



**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH DT, A MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER AND KINSHIP CARER**

- DT** Yeah I'm a single mother and I work at {redacted} as the Residential Youth Worker, working in the two homes.
- That's taking care of the kids that's been referred to us through the DCF mob, the welfare mob.
- And I've got children at home myself. I don't drink or I don't smoke either. I'm always taking care of kids all the time.
- Interviewer** We just wanted to ask you about your, I think it's your granddaughter.
- DT** Well I grew up my son, my older sister's son. I took him in since he was like 8 months old.
- I brought him up and I had a terrible violent relationship with my ex-partner and stuff. Then we moved away coming here to Katherine with all the kids.
- Interviewer** How many of your own kids did you have?
- DT** Yeah I had my own children at that time, 4 of my other kids. I grew [redacted] up until he come to a very age he think he could find a girlfriend which he found his partner now.
- Interviewer** You grew him up until he was a young man, young adult and he found a partner?
- DT** He found a partner. They loved each other so much and they had problems, you know, like, as they got into their real relationship, serious relationship.
- They started having problems, like, drinking problems mainly and then she become pregnant having her first child [redacted].
- She was born premature and they sent her to Darwin Hospital and she was in the hospital for 2 or 3 weeks until she started putting on some weight and stuff. And they took that kid off her because she kept on leaving the hospital because of wanting to be with her partner, my son, and then she had to come back to the hospital to feed the baby and at some times she used to be running late because of the distance from the city to the hospital.
- She couldn't find her way getting back there. She used to be very late getting to the baby and stuff. So they discharged her out of the hospital but they kept the baby in the hospital. And then welfare, the DCF mob, got involved and they told her that they're going to take the baby away as soon as she puts on some more weight.
- They thought they was going to come home with the baby but they never come home with the baby. So they ended up coming back without the baby and they started going to some programs here with the DCF mob.

**Interviewer** What sort of programs were they?

**DT** Some sort of reconnecting program, something to do with rehabilitation and stuff like that. They were going to rehab.

**Interviewer** Alcohol rehab and stuff like that?

**DT** Yeah.

**Interviewer** So welfare had asked them to do programs and they started doing those programs?

**DT** They started doing the programs and they still didn't get the baby back to them.

**Interviewer** Where were they staying while they were doing that? Were they staying with you?

**DT** Yeah, they were staying with me. They were staying with me for some time because they had no home. They didn't have their own place to stay in.

I've been always supporting them to try and help them come and talk to the welfare mob about this baby.

They kept on saying they have to be very strong and to show and prove to show that they can be off alcohol and take the kid back.

They tried, tried so many times. That never worked for them for the first child. She become pregnant again, I think a year later, and same again.

The same thing again, yeah she and my other little granddaughter. The same thing again she was a bit underweight, she was born a bit early. They kept her in again to help her to put on some weight.

She then come back with the baby. It was only for a short time and they were having some problems again you know like, I don't know what. Drinking problems I think. And the welfare sort of like gave them some warnings about the baby and stuff but they sort of went to the rehab and stuff with the baby and they become stronger going through that counselling and stuff like that.

Then they come back and they were still paying visits with the DCF mob and the DCF mob gave them some rules where what they can do and what they cannot do and they met all those things, the rules. Only on that one weekend now and they wanted to go and have a bit of drink and ...

**Interviewer** Maybe before you mention that, so those rules included what to do if they would go out somewhere?

**DT** Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Interviewer** Like a safety plan was it?

**DT** Yeah safety plan now.

**Interviewer** Were you a part of that?

**DT** Yeah, yeah. I was part of that safety plan because I raised my hand and I said yes I don't drink, I don't do drugs or go out and stuff like that.

**Interviewer** And you worked?

**DT** Okay, yeah I was employed at that time yeah.

**Interviewer** So what was the safety plan if your son and his partner wanted to go out drinking?

**DT** They said, the DCF mob said that only on weekends if they want to go and have a bit of time off, free time off without the baby as long as they find me suitable at the time to take care of the kids and then I've agreed to take the order from the DCF mob to say that I am happy to take the baby.

**Interviewer** And up until then were they doing alright, were they strong?

**DT** Oh yeah they were very good. They never drank ever since they come back. They were going very strong, very good. They followed all the steps for the orders that were given to them. I couldn't understand why for that one weekend they wanted to have a bit of drink now.

