

**INQUIRY INTO FAMILY RESPONSE TO THE MURDERS IN
BOWRAVILLE**

Name: Ms Delphine Charles

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Partially Confidential

Teresa McMichael
Director
Standing Committee on Law and Justice, Legislative Council
Parliament of New South Wales
Parliament House, Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW, 2000

Dear Ms McMichael –

Submission for the Inquiry into the Bowraville Murders

My name is Delphine Charles and I live at [redacted]. I am Clinton's sister-in-law. I am married to Clinton's brother, David.

Clinton was a vivacious kid. If we were at the disco, he'd be the Michael Jackson. He was great with younger kids and always looking after his siblings and cousins. He was a happy kid. I never saw him angry. He was out-going and friendly. He had no enemies.

When he first went missing, I was pregnant with my daughter, Clinton's niece. Being pregnant, I was very emotional. His disappearance and murder really affected me and there was a point at which it was thought I might be miscarrying. My son, Nathan, who was three, knew something was wrong and it took him a long time to be able to talk about it. Clinton's loss affected my relationships.

Clinton's loss meant we were over-protective with our kids. I ended up working at the school and high school because I didn't want to let them out of my sight. Now that I look on it, I realise we hardly let them do anything because we were worried something would happen then.

After we reburied Clinton's bones, my partner would push me away and he shut down, wouldn't talk to me and it caused a fracture in our relationship. Luckily, we were able to repair that because we realised we were in this together but it took a long time for us to understand how Clinton's murder affected him. I am amazed that he has survived as he has and, with all the pain he has suffered, is still kind. He once used to deal with his grief through drinking. He never received any counselling. He has now broken his dependence on alcohol.

It also affected my cousin, Melissa, who had been close to Clinton. She was haunted by Clinton's disappearance.

When Clinton left, he said, I'll be back to see my niece or nephew. They were the last words he said to me.

It is important to know that Clinton's murder did not just affect Bowraville. Clinton had grown up in Tenterfield and Warwick. His disappearance and murder affected our communities up here in those towns as well.

We didn't believe that such a thing could happen. We grew up in a small, safe community and you don't think that such terrible things could happen in communities like ours.

David did not receive any support or counselling when Clinton disappeared or when the trial happened.

I don't think the police who investigated Clinton's death cared. They didn't care because he was black. If they had done their job and investigated properly at the time, we would not have to keep fighting for justice. We see other kids go missing and their disappearances are taken seriously. The fact the police thought our kids had gone walkabout shows the prejudice that they had about our case. We knew Clinton and we knew that as soon as his shoes were found something was wrong because he never went anywhere without his shoes. We knew our kids and the police just didn't believe what we said.

We need better services for drug and alcohol counselling for our families. It has been used to deal with our grief and this cycle has been made worse because they were never given support.

Even the children who didn't know Clinton are affected by his loss. They have felt the grief of their parents, the families and the community. They feel helpless that they have not been able to help alleviate this. We have given them a legacy of sadness and because these murders haven't been resolved.

When we got the autopsy report, we didn't know what it meant. No body explained it to us so we took it to a local doctor to find out what it meant. It was only then that we found that some of Clinton's bones had been found a year after he was first found. We didn't even know until that time that we hadn't buried a full body. When confronted with this, the police said that they had told the families but Clinton's mother, father and family were not informed and we were all deeply distressed to find out that Clinton hadn't been buried properly.

Clinton's mother would always be crying. She got no proper counselling and of course we didn't know how to console her. She still feels her son is with her and plays music for him. For her, Clinton is still there and she will never get over his loss.

One thing that would make a difference to our community is to have our own Aboriginal Medical Service and then maybe it could provide the support that we need for our medical and mental health issues.

We need to put our children at rest because it is still unfinished business. We need justice so we can find some peace.

I would be happy to give evidence to the committee.

Delphine Charles
6 March 2014