

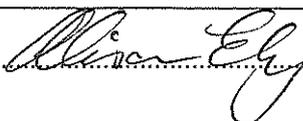
Statement of Alison Ely (Omdhyanam)

Name	Alison Ely
Address	Known to the Royal Commission
Occupation	Various Ashram duties
Date	13 November, 2014

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. This statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. Where direct speech is referred to in this statement, it is provided in words or words to the effect of those which were used, to the best of my recollection.
2. My full name is Alison Ely. My spiritual name is Omdhyanam I was born on 9 September 1951 have two sons and a granddaughter.

Background

3. I worked in the Australian film and television industry in freelance work. I was a director's assistant/continuity person, I worked in the industry for 17 years.
4. To perform this job I completed a course at the Australian Film, Television & Radio School, AFTRS.
5. I am a qualified yoga teacher by the International Yoga Teachers Association.
6. I am a qualified Chinese herbalist and acupuncturist. I have a Diploma of Traditional Chinese Medicine from the Sydney College of Traditional Chinese medicine. That qualification

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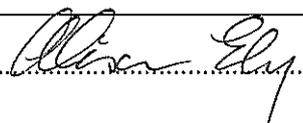
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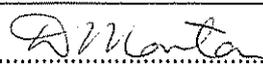
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involved a four year diploma course and 3 months internship in a Hospital in Hangzhou China.

Initial involvement with Satyananda Yoga and the Mangrove Mountain Yoga Ashram

7. In 1995 I attended an Easter weekend event at the Mangrove Yoga Ashram when Swami Niranjananda was there. I went to this event with a close friend. I did not know Swami Niranjananda before that time.
8. Between 1995 and 2003 I went to the Mangrove Yoga Ashram about four (4) times to participate in weekend courses as a visitor.
9. I always wanted to learn more about and explore the connections with the Ashram and their foundational ideologies. When my eldest son left home in 2003 I travelled abroad and lived in India for six years. I lived in the town of Rikia for a year and then Munghyr for five years.
10. For the first year I was in India I was living in a Satyananda Ashram called Rikhipeeth where Swami Satyandanda resided. At that time Swami Satyananda lived in seclusion and my contact with him was minimal.
11. When I was living in Rikhia there was a small school where I taught. There was also a hospital for tuberculosis patients where I generally helped out in a non-medical capacity. The school and the hospital were all part of the Ashram.
12. After one year Swami Niranjananda asked me if I could go to the Bihar School of Yoga in Monghyr, India. That is the sister Ashram to Satyananda Yoga in Rikhipeeth.
13. In Monghyr I performed general office work in the ashram located there.

Signature:..........

Witness:..........

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14. There was no monetary profit from these efforts but the ashrams provided food and lodging for me during this time.
15. In 2009 (I do not recall the exact date) I returned I was visiting Mangrove Yoga Ashram and sometime later I decided that I wanted to live at the Mangrove Yoga Ashram.
16. I still live at that Ashram today.

Current Role

17. Currently I take care of the gardens, bake the Ashrams homemade bread, keep bees and am responsible for ensuring the compliance of the Entities to all Government regulations/standards. In that role I organise meetings, keep records, file minutes and submit documents to ASIC, Dept Fair Trading and the ACNC etc. when necessary.
18. I have no background training in this area.

Understanding of Company Interrelation

19. The only company in which I hold an official position in is the Yoga Association of Mangrove Mountain Incorporated (YAMM), established in 1999. I am the president of YAMM and have been since March 2011. YAMM is a not for profit organisation.
20. I believe that Satyananda Yoga Academy Limited (SYA) established in 1996, owns the land in Mangrove Creek on which the Ashram is built. I understand that SYA is the parent company to the other associated organisations. It is a registered training organisation and academy. YAMM pays rent and utilities fees to SYA to be present on the land and run its courses there. SYA also owns a property in Manly which it rents to the Yoga Association of Manly and a

Signature:.....Witness:.....

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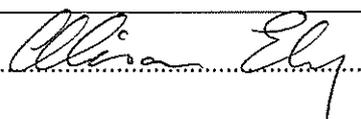
Statement of Alison Ely continued

property in Victoria which it uses as a second campus for the Academy and also rents to the Yoga Association of Victoria.

