

**ROYAL COMMISSION INTO INSTITUTIONAL
RESPONSES TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

**Public Hearing - Case Study 17
(Day C46)**

Supreme Court Building, State Square, Darwin

On Tuesday, 23 September 2014 at 10am

Before
The Chair: Justice Peter McClellan AM
Commissioners: Mr Robert Fitzgerald AM
Professor Helen Milroy

Counsel Assisting: Ms Sophie David SC

1 THE CHAIR: Yes, Ms David?

2

3 MS DAVID: Your Honour, the next witness is [AKV]. He
4 will give his evidence without the webstream operating on
5 him. I call [AKV].

6

7 <[AKV], affirmed, [10.02am]

8

9 <EXAMINATION BY MS DAVID:

10

11 MS DAVID: Q. [AKV], did you provide a statement to the
12 Royal Commission in respect of your experiences at Retta
13 Dixon Home?

14 A. Yes, I did.

15

16 Q. Did you sign that statement on 15 September 2014?

17 A. That's correct.

18

19 Q. Can the witness be shown the statement. Have you had
20 an opportunity to read your statement before coming to the
21 hearing today?

22 A. Yes, I have.

23

24 Q. Do you recognise the document in front of you as a
25 copy of your statement?

26 A. That's the right one.

27

28 Q. Is it an honest and accurate recollection of events as
29 you recall them?

30 A. Absolutely.

31

32 MS DAVID: If your Honour pleases, I tender the statement.

33

34 THE CHAIR: It will become exhibit 17-7.

35

36 **EXHIBIT #17-7 STATEMENT OF WITNESS [AKV] DATED 15/09/2014**

37

38 MS DAVID: Q. [AKV] I understand you would like to read
39 your statement to the hearing?

40 A. Yes, that's correct.

41

42 Q. I'd ask if you could do that now?

43 A. Okay, thank you.

44

45 "This statement made by me accurately sets out the
46 evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission
47 into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The

1 statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge
2 and belief.

3
4 Where direct speech is referred to in this statement,
5 it is provided in words or words to the effect of those
6 which were used, to the best of my recollection.

7
8 My full name is [AKV] and I was born in 1960. I am
9 54 years old.

10
11 I was born in Alice Springs and lived with my
12 Aboriginal grandfather and grandmother, and three younger
13 sisters. I am from the eastern Aranda people" and I'd like
14 to add of Waramunga as well, from my grandmother's side,
15 and eastern Aranda is my grandfather, grandmother's
16 country. "My mother, an Aboriginal woman, was not around
17 very much, from what I remember. My father was not
18 Aboriginal nor indigenous. I would only see him
19 occasionally as he worked on the railways and was away from
20 home most of the time.

21
22 I have memories of attending preschool in Alice
23 Springs whilst living with my grandfather and grandmother.

24
25 I can't recall the exact year, but in or around 1966
26 or 1967, when I was about six or seven years old, I was
27 playing in the street outside my house in Alice Springs
28 with my sisters. We both lived with our grandparents.
29 Both were Aboriginal, as I mentioned. An old car, I think
30 it was an FJ Holden, approached us. There was a man and a
31 woman inside the car, but I don't know who they were. They
32 were handing out lollies, and I approached them and ended
33 up getting in the car.

34
35 We went for a cruise in the car and ended up on the
36 Stuart Highway heading for Darwin. The car took us to
37 Retta Dixon Home in Darwin. I had no idea where I was or
38 why I had been taken there - we were taken there.
39 I didn't even know if my grandparents knew where I was.
40 I did hear later that my grandparents went to court and
41 tried to get us back, but failed. After we were dropped at
42 Retta Dixon the car drove away. I don't think the people
43 lived or worked at Retta Dixon.

44
45 When I arrived, I saw all these other kids around the
46 home. I didn't know any of them. There were about eight
47 different cottages at Retta Dixon and I ended up living in

1 cottage 5 and was put eventually into cottage 6, but mainly
2 it was number 5 cottage.

3
4 [AKT], who was my sister, was placed into a Catholic
5 home for a while, but later ended up at Retta Dixon.
6 I don't know why she didn't go to Retta Dixon with us.

7
8 Cottage 5 had a house parent by the name of
9 Margaret Parker. I found her to be a very cruel and evil
10 lady. Some of the other house parents at Retta Dixon that
11 I remember were Gwen Platt, Judy Fergusson, Mr and
12 Mrs Wall, Don Henderson, and his wife Barbara, Ethel McKay,
13 and Marge Spohn. Mr Pattemore was the superintendent in
14 charge of Retta Dixon.

15
16 There was very harsh and cruel treatment of the kids
17 at Retta Dixon. I remember Gwen Platt and Judy Fergusson."

18
19 And I'd like to explain, Mr Wall - and I say this in
20 an incredibly respectful way - there were times when he was
21 too harsh to children, on the level of being cruel as far
22 as I'm concerned. I say that in a very respectful and
23 humble way because I'm very good friends with his family
24 and son.

25
26 "Me and some of the other kids would crawl under the
27 floor of the cottage."

28
29 This was actually at Blackheath, in New South Wales,
30 after Cyclone Tracy. There were cracks in the wall there,
31 in the floor, and we would watch, underneath, the floggings
32 that would take place. That was done by Mr Wall.

33
34 "Mr Wall flogged the kids in his cottage with an
35 electric cable. We called him 'Spy Eye'. The house
36 parents would also give the kids a flogging for little or
37 no reason. The beatings happened at a place called
38 Blackheath, as I previously mentioned, in the Blue
39 Mountains in New South Wales. Most of the kids went there
40 following Cyclone Tracy in 1974.

41
42 Sometimes I would be sent to Mr Pattemore for
43 punishment. He wasn't as brutal as" - I find it very
44 difficult to say this man's name, but he wasn't as harsh as
45 Mr Wall, if I can say it that way.

46
47 "We used to call Mr Wall 'Big Eye' or 'Radar', as he

1 was always watching us, all the time. We used to get \$3 a
2 month, I can recall. It was like pocket money. It was
3 called 'coon cheques'. We were often called 'coons'. And
4 that was from the government. It was like pocket money, if
5 you like. The money was used to buy clothing only. One
6 time I left my cheque somewhere and it got lost. I was
7 sent to Mr Pattemore and got caned on the hand. I was
8 probably hit a couple of times. It was enough to give you
9 a good fright. I also had to say a prayer to get that coon
10 cheque back. At the time, it felt like to me that
11 Mr Pattemore's attitude was that we deserved what we got if
12 we did something wrong. I do remember, though, that Ethel
13 McKay and Marge Spohn" - who we used to call "auntie", I'll
14 add that in here - "were really nice, and they treated the
15 kids very differently. There was some kindness in their
16 hearts.

17
18 In cottage 5 we were always working. Continually
19 washing up, cleaning, scrubbing floors. We never did
20 homework or learnt anything except how to do domestic
21 chores. If I didn't do it just the right way, just right,
22 I would get belted across the back with a feather duster
23 that had a bamboo handle, or hit across the back of the
24 legs with a broomstick by Ms Parker. Then, when I fell on
25 the floor, I would be hit across the back. My payback was
26 to never cry in front of them. I refused to let them have
27 any pleasure in seeing my suffering or pain.

28
29 I regularly went to school with welts across my back
30 which were hidden under my shirt. The teachers never asked
31 about the bruises. They were mean as well. I didn't think
32 to tell them about the abuse. I just felt it was normal
33 and all kids must get flogged.

34
35 Sometimes I would also be told by Ms Parker to stand
36 outside my bedroom for hours on end, until I fell over,
37 from lack of sleep or exhaustion. This would happen at
38 night. I'd fall over on the floor in the corridor. When
39 I fell, I would be belted. Sometimes I would be taken into
40 Ms Parker's room on my own and told to strip off for
41 inspection. Ms Parker told me that she was looking for
42 things like ringworm but I think she was just getting a
43 thrill out of looking at me naked. I didn't have a clue
44 what ringworm was. We thought she was being rude, asking
45 to look at our rings, which is our bums or anuses or
46 whatever - we used to refer it to it as 'rings', meaning
47 our bottoms. I think I was about 8 or 9 years old when

1 this first happened." I've got here "she never touched
2 me", but she actually did, with her hands - looking and
3 probing, seeing if there were any ringworms, or whatever
4 she was trying to do.

5
6 "My sister would sometimes be tied to the
7 clotheslines. She was in my cottage, number 5. There were
8 times she would have faeces rubbed in her face, maybe just
9 for looking at Ms Parker the wrong way. My sister was very
10 young at the time. I remember one time she was
11 deliberately burnt with hot water by Ms Parker. There was
12 a boy in my cottage who threatened to kill her with a
13 knife, because he could not take it anymore.

14
15 All the kids were forced to go to church and Sunday
16 school. I remember singing 'God loves all the children of
17 the world'" and I will continue with that song. It went,
18 "God loves all the children of the world, red, yellow,
19 black and white, and all the precious in His sight."

20
21 "And then we would go home and get belted."

22
23 It was utterly confusing and an absolute contradiction
24 to those songs we used to sing - absolute contradiction.
25 I've just added that in there.

26
27 "The actions of the missionaries were very different
28 to the values they tried to instill in us. To this day
29 I hate the sound of hymns." I can't stand them, because it
30 brings back those memories.

31
32 I remember going to school whilst at Retta Dixon.
33 I went Nightcliff Primary School, and for a while later on
34 I went Nightcliff High School. All the kids at Retta Dixon
35 would climb into the back of this old creamy yellow Bedford
36 truck and we would be driven off to school. We felt like
37 cattle. The other kids at school would make comments about
38 the yellow truck" - it's actually got "bus" here - "the
39 yellow Bedford truck from Retta Dixon.

40
41 I don't recall the exact time, but whilst I was at
42 primary school, I remember my father came and took me out
43 of Retta Dixon. We lived with him in Darwin for a short
44 time and I went to Millner Primary School, then he moved to
45 Cloncurry in North Queensland. I think that was just
46 before Cyclone Tracy in 1974. I then went to the State
47 primary school in Cloncurry.

1
2 I lived with my father for about four or five months,
3 but my father was an alcoholic and was very violent towards
4 his partner and us kids." This partner is not my mother.
5 That's my sister and myself. My other sisters weren't
6 there.

7
8 "We were put on a plane back to Darwin. I thought we
9 were being met by his de facto's family and we would be
10 living with them, but missionaries from Retta Dixon met us
11 at the plane and we went back to live at Retta Dixon."
12 I was absolutely devastated, to tell you the truth. I'm
13 just adding that in there. We were both devastated, me and
14 my sister. "We felt sick about the idea of going back.
15 I think it was Gwen Platt who picked us up.

16
17 When Cyclone Tracy hit in 1974, Retta Dixon was almost
18 wiped out, or I could say it was wiped out. All the kids
19 were happy, because" - I'll add something in there, if I
20 could, because they saw the destruction of Retta Dixon was
21 the destruction of the missionary society that ran the
22 place, AIM. We were so overjoyed in the morning to see the
23 absolute devastation of the place.

24
25 "We were sent to Blackheath, near Sydney, for a while,
26 then ended up in Batchelor, near Darwin. The accommodation
27 there was in pretty bad shape." But when I think back now,
28 looking at it, that's all that was available. We were very
29 lucky, actually, to have a place to go, So I am very
30 grateful for that. People did do their best.

31
32 "We stayed in old huts left over from the old
33 Rum Jungle uranium mining days.

34
35 Sometimes all the kids would go on holidays to either
36 Lee Point or Coomalie Creek. There was a lot of physical
37 abuse and cruelty by house parents, or certain house
38 parents, at these places as well. I remember a lovely
39 Fijian lady, we called her Auntie Evy. She tried to stick
40 us up for us kids and complained about the cruelty."

41
42 I am adding in here, she was so upset and stricken
43 with grief, I think, but eventually, from my understanding,
44 I believe that she got sacked.

45
46 "She got so upset that she cried a lot. We all loved
47 Auntie Evy. But when she went, nothing ever changed."

1
2 Her compassion and kindness and remonstrations with the
3 Christian mob - and they were like a mob - nothing had ever
4 changed.

5
6 "One of the house parents, Don Henderson" - and I'll
7 say DON HENDERSON in capital letters - "was well known
8 amongst all the children for the things he used to do to
9 us. Don Henderson was a very powerful, strong man, who was
10 very intimidating to little kids. We used to call him 'Don
11 Don' or 'Tickle Foot' because he would tickle boys on the
12 feet with a feather duster whilst he was getting his sexual
13 pleasure. Henderson would regularly grope me in a sexual
14 way. He would always do it in a" - this is a big flash word
15 here - "surreptitiously" - how do you say it? In a lustful
16 way of exerting his power and authority over the most
17 vulnerable of us all - boys and girls, as a matter of fact
18 - "so other people couldn't see".

19
20 He did this a lot, out of reach and view of the other
21 mob - the other missionary mob - the house parents, is
22 what I'm trying to get out.

23
24 "Henderson was the house parent for cottage 2. They
25 had an above-ground swimming pool out the back of their
26 cottage, and I remember one time Henderson was swimming in
27 the pool and he invited me in there. At one point he had
28 his feet on the ground and then grabbed me and sat me on
29 his lap. He bounced me up and down and I could feel his
30 penis rubbing against me whilst he did that. He had shorts
31 on, but I don't know if he exposed himself or not whilst
32 doing that. He did it to me one time at Berry Springs" -
33 not the other way, but he did this behaviour at Berry
34 Springs - "as well and we went for a swim. He would hold
35 me very tightly, it felt like a python had hold of me. We
36 were scared and I felt afraid that he would drown one of us
37 one day."

38
39 I would also like to add into that, in paragraph 24 at
40 the end of that sentence, that we would regularly go on
41 field trips, a place called Leaning Tree Lagoon, which is
42 on the Arnhem Highway. We would dress up as disciples and
43 he would take photographs of the boys. It sounds rather
44 ironic - I was dressed up as Jesus - and then he would
45 build his slides. Me and some of the boys would disappear,
46 running through the bush, chasing wallabies and whatever,
47 and having fun, whilst he did his gross acts on kids.

1
2 Weeks later - this is not in here - he would show
3 slides in what they called the recreation hall to the rest
4 of the kids and the missionaries - more or less implying,
5 "You mob can be like this, dressed up, white and pure."
6 I now move on to number 25.

7
8 "I saw Henderson groping kids all the time. He had
9 his favourite boys" - I can't say his last name, to protect
10 his name. "From what I saw and what I was told, he would
11 abuse them regularly. He really seemed to have a liking
12 for the darker-skinned boys. Henderson's favourite places
13 for abusing boys were in the chook pen down the back of
14 Retta Dixon, and there was a banana patch, and the food
15 storage shed which was attached to the recreation hall."

16
17 In fact, any place he could find - I'm adding here as
18 well - that was secluded, away, out of view. He would
19 find any place to do whatever he did. It wasn't
20 "whatever", he actually did it.

21
22 "Some of the boys talked about what went on there and
23 I believe Henderson was raping some of the boys. Some of
24 the boys talked about what went on in there and I believe
25 they were saying" - excuse my swearing here, your Honour -
26 "Henderson can't fuck his wife because his prick's too big"
27 I apologise for that word - "and that's why they don't have
28 kids. The Aboriginal slang word for 'prick' is
29 'Boonunger'. We called Henderson 'Big Boonunger'.

30
31 I also saw Henderson groping and abusing boys after we
32 had moved to Batchelor. I did not see any penetration.

