



Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

Name Jennifer Margaret Davies
Address Known to the Royal Commission
Occupation Teacher
Date 3 March 2016

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. In preparing this statement, I have been shown documents relating to Grant Davies (Grant). Where I refer to a document in this statement, I have used the document reference number, which appears in the top or bottom right hand corner of the document to which I refer. I have not independently reviewed the records from which these documents have been drawn.
3. 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.
4. This statement has been prepared on the basis that the Commission will issue a Notice to Produce under *Royal Commissions Act 1902* (Cth) s 2(3A) for the production of a signed copy.
5. My name is Jennifer Margaret Davies and I am 43 years of age. I am preparing this statement voluntarily having been provided with statements made by other witnesses who refer to me or my actions concerning RGDANCE. There are five elements to my

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J. Davies

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statement that may be of value to the Commission in considering the scope and purpose of this hearing; in particular "The response of RG Dance and its members of staff to concerns raised or complaints made about the behaviour of Mr Grant Davies, dance instructor".

Background

6. I am the eldest sister to Grant and Rebecca Davies (Rebecca).
7. I have worked as a school teacher since approximately 1994.
8. Sometime after May 2003 (when my first child was born) I began teaching at Grant and Rebecca's dance school, RGDANCE. Initially it was casual as a substitute dance teacher of the "Babies Class" (2-3 year olds) when the regular teacher, Tracie-Marie Seipel (Tracie), was unavailable. Soon after, I took over the teaching of that class as their regular teacher.
9. By 2004, I had returned to school teaching on a part-time basis, I continued to teach at RGDANCE on Saturdays and some afternoons.
10. This continued, with the number of classes I taught at RGDANCE varying, until 2007 when I returned to full time school teaching work. I still taught at RGDANCE in 2007 but fewer classes. In December 2007 my second child was born and I took maternity leave from school teaching.
11. From 2008 to 2013 I continued teaching as a part time school teacher and took some classes at RGDANCE. In the latter of those years my class load at RGDANCE increased as I taught across a wider range of ages (earlier I had focussed on the youngest students) and dance styles; I also taught several soloists each week.

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12. My cousin, Fiona Gage (Fiona), taught at RGDANCE for a time. My memory is that she taught 1-2 classes of musical theatre on one evening a week. She did this for about 2 years.

My role in the conversation with BZQ & BZR and Grant in February 2007

13. I recall an incident when I was at home in the evening. I was living in REDACT at the time with my husband, John Barnier (John), and daughter (3 years old). I received a phone call from my cousin, Fiona. I think it must have been a Thursday because I think Fiona taught on Thursdays. I recall she said, words to the effect of "I'm still at the studio. Grant is in a meeting with the BZQ. It doesn't seem to be going well and I don't want to leave them here on their own. Can you come down?" I agreed to go. I got ready to go and travelled directly to the studio at Chiswick from REDACT.

14. When I arrived I went upstairs and was met by Fiona. We spoke briefly. I don't recall exactly what she told me and I don't remember her leaving. I do not recall seeing her again later. I think she told me that there was an allegation of an inappropriate communication between Grant and BZP (a student).

15. Classes had finished for the night and I do not recall anyone else being present. I did not see Rebecca there and I do not recall whether Fiona and I spoke about Rebecca. It did not seem unusual for Rebecca not to be there or for the BZQ to meet with Grant alone.

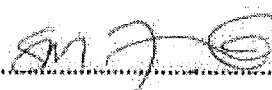
16. I went into the office where Grant was with the BZQ. I saw Grant sitting crouched on the floor with his head in his hands and crying, and BZQ and BZR who were seated on chairs. I sat on the lounge.

