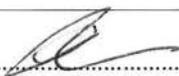




Statement

Name Adam FAULKNER
Address REDACTED
Occupation Public Servant (planning officer)
Date 11 September 2013

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. My full name is Adam Faulkner and my date of birth is 27 September 1972.
3. I am currently employed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service as a planning officer.
4. I became a member of the management committee for Hunter Aboriginal Children's Service (HACS) in 2006. I do not work in the children's welfare sector. I was nagged to become a member of the committee, and eventually relented and joined because I thought it was a good organisation. My involvement as a committee member was at the lower end of the spectrum of involvement.
5. The Management Committee generally met bi-monthly.
6. I got to know Steven Larkins reasonably well over the time I was on the Committee.
7. Steve appeared to be professional in how he went about his business. He was organised and seemed to have a very good grasp of process. My impression of Steve was someone who was smart, very together, professional. He also had an ego, because of the fact that he was a member

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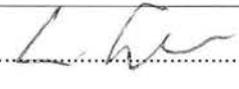
of peak bodies to do with out-of-home care at a federal level. He was quite ambitious, and the staff all knew who the boss was.

8. In my time on the Management Committee at HACS, I did not hear any rumours or innuendo about Steven Larkins doing anything inappropriate. I am confident that the first time I heard anything about his conduct with scouts was when I was interviewed by Detective Nathan Abbott after Steve's arrest.
9. In 2011, I was Committee Secretary, and therefore responsible for taking minutes of Committee meetings.
10. I believe that Karen Elphick was the Committee Chairperson in 2011. I can't recall exactly when she left that position, but it may have been around October 2011.
11. On 19 January 2011, I attended an extra-ordinary meeting of the HACS Management Committee. Other members of the Committee who attended the meeting were Karen Elphick, the Chairperson; Michelle Morris and Andrew Smith, who were ordinary members; and Glenda Brown, who was a HACS carer. Steve Larkins also attended. Lenny Anderson, who I believe was the Deputy Chairperson, and Jeff Farmer, the Treasurer were apologies.
12. I took the minutes of the meeting.

EXHIBIT I PRODUCE A COPY OF MY HAND-WRITTEN MINUTES OF THAT MEETING WHICH ARE ATTACHED AND MARKED AF1

EXHIBIT I PRODUCE A COPY OF A TYPED TRANSCRIPT OF MY HAND-WRITTEN MINUTES OF THAT MEETING WHICH ARE ATTACHED AND MARKED AF2

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13. The purpose of the meeting and the main items of discussion are detailed in a statement I made to police on 22 August 2011. The information I am providing here adds to that statement.

EXHIBIT EXHIBIT I PRODUCE A COPY OF THAT STATEMENT WHICH IS ATTACHED AND MARKED AF3

14. The meeting discussed concerns about AD being in Steve's care. Steve presented the concerns as having been raised by HACS staff. Steve said it was "nothing to do with anything inappropriate", but it was "a concern around process", and about Steve being a carer.

15. Prior to the meeting, I did not know that AD had been in Steve's care. No concerns about Steve's role in AD's care had been raised with me. To my knowledge, no such concerns had been raised to the committee as a whole.

16. The Management Committee members asked questions like: "What do you mean concerns? What concerns do staff have? Is it concern about anything inappropriate or something else?"

17. We discussed Ted Lancaster's role, which from memory, was as AD's case worker. That role may have moved from Ted Lancaster to Ian Eggins, with Ted being Ian's boss. Steve said Ted Lancaster was not happy because he didn't know about AD being with Steve. This did not ring alarm bells, it was just not good, because the kid's placement had broken down and he had obviously developed a relationship with Steve. Whatever the situation was, AD kept gravitating back to Steve's. This obviously wasn't standard foster care practice and there had been poor communication from all round.

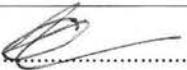
18. Steve presented the concerns of Ted, Ian and Karen to be something like: "This isn't good case work practice. This isn't how this stuff's meant to operate". He indicated they were concerned

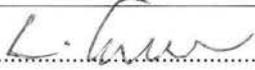
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that people were going to call him out on "these aren't the proper processes to be followed with case work".