33
34 One of the girls at Retta Dixon gave birth" - I can't
35 say her name to protect her shame. Within Aboriginal
36 culture it's very important to us. I'll continue:
37 "... gave birth to a child when she was about 12 years old.
38 She had an Aboriginal boyfriend at the time, but the baby
39 was, from what I remember, very light-skinned. Most of the
40 kids thought that Henderson was the father of the child,
41 though to this day I am not sure who the father is. [AKJ]
42 was in cottage number 2, where Henderson was the house
43 parent, so the kids used to say this. I don't know if
44 Mr Henderson actually abused her or not. [AKJ] was shamed
45 in the home by the missionaries. They would say 'Don't be
46 like [AKJ],' as she had not upheld the Christian values
47 that we were constantly indoctrinated with, or into our

1 minds. I believe, however, that they turned a blind eye to
2 Henderson, and their failure to uphold those Christian
3 values was absolutely appalling and full of contradictions.
4

5 The Hendersons adopted a couple of children at
6 Retta Dixon. I can't recall their names. I remember about
7 1969 or 1970 there was a three-year-old girl who was found
8 floating dead in the pool. She had drowned. I remember
9 the ambulance arriving at Retta Dixon. There was a rumour
10 that Henderson had drowned her. I don't remember any
11 police investigation and don't know if it was reported to
12 police. The missionaries never shared any information with
13 the kids, so we would never have found out about something
14 like that occurring or happening. It was very hard to know
15 what was going on."
16

17 It was like the secret business, private business.
18 Some words have been redacted here, which is good.
19

20 "Judy Fergusson or Ms Fergusson would make the girls
21 sit and twiddle their thumbs, and when they got tired and
22 stopped, she would belt them. She earned the nickname
23 'Twiddle Thumbs'. I never saw Fergusson abuse anyone, but
24 I did see the kids in the corner twiddling their thumbs,
25 because sometimes we would go to her cottage for Bible
26 studies, social visits, et cetera."
27

28 And since this time I've spoken to people, whose names
29 are redacted from here. [REDACTED]
30 [REDACTED]
31

32 "I never reported the abuse to anyone. I lived in
33 fear all the time when I was at Retta Dixon. I would get
34 flogged for very minor reasons so that I wasn't going to
35 report Henderson to anyone. I know I would have been
36 severely punished for that, or called a liar. We were all
37 made to feel that our actions were our fault, and physical
38 abuse was always the punishment.
39

40 I do remember, in the late 1960s, a man from the
41 welfare department came to Retta Dixon. I can't remember
42 his name. But in recent times. I think he was a
43 Commissioner on the anti-discrimination board and also
44 worked for the United Nations. He had a big role at the
45 board within the context of the United Nations. He was an
46 Aboriginal man, or he is an Aboriginal man, he is still
47 alive today. He walked around talking to kids and taking

1 notes. I always have assumed he was there because
2 Henderson had been reported for what he was doing, but I
3 don't know that for sure.
4

5 I remember there was a court matter involving
6 Henderson. It was after Cyclone Tracy. I remember we had
7 moved back to Retta Dixon for a while whilst it was being
8 fixed up. Some of the boys were kicking a football down at
9 the oval. There was talk about [AJT] going to court."
10 When I say "[AJT]", I can't say his name for the same
11 reason, to protect his shame. "I don't know what happened
12 as I was never told the details." That person - I don't
13 want to mention his name, because he's deceased.
14

15 "Following Cyclone Tracy, all the kids from
16 Retta Dixon ended up at Batchelor. We moved back to
17 Retta Dixon for a while. Later on, I moved to a house in
18 Rapid Creek in Darwin, where I lived with foster parents,
19 Mr and Mrs McIntyre. The McIntyres had been at Retta Dixon
20 from 1974" - they were in that cottage when it was
21 destroyed. I remember that very clearly.
22

23 "There were about five or six Retta Dixon kids at that
24 house including Colleen Walker" - it's hard for me to say
25 this name, because he's finished; we say "kumanjayi" -
26 "William McMahan, and Martin Fergusson. When I turned 17
27 years old, I felt pressured to leave the house because
28 I was too old to be there."
29

30 The sense was, "Well, you're big enough, go out in
31 that big world out there and go for it,", but,
32 unfortunately, there was nothing for people to go to.
33 No-one had life skills, social skills, educational
34 confidence, numeracy, literacy - nobody had that. People
35 had been - the emphasis, I'm adding in here if I may - the
36 strategy and the plan was to literally indoctrinate people
37 with Christian values and teach them that. That was it.
38 There was nothing else. That was the whole thing.
39 I remember clearly working and cleaning and washing up,
40 like everyone else, studying the Bible, reading Bible
41 verses, getting slapped around. There was no encouragement
42 "Can I help you with the homework?" There was nothing.
43 Absolutely nothing.
44

45 "I remember Ethel McKay saying to me, 'Don't you end
46 up like the others.' I think she was referring to some of
47 the other kids who had left Retta Dixon and were struggling

1 with life and issues such as alcohol addiction. It felt
2 like we were all doomed to failure."
3

4 The sense was, "After here there's no future for you,
5 you're on your own, goodbye, thank you very much, happy
6 days." That's what it felt like.
7

8 "I left the house and moved to Tortilla Flats where
9 I got a job working on a farm, a station." I would like to
10 add, the people I worked for were beautiful, loving, caring
11 people. "I learned to ride horses, operate plant equipment
12 like tractors and eventually learnt how to operate
13 graders."
14

15 I remember many years later working for one of
16 Mr Pattemore's sons-in-law on his grader. I appreciated
17 that very much. I had wonderful friendships with the
18 Pattemores. It's just sad that I have to read this story,
19 I don't want to shame people, but, I'm sorry, I have to
20 tell the story.
21

22 "Some years down the track I was earning good money,
23 but decided I did not want to spend my life operating
24 machinery. Sometimes I would go back to Darwin, but I had
25 nowhere to stay. I didn't know anyone, so I went back to
26 Retta Dixon and asked if I could stay there. At least
27 I had power and water and Mr Pattemore would let me stay
28 there. He was very kind and humble in that sense. I would
29 just throw a swag on the ground for a couple of days, and
30 then go."
31

32 It was either that or living in the long grass and
33 I was determined not to go there.
34

35 "I then moved to the Kimberleys and worked at
36 Nicholson Station as a jackeroo for 8 months.
37

38 My passion is conservation and land management, so I
39 left my job and I went back to college to learn to read and
40 write. In 1987 I attended what was called then the Darwin
41 Institute of Technology, now Charles Darwin University in
42 Darwin, and completed a Certificate in Aboriginal Community
43 Services - Project Officer. I then worked for the Northern
44 Land Council as a project officer, and then at Jabiru",
45 including over at Nhulunbuy for eight years as well, where
46 I met my wife.
47

1 "I attended Batchelor College and completed a Diploma
2 in Cultural and Natural Resource Management, and some years
3 later went on to get a Bachelor of Applied Science degree.
4 That was in Albury-Wodonga, in New South Wales. I had done
5 a lot of my studies down there. I was living in a
6 community in Eastern Arnhem Land and used to often fly down
7 there, and eventually finished my Bachelor of Science
8 degree through the Batchelor Institute.

9
10 I worked in the Eastern Arnhem Land as a ranger
11 coordinator, coordinating training and ranger programs.
12 I have also worked for the Australian Quarantine Inspection
13 Service in Darwin, dealing with Aboriginal people and
14 communities developing policies in relation to quarantine
15 issues.

16
17 I have worked in various roles - worked as a lecturer
18 at Charles Darwin University in Alice Springs, where I was
19 involved in training park rangers. I currently work as an
20 indigenous project support officer - I don't want to say
21 the name where I work, but I currently work right now with
22 them as an indigenous project support officer. My role is
23 in training and supporting indigenous rangers.

24
25 Growing up in Retta Dixon has affected my life in
26 many, many ways. I lack confidence and remain shy and
27 reserved. I am very untrusting of people. I dislike
28 authorities."

29
30 I always found it difficult and frightening when the
31 police were nearby or driving past, even getting pulled
32 over - I'm adding this in here - because I was afraid of
33 them, because they represented authority and authority to
34 me was about harshness and cruelty, even though the police
35 were never cruel to me, it's just the sense that they were
36 authority and this is what they did. It was ingrained to
37 your psyche because of the way I was treated by authority
38 at the Retta Dixon.

39
40 "I tend to run away from tough situations. I remember
41 working in Alice Springs recently and I was called into the
42 office by my manager. She criticised me for something.
43 She locked the door and grabbed my hand. It brought back
44 memories. I just walked out and left the job. I couldn't
45 deal with her harsh and negative criticism that was given
46 towards me" - for something I didn't do, as a matter of
47 fact.

1
2 "I have been lucky compared to many of the kids at
3 Retta Dixon, though. I don't drink, other than having a
4 social beer on the weekend. I don't smoke cigarettes,
5 smoke gunja, I don't take drugs. I've been married for
6 22 years. I have two children. I have told those
7 stories."

8
9 MR LAWRENCE: Could we have a brief break?

10
11 THE CHAIR: Q. Would you prefer that Ms David read the
12 rest of your statement?

13 A. I'll keep going. I'm not giving up.

14
15 Q. You want to keep going now?

16 A. I'll keep going, your Honour:

17
18 "I have told the stories to my wife and kids about
19 growing up at Retta Dixon so they are better able to
20 understand my background.

21
22 Redress: I have never sought compensation, nor have
23 I ever sought an apology, either, from the Aborigines
24 Inland Mission that ran Retta Dixon Home."

25
26 Actually, this is not good enough. There is too much
27 humbleness going on in this hearing. We are being too
28 kind, being too gentle. We're being too beautiful to
29 everyone, saying, "Hello, yes we all did suffer, we took it
30 tough. We don't want compensation." Well, what is
31 compensation? Is it money? Is it some sort of counselling
32 facilitation? What is it? We do need compensation. It's
33 time for us mob, the Retta Dixon mob who are here today,
34 the survivors, the ones who are out, wherever they are in
35 their communities or townships, and the mob who have now
36 gone in with us, to remember this, never to give up and
37 never to forget what happened at Retta Dixon Homes.

38
39 Down on Bagot Road there is a big block of land. It's
40 growing grass and has bits of cement laying around. It is
41 not good enough to say, "It's okay, I forgive you, let's
42 forgive and move on." It's not good enough, folks. We're
43 actually sick and tired of coming to places to tell our
44 story. We've told stories - I've been telling stories all
45 my life. I've had students with cross-cultural stories,
46 teaching. I've taken some of my students to Retta Dixon
47 and shared stories with them; my work colleagues - they

1 were there for one minute and broke down and cried. These
2 are non-indigenous people.

3
4 Society - if this story is never told out there,
5 further out, to be visible - how many motor cars go up and
6 down past Retta Dixon Home having no idea what's gone on,
7 meanwhile, the place has various developments springing up
8 all over the place. It's not good enough to say the place
9 will disappear into history. It's not going to. This is
10 what this Commission is for, and I'm very proud this is
11 happening. I'm so grateful.

12
13 We're here from yesterday and today and so on to share
14 this story, so it can go on for ever in terms of not being
15 locked up and covered away. I'll keep reading.

16
17 "My motivation is to have what was done wrong -
18 acknowledge what was done was wrong."

19
20 Let's not forget this: what happened did happen.
21 It's not an aberration in our imaginations, it's not some
22 illusion, it's not some, how do we say, gammon story. It's
23 a true story. Each story told here is a true story. So
24 what happened there was absolutely wrong, and the denials
25 that have taken place, from my understanding - they are
26 absolutely denials. No apologies from the Aborigines
27 Inland Mission, or whatever they call themselves today; no
28 redress. Absolutely zero to me, that is absolutely
29 appalling. It's just not good enough.

30
31 If there was compensation offered, I'm not interested
32 in going and buying a big, flash motor car. I've got
33 everything I need. That's not the compensation I am
34 talking about. I have two properties, two motor cars, a
35 nice boat, a beautiful wife and two kids and a pet dog.
36 I'm happy. I'm not interested in money compensation.
37 I want to be very clear on that. But if it was offered,
38 I would put that towards a trust to go towards, say, my
39 children's education to support them, to my nieces, to my
40 nephews, because their parents, my sisters, were absolutely
41 diabolically abused, in the context of the stories we heard
42 yesterday, in that level. It's beyond comprehension, what
43 happened to them - absolutely beyond comprehension - and
44 that's where I would put that energy, that compensation, to
45 help them.

46
47 "The desired outcomes from the Royal Commission.

1 Institutions like Retta Dixon need to demonstrate clear and
2 transparent acknowledgment of what took place. They need
3 to be open about the sexual abuse that occurred" and the
4 physical abuse, the psychological abuse, the genocide of
5 people's languages of such places, the genocide of people's
6 culture, the destructions of families. That has to be
7 acknowledged. That has to take place.

8
9 That is my desired feeling of what needs to take
10 place - not this pretentious make-up, cover-up, we're all
11 going to eventually get to 100 years old and that will be
12 it, it will go to our graves. But, hello. We're a very
13 resilient mob. The stories are passed down. Aboriginal
14 culture is very resilient. It has been kicked in the guts
15 for the last 200-odd years. We're still here, we're still
16 telling the stories, and they are still being passed down
17 today. So when we go to our maker - hopefully when I'm
18 about 150 years old - those stories will be today; they'll
19 still be here. So will Coomalie Creek and Lee Point and
20 that big block of land along the road there in the Kahlin
21 Compound and everywhere else. Those stories will be told
22 forever.

23
24 What I'm trying to say here is there has to be
25 acknowledgment. This has got to be the truth. This is a
26 truth commission, to be honest. This is like a truth
27 commission. We say no more now. Tell the truth. The
28 Aborigines Inland Mission has to say, yes, they did say,
29 from stories, that some mob had locked up the wrong -
30 parents were put away. But it's just a little iceberg, and
31 under that iceberg is this massive deplorable story that
32 has to come up and be acknowledged.

33
34 I feel that we need to be open about stories about
35 sexual abuse that occurred and not to try to hide it and
36 sweep it under the carpet.

37
38 "I feel that the welfare of children needs to be out
39 of the hands of religions or Christian societies."

40
41 And I'm talking about all of them. I'm talking about
42 the wrong attitudes that they have. The idea was we were
43 in need, but we got abused. Every single kid was abused -
44 not just the indigenous children. There were other kids -
45 house parents' children got abused as well. I'm not making
46 this up. And they were my brothers as well - we were all
47 family. We were all together in this. Aboriginal mob, we

1 say like 'Balanda', 'Gardia', means 'white fella mob' - we
2 all got abused together. This is like a cancer. Is this
3 what we celebrate in Darwin? There are big developments
4 going on and, you know, we can't deal with the future
5 unless we deal with the past, and the past is right here.
6 It's right here, right now. We're talking about it right
7 now. We've got to deal with this right now before we can
8 think about how we're going to deal with the space of, the
9 sense of, the welfare of Aboriginal indigenous children,
10 including non-indigenous children. The story of Australian
11 history is absolutely horrific. It's an embarrassment. We
12 are the 'lucky country', they say. Are we the country full
13 of paedophiles and child abusers where brutality was acted
14 out on everyone who went to those places?

15
16 "It's not about the introduction to religion, God, or
17 a so-called 'superior being'. It's about children
18 receiving the proper care, to feel safe and to be raised
19 humanely. This needs to continue into the future so
20 institutions" - in fact, the word "institutions" should be
21 just wiped out. Look, please, I'm not making up gammon
22 stories here. Just drop this word "institutions". We were
23 institutionalised. Yes, it was an institution, yes. Abuse
24 took place, yes. We look into the future - "institution"
25 has connotations of "You need help and we're going to help
26 you, and you're powerless and we're going to do all this,
27 and it's just too bad, you don't have a voice." We have to
28 start to get rid of those words and start to put a positive
29 context into it.

30
31 "It's about children receiving the proper care, to
32 feel safe and be raised humanely. This needs to be
33 continued into the future so institutions continue to
34 acknowledge child abuse when and where it occurs."

35
36 If it takes place in our current modern society, we
37 need strategies to deal with it, to handle it properly.

38
39 "That is the only way we will know it's being handled
40 the right way.

41
42 There needs to be a system whereby kids can report
43 abuse, both sexual and physical, and feel safe in doing
44 so."

45
46 I'd like to add in there, cultural abuse as well.
47 Abuse of what their beliefs are, their dreamings, their

1 story. That is a religion, that's our religion, our
2 culture is our religion, if you like.

3
4 "It is important not to assume that kids have a
5 behavioural problem, or that they are bad or naughty.
6 There is usually a reason why they are behaving in a
7 particular way. They have to have a chance to talk about
8 what is bothering them, and not to feel fear."

9
10 When we lived there, we felt nothing but fear in
11 there. We left and we still feel fear. It's in our
12 subconscious mind. I've heard stories of people having bad
13 dreams. I have bad dreams. I can't sleep at night unless
14 I have light coming through the window. My wife thinks I'm
15 mad but she got used to it now.

16
17 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Do you have any questions,
18 Ms David?

19
20 MS DAVID: Just a couple of questions, your Honour.

21
22 Q. [AKV] long after you left Retta Dixon Home and while
23 you were living in Darwin, did you have any contact with
24 the police about the alleged behaviour and sexual contact
25 by Mr Henderson with you?

26 A. I did. I did, yes.

27
28 Q. Can you remember how it was that you got in touch with
29 the police officer?

30 A. I remember getting a phone call from this particular
31 person. He introduced himself. I can never remember his
32 name, but he said he was a detective. He was investigating
33 allegations about Don Henderson.

34
35 Q. Can I ask you, does the name Detective Roger Newman
36 ring any bells to you? Is that the person who rang you?

37 A. In recent times, the name is starting to come back to
38 me. Of course, we all meet different people throughout
39 life, but the name is coming back as that person, yes.

40
41 Q. Can you say whether you contacted him or he contacted
42 you?

43 A. He contacted me. Yes, indeed.

44
45 Q. After he contacted you, did you meet with him?