**Interviewer** What happened that weekend?

**DT** Well that weekend they went drinking that Friday night. They never come home Friday night because I had rules for drunks not to be coming home which they obeyed my rules and they never come home.

So they came back Saturday afternoon after they slept it over and stuff like that.

Before they come home the DCF mob come [redacted].

I said to her those two are out because they were allowed to have some time off on weekends because I am here to take care of the baby. I had explained myself to her and told her, you know, I don't drink, I don't smoke and I'm happy to have the baby for the weekend.

Then she said okay, okay. She was all fine and all good about that and then she

rang the other fella. He was the guy from DCF also.

He then came up to home and he said, no there's an order from the DCF mob up in Darwin to say we have to take the child.

That sort of broke my heart. I was crying because it was raining that day and I didn't see any problem there for that baby to be here with me being at home, you know, safe.

They took the baby then [redacted].

**Interviewer** You said it was raining that day when they took the baby?

**DT** Yeah it was raining and I tried to tell them don't take that baby out in the rain but they still didn't listen.

Yeah. So my son and his partner come back asking for the baby. I said the baby's gone, the welfare mob come and take the baby away.

They started being so worried and they end up thinking what they have done wrong.

**Interviewer** How did you feel when that happened?

**DT** I felt so heartbroken because the baby was fine with me.

**Interviewer** Were your children home when this happened?

**DT** Yeah my kids was at home.

**Interviewer** So did they see the baby taken away?

**DT** Yeah they even also were so sad and angry and they started talking about "Why are they take the baby away? Nothing wrong for the baby to be here at home with us".

You know, the baby was here in a safe house.

**Interviewer** Not a very good day, eh?

**DT** Yeah.

**Interviewer** And that was hard on them too, your son and his partner?

**DT** Yeah it was very hard on that Monday. That was on that Saturday and they came to take the baby. On Monday we go straight down to the DCF office and tried to ask

for the baby back and ask what the thing that they did wrong, what did they break the rules on for them to come and get the kid off me or them, you know?

They said because you guys have been drinking and never been home when we come around and stuff.

I tried to step in and say "Look, that was an agreement for us for whenever they want to have a break they can have the break as long as I am home looking after their baby, you know."

But then they decided or made all these arrangements to say they were going to send the baby to a carer and then yeah, the baby was sent up to Darwin then.

My son and his partner had to go through this cycle again of going back to rehab and stuff.

So they went back to the rehab, here I think they went back but it was continuously for them to be keep going back through that same thing. Going to rehab, coming back here, trying to fight for them kids to come back, but they was always saying some things to them to make them feel like...

They were doing everything the DCF mob asked them.

**Interviewer** And what would happen after they've done all those programs and done what they wanted them to do?

**DT** They were just going back to drinking then, you know, because they thought they were doing everything that they were asked to do but never worked for them, you know.

**Interviewer** They never got their kids back?

**DT** Yeah never got their kids back.

**Interviewer** How many times would they have brought them down here?

**DT** Maybe once or twice.

**Interviewer** Yeah. Did you guys get to keep them overnight or anything like that?

**DT** No, just only like an hour or two for access.

**Interviewer** So what do you know about where they're staying up in Darwin or who they're staying with, the sort of people they're staying with?

**DT** Well I was up in Darwin last month and I saw those girls. I made an appointment to see those girls and the lady, she was very, very nice, the carer. I found she was

very nice at the time at present when I saw her face to face.

She said "I have to give these girls back to the parents. It's so sad for these girls to be away from ... I know they don't have a mother but at least they can still go to the father and like for you guys" she said, and stuff like that.

Yeah well if they was at home they would have learn to pick up their own ways of speaking like how we speak at home, Creole and a bit of my own language which I speak to my kids here at home.

Yeah they're missing out on all them stuff and not only that, they're missing out being connected to us and missing out on knowing who's the real family for them and stuff like that.

Yeah, they're really, really missing out on a lot of things.

I feel so sad for those girls because they lost their mother, they never come to know who their real mother is and everything.

They call that other lady "Mum" all the time, it made me so sad you know.

**Interviewer** Do you want to just mention what happened to your son's partner?

**DT** Yeah after she's been going through all these counselling and going to rehab. It was a cycle for them to be going through over and over and she come to this part where she couldn't do any more thing.

