



Royal Commission  
into Institutional Responses  
to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

Name AS  
Address [REDACTED]  
Occupation [REDACTED]  
Date 26 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 AS and my date of birth is [REDACTED].
3. I am currently employed as an accountant.
4. I am married to [REDACTED] and we have two children – AH who is 10 years old and [REDACTED] who is 8 years old. When AH was 5, he was diagnosed as having Asperger Syndrome.

**Background**

5. AH and [REDACTED] go to Public School 1. In 2009 AH was attending [REDACTED] which is a small before and after school care and vacation care centre run by a married couple.
6. In around July 2009, AH and [REDACTED] started doing gymnastics on a Saturday at the Caringbah YMCA. That's where and when I first found out about the YMCA vacation care

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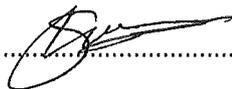
Statement of AS continued

program. AH told me that he thought the vacation care activities at the YMCA were "more fun" than at [REDACTED], and initially ended up going to both the [REDACTED] and the YMCA during the holidays. Because AH Asperger's is mild and he is high functioning, I didn't tell the YMCA vacation care about his Asperger's.

7. AH started going to the YMCA vacation care from July 2009. AH would attend the YMCA a minimum of twice during the school holidays and the rest of the time he would go to [REDACTED]. I would show AH the programs for both of the vacation care centres, and he would pick which sessions he wanted to go to at each centre. AH went to YMCA vacation care in every school holiday between July 2009 and October 2011. I know now that AH was first abused by John in vacation care during the Christmas 2010/2011 holidays and then again in the April 2011 and July 2011 school holidays. Despite this, AH still kept choosing to go to some days of the YMCA vacation care in each holiday.
8. AH enjoyed the YMCA programs and would speak a lot about Jonathan Lord ("John"). When I would drop AH and [REDACTED] off at vacation care, John would say "hi AH". I thought of John as just like a teacher.
9. AH Asperger's places him on the Autism spectrum and causes him to be socially awkward and he finds it difficult to make friends. Kids tend to pick on him because he is a bit different to them. AH didn't know many other kids at the YMCA because they came from other schools, so I didn't think anything was unusual when he would talk about spending time with John at vacation care. AH and [REDACTED] are close siblings, and they used to stick together at vacation care as well.
10. Often when AH came home from vacation care, he would tell me how he had spent time on the bus or in the car with John when they went on excursions. I now know that during

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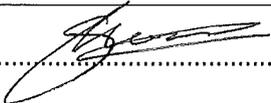
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one of those bus trips AH was abused and that on one of the occasions where oral sex happened, John was sitting in between AH and [REDACTED] on the bus, with AH by the window. I just have no idea how that type of thing could have happened to AH, when he had his [REDACTED] sitting next to him. I am still shocked that something like that could happen.

11. Usually AH and [REDACTED] would travel in the same vehicle on a YMCA excursion, but there were a few times that I went to pick them up from vacation care on the day of an excursion, and found out from them that [REDACTED] had been on the bus and AH had been in a car with John. The YMCA never told me that some kids would travel in a car, but I assumed that some of the older kids went in the car if the bus wasn't big enough.
12. AH would always speak about John in positive terms. AH told me that John let him play with his iPhone. In my experience, almost all children love playing electronic games, so there was nothing which led me to think that there was anything out of the ordinary. AH told me that John let other children play on his iPhone as well, and so I didn't think that AH was being singled out. I thought John was just a carer who was just letting the kids play with his phone as a treat. I was not aware of any YMCA policy against staff mobile phone usage.
13. Most of the time when I picked the children up from vacation care they seemed to be near John, but this also did not seem out of the ordinary. John didn't make any big effort to make conversation with me, we would just exchange a few comments about what the kids had been doing for the day.

