reading from the report for the moment to say that I could not agree more with what Mr Thomson has said. I hope that his*

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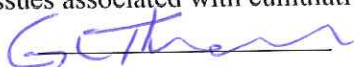
comments and my endorsement of his comments are brought to the attention at the highest levels of the Department of Child Safety. I would urge counsel for the Department to ensure that a transcript of this decision is sent to the people who control these matters to make sure that this sort of thing is known about and addressed adequately." I note that the subsequent deafening silence from the Department since the judgement was handed down in 2009 and published around 2010 has been disappointing. Despite Mr McLaughlin's comments at paragraph 71 and elsewhere in the report, there has been no indication that any senior manager from the Department has read his recommendations or that they have acted upon them. Certainly no one from the Department has ever attempted to contact me to discuss or review the matter and so one could be forgiven for thinking that this Department does not really seem to have any real internal capacity to respond to calls to self-reform. Once again, this is not isolated and I have had several other occasions to write lengthy criticisms and on one occasion this lead to a Separate Representative lodging a formal complaint against the Department involving a young female child with a profound disability and in the care of her grandmother who had not been sighted by Departmental officers for several months and for whom no case plan had been completed for many more months.

8.3.3.Availability of Evidence-based Support/Therapeutic Services for Parents & Children in the Process of Reunification or in the Early Stages of Family Stress:

8.3.3.1. At paragraphs 108-110 Mr McLaughlin made comment about the apparent lack of support available to the parents, *"As we have looked at in section 61 of the Act, I can make a variety of orders, but once I make a final order, what support is offered is up to the Department. The reality is the Department has offered little support in the last three and a half years. They are not likely to suddenly change now."*

8.3.3.2. I would note to the Inquiry that in terms of my own attempts to make valid clinical recommendations to the Department or the Separate Representatives for timely, research-based interventions, this continues to be the most challenging area of report writing as one observes the same tired case plan goals such as parents being required to attend short term ineffectual anger management classes in an attempt to combat systemic issues of violence, or women being referred to 10 generalist counselling sessions to address issues associated with cumulative psychological traumas. One does not want to

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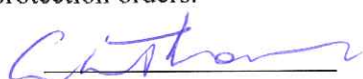
simply dismiss these attempted interventions as a waste of time and resources, but in my report writing practice I am receiving many commissions to undertake new reports for Long Term Guardianship Applications for children who were the subject of reports from two, three and four years earlier when I supported for the original Short Term Guardianship Applications. In this respect, over the past years I have developed a very healthy scepticism of the Department's ability to work proactively with family members in order to achieve successful reunifications.

8.3.3.3. Areas of required support and intervention that arise repeatedly for families and parents and children under pressure are in the areas of: housing support; alcohol and substance abuse; domestic and family violence; mental health; disability issues; parenting skills; chronic attachment and trauma related disorders in children; isolation from services (particularly for rural and Indigenous communities) and debt management. Unless these issues are addressed at national, state and local levels, the core issues that place the pressures on the parents and children will still exist and continue to reproduce the same issues generation after generation.

8.3.4.Recommendations drawn from Case Example 1:

8.3.4.1. **Recommendation:** If the Department is to continue in its role as the primary investigative body into complaints of child protection in Queensland, then there needs to be a further review of how it trains its frontline officers to gather and present evidence before the Courts. In particular, this practice of the Department including every shred of unsubstantiated allegations against parents in support of their applications needs to be stopped immediately. I say this for two reasons: (1) The inclusion of this material is one of the primary reasons why parents often become extremely irate towards the Department and this then affects their overall ability to communicate and cooperate with case workers in order to work towards reunification and undertake case plan goals. (2) Including unsubstantiated allegations in Departmental affidavits supposedly in support of a valid child protection application, does little to enhance the Department's professional credibility in the eyes of presiding judicial officers, legal representative or independent experts such as myself. What it does do however, is to undermine the validity and impact of the genuine evidence that really does support the Department's applications for child protection orders.

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8.3.4.2.

Recommendation: As Mr McLaughlin pointed out in his judgement, the Department needs to address the overall quality of the way it presents its evidence to the Court and the parents. If the Department insists on internally cataloguing recorded child concern reports as either '*substantiated*' or '*unsubstantiated*' then it needs to start demonstrating the validity of the decision making process that went into arriving at that decision and including that rationale in its affidavits.

8.3.4.3.

Recommendation: At present, each Child Safety Service Centre employs a Court Coordinator. This is similar to the role of a police prosecutor in that they ensure matters brought before the Court meet with a minimum standard of evidence, adhere to legal procedures, and to the Police Service's own policies and procedures. The Department also maintains a central 'Court Services Unit' in Brisbane. The Court Coordinators would appear to be often overwhelmed by the amount of work they have to perform, they operate with little to no administrative support and seem to have limited opportunities to adequately instruct or mentor front line staff on evidence gathering and affidavit presentation. Greater administrative support for Court Coordinators and additional opportunities for them to undertake training in investigatory procedures would provide them with the opportunity to train CSOs in these procedures.

