



Commission of Inquiry into  
the Tasmanian Government's  
Responses to Child Sexual  
Abuse in Institutional Settings

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF TAMMY DONOHUE**

I, Tammy DONOHUE of an address known to the Commission, in the State of Tasmania, of a phone number known to the Commission, do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

1. I make this statement on the basis of my own knowledge, save where otherwise stated. Where I make statements based on information provided by others, I believe such information to be true.
2. I make this statement on the basis that its contents can be made public. I am happy for the Commission to use its contents as evidence or in the final report.

**BACKGROUND**

3. I am the single mother of three children. I am presently engaged in full time in caring for my children. I have mostly lived in Tasmania my whole life, other than a few years living in Queensland before [REDACTED] was born. I have lived mostly in the areas of Launceston, Georgetown and Piper's River.

- [REDACTED]
4. [REDACTED] has cerebral palsy. She was diagnosed with dystonia and quadriplegia due to the cerebral palsy at the age of seven months. She has always been a delightful baby, and then young person. [REDACTED] is now aged 15. She is mostly non-verbal and incontinent and communicates with hand-signals and an eye gaze-communicator. I am able to communicate with her as well as anyone can.
  5. She loved going to school. She always had big smiles when she went to school. However, I have found some of the relationships with doctors and the medical world to be quite difficult to navigate.
  6. When [REDACTED] was little it was very hard for anyone other than me to look after her. However, once she got into school she absolutely started loving it and she grew out of her separation anxieties. I would make sure [REDACTED] would live life to the fullest.

**LAUNCESTON GENERAL HOSPITAL**

7. Because of her various conditions, [REDACTED] needs regular assistance from doctors. She can't speak for herself. I understand that I need to be the one to speak for her. I would take her to a range of doctor's appointments to assist her with her various conditions.
8. Between approximately 2009 until November 2018, I regularly took [REDACTED] to Launceston General Hospital (LGH) when she needed assistance with her various medical conditions. There were few other medical options available in Launceston at the time, and in any event, I trusted the hospital, and I trusted the medical staff.
9. [REDACTED] sometimes attended LGH as an outpatient and sometimes was admitted as an in-patient. I would usually stay with [REDACTED] when she was admitted overnight, but when my second child was born, that became impossible from about 2015 because there was no one at home to stay home with my other child.
10. The first time I left her alone overnight at hospital was in 2017 when she underwent surgery. In mid-2018, [REDACTED] stayed again overnight following hip-surgery. I was unable to stay overnight with her because I was caring for her sibling.

**[REDACTED] EXPERIENCE AT WARD 4K IN 2018**

11. In [REDACTED], Dr [REDACTED] became [REDACTED] paediatrician. [REDACTED] was aged about [REDACTED] at this time.
12. In around October 2018, [REDACTED] had a feeding peg inserted into her stomach after the previous peg was ripped out. She wore a nappy and had to be changed roughly every three to four hours.
13. After the surgery and in November 2018, [REDACTED] was admitted to LGH and stayed for approximately two to three weeks with a golden staph infection. She was admitted to ward 4K for the duration of that admission.
14. During her admission, [REDACTED] had a number of nurses (including male nurses) care for her. James Griffin was one of those nurses. At the time, I didn't know his name, but I saw him around, and I heard others refer to him as "Jimbo".
15. I became increasingly concerned about her care and treatment at ward 4k. For instance, I returned on numerous time and found [REDACTED] head under pillows, which had moved due to her lack of muscle control. For the first few days of her admission, she was constantly screaming, turning her head and going stiff with her whole body. I knew that this wasn't [REDACTED]. This was her trying to tell me that something was wrong. I know my own child and when she is unhappy.

16. During her admission, I walked into her room and saw a man who I now know to be James Griffin rubbing [REDACTED] head and I told him to stop because I could see that she was obviously uncomfortable. After Mr Griffin had left, I asked [REDACTED] whether she wanted him to be her nurse and she answered "no" very distinctly using her hand signals. Every time Mr Griffin entered her room, [REDACTED] became unhappy and indicated she did not want him near her. [REDACTED] communicated this through her hand signals. She would also eyeball him and her body would tense up. I recall saying to her she can tell me what is wrong when we get home on the communicator. Mr Griffin was in the room, he turned to me and said "she can communicate can she?"
17. During her stay in 2018, somebody began continually putting cream on [REDACTED] vagina. I noticed there when I changed her nappy in the morning I do not know what the purpose of this cream was, and so far as I was concerned, this was not medically necessary. I asked nurses (including a young male nurse) who was applying the cream and why but staff never answered.
18. I would have hoped that if cream on her vagina were required, that it would be carefully explained to me and, as much as possible, to [REDACTED].
19. Whilst in hospital, [REDACTED] had her first period, which was just spotting.
20. I started getting upset with the nurses, telling them to stop putting cream on [REDACTED]. I confronted Mr Griffin about the cream and rash and he said, "show me where the issue is". I asked why he needed to see that, but he insisted, so I pulled her nappy down slightly. Mr Griffin tapped his hand on her vagina. I am not sure why. He said "she'll be fine".
21. The next morning, I came to see [REDACTED], and found her unattended and her nappy area smothered in the cream. I took her to the shower to wash the cream off and found skin missing from her vagina. Nurses told me the cream was causing the skin to come off. I didn't understand what had caused any of this. That same day I called child safety services.
22. Until this day, [REDACTED] has scarring where the skin was missing. From 2018 until today, a red-rash like line on [REDACTED] backside has spread and now appears to stain her skin.