She thought she couldn't do anymore to be strong to get those kids back and stuff.

My son was at the rehab here. He was out there and at that very day he was released to come home, before he got home his partner took his life so he never got to see her...in their home.

She used to tell me a lot you know. I can't take this anymore because I am crying so much, you know. It really hurts me too.

She tried to become very strong, you know, for those kids.

**Interviewer** You were mentioning before that they do what they're supposed to do but then they get told to do something else.

**DT** Yeah.

**Interviewer** It never seemed enough, or ...?

**DT** She used to go to rehab all the time, you know, her and her partner.

Trying to get their kids back and stuff.

They'd been always pushing them to do things that they were always doing over and over.

**Interviewer** Yeah and that must have been hard on your son as well obviously?

**DT** Yeah he's still, you know, like, he still can't get over it too.

**Interviewer** Yeah.

**DT** Yeah. She was a real good girl you know. Like she was young but, like, she had a lot of support from me and stuff.

**Interviewer** And your son now, does he still get to, or do you both, still get to see those girls?

**DT** Yeah.

**Interviewer** Did those kids get to go to her funeral, their mother's funeral?

**DT** No.

**Interviewer** Do you know if welfare spoke to you or her family about getting the kids to the funeral?

**DT** Well they told me that they were supposed to take the kids to her funeral but that never happened.

**Interviewer** And you don't know why?

**DT** I don't know why.

I don't think they can send them interstate or anywhere, you know. Over the border or stuff like that. I don't know. They have to remain here in the Northern Territory.

I wish that could be allowed because my mum she's very, very old and she cries about these girls because they are taking those kids away from us.

It's bringing back bad memories to her because she's one of the Stolen Generation herself.

She's never seen those girls because she's elderly now. She can't travel.

**Interviewer** She never got to see them?

**DT** No she never but she's wishing and hoping one day, you know, sometime she could see them and stuff.

**Interviewer** You were saying about the case workers. How many case workers they've had over the time? Has it been the same case worker or different ones?

**DT** No different case workers. I think there was about 3 case workers or something like that.

**Interviewer** You've asked in the past, you've asked if you could, or you've put your hand up to say that you'd care for those kids?

**DT** Yes I did.

**Interviewer** They used that word 'kinship carer', so you were willing to care for them?

**DT** Yeah. We tried with the first child that was taken away. Me and the mother and the father, we got together and we went to the DCF office and we spoke to one of the DCF staff and he said, you know. I provided all my ID, Ochre card and everything, because they wanted all those things from me.

**Interviewer** And you've got an Ochre card?

**DT** Yes I've got Ochre card. That was all sent off with my application that I filled out to say that I'll become a kinship carer and will be there to support the parents, my son and his partner, to help them look after the child and stuff like that.

**Interviewer** Yeah.

**DT** I don't know why for some reason that has been rejected. So the DCF mob called me, I think the next day, to say sorry you've got bad news to say that the application has been rejected and then I started saying why? I asked them why.

They said because from back date time and stuff I had a violent partner and I tried to speak up for myself and I tried to tell them, you know, I no longer live in that violent relationship with any men. I'm a single mum at home all the time with kids, you know, and I'm always happy to take kids in because I know I don't drink, I don't do drugs and run around and leave the kids and stuff you know.

**Interviewer** And you're always employed as well?

**DT** Yes I'm always employed.

**Interviewer** Has it been a long time since you left that violent relationship was it?

**DT** Yeah back in 2009 I left him.

**Interviewer** Yourself, have you got any criminal record or anything?

**DT** No.

**Interviewer** Never been in trouble?

No only for driving kids without seatbelt and stuff. Not serious ones.

**Interviewer** Okay. That's probably about all I suppose. Just maybe the last thing, can you think of anything you'd like to see welfare doing differently with anyone in the same situation as you or your son?

**DT** Yeah. If welfare think of taking kids away from the parents, they should never ever do that because these parents wanted to become parents and wanted to have these children.

They should let the parents have their children and at least just do home visits and making sure that kids are at home safe and maybe if they're very strict on drunken parents, maybe they should just monitor them and say only on weekends they can do drinking, like only 2 days on the weekend like Friday and Saturday and leave it off on Sunday and the rest of the week you know.

**Interviewer** Yeah.

**DT** I think that's a real, real bad thing that they do, take kids away from parents.