46 A. Yes. We caught up. We had a phone call. I was
47 living in Jabiru at the time, working there. He suggested

1 we catch up for a coffee. We caught up in a coffee place
2 in Darwin. I won't say the name to make them feel shame.
3 We met there and had a cup of coffee, yes.
4
5 Q. When you went and had a cup of coffee with the police
6 officer, did you tell him about what happened with
7 Mr Henderson - what Mr Henderson had done to you?
8 A. Absolutely, absolutely.
9
10 Q. Can you now recall what it was that you told him, what
11 sorts of things you told him about?
12 A. Okay. The stories, if you like; the behaviour that he
13 did on children in Retta Dixon, including myself. I went
14 through the whole story, everything, to my absolute memory
15 and knowledge. Yes, I did.
16
17 Q. Did you tell him that Mr Henderson had indecently
18 assaulted you or sexually touched you on two occasions?
19 A. Yes, I did tell him that story.
20
21 Q. Did you tell him that one of the occasions was at a
22 swimming pool?
23 A. That's absolutely correct.
24
25 Q. And there was another occasion at Berry Springs when
26 that had happened?
27 A. That's right. That's correct.
28
29 Q. Did you also tell him about having seen or heard about
30 Mr Henderson touching other children?
31 A. That's correct, absolutely.
32
33 Q. Did you name the children that you had seen
34 Mr Henderson touching?
35 A. Yes, I did, absolutely.
36
37 Q. I won't ask you the names now, but you told the police
38 officer about that?
39 A. Yes, I did, indeed.
40
41 Q. Can you now say what date it was that you had this
42 conversation with him, or what year?
43 A. It would have been around - it was
44 2000-and-something - 2001, 2002.
45
46 Q. If it was said that a police officer met with you on
47 14 February 2002, do you think that's about the right time?

1 A. I reckon so, yes. Yes.
2
3 Q. Did the police officer ever take a statement from you?
4 A. Well, I remember that man in question, a detective,
5 was taking notes. He had his diary and he was writing down
6 everything I was saying - writing them all down,
7 everything.
8
9 Q. Did he read those notes back to you?
10 A. I can't be sure, but I'm pretty sure he did, because -
11 yes, I can guarantee, yes, he did. No, no problem. It's
12 just trying to work out the context of how it was done in a
13 place where there was a lot of people - coffee drinkers,
14 whatever. I felt shamed and, you know, you're talking and
15 getting - thinking, I don't want all this other mob to
16 listen; you know what I mean?
17
18 Q. Did you sign anything, can you recall?
19 A. Yes, that's one thing I can't remember. I wish
20 I could say "yes". I really wish I could say "yes".
21
22 Q. You just can't recall one way or the other?
23 A. I just can't recall one way or the other.
24
25 Q. After this meeting with the police officer, did you
26 hear from him again?
27 A. Never heard from him again. In fact, I was quite
28 anxious to hear from that person, and there was absolutely
29 nothing to this day, to this very conversation.
30
31 Q. Did you ever see a copy or a signed statement, written
32 out, of what you had told him during the course of that
33 conversation?
34 A. Absolutely nothing.
35
36 Q. If you had been asked to sign a statement and give
37 evidence to a court back when you provided this information
38 to the police officer, would you have been willing to do
39 that?
40 A. Absolutely. Absolutely. I'd even swear on the Bible,
41 wherever it is, I would do that.
42
43 Q. Was that your position back in 2002? Is that how you
44 felt back then?
45 A. Yes, indeed.
46
47 Q. When you had that conversation with the police

1 officer, were you aware of any court proceedings or any
2 other police allegations about Mr Henderson involving other
3 children?
4 A. From what I've heard in the media - I remember reading
5 something in the Northern Territory News, he was referred
6 to as a "sex pest". That's what I remember, in the
7 Northern Territory News. Also through the grapevine, from
8 other Retta Dixon mob, that this was taking place.
9
10 Q. Did you know that at the time that you spoke with the
11 police officer in the coffee shop?
12 A. No. I didn't know - actually, sorry, he did mention
13 in a phone conversation that an investigation was going on
14 and they basically wanted to nail him. Those were his
15 words, they wanted to nail this sex pest.
16
17 Q. When you spoke with the police officer in the coffee
18 shop, did you know that there were allegations in respect
19 of other people before the police and the courts?
20 A. Oh, definitely. Definitely.
21
22 Q. After you spoke with the police officer, did you
23 follow up with him?
24 A. No, I didn't, because there was no phone number, there
25 was no emails, there was nothing - absolutely nothing - no
26 trace of being able to contact the detective.
27
28 Q. Is it your evidence that you never heard back from
29 him?
30 A. No, didn't hear nothing. There was just nothing,
31 absolutely nothing.
32
33 Q. Did you give him your details?
34 A. Well, I did, because he was able to ring me up in
35 Jabiru. He had my details, he knew what street I lived in
36 and knew where I worked. He knew everything about me in
37 that sense of contacting.
38
39 Q. After you spoke with him in the coffee shop, did you
40 move at all, or did you stay at the same address?
41 A. Well, no, I was at the same address. I worked and
42 lived in Jabiru for several years.
43
44 Q. I now want to ask you some questions about another
45 topic?
46 A. Yeah, for sure.
47

1 Q. When you lived at Retta Dixon Home, you've told the
2 hearing that on at least one occasion a welfare officer
3 came out?
4 A. That's correct.
5
6 Q. And was taking notes?
7 A. Definitely taking notes.
8
9 Q. Did that happen on one occasion or more than one
10 occasion?
11 A. I reckon definitely several occasions - definitely
12 several occasions.
13
14 Q. You told the court that the one occasion you
15 described, the person was an Aboriginal person?
16 A. That's absolutely correct.
17
18 Q. On the other occasions, were those persons Aboriginal
19 persons?
20 A. I don't remember any non-indigenous mob, no, but there
21 were people wandering around and talking to people from
22 so-and-so mob, so, yeah, "So-and-so are talking to me from
23 the government, that white fella mob" - non-indigenous
24 people - "they're talking to so-and-so."
25
26 Q. On any occasion that the welfare officers were at the
27 home, did they ever approach you directly?
28 A. I don't think so. I was mainly approached directly by
29 this indigenous man.
30
31 Q. The one man that you spoke of initially?
32 A. Yes, that's correct.
33
34 Q. Did he approach you directly?
35 A. That's correct.
36
37 Q. At that time, did you tell him anything about what had
38 happened with Mr Henderson?
39 A. Yes. I remember telling him about Mr Henderson.
40 I remember telling him about all the cruelties and
41 beatings, et cetera, definitely.
42
43 Q. Can you recall the name of the man, or you just can't
44 say?
45 A. I can, because in such high standing in the
46 Commonwealth Government, and connection with the United
47 Nations - I don't want to shame his family. I can do it

1 off the record. It's no problem.
2
3 Q. Is it your evidence that you told this man about what
4 was happening to you at the hands of Mr Henderson?
5 A. Absolutely.
6
7 Q. Did you tell him about the sexual touchings?
8 A. Yes. Well, to me, it was a kind of a shameful thing
9 to talk about, the connotations of being touched definitely
10 refers to the gropings, you know, to all the rest of the
11 business that went on - yes, all that stuff.
12
13 Q. So did you tell the man about that, or did --
14 A. I definitely told him that story, yes.
15
16 Q. Can you recall how he responded to you?
17 A. Well, it's a long time ago and I don't forget things.
18 You don't forget anything like that. He was pretty
19 dismayed. He seemed almost helpless. Almost like, "I'm
20 taking notes and this is about as far as it's going to go."
21
22 Q. Where was this man from, to the best of your
23 recollection?
24 A. Well, he's from the Darwin region, south of Darwin.
25
26 Q. But who did he work for?
27 A. Well - yes, I'm pretty sure, without saying at the
28 time that I knew exactly where he was from, but in my
29 assumption, he was from welfare - the Northern Territory
30 Government welfare mob.
31
32 Q. Did you see that man on one occasion, or more than one
33 occasion?
34 A. I remember him turning up on several occasions.
35
36 Q. Did you speak to him on one occasion or more than one
37 occasion?
38 A. On just one occasion, yes.
39
40 Q. After you spoke to him, did anything happen - did
41 anyone talk to you further about it?
42 A. Nothing at all. Not at all.
43
44 MS DAVID: Thank you, I have nothing further.
45
46 THE CHAIR: Does anyone else have any questions?
47

1 MS McLEOD: With your leave, Commissioner.

2

3

<EXAMINATION BY MS McLEOD:

4

5 Q. Mr [AKV], my name is Fiona McLeod and I'm appearing
6 for the Commonwealth Government here. If you are able, are
7 you prepared to identify the welfare officer that you have
8 just spoken about?

9 A. Absolutely.

10

11 Q. Would you do that for the Commission, please?

12

A. Do you want me to do it in front of everybody? I'm
13 really worried about --

14

15 Q. Yes, please.

16

A. Okay, Tom Calma.

17

18 Q. You said he took notes?

19

A. That's right.

20

21 Q. Can you say roughly when that occurred?

22

A. I don't know what year, because I was probably around
23 about 10 years old, or around that age - early 1970s.

24

25 Q. You were about 10 years at the time?

26

A. That's correct.

27

28 MS McLEOD: Thank you, sir.

29

30 THE CHAIR: Anyone else?

31

32 MR LAWRENCE: I'm counsel for the witness.

33

34 **<EXAMINATION BY MR LAWRENCE:**

35

36 MR LAWRENCE: Q. I won't keep you. Just a couple of
37 things. When you were living at Retta Dixon, is it the
38 case that the kids developed a form of code when they
39 referred to certain people and certain places?

40

A. That's correct. We developed our own sense of
41 language. We would use particular words. I mentioned some
42 of them like "Tickle Foot", "Don Don", they were like alarm
43 bells, really.

44

45 Q. Can you tell us some of the names that you had for
46 some of the staff that worked there, if you can remember?

47

A. Well, there was Judy Fergusson, we called her "Carrot

1 Top", "Tickle Foot" - not "Tickle Foot", sorry, the other
2 names that I've written down there. "Twiddle Thumb",
3 sorry. We called people "Big Eye", "Radar", "Spy Eye",
4 et cetera.
5
6 Q. Who was that in relation to?
7 A. I say this in a respectful way - Mr Wall.
8
9 Q. Mr Wall?
10 A. That's correct.
11
12 Q. Can I just ask you about that. It's obviously been
13 very difficult for you to reveal the details of what you
14 saw him do, and I think you said particularly in Sydney -
15 you gave evidence about witnessing him hit a child with an
16 electric cable; is that correct?
17 A. That's correct.
18
19 Q. At the beginning of giving your evidence, you were
20 asked if the statement that was going in in evidence is
21 true and you said "absolutely"?
22 A. Absolutely. Absolutely.
23
24 Q. Do you find it difficult giving that evidence about
25 that gentleman because you're aware that he's in court
26 today?
27 A. Absolutely.
28
29 Q. Is it the case that, in fact, you have spoken to him
30 over the last couple of days in this court house?
31 A. That's correct.
32
33 Q. Does that explain how you're somewhat reticent about
34 repeating, basically, what's in your statement?
35 A. That's very true, absolutely.
36
37 Q. Was there a nickname for Mr Pattemore?
38 A. We used to call him "Paddle Pop".
39
40 Q. What about some of the areas in the Retta Dixon site,
41 were any areas that had names?
42 A. There was the banana patch, the chook pen, the laundry
43 area where clothes and linen were washed. There was a
44 place called "the back". "The back" was a place where you
45 could get refuge away from the humbug that was going on.
46
47 Q. Were those code words used later on in life to alert

1 friends, family?
2 A. That's absolutely - I share those very words with my
3 son. In fact, I had a conversation with him last night.
4
5 Q. How would that work?
6 A. I would say, "Do you know that the word for paedophile
7 is 'Tickle Foot'?" Because he had been getting certain
8 humbugs on Facebook and I was very worried about that.
9 I call that mob who do that sort of stuff - he calls them
10 "Tickle Foot". Around the indigenous mob around Darwin,
11 the Aboriginal society of Darwin, there are all these
12 different words used in different ways. People have their
13 own special words. There are different areas of language
14 that people utilised and developed.
15
16 Q. Was there a code word that came from the Retta Dixon
17 kids which meant an area that you wouldn't go to because it
18 was dangerous?
19 A. Absolutely. You would have to avoid the banana patch,
20 you would avoid the chook pen, you'd avoid the linen press,
21 you'd avoid the place right next to the recreation hall,
22 which was the store room where people were sent, the young
23 fellas were sent to get the food to take back to the
24 houses, because Mr Henderson was in there abusing boys in
25 that place.
26
27 Q. So consequent to that, you would use that word,
28 "banana patch", as a word of warning of an area that could
29 be anywhere, but it was somewhere that you wouldn't go?
30 A. That's exactly right. You'd dare never go to the
31 banana patch to pick bananas, because something else might
32 happen. Absolutely.
33
34 Q. I won't keep you. Is it the case that you in fact
35 wrote a letter to the local newspaper, the NT News in
36 relation to these issues and it was responded to?
37 A. That's right. I remember writing a letter to the
38 Northern Territory News in response to a letter written
39 by - I can't recall the gentleman's name, who wrote a
40 letter. The context of his letter was about, in my view,
41 sort of demonising, I guess, that half-caste Aboriginal
42 people weren't Aboriginal people. To me, my belief was
43 that we were demonised, and then, if we weren't Aboriginal
44 people, who the hell were we? Were we non-humans that
45 didn't have a voice? So I decided to write a letter back
46 to the Northern Territory News to tell my story, about how
47 I felt about his views, and several weeks later there was a

1 letter that went back into the News, it had Mr Pattemore's
2 name as the author in the NT News. I felt I was pretty
3 well chastised and criticised. But in my original letter
4 I did not mention the Retta Dixon once. I did not say the
5 word "Retta Dixon" in my letter at all. I was referring to
6 the place without actually mentioning the place.

7
8 Q. But you understood that the author of the subsequent
9 letter, Mr Pattemore, was indeed the superintendent,
10 Mr Pattemore, responding to your correspondence in a
11 chastising way?

12 A. That's how I felt. It was like, "Well, what are you
13 writing - don't lay all your blame on us at the front gate
14 of the Retta Dixon Home. It's not our fault." That was
15 the context, or my belief, how it read to me.

16
17 Q. Mr [AKV], you've told us about the endeavours to
18 instill religion into you, and you're clearly very negative
19 about that. Wasn't there a sign outside Retta Dixon which
20 actually said, "Our God is Able"?

21 A. That's right. At the front, on Bagot Road, there was
22 a sign, "Our God is Able", which is the motto of that era.
23 I don't know what it is now, but it was, "Our God is Able".
24 There was a boomerang and two spears, from my memory, like
25 that (indicating) - they are cultural symbols of Aboriginal
26 people. But on top of that was, "Our God is Able".

27
28 Q. Was that indicative of the religion that overwhelmed
29 that place and overwhelmed you --

30 A. It certainly did, because their statement of, "Our God
31 is Able", their philosophy, built around their God,
32 I should say, their God is able, and they tried to throw it
33 on to us, saying "That's your God" - what happened beyond
34 that fence, behind the sign, was absolutely Amityville
35 Horror, literally. There was no God, no angels, no Jesus
36 under the bed to protect us. There was nothing. We went
37 to Sunday school and learned about the love of God and
38 Jesus and how he died on the cross for us and shed his
39 blood. But we were the ones bleeding in there. The young
40 girls were bleeding, the young fellas were getting belted.
41 That's what was going on in there. That was an aberration
42 to us, "Our God is Able." That means nothing.

43
44 MR LAWRENCE: Thanks very much for your evidence.

45
46 THE WITNESS: You're welcome. Thank you.
47

1 MS DAVID: Nothing arising, your Honour.

2

3 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr [AKV]. Thank you for telling us
4 your story, you are now excused.

5

6 <THE WITNESS WITHDREW

7

8 MS DAVID: If your Honour pleases, I call Veronica Johns.
9 She'll give her evidence in court with someone assisting
10 her.

11

12 THE CHAIR: What about the webstream?

13

14 MS DAVID: Webstream on, please.

15

16 <VERONICA JOAN JOHNS, affirmed: [11.11am]

17

18 <EXAMINATION BY MS DAVID:

19

20 MS DAVID: Q. Mrs Johns, are you okay? Did you provide
21 a statement to the Royal Commission?

22 A. Yes.

23

24 Q. You did that through your lawyers?

25 A. Yes.

26

27 Q. Have you recently had an opportunity to look at that
28 statement?

29 A. Yes.

30

31 Q. Did you sign that statement on 18 September of this
32 year?

33 A. Yes, I did.

34

35 Q. Could the witness be shown the statement? Just
36 looking at those pieces of paper, is that a copy of the
37 statement that you provided to the Royal Commission?

38 A. Yes.

39

40 Q. Have you had a chance to read it recently?

41 A. Yes, I looked over it again last night.

42

43 Q. Is it an accurate statement?

44 A. There is a date at the end of the first page. It says
45 "1983", and that should be "1963".

46

47 Q. 1963. If we change that to "1963", would it then be

1 an accurate statement of your recollection?

