



## Royal Commission

into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and  
Exploitation of People with Disability

### STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS OF COUNSEL ASSISTING

**Name:** Jeanette Kerr

**Address:** Level 7, Darwin Plaza  
41 Smith Street  
DARWIN NT 0800

**Occupation:** Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Families  
Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities

**Date:** 5 November 2021

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability ("**Royal Commission**").
2. I make this statement based on my own knowledge and relying on information supplied by other staff of the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities ("**Territory Families**"). This statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
3. I provide this statement in response to the submissions of Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission ("**Submissions**") following Public Hearing 8: The Experiences of First Nations people with disability and their families in contact with child protection systems ("**Public Hearing 8**"). This statement is in response to specific issues relevant to Territories Families and the Northern Territory ("**NT**") Government. It is not intended to be an exhaustive response.

#### ***The overrepresentation of First Nations parents with disability***

4. I refer to paragraph [181] of the Submissions. In my experience, the statement is more likely to be correct in respect of non-First Nations families in the NT, than for First Nations families. The latter, in the experience of Territory Families, are better placed and more likely to provide care for a child in need of protection within the broader family group, than the former.

#### ***Involvement of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations***

5. I refer to paragraph [426] of the Submissions. Whilst Territory Families supports recommendations regarding improved resourcing, it is important to note that in the NT, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (**ACCOs**) are funded, in a large part, by the Commonwealth Government. This is particularly the case in remote areas of the NT and for Aboriginal Medical Services and Child and Family Intensive Family Support services.

Signature of person giving this statement: ...

Signature of Witness: ...

6. Presently, Territory Families allocates all funding to ACCOs across the NT for Aboriginal Carer Services, Family Support Services and Children and Family Centres, and the majority of available funding for Youth Diversion Services. The NT is a small jurisdiction and Territory Families is a relatively small agency with limited resources, which does not permit significant funding increases. To fully support this recommendation the NT would need considerable support from the Commonwealth in building the capacity and capability of organisations to deliver disability services in both urban and remote areas.

***Prevention and Early Intervention Supports***

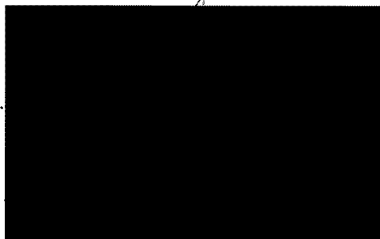
7. At paragraph [489] of the Submissions, Counsel Assisting submit that it is open on the evidence for the Royal Commission to recommend that the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments must invest to ensure that culturally safe and appropriate prevention and early intervention supports and services for First Nations parents with disability and their families are widely and sufficiently accessible to them, either through specialist services such as ACCOs. Territory Families supports this recommendation in principle.
8. Counsel Assisting submit child protection authorities should co-design a plan of action and strategy with First Nations community and stakeholders in the relevant jurisdiction, including Family Matters, First Nations children protection peak bodies and the First Peoples Disability Network Australia. Territory Families supports the recommendation but asks that it be recognised that Family Matters, a First Nations children protection peak body and the First Peoples Disability Network Australia, do not have a tangible footprint in the NT. Alternatively, local ACCOs would be included in co-designing a coordinated action plan and strategy, particularly those from remote and regional areas.
9. As above, to fully support this recommendation, the NT would need considerable support from the Commonwealth in building the capacity and capability of organisations to deliver disability services in urban and remote areas.

***Research commissioned and funded by the NT***

10. I refer to paragraph [222a] of the Submissions. Territory Families support this recommendation in principle, however, as noted above, there are existing challenges for the NT as a small jurisdiction and as Territory Families is a relatively small agency with limited resources, which does not enable a research program.


Signature of person giving this statement: ..

Signature of Witness: ..



CONTINUED STATEMENT OF JEANETTE KERR


- 11. The Child and Youth Development Research Partnership (CYDRP) is a research partnership between the NT Government and the Centre for Child Development and Education (CCDE) at Menzies School of Health Research. The aim of the partnership is to support research and evaluation that informs child and youth wellbeing. At the heart of the partnership, is a repository of de-identified, linked data about NT children and young people (born from 1994 onwards). The CYDRP data repository was refreshed in 2017 and the current version (Extract 2) contains information on 80 000 children and young people across 14 datasets including those in health, education, child protection, and youth justice. Data linkage for the repository is undertaken by SA NT DataLink, which is a dedicated research linkage facility.
- 12. The NT may be able to leverage this partnership to undertake research on the experiences and needs of parents with disability and their families in contact with child protection systems, particularly noting that the vast majority of these families are First Nations.
- 13. The NT submits that consideration should be given to a recommendation for a nationwide co-operative arrangement to undertake research across all Australian jurisdictions, which is co-funded on a pro-rata basis to better utilise the collective resources of agencies. Alternatively, a Commonwealth funded model, and/or a co-contribution model is more likely to allow delivery on this recommendation for jurisdictions, especially small jurisdictions.

Name: 

Signature: Jeanette Kerr

Date: 5/11/21

Witness Name: Julyana Un-Kukla

Signature: 

Date: 05/11/21