

STATEMENT OF WAYNE ALCORN

Name Wayne Alexander Alcorn

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Occupation Minister of Religion

Date 19 September 2014

1. I was born on 23 January, 1958.
2. I am married to Lyn Alcorn and we have 2 children.
3. I am the Senior Pastor at Hope Centre Church located in Queensland. Hope Centre has a growing number of multi-campuses in the South East Brisbane area.
4. I am currently the elected National President of the Australian Christian Churches (**ACC**).
5. Australian Christian Churches was formerly known as Assemblies of God in Australia (**AOGA**). The name change occurred in April 2007 and was officially embedded into our Constitution in April 2013. The ACC is an affiliation of a large number (but not exclusive) Pentecostal churches. There are other Pentecostal movements within Australia that are not part of the ACC movement.
6. I was invited to the Queensland State Executive in 1989 and was elected onto this team in October 1990. I became the Vice President in October 1994 and then President of this team in 1998, fulfilling this role for 12 years until October 2010. I was elected onto the National Executive in April 1999, becoming President in April 2009. I serve in this role currently.
7. The Royal Commission has made inquiry on the role of the ACC its policies, procedures and practices for the prevention, detection, investigation and reporting of allegations of child sexual abuse. My response to this inquiry is set out below.
 1. **The Role of the ACC as a movement of Pentecostal Churches in voluntary cooperation, including**
 - a. **the nature of the affiliation between the ACC and the individual churches, including Hillsong Church; and Encompass Church, Bundoora Victoria; and**
 - b. **ACC's governance of or oversight over Pentecostal churches affiliated with ACC.**
8. The ACC is a movement of churches who voluntarily choose to affiliate and cooperate. This movement commenced in Australia in 1937, then known as the Assemblies of God in Australia. It does not have the history and tradition of many other Christian churches (such as the Catholic Church and the Anglican Church). We have no body of canon law, and consider ourselves subject to the general law.

9. Each individual church is self-governing, but commits itself to work together with other churches in the movement for the purpose of mutual support and the spread of the gospel in Australia and in the world.
10. Voluntary cooperation is in terms of equality, as self contained and autonomous Christian churches, uniting for evangelism, unity, fellowship, order, discipline and other purposes. ACC has over 1070 affiliated churches and over 272,000 constituents.
11. Each affiliated church is a separate legal entity, either incorporated under State, Territory or Commonwealth legislation, or otherwise unincorporated as a gathering of the local members.
12. ACC is governed by a National Executive. The National Executive is elected by the National Conference, held biennially.
13. The National Conference is recognised as the governing body of the movement, with power to make whatever decisions may be necessary or advisable in the interests of the work as a whole. The National Conference is the gathering of all the affiliated churches and credentialed ministers.
14. It is the function of the National Conference as the governing body:
 - (a) to promote possibilities for fellowship between local churches;
 - (b) to make whatever decisions may be necessary in the interests of the ACC;
 - (c) to carry out elections to office in accordance with the United Constitution and to appoint committees for special work as occasion may rise;
 - (d) to receive and consider reports from the states, departments, officers and committees and, where appropriate, make any decisions or recommendations arising there from; and
 - (e) to consider and decide on any constitutional matter that may arise.
15. Whilst the ACC is a national movement, it recognises the necessity of administration of some matters at a state level.
16. To facilitate this, each state has its own Conference, State Executive and elected executive officers. Some functions are delegated to the State Executive, such as managing ordination applications, investigation of grievances against credentialed ministers and holding church property on trust for the local church (usually where the church is unincorporated).
17. The National Fellowship has a limited oversight of the affiliated churches. Its oversight primarily relates to the registration of affiliated churches and accreditation of pastors. However an affiliated church retains complete responsibility for local governance, and the ACC has no authority to direct individual churches or their board of directors/elders regarding this local governance, other than through moral persuasion and provision of policy guidance. This is not an abdication of responsibility, but a recognition that affiliated churches are autonomous and self-governing, and in most cases are incorporated independently. At best the relationship can be described as quasi-contractual, in that the United Constitution is a consensual compact between each affiliated church.
18. Hillsong Church and Encompass Church are two of many individual affiliated churches within the ACC. They are also both independently incorporated as separate legal entities.

c. ACC's role, if any, in the investigation of allegations of child sexual abuse by ministers and/or members of Pentecostal churches affiliated with ACC

