

INQUIRY INTO FAMILY RESPONSE TO THE MURDERS IN BOWRAVILLE

Name: Ms Elaine Walker

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Partially Confidential

My name is Elaine Walker
been staying with me when she went missing.

I am Colleen Craig's aunt and she had

I grew up in Bowraville. As a child, you don't see the colour of peoples skin so we didn't understand while things were separate. We had our own school and it was divided by a fence from the one where the white children went. The only time we mixed was when we played sport.

When we little, we only went into town if we had an elder with us. We weren't allowed to be served in the shops and the cinema had different seats for whites and for us. I couldn't understand why the community was divided like this but when I grew up, I started to realise that there was one set of rights for the blacks and another for the whites.

Colleen was the first of the three children to go missing. My sister came down and we both went to the police to tell them something was wrong. We searched the town, we had a family meeting and a community meeting with the police. The police did not take things seriously at first. They said they thought the children had gone 'walkabout'. It was really sad for me to hear that attitude and to see that they weren't taking the disappearance seriously.

Colleen's disappearance has had a big impact on the family. Colleen's sister's and brothers were only small but it affected them. They see pictures in the paper. People ask them about their missing sister or aunt. The children and grandchildren feel what we feel and the sadness has been dripping through all the family, affecting generation after generation.

We are often told that we should move on. Each time the legal process lets us down, it feels like officials want to just put it under the carpet and leave it there. I wonder if these people who are making decisions have children. Our children have been taken from us.

When I was growing up my grandfather said that we had to do the right thing and obey the law. We grew up being taught that the law was a protector, but when the police didn't want to come and find our children I got very angry because we were looking for answers. What has the law done? What has it done for our family?

Our children are our children. They have taken them and it shouldn't matter what colour they are.

A lot of people are still afraid, even after over twenty years. I want the community to go back to how it was before the murders, when we were more united. We need closure for our next generation.

Parents, who were only children at the time of the murders, are still afraid because the person who killed them is still out there.

My brother Fred and I believed in our hearts that the law would do the right thing for us. We feel like we have let our young ones down.

I would be happy to provide more information to the committee.

Elaine Walker

20 February 2014