



Royal Commission  
into Institutional Responses  
to Child Sexual Abuse

## Statement

**Name** Aileen ASHFORD  
**Address** Known to the Commission  
**Date** March 2017

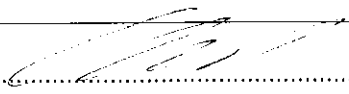
1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I would be prepared, if necessary, to give to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. My full name is Aileen ASHFORD and I am 58 years old.
3. I have been asked to describe the changes I would like to see following the Royal Commission.
4. As a sibling of a family member who has an intellectual disability who endured many years of sexual abuse by a religious order I firstly want to thank the Commissioners for their enduring work that has allowed the many voices of victims to be heard but more importantly has brought institutional sexual abuse into the public domain, shattered the secrecy, given victims and families hope that change will occur and we will never see this again.
5. I, like many families hope that the Commission will have a long lasting impact on the services that are delivered now and into the future.
6. There has been some movement regarding the introduction of child safe organisations alongside police and working with children checks.

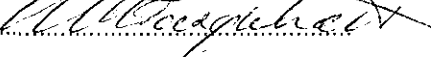
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7. The reality is that no matter how many pieces of legislation, policies and quality practices that are put in place these cannot be seen as the sole answer to prevention.
8. My brother was not provided with any sexual abuse prevention programs and when we began to notice his behaviour had changed it was us as a family who sought out and funded a specialist counsellor to work with him and support us not the organisation.
9. I would like to see an investment by the Commonwealth Government in the research and development of evidence based sexual abuse prevention programs for children with disabilities, their families and carers.
10. As well, all schools and services should be funded to provide such evidence based prevention programs similar to the Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria's recommendation and implementation of Respectful Relationship training in schools.
11. There are a broad range of organisations nationally that provide sexual abuse education, support and counselling services however these are fragmented, have no quality frameworks and do not provide services to all children, specifically those with intellectual disabilities.
12. There is a need for national standards, evaluation and quality control of these programs as well as investment by Government in funding these services across Australia.
13. A lot of focus has been on the service delivery system and yet in my experience with my brother it was the broader system that failed him.

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**Statement in the matter of Case Study 57: Nature Cause and Impact****Page 3 of 4**Statement of Aileen ASHFORD continued

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14. The criminal justice system- he was an unreliable witness due to his intellectual disability- his voice could not be heard- the system did not allow any flexibility in its framework, legislation or systems thereby providing protection for the perpetrators.
15. The criminal justice system needs to begin to explore and establish how evidence is gathered from people with intellectual disabilities and how this can be used to either commence a criminal trial or ban a carer from working within the organisation that is providing services to the individual.
16. Staff in this area – police, prosecution, lawyers, judges and jurors require specific understanding of intellectual disability, the impact and effects of sexual abuse and skills in communicating with people with disabilities to provide them the right to ensure their stories are heard.
17. It is my experience that children with disabilities are often lost voices within legislation, national frameworks and policy, it is either mainstream or adult focussed.
18. The statutory bodies that exist across our nation, Disability Services Commissioner, Children’s Commissioners and Guardians, Ombudsman, Public Advocates etc need to establish a co-ordinated approach in how they advocate, engage and provide services to children, inclusive of children with disabilities and their families in relation to sexual abuse.

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**Statement in the matter of Case Study 57: Nature Cause and Impact**

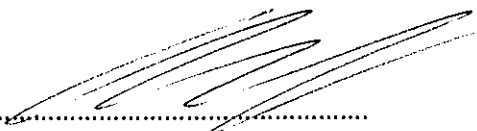
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Statement of Aileen ASHFORD continued

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19. Finally a public health approach on child sexual abuse is required that focuses on prevention that aims to challenge the social conditions that excuse, justify or promote the sexualisation of children is required.
20. We have seen this in the health space with great results- Campaigns -Cancer Awareness, Slip Slop Slap, road safety, smoking.
21. My vision is that children inclusive of disability have access to sexual abuse prevention programs in all school settings across Australia and child focussed sexual abuse counselling and support services.
22. The rights and needs of children are embedded in relevant legislation and policies across Australia.
23. Children thrive in safe and strong families and communities.

Signed: .....



Date:

28/3/17

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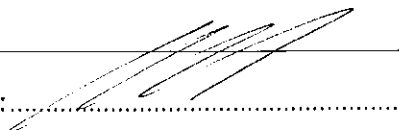


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