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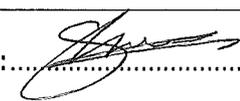
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AH **changing behavioural patterns.**

14. A number of my family members have observed to me that there has been a change in AH behaviour since the first incident at the YMCA in January 2011. However, it is only been with the benefit of hindsight that I understand why there were changes to his behaviour.
15. The pattern that AH behaviour usually takes during the school year is that, in term 1 he is well behaved, in term 2 he starts to have a few hiccups by the end of term, by term 3 a few more behavioural problems emerge and then by term 4 he is completely over it and he gets in trouble. It is usually just a progression as he gets more tired throughout the school year.
16. On the second day of term 1 in 2011, AH got into trouble at school, and then he got into trouble again a couple of days later. In my experience this was quite out of character for him. After these initial incidents at school in 2011, AH then settled back down and seemed to go through the rest of the term without further issues. At the vacation care in April 2011, his behavioural issues again arose. Once again, in the first week of term 2, he had a complete meltdown. He was hitting, kicking, spitting and pinching at both home and school. AH attended vacation care again in the July 2011 holidays and then as soon as term 3 started he got into trouble again
17. AH has been going to see a psychologist since he was diagnosed with Asperger's at the age of five, to help him manage his behaviour and his feelings. In 2011, I considered it necessary to take AH to the psychologist more than usual because I observed him to be

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angry, depressed and often miserable. As he was only eight years old at the time, it was extremely sad to see and I didn't know what was causing it.

18. From around the beginning of 2011, I observed that AH started rejecting physical contact with people, including his dad or his grandparents. He wouldn't kiss, cuddle or handshake. This affected his relationships with his father and his grandparents.
19. AH became increasingly anxious and clingy with me. I was the only person who could get close to him. He would come to [REDACTED] and my bedroom six times in a night and in the end he would climb into the bed and would just want to hold my hand.

**The allegations about Jonathan Lord**

20. I first heard about the allegations against Jonathan Lord while I was at home listening to radio, in the beginning of October. I also received an email from the YMCA shortly after.
21. I spoke to AH as soon as I heard about the allegations. I asked AH at this time if anyone had done anything inappropriate such as touching him or if anyone had hurt him in any way. AH told me that no one had. I heard further news reports over the following weeks and I again asked similar questions to AH. Each time he told me that nothing had happened.
22. I just kept asking him anyway, because I had an instinct that he may have been involved. AH fell in the target age group, and because he has Asperger's, I know that he often doesn't play with the other children but instead tends to hang around the teachers. I thought that for these reasons he may have been an easy target for Jonathan Lord. I just kept asking him every time I heard something, I asked him whether anything inappropriate would had happened and he would say "no, no, no".

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23. The YMCA did keep me updated with information, through emails. The first emails were helpful, but in the later emails especially, it seemed like they were 'back-peddling' and trying to cover themselves by saying that they did all the appropriate checks.

**Disclosure**

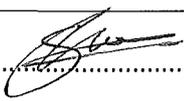
24. At about 5pm, on Tuesday the 29 November 2011, Detective Sergeant Russell, Detective Kelly and Gemma Millar from Kogarah Join Investigation Response Team ("JIRT") came to our home and spoke with [REDACTED] and me, and explained that AH had been abused by Jonathan Lord. They had a counsellor with them. I made an appointment with the police for AH interview for 1 December 2011. I thought that the police handled the situation very well, I couldn't fault them.

25. After the police left, I went to AH room and said to him, "Do you know why they were here?" He replied, "John and me." I told him that we would have to go to the police office to talk to them.

26. The next day at breakfast AH asked me "can I just write the police a note". I said, "Yes if that helps, yes". So AH wrote a note labelled 'To the police only' and left it on the kitchen table.

27. To help AH explain to the police, I printed off the spreadsheet of the YMCA 2011 Vacation Care program, which I had previously used to ask him where he wanted to go on vacation care. I gave it to AH and said "this might be handy for the police – these are the activities you did, just write little notes, anything you can remember. That would be helpful". And so he did. Next to some days of the program he wrote, "Something happened

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on this day". Usually the days he marked were excursion days. We folded up that program and put that with the letter as well.