19. I recall that I asked the question, in words to the effect of "What are we looking at"? "What do you mean by 'inappropriate'?" I said something like "Let's just be clear what the concern is about because the committee needs to know what it is we are hearing".
20. It was presented to the Management Committee as an issue of process, something like: "You are exposing yourself, as a CEO, to the risk of someone saying 'this is inappropriate, something inappropriate is going on' and there's no structure around that to give you any protection."
21. There was no concern by the Committee that there may have been actual risk to AD. We did not have concerns that Steve was acting inappropriately towards AD.
22. The way Steve presented it at the meeting was that AD's placements had broken down a few years ago and he had a lot of trouble, including self-harm, and that AD had started to bond with Steve for whatever reason – there was no reason given. Steve put the issue forward as AD continuing to show a bonding and attachment with him, and he was angry about the innuendo. He said something like, "there's nothing wrong here. I have the right and the ability to do this", and "Bugger it, I'm going to do it because I'm going to give this kid a go".
23. AD was unfortunately at the time a bit of a broken person, and the Committee expressed some concern that Steve was vulnerable to allegations, along the lines of: "He's latching onto you. He's just as likely to unlatch and if you don't follow the proper structures, and he could say anything." It was not just about issues for Steve, but issues for HACS.
24. One of the challenges on the committee was that quite often the Committee did not know any detail about individual children and their carers. The circumstances of individual children would

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not normally be talked about in a committee meeting, because of issues around confidentiality and the like. As a management committee we weren't there to get involved in day-to-day case work. It seemed to me that no-one else had a detailed understanding of the regulatory regime.

25. At the meeting we asked Steve about HACS policy, that staff of HACS could not become carers for HACS children. For example, if someone was a case worker they could not be a foster carer.

26. The Committee then said "Well, what's the policy for staff - why is it different for you?"

27. Steve led the Committee to believe that he was in a different situation, because he had parental responsibility under the Act, which he said essentially meant that he could be a carer. He gave the committee the impression that he had a different status that allowed him to be a carer. Steve was the only person who provided advice to the Committee about what parental responsibility meant.

28. I was concerned that even if Steve had the authority to take on AD as a foster child, there were still questions about whether he should. I asked Steve at the meeting something like, "there's an existing policy in HACS saying staff can't be carers. You've told us you've got the ability and the right to. You know, just because you can doesn't always mean you should". I can't remember what he said, except that I don't think anything changed and that he stuck to his guns, so I don't think it had much effect.

29. I got the impression that Steve did not raise the issue of him becoming a carer for AD for the approval of the management committee didn't necessarily approve it I left the meeting with the understanding that it was a done - it was already done. He brought to us his role as AD's carer as a fait accompli.

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30. I don't have any memory of hearing anything else around AD or Steve. I was never made aware. The first time I heard serious concerns about him was within a couple of days of the memory stick being found and Steve's arrest.

31. I was never aware of Steve having a Working With Children Check. I joined the committee some time in 2006 and Steve was the CEO at the time and had been for some time. I joined the committee and assumed that he had had a check. I assumed that everyone who was working there had had a check.

32. I knew that having a Working With Children Check was a condition of employment. From memory, I filled out a Working With Children Check when I joined the Committee, so I assumed if the committee are filling them out, then staff would be. That was my understanding.

33. I am not aware of any board documents or schedule kept by HACS that noted when staff got their Working With Children Check. I believe this was the responsibility of staff; the Human Resources Manager, and if not that person, then certainly Steve as the CEO.

34. The Management Committee was focused more on broad policy decisions, and was not involved in the detailed day to day running the service. The Committee's role was to watch the money, watch the program, know how many kids were in the care of the service, manage allegations against employees and issues like that. It did feel to me like Steve ran HACS.

35. **THE RECORD OF INTERVIEW ADJOURNED ACCORDINGLY**

Signed: 

Date: 12/9/13

Witness:

Date:

Signature: 

Witness: 