

### Statement

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**Name** Mr Antonis Makri (also known as Gurubhakta)  
**Address** Known to the Royal Commission  
**Occupation** Head of the Skills and Lifestyle Department (Human Resources)  
**Date** December 2014

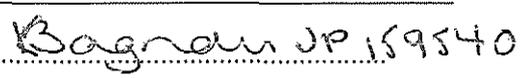
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1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. Where direct 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 Antonis Makri and my date of birth is 15 June 1972. I am also known by my spiritual name, Gurubhakta.

#### **My qualifications and career history**

3. I grew up in Bunbury in Western Australia. I graduated from high school in 1989, and subsequently undertook a Diploma in Applied Science at TAFE which I completed in 1990.
4. From 1991 until 1994 I worked as a lab technician for Cable Sands mining. Between 1994 and 2007 I worked on contract as a Technical Officer at the then Western Australian Water and Rivers Commission. I also worked as a Technical Officer for the Water Corporation of Western Australia.
5. I was also employed on contract as the National Resources Management Officer for the Department of Environment and Department of Water. I also worked as a contractor for the

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Department of Environment and Department of Water on and off for around 13 years concluding in 2007. I worked on contract for those four departments from anywhere between three month and two year periods.

6. I commenced as the Head of the Skills and Lifestyle Department at the Satyananda Yoga Ashram Mangrove Mountain (the Ashram) in December 2012, and I currently hold this role.

**My initial involvement with the Ashram**

7. I discovered yoga in 1997. I studied with several teachers from various traditions in Western Australia until I came into contact with Satyananda Yoga teachers in 2006. I knew of Satyananda Yoga before this date as I had been to some classes in Perth.
8. In 2009, I lived in a small ashram in Fremantle called the Sivananda Ashram which was not of the Satyananda tradition. In that same year I went to India to visit the Rikhia Ashram.
9. In 2010, I was initiated into the Satyananda tradition by Swami Satsangi at the Rikhia Ashram. There are different stages of initiation within the Satyananda tradition. These stages indicate a person's dedication to the Satyananda tradition. Some people just get a mantra, but most people will get a mantra and a name initiation. Initially I got a mantra, name 'Jigasu' initiation which means spiritual seeker, someone who explores the tradition.
10. During the visit to the Rikhia Ashram I asked for and was given Karma Sannyas initiation. At that initiation I was given the spiritual name 'Gurubhatka', which means 'devoted to the Guru'. During this trip, I felt that I would like to be more involved in yoga, but in Australia rather than in India. At the time I had friends at the Ashram at Mangrove Mountain, including Ananda

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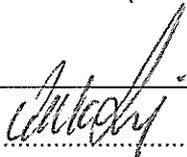
Bindu, and so it was the obvious place for me to go to. I ended up coming to live at the Ashram in March 2012.

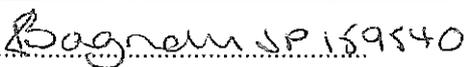
11. Since coming to the Ashram, I have visited India. In September/ October 2013 I visited the Munger Ashram to help with the preparation for the World Yoga Convention. I also visited this year in 11-29/11/2014 to the Rikhia Ashram. I was initiated as a Poorna Sannyasin in Rocklyn on 1 April 2013 during Swami Satsangi's visit to Australia

#### Management structure of the Ashram

12. In addition to my role as Head of the Skills and Lifestyle Department, I am a member of the current management team at the Ashram. This team comprises four people: Yogasandhan, Suryamitra, Samhita and myself. Samhita only joined in late September 2014, and she is currently the Head of the Courses Department. There are plans to add more people to the team.
13. Prior to around December 2013 and January 2014 when the current management team was formed, the Ashram was managed by a coordination team. The coordination team was made up of Rishi Hridayananda, Omdhyanam, Kriyatma, Yogasandhan, Gurupram and myself.
14. There are many legal entities, I don't know them all, the policies and procedures are relevant to all, Skills and Lifestyle looks after all Seva and Karma yoga in the Ashram, if there are teachers coming for instance then the education Department lets Skills and Lifestyle know, we work together.

There are two legal entities that comprise the Ashram. They are the Yoga Association of Mangrove Mountain (YAMM) and the Satyananda Yoga Academy Pty Ltd (SYA). The Skills and

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Lifestyle Department falls more under YAMM than SYA, which just runs the education side of things at the Ashram, However, if SYA needs a hand with something, such as looking for policies and procedures, I'll help them.

15. The current heads of each department at the Ashram are: Gyaneshwari (Media and Communications), Yogasandhan (Education), Sian (Kitchen), Mantramurti (Maintenance), Suryamitra (Administration), Kriyatma (Farm), and Samhita (Courses), and me (Skills and Lifestyle).