2 A. Yes.

3

4 MS DAVID: I tender that statement. It's under tab 16.

5

6 THE CHAIR: That will be exhibit 17-8.

7

8 **EXHIBIT #17-8 STATEMENT OF VERONICA JOAN JOHNS DATED**
9 **18/09/2014**

10

11 MS DAVID: Q. Since providing this statement, have you
12 also written some other notes that you would like to tell
13 the Royal Commission about?

14 A. Yes.

15

16 Q. Are those notes further matters that relate to your
17 experiences while you lived at Retta Dixon?

18 A. Yes.

19

20 Q. Do you have a copy of those notes in front of you?

21 A. Yes.

22

23 Q. Perhaps if we just get you to have another look at the
24 document. Just looking at this second document I've given
25 you, is that just a copy of what you've written and have in
26 front of you?

27 A. Yes.

28

29 Q. Is that, too, an accurate summary of your
30 recollections?

31 A. Yes.

32

33 MS DAVID: If your Honour please, I tender that document
34 as well.

35

36 THE CHAIR: Do you have a copy?

37

38 MS DAVID: Yes.

39

40 THE CHAIR: We'll make the further statement exhibit 17-9.

41

42 **EXHIBIT #17-9 SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT OF VERONICA JOAN**
43 **JOHNS TITLED "IMPACTS OF THE SEXUAL ABUSE"**

44

45 THE WITNESS: Sorry, I've got to laugh sometimes. That's
46 how I deal with things. I can see my brother over there,
47 so that's good.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

MS DAVID: Q. Mrs Johns, would you like to read your statements or would you like someone else to read them for you?

A. No, it's okay, I'll read them.

Q. You'd like to read them. Take your time. I'd ask you to read both statements now?

A. Yes.

"My full name is Veronica Joan Johns and I was born on 7 March 1958. I was previously known as Veronica Joan Stagg. I went to live at the Retta Dixon Home in Darwin when I was three and I left there when I was 15.

I lived there with my younger brothers, Kenny and Kevin Stagg, and my older sister, who is here with me. My older sister left when she was quite young. I was told she was sick."

Just to throw something else in, I have other sisters here, older sisters here.

"We lived in cottages." Throwing something else in again, I remember we did go to the old home and my first memory is going on the truck to the new home, so I remember that, yes.

"There were about up to 13 children per cottage. I was in number 3, Ashmore cottage. Kevin and Kenny also lived in the cottage with me. The kids that shared cottages could be aged from newborn up to 17 - that's what I think, I'm not really sure about the end date - and they were both boys and girls. We had many different cottage parents."

Just to throw something else in, again, mostly in our cottage we had single women. We did have a couple of male cottage parents - I mean husband and wife - but mostly ours were single women.

"Retta Dixon was, I would say, just a place where I existed. I lived in fear. I was always scared of the older boys that lived with us at Retta Dixon. When I was about age 7 I went to play with a girl in another cottage. She was in number 5 cottage. A boy came out and he said I couldn't play with the girl and had to go with him to the

1 laundry."

2

3 This is the big laundry that some of the others talked
4 about, the one down the back.

5

6 "He had a feather duster and said I had to go with him
7 or he'd belt me. I went in the laundry and I had to make
8 sure all the louvres and doors were locked. He sexually
9 penetrated me. There was lots of blood.

10

11 MR GEORGIU: Perhaps we should have a short break.

12

13 THE CHAIR: We'll take a short break. Perhaps you could
14 find out whether it would be better if someone else read
15 the statement for her?

16

17 MR GEORGIU: I'll do that.

18

19 **SHORT ADJOURNMENT**

20

21 MR GEORGIU: We're grateful for the break. Ms Johns
22 feels strong enough to continue reading her statement.

23

24 THE CHAIR: Very well, thank you.

25

26 Q. Start when you're ready.

27

28 A. Yes.

29

30 "We had to go to the laundry, make sure the louvres
31 and doors were locked. He sexually penetrated me. There
32 was lots of blood. I can't remember getting back to my
33 cottage or what happened next. I didn't tell anyone.
34 I went to play with the same girl at the same cottage
35 another time, and the same thing happened."

36

37 So it was with that same person.

38

39 "I never went to play with her again.

40

41 I kept this a secret until I think I was 25.

42

43 Although this stopped with this boy, it didn't go
44 away. It entered inside me, bringing with it the pain,
45 terror, disgust, and horror and making me ever alert and
46 wary.

47

48 Once a month we had a film night in the home. After

1 the film we went to our cottages and the adults stayed in
2 the film area. There was an older girl in my cottage and
3 three to five boys would come in to our room and have sex
4 with her. I'd hide under my sheet. This happened
5 regularly and for months. The boys didn't leave until
6 their cottage parents called out for them."

7
8 They used to call their names and they'd run out the
9 back door, the side door.

10
11 "I was terrified that they would force themselves upon
12 me. Once when I was sharing a bedroom with my brothers
13 I told them they had to save me if these older boys came to
14 get me."

15
16 So they actually came in one time and I could hear
17 them. I knew on those nights - it's out of that
18 statement - but, yes, those film nights, what that door
19 sounded like, when they came through the front door.
20 I knew they were in the room with that older girl, and
21 I said to my brothers, "You have to save me if they come to
22 get me."

23
24 When I shared a cottage with my brothers, Kenny and
25 Kevin, they looked after me. I now realise my brothers,
26 Kevin and Kenny, were also being abused. I found out that
27 the first time they were sexually abused was by [AJQ]:
28 that's in 1963.

29
30 "In about 1963 when I was five I saw this older boy
31 have sex with my friend [AJA]. He was an older boy in my
32 cottage. [AJA] was about 7 at the time. It was the year
33 the Queen came to Darwin.

34
35 Once I was working at a wedding reception at the home,
36 so that was held in the recreation hall that they talk
37 about. Another girl asked me to help her get drinks.
38 I went through some doors and there were four boys inside
39 there. They were sexually threatening me and wouldn't let
40 me out. I pleaded with one of the boys to let me out, and
41 he did. They were looking at me and smiling. The girl was
42 laughing. I said, 'Tell them to let me out.' One of the
43 boys was in a different spot at an opposite side of the
44 room. I said, 'Don't let them get me. I said, 'Let me
45 out.' He said, 'I can't.' I was pleading with him and he
46 finally let me out. I could tell by the way those boys
47 were behaving and saying, 'Come on, you have to give it to

1 us,' that I was in terrible trouble. The boys - I don't
2 know, when I think that maybe they were 17, I was about 12.
3 I think I was, like, younger.
4

5 Another older boy in the home always used to make
6 sexual gestures to me with his fingers and tongue and I was
7 frightened about what he was going to do to me.
8

9 Sexual assaults happened all the time. You had to be
10 constantly aware of this thing.
11

12 An older boy [AJR] used to go under my bed at night."
13

14 Sorry, she's doing deep breathing trying to help me
15 and she's making me laugh.
16

17 "He shared the cottage with us."
18

19 I used to hang my hand over my bed when I slept - and
20 it doesn't say there but I'd wake up; something would wake
21 me up, and my hand was on his penis.
22

23 "I'd call out to the cottage parents. They would
24 respond." And I must say that every time I called out,
25 they did respond.
26

27 "[AJR] would run back to his bed. I would go to
28 Mr Pattemore, the superintendent, the following day with my
29 cottage parents and report it."
30

31 I think they reported it and then I was just going to
32 tell my story.
33

34 "Nothing ever changed.
35

36 In that time" - it's got some years there, I tried to
37 guess how long I was in that home with that same boy.
38

39 "Mr Pattemore, when I'd go to talk to him would say,
40 'How did you know it was him?' and I tried to tell how
41 I knew it was him, but nothing happened. [AJR] kept doing
42 it. One time I woke up and AJR's hand was on my upper
43 thigh. I screamed out. He got out straightaway and ran
44 back to his bed. I think I told Mr Pattemore the next
45 day - that was with the cottage parents again, not by
46 myself. [AJR] continued to live in our cottage and had
47 free access to my room and to me.

1
2 I saw [AJR] threatening other girls with a feather
3 duster. He would stare at us and scare us, and take some
4 girls into the toilets.

5
6 We did not have curtains" - that's not right there; we
7 had curtains, so that's not right. We did have curtains,
8 but they were those see-through curtains.

9
10 "[AJR] would regularly look at me through the
11 windows."

12
13 I'd be getting dressed and all of a sudden I would
14 realise they were eyes in the plant, in the bush there,
15 that were looking at me. So, yeah, he used to watch, and
16 when we were showering, through the bathroom windows.

17
18 This is about my siblings.

19
20 "My older sister" - I have three older sisters here
21 with me today, so this "older sister" is this one here -
22 "left Retta Dixon early. I felt it was my job to look
23 after the boys" - the boys are my brothers Kevin and Kenny,
24 I'm talking about.

25
26 "My brother Kevin would bang his head on the bars of
27 his bed at night and rock himself violently." I put in
28 that he was distressed, but at the time, that's not
29 written, what I knew.

30
31 "He did this for most of the time in the home. There
32 were like two bars on the bed and he'd lie on his belly and
33 bash his head on the bars. I'd get up to try to stop him.
34 I was worried about him hurting himself. He used to rock
35 so hard. I would try to settle him and get him to relax.
36 I now realise that this was probably related to the sexual
37 abuse that he was enduring.

38
39 Don Henderson, a parent in cottage 2, was sexually
40 abusing the kids, including my brother Kevin. Kevin told
41 me about it much later on. When another of the Retta Dixon
42 boys died, he stood up on the table at the wake and
43 said..."

44
45 Do I have to say that bit?

46
47 Q. Not if you don't want to.

1 A. Because people can see that.

2

3

"I'd heard this from Kevin before.

4

5

6

7

8

I often saw Henderson on the tractor taking boys to the chook yard. We all talked about him. We called him 'Jumbal'. I never saw any sexual abuse by Henderson, but we all knew and talked about it.

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

I once saw Don Henderson sitting on a girl punching her repeatedly. He was a psycho. She told me that the police saw her bruises and she said to the police" - because they asked her where she got them from, and they told her to report it - she said that they were from him, from Henderson, but nothing happened."

16

17

I'll just have a drink, is that okay?

18

19

Q. Sure.

20

A. "After Retta Dixon.

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

Apart from my attempts to tell my cottage parents and Superintendent Pattemore about these things", really, the only thing that Mr Pattemore knew about was about that boy under my bed and when he used to come into the room. He didn't tell - he didn't know anything else. I never told him anything else.

28

29

30

31

32

"I didn't tell anyone." This is specifically talking about what happened in the laundry. "I didn't tell anyone until I was 25. At that time I told my husband.

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

I met my husband when I was 15. He thought I was a virgin. He was a drinker." As far as I was concerned - it doesn't say it in there - I was a virgin. "When I told him what happened, he went off his head. He blamed me for it, like I was a bad person, and drove off in the car, drunk. I was upset as he was driving drunk. I went to see my brother." That brother was Kenny, he lived in the same block as us. "I told him about it too." So that was the second person I'd ever told.

43

44

45

46

"It was a relief to get that off my shoulders. It took ages for me to say that fella's name. I think he was a young teenager.

47

I have one word that I have lived with through the

1 years at Retta Dixon, and that was 'bad'. Because of what
2 happened to me at Retta Dixon, I feel bad. I have tried so
3 hard to be good. I was worried that if I was bad I would
4 burn in hell. That's what we were taught at Retta Dixon -
5 what they taught me.

6
7 I didn't realise at the time, but I now realise that
8 my little brothers were also being sexually abused. I feel
9 really guilty and sad in my heart that I wasn't there
10 looking after them, that I wasn't able to keep them safe,
11 as I thought that I was.

12
13 Us children were all alone at Retta Dixon, coping and
14 dealing with sexual, physical and emotional abuse. We did
15 not have a trusting relationship with our cottage parents
16 or with the superintendent."

17
18 Can I throw something in here, your Honour? I did get
19 on all right with Mr Pattemore and I have a good
20 relationship with one of his children, who are here, and
21 she was bridesmaid at my wedding, and she's here supporting
22 me today.

23
24 "No-one ever inquired about our welfare. There was
25 no-one we could talk to and be confident that they would
26 make the bad things stop happening.

27
28 I am a warrior woman."

29
30 That's what I want to be, being here.

31
32 "I must step up, be strong, and share myself with
33 you."

34
35 I would like to thank the Commission and the
36 Commonwealth, too, because they have acknowledged that
37 things happened and are giving us this opportunity to tell
38 our story.

39
40 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Do you want to read your other
41 statement, too.

42
43 THE WITNESS: "Impacts of the sexual abuse".

44
45 "The rape by an older boy.

46
47 The feeling that I am a bad person because this bad

1 thing happened to me. And because I am a bad person and
2 have sinned, I will go to hell and I will burn in hell. We
3 were taught about 'sinning' in our Christian upbringing.
4

5 I don't want to be in the same space with the male who
6 did this to me. When I see him, I can say 'hello', but
7 I don't want anything more than this. At our last
8 Retta Dixon reunion, he came out and greeted me and my
9 husband when we arrived. I thought, how dare he come up to
10 me like nothing had happened. After he walked away, I told
11 my husband, 'That's that fellow.'"
12

13 That's that name there. He knew his name but didn't
14 know what he looked like.
15

16 "I said, 'He's the one that did that to me.' We both
17 had very different immense feelings. After hearing that
18 Danila Dilba had counsellors there, all I wanted to do was
19 go up to him and say, 'Come on, you and I are going to go
20 and talk about what you did to me.' I didn't do this, and
21 I think that I would like to do this."
22

23 I would like to be in the same space as him and do
24 that.
25

26 Keeping my secret for nearly 20 years and not telling
27 anyone. Trying to hide from my husband that I wasn't a
28 virgin and going through a difficult time with him when
29 I did finally divulge what had happened. I felt like I was
30 the sinner, because we lived together, my husband and I,
31 before he was my husband. I felt like I was sinning every
32 time we had sex when I wasn't married. My sexual life with
33 my husband has been seriously affected from this.
34

35 My husband actually said to me, too, "Put that there",
36 so he's in my space, you know.
37

38 Then I've put in another heading, "The rape, sexual
39 advances, traps and lures that came from older boys".
40

41 "I have this thing in my head that Aboriginal males
42 are not really interested in me as a person and who I am.
43 They only want to know me or talk to me because they want
44 to get into my pants.
45

46 I like to know and be prepared and aware of where
47 danger may come at me from.

1
2 I feel scared when alone at night and in spaces where
3 I think someone could be lurking or hiding around a corner,
4 behind a bush, wall, door, or under my bed. I like to
5 survey the area and things in the spaces where I have to
6 move into."
7

8 I think about, okay, I've got to walk to there, what's
9 in my hand when I've got to get between there and there.
10 I'm relieved when there is a wall or a door at my back.
11 I feel great relief when I'm in a safe space or when I see
12 people who I know I can feel safe with.
13

14 "I jump and am jumpy sometimes when males come up
15 behind me unannounced."
16

17 One of my old bosses, when I was much younger I worked
18 in a hostel as a cleaner, and I used to jump every time.
19 After a while he started to whistle, so I knew he was
20 coming, so I could be okay about it.
21

22 I have felt alone, and being alone in a space as a
23 child and as an adult now I'm very used to that. I often
24 feel alone and go into my own space and to a place where
25 I need to just be.
26

27 "I know that my alone place is about me and it is the
28 only space that I am in control of.
29

30 I've been consumed with guilt that I've let my
31 brothers Kenny and Kevin down, because they also were
32 subjected to the sexual abuses in the home. I didn't take
33 care of them. As a Stagg family, my brothers Kenny and
34 Kevin, and our sister and I didn't have our mum and dad to
35 turn to, feel that we belonged and know what it meant to be
36 loved as children.
37

38 Sometimes when things get too hard or difficult for
39 me, I go 'walkabout in my mind'. This can involve me being
40 alone or with people all around me. It is where I go for
41 peace and healing. I go 'walkabout in my mind'. I can
42 focus, feel I am in control, and channel my energy into
43 putting myself at ease or to find peace."
44

45 Can I just say that those places where I go to, it's
46 down the river, usually it's Coomalie Creek because that
47 was a peaceful place, or it's around the camp fire and it

1 doesn't have to have any people there.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

"I know that when I come back from going 'walkabout in my mind', I will once again be out in the open and exposed.

Those of us who have grown up in 'the home' either as children who have been sexually abused, been an abuser, or a witness of sexual abuses, have all been in this space alone as individuals, families, and Retta Dixon Home kids."

Also when I'm talking about the Retta Dixon kids I'm talking about kids of cottage parents, not just us kids that were in the protection of the government.

"Children were not safe and were not protected.

We as children lived our lives where there was no one person, God, nor the welfare system, government or institution that kept us safe and protected from the sexual abuses that occurred at Retta Dixon.

There was a culture of sexual abuse that was a big thing and a horrible thing that happened to nearly every single child that grew up in the home. It continued over the life of the home and it was not stopped. It was kept silent and, by some, not even considered as it could possibly be occurring.