8.3.4.4.

Recommendation: At present the Department recruits officers apparently on the basis that their tertiary qualifications represent the attainment of a core set of skills and values commensurate with child protection practices. This assumption seems to have lead to a policy whereby new Departmental employees are provided with a combination of block training, mentored field placements and ongoing in-service training. Over the past 5 years I have had the privilege to observe the professional practices of many highly skilled and competent child safety officers. As my own primary academic discipline is in social work, I would like to report that the best Departmental workers are from that traditional recruitment field for child safety but that does not seem to be the case and I have encountered excellent workers from across a range of academic disciplines. Unfortunately, my experience of encountering proficient workers has not been uniform across the Department and I've often been struck by the unpredictable quality of many workers irrespective of their initial academic training and the unpredictability of how they might interpret the Department's policies and procedures. To my mind, the problem seems to be more around the fundamental culture of the Departmental workers and their

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attitude to vulnerable parents than it has to do with what their basic degree happens to be. In that respect, one might also argue that there is not just one Department but as many informal versions of the Department as there are frontline workers', as parents, foster carers and kinship carers struggle to identify patterns of consistent policy application by their case workers. **I would therefore recommend that significant investment needs to be made in redesigning a much longer-term pre-service and in-service training components for prospective Departmental staff.**

8.3.4.5.

Observations and Recommendation: I

have just referred to the concept of a '*cultural shift*' for Departmental workers. This is a vague term that does not really provide any concrete examples of how change might be achieved. Once again, referring to Mr McLaughlin's judgement and with specific reference to my own arguments as reviewed by Mr McLaughlin at paragraph 70 of Attachment 2, I am persuaded that one immediate area of '*cultural shift*' for Departmental workers should be their attitude towards parents with mental health issues who are frequently portrayed in affidavits as fundamentally deceitful, unresponsive and generally vilified. There have been times when I have reviewed Departmental affidavits prior to undertaking assessment interviews where I have been somewhat concerned for my own safety and I am a 6ft, 90kg, ex-police officer. However, when I've actually conducted the interview, I've generally found that most parents have presented in such a responsive and reasonable manner that leads me to conclude that Departmental officers are certainly capable of preparing official documents that provide quite an unbalanced portrayal of the facts and the individuals involved. I make this statement knowing that I may be accused of being somewhat naive of the risks posed by some parents, step-parents, extended family members, carers and guardians. Let me say that I have spent over 30 years in a professional capacity around angry, violent, unstable, traumatised and distressed individuals and I am quite aware of the risk some people pose to themselves and to the people and children they love. What I am proposing is that more than a few Departmental staff seem to have a limited understanding of parents and family members who may be suffering from: serious mental health issues (i.e. schizophrenic forms; chronic anxiety and mood disorders; substance abuse issues; serious trauma; bipolar disorders; etc...); intellectual impairments; and acquired brain injuries. There is a well-entrenched practice of officers at many of Queensland's Child Safety Service Centres not properly taking into account the impact these types of

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disabilities and impairments have on the parents' ability to properly understand the practical implications of case plan goals that are supposed to lead to the reunification of the children with their family. It is little wonder then that when I undertake interviews with the parents to inquire about their ability to work cooperatively with the Department and other community and therapeutic organisations, that parents often state that by their own standards they have complied with every documented goal on the reunification case plan. I think Mr McLaughlin's judgement and my associated 2009 social assessment report on the family, properly demonstrates the Department's gross misrepresentation to parents of what it is they actually need to achieve in order to demonstrate a level of fundamental change in order to achieve reunification. Therefore my recommendations in this respect are:

8.3.4.5.1. **Recommendation:** Departmental officers require a good deal more basic education around issues of parental trauma, mental health issues and disabilities and how these issues affect such matters as relationships and parenting;

8.3.4.5.2. **Recommendation:** The Department needs to design and implement a basic protocol around how it manages and interacts with parents with significant disabilities;

8.3.4.5.3. **Recommendation:** Parents with suffering from a significant disability – particularly those suffering from a disorder that may affect their capacity to store and recall information, comprehend, interpret and apply complex or abstract concepts related to case plan goals need to have much more standardized access to disability advocacy services so that they will be able to work alongside parents to ensure the parents both understand what is expected of them and to assist them to access those services designed to address any perceived deficits of parenting or individual functioning.

8.3.4.6. **Recommendation:** With respect to the issue of limited social and therapeutic support services, I would agree with the findings of the Cummins Report (2012: Report of the Protecting of Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry) at Vol. 1. Paragraph 4.3. and its recommendation for a locally coordinated system that effectively targets individual families (i.e. the suggested Vulnerable Child and Family Services Network). I would further add, that even though the concept of providing a '*supportive buffer*' around any identified vulnerable family is crucial to help them avoid reaching the stage where

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involuntary interventions are necessary, it will be crucial to ensure that those services are evidence-based models and that any support staff are properly trained and have the confidence of the local community. An example of one such program is the University of Queensland's Indigenous Positive Parenting Program (PPP) currently undergoing further trials in remote North Queensland Indigenous communities (PhD. Candidate Ms. Lauren Hodge). It is these styles of programme that need to be better funded and adapted to local conditions.

