

28th March, 1999.

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Ms. A. Bligh,  
 Minister for Families, Youth & Community Care  
 and Minister for Disability Services  
 BRISBANE.

Dear Ms. Bligh,

It is with sadness and regret that we ask for your assistance. Our little girl with disabilities we believe has been sexually molested by a support worker of a respite service provider and the matter is presently under investigation by the Juvenile Aid Bureau.

Not only has the molestation of our child been abhorrent for this family but the difficulties we have encountered with the service provider in the handling of this matter and their subsequent refusal to acknowledge the seriousness of our complaint has created extreme duress upon us. We have been endeavouring to have a true account of our complaint placed on record with the service and a copy of the their report made available to us. Our endeavours over the past 12 months have been to no avail. and we have now sought the assistance of your Gold Coast Area Manager, Ms. Carol Mackay and Area Manager of H.A.C.C., Department of Health Services Mr. Peter Mark.

*Paul  
 Cornhill.*  
 As I believe your Department is currently working on the development of policies and protocols for the management of abuse, assault and neglect to be applied to departmental and department funded services, we would appreciate an appointment with you to discuss these issues.

There is an urgent need for a Policy for systematic management of complaints of physical and sexual abuse within government funded services, and in particular for people with disabilities who are so vulnerable and for whom justice is almost impossible to achieve within the present legal system. Where there is no definite government policy for government funded services to abide by for complaints of physical or sexual abuse, there is a temptation for service providers to act as 'judge and jury' under the service provider's own procedures. And in so doing, may continue to place others with disabilities at risk with the continued employment of a worker. No staff or committee member has the experience or expertise to carry out their own 'investigation' and disregard the complaint. Where a respite service receives government funding I believe their first duty of care must be to their client with disabilities and not to the employee.

Would you please advise at your earliest convenience if we are able to discuss our concerns with you.

Yours faithfully,

*Amasee Bob Welch*