

Acknowledgements

The Board of Inquiry is grateful to the many individuals and organisations that provided assistance at different points during the Inquiry and without whose support the Report could not have been produced.

Reference Group

The Expert Reference Group listed here met formally with the Board on three occasions over 5 days. At other times, group members provided information and feedback by e-mail or telephone. Their input has been invaluable:

Dr Leah Bromfield

Mr Charlie King

Ms Patricia Miller

Mr Julian Pocock

Professor Dorothy Scott

Professor Sven Silburn

Dr Anne Smith

Ms Lesley Taylor

Further details about the Reference Group members can be found in Appendix 1.7.

Experts

The Board was ably assisted by a number of subject matter experts at different points of the Inquiry who all made significant contributions to the content and shape of the final report:

Associate Professor Fiona Arney

Dr Maria Harries AM

Dr Sue Glead

Dr Darryl Higgins

Dr Peter Lewis

Dr Elizabeth Reimer

Ms Denise Rieniets

Mr Garry Rogers

Mr David Ross

The Board is grateful for the expertise and insights of the Reference Group and subject matter experts, but accepts responsibility for the final form of the written material and the recommendations.

Legal Counsel Assisting the Inquiry

In addition, the Board gratefully acknowledges the invaluable work of Mr Greg MacDonald, the lawyer assisting the Inquiry, for his insight and commitment to the Inquiry in the context of many other demands. He was assisted from time to time by Mr Robert Pocock.

Organisations

A number of organisations also provided valuable assistance in the preparation of the Report.

The National Child Protection Clearinghouse (Australian Institute of Family Studies) provided background research materials on a number of topic areas, as did Menzies School of Health Research. Staff members from the Australian Institute of Family Studies who contributed their expertise for the Inquiry include Dr Leah Bromfield, Alister Lamont and Rhys Price-Robertson and, from Menzies, Associate Professor Fiona Arney and Mark Westby.

The CREATE organisation was instrumental in facilitating three meetings with young people in the care system and the Principal and staff (Margaret Moon and Elspeth Hurse) from Millner Primary School facilitated a visit by the Inquiry to view the ERICUS Project. We are grateful for this support and assistance.

Visits to remote communities and town camps

There are a number of organisations and individuals to thank for their work in helping to organise the visits of the Board to remote communities and town camps.

The Aboriginal Interpreter Service (Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services) provided invaluable assistance for most visits, whilst Save The Children (through Lisa Hillan and Nancy Sweeney) and Tangentyere Council organised visits to particular communities and town camps. The Commonwealth-funded Government Business Managers greatly assisted the Board with coordination and support in each of the communities that it visited.

Several organisations assisted the Board in understanding the views of people in town camps and remote communities who may have an interest in the operation of the child protection system. These include the Katherine Women's Information and Legal Service, Tangentyere Council, Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, and the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency.

Government agencies

During the course of the Inquiry there have been numerous meetings with personnel from the Department of Health and Families and, in particular, officers from Northern Territory Families and Children. We have made many specific requests for information or data and for meetings with personnel from different work units. In all matters we have received courteous cooperation from Departmental staff.

The Board would also like to acknowledge the valuable practical support provided to the Inquiry from officers of the Department of the Chief Minister around the establishment of the secretariat office and ongoing administrative support and staff recruitment. Staff from the Strategic Communications Unit of DCM have been invaluable in providing advice and assistance in relation to the website and processes for the design and printing of the Report.

The Secretariat

The organisational demands behind an Inquiry such as this are onerous. They include the creation of an office base from scratch, the development of mailing lists to identify and communicate with stakeholders, the setting up of systems to receive and process the vast amount of electronic and written material sent in (so much more than had been anticipated), the development of financial accounting processes, the organisation of public and stakeholder forums, formal hearings and community visits across the Northern Territory, the coordination of a relentless and rapidly changing travel schedule, the scheduling of countless meetings and consultations in the Northern Territory and interstate, the management of an ever-changing team of researchers, policy experts, investigators and others, in addition to supporting and facilitating communication between Board members living in different cities – all this and more whilst working under pressing time constraints and dealing with material of a most sensitive and often distressing nature.

The Board is most grateful for the untiring efforts of the secretariat that enabled this work to proceed and saw it through to completion. In particular it wishes to thank the Executive Officer, Kathleen Chong-Fong for her skill, patience and commitment in developing and marshalling the team then keeping it focused and effective, and Trish Schebella, the Office Administrator, who so ably managed the relentless day-to-day demands of the work with good humour and attention to detail.

Others

There are many others who have ably assisted the Inquiry in its work at different times. These include Rosemary Aldridge, Carly Strachan and Veronica McClintic, Jane Munday, who ably managed the (at times) overwhelming media demands, Dr Christine Fletcher, our diligent and patient editor, James Carter of Big Picture Graphic Art, the report designer, and staff of the Government Printing Office.

We thank the forbearance of our colleagues and other employers who have tolerated our absences and supported us through the Inquiry, namely the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

Finally, each of the Board members would like to sincerely thank our long-suffering families who have had to do without us (in mind and body) for long periods of time over the past ten and a half months. We thank you for your love, patience and understanding.

MB, HB, RR

18 October 2010