



TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH CQ, A CARER

- CQ Yeah when I first seen her walk in, it just melt my heart you know and made me feel proud at least I done something to help a little girl, you know? Came from a really rough background and everything. And I ask her what your name. "I didn't know you can talk." "Yeah I can talk." Must be she was shocked all that time, you know, too scared to talk or anything. She's still a bit scared I think, still a bit traumatised from her mother and father. But for that one week when I left her she wanted love from her mother and father. In the end she didn't receive that love. I'm keeping her here. Like I said, you know, before, she had a really rough upbringing and everything. I heard a lot of stories that she went to thing and all, but I had great help from my brother and sister-in-law, with mum. It's just really sad, you know.
- Interviewer How old again was that little girl when she came to you?
- CQ One years old. Now she is four.
- CQ [I told the clinic] Give me a week or two, see what happens, if she's not improving or putting on weight then I'll ask the welfare mob to help me. That's what I told them but since the two weeks when it went past, I did see a lot of improvement, like putting on weight, eating, eating healthy, getting strong on knees and legs, you know. Running around, using arms and legs.
- Interviewer So you just did that yourself. Did you do it through welfare?
- CQ No, I didn't need welfare's help, I had my mother and sister-in-law. I don't know how.. I got the welfare. Through child care. I still take her to child check-ups and everything and to nutrition doctors, Paediatrician I mean. Sometimes it did made me angry what the welfare mob asking the same old questions, because its been four years. They should have went about 2 years and leave me alone but it's been 4 years but I don't know whether it's closed or open. They haven't been contacting. The only contact they gave me is when I was in hospital, they told me it's closed but I don't know.
- Interviewer You don't think it is closed?
- CQ Didn't receive any letters or anything. The other thing make me angry is instead of teachers and doctors and nurses contacting me about what I'm doing wrong or right they contact welfare and that's not right. Welfare is not the legal guardian of that kid. Welfare is not there every night and day sitting down with them, talking to them, what's wrong, comforting them, it's us you know. We've got to go through the emotional things and stressing out on everything. I understand you mob are really concerned about this. Don't contact the welfare unless you contact me first. They got a bit angry at that. Nah, I'm on the right track because I'm with her 24 hours 7 days a week, that's for life. They come and go. Yes we're going to have a bump, it's not smooth sailing you know, you've got to naturally have bumps and everything. That's part of growing up.
- CQ They told me that next time we will contact you but next time keep an eye on it. I understand that school hours are your time, home time is my time, that's what I told

them. How can she get naughty, she's only a 4 year old. That age always do. But like they tell me if her nose is running or like earache and everything. Last year or year before the welfare mob came and was talking to me, my mum, how to come up with a plan so us three decided there and then, gave us a paper each. Like mum she almost go to meeting every week and sometime I'm not here as well, well kid not really going to go an get education first. Sometimes my sister-in- law steps in and my brother. Not sometime but always. We all help out. Another thing about that welfare telling us you've got to leave the money behind.

CQ

Like in those days in Aboriginal community my generation you know, we didn't charge each other for money and we didn't know anything about that. We only know about sharing, share food, blankets, everything. Even my great-grandparents done that. My grandmother and grandfather grew a lot of people who are here right now and they have family of their own. Like say if I run out of food myself in this house, the kids usually go to green house or there's another house here. They have supper there. No one complains. When we walk over they say we just make another plate and your turn to cook. Like we share our kids and we share our food and money. Everything like that. I think it is a good idea to pass it onto kids as well, you know. Like in Europeans, family is only mother, father and the kids, hey? Not the cousins or extended family you know. Doesn't work that way in their side. But in Aboriginal culture it does work perfectly. That is how I've grown up, I was growing up like that. I still do that, I share food when they starving and even my last tin I gave it to my brother or my cousin when they come past.

Interviewer

How was that important for you when kids get taken away?