21. The SYA runs its own courses that focus on education of Yoga teachers whilst YAMM runs weekend courses that focus upon lifestyle for visitors. The courses are usually in the form of weekend yoga retreats focusing on different aspects of yoga such as health, fitness, cooking and various other things. SYA courses generally go for two years (full time) and are based upon being trained as a yoga teacher.
22. I believe that Satyananda Ashram (SA) established in January 1977 is the trustee for "The Trustee for Satyananda Yoga Trust" (SYT) SYT was established in October 1987. SYT owns property in Gosford which it rents to an affiliated Yoga Teacher who uses the space for holding yoga classes. SA is also "The Trustee for the Sannyas Ashram Trust" (SAT) established in March 1987. SAT owns property at Mangrove Mountain on which the ashram has an organic vegetable farm that supplies the kitchen with its organic fruit and vegetables.
23. I have no connection with Yoga Association Victoria (YAV) other than that I believe SYA owns the land in Rocklyn, Victoria and the YAV rents it from them which is similar to how it is done for Mangrove Ashram.
24. I understand that the International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM) exists for international trademark and copyright purposes. I am unsure of the purpose or function of that body. I believe that it receives small loans from SYA as it doesn't earn its own money. I also believe that the money is to pay the companies' registration and legal fees.

Working Together Taskforce

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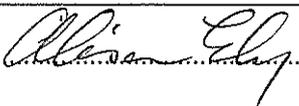
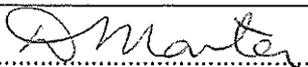


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25. I did not have a role in the taskforce but because I had been in management until January, 2014, I was told it was set up and who was in it.
26. I can recall that Surymitra informed me of the existence of the Working Together Task force, but I can't recall when she told me that.
27. I did not have any involvement or input in the task force although I was kept apprised of some small details out of respect.
28. I was told that a cease and desist letter was being sent out to someone or some people. I believe that there was concern that some of the postings on Facebook could have been considered libellous and management were unsure of our responsibility if this were the case. I believe that I was told that by Surymitra but I don't recall precisely what I was told.

Posts on the Ashram's Facebook page

29. I did not have any involvement with the SYA Facebook page other than viewing it once when the events had been going on for some time. I recall feeling concerned about the page for a number of reasons; that there are a number of people out there hurting, that something from so long ago in the Ashram's past was still haunting so many people and also that the social media forum was not the most appropriate forum for the expression of these feelings and was perhaps creating negative energy.
30. I do not think that YAMM has a separate Facebook page.
31. I have a Facebook page that was set up by my children, however I have rarely used it.
32. I have not had any correspondence with former residents or victims through Facebook.

Signature:..........Witness:..........

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33. I had nothing to do with the creation of the survivor pack. I wasn't consulted about it or sent a copy. I remember thinking at the time that it seemed like a good idea. I believed that it was intended to establish communication with the ex-residents so that a relationship could be formed and we could all find a way to move forward together. To this day I still have not read it.

34. I had nothing to do with the organisation of the 40th anniversary celebrations other than attending.

Emails from Bhakti Manning and Mary Smith and associated events.

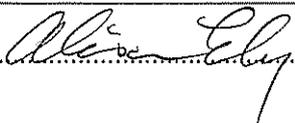
35. I do not recall ever receiving or seeing any emails from either Bhakti Manning or Mary Smith regarding the Facebook complaints. I do not believe I ever saw such documents.

36. I do not recall playing any part in the formation or drafting of the survivor pack and believe I played no such role. I did not see this document when it was sent out.

Additional Comments

37. I know there is always room for improvement. We as a group are always trying to make improvements. Not only in the area of child safety but we also try to create a safe space for adults, as many of those who come to stay at the ashram are going through a period in their life of vulnerability and or upheaval.

38. We want the Ashram to be a place where people feel safe and calm so that people of all ages can come to feel centred, relaxed and restored.

Signature:..........

Witness:..........

Statement in the matter of the Yoga Ashram

Statement of Alison Ely continued

Signed: *Alison Ely* .

Date: *26th November 2014*

Witness: *A. Marten* .

Date: *26/11/14*

Signature:.....

Witness:.....