This stuff that was happening was not right and was not Christian. All the prayers in the world and seeking forgiveness from God would not stop it, make it go away, or make you feel you were not a bad person.

The sexual abuses was another layer of the rude and almost brutal disregard and stronghold that individuals, governments and institutions had for us and over us as Aboriginal children. To me, it is almost saying, 'What you have or who you are as an Aboriginal identity is not okay and that is why you are in protective care and, while you're in here, don't challenge, talk about, or even hope that anything will change for the better for you, because we know what is best for you and that is why you are in Retta Dixon.'

I have tried to use my own personal tragedies and negative experiences to be a good person, take a proactive role to be out there, and be a positive role model and

1 mentor to others. I want to empower others to be a
2 positive advocate, voice and support for our more
3 vulnerable people, children and families and to help in
4 creating safe, open and honest places and spaces where
5 sexual abuses can stop before they start.

6
7 Redress."

8
9 I've got "apology", so, you know, apology - I won't
10 read that whole sentence. Is that all right if I just say
11 it is about an apology from the government and AIM.

12
13 I would also like to have an apology from
14 Mr Pattemore, because I do have a relationship with
15 Mr Pattemore, but I would like him to know and apologise to
16 me.

17
18 I want all children to be apologised to who grew up in
19 Retta Dixon, including those who don't tell their stories,
20 those silent ones, but I also want that personal apology to
21 me, Veronica Johns, for the sexual abuses that I endured
22 while a child growing up in Retta Dixon.

23
24 I have never had counselling for any of this, and the
25 first time I have been doing counselling is only just since
26 I put my name forward, just in the last month or couple of
27 months. I thought I was that warrior woman, that I can do
28 it on my own, but I know that I can't. So I want to
29 continue having counselling for me and for every other
30 child who has been through this.

31
32 Compensation: I've never thought of that, but if it's
33 offered I would like financial compensation.

34
35 In my desired outcomes, I'm not going to read it all,
36 but it is about today, it's about the compliance with the
37 Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, that needs to be in
38 there, because we talk about holistic care and protection
39 of children, and that disregard for us as kids being put in
40 those institutions, you know, we need that to be in place
41 and working and adhered to, that compliance.

42
43 The spoken, silent and unspoken stories of the
44 Aboriginal child who is removed from their family, people,
45 country, language and heritage, hopefully that is weaved
46 into this, what comes out of these stories, is how
47 important that is to our whole heart, mind, body, soul,

1 spirit.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

And we do need that contact and communication with our Aboriginal family and on country, because children are taken, or families come to children and, you know, might go to McDonald's to see their families. Sometimes they need to be on country where they can see their people and their country and hear the language and stuff.

It is also about that thing about the tools, culturally appropriate tools for working with the kids to get through things. Like us today, we need people who know how to work with us as Aboriginal people to get through these things and the children of today and tomorrow, we need them to have culturally appropriate tools and checking, monitoring, evaluation of things. So it might be that you need key Aboriginal groups, stakeholders, individuals, families, to be there as part of that.

The children, as we're saying, we need to have the voice in being able to speak up, so we want children of today and tomorrow to have that voice as, you know, who they can talk to or someone to give their ear to.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS DAVID: I have no questions.

THE CHAIR: Does anyone else have any questions?

<EXAMINATION BY MR GEORGIU>

MR GEORGIU: Q. I have just a couple of questions.
Veronica --

THE CHAIR: You had better tell everyone else who you are.

MR GEORGIU: Sorry, your Honour. George Georgiou, counsel for Veronica Johns.

Q. I just want to ask you about that time when you complained about [AJR]'s behaviour, okay?

A. So - oh, yes.

Q. You gave evidence to the Commission that you told your house parents about what he was doing. Who were your house parents at that time, please?

1 A. Auntie Ruth Roberts.
2
3 Q. So it was just the one parent, was it?
4 A. Yes, it was usually just one.
5
6 Q. When you told Auntie Ruth Roberts, can you just step
7 us through what it was that she told you and how you ended
8 up before Mr Pattemore?
9 A. So I'd call out - I'd call out, "Auntie Ruth, Auntie
10 Ruth." She'd come into my room and that person would be
11 gone and, you know, I'd just tell her what happened, where
12 he was, or what he was doing and then the next day she
13 would take me up to see Mr Pattemore to talk about it.
14 I think that person also went to see Mr Pattemore, but we
15 were never in the same space telling our stories.
16
17 Q. Do you mean by that you were never in the same room
18 together to tell Mr Pattemore the story?
19 A. Yes.
20
21 Q. How many times do you think you went to see
22 Mr Pattemore about that particular behaviour?
23 A. Probably half a dozen.
24
25 Q. Did [AJR] continue with his inappropriate behaviour
26 after you had complained to Mr Pattemore?
27 A. Yes.
28
29 Q. From what you say in your statement, I take it that he
30 was never removed from cottage 3.
31 A. No. And we used to play hide and seek and we used to
32 make sure you're not in the cupboard where he was going to
33 come into.
34
35 MR GEORGIU: Thank you.
36
37 MS DAVID: I have nothing further, your Honour.
38
39 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Veronica. Thank you for coming and
40 telling us your story. You are now excused.
41
42 **<THE WITNESS WITHDREW**
43
44 MS DAVID: I call Kevin Stagg. He will give evidence with
45 the web camera on.
46
47

1 <KEVIN JAMES STAGG, sworn: [12.17pm]

2

3

<EXAMINATION BY MS DAVID:

4

5

MS DAVID: Q. Mr Stagg, did you provide a statement to the Royal Commission on 3 September 2014?

6

7

A. Yes, I did.

8

9

Q. Have you had an opportunity to read that statement before coming to court?

10

11

A. Yes, I have.

12

13

Q. Can the witness be shown the 17-page document?

14

15

THE CHAIR: He needs his glasses.

16

17

MS DAVID: Q. You have the statement before you?

18

A. Yes, I do.

19

20

Q. Do you recognise that as a copy of the statement that you provided to the Royal Commission?

21

22

A. Yes, I do.

23

24

Q. Having read it recently, is it an accurate account of your recollection of events?

25

26

A. Yes, it is.

27

28

MS DAVID: I tender the statement, your Honour.

29

30

THE CHAIR: It will become exhibit 17-10.

31

32

EXHIBIT #17-10 STATEMENT OF KEVIN JAMES STAGG DATED 3/09/2014

33

34

35

MS DAVID: Q. Mr Stagg, I understand that you would like to read your statement to the Commission.

36

37

A. I would like to read my statement.

38

39

Q. I'd ask you to do that now.

40

A. Thank you.

41

42

Your Honour, if I may just first, I just want to say a few thank yous, one and foremost to me, myself and I; secondly, to Barbara Cummings; and to Mrs McCarthy from the Newcastle Post; the ex Prime Minister, Ms Gillard; the Commission; my family - my family, all staff and all my counsellors and extended family, my grandparents, my blood

43

44

45

46

47

1 parents and the Retta Dixon Home for getting me to today.
2 Thank you. I will now read my statement.

3
4 "This statement made by me accurately sets out the
5 evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission
6 into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The
7 statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge
8 and belief.

9
10 Where direct speech is referred to in this statement,
11 it is provided in words or words to the effect of those
12 which were used, to the best of my recollection.

13
14 My full name is Kevin James Stagg and I was born in
15 1960. I am 54 years old.

16
17 I am the youngest of the four Stagg children. I have
18 two sisters, Beverley and Veronica. I have an older
19 brother, Kenny. I know I had a black mother, but I never
20 knew my father until I met him later in life when I was
21 25 years old. I don't remember life before going to live
22 in Retta Dixon Home.

23
24 I have been told by Barbara Cummings, another resident
25 of Retta Dixon, that I was about four years old when I was
26 sent there, which must have been in about 1964. I was made
27 a ward of the State as a baby due to the Commonwealth
28 Government's policy of removing half-caste kids from their
29 families. So I went to live at Retta Dixon. Kenny and
30 Veronica were at Retta Dixon as well, but I didn't know
31 they were there, or that they were my family, until
32 adolescent years. I don't even recall how I found out they
33 were my relatives. Beverley went to another institution at
34 Garden Point on Melville Island.

35
36 Retta Dixon was made up of 12 aluminium cottages in
37 the shape of a horseshoe. The superintendent's name was
38 Mr Pattemore. He had the first place at the front, and
39 then the cottages were numbered 1 through to 8. In the
40 middle of the horseshoe of cottages we had the store and a
41 hall. There was a back road after the hall, and past that
42 was a laundry, workshop and chook pen. Down the back was
43 an oval and a banana patch where the dirty water from the
44 laundry spill used to go. Each cottage had either five or
45 eight bedrooms. As far as I remember, I was in cottage 3.

46
47 There were house parents for each cottage. I was

1 looked after by Mr and Mrs Goodchild at first, then
2 Auntie Marge Spohn in cottage 3.

3
4 Mr Pounder was the house parent in cottage 1. At
5 times he would chain me up, and I saw him chain up other
6 children as well, to the outdoor water tap like a dog as
7 punishment for minor things. I got chained up one time
8 when he caught me hiding food that I didn't want to eat in
9 my clothes.

10
11 Don Henderson and Mrs Henderson were the house parents
12 for cottage 2. Mr and Mrs Barnes were the house parents
13 for cottage 4. Gwen Platt was the house parent for
14 cottage 6. Judy Fergusson was the house parent for
15 cottage 7, and Auntie Layli Shankleton was the house parent
16 for cottage 8. The house parents for cottage 5 used to
17 come and go. I don't remember who they were.

18
19 I remember we had to go to church. The church was in
20 Sabine Road and we would be driven there. The missionaries
21 at Retta Dixon told me that they had to knock the heathen
22 out of me. We'd also go to boys' brigade or girls'
23 brigade, and also choir, so we'd go to church two or three
24 times a week, as well as a service on Sunday morning. And
25 when you were older you would go on Sunday night as well.
26 You would get your one or two cents from your house parents
27 and you'd put that in the offering, and you'd have to sing
28 in church. I thank them for that. The mission taught us
29 right from wrong and taught us to mind our manners - they
30 taught us well.

31
32 Sometimes, if we had behaved well all week, we were
33 allowed to go to the swimming pool down in Nightcliff and
34 on our way back we were allowed to buy Happy Aid, a sweet
35 like sherbet. When we used to go there, we would run,
36 because it was the only outing we got. We wasn't allowed
37 to go anywhere much outside of Retta Dixon before we turned
38 10 years old.

39
40 Every school holidays we would go camping. The
41 younger kids would go to Lee Point, and once you could swim
42 you could go to Coomalie Creek. At these camps the shower
43 facilities were corrugated iron sheds. They all had holes
44 and things in them and all the children would be looking at
45 everyone else in the shower. We would even look at the
46 house parents. I remember looking at one of the house
47 parents, Robyn. If we got caught, we would blame it on

1 someone else. It was always the smallest or quietest that
2 got in trouble for it.

3
4 Whilst at Retta Dixon, I went to Nightcliff Preschool
5 and Primary School. Later, I went to Millner Primary
6 School and Nightcliff High School. I got expelled from
7 Nightcliff High School when I was about 12 years old.

8
9 I was a boarder for a short time at St John's Boarding
10 School. I don't remember how long I was there. I was
11 physically abused by [REDACTED] and one time I got violent
12 with him. I told him, 'If you're going to hit me, I'm
13 going to hit you back.' That's what happened, and that's
14 why in the end I was expelled from school. I also attended
15 Goodwood Boys Tech in Adelaide for the ages of 14 and
16 15 years old.

17
18 I have since become aware that Retta Dixon was run by
19 the Aborigines Inland Mission (AIM). They were mainly on
20 the East Coast and came to Darwin in 1940. I thought the
21 staff at Retta Dixon were mostly lovely people, very nice
22 and loving to all us kids. I thank them for teaching me
23 proper manners and to be respectful, and for all that
24 discipline.

25
26 But there were certain aspects of Retta Dixon that
27 were very hideous. All the games that the kids played, all
28 the conversations, all seemed to have sexual connotations.
29 We would play games like sticking stalks of grass up our
30 penises to see who could put it up the furthest.

31
32 Mr Pattemore also used to be physically abusive to me
33 and would give me the cane on my hands. My hands are still
34 welted from being constantly caned by him. Usually, when
35 he caned me, he would cane me six hits on each hand and
36 another six on my behind. Sometimes he would give me more
37 than six hits. When Mr Pattemore first started caning me,
38 I would have been about seven years old. He would hit me
39 on my behind through my clothes, but I started hiding books
40 in my pants to reduce the pain. But he found this out and
41 Mr Pattemore made me pull my pants down so he could cane me
42 on my bottom. These canings were done in Mr Pattemore's
43 office. Sometimes there were other kids there if there was
44 more than one kid that got in trouble. The canings
45 continued until I left Retta Dixon.

46
47 Often Mr Pattemore would keep hitting me with the cane

1 until I admitted to what he told me I was in trouble for,
2 even if I didn't actually do it. For example, if
3 Mr Henderson had sexually abused me, or one of the other
4 children, and we then got in trouble from one of the adults
5 for some reason, me and the other kids involved would be
6 sent to Mr Pattemore. Mr Henderson would tell Mr Pattemore
7 that we had been playing with our own 'number ones' -
8 that's how we referred to our penises, but it was actually
9 Mr Henderson that had been playing with our penises. But
10 I couldn't say to Mr Pattemore that, 'It was Mr Henderson
11 who did it,' as Mr Pattemore would call me a liar and cane
12 me until I admitted that us kids had been sexually abusing
13 each other.

14
15 I started getting sexually abused by Henderson about
16 when I was seven years old. Mr Henderson was married to
17 Barbara Henderson. They didn't have any children of their
18 own, but they had a couple of foster kids who changed their
19 names to Henderson. I don't think they were allowed to
20 adopt them.

21
22 All the kids were allowed to play in the area in the
23 middle of the cottages, and sometimes down the back oval.
24 If we went down the back oval, that's where Henderson's
25 sexual abuse was bad. We would play on bikes and we used
26 to go round and round, all us boys, and we would hide
27 behind the chook pen. The chook pen was made of mesh wire
28 and it had a shed. There were apple boxes, apple crates
29 from Tasmania, where the chooks would lay their eggs. We
30 had to get the eggs from the chooks by reaching into the
31 apple boxes. You would put your body in to get the eggs.
32 As I was bending down to get the eggs, Henderson would come
33 up behind me and pull my pants down and rape me. No
34 foreplay, no nothing. He just rammed himself into me.

35
36 Our name for Henderson was 'Joombudge'. This was a
37 traditional language word meaning, 'Fuck'. Excuse me.
38 Sorry, your Honour. I don't know where this name came
39 from, but this is what we called him. Henderson was a big
40 man, big hands, big private parts, as big as a small tomato
41 sauce bottle. I was terrified of him all the time. He
42 used to run the chook pen, and that's where a lot of the
43 sexual abuse secretly went on.

44
45 Sometimes Henderson would take some kids on an outing
46 somewhere in his old Bedford truck. Henderson would make
47 me or one of the other kids sit on his lap in the cab while

1 everyone else was in the back. We called it 'the lap sit'.
2 Some of the boys would say, 'It's your turn, not mine, you
3 have to go to do the lap sit.' Some of the young ones who
4 had not been sexually abused by Henderson didn't know what
5 it was about, so they would volunteer. But I knew what was
6 going to happen. I would try to pull them down from
7 Henderson's lap and create some confusion to protect them.
8 There were some kids who were more tolerant of the sexual
9 abuse. I don't know if they were preyed on more, but some
10 of them would stay back and take the punishment for others.

11
12 The lap sit involved sitting on Henderson's lap while
13 he drove. He would fondle me and have his hands all over
14 my privates. One time I remember being in the back of the
15 truck against the glass and I could see Henderson had his
16 paws all over this poor child. I don't know who it was.
17 He would sexually abuse the boys and the girls.

18
19 Sometimes me and some of the kids would refuse to get
20 in the truck and we would walk back to Retta Dixon.
21 Henderson would then claim we ran away and we would get
22 caned by Mr Pattemore for running away. If I tried to tell
23 Mr Pattemore that Henderson was trying to tell us to sit on
24 his lap, Mr Pattemore would tell me, 'Kevin, stop talking
25 like that' and then cane me. I would keep getting caned
26 until I said, 'No, Mr Pattemore, it wasn't Mr Henderson, it
27 was us.' That was the only way to stop the canings.
28 I would also lose privileges, like going to the pool or
29 feeding the pigs at the Clarks, who were neighbours to
30 Retta Dixon. From what I saw and heard from other kids,
31 I believe Henderson sexually abused many of the children at
32 Retta Dixon.