8.3.4.7. **Recommendation:** Whilst I cannot comment on how much Mr McLaughlin's judgement has directly influenced the Department's own policy development, I am aware that the publication of the judgement has certainly generated some interest and discussion amongst some members of the legal community, report writers and some frontline Departmental staff. I would therefore recommend that consideration be given to publishing Children's Court (Magistrates) judgements (de-identified) as they do provide an additional insight into the concerns of judicial officers presiding over child protection matters and may prompt workers to reappraise how they approach the whole issue of how they elect to proceed with contested matters.

9. Case Example No. 2. Consideration for Option of 'Long Term Care Adoption'

9.1. A copy of this de-identified case example can be found at Attachment 3 to this submission. I would caution the Inquiry and any reader, that the contents of this extract from the Social Assessment Report are at times quite distressing. In that respect, whilst I do not apologise for providing the extract from the associated report, I am of the opinion that the nature of the material does serve to demonstrate the oppressiveness of some parent's lives and the possible need to provide a more intrusive level of child protection order in some limited occasions.

9.2. NB: I note that consideration may need to be given by the Inquiry as to whether or not they elect to make this extract public.

9.3. **Background Summary:** The report was commissioned by a regional Child Safety Support Centre that sought guidance with respect to the most appropriate level of child protection order. The subject child was approximately 4 years old and had been in the care of the Department for most of his life. The mother had made some progress with respect to the case plans but as the reader will perhaps note from the content of the interview, she continued to struggle with a range of issues including: very sporadic contact with her son, substance abuse, trauma, relationship stability, social isolation and accommodation issues. The child in question had also been subject to several unstable placements and was demonstrating some

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challenging behaviours with his new carers. Otherwise, the carers were managing the behaviours quite well and had indicated to the report writer that in the event that Long Term Orders were granted, they hoped he would remain in their care for the balance of any order (18yrs). I note that the level of attachment between mother and son was extremely limited even by the mother's own estimation.

9.4. Discussion:

9.4.1. I will keep my comments on this matter uncharacteristically brief. Suffice to say that if I had have had the opportunity to make an even more intrusive recommendation than Long Term Guardianship on this occasion then I probably would have resorted to its use. That is, I would like to have made a recommendation for what might be referred to as 'Long Term Care Adoption'. The young boy's father was not available and the mother had herself prompted the conversation around a possible earlier adoption for him. On the one hand, the mother still retained a residual desire to achieve reunification but when that was tested it became apparent that her primary concern was to ensure that her young son now had an opportunity to grow up in what she hoped would be a relatively stable family environment. There is no joy whatsoever in reviewing this type of matter or in making these types of recommendations. I think all one can hope for as an assessor is assisting the mother to come to some sort of resolution about her own future and the future of her son. I note that if I had have been able to recommend a 'Long Term Adoption' for this report I would have continued to support some level of contact between the mother and her son and there would have been additional conversations with the boy's new foster carers about their capacity to form a collaborative relationship with the boy's mother. Of the 125 reports I've completed over the past few years, I don't imagine that I would have considered this type of highly intrusive recommendation on more than a handful of occasions. However, I am convinced that there is a place for this style of placement in the legislation and I would welcome any opportunity to provide further commentary before the Inquiry to address the matter in more detail.

9.5. **Recommendation:** That consideration be given to including the option of 'Long Term Care Adoption' into the legislation. By 'Long Term Care Adoption' I refer to a level of child protection order above that of Long Term Guardianship to the foster carer, in that the carer would take on full responsibility for the child in the manner of a formal adoption. However, where acknowledgement was also made recognising the child's biological parents and, if appropriate and safe, provision also to be made for the child to maintain and pursue that natural relationship with the parents, other siblings and members of the extended family.

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References:

Levy, T. & Orlans, M. (1999). *'Attachment, Trauma and Healing: Understanding and Treating Attachment Disorder in Children and Families'*. CWLA Press: Arlington VA.

Attachment 1: Extract of Curriculum Vitae dated 26th October 2012

Attachment 2: Copy of 2009 Children's Court Judgement by His Honour Mr McLaughlin.

Attachment 3: Extract of De-identified Social Assessment Report #1.

Declaration

This written statement by me dated 26th October 2012 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 40 is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

G. L. Th... Signature
Signed at BRISBANE this 26th day of October 20 12

Witnessed:

Emma Rahemtula Signature
Name EMMA RAHEMTULA Rank LEGAL OFFICER Reg. No. _____

Witness signature: _____

Officer signature: _____