**Our experience with the police**

28. On 1 December 2011, my husband, AH and I arrived at Kogarah JIRT. Initially they took us to a room to explain the interview process and show AH where he would be interviewed. They showed AH that a counsellor was sitting behind the glass. The police then asked AH "would you like mum to stay", and AH said no". So I said, "Okay".
29. I wasn't upset at this arrangement as it was what AH wanted, it was his choice and I wanted him to be as comfortable as he could. I thought that if they were going to get more out of him if I wasn't in the room then that would be better for the case.
30. I then provided a police statement on the 1 December 2011.
31. I found the police very supportive and good with AH. One of the policewomen, Leanne Kelly was in constant touch with me all through the court proceedings. She kept me updated with court developments, which was particularly helpful as we had no idea about how the court system worked. She rang me when Jonathan Lord pleaded guilty and explained what would happen next.
32. Leanne Kelly explained that AH would not have to give evidence now that Jonathan Lord had pleaded guilty. I was so relieved that AH would not have to speak in public about what had happened to him.
33. The police offered us counselling. However, I felt that AH would be more comfortable with his existing psychologist, who he has been seeing since he was first diagnosed with Asperger's in 2009. Therefore I sent him to his existing psychologist, [REDACTED]. The YMCA did not offer us counselling, nor did they cover the cost of AH counselling.

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34. During the sentencing of Jonathan Lord, the police requested that I write out a victim's impact statement. [REDACTED], AH and I prepared a victim's impact statement together. The statement outlined the behavioural issues that we had faced with AH ; which I considered to be directly linked to the incidents with Jonathan Lord. These included AH increased anxiety, sleep problems, problems with physical contact and aggression at school. I was very worried about reading the statement in court, I didn't know if I would be able to. The police officer said that he could read it for me, but that it would have more effect if I did. In the end I did read the statement aloud in court at the sentencing hearing in November 2012. I am glad that I did.

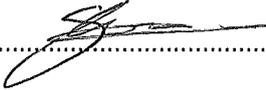
35. I thought that the judge who sentenced Jonathan Lord did a really thorough job. We came back to Court in January 2013 for the sentence to be delivered, and it took over four hours because the judge did not want to miss anything. He went through the details of each individual child and the entire facts of the case. It was a lot to take in, but we were just happy at the end that Jonathan Lord was going to prison.

**Involvement with Public School 1 .**

36. As discussed above, AH attends Public School 1 and is considered to be 'high functioning' on the Autism spectrum. This means that if you give him a task, he's very focussed on it and he is a model student in the classroom. However in the playground, his social skills sometimes let him down.

37. On 2 December 2011, being the day after AH gave the police his statement there was a behavioural incident at school. I was told that he had been aggressive towards another student. I was telephoned and asked to attend the school to talk with the Principal. I

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explained to him that we had discovered that AH had been sexually abused, that he had had given a police statement the day before and was dealing with some very serious issues, especially for a nine year old.

38. The Principal told me that despite this, there must be consequences for AH actions and he was suspended from school for two days. AH was really upset about being suspended, and he was worried that it would affect his chances of going to the secondary school that he really wanted to attend.

39. The first few months of 2013 were also horrendous for AH. He was in a very fragile state after Jonathan Lord was sentenced, and was misbehaving at school again.

40. I don't think that AH has been given the support that he deserved and needed from the school, especially from the Principal. Unfortunately, I feel that the Principal has 'pigeon-holed' AH as a trouble maker, despite the fact that he knows he has Autism and Asperger's, and has been the victim of sexual abuse. I feel that AH should be given some leniency with his behaviour and that he should be treated with a bit more understanding. Another child at AH school is on the Autism spectrum, and I feel that AH doesn't receive the same leniency that the other child does.

41. I have observed that AH is trying to cope with a lot of information, especially after Jonathan Lord was sent to jail. I consider that it is a lot for a child to process, especially with his Asperger's and I think that the Principal should understand that better.

42. Despite this, some of AH teachers have been very helpful and supportive. For example, his current teacher understands AH and listens to him.

