



Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

Name Erin Turner
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Occupation Outbound Manager, Camp America
Date 2 October 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 Erin Elizabeth Turner. My date of birth is 27 March 1980.
3. I am currently the Outbound Manager for Camp America in Australia. My role involves vetting and preparing applicants to staff American children's summer camps. I completed my HSC in 1997 and from 1998 until 2010 I held a variety of roles involving child care and coaching in Australia and overseas. These included touch football coaching through New South Wales Touch, 5 years at various summer camps in America, 1 year at a Children's camp in the UK and services manager at a health club in London. Throughout this time I started working at YMCA in 2008, I left Australia and returned in this time a few times.
4. When I returned to Australia in or about 2010 I moved back in with my mother in Caringbah which was where I had grown up. I recall that in approximately 2008 I submitted my resumed to Young Man's Christian Association (YMCA) and I was contacted by Lisa Barrett at the YMCA Arncliffe Branch. Lisa invited me for an interview with herself and Casey then after getting through the interview process they invited me to have some trial shifts at the YMCA Arncliffe in

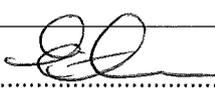
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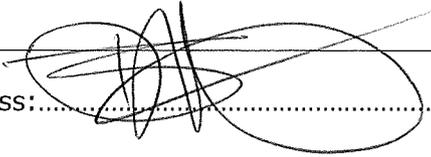
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before and after school care program. The Arncliffe centre also offered vacation care and the school holidays were coming up at the time I started. I recall that I was taken through all the policies and procedures at the Arncliffe centre at the start of my "buddy shifts" which were a trial period where I worked with a senior coordinator. After the buddy shifts I had another interview to confirm that I was still interested and wanted to continue. At that point one of the YMCA staff called Casey took me through all the policies.

5. Whilst working at YMCA I was sent for external training through an organisation called Network. My training included child protection, safe food handling and OH&S. We also had occasional meetings within YMCA Childcare Centres to go over related child care procedures and upcoming events. I recall that in or about 2010 I wanted to increase my work shifts and I had met Jacqui Barnat at various YCMA Childcare meetings. As Caringbah was my local YMCA I approached Jacqui and asked her if she had any hours she could give me.
6. On 11/10/2010 I moved from the Arncliffe YMCA to Caringbah YMCA. Jacqui Barnat took me through the routine at YMCA Caringbah's child care centres, but not the policies, as I was already a YMCA staff member and had done this training. I remember that there was a policy folder in Jacqui's office at the main centre and where the policy folder was at the St Patrick's centre. I didn't know where to access the folder at other centres.
7. My first role in Caringbah was as the coordinator of the St Patrick's centre and I started there in term 4 of 2010. Jonathan (John) Lord was my assistant. I recall that at or about the time I started at the centre Jonathan Lord told me that he had lost his driver's licence. I did not ask him why. He asked me if I could give him a lift to and from work as needed, and I agreed. I recall that one of the first times I drove him to work I asked him questions about his background in an effort to get to know him. We were comparing our work experiences and he told me that he had

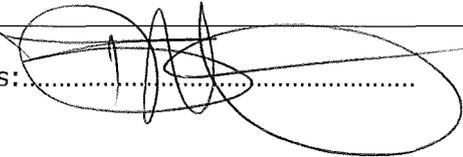
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worked at a YMCA summer camp in the United States. I was excited to hear that as it was something we had in common. I asked him how many years he had done this for, he said he had been there for 1 year. Then he said words to the effect: *"Well actually I didn't finish the whole of that summer through to the end, I was sacked."*

8. At the time I didn't find this unusual as I knew quite a few people who had been let go from camps. It was not uncommon for certain camps to find a trivial reason to dismiss staff in order to avoid paying overtime. As a result I didn't ask him the reason he was dismissed. This was more so because I assumed that if there had been a serious reason for his dismissal from a YMCA camp, the YMCA in Australia wouldn't have hired him, especially to look after children.
9. During the time I worked with Jonathan Lord at the St Patrick's centre there were a number of things I observed which, on reflection, were suspicious. However, at the time I did not consider them to be so. At the time I thought he was a great guy. He had an attractive personality. He was always thinking of fun games for the kids and interacting with them with more enthusiasm than a lot of staff.
10. There were a number of times that I saw John with a child on his lap. I would shake my head at him in order to let him know that he shouldn't do this. He would then not do so for the rest of the shift but this happened on quite a few occasions. The reason I would pull him up on this was because I didn't want him to get into trouble. I didn't think for a second that he would actually be doing it for any inappropriate reason.
11. I became aware in late 2010 that John was babysitting children. I wasn't aware what the YMCA policy was on this but I knew that the other organisations I had worked at had an anti-babysitting policy in relation to the children enrolled with those organisations. I recall asking Chloe Starr what the view was at YMCA about it and she told me that we weren't allowed to do it.