19. The National Executive, pursuant to article 11 of the United Constitution (2013) [ACC.0004.001.0174], can investigate complaints against certificate holders alleging improper conduct. This would include allegations of child sexual abuse.
20. With respect to allegations of child sexual abuse, the rule is that the ACC will first report to government authorities the content of the allegations (mandatory reporting) and suspend the certificate holder's credential resulting in the former certificate holder being unable to preach and or continue his or her pastoral services or ministry within any individual church. The ACC will usually not investigate the allegation until criminal proceedings have been completed, unless the credentialed minister consents to the investigation occurring earlier. This is to avoid prejudicing the criminal proceedings.
21. However, the suspension remains until ACC has investigated the complaint and made a determination.
22. Investigations are usually carried out by the State Executive in accordance with the "Grievance Procedure for Certificate Holders" (2010) [ACC.0005.001.0001]. Where the certificate holder has a prominent national ministry, the National Executive can assume responsibility for the investigation. The National or State Executive retains the right to truncate the investigation process, where they consider it necessary (for example, where the allegations have clearly been substantiated through the outcome of criminal proceedings).
23. If an investigation is substantiated, on the balance of probabilities, the State Executive advises the National Executive of the outcome. The National Executive determines the discipline that should apply, in accordance with the "Program for the Restoration and Reinstatement of Disciplined Ministers" (2010) [ACC.0001.001.0126]. In instances of child sexual abuse, the credential is revoked, and this policy stipulates that there is no restoration available for Certificate Holders who have engaged in child sexual abuse.
24. ACC cannot direct a church to remove a disciplined Certificate Holder from ministry. However, if a church refuses to remove a disciplined Certificate Holder from ministry, the church would need to withdraw from the National Movement, or have its affiliation cancelled. There have been a small number of cases where a church has chosen to withdraw from affiliation with the National Movement in this circumstance.
25. ACC has no formal role in investigation of allegations of child sexual abuse by members or volunteers of affiliated churches, because of the autonomy of local churches.
26. However, we do provide advice and assistance to churches, as and when required, in relation to handling such complaints or allegations. The various State Executives have developed template Child Protection Policies, which are distributed to local churches for consideration and implementation. Local Churches often tailor the policy to suit their own ministry activities. The National Movement strongly recommends that the relevant State Policy is implemented as a minimum.
27. On request, every State provides child protection and risk management training to church staff and volunteers.

d. ACC's role, if any, in granting, suspending or removing ministers' credentials in relation to Pentecostal churches affiliated with ACC

28. ACC credentials individuals as ministers (Specialised Minister Certificate, Provisional Minister Credential and Ordained Minister Credential). Article 11 of the United Constitution (2013) [ACC.0004.001.0174] sets out the various credentials and requirements to be credentialed by the National Movement.
29. A registered church must generally have a Senior Pastor who has a ministry credential.

e. ACC's role, if any, in the discipline of ministers and/or members of ACC affiliated churches

30. Discipline of ministers has been addressed above. ACC is not involved in the discipline of members of ACC affiliated churches, as this rests with the local autonomous church.

2. The current policies, procedures and practices of ACC for the prevention, detection, investigation and reporting of allegations of child sexual abuse in respect of ACC and its affiliated churches.

31. The ACC and its state branches release policies and procedures for ministers and ministry workers that deal with children. The principal underpinning these policies is the protection of children in church care. The ACC produces documents that can be used as generic templates for its state branches in drafting child protection policies. The state branches adopt, adapt, advance and incorporate these policies.
32. The list below shows only the policies that are current at national and state level.
33. The ACC at a national level produced the following current documents:
- a. Ministerial code of conduct for credentialed ministers in the AOG (2013) [ACC.0001.001.0183];
 - b. Program for the Restoration and Reinstatement of Disciplined Ministers (2010) [ACC.0001.001.0126];
 - c. AOG Credential Review Form (2014) [ACC.0001.001.1005];
 - d. AOG Credential Application Form (2013) [ACC.0001.001.0996];
 - e. AOG Credential Reactivation Form (2013) [ACC.0001.001.1005]; and
 - f. Grievance Procedure for Certificate Holders (2010) [ACC.0005.001.0001].
34. The ACC New South Wales branch produced the following current documents:
- a. The New Working with children check for church of ministry administrators (pre June 2013) [ACC.0001.001.1054]
 - b. Towards Safe Places – Participant Workbook (2011) [ACC.0001.001.0238]
 - c. Individual Support and Accountability Plan (2009) [ACC.0001.001.0330]
 - d. Safe Ministry Resources Individual Support and Accountability Plan (ISAP) (2009) [ACC.0001.001.0238];

- e. Towards Safe Places – Implementation Pack (2008) [ACC.0001.001.0266]
 - f. Safe Places Safe Environment Procedures (2008) [ACC.0001.001.0238]
 - g. Safe Places Code of Conduct (including abridged) (2008) [ACC.0001.001.0240]
 - h. Child Safe and Child Friendly Policy (2008) [ACC.0001.001.0238]; and
 - i. Policy and Procedure for Children Ministries [ACC.0001.001.0420]
35. The ACC QLD branch produced the following current documents:
- a. ACC (QLD) Policies and key procedural elements document – Ministry to Children and Young People (2013) [ACC.0001.001.0238]; and
 - b. Resources for Children's Workers – Children and young persons (2008) [ACC.0001.001.0238].
36. The ACC VIC branch produced the following current document 'Kids R Us Victoria – Child Protection Policy (2005)' [ACC.0001.001.0654].
37. The ACC SA branch produced the following current documents:
- a. AOG (SA) Volunteers Code of Conduct (2011) [ACC.0001.001.0784]; and
 - b. AOG (SA) Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2007) [ACC.0001.001.0745].
38. The ACC NT branch produced the following current document 'Child Protection Policy Registered and/or Incorporated Churches (exact date produced unknown, possibly post 2004)' [ACC.0001.001.0787].
39. The ACC WA branch produced the following current document 'Child Protection WA' (exact date produced unknown, possibly post 2004) [ACC.0001.001.0826].
40. The ACC TAS branch produced the following current document 'Child Protection Policy and Procedures' (2004) [ACC.0001.001.0827].
41. The documents listed above have been disclosed to the Royal Commission in response to Summons S-NSW-235 previously issued.



Signature

19/9/14

Date



Witness

19/9/14

Date