43. AH saw the school counsellor when he was in year 2 and he was involved in a program aiming at developing social skills. We also applied for some Autism assistance through the

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school in around 2010 and AH was granted it; but the counsellor was only at the school for two weeks in 2011, when AH was in year 3, and I did not think that it was very helpful.

44. To help to try and avoid situations where AH may have problems with other children in the playground, where there is less structure, AH has been involved in a number of extra-curricular activities. Since year 3 he's been involved in the band, he's a library monitor, he's in the choir, and he's applied for a technician job next year.

45. On the days when he knows he is not feeling in a good space mentally, AH asks the teacher if he can stay in the classroom and help her rather than put himself in a social situation where he may react poorly. In this way I have observed that he is learning to manage a lot better.

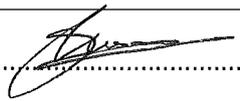
**Victims' compensation**

46. We were informed about victim's compensation last November 2012 during the sentencing hearing. I filled in the paper work and submitted an application for victims' compensation. I arranged for AH psychologist to prepare a psychological assessment of AH ; to provide to the Victims' Compensation Tribunal as evidence.

47. I have been shown a 14 page document, being a copy of the psychological assessment prepared by [REDACTED], AH psychologist, for the purposes of applying for victims' compensation. [REDACTED]

48. In August 2013, my husband and I were walking down the street in Cronulla and we bumped into the policeman who had worked on AH case, Matt. He came and said hello to us and asked us how AH was doing. Matt did not have to stop and keep us

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updated, particularly as he's moved onto Homicide and is no longer involved on the case.

I thought it was really great of him.

49. Matt told us that he has heard from the Victim's Compensation Tribunal and that he has given them his statement. We expect to find out in around November 2013 whether or not we will receive victim's compensation. If we do, the victim's compensation will help to pay for AH ongoing therapy with his psychologist.

**Emotional impact on me and AH**

50. I continually tell AH that he did nothing wrong in relation to Jonathan Lord, but I think he blames himself for not talking to me sooner.

51. I also think that AH blames himself that Jonathan Lord has gone to jail. After Jonathan Lord's sentencing in January 2013, AH was very angry and in a very bad mental state. After Jonathan Lord was sentenced, AH saw an article in the local newspaper about the sentencing and knew that he was mentioned in the article. When I told him that Jonathan Lord had been sentenced to 10 years in prison, he thought that was a really long time. I told him that it wasn't a very long time to be in prison for the things that Jonathan Lord had done, because the things that Jonathan Lord had done had been very bad.

52. Even at times when AH appears to be alright, problems arise if he is reminded of the YMCA, because he associates that with Jonathan Lord. Recently we were at a family friend's wedding and AH was happily dancing to the music. The next minute, the Village People's song 'YMCA' came on and AH ran and hid under a table. In June this year, we went to the cinema to see an animated movie, and during the movie the same 'YMCA'

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song was played. I looked over at AH and he was slumped in his seat, and he appeared very distressed.

53. I also worry about how AH may react if he ever saw Jonathan Lord again. AH knows that what Jonathan Lord did was wrong, but I think that he has very conflicting emotions about everything that has happened. After AH had spoken to the police for the first time in November 2011, he told me that he was sorry for not telling me sooner, but that he was confused, because he knew what John was doing was wrong, but John was his friend. He also told me that he thought he might get in trouble if he told me.

54. This year I started going to counselling sessions of my own, because I needed strategies to help AH. In the past few years [REDACTED] and I have been so focussed on getting AH back and making sure that [REDACTED] doesn't miss out that I have pushed all my friends and family away. I felt like I couldn't deal with the outside world. I am trying to rebuild those relationships now.

55. It is only since March this year that AH behaviour has settled and I observe that he is a bit happier within himself. I know that there will be more problems in the future though, because I know that issues relating to Jonathan Lord will arise as AH grows up.

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Signed: ....

Date: 26 September 2013

Witness:  .....

SOPHIE LLOYD

Date: 26 September 2013

Signature: AS Witness: 