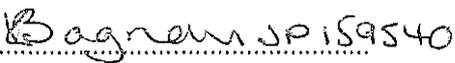
16. The management team looks after the day-to-day running of the Ashram. We discuss various things, including strategic plans, marketing, the various departments and promotions. We are also working on creating a public document which sets out the Ashram's organisational structure so the general public and the community in the Ashram know who is responsible for what within the Ashram.

#### **My role as Head of the Skills and Lifestyle Department**

17. When I first arrived at the Ashram in March 2012, I was on the general roster doing bits and pieces, but mostly farming, gardening and cooking. In June 2012, I began to help in maintenance at the Ashram and in December 2012, I became the Head of the Skills and Lifestyle Department, which is essentially Human Resources. The previous Head of the Skills and Lifestyle Department was Yogasarita, and before that it was Kriyaratna.

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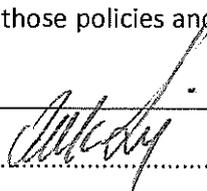
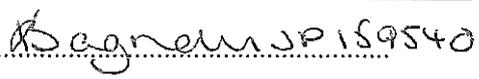
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18. My role as Head of the Skills and Lifestyle Department is diverse. There is a lot of running around making sure that the Ashram flows and if something goes wrong, I have to fix the problem and jump in wherever I can.
19. Initially, my role was to do the rostering and allocation of Karma yoga, and generally help out where I could. At the start of 2013, I took on responsibility for administering all of the policies and procedures at the Ashram.
20. Due to my understanding of the policies and procedures for the Ashram, people come and ask me questions about how they are to be applied in different situations. If I don't know the answer, I seek advice as to how to approach the situation. For example, because we are an ashram, we sometimes get unstable people coming here. If they are disruptive we may need to ask them to leave. At the Ashram we have two counsellors who used to work for the Department of Community Services (**DoCS**). Their names are Jayatma and Urvashi, and they do currently live at the ashram. We also have at the ashram a psychologist and retired psychiatrist, Rishi Vivekananda, who worked for the Health Department. I may ask one of these people for advice on how to approach someone who is unstable, or I may ask them to chat to the person directly.

**Policies and Procedures at the Ashram**

21. When I arrived at the Ashram at the end of 2012, Bert Franzen from electAssociates was undertaking a review of the Ashram's policies and procedures. I recall that Bert completed the main policies for the Mangrove Ashram or for YAMM in 2012, and he is currently updating the workplace health and safety policies. In about 2013 I began communicating with Bert about his review of those policies and procedures. These policies and procedures had existed prior to my

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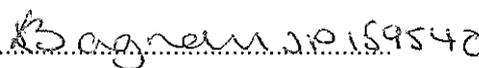
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time at the Ashram. In early 2013 Bert began to send me drafts of the revised policies. I have kept these drafts and put a copy in the library so everybody could access it. I cannot recall when the final draft of these policies came out (It came out around February, 2013). I continue to communicate with Bert about the Ashram's policies and procedures

22. The management team asks for advice from Bert on policies and procedures because he is an HR consultant, and he knows more about this stuff than we do. I have been told that he has experience developing policies and procedures for other clients. I am not personally aware of his previous experience or clients, however, I understand Bert has been attending the Ashram since the early 1990s and is known to many people at the Ashram.

23. Some of the policies in our area include those that relate to workplace health and safety, child protection, sexual harassment, bullying and copyright. There is a document titled "Child Protection Policy" that was created in 2010 or 2011, and is a SYA policy that is also relevant to YAMM [See SYA.0003.001.5639 at 5665]. The Child Protection Policy covers supervision of children, complaints and processes, and relevant phone numbers, like the DoCS Helpline. There is also a reference to the Child Protection Act. I recall a statement saying that the policy was changed, or is going to change, to correspond with the changes made to the Working with Children Check in February 2014.

24. The Ashram also has a "Grievance Policy" which is distinct from the Child Protection Policy. I believe it was developed around December 2012 with the assistance of Bert Franzen. It deals with complaints by staff members or students. If there is a complaint, it is written down, and we deal with it. I am the contact with regard to complaints made under the Grievance Policy, any of the management, department heads, skills and Lifestyle people can be contacted

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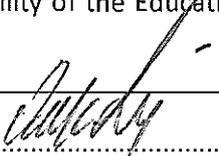
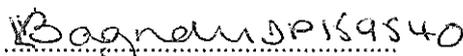
regarding a grievance, the grievance officer is Sumitra. I receive the complaint and then seek advice or apply the policy so that it may be dealt with: The grievance policy is contained within the Ashram Reference Guide [see SYA.0007.002.0002 at 0052]. We also have a document which outlines the role of the grievance officer [see YAM.0001.001.1685].

