



Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

Name Neil Parker

Address Queensland Police Service, c/- 200 Roma Street, Brisbane, QLD, 4000

Occupation Police Officer

Date 23 June 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. 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. This statement is made in response to a request from the Royal Commission for a statement in respect to the Queensland Police Service (QPS) investigation into allegations of child sexual abuse made in 1998 against Mr John O'Connor (date of birth REDACTED 1948).
3. The request from the Royal Commission seeks specific information, my response to each of the matters identified by the Royal Commission is set out below.
4. My full name is Neil Parker and I am an Acting Senior Sergeant of Police. I am currently attached to the Gold Coast District Duty Officer section.
5. I am currently performing an acting role as a District Duty Officer providing on road supervision and command to the Gold Coast District. I have been a police officer for 33 years having performed duty in various locations and sections.
6. I have approximately 15 years experience working as a detective in both the criminal investigation branch and the previously named Juvenile Aid Bureau. From 1993 to 2001 I performed my role in the Juvenile Aid Bureau as a Detective Sergeant and primarily worked in the area of child protection within the child and sexual assault investigation unit

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located at Surfers Paradise. At this time, I had been trained in regards to sexual assault investigations and had also completed the Interviewing Children And Recording of Evidence (ICARE) course. I also completed the Train the Trainer program for the ICARE course.

7. While I recall the investigation into the complaint of Ms Bobby Welch (Bobby) against John O'Connor, it has been over 18 years since this matter was first reported to police and my recollection of all of the events has somewhat diminished. In providing this statement, I have reviewed a copy of the original crime report as well as a statement from Ms Maree Welch and a QPS report to the Director of Public Prosecutions. I have not had access to any other documentation at this time.
8. From my review of the above material, I am aware that the matter was reported to Police by Ms Maree Welch (Maree), Bobby's mother, on 29 March 1998, some three years after the alleged offence date. I recall the matter was reported to Detective Senior Constable Brenda Ryan and I assisted Detective Ryan with the investigation. I am aware that Brenda Ryan is no longer a member of the QPS.
9. The nature of the complaint was that on the 10th April 1995 between 1.45pm and 4.00pm whilst Bobby was in the care of John O'Connor, he has indecently assaulted her.
10. I recall that during the course of the investigation a number of attempts were made to record disclosures from Bobby, however, due to her disability, no sufficient disclosures were obtained. The main issue was Bobby's inability to communicate with investigators.
11. I am aware that the alleged offender, John O'Connor, was interviewed by Detective Ryan and denied the allegations.
12. It was ultimately decided that there was insufficient evidence to proceed with a criminal charge.

Request 1 – Interviews with Bobby Welch

13. Bobby was first interviewed by Detective Ryan on 29 March 1998. This interview was recorded by video and audio device. Whilst I was not present during the interview, I recall

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being informed by Detective Ryan that Bobby could not communicate very well and that there was much difficulty in obtaining any disclosure from her.

14. Bobby was again interviewed by myself some 12 months later, on 18 March 1999, at the request of her mother, Maree. I do have a vague recollection of this interview, however I have not had the opportunity to recently review the interview. I do however recall that, whilst a disclosure was made by Bobby, there was very little detail. I recall that I had difficulty in communicating with Bobby and could not obtain information from her to clearly articulate what had occurred or how it occurred. It was impossible to try and validate the information provided by her mother, Maree as to the nature of the offence. I recall that there were also concerns regarding the ability or capacity of Bobby to give evidence to a court.
15. Sometime after July 1999, at the request of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Bobby was again interviewed at the Child Abuse Unit in Brisbane, with a specialist from a support organisation called Wwild. This organisation specialises in working alongside people with intellectual and learning disabilities. I have not had the opportunity to review this interview and cannot recall specific details, however I do recall that it was determined that Bobby would not be able to provide evidence to a court.

Request 2 – Interviews with John O'Connor

16. As referred to above, I recall that Detective Ryan conducted the interview with John O'Connor. I do not recall being present during this interview but am aware that John O'Connor denied the allegations made.

Request 3 – Interviews with Maree Welch

17. From receipt of the complaint in March 1998, I recall speaking with Maree on a number of occasions with regards to her daughter, Bobby. I recall that Maree provided the initial information to Detective Ryan, on 29 March 1998, with regards to an incident that occurred on 10 April 1995. I then obtained a typed written statement from Maree on 29 April 1999.
18. I recall that Maree kept in regular contact with myself and Detective Ryan during the course of the investigation, and for many years afterward, and that she made numerous notes of her conversations with Bobby over this time.

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Request 4 – Any specialist measures and/or advice taken in relation to the investigation

19. The QPS has specialist investigative sections who are specifically trained in child abuse and sexual offence investigations. The Juvenile Aid Bureau – which was renamed in 2006 to the Child Protection Investigation Unit – provides a specialist policing response to children, both as victims and offenders. In broad terms, officers are provided specialist training to: assist in the protection of children; investigate child abuse and sexual offences; properly record evidence to a standard that is admissible in a court of law; and dealing with juvenile offenders. As members of the then Juvenile Aid Bureau, both myself and Detective Ryan had participated in all available specialist training at the time.
20. As discussed in further detail below, advice was sought from the Director of Public Prosecutions with regard to a prosecution of the matter. This request to DPP resulted in a third interview with Bobby with the assistance of a Wwild specialist, as referred to at paragraph 15 above. It was ultimately determined that Bobby would not be able to provide evidence to a court.

Request 5 – Information provided to any employer of Mr John O'Connor in relation to the allegations made against him

21. I do not recall providing any information to any employer of John O'Connor with regards to this incident or the allegations made against him. I do however recall that Maree had made complaints to the Gold Coast Family Support prior to reporting the matter to police.

Request 6 – Information provided to any regulatory body

22. I do not recall providing any information of this matter to any regulatory body.

Request 7 – Consideration of laying charges following the investigation, including any advice given by the Queensland Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; and the outcome of the investigation and the reasons for the outcome

23. I recall that a report was furnished to the Southport Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions seeking advice with regards to a prosecution of this matter and that advice was received that any prosecution would be dependent upon Bobby's ability to give evidence. This resulted in the interview of Bobby with the assistance of Wwild. I recall

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that it was determined at this point that Bobby was not capable of giving evidence to a court.

24. The investigation was subsequently finalised and no prosecution commenced against John O'Connor on the basis of insufficient supporting evidence and the inability of Bobby to communicate to a level that would be required to provide evidence in court.

25. There is no further information that I can recall to provide to the Royal Commission with regards to this matter.

Signed: [REDACTED] *N. Parker*

Date: *23/6/2016*

Witness: [REDACTED] *LUKE YOUNG*

Date: *23/6/2016*

Signature:..... [REDACTED]

Witness: [REDACTED]