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17. When I joined them in the office, it appeared to me that they had been talking for some time and it felt like the end of a long conversation. I recall feeling concerned about the situation. I recall [BZR] saying things that sounded like they were trying to calm Grant down and reassure him. To me, her manner seemed maternal towards him. I assume I too tried to calm him down but don't recall what I said.
18. I don't remember particularly what was said by [BZQ]. The talk revolved around [BZR] suggesting Grant take time off and Grant worrying about what was going to happen. I recall the [BZQ] saying it was not something they wanted to go to the police about.
19. I distinctly remember [BZR] saying "You need to get help, sometimes the mind plays tricks; you need to talk to someone". I recall Grant was nodding his head in agreement.
20. I also recall [BZR] saying that [BZP] needed some time but that she might come back one day. I also remember her saying "If you cut her [BZP] veins RG would flow out". I took this to mean that [BZR] was saying RGDANCE 'flowed in [BZP] veins'.
21. I don't remember exactly what I said throughout the conversation. I agreed with the sentiments of what [BZR] was saying and suggesting.
22. I felt my purpose in the conversation was to help the [BZQ] be heard and help them to know that Grant heard what had been said. I did not feel I was there to have the incident reported to me in any official way or make decisions on what was to occur. I felt like a facilitator of their communication. At that stage I did not have any managerial or decision making role in RGDANCE.

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23. At that time, I knew the [BZQ] but not as well as Rebecca and Grant did. They were friends as well as clients/teachers. I was not part of that friendship. I did have some connection with [BZP] who was one of about three older students who assisted me with teaching the young students.

24. By the end of the evening, my knowledge of the detail of what the meeting was about was that Grant had told [BZP] of a dream he'd had that involved her dancing so beautifully that he had been aroused and that this had been disclosed during a slumber party. I do not recall who exactly gave me those details. It may have been what I pieced together from what I had been told by Fiona and heard from the [BZQ] and Grant. At this point I thought the comment Grant had made had taken place during a soloist's class and I knew nothing of electronic communications.

My response to the incident disclosed in February 2007

25. I do not recall having a specific conversation with Rebecca about what had happened with the [BZQ] and Grant.

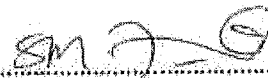
26. I do recall at that time there was an undercurrent of chatter about it. I overheard a conversation between a teacher and Rebecca in which the teacher told Rebecca a student had told him that the student "hated Mr Grant" for what he had done. I think during this conversation I heard mention that children had used the expression "threesome". I had not heard this from the [BZQ] or Grant. When I heard it at this point I believed it was an elaboration or dramatization of what I had heard (directly from the [BZQ] and Grant) about the dream. I did not understand it to have been something Grant had admitted.

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27. The reason I perceived a naivety to the inappropriate communication, as I understood it, between Grant and [BZP] also stems from my perception of Grant's teaching style. Grant's skill was in teaching performance and fostering audience connection. He wrote inspirational books and taught confidence and expression. I thought he inspired his dance students through imagery and storytelling. Rebecca's area of expertise was helping students develop technical abilities and creating unique choreography. I saw one of the strengths of RGDANCE as the collaboration of Rebecca and Grant.
28. When I first heard about the dream he had recounted to [BZP] I perceived it in the context of how I understood his teaching style. Although I appreciated the word "aroused" as being a sexual word, I assumed he had chosen it in a more sensual manner – to inspire an emotive performance.
29. I recall my family meeting to discuss how to best address what had happened. There were two aspects to this: 1. Grant obtaining psychological help as had been agreed with the [BZQ] and 2. How to address what, at that point, I believed to be chatter or gossip about what had been said at the slumber party.
30. I saw the discussion in this meeting about Grant's psychological needs as an opportunity for Grant to obtain some help with all aspects of his emotional health. While I don't remember the resolution made about how to address what we believed to be gossip I do recall attending the meeting that was held with parents at the studio.
31. At this parent and staff meeting I remember being asked by [BZQ] whether I was happy with the plan that had been made for Grant to return to teaching. I do recall saying "Yes". I was satisfied with the plan at that time because as far as I knew Grant

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had seen the psychologist and thought this was consistent with what the BZQ had wanted. The BZQ response at the meeting seemed different to how they had been during the evening conversation when I was present.

