



Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

Name Janice McWatters
Address Known to the Royal Commission
Occupation Retired
Date 1 July 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 the abuse of my niece by a staff member at the Gold Coast Family Support Group (FSG). 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.

Background

5. My name is Janice McWatters. I am the sister of Maree Welch (**Maree**), and aunt of Bobbie Welch (**Bobbie**).

Signature: Witness:

Statement in the matter of Case Study 41: Disability Service Providers
Statement of Janice McWatters continued Page 2 of 4

6. I have spoken with Maree over many years about her stresses associated with caring for Bobbie.
7. I have only ever had very limited contact with FSG. On several occasions I, along with other members of our family, sent donations to support the work of the organisation. Besides the phone conversations outlined in this statement, I have had no relationship with FSG or its staff members.

10 April 1995 – Phone Call to Maree Welch

8. On the evening of 10 April 1995, at around 8pm, I telephoned Maree. I have a copy of my telephone records from that time, which indicate that the call lasted for 26 minutes (IND.0449.001.0395). I had not phoned Maree to discuss anything in particular, but regularly phoned my sister to keep in touch.
9. During the call, I could tell from her tone of voice that Maree was upset about something. I asked her "What's the trouble?" Maree replied that she believed that Bobbie had been "sexually molested" or "sexually interfered with" by a staff member of FSG earlier that afternoon. I do not believe that Maree knew many details of what had happened at that time. However, I definitely remember that her concerns related to an allegation of sexual interference.
10. I recall that Maree explained to me that, on that day, she had been required to stay for a meeting at FSG. Maree said that arrangements had been made for Bobbie to be picked up at school by an FSG carer. I believe that she told me that his name was 'John'.
11. I remember that Maree told me that, when she went to pick up Bobbie, Bobbie had said straight away words to the effect that 'John is a naughty man'. During the phone call,

Signature:

J. McWatters

Witness:

A. R. Skuse

Statement in the matter of Case Study 41: Disability Service Providers
Statement of Janice McWatters continued Page 3 of 4

Maree gave me a brief outline of her conversation with John that afternoon. Maree told me that John had said words to the effect, 'Kids make up stories'.

12. I told Maree that she would need to be careful how she handled any complaint as it could be very stressful for Bobbie and the family. I recall that I advised Maree that she should take Bobbie to the doctors in order to get some medical evidence to support the allegations. I recall that Maree took on board what I had said, but do not know what action she took to follow up the disclosures at the time.
13. Maree told me that she had already contacted Melissa from FSG and informed her of the complaint.

11 April 1995 – Phone Call to Dorothy Williams

14. On 11 April 1995, at around 5pm, I telephoned FSG at their office at Southport, Queensland. My telephone records from that time indicate that the call lasted for around 6 minutes (IND.0449.001.0395). I decided to telephone FSG because I was concerned that Maree was terribly upset, and required support from FSG as her employer.
15. I spoke with Dorothy Williams (**Dorothy**). I cannot recall whether I asked specifically to speak with Dorothy, or was simply put through to her after outlining the purpose of my call with the person who answered the phone.
16. I cannot now remember the exact words that I used in conversation with Dorothy. However, I recall that I informed her that I was concerned that Maree had seemed distressed in our conversation the night before because she believed that Bobbie had been sexually abused by an FSG carer.

Signature:



Witness:



Statement in the matter of Case Study 41: Disability Service Providers
Statement of Janice McWatters continued Page 4 of 4

17. I informed Dorothy that, although I did not know the detail of the alleged abuse of Bobbie, I was concerned that Maree needed support as she had seemed distressed in our phone conversation the night before. I believe that I used the words "sexually abused" or "sexually interfered with" to describe Maree's understanding about what had happened to Bobbie, as that was my understanding from our conversation the night before. Other than informing FSG of Maree's complaint, and her need for support, there was no other reason for me to phone Dorothy.
18. I do not recall the details of Dorothy's responses during our conversation. I do not recall whether Dorothy appeared to have any knowledge about the incident prior to my call.

Impact of Abuse

19. Maree has spoken with me on several occasions about her attempts to report what happened to Bobbie to FSG and various authorities. I understand that this issue has been a source of stress for both Maree and the family.

Signed: 

Date: 1-7-2016

Witness: 

Date: 1-7-2016