25. I haven't had to use any of the policies at the Ashram regularly and we don't have any policies that we do use regularly. If a situation were to arise, I would refer back to the policies and procedures in order to deal with it. If there were no policies or procedures in place, I would discuss it with the management team, assisted by Bert Franzen in his capacity as a consultant, and try to put something in place. If a child were to make a complaint about being sexually abused, the first thing I would do is ring the police. The other thing I would do is call DoCS to get advice. I would maybe even tell DoCS what is in our policy and get advice on it. It is likely that this process would be performed by one of the counsellors on-site, rather than me, as they have experience working with children.

#### Children at the Ashram

26. Children are at the Ashram during Family Weeks and Family Weekends mostly, but can be here with parents anytime. Family Week happens only twice a year and there are around three or four Family Weekends over the year. There are also occasionally things like farm projects, personal retreats, Serve, Love, Give where kids come with their parents, usually on the weekends.

27. The Courses area of the Ashram deals with Family Weeks and Family Weekends so I do not have much involvement with them. Courses is a specific area that until recently fell within the responsibility of the Education department, run by Yogasandhan, though I am not sure where

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Statement of Mr Antonis Makri (also known as Gurubhakta) continued

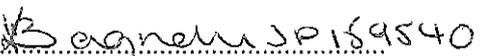
Courses sits now (Courses sits on its own). The Head of Courses is Samhita, who is also known as Deborah Wunderlich. I am aware that Courses have pamphlets that go out to parents, teenagers, residents and staff as to how they are to behave during Family Weeks. If there were any issues with kids during Family Weeks, they would be dealt with by Samhita.

**Facebook communications**

28. In or around December/ January or February 2014, a number of comments were made on the Ashram's Facebook page by former residents of the Ashram about abuse they had experienced at the Ashram when they were kids. I was around at the start of the Facebook comments. I was not at the Ashram when the Facebook comments emerged, as I think I was in Perth at the time I was in Perth from the 10 March 2014 until 26 March 2014.

29. I had previously heard rumours of the abuse and Swami Akhananda going to jail that occurred at the Ashram in the 1970s and 1980s. There were rumours in Western Australia that had spread through the Satyananda community, I heard these rumours in 2007. I assumed that there was some truth in the rumours that Swami Akhananda had gone to jail, but I just let it go since they were just rumours. It wasn't until the Facebook communications earlier this year, when I saw the stories of the children, that I realised there was truth in it.

30. After I returned to the Ashram from Perth on 26 March 2014 we discussed the Facebook communications from the victims in our management team meetings. We would ask questions such as, "What do we do? Do we reply or don't we reply?". We ultimately decided that the best thing we could do was to reply to the best of our ability at the time. It is my recollection that Yogasandhan and Suryamitra replied to a lot of the comments directly. I did not respond to any of the Facebook comments.

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**The Working Together Taskforce**

31. I was in Perth in February 2014 when the Working Together Task Force was formed. I was listed as a member of the Task Force. The main players involved in the Task Force were Ahimsadhara (Ahimsa), Yogasandhan, Suryamitra and Bert Franzen. I was the contact when the other members of the Task Force weren't available. If I was contacted, I would pass the information to Ahimsadhara, Yogasandhan, Suryamitra or Bert.

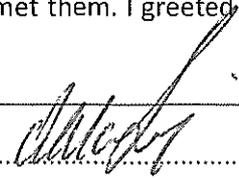
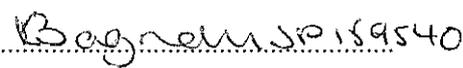
32. I vaguely remember a cease and desist letter being written to Bhakti Manning from Bert Franzen during the period in which the Taskforce operated. However, I was busy running the Ashram at this time, and as the other people on the Task Force were more involved at the time I thought I'd just keep out of it.

**My contact with Timothy Clark in March 2014**

33. Earlier this year in March 2014, I answered a phone call from one of the former Ashram residents called Tim Clark. He was the only former child resident that I had direct contact with. It was the first time he rang, and I did not get to say much as I felt that he wanted to talk, so I let him talk. I thought that was the best thing.

34. I asked Tim during our conversation if there was anything I could help him with, and after around 40 minutes or so, I decided that it would be best if he talked to someone on the Taskforce who was dealing with the victims. I believe that Tim then talked with Ahimsa, and subsequently, to Bert.

35. Two girls visited the Ashram at some point, around Christmas of 2013. They came for a day visit when I met them. I greeted them and invited them in for lunch, but that was the extent of my

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contact. Subsequently, I was told that one of the girls was Tim Clark's sister. I did not engage in any conversations about Tim.