CQ

Well it's really, really sad for us if children being taken away from us will have the hurt and heartbroken for the rest of our life and regrets. Plus, if the kid has been taken away from us to Kartiya family they won't know our culture or our way of living. Like sometimes Kartiya do good work, good and bad works, same as for Yapa, Aboriginal people, good and bad. Somehow we all have to balance it both sides you know. Try and work it out together for the children's sake. That's what I told welfare. You can't just take our kids away because we going to keep on fighting. That's what we good for, we gotta fight for our kids. That's our next generation. If we look after them, they're going look after us when we old and grey. They'll think back my auntie look after me. We are trying to teach the kids how to show in our way, in our Yapa way, trying to teach our children to be respectable from a young age. Same as Kartiya they teach their kids to be respectable for others. Same like that. But we're doing it differently by sharing. When they hurt, like when they break their arm or something, they come and tell us and let us know, we take them straight to the hospital. Sometimes we get bush medicine like if their arm is swollen or something, swollen things, we just put ointment on them. Make them feel safe and comfortable and talk with them. That's what they like best really, they love adults attention.

Me and my sister in law we sit and talk about it. I tell her my problem, talk to her, I tell the kids go play somewhere. Go somewhere, go next house and play with the families, talk to them, watch television, do something. Tell my problems to my sister in law, sit down and I ask her for advice, tell her ah that's really hard. Then you know it's hard you an adult you understand now. Yep. That's how I used to feel but don't forget, that's one thing that will always be there, it can't fade away or no

one can take it. You know what it is, she told me, love. Love will always be there for the kids. Now I know what you mean. They start walking away, getting all the bad energy out then all the kids start running up towards me hugging me now. Ah, now I know because every single day and night I walk, kids walk with me. You know because even when they're coming from school they never let me go. It is just a great feeling but sometimes I get frustrated, go on play along, leave me alone. Kids are really important. Got somewhere to live you know. I didn't think about that when I was drinking.

Interviewer If there was any message that you wanted to give the Commissioners about welfare and your experience, what would that be?

CQ Well, my strong advice is talk to the elders more, find out how they grew up, not the negative side the positive side, you know, especially for the kids, how their upbringing was and everything. What made their mind to be occupied more, you know and to learn more things. What made them listen. I started listening to my parents when I was in my 20s, not in my teenage years. I used to ignore them. But just keep up the good work. Listen to kids mainly. They're curious. They want to know more. They think adults keep secrets, you know?

Interviewer You was talking a little bit before about boredom?

CQ Yeah, boredom, well sometimes when they're bored, I tell them to make them things, not to talk to herself, imagine things like you were in a castle and build something. Well I used to do that. Get away from boredom and everything. Make a doll, make a little humpy. How you make a humpy you just get a couple of sticks and put them across the tree and get a sheet, old sheet and yeah, that's what you call a humpy. Teach them you know. But other advice to the Commissioner is like children are like are students and we are the teachers. They don't know anything, we've got to teach them how to and guide them through life. They are our life and our next generation. But no one's their principal. We got to teach them. Teach them how to look after themselves and be strong and take responsibility you know.

Interviewer What happens when they get taken away?

CQ They lose all that. They'll start feeling hurt, sad and try to hurt themselves or hurt others. They'll start hurt themselves first, if that doesn't work they'll start hurting others. Not only emotionally, physically too as well because there's not only Yapa people like that, I've seen them. Just trying to keep them, you know, on a straight road, but there's always going to be a bump on the way.

Interviewer Can you think of anything that would have made it easier for you caring for your two girls as a family carer or foster carer?

CQ Yeah, they should have like a mother and daughter time out, you know what I mean. Like a night out for girls. For mothers with teenage daughters or you know, 10 year old daughter, 4 year old daughter to go out and do some activities, you know. Because I didn't think of that one before. [Organisation] are trying to do that but they only invited the young kids, they didn't invite the mothers or aunts or carers like us. They didn't tell us you can join in. They didn't tell us like that. Because that's the special way to bond with children, you know? To do things, activities together, be crafty together, share ideas and dreams together. They had

that going but it just completely stopped because the workers didn't explain it to us properly. Us adults we thought it was only for the kids completely. It's only for kids, we can give you can rest. I see that as weak, how can I rest when I want to be with my daughter. I want to see what's going on in her world you know, every night. Yeah like more activity with the parents. Kids and parents bonding together. Like learning both worlds, like learning Aboriginal and Kartiya world together. Because one way that was back from our great great great grandparents. Today it is both worlds, now two worlds and got to learn both sides.