



### TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH CP, A CARER

- CP Because we're the grass roots people. We don't know what's happening, and we see these things. It just hurts us. You know, we should be working together as one for the betterment of kids. Any children, you know. It doesn't matter whether you're white, black or brindle. Kids are kids. They're our kids. You know, it's everybody's problem.
- CP We had an incident where my niece's son got hurt in town. Well, friends rang us up. They said, "He's been hurt, he's bleeding from his nose", and stuff like that. So I rang up the police from out bush and they said, "No, we can't take any calls from a...you have to be a witness." And I said, "Well, I'm – whether you like it or not". I said, "I'm – I'm one of the family members." And he goes, "But you have to see it." So I gave them the address. They picked up the girl, then the girl – the girl went and picked up the kid out at the community. Picked him up. The mother was home. The lady took him to the hospital, then I rang the lady and said, "If FACS get involved," I said, "tell them to ring me first", you know. So FACS went there the next day. Family and Children's Services went there the next day but then they rang me. And I said – I just told them, "I don't want that kid in care. He's got parents out here, family out here that can look after him." Then on – so that happened. That went smoothly. We took the – the child and we did a meet, you know, between here, Katherine and Top Springs. Did a meet there, so I picked up the child, took him home. Then when last week, me and my sister goes to ..... and just me – my family's care – like, me and my sister, the father's mother.
- CP It's just a family arrangement between us. So we went and met with FACS on Monday last week. And they told – they gave us the points that they said we can't – we're not – because we wanted the child to go with the mother to rehab but it didn't happen. So all well. So we stayed and kept him. So I said to FACS – I said, "So what's going to happen now?" And he said, "Well, it's a family arrangement. It's up to family. You know, you decide whether you want him and all that. Except the parents. The parents can't have the kid." And I said, "Well, tell me, is he still on your caseload?" And he says, "No, he's not." But why are they telling us, if it's a family arrangement, to do this, that and everything else? They should keep their nose out of it, you know. And I can't understand how they work, truly.

CP But I don't think Indigenous people really understand their system, you know. They should be given that awareness out in the communities because most of the kids they have in care are from communities. Out in communities. No awareness, you know, out in them communities. And that's where they should be showing them more awareness, instead of coming there, putting the red tape on. That's it, the kid disappears forever and a day. And then the parents have another kid. They forget about the kid. You know, there's no follow ups as well. So they don't – they've got to clean up their backyard before they start dealing with kids, even communities, I reckon.

CP ... at the moment you get some families in the community that are looking after other people's kids, but they haven't gone through FACS, you know. It's just – it's just within the family group, and it's happening now but soon as FACS get involved through, maybe, Health or anybody else, you're going to have a hard time, bloody, you know, beating the red tape. Trying to bloody jump that. And I think that's a lot of crap.

CP Yeah. But I reckon they should have Indigenous people that are on communities. You know, strong ones. You know, strong people. Like, I'd be a strong person. Even though – even though the parents would be there, I'd just draw the line, "No, you don't take your kid. This is only the times you can visit." You know, you can find people like that who are caring and willing to take on board kids, you know, that need love and care and support. And – but I think they – I think some – some community members are so scared that because you've got to go jump this loop, jump that loop, they're not going to do any – they're not going to come in to be – you know, be assessed. I mean, it's not an assessment thing. You're a parent, you're a parent, end of story. If you haven't got a police record, I'm sure you're a good parent, you know.

CP I think they're reluctant to talk because I think they feel ashamed in that community environment because that's a small community environment. They feel ashamed that – like, these two parents that lost their kid for three to four years, I think they felt ashamed because FACS actually went into their house – went into their house with police involvement, you know. And that scares people. It does. So I think that's why people go, "No, if FACS is involved, I'm not going to say anything because they've got the police behind them." I think that scares people as well. And some

parents, I've noticed – because their kids already left, they have other – they have another – two, three other kids, so that kid's forgotten, you know. And that's where FACS should be saying, "Remember you still have this seven year old kid. You've got a two year old and a one year. Remember this seven year old kid. We're going to get him back to you." That's where they should be assisting parents and say, "We are trying to them back to family, to their own culture." I don't think they – they – they don't do that.

CP That's where, I think, FACS – even though you take kids off drunks in the streets, you still have to do follow ups. Getting the kid back to their families while they're young. When they're young, they pick up things, you know, so quickly. The older they get, they lose that because they've got to – they've got control of themselves. And this is where, I think, that's what we lack, is getting them back to family while they're young, you know. And understand where they can grab onto things, you know. Otherwise, the older they get, it's too late then. It's too late then.

CP Well, and what else I'd like to add is looking at our kids that are being – if they're putting – you know, going into rehab or into diversionary program, like, within, like, Don Dale itself, I'd like to see the government – any government – giving communities a chance to do it in their own communities. I mean, not in the community but, like, a few ks out, you know. Because what it means to me – because I work with kids every day of my life, you know. I used to do settling and all that. And this has changed me, you know, being on the patrol and dealing with kids. Student attendance. Seeing kids, it's changed the way I feel about kids. Because I think we should be helping them, just supporting them, you know. Because that's what I did with my kids and nobody's doing it to other kids, you know.