The Sydney dance community

32. The dance community for children in Sydney is, by its nature (being the opportunities for performance), highly competitive. This extends to competitiveness between dance schools that manifests with the poaching of students to get an edge over opponents.
33. In this context, there were also many parents who were highly ambitious for their children. It was common for children to be moved around between studios in the pursuit of more high profile performance opportunities.
34. RGDANCE had developed a reputation as being one of the highest achieving dance schools. RGDANCE taught students who, three years in a row, won Dancer of the Year. This is the highest national award at Showcase Dance Championships.
35. I am aware that my husband's statement [STAT.0862.001.0001] provides an overview of enrolment numbers over the years and incidence of students leaving RGDANCE for other studios.
36. This was the context in which Grant would refer to any criticism of him or RGDANCE as "the tall poppy syndrome". In this context it was easy to accept Grant's explanations or dismissal of complaints.
37. When the "Bryan Jones" pseudonym email was circulated [see 2016-0022] I speculated that the email was authored by a group of disgruntled ex parents with the encouragement of a new studio to stir up trouble for RGDANCE. Some of the

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information in the email had some basis in fact. However, any fact appeared to have been embellished and warped into an allegation that was essentially untrue.

38. The inflammatory nature of the email suggested to me that it did not have any fundamental credibility that made it worthy of further investigation.

Response to specific assertions

39. I have read part of the statement of Diana Dimos [STAT.0869.001.0001_R]. At para [54] of her statement she refers to my presence during a teleconference with Grant and Rebecca. I do not believe I was at this teleconference. I recall Diana Dimos calling me individually to tell me that she was leaving the studio.

40. I have read the statement of BZR [STAT.0878.001.0001_R] and at paras [69-70] and [74] there are references to telephone calls made by me. I have no recollection of making these calls. In retrospect, I can imagine I might have called because of my interest in having BZP involvement with my teaching of the junior students. However, calling the BZQ seems an unusual thing for me to have done given the limited nature of our relationship.

41. I have read part of the statement of Tracie-Marie Seipel [STAT.0869.001.0001_R]. At paras [20-22] she refers to a conversation with Rebecca that led to conversations with John and me asserting that Rebecca had found "child porn" on Grant's computer. I have no recollection of any such conversation and am shocked by the assertion as I feel quite certain that I would remember a conversation of this nature.

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My experience of Grant Davies

42. I have had read to me part of the statement made by BZB [stat.0868.001.0001_R]. At para [15] she provides a description of Grant that fits closely with my assessment of him. She describes him as not liking to be told what he could or could not do. She describes him as attention seeking, a "people person" more so than Rebecca, stubborn, charismatic, charming, arrogant but needing reassurance and validation.
43. These are all characteristics that affected the ways in which he related to all family members. These characteristics made him a challenging person to work for and maintain cohesive family relationships. In all my dealings with Grant about RGDANCE I was conscious of the fact that I was an employee. Even within the family it often felt like he was the boss of everyone.
44. The ultimate revelation of Grant's offending in 2013 was devastating in so many ways. It also felt like the ultimate betrayal of the children, their families and also his own family.
45. In retrospect, and with full knowledge of what had been taking place, I feel like Grant also manipulated us (his family). Grant had a way of influencing those around him to perceive others and their behaviours as he portrayed them. I think this influenced how we all responded to what happened in 2007 and inhibited us from seeing what could have been indicators of concerning behaviour in the years leading up to the eventual disclosures in 2013.

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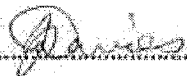
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46. Grant's manner could be reassuring and he instilled a sense of confidence in his character. Had I any belief that there were children at risk I believe I would have acted differently.

Signed: 

Date: 4.3.16

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S.M. FERNANDO

Date: 4/3/16

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