#### Engagement of Terry O'Connell in March 2014

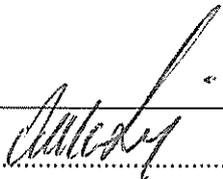
36. The management team came to a collective decision in early 2014 to engage Terry O'Connell to provide advice on the Facebook communications and the best approach for handling the situation.

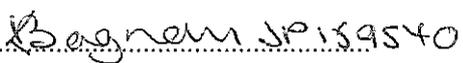
37. I met with Terry twice, once on his first visit in March 2014 and again on a later visit to the Ashram after the Easter celebrations. I cannot recall what happened during the first visit, however, there was a meeting with a small group of people, including Suryamitra, Yogasandhan, Stephen Phillips Terry and myself. I believe that we talked about the situation and the best way of handling it. I no longer remember what Terry suggested as possible approaches for moving forward.

#### The Easter 2014 meeting

38. We decided as a group to have a public meeting during the Ashram's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations held over Easter this year.

39. I did not end up being involved in the public meeting held during the Easter celebrations, as there was no one left to ensure that the Ashram was being managed so I sat in reception whilst it occurred. I did not talk to any of the former child residents during or after the meeting, although I may have seen some comments on Facebook about it afterwards.

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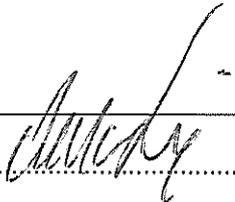
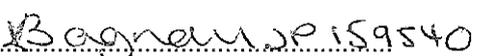
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**The Survivor Pack**

40. After the Ashram's 40th birthday celebrations, the management team came up with a plan for Terry O'Connell to offer counselling to all the victims and anyone else who felt they needed his services. The plan was called the "Survivor Pack" and is contained in a document of that name [see SYA.0003.001.1150]. I was involved in making this decision in so far as agreeing that it was a good idea.
41. The Survivor Pack applies to anyone who alleges child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, bullying or abuse of any kind, in connection with the Ashram. I have not personally given the Survivor Pack out to anyone.
42. We on the Taskforce and management team just keep developing the Survivor Pack to the best of our knowledge, sometimes with Terry's help.
43. We originally set a time limit for people to apply for assistance under the Survivor Pack, though I cannot recall the exact limitation period or why it was imposed. Even though we imposed a time limit at the time, we know these issues don't have a time limit.

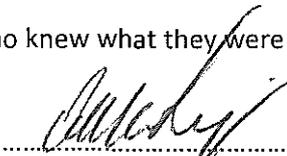
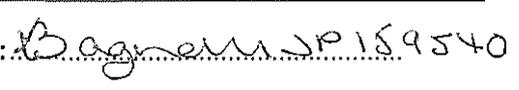
**Compensation and Monetary Payments**

44. I vaguely recall discussions in management team meetings about offering money to the victims. However, it was collectively decided by the management team that the best thing to do was to offer the Survivor Pack. In my personal view, I felt that it was best to offer counselling.

**Mechanisms subsequent to the Working Together Task Force**Signature:.....Witness: 

Statement of Mr Antonis Makri (also known as Gurubhakta) continued

45. The Working Together Task Force disbanded after the Ashram's 40th birthday celebration. In its place, a second task force was formed. I was a member of this second task force. My involvement was merely being informed of its progress. I believe Suryamitra, Yogasandhan, Bert and Ahimsadhara were also on the Taskforce.
46. After the meeting with Terry after the Easter celebrations there were no longer any victims contacting the Ashram and needing responses from the Task Force. The current Task Force does not have regular meetings, but if an issue arises we will bring it up during the management meeting.
47. The sessions with Terry that are offered under the Survivor Pack are funded by the Ashram. I am now aware that there are three people currently going through Terry's process. One of those people was involved in a sexual misconduct matter as an adult. I am aware the Ashram receives updates from Terry as to how the process is going, I think by Terry emailing or telephoning Yogasandhan and Suryamitra. I understand from these emails that Terry does not reveal personal information, however he lets us know whether people are still attending.
48. Yogasandhan and Suryamita, as members of the management team, speak regularly with Bert and Terry. I am copied into their email correspondence.
49. In my view, I believe that the Ashram responded to the issues raised earlier this year by the former residents of the Ashram in the best way it could at the time. I am not an expert and I cannot be sure whether the response was good or not good, but I felt that we did the best we could for what we knew. Our response has slowly developed through getting outside help from people who knew what they were doing.

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Statement in the matter of the Satyananda Ashram

Statement of Mr Antonis Makri (also known as Gurubhakta) continued

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Date: 5/12/2014 *AM*

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