



Statement

Name Meir Shlomo Kluwgant
Address Known to the Royal Commission
Occupation Rabbi
Date 20 January 2015

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. 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.

Background

3. My full name is Meir Shlomo Kluwgant. My date of birth is 18 December 1968.
4. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) has requested that I, as the current President of the Organisation of Rabbis of Australasia (ORA), the former President of the Rabbinical Council of Victoria (RCV), and the General Manager of Cultural and Spiritual Services at Jewish Care Victoria (JCV), prepare a statement setting out a chronological narrative of these institutions' responses to allegations of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) at Yeshivah Melbourne.

Jewish Care Victoria (JCV)

5. To the best of my knowledge Jewish Care Victoria did not have any knowledge or information in regards to CSA at Yeshivah Melbourne and therefore had no cause to respond to any such allegations.

Rabbinical Council of Victoria Inc. (RCV)

6. To the best of my knowledge, the RCV had no direct knowledge or information in regards to CSA at Yeshivah Melbourne, other than what appeared in the media. The RCV did not

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respond to these allegations, as it believed that these matters were best left to the justice system. The RCV did issue statements after a verdict was passed down in relation to David Cyprys and David Kramer. The RCV also issued a statement after the death of Aron 'Ezzy' Kestecher. The RCV encouraged victims and people with credible information related to CSA in general to pass this information on to the police.

Organisation of Rabbis of Australasia (ORA)

7. During my presidency (25 May 2014 to present), to the best of my knowledge and recollection, ORA did not have any direct knowledge or information with regards to CSA at Yeshivah Melbourne, other than what appeared in the media.
8. Since my appointment as President of ORA one individual who claimed to be a victim of CSA by David Cyprys made contact with me. This individual advised me that he disclosed all relevant information to the police. I saw no cause to respond further other than to offer personal support to the victim and to encourage him to get counselling.

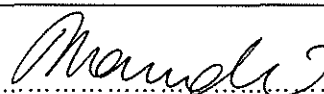
The Structure and management of the RCV and the role of the RCV within the Jewish community, particularly in responding to allegations of child sexual abuse from 1980 to the present:

9. The RCV is an Incorporated Association whose members are predominantly pulpit rabbis and members of the Jewish clergy in Victoria. The RCV was established to be a support to its members and to further its objectives. Its only powers are over those who choose to be members of RCV Inc. and those powers extend to fining, suspending and expelling a member for behaviour unbecoming.
10. The RCV plays no formal role in responding to allegations of CSA other than to encourage the reporting of such allegations to the police.
11. The RCV has numerous portfolios that are held by various members. One of these portfolios is a liaison for matters relating to abuse. This liaison is available to support RCV members with queries or concerns in relation to abuse, and as the RCV's contact person for related matters, for local Jewish organisations and members of the Jewish Community. This liaison also works with the Jewish Taskforce against Family Violence (JTAFV) to arrange professional development sessions for RCV members on issues relating to disclosures of abuse.

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The Structure and role of the ORA within the Jewish Community, particularly in responding to allegations of CSA from 1980 to the present:

12. The ORA has a membership of rabbis and ministers from Australia and New Zealand. Its role is to support its members and to further its objectives. In November 2014 ORA was registered with ASIC as a Company Limited by Guarantee. It is in the process of preparing for its inaugural AGM. ORA Ltd has seven members who are its directors.
13. The ORA plays no formal role in responding to allegations of CSA other than to encourage the reporting of such allegations to the police.

The role of Jewish Care within the Jewish Community, particularly in responding to allegations of Child Sexual Abuse from 1980 to the present:

14. The Mission Statement of Jewish Care Vic. is to support and enhance the wellbeing of the Jewish Community of Victoria. It provides a range of aged and community care programs. To my understanding it is not the role of JCV to respond to allegations of CSA from 1980 to the present. The role of JCV would be to refer these matters to the police and to offer counselling services to victims.


Any public Statements made by the RCV, ORA or Jewish Care, whether initiated by the RCV, ORA or Jewish Care or in response to the comments of others in the community, relating to CSA:

Jewish Care Victoria (JCV)

15. To the best of my knowledge, JCV has never made any public statements on the issue of CSA.

RCV

16. The RCV adopted a slightly modified version of the Rabbinical Council of America's (RCA) policy on Child Abuse. This is posted on its website. To the best of my knowledge, the RCV did not make any public statements in relation to allegations of CSA while these matters were with the police or before the courts, other than to encourage victims and individuals with information to bring these matters to the police.

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Attached is a list of public statements made by the RCV in relation to CSA.

ORA

17. Attached is a list of public statements in relation to CSA made by ORA during my presidency. I do not have access to any statements that may have been issued prior to my presidency.

When and in what circumstances, the RCV, ORA, or Jewish Care became aware of allegations of CSA made against employees of or volunteers at, Yeshivah Melbourne:

18. To the best of my knowledge none of these organisations became aware of any allegations of CSA made against employees of, or volunteers at, Yeshivah Melbourne. If they were made aware of such allegations it would only have been through those published in the media.

Any actions taken by the RCV, ORA, or Jewish Care, including investigations or inquiries, in response to any allegations of CSA made against employees of or volunteers at, Yeshivah Melbourne:

ORA, JCV, RCV

19. To the best of my knowledge no actions were taken by the RCV, ORA or JCV, including investigations or inquiries, in response to any allegations of CSA made against employees of or volunteers at, Yeshivah Melbourne. I say this as to the best of my knowledge The RCV, ORA and JCV did not have any knowledge of such allegations other than those posted in the media.

Jewish Care Vic

20. While under investigation, David Cyprys requested to attend one of JCV's aged care facilities for prayers on the Jewish Day of Atonement. After discussion with the CEO and president it was decided that access not be granted. There were no other instances that I am aware of where JCV took action, including investigations or inquiries, in response to any allegations of CSA made against employees of or volunteers at, Yeshivah Melbourne.

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The nature and extent of my role as Chaplain to Victoria Police:

- 21. In 2009 I was appointed as the chaplain for the orthodox Jewish members of Victoria Police. Not long afterwards I was asked to take up the general chaplaincy role for all police members in Caulfield and Bayside stations. Not long after that I was asked to take up the same role in Malvern and Prahran police stations, and then at Moorabbin Police station with the Sexual Offense and Child Abuse (SOCA) team.
- 22. The chaplaincy role is one of providing pastoral, chaplaincy and wellbeing support services to members and their families both on a proactive and reactive basis. In this role I also act as liaison between Victoria Police and the religious leadership of the Jewish Community as required and requested

Signed: *Lev*

Date: 21/1/15

Witness: *Mandi*

Date: 21/1/15

Signature:..... *Lev*

Witness:..... *Mandi*