

**Supplementary
Submission
No 11a**

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

Name: Ms Elaine Walker

Date received: 20/05/2014

Impact Statement

This is an additional statement following the Enquiry into the Three Murdered Children in Bowraville.

Following my interview in Macksville at the Council Chambers, I walked away feeling that I should have explained to the Panel my connection to all three families involved.

Firstly my name is Elaine Walker and I am oldest sister to Muriel Craig – Colleen Walkers mother. Within our family Muriel moved to Sawtell with the father of her children to raise her little family there. Although our family were located all along the eastern coastline we always found time to come together for special occasions, for example birth of a baby, mothers day, birthdays and Christmas. We always kept the connections open. Colleen was able to spend time with family in Sawtell as well as in Macksville and Bowraville at the time she was taken from us. It has been hard over the years to support my sister Muriel as she has never been able to lay Colleen to rest. Three of my brothers have passed on and they carried the pain with them, because they started to blame themselves that they should have protected her, they carried the blame.

I supported Muriel by attending meetings with Community Organisations that were seeking Muriels approval to seek funding from the Government to support the Aboriginal Community in grieving from these murders. At times there was no communication with her from these organisations and my sister would get very upset when she would find out these organisations got funding on her behalf without her input or knowledge. These organisations did not understand what my sister was going through and they used Colleens' death to gain funding for their organisations programs.

As the years went on without finding Colleen it got harder and harder for my sister and all of the family. To this day we still go to search for her. My Nieces, Nephews, children & Grandchildren (Colleens Siblings, Cousins, nieces, nephews, Aunties and Uncles) all come together in the hope that they will find her. Knowing that they are looking for remains (bones). Colleen in always in our heart and I am hoping in my heart that you the Panel will be able to help bring closure for my sister and the family. Then we will be able to start a new journey of healing.

Secondly, Rebecca Stadhams – Evelyn's Mother is my first cousin. Muriel Stadhams (we all call Nanna Moon) is my Aunty – My mother's youngest sister. When the news came about Evelyn family gathered from everywhere to search

for her as she was a little girl that would never walk around on her own, she was always with one of the family. The confusion amongst the community that day was horrendous and the days following finding her remains sent shock waves through the family. Rebecca's life was changed forever with the loss of her oldest child. Evelyn's family carried a different surname but we are all one family with the connection of Nanna Moon and my Mum. The hurt and pain is felt by all of us because Evelyn is part of our family. As I said before Family gatherings included all of the family, even Evelyn's family.

Thirdly, Clintons Father, Thomas Duroux is married to my first cousin Marjie Jarrett. Her mother Aunty Alma Jarrett, is my Mum's oldest sister. Nanna Moon is the youngest sister to both of them. This is the family connection between the 3 children. Thomas came to live in Bowraville as a young boy with his Mum Aunty Lavina. He went away as a teenager but returned to marry my cousin Marjorie. Clinton was a young man that was here only to visit his dad Thomas. He was always well dressed, well mannered and he kept to himself. He was always respectful of elders and was kind and helpful to others. Her always had a beautiful smile. When I heard the news that he too was missing I became more confused about what was happening in our community. There was no help from anyone outside of Bowraville other than our own family searching. It was hard for me to support Thomas and Marjie as we were still searching for answers with Colleen and Evelyn.

I rang my sister Muriel and then Leonie Duroux to talk about marching as a community to let the outside world know that our family and community was suffering and we needed answers. I went to all the homes of the Aboriginal community in Bowraville to let them know that we were organising a march in the main street of Bowraville. Everyone showed up from Nambucca Heads, Macksville, Sawtell and Coffs Harbour to walk together as a community to show we needed answers from the Police. No answers came that day. We were seen by the rest of the community as making a Riot and making Bowraville look bad to the rest of the world. No one wanted to acknowledge our pain and our need for support. I was very angry that day as I needed the message to get across to the Police and to the media that these are 3 children – they were our children and they were missing.

The sadest thing today is that we are still being judged by the colour of our skin and looking back our children were judged wrongly then by the colour of their skin as the proper procedures were not carried out. Today we are still suffering.

My question to all of you on the Panel is can you help us bring justice and closure?

Can you help right the wrongs that were done in the past to my sister and to our children?

It is not about revenge on the person who did this. It is about bringing closure to the families and the community of Bowraville.

Elaine Walker
Bowraville