#### DISCLOSURE

23. During [REDACTED] admission in 2018, and after my discussion with Mr Griffin (referred to at [20] above) and following my discussion with Mr Griffin, I called child protection and raised concerns about nursing and medical staff and they said that they would notify a social worker to attend a meeting. They said "we've never had somebody complain about a doctor before".
24. The next day, I spoke to the nurses on the ward, and told them that the nurse looking after [REDACTED] was being inappropriate. I asked them how they would like it if it was their daughter. I got quite upset, and I told them that I didn't want any more males looking after [REDACTED] at all,

and I asked that staff put that preference in writing in [REDACTED] file. I saw them write something down. The head nurse came into the playroom and said she would refer the incident to people higher up in the hospital. I do not know the name of the head nurse. Other nurses that were also aware of this conversation was a young male nurse who I saw write down notes on [REDACTED] file. There was also another nurse that I understand is aware of the event. I would expect all the staff on the ward at that time would remember who we were.

25. I attended a meeting with a social worker from Tasmania Health Service, a social worker from LGH, teachers from [REDACTED] school, [REDACTED] sister's father, and my disability support worker, my mother and [REDACTED]. I still don't understand what the meeting was for. We went in for a staph infection and they were treating me like I dropped [REDACTED]. I restated the concerns about the cream. No one said that any action would be taken. Someone at the meeting said that I didn't have enough help at home and blamed the home conditions for [REDACTED] state. I felt like I had done something wrong. I brought up Mr Griffin's inappropriate behaviour in the meeting but I felt that my concerns were dismissed by everyone from the hospital in that room.
26. In late November or early December 2018, [REDACTED] was discharged from LGH, and I took her home.
27. [REDACTED] wasn't good for about six months after being admitted at LGH. During this period, she wasn't herself. She was upset all the time, she didn't want to be away from me, and she was short tempered. She was previously a happy and smiley girl but I couldn't make her smile during this time. Her lip would just drop. She has thankfully gotten better. To this day, I don't like to change her. I will ask her carer to do it for me.
28. On 17 October 2019, the day after the allegations about James Griffin were publicized in the media, I went to Launceston Police Station and made a statement recording my concerns about the way that Mr Griffin had interacted with [REDACTED]. I was then and I remain now concerned at his behaviour towards my daughter. I have not had any communications from LGH about any complaints or investigations that they might have undertaken. I have no idea if anyone in the hospital has recorded any observations that are relevant to [REDACTED] stay in the hospital.
29. In January I spoke to one of [REDACTED] treating doctors. I confronted her about the way that I had been treated. I said that I felt that I had not been listened to about my concerns. She apologized and said she would listen more in the future.

#### IMPACT ON MY FAMILY

30. I took [REDACTED] to LGH on a number of occasions, and I am now haunted by the fact that Mr Griffin was working there each and every time. I have no idea if he had access to my daughter, and I have no idea if there were the processes in place to keep her safe. I had trusted hospitals, but I now find it hard to trust that my child is safe. [REDACTED] is already vulnerable because she finds it hard to communicate, and I am worried about what might have happened to her or what could happen to her in the future.
31. I have had access to some support services from LGH to address these concerns. While I was pregnant with my youngest child, LGH offered a social worker fortnightly for a time. I occasionally call Lifeline for support for myself, however I find it difficult to find the time to do so.
32. I find it very hard to have any males near [REDACTED] now. I have instructed [REDACTED] after school care that no males are to be around here. I can't trust anyone. I feel lost and broken, and I feel like that makes it harder for me to be the kind of parent I want to be for my other two children. I get very anxious when I leave her alone now.
33. [REDACTED] still looks at me funny when I walk away and leave her. I get major, crazy anxiety when I walk away from her now. It has made it hard to build up trust in carers for [REDACTED]. This has prevented me from finding somebody to look after her.

#### CONCLUDING COMMENTS

34. The Government has failed to respond to [REDACTED] abuse. Nobody has contacted me to apologise for what happened to [REDACTED]. Nobody has reached out to us to offer psychological support. I have been left alone to seek out help myself.
35. Lifeline have been the only decent support service I have talked to. I call them about once per month when everything gets to me. I am not currently seeing a psychologist.
36. I feel that nobody was telling me anything about what was going on with [REDACTED] while she was a patient on Ward 4K.
37. There should also be greater respect for patients with a disability. Not all people that are non-verbal are unable to communicate. Hospital staff need to listen to the parents and not dismiss their concerns.
38. I haven't been able to take [REDACTED] back to LGH. I now wonder if Launceston is the best place for my family to live.
39. I hope that there can be changes to the way that staff are employed and monitored at LGH and in other institutions that care for children. I don't know how to re-build trust in institutions and people.

I make this solemn declaration under the *Oaths Act 2001* (Tas).

Declared at Launceston in the State of Tasmania

on 3 May 2022

[Redacted signature]

[Signature of witness]

Before me:

[Redacted signature]

[Full name of Justice, Commissioner for Declarations or Authorised Person]

[Redacted signature]