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27 JUL 2012

Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry
PO Box 12196
George St QLD 4003

25th July 2012

Dear Commissioner,

RE: Submission to the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry

Some points that I wish to raise are:

1. Children removed from their family unit.
 - a. When a child is removed from their family unit that in the 1st instance the child is put into a temporary community based network of 'family care centre' for a period of no longer than 7 days. Each centre would be adequately staff 24/7 and be set-up as a comfortable 'home like' environment' that could cater for up to 8-10 children of various ages
 - b. During these 7 days Departmental officers will discuss with members of the affected family unit's extended family (eg. grandparents, uncles/aunties, etc) their willingness to provide extended care for the children affected. Failing to find a trusted or willing relative then in the following order - Departmental officers would then seek out trusted friends of the family unit, local community based organizations, and then finally a local foster family to undertake long term care of the affected children. All attempts must be made to keep the children within the local community where the community as a whole can be part of the caring solution and local knowledge and norms can keep a watchful eye on both the perpetrators (so that they can mature and develop better life skills) and the victims (can lead at best a normal and happy childhood). A family issue becomes at some point a community solution - we have to move beyond a traditional 1st response biological based solution. A community solution would involve local representatives from school, health, police, housing, and the general community proactively helping mentor and assist the rehabilitation and socio-economic functioning of the affected family unit over a longer term. A step-by-step 'road to recovery' long term program must be designed, developed, implemented (and regularly reviewed) for all members making up the current dysfunctional family unit.
 - c. Both Departmental officers and the non-family key stakeholders that are involved both with the children's longer term care and the providing assistance to adult members of the family unit would have equal input into deciding about the level of contact and the planning of any transaction arrangements back into the original family unit. They would also be involved with longer term ongoing regular monitoring until they believe that the situation within the family unit is stable and functional.

2. Agencies looking after child protection
 - a. At least 85% of their budget must be expended on 'hands on' front line workers who are operating from a fleet of vehicles (mobile offices) and having day-to-day interactions with dysfunctional/recovering family units. Less than 15% of an Agencies total expenditure must be spent on administrative, IT, research, and managerial management issues. IT solutions to record/monitor/manage family units data must eliminate all paper based records and also fully integrate/communicate with other Agency systems (eg. courts, housing, school, health, etc)

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- b. Agencies fund more University and in-house research into child protection areas that may lead to more practical and successful outcomes in the field for both parents and children making up the family unit.
- c. Any evaluation process must be streamlined and governance redefined where is having a negative impact upon timely decision making and the delivering timely outcomes.
- d. More trust and delegated decision making power must be devolved to the Agencies professional workers in the field. These professionals must be given greater flexibility to develop unique outcomes to suite each particular situation. They must also be provided with a adequate budget and a level of discretionary expenditure (with a define audit trail) to implement outcomes and strategies (eg. training, travel, etc) to enable a family unit's 'road to recovery' to have a chance to be realized.
- e. The Agency undertake a significant amount of 'hand on' life skills' training (eg. teenage relationships, budgeting as a family unit, relationships and pregnancy, relationships and new babies, step families, anger management, etc) within schools, within maternity wards, within community groups, and as a result of court imposed orders. A proactive educational approach may reduce the need to reactive to a negative child protection incident.

Yours in service,



Tom Gordon
21 Darling St
Sandgate Qld 4017