



Royal Commission  
into Institutional Responses  
to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

Name AOA  
Address Known to Royal Commission  
Occupation Known to Royal Commission  
Date 23/3/2017

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. My full name is AOA and I am 67 years old.
3. I have previously given evidence to the Royal Commission in Case Study 20, Hutchins School, Tasmania.
4. I have been asked to describe the impacts of the sexual abuse I experienced, particularly later in my life.
5. Fifty-four years ago I was groomed and abused over a twelve-month period. Childhood sexual abuse is a risk factor for many diseases. I am an example of the increased likelihood of survivors developing inflammatory diseases. Over the last five years I have had single or multiple episodes of the following inflammatory conditions: excruciatingly painful cystitis, urinary tract infections and prostatitis; pelvic inflammatory disease including crippling spasms of the pelvic floor; Irritable Bowel Syndrome; asthma; bronchitis; sinusitis; arthritis; oedema and pneumonia.

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6. I suffer from complex PTSD and over the past five years I have experienced chronic insomnia, episodes of hyper arousal and vigilance, intrusive images of self-harm, panic disorder, dissociation, numbing and depression.
7. I have been in a secure, monogamous and happy relationship now for twenty-two years yet I experience ongoing confusion between sex and affection with close friends. When I am triggered into a trauma cycle, I have intrusive fantasies of wanting a man in me and I become obsessed with romantic fantasies about other people. I can be emotionally and socially over-engaged with some friends and with people who come into my life only briefly. I exhibit a disorganized attachment style at home - one moment anxious dependent next moment detached dismissive and another moment looking for love outside of marriage. Acting out that confusion contributed to the end of my first marriage. As a result I am overly vigilant of myself in case I damage this marriage in the same way.
8. At times inside the marriage I appear to be emotionally connected and engaged but I am not present. I am watching myself acting emotions, watching my life from a distance, and inside me I feel detached, isolated and depressed. Surrounded by people who love me and are deeply bonded to me, I can feel alone. On the outside I appear normal, happy and relaxed. These are the invisible wounds of my being groomed for child sexual abuse. In a way I am still trying to navigate how to connect with a ghost who abused me. The past unfolds into my current relationship and catches my partner and me unawares. I will allow my therapist to track shifts in these disconnections in a session but I won't allow

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my partner to be my therapist. That would be just another confused boundary to navigate.

9. Happily in the last twelve months I have had none of my usual respiratory tract, pelvic floor or urinary tract ill health. My immune system has come back on line. I attribute some of that to the influence of family and friends, of life style and body-oriented psychotherapies. But without the exposure and expression, without the full hearing of my case and the cleansing effects of the two Royal Commission public hearings that involved my partner and me, I would have continued to eat myself up with grief, allowing the auto-immune diseases to run. Having said that, however, insomnia and irritable bowel syndrome continue unabated with flare-ups of PTSD symptoms and disorganized attachment behaviour hijacking my relationships.
10. For example, last year I had a long period of daily intrusive images of self-harm flash across my mind. After months of this, one day only four months ago, I acted it out in the kitchen. I picked up a knife and turned it over to the blunt side and then in front of my twelve-year-old son suddenly pulled it across my wrist. I didn't know what I was doing until I saw the alarm in his body and shock on his face. For a few weeks he repeated the action in front of his mates and me.
11. At that moment with my son, I snapped out of months being locked in the trauma cycle. I realized I was in deep trouble. I made myself go back into therapy, I literally marched myself back into it. There I allowed myself to feel. I expressed profound shame that I needed to be back in therapy at all. I believed I was a failure because I hadn't sorted

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myself out after all these years - after hundreds of hours of the most effective therapies for complex trauma. I believed myself to be damaged and beyond repair. I sometimes sabotaged the process in order to exit it prematurely but the therapist and my partner caught me and pulled me back in.

12. Over that same period last year, I came to believe that my marriage was a charade. I felt it had reached a place where I had to make a do or die effort to get back to being real with my partner and letting her in on what a mess I had become. I hadn't let her know what had been going on in my head for months, that I was numbed out and faking it. We began couple therapy and there I started to correct the experiences I had of believing I didn't matter to her. I began to track again the trauma triggers in our relationship, and we began handling them better. I will need ongoing individual and marital therapy using body orientated and trauma informed methods. I am broken. I am alive. I am blessed.

13. Now fifty-four years on I experience the impact of the grooming, as far more damaging, than the physical acts of sexual abuse, though they continue in the inflammatory conditions in my body. Somehow physical ill health is just something I have to deal with periodically. Maybe it will kill me and I can deal with that too but the invisible trauma wounds affect my relationships everywhere, even down to the struggle to go for help when I so obviously need it.

14. What concerns me most is that I continue to feel incredible rage toward the institution where I was abused. I rent space in my head to a bunch of institutional and community elders who don't deserve my care or attention. I fear that my anger and the profound

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sense of injustice that underlies these emotions will shorten my life through a survivable disease weaponised by child sex abuse.

15. In the last two years I have completed a novel about my experience of grooming and its impact in my adult life in the hope of exorcising these demons. It has been edited and is ready to publish. Researching and writing it allowed me to step back from my personal trauma and see a bigger picture of the orchestrated forms of paedophilia worldwide: I have come to understand how our culture is complicit in the growth of paedophile activity particularly through minimizing the role of cultural grooming, through eroticizing children in fashion and in the media and through kid's easy access to on line pornography. I understand how these can play out in the increasing numbers of

*children who exhibit sexually harmful behaviours.*

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*23.03.17*

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*23/3/2017*

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