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12. As a result I approached John and I told him that I had become aware that he was baby-sitting and that this was against YMCA policy. I said to him *"You can't do it anymore"* and he told me that he would stop. I took him at his word that he had stopped and as a result I didn't report it to anyone that he had been baby-sitting.
13. On 17 November 2010 I moved to a middle management role at YMCA Caringbah and was based in the main centre working directly under Shane Demir.
14. On the evening of 30 September 2011 I was still in the office when some parents came in to speak to Shane Demir and Jacqui Barnat. I knew something serious was going on as they went into a closed door meeting. When the parents left Jacqui told me that there had been an incident with a staff member. She didn't tell me more than that. Shortly afterward I was at my desk when John and his sister [REDACTED] came in. I got the impression John had rushed down to the centre as he wasn't wearing shoes. John said to me *"Ez, what's going on?"* I replied *"I don't know buddy"*. His sister asked me what she should do. It never occurred to me that John could actually have done something wrong. So I gave them advice and told [REDACTED] to listen to everything that was said, and write down everything as John's support person. I don't recall seeing John and [REDACTED] come out of the meeting.
15. On the next work day after that evening there was a meeting at the Caringbah centre with the child care coordinators. The meeting was run by Shane Demir and Jacqui Barnat. Shane told the group that an allegation had been made by a family against a staff member. They did not mention any names but I put two and two together because I had been there on the Friday when John had come in. When I eventually discovered that the allegations were of sexual abuse against a child I refused to believe it. It wasn't until many more children came forward that I

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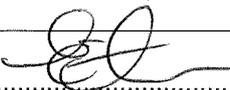
finally accepted that it must be true. When I was told he was pleading guilty that confirmed it for me.

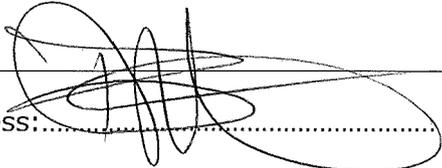
16. I often think about what I would say to him if I saw him. I considered going to see him in jail to ask him why he did this to the children and also why he did this to me. At the time of the incident I knew what grooming was as a concept. I never considered that I could have been groomed but on reflection that is exactly what I think John did to me and I am extremely angry with him about it. I feel that John manipulated me and that what I thought was a genuine friendship was probably created by him so that I wouldn't suspect him while he abused the children.

17. In the months immediately after John's first arrest I felt truly informed by the YMCA. As I worked in the Caringbah centre close to Jacqui I was much 'in the loop'. I received many emails in that period to my YMCA email address which kept me up to date with meetings and the status of where John's court case was up to. We were offered counselling and if I ever needed to chat I could always go to Jacqui Barnat and Ann Mary Nolan. Ann Mary was often at the Caringbah centre and she was really lovely to me.

18. Ann Mary told me that it was better to speak to her or Jacqui than it was to speak amongst ourselves because this would stop gossip about the situation. If parents called the centre I put them straight through to Jacqui. I recall that Ann Mary Nolan and Irene Minos also worked from the Caringbah centre in early October 2011 in order to deal with media enquiries.

19. At around that time I attended a meeting at which we were all asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. After that if I ever heard staff discussing the John Lord matter I would tell them to stop.

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20. I was made redundant from YMCA in 2012 and after that I moved to my current role. In that role I have undertaken extensive child protection training. Camp America has a very strict vetting process.
21. All initial enquiries from applicants must be made online using a standardised form. This ensures that we receive the same information from every applicant. After an initial enquiry, applicants are sent some information and then progressed through to a further form. As part of this form they are asked specific and detail questions. This includes a question as to whether they themselves have ever suffered abuse.
22. I understand that the reason for this is that people who are abused often become abusers themselves. If they answer yes there is a separate process to get details from them about it. If the answer no, and they eventually proceed to a face to face interview stage, they are asked again and the interviewer looks at their physical response to the question. At a face to face interview the candidate is asked all of the online questions again to see how they answer for consistency and also body language.
23. I have been trained to look for "red flags" in the wording of applicant's answers. This is because there are certain responses and words that betray an odd attitude to children. For example emotional words like love in relation to children can often be a red flag. Also if applicants suggest that they have children as their "friends". In addition we look for any mismatch in relation to job experience and referees. If a person has an extensive work history but their referees are friends or family or religious ministers for whom they haven't worked. All of these aspects are extensively tested in the course of the application process.

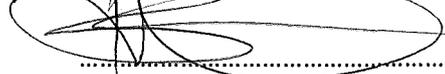
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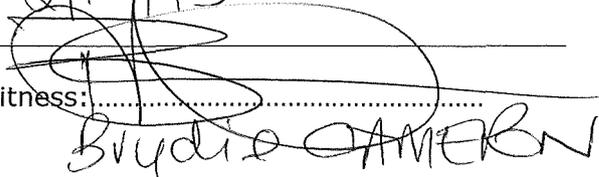
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