33
34 There was also a group of kids at Retta Dixon who were
35 like prefects. They were some of the older kids. In my
36 cottage, the prefects were [AJQ] and [AJR]. There was also
37 [AJD] and there were other boys that used to hang around
38 with him. [AJD] was about one to three years older than
39 me, whilst the other boys and [AJR] and [AJQ] would have
40 been about five years older. The other boys that hung
41 around [AJD] groomed me by playing sexual games and
42 touching. They didn't actually rape me. Once I had been
43 groomed, I became the property of [AJD]. He was the main
44 abuser.

45
46 When I was about seven years old, [AJR] and [AJQ]
47 would start off by throwing water on the floor of the

1 bathroom so they could see my reflection when I was in
2 there, or they would say to Auntie Marge, 'Kevin's not
3 washing himself properly', so Auntie Marge would tell them
4 to come in and help wash me properly. I feel that she was
5 basically giving them the right to come and sexually abuse
6 me. The prefects would look at me when I was naked, or
7 fondle my private parts, or try to have sex with me. I was
8 too small and couldn't speak out. This continued until
9 I left Retta Dixon.

10
11 After this, I learnt which kids to hang around with
12 and who to avoid to try and stop being sexually abused by
13 them. If you couldn't hide, you were legitimate prey for
14 these older kids' attention.

15
16 I remember [AJQ] playing with my doodle to the point
17 where there was semen. I didn't know at the time what it
18 was. I thought it was wee or something. [AJQ] and [AJR]
19 would touch me on the penis and make me touch them on their
20 private parts. This occurred about once or twice a week up
21 until the age of about nine or 10 years old. If I refused,
22 they would ensure that I would get in trouble for things
23 and lose privileges. They would tease me and make my life
24 unbearable. If you let them abuse you, life was a little
25 easier. They never touched me on my number 2, my bottom,
26 but [AJD] raped me. I think he raped me about three times
27 all together. The rapes occurred either near the banana
28 patch or down at the chook pen. I think once I was also
29 raped at Lee Point. I was about nine or 10 years old at
30 the time.

31
32 I tried to tell Mr Pattemore a number of times that
33 Henderson was sexually abusing me, but he would tell me,
34 'Stop lying' and then he would give me the cane. If I told
35 any of the other house parents about the sexual abuse, they
36 would send me straight to the office of Mr Pattemore.
37 I think they did that so they didn't have to take
38 responsibility for what was happening. In my cottage,
39 number 3, the house parents weren't allowed to physically
40 chastise us in any shape or form. It was more loving in
41 cottage 3.

42
43 Once I was taken to the old Darwin Hospital with a
44 bleeding anus from being abused by Henderson. I was about
45 nine years old. I was not allowed to speak to the hospital
46 staff, as Henderson was standing next to me. It was only
47 Henderson and me at the hospital. He told the nurses, 'Oh,

1 them boys, they've been playing with each other. That's
2 why they've got these problems.' I know other kids were
3 taken to the hospital because of bleeding anuses, too. We
4 would know someone had gone to hospital and when they got
5 back we would ask, 'Why were you at the hospital?' Who
6 ever it was would tell us what had happened. I was scared
7 to tell the nurses that Henderson had raped me.

8
9 Sometimes we had to wear diapers, a cloth nappy, to
10 school so the blood didn't come out on the school uniform.
11 Some of the other kids at the school knew and we used to
12 protect each other if the other kids teased us. I don't
13 know if the teachers knew, but we weren't going to tell
14 them. I didn't know what they would do about it. I didn't
15 want them to tell Mr Pattemore, because we'd just get caned
16 by him for lying.

17
18 I am not sure if the other adults at Retta Dixon knew
19 about the nappies and the sexual abuse. If they did,
20 I think that Henderson would have just told them that it
21 was the kids sexually abusing each other. We couldn't say
22 that it was 'Joombudge', because we'd get caned for lying
23 and then miss out on our privileges.

24
25 I have never gone to the police about Henderson
26 sexually abusing me. I can't tell the police because they
27 are the authority, and the authority are the people that
28 abuse you. It was the government that put me in
29 Retta Dixon, and the government didn't protect me. I can't
30 rely on the government or trust them.

31
32 In 1997 or 1998 I was sent to Lotus Glen prison for
33 domestic violence, then unlawful use of a motor vehicle.
34 Whilst in prison, I told some of the prison guards about
35 the sexual abuse, but they never believed me. I don't
36 remember who they were. I have also told some of the other
37 inmates, because they would ask me why was I always crying.
38 One of the prison officers, I think his name was Geoffrey
39 Munns, he believed me. He helped me deal with it, taught
40 me some ways to cope when I was stressed.

41
42 We used to take the food scraps from Retta Dixon to
43 the Clarks' place. They lived across Totem Road. I would
44 walk with the wheelbarrow to each cottage and pick up the
45 food scraps and then take them around to the Clarks' pigs
46 down the back of their property. One day when I was about
47 nine or 10 years old, after taking the scraps, I met up

1 with my cousins. They weren't at Retta Dixon. We robbed
2 the Clarks' place. We took money, cars, guns, and other
3 stuff from their house. We were taking all the stuff by
4 boat to the Tiwi Islands, because we were going to stay
5 there. About four or five days after the robbery the
6 police caught up with us and we ended up having a
7 firefight. I was on attempted murder and manslaughter
8 charges.

9
10 I had to go to court and I was given a nine-month
11 sentence at Essington House, a juvenile detention centre.
12 I got in trouble sometimes at Essington House. I would
13 climb up on the roof until the police came. I would throw
14 things at them, or smack one of them in the mouth. I ended
15 up back in front of the magistrate. I was in and out of
16 Essington House for things like stealing cars, break and
17 enter, assault. The first time, I got a good behaviour
18 bond and returned to Retta Dixon.

19
20 My mum died when I was 11 years old. I was living at
21 Retta Dixon at the time. Jan deCarchi, my probation
22 officer, came and took me to the hospital and I went and
23 jumped on a white lady by mistake. They told me not to do
24 this. Then I jumped on the black lady and I tried to wake
25 her up, but she had died. My brother and my sister were
26 there, too, standing by the wall. Someone said, 'She's not
27 going to get up, Kevin.' So I ran away and slept in the
28 graveyard for two or three weeks. I still sometimes go and
29 sleep in the graveyard. I find tranquility there.

30
31 Around this time I ran away from Retta Dixon. I got
32 involved with some other boys and was involved in some
33 criminal behaviour. As a result, I was sent back to
34 Essington House. I think I was about 11 years old.
35 I never went back to live at Retta Dixon again.

36
37 When I was about 13 years old I got out of Essington
38 House and I went to live with James Davey, my mother's
39 brother, and his wife Nanette Cummings for a while, but
40 less than six months later I was back at Essington House.
41 I don't remember what I did to go back there.

42
43 Then Cyclone Tracy hit. It badly damaged the place.
44 The director of welfare evacuated us and I met up with my
45 sister Veronica and her husband, Ian Johns. They were
46 leaving Darwin because of Cyclone Tracy, too, and heading
47 to Adelaide. The welfare officer, Mr Taylor, said I could

1 go with them and he just told them once we got to South
2 Australia to get in contact with the Northern Territory
3 welfare and let them know where I was and who I was with.
4 I was 14 years old.

5
6 We drove to Alice Springs and I was put on an
7 evacuation flight to Adelaide. When I got to Adelaide, my
8 sister, her husband and I stayed at Traveller's Aid, an
9 emergency accommodation centre. I stayed there for three
10 to six months and was then fostered out to a family, Dennis
11 and June Luthie. The Luthies were lovely people. I lived
12 with them for about six months to one year. One day I had
13 an accident on my way to school at Goodwood Boys school and
14 ended up in hospital. I don't remember what happened.
15 After I got out of hospital I had an argument with my
16 sister and the Luthies and ended up being taken by the
17 police to Minda Boys Home in Adelaide.

18
19 At Minda I started carving sculptures. I won a prize.
20 I was at Minda for a short time, maybe three months.

21
22 I was then put into Kali Boys Home. I was in Kali for
23 a while and whilst I suffered one incident of physical
24 abuse at Kali, I enjoyed being there. It was lovely.
25 I went to school at Goodwood Boys school for a while, but
26 I had the same issues as previously, in that the headmaster
27 hit me, so I hit him back. I got expelled again. After
28 this, I was allowed to get a job and I started working at
29 the Fancy Food Manufacturer in Adelaide. I would have been
30 about 15 years old.

31
32 One day at Kali I was having a shower when the police
33 came, handcuffed me, and sent me back to Darwin, because
34 I was a known runaway. I went to Nanette Davey's home, but
35 Jan deCarchi told me to go to my sister Veronica's new
36 place in Katherine. This was around Easter in about 1976,
37 I ran away from welfare. I would have been about 16 years
38 old by then and I never saw welfare again until I was
39 18 years old.

40
41 I travelled around to various places doing different
42 jobs. I ran my own fencing business at Victoria River
43 Downs for a while. I loved the life and I was away from
44 mainstream society and welfare.

45
46 I couldn't live in a normal society. I was
47 institutionalised and I felt happier in the institutions.

1 I came to enjoy and need the routine and the discipline.
2 I feel like I was not given the skills at Retta Dixon to be
3 able to live in society.
4

5 For most of my life, after being in State care, I have
6 had habitual substance abuse problems, including heroin and
7 alcohol. I used to work a lot, because I didn't want to
8 think about nothing, and I used to take hard drugs.
9 I stopped using heroin when I was 19 years old. I was
10 taken out to Arnhem Land as a worker helping to build the
11 first non-traditional houses. I had my last shot of heroin
12 in front of Peter Thompson. He was helping a lot of the
13 troubled alcoholics from Arnhem Land. I did this so he
14 could have an understanding of me, and he helped me.
15

16 I worked for about five to seven years for the
17 Aboriginal Legal Service in Fitzroy Crossing in Western
18 Australia. I represented people in the Magistrates Courts.
19 I wasn't a lawyer, but I had authority to act like a
20 lawyer. In Western Australia you can get permission to
21 appear in Magistrates Court proceedings. I completed a
22 seven-week course to be able to do that. I loved the job,
23 standing toe-to-toe with police officers, the authority.
24 In the end, I got sacked because I had three strikes and
25 I was out. I remember one of the issues was a car accident
26 I was involved in, and another was when some boys took my
27 keys to the work car and stole it and flipped the car which
28 I was responsible for. I can't remember the third thing.
29

30 I don't like authority, I disagree with authority.
31 I abused alcohol until the story of what happened at
32 Retta Dixon started to become public and the Bringing Them
33 Home report was published. Now I'm a reformed alcoholic,
34 but I have been on marijuana for most of my life, and I'm
35 hooked on cigarettes. I've tried to refrain from going to
36 the authorities or services, because they don't seem to be
37 able to give me the right help. I live in Cairns,
38 Queensland, and I have lived there for 17 years now. I
39 don't ever want to live in Darwin again.
40

41 I have never received counselling, but I have told my
42 story before to Relationships Australia. I have told
43 people at Wuchopperen Health Services in Cairns where
44 I live, but the original counsellor there just wanted to
45 put me to the light of God, get me to go to church. I told
46 him God never helped me. I now talk to another counsellor
47 there, and to one at Lotus Place. I also have contact with

1 1800 RESPECT and with other mental health services in
2 Cairns.

3
4 I have experienced ongoing problems with depression
5 for over 25 years. I am on a disability pension because of
6 my psychological problem, which was medically diagnosed
7 approximately seven years ago. I have been diagnosed as
8 being manic depressive. I don't take any medication, but
9 I do yoga. I also have osteoporosis in my back, and have
10 problems going to the toilet.

11
12 I have said to all my counselling places that I have a
13 sexual problem - I think everything is about sex, but
14 I have never got help. I also like to go walkabout, to get
15 away and walk in the bush. That helps me.

16
17 I have about 15 children to different mothers. I have
18 not really been a father to them. I am not proud of that.
19 I'm disgusted by it. I have to live with the fact that I
20 was brought into this world to be somebody's sexual play
21 thing and, as a result, I have gone out into the world and
22 been involved in sex, drugs and violence.

23
24 Sometimes I feel great and I can talk. People say to
25 me, 'Why are you so contented?' And I say, 'Because beyond
26 this I have nothing to lose.' But I cannot stop the tears.

27
28 THE CHAIR: Kevin, I think we might stop there and have
29 lunch.

30
31 THE WITNESS: Thank you, your Honour.

32
33 THE CHAIR: Ms David, can I see you and Ms McLeod outside?

34
35 **LUNCHEON ADJOURNMENT**

36
37 THE CHAIR: Q. Mr Stagg, are you ready to keep going?

38 A. Yes, your Honour.

39
40 Q. Thank you.

41 A. Paragraph 51 - or are we here, 55?

42
43 "The redressing. I was aware of the criminal case
44 against Henderson in 2002, started by poor old [AJB]. He's
45 dead now. I was asked by David Dalrymple, a lawyer, to be
46 part of it, but I couldn't. I was too scared to face my
47 peers. Since then, I have been trying to get to the

1 Federal Court. I have wanted to get compensation and to
2 have a case against Henderson. I just wanted it all out in
3 the open for the benefit of the children of tomorrow.
4 I originally spoke to Dr Norm Tuppin. He used to be the
5 chief medical officer for Western Australia. He helped
6 a lot of Vietnam vets with their compensation claims.

7
8 Dr Tuppin thought I could get \$14 million, but
9 I didn't end up doing it. I wanted to take the government
10 and missionaries for 144 million or 1 trillion, because
11 then everyone would look and listen. I wouldn't want
12 a cent of it to make me happy. I'd give it all to the Save
13 the Children Foundation. It ain't going to bring me
14 happiness. No amount of money can compensate for the harm
15 done to me while I was in State care.

16
17 I have purposely lived outside Darwin and the Northern
18 Territory for many years. My past haunts me. I have not
19 had the support I need to seek redress for the harm done to
20 me.

21
22 It is difficult to recall events without reliving the
23 trauma. Every time I am asked to recall events I find
24 myself mentally and emotionally going through what I went
25 through as a child, reliving the physical, sexual and
26 emotional abuse I received at the hands of those who were
27 meant to look after me.

28
29 I have not instigated legal proceedings in the past,
30 because I did not have the psychological stamina and the
31 help that I need to get me through the personal
32 difficulties I have experienced when I think about my past.
33 Every time I am asked to recall events, I remember what
34 I went through as a child, and relive the abuse all over
35 again. It mucks me up inside and I find my life spiraling
36 out of control. It's like the pain from this cycle of
37 abuse and neglect increases and continues.

38
39 No amount or measures of redress will compensate for
40 the life that was taken away from me. However, I would
41 like for the Federal and State governments and those
42 responsible in the AIM, and all of the organisations
43 involved in the care of children to learn from what happens
44 when they neglect their responsibility towards children.
45 I want them to acknowledge the harm caused to me and
46 others. I want them to accept responsibility and provide
47 speedy resolution with a compensation scheme that minimises

1 the added trauma associated with expensive and prolonged
2 litigation.

3
4 Welfare people or someone independent needs to go and
5 check out the homes where kids are living. They need to
6 speak to the kids away from the adults looking after them.
7 Then you can see the problems, see people like Henderson
8 and Pounder and the things they do to the kids. I want
9 Mr Henderson to be made to feel responsible for stealing my
10 innocence, for all the lost adults he created. I want
11 others like him to know that their crimes against children
12 will haunt them for the rest of their lives. I want them
13 to know that they will be held responsible for their crimes
14 against children no matter how long ago they were
15 committed.

16
17 If I had the chance to talk to a welfare officer in
18 private I think I would have spoken up. I would have been
19 able to say, 'No, it wasn't us boys abusing each other; it
20 was Joombudge.' There would have been repercussions for me
21 afterwards, though, if I had done so. The welfare officers
22 would need to protect the kids from that."

23
24 MS DAVID: Q. Mr Stagg, could I just ask you to look at
25 paragraph 55 on page 14 of your statement.

26 A. Yes.

27
28 Q. You say there that you were aware of the criminal case
29 against Mr Henderson in 2002?

30 A. Yes, I was asked by Mr Dalrymple to be involved.

31
32 Q. Who was Mr Dalrymple?

33 A. He worked for Katherine Regional Aboriginal Legal
34 Service in Katherine, Northern Territory.

35
36 Q. And how did he want you to be involved?

37 A. He wanted me to be one of the 14 or 16 victims that
38 went up, in between the [AJB] v Henderson case which was
39 done at the NT Supreme Court.

40
41 Q. Were you ever spoken to by the police in respect of
42 Mr Henderson?

43 A. No, never.

44
45 Q. Did you ever contact the police in respect of
46 Mr Henderson?

47 A. I contacted him - I came up once for Bikki - Bikki's

1 funeral. He's Carmen's deceased brother.
2
3 Q. Did you ever make any contact with the police?
4 A. Yes, it was brought to our attention that Joombudge
5 was still hanging around Darwin, between schools and shops,
6 and I rang up the police from one of the northern suburbs
7 shops here and told the police that he was sitting in his
8 car with lollies and his doors was open, between the school
9 and the shops, and the police said - there was some change
10 in the legislation, to stop him from doing that.
11
12 Q. In respect of the sexual conduct that you have
13 described, the things that happened to you, did you ever
14 contact the police about those matters?
15 A. No, I never, no. Never.
16
17 Q. And did the police ever contact you about anything
18 that may have happened to you by Mr Henderson?
19 A. No, never.
20
21 Q. And was there any particular reason why you didn't
22 contact the police?
23 A. I thought we had to live with it.
24
25 MS DAVID: Thank you. I have nothing further,
26 your Honour.
27
28 THE CHAIR: Does anyone else have any questions?
29
30 MR GEORGIU: No, your Honour.
31
32 MS McLEOD: No questions, your Honour.
33
34 MR GRANT: No questions.
35
36 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Stagg.
37
38 THE WITNESS: Thank you, your Honour.
39
40 THE CHAIR: Thank you for coming and telling us your
41 story.
42
43 THE WITNESS: Thank you, Ms David.
44
45 THE CHAIR: You are now excused.
46
47 **<THE WITNESS WITHDREW**

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

MS DAVID: The next witness I call is Ms [AJW]. She will be giving evidence from a remote room, with the camera off her. So we will hear her voice only.

<[AJW], sworn: [2.20pm]

<EXAMINATION BY MS DAVID:

MS DAVID: Q. [AJW], do you have a copy of a statement that you provided to the Royal Commission?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. And is that statement dated 8 September 2014?

A. Yes, it is.

Q. Have you had an opportunity to read through that statement?

A. This morning, yes, I have.

Q. Is it an accurate statement of your recollections of what happened at Retta Dixon?

A. Yes, it is.

MS DAVID: I tender that statement, your Honour.

THE CHAIR: The statement will be exhibit 17-11.

EXHIBIT #17-11 STATEMENT OF [AJW] DATED 8/09/2014

MS DAVID: Q. [AJW], I understand that you would like to read that statement to the Royal Commission.

A. Yes, I would.

Q. Can I ask you to do that now. Take your time, and if you need a break, just let us know.

A. Thank you.

"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, to the best of my recollection, were used at the

1 time.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

My name is [AJW]. I was born in 1968 and I am now 46 years old. I have an older brother named [REDACTED] who is also known as [AJS]. [AJS] and I have the same parents. My mother was an Aboriginal Larrakia Darwin woman and my father was of Irish and Spanish descent.

My mother later then met a man whom she had four children to. He made my mother give two of their daughters up for adoption but she refused to give up the second born and the last child.

My mother, [AJS], and I were living with my grandmother in Water Street, Darwin. We were well fed, clothed, loved and not neglected. My grandmother had been stolen from her people, and my mother had lived in Retta Dixon home before me. This makes me a third-generation institutionalised child.

I was placed in the Retta Dixon when I was two years old with my brother. He told me that he remembers the superintendent of Retta Dixon, Ms Shankleton, picking us up from Water Street and telling us we were going for a drive.

Mum had been in an abusive relationship and ran away to Mt Isa to escape. When she returned to Darwin, she tried to get us out of Retta Dixon, but she was told by Ms Shankleton to wait until she had settled into a home and had a way of supporting us.

When [AJS] and I arrived at Retta Dixon, we were placed in cottage 1. Initially, my house parent was Judy Fergusson, but I don't remember her. I only remember a beautiful woman named Ethel McKay, Auntie Ethel, being my house parent in cottage 1. There was [AJS] and I, the four Marego kids - Isobel, Anita, Normie and Willie. There were also Joe and Beryl Smith and the two Taylor kids, Louise and Daryl.

Next to our cottage was cottage 2, and the house parents were Don and Barbara Henderson. Some of the other house parents that I remember were the Walls, the Goughs, Gwen Platt and the Pattemores, who lived in the front of the home in an upstairs house.

When Cyclone Tracy occurred in 1974, we were evacuated

1 to Blackheath, in Sydney. I would have been about six
2 years old. I stayed with Ms Shankleton because I had
3 rheumatic fever as a child, so I had to spend some time in
4 St Vincent's Hospital. Then I went to a boarding house in
5 Blackheath with the rest of the Retta Dixon kids.
6 I remember a photographer coming around and taking pictures
7 of us kids on the front porch.

8
9 Once Darwin was safe to return to, we were taken to
10 a place at Batchelor, 120 kilometres away from Darwin,
11 where we stayed until Retta Dixon was rebuilt. I don't
12 remember how long we were at Batchelor. We stayed in a
13 building that had all these bedrooms and a communal
14 bathroom. The house parents lived in the first room,
15 followed by the girls in the next room, and then the boys.

16
17 Before returning to Retta Dixon, we resided in Clarke
18 Crescent, Rapid Creek. I have a lot of fond memories
19 growing up there. Auntie Ethel would allow us to go to the
20 beach, play with other children in the street and walk to
21 school. This is not something that you could do in the
22 home. It felt good, normal and spacious.

23
24 We eventually had to move back to Retta Dixon once the
25 buildings were repaired. [AJS] and I were moved to
26 cottage 6 with Auntie Ethel and a few more families,
27 including the Brown children - Ross, Sandra and Terry; the
28 Clancy sisters - Cathy, Shirleen and Andrea; and Glen
29 Woods. Isobel Marego and Joe and Beryl Smith were at the
30 age where they had to leave Retta Dixon.

31
32 One year, Auntie Ethel paid for me to fly to Bendigo
33 so I could spend Christmas with her family. I was also the
34 flower girl at her wedding to David Saxby. I felt very
35 privileged. I still keep in touch with Ethel. She is now
36 Ethel Saxby. When they moved away, the children from
37 cottage 6 were introduced to a new house parent by the name
38 of Carol Ramsbottom.

39
40 The superintendent of Retta Dixon was Mr Pattemore.
41 He was like the principal. He was the one that gave
42 physical punishment if you did something wrong. His home,
43 where he had an office, was where you would go to get your
44 belttings, although I remember Mr Wall used to do his own
45 disciplining. We feared Mr Wall because he was very cruel
46 as the children in his care would confide in us, or we
47 would visually see what he did to them. Mr Pattemore used

1 a belt across the back of the legs or the bum through our
2 clothing when we had to be disciplined. After a while, he
3 realised hitting me with a belt didn't hurt me any more, so
4 he started caning me instead, either on the hand or the
5 backside, to my legs (he would hit us over the legs and
6 backside because we would jump around when we were caned.)
7 When he used the cane, he would cane me about five times,
8 either on the hands or the back. Usually, he would
9 remember where he caned me last time, so he would do it in
10 a different spot each time so there wouldn't be obvious
11 marks left behind.

12
13 I remember my father came to visit [AJS] and I at
14 Retta Dixon. My father wanted visitations with [AJS] and
15 I so he could get to know us. That was the first time
16 I realised I had a white man for a father.

17
18 On occasions, [AJS] and I would be allowed to visit
19 mum. She lived a short walk from Retta Dixon and still
20 lived with - I will say my stepfather. Mum would only
21 visit us if he was either locked up in gaol or away
22 poaching. I remember on one occasion when Auntie Ethel
23 helped me make a birthday cake for mum. I was so proud of
24 it and I walked it over to mum's place.

25
26 I remember Auntie Ethel bought me a pair of King Gee
27 shorts when they first came out. I was as proud as Punch
28 to wear them. They were my first pair of shorts.

29
30 When I went out to play with the other children,
31 Mr Pattemore saw me playing in them, outside. He called me
32 over and he told me to go and take them off and to change
33 into either a skirt or a dress. I went crying inside to
34 the house to Auntie Ethel and told her what Mr Pattemore
35 had said. Ethel stopped what she was doing and marched
36 right next door and gave him what for. From then on, I was
37 allowed to wear my King Gee shorts.

38
39 Auntie Ethel was an admirable house parent. She was
40 a young woman in her late 20s when she first came to us and
41 she would regularly stand up for us kids with the other
42 missionaries if she thought we were being unfairly punished
43 or spoken to.

44
45 I felt we were incarcerated at Retta Dixon more than
46 institutionalised. I compared it to the freedom we had
47 when we were living in Clarke Crescent after the cyclone.

1 All we knew was church and school and on weekends we would
2 pretend play and make up our own sport events with the
3 other children. We weren't even allowed to stay over at
4 a friends' places. We didn't have much knowledge of the
5 outside world and we would learn about the world from our
6 classmates.

7
8 But Auntie Ethel made sure we had some good childhood
9 experiences and development. It was only because of Ethel
10 that I was allowed to play netball. Ethel would also take
11 us to Oenpelli, where we would mix with Aboriginal people.
12 They taught us spiritual things and we learnt about
13 Aboriginal culture. We didn't even know we were Aboriginal
14 kids.

15
16 Auntie Ethel would take us to Buffalo Creek and
17 Coomalie Creek to get away from Retta Dixon. She would
18 also take us to Tortilla Flats where there was a banana
19 plantation. We basically lived off the land, swam and dug
20 for mussels, got camp fires going and stirred up bulls.

21
22 Back at Retta Dixon, we used to have to scrub the
23 floors on our hands and knees, and do lots of housework.
24 It was pretty harsh conditions. You just had to follow the
25 rules and do what you were told, otherwise you got punished
26 by the adults. We also had to do the washing and
27 washing-up, and make our own lunches. We were given pocket
28 money by our house parents, usually consisting of a few
29 coins. We had to go church four times a week, including
30 Sunday school, then the service when the adults would come,
31 and then back again for the evening service, and we would
32 have to give the pocket money back to the church.

33
34 Auntie Ethel told me a story where she would have to
35 squeeze Willie's and my hands to wake us up from church
36 services. As she was given an 'eye-look' as to say, 'Wake
37 those kids up, how dare they fall asleep in service.'

38
39 There was a lot of sexual activity at Retta Dixon,
40 particularly with the older kids. Mostly it was the boys
41 trying to get us to do hand stands and things. One boy
42 showed me his penis. He was about 16 or 17 years old, and
43 he would have it hanging out of his shorts, and he would
44 say, '[AJW], look here.' I would just run away or go and
45 hang out around someone else.

46
47 We were never taught anything about sex or warned of

1 any dangers.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

Sometimes boys would chase you. One or two boys would chase me and I would hide in the chook pen, where they couldn't find me. There was a lot of fear growing up about getting molested by the boys.

As a child, I suffered from rheumatic fever and was in and out of hospitals. I don't recall how old I was. At the hospital, a male nurse touched me inappropriately. I used to hide in the hospital cupboards. The nurses used to look for me and thought I had run away. He was the only male nurse working in the children's ward. Two other Aboriginal girls were in the room with me and told me he had touched them also. He would come in and take your observations and things like that. He would make an excuse like, 'Oh, I've got to feel your belly', and then his hand would slide down to my undies, and he would insert his fingers into my vagina.

I now have anxieties about hospitals, which actually causes my blood pressure to rise when I'm in hospital. But I have never told the doctors or nurses about the sexual abuse that I suffered in hospital as a child due to the shame. I have only ever told my sister about what happened in the hospital.

I left Retta Dixon in about 1980, when I was 12 years old. I returned home from my Christmas in Bendigo with Auntie Ethel's parents and found Retta Dixon had been closed. I didn't know it was closing. All the kids were gone. There was only one adult, Carol Ramsbottom, who was still at Retta Dixon. Carol arranged for my Auntie, Barbara Cummings (Auntie Barb), to come and pick me up and take me to my mother. [AJS] had already been given back to mum. I was the last child to leave Retta Dixon.

When I left Retta Dixon, I got no support from the government at all. I went back to live with my mum, but shortly afterwards she abandoned us. She left \$20 and a note saying she had gone tomato picking. By chance, my mother's sister came around to visit and we told her what had happened and, as a result, I lived with my maternal grandmother after that.

I moved in with my father for a while. He had everything. A nice house, carpet, airconditioning and

1 a pool. But I never felt loved there. I would rather grow
2 up in poverty and be with my maternal siblings, as I am
3 accustomed to being their protector, and they are the only
4 family I have known.

5
6 When I was about 26 or 27 years old, I was in hospital
7 to have an operation. I was sitting on my bed waiting to
8 go into theatre and I saw my medical file sitting at the
9 end of my bed. I opened it up and found a court order
10 inside that said that when I turned 18 I must be told that
11 I had been sexually molested as a child.

12
13 I was shocked. I had never been told about the sexual
14 abuse as the court order required. The hospital report
15 said that I had been anally and vaginally penetrated.

16
17 Before seeing the report, I had no memory of the
18 abuse, and yet as soon as I read it, it just all hit me.
19 Some memories came flooding back to me.

20
21 When I got out of hospital, I rang Auntie Ethel and
22 I asked her, 'Why didn't you tell me?' She told me that for
23 legal reasons, it wasn't up to her to tell me. I asked her
24 'How did you find out?' She told me that at night she
25 would conduct bed checks to make sure that all the children
26 in her care were asleep before she went to bed. One night,
27 whilst doing the bed check, she overheard the boys talking
28 to each other about how they were being abused by
29 Mr Henderson. That is how she found out about the sexual
30 abuse.

31
32 Auntie Ethel told me that the following morning she
33 asked Mr Norman Wall, another house parent, to take her to
34 the police in town. Mr Wall had a combi van. She told
35 Mr Wall what the boys had said about Mr Henderson sexually
36 abusing them. They both then went to tell Mr Pattemore
37 about the allegations. Together, the three of them went to
38 report the allegations about Henderson to the police.
39 Auntie Ethel said that that was all she was allowed to tell
40 me. I don't know why she wasn't able to tell me anything
41 else. I think she thought that she would be breaching
42 something the lawyers told her not to talk about. I have
43 spoken to Auntie Ethel about it once more since, but she
44 won't talk to me about it.

45
46 Since I read the court order about the sexual abuse,
47 20 years ago, I have been trying to piece together what

1 happened. It has taken me about a decade, but I think the
2 abuse started when I was six or seven years old whilst we
3 were staying at Batchelor, after Cyclone Tracy destroyed
4 Retta Dixon. I specifically remember two incidents
5 involving Mr Henderson. The first was when he asked me to
6 go on a motorbike ride with him around Batchelor. He asked
7 me to wrap my legs around him. I have blanked out what
8 happened next, but I think he sexually abused me and that's
9 why I have blanked out the memory.

10
11 There was another incident where I had been called
12 into his bedroom. Again, I was about seven years old. He
13 only had a pair of shorts on. At first, he asked me to
14 start tickling his feet. From there it led to massage,
15 then my hands being placed where I didn't want them to be,
16 and then even further. I have blocked that out memory too.

17
18 I have a lot of other memories of Henderson sexually
19 abusing me that I think I have blocked out.

20
21 Mr Henderson would target a child that he could
22 visually see was either playing alone unsupervised, or
23 identify which child was more vulnerable. Somehow,
24 instincts kicked in and an older child, [AJT], would be our
25 protector. He would take us into the bush either to amuse
26 us or hide us and teach us how to make humpies or look for
27 bush potatoes. We would return only back at meal times."
28 It wasn't at Retta Dixon; it was Batchelor.

29
30 "[AJS] told me that Mr Henderson was regularly
31 sexually abusing the boys in the boys' dormitory both at
32 Coomalie Creek and at Batchelor. I never reported the
33 abuse to anyone because we were brought up in a very strict
34 environment, that is, children should be seen and not
35 heard. The kids were completely disempowered, and we just
36 thought we would be punished if we spoke up against the
37 adults.

38
39 After Auntie Ethel reported Henderson to Mr Pattemore,
40 I was taken to the police station. [AJS] and I were taken
41 to the old Royal Darwin Hospital for a medical examination.
42 The medical staff confirmed that both [AJS] and I had been
43 sexually abused.

44
45 After that, me and some of the other kids from
46 Retta Dixon had to attend court in Darwin to give evidence
47 against Mr Henderson. All of the kids were kept together

1 at the back of the courtroom. I remember being very
2 frightened, because Henderson was in the courtroom with us.
3 I was put in the witness box, but, from memory, I was
4 unable to talk because I was so afraid. I was unable to
5 give my evidence because Henderson's lawyers petrified me.
6 The way Henderson's lawyer was questioning us, and his tone
7 of voice, made me feel like I was the criminal, and not
8 Henderson. We were just getting hammered with questions
9 and I felt like there was no-one there to help me, and
10 no-one came to our defence.

11
12 From what I remember, there was just Henderson, his
13 lawyers, the judge, Auntie Ethel and the prosecutor, Harry,
14 in the courtroom. I don't remember there being a jury.

15
16 After the court case, Auntie Ethel told me that
17 Henderson was fined \$300. He did not go to gaol. I think
18 it was a waste of time giving my evidence.

19
20 Henderson never returned to Retta Dixon after the
21 court case. I think he was dismissed from Retta Dixon by
22 Mr Pattemore. I think he went and joined another church,
23 but I never saw him again. If it wasn't for Auntie Ethel,
24 who was a young woman in her early 30s at the time,
25 standing up for us and protecting us, I believe that
26 Henderson would have continued sexually abusing me and the
27 other children of Retta Dixon Home.

28
29 Mr Pattemore never asked me if I was all right after
30 he found out about the allegations against Henderson, and
31 we were not offered any support or counselling.

32
33 After the sexual abuse, I started wetting the bed.
34 I didn't wet the bed beforehand. Mr Pattemore made me
35 carry out my mattress, strip my bed, wash the sheet and
36 hang it on the line. I was just a little kid. When
37 I finished, I had to go to Mr Pattemore to get the belt for
38 wetting the bed. I would get five lashes. It was
39 embarrassing as Mr Pattemore would comment, 'My twin
40 children are the same age as you and they don't wet the
41 bed.'

42
43 I started to have nightmares as a child when the abuse
44 started. It was the nightmares that led to me wetting the
45 bed, because I was too afraid to get up to go to the
46 toilet. The nightmares have continued from time to time
47 into adulthood. I dreamed that I am being attacked but

1 I couldn't see the face of who was attacking me. I went to
2 my doctor to get medication to help me to sleep.

3
4 When I was about 27 years old, I got the nightmares
5 again and just kept rehashing everything that happened to
6 me. It was fully on my mind all the time. I ended up
7 getting some of the pain medication I got from the hospital
8 after my operation and took them with some of my sleeping
9 tablets, and I took a bottle of wine from the fridge.
10 I started to cry, then I started to cut my wrist, because
11 I didn't want to live through the nightmares and I felt
12 I had no control.

13
14 As I was sitting on the floor, my daughter came in to
15 the room and said to me, 'Mummy, what are you doing?'
16 I thought, 'Who's going to look after my daughter if I do
17 this?' So I made the decision to try and be a stronger
18 woman for my children and just somehow manage to not let it
19 kill or haunt me.

20
21 I have been overly protective of my own three
22 children. I would not let my daughter have girly curtains
23 because I didn't want anyone to know that a girl was
24 sleeping in that room. I was paranoid about the people
25 sexually abusing her. I would let her have her friends
26 sleep over, but I would not let her sleep over at other
27 people's houses.

28
29 I have never told my children about Henderson's sexual
30 abuse. I confide in my sister a lot, as well as [AJS] and
31 Auntie Barb. I also talk to another victim of
32 Don Henderson's. It's the only way we could counsel each
33 other, to just talk about it. I confided in my doctor and
34 he did put me on to a counsellor. To me, it was pointless,
35 because it feels like you had to be a victim to have an
36 understanding, and speaking to a counsellor kept bringing
37 back the bad memories that I wanted to suppress - I just
38 pushed her away and told her I was all right.

39
40 I don't talk about the sexual abuse with the rest of
41 the people from Retta Dixon. We don't discuss it. We just
42 see each other as brothers and sisters. A lot of them
43 turned to alcoholism and drug abuse, and some of them died
44 as a result.

45
46 I still run into people from Retta Dixon in the street
47 or at the shops. We always greet each other, give each

1 other hugs and kisses.

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52

53

54

55

56

57

58

I used to drink in my early teens, up to my 30s. I stopped drinking when I was 32 years old. I watched my mother be an alcoholic and my grandmother being an alcoholic. I didn't want that to happen for my children. I just thought it's not about me, it's about my kids.

The abuse also affected my education. I went to Rapid Creek Primary School and Croydon High School in Adelaide. I was a good student, although I think the sexual abuse has caused me to have short-term memory problems, so I couldn't stay focused for long. I can absorb information for a short time and then I would just forget it. It means that I have never been able to study or get any qualifications. I think the memory loss is related to me repressing memories of the sexual abuse, a self-defence mechanism.

I currently work for a non-government organisation called Save the Children. It's an international organisation that provides services to families with at-risk and neglected children. We receive referrals from the Northern Territory Department of Children and Families. I work there as an intensive family support worker.

I believe that there should be an education package for children from creche, all the way up to school, focusing on providing children with their rights and educating them about sexual abuse. There should also be an advertising campaign on television and in newspapers and magazines. The education should also include parents, because you've got ignorant parents, too. The education should include teaching young kids about secrets and not letting people touch your private parts, and it should be matched to the child's age.

Where children have suffered abuse, their personal records should be confidential and only available to people who need to know. When I was abused in the hospital by the male nurse, I believe he had access to my records and would be able to see I had suffered sexual abuse. This may have encouraged him to abuse me, knowing I had suffered before.

There should be the opportunity for self-help groups where victims of the one abuser can come together and support each other to help each other heal and deal with the issues.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

I would also like to emphasise a proactive outcome compensation for the physical, mental and psychological abuse for my brothers and sisters of Retta Dixon that do not have the capacity to speak here today. They need to be looked after until the day they die."

I would like a home for my children that I've not been able to provide myself due to the impact of my childhood, as I have supported my siblings and my family and each other, so therefore I am unable to save.

That's it.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Yes, Ms David?

MS DAVID: Q. [AJW], can I just ask you about one topic you have told us about. You told the hearing that you went to court when you were a young child.

A. Yes.

Q. And that you went with some of the other children from Retta Dixon Home?

A. Yes.

Q. And you went to a court in Darwin to give evidence against Mr Henderson?

A. Yes.

Q. And that, at the end of the day, you couldn't tell the court about what had happened to you?

A. No, because his prosecutor terrorised, basically, us - that he made us - disempowered us from speaking out.

Q. If you can --

A. We couldn't talk.

Q. Are you talking about Mr Henderson's lawyer?

A. Yes.

Q. If you can, now looking back at how you felt when you were a child at court, what would have helped you to give evidence at that time?

A. Not seeing him there, because the fear that he had caused previously, the trauma. I think his lawyer - seeing I was a child, the lawyer should have been more compassionate, instead of us being made to feel like we

1 were the criminals, we were the liars, we were causing
2 trouble.
3
4 Q. Did anyone escort you into court or sit with you in
5 court?
6 A. Auntie Ethel was inside the court with us kids, and
7 Auntie Barbara was outside waiting for us. It was a closed
8 court, apparently.
9
10 Q. Looking back now, can you think of anything else that
11 may have assisted you in giving that evidence or telling
12 the court, as a child, what had happened to you?
13 A. Well, we felt comfortable with the police because of
14 the tone they would have used. It would have been nice to
15 see some kind of family figure or parent support. Yes.
16 Sorry.
17
18 Q. I don't want to cut you off. Is there anything else
19 that you wanted to add?
20 A. No.
21
22 Q. After the court case, did you go back to Retta Dixon
23 Home?
24 A. Correct.
25
26 Q. And Mr Henderson was no longer working at the home; is
27 that correct?
28 A. No.
29
30 Q. When you went back to Retta Dixon Home, did anyone
31 talk to you about what had happened with Mr Henderson or at
32 the courthouse?
33 A. No.
34
35 Q. Did you receive any counselling at that time?
36 A. None.
37
38 Q. And looking back now, would that have assisted you?
39 A. Definitely. Walking in here, I feel like
40 a seven-year-old child instead of an adult. I feel like
41 I've gone through it all over again.
42
43 Q. If you can cast your mind back to when you returned to
44 Retta Dixon, after the court case, can you say what would
45 have helped you in terms of counselling or any other
46 supports, afterwards?
47 A. I think we should have been monitored. We should have

1 been counselled. I think we should have lived in a
2 different environment than one we didn't no longer feel
3 safe to live in.

4
5 Q. In the years that followed, did you have any other
6 contact with the police in respect of Mr Henderson?

7 A. None.

8
9 Q. Did anyone contact you from the police about
10 allegations relating to Mr Henderson again?

11 A. No.

12
13 MS DAVID: Thank you. I have nothing further.

14
15 THE CHAIR: Does anyone else have any questions?

16
17 MR GEORGIU: No, your Honour.

18
19 MR LAWRENCE: No, your Honour.

20
21 MR GRANT: No.

22
23 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms [AJW]. No-one else wishes to
24 ask you any questions. Thank you for coming and telling us
25 your story.

26
27 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

28
29 THE CHAIR: You are now formally excused.

30
31 <THE WITNESS WITHDREW

32
33 MS DAVID: If your Honour pleases, can I now tender the
34 statement of [AKR]. She was a house parent at Retta Dixon
35 home, and be cause of a family bereavement she can't attend
36 the Royal Commission hearing, so I propose to simply tender
37 her statement.

38
39 THE CHAIR: Does anyone wish to comment on that at all?
40 That will become exhibit --

41
42 MR LAWRENCE: I am wondering if it might be appropriate,
43 bearing in mind the nature of the proceeding, that someone
44 actually reads that statement out for the public, because
45 I know that, although perhaps not my direct clients, but
46 there are a lot of members of the community direct and
47 related.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

THE CHAIR: We could do that. Ms David, do you want to read it?

MS DAVID: I can do that.

THE CHAIR: Before you do that, we will make it exhibit 17-12.

EXHIBIT #17-12 STATEMENT OF [AKR] DATED 12/09/2014

MS DAVID:

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.

My full name is [AKR] and I was born in 1947. I am 67 years old. Prior to being married, I went by a different name.

In 1972, when I was 25 years old, I spoke with Lorraine Williams, a friend of mine, who grew up in my home town in Victoria. She had been working as a missionary at the Retta Dixon Home in Darwin. Lorraine wrote to me to say she was leaving Retta Dixon and asked if I would be interested in taking her position.

Retta Dixon was a home for neglected kids who had either been taken by the government for placement in the home or had voluntarily been placed in the home by their parents. Most of the kids at Retta Dixon were part-Aboriginal. Retta Dixon was managed by the Aborigines Inland Mission (AIM), a Christian organisation.

1
2 *I decided to apply for a position at*
3 *Retta Dixon. I had no formal training in*
4 *childcare or working with Aboriginal*
5 *communities, but I had some experience*
6 *working with children at church camps.*

7
8 *The application process required completing*
9 *an application form which was submitted to*
10 *AIM. I don't recall if I was required to*
11 *provide details in relation to a criminal*
12 *history check. I do recall that during the*
13 *application process there was*
14 *correspondence back and forth.*

15
16 *Following the application, I believe*
17 *I participated in a telephone interview*
18 *process. I don't remember who I spoke with*
19 *during that interview. At the end of the*
20 *application process, I was accepted as*
21 *a missionary for Retta Dixon.*

22
23 *After Christmas in 1972 I departed my home*
24 *in Victoria and travelled to Darwin to take*
25 *up the position at Retta Dixon. At that*
26 *time I had received no formal training and*
27 *had been provided with no documentation*
28 *regarding my role, the expectations of my*
29 *position, duties, reporting requirements or*
30 *any other form of guidance or procedures.*

31
32 *I was responsible for paying my own way to*
33 *Darwin. As a missionary, I was entitled to*
34 *only a very small remuneration, but was*
35 *provided free accommodation and meals.*

36
37 *Life at Retta Dixon.*

38
39 *The superintendent in charge of Retta Dixon*
40 *was Mr Mervyn Pattemore, who lived at*
41 *Retta Dixon with his wife and family.*
42 *I respected the Pattemores and found them*
43 *to be very caring people. They occupied*
44 *a two-storey house at the front of the*
45 *Retta Dixon site. Another eight cottages*
46 *were then located in a horseshoe pattern*
47 *behind the superintendent's house. These*

1 cottages were numbered one through to
2 eight.

3
4 In the middle of the horse shoe of
5 cottages, we had the store and a hall. At
6 the back of the site was an oval, tennis
7 court and chook pen.

8
9 Each of the cottages was like
10 a self-contained house. There were
11 bedrooms, kitchen, lounge and dining area.
12 There was also a laundry and bathroom
13 facilities for each cottage.

14
15 My position at Retta Dixon was that of
16 house parent. I was placed at one of the
17 cottages and was in charge of that cottage
18 and the children that were living in that
19 cottage. When I arrived at Retta Dixon
20 I was the house parent for cottage 1.
21 I was replacing Lorraine Williams, who was
22 still working at Retta Dixon. She remained
23 for about two weeks so I could learn how
24 the cottage, and Retta Dixon, operated.

25
26 When I started, some of the other house
27 parents at Retta Dixon included Don and
28 Barbara Henderson, Marge Spohn, Laelie
29 Shankleton, David and Beryl Barnes, Gwen
30 Platt and Judy Fergusson.

31
32 The cottages operated independently of each
33 other. Each cottage was responsible for
34 cooking its own meals, doing its own
35 washing, cleaning, and other domestic
36 chores. As the house parent I was
37 responsible for the behaviour, supervision
38 and discipline of the children that resided
39 in my cottage. My children were not left
40 in the care of other house parents, and
41 I did not take responsibility for any
42 children in other cottages unless another
43 house parent was on holidays, when the
44 children from that cottage were shared
45 among the remaining house parents.

46
47 Sometimes, house parents would get a day

1 off. On those days, the children in their
2 cottage would also be shared amongst the
3 other cottages, so I would often be
4 responsible for supervising kids from other
5 cottages. Sometimes I didn't take days off
6 whilst at Retta Dixon, as the pre-school
7 aged kids in my cottage never wanted to
8 stay at the other cottages, so I stayed
9 back to look after them.

10
11 In my cottage there was anywhere from eight
12 to 12 children in my care at the one time.
13 I was the only house parent for cottage 1.
14 The children would range from three or four
15 years old to 16 or 17 years old.
16 Occasionally, a volunteer worker would come
17 to Retta Dixon for varying lengths of time,
18 and I would sometimes have one of the
19 volunteers to help in my cottage. Once
20 children finished high school, they no
21 longer came under the care of Retta Dixon.
22 Usually, once children turned 16 or 17
23 years old, they left the home. In the
24 cottages, the boys had separate bedrooms
25 from the girls. They also had separate
26 bathroom facilities.

27
28 Due to the number of children in my care,
29 they were expected to help with the
30 domestic duties. In addition, the children
31 were also required to attend school and
32 church. The children went to Rapid Creek
33 Primary School or Nightcliff High School.
34 On Sundays, the children attended the AIM
35 church in Darwin.

36
37 There was an expected routine at
38 Retta Dixon that was strict. The kids were
39 expected to attend church on Sunday
40 mornings and again on Sunday nights.
41 I applied a flexible approach to some of
42 the rules. Another house parent and
43 I would take our group of children to the
44 beach or on other outings, mainly on the
45 weekends.

46
47 Sometimes during school holidays the kids

1 would be taken to Coomalie Creek for
2 a holiday. The holiday involved camping
3 and the older children from Retta Dixon
4 were together, not separated by their
5 cottage groups as they usually were. The
6 boys were still separated from the girls at
7 night, and the boys were looked after by
8 male missionaries, whilst the girls were
9 looked after by female missionaries.

10
11 In 1974, Retta Dixon was badly damaged by
12 Cyclone Tracy. Most of the kids and the
13 missionaries were sent to Sydney. We
14 stayed in Sydney for a short time before
15 moving back to a place at Batchelor, a town
16 a little south of Darwin. Facilities at
17 Batchelor were similar to Retta Dixon.
18 I continued to take care of the same
19 children I had at Retta Dixon, and the
20 other house parents did the same. We were
21 housed in dormitory-type buildings and had
22 meals in a common dining room.

23
24 I am not aware if the welfare department
25 was informed that we took the children to
26 Sydney following the e evacuation of Darwin
27 due to Cyclone Tracy. I do recall that
28 someone from welfare may have made
29 a comment like, 'I thought you were all
30 just going to Batchelor.'

31
32 In my time at Retta Dixon, I do not recall
33 any welfare officers coming to the home to
34 check on the children. I do recall that we
35 had a visit from a health inspector once,
36 and I think Mr Long, a senior officer from
37 the AIM headquarters, may have visited as
38 well. I also recall the health nurse
39 visiting on occasions because some of the
40 children would get tropical ear.

41
42 *Reports of sexual abuse by Don Henderson.*

43
44 One day in 1975, whilst we were still
45 living at Batchelor, some older boys
46 arrived at our location saying they wanted
47 to bash Don Henderson. The boys were

1 related to some of the children in
2 Retta Dixon, but I don't remember who. The
3 older boys told me that Don Henderson had
4 been sexually abusing some of the children.
5 This was the first time I had heard such an
6 allegation.

7
8 I was absolutely devastated. I believe
9 I approached Norman Wall, a fellow house
10 parent who had come to Retta Dixon.
11 Mr Wall had a vehicle and I wanted to get
12 all of my children away from Don Henderson
13 as quickly as I could. Mr Wall drove me
14 and my children back to Retta Dixon.

15
16 I spoke to some of the children and they
17 told me stories of some of the abuse that
18 was taking place. I heard some confronting
19 stories of abuse that Don Henderson was
20 inflicting on some of the kids. The kids
21 also told me that Don Henderson threatened
22 that if they told anyone what was
23 happening, he would hurt them.

24
25 The Pattemores had already moved back to
26 Retta Dixon by this time. I think the home
27 was in the process of being rebuilt. Once
28 I arrived there, I approached Mr Pattemore
29 about the allegations concerning