COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950
Section 5(1)(d)

STATEMENT OF KERI TAMWOY

Name of Witness:	**Keri Tamwoy**
Date of birth:	[redacted]
Current address:	[redacted]
Occupation:	**Mayor, Aurukun Shire Council**
Contact details (phone/email):	[redacted]
Statement taken by:	**Lara Soldi**

I, **Keri Tamwoy**, make oath and state as follows:

1. I am the Mayor of Aurukun. I was elected to this role in 2020. Before that, I was a mediator for five years.

2. Domestic and family violence is a problem everywhere, and Aurukun is no exception. Men are victims as well as women, but they don't talk about it or seek help.

3. My mother was involved in domestic and family violence prevention, providing support to those being abused. Despite this, my own understanding of domestic violence was fairly limited until a few years ago. It was then that I learned domestic and family violence takes on forms beyond just physical assaults. It seems to me that there is a limited understanding of domestic and family violence in Aurukun. Education would be beneficial.

4. Domestic and family violence protection orders and police protection notices are common in Aurukun – they form part of the response by police to incidents involving violence. Depending on the level of abuse involved, police often decide (independent of the wishes of people involved) to include a 'no contact' condition.

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Witness signature

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5. It seems to me that the orders often don't work, because the aggrieved and respondent don't truly understand the impact and purpose of it. In my opinion, that piece of paper will only work if the victim is strong. Victims will very rarely call police if a condition is being breached, because they don't understand the condition, or because they still want to be in a relationship with the respondent.

6. The Queensland Police Service could do better with cultural protocols, which are very important in Aurukun. New officers arrive in Aurukun and, without realising, might do something which causes offence. On the other hand, people in the community might try to justify wrongdoing by claiming it is culturally appropriate, and police might accept that without knowing better. For example, people might say that it is okay to street fight because they are sorting out their differences culturally – but it is not okay to street fight, there is the lore that needs to be upheld.

7. Amit Singh recently came to Aurukun as the Officer in Charge. It is early days, but things are going well. Officer Singh engages with the elders and with offenders, and is very proactive and focussed. This level of engagement is important. He also engages with the community as a whole – like recently, the police hosted a community game night and I believe a lot of people attended that. He knows what he wants to achieve, but he also knows that achievements only happen when we all work together. I feel the same way.

8. The PCYC is an example of engagement done well – Steve and Norma (who run the PCYC) really go out of their way to engage with the youth in the community. A recent example is the first NAIDOC Youth Ball.

9. In Aurukun, there is an issue with limited support and engagement from service providers. For example, some organisations operate within these hours: Monday 10am – 4pm, Tuesday 8:30am – 4:30pm, and Friday 8:30am to 3pm only. There are extremely limited services for the community over the weekend – a person who is sick may need to wait for the right care on Monday. This is especially problematic because weekends are normally the time when everything happens – by this I mean, alcohol coming in, which leads to drinking, which leads to arguments, which leads to domestic and family violence – it is a ripple effect, and children and elderly people can be affected. If it's really serious, the only backup that Queensland Health have is the Royal Flying Doctor Service – but sometimes there are long delays.

10. The Wellbeing Centre is a very important service to the community. If someone has a problem with their anger, they need to go and talk with someone about it. Likewise, if someone is the victim of anger, they need support. Despite the importance, it is a fly in/fly out arrangement that is open on Tuesday and Wednesday, and for half-days on Monday and Thursday. There's limited engagement with community mostly due to the shortage of staff. There have been complaints made by the general pubic that whenever they call the Centre, it just rings out.

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Witness signature

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11. I worked with Brendan McMahon when he was the government coordinator, and I was a mediator. What Brendan did, made a difference, but what was built should have evolved with the community. After Brendan left, there was a tragic incident that effected the whole Aurukun community. Duane Amos coordinated the Whole of Government response to the displaced families When the many displaced families returned to Aurukun, the government's response should have been to appropriately address the needs of the people (for example, culturally safe allocated housing).

***OATHS ACT* 1867 (DECLARATION)**

I Keri Tamwoy do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

(1) **This written statement by me is true to the best of my knowledge and belief: and**

(2) **I make this statement knowing that if it were admitted as evidence, I may be liable to prosecution for stating in it anything I know to be false.**

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provisions of the *Oaths Act 1867*.

[redacted]

Signature

Taken and declared before me at Aurukun **this** 01 **day of** August 2022

Taken [redacted]

Justice of the Peace / ~~Commissioner for Declarations / Lawyer~~

[redacted]

Witness signature

Justice of the Peace/~~Commissioner for Declarations/Lawyer~~