



STATEMENT BY CHIEF JUSTICE DIANA BRYANT AO

14 October 2016

The Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia, Diana Bryant, has expressed concern about inaccurate information being used to support a call for a royal commission into the family law system.

The demand for a [royal commission](#) draws on a case where a girl called Abbey committed suicide. It is being reported that Abbey was “driven to suicide by the family court system” following proceedings in the Family Court of Western Australia. Others calling for a royal commission have repeated that claim.

Out of respect for Abbey and her family, the Chief Justice said she was reluctant to enter into a public dispute, or to air facts that would be painful for the family. However, given the dissemination of inaccurate information the Chief Justice said she considered it important to place on record:

- The matter was not heard in the Family Court of Australia at any time.
- The only orders made by the Family Court of Western Australia were those requested by Abbey’s mother or made with her agreement. The case did not proceed to a contested hearing.
- All of the orders were made with the knowledge of the child protection authority, following the recommendation of an experienced psychologist who was appointed at the request of Abbey’s parents.
- The orders made were in accordance with Abbey’s expressed wishes.

Chief Justice Diana Bryant said she and the Chief Judge of the Family Court of Western Australia had met with Abbey's family and Hetty Johnson from Bravehearts in 2015 to discuss what had actually occurred in the proceedings. The Chief Justice said it was therefore disappointing that misstatements were again appearing in the media and online about the case.

NOTE: There is no published judgment as the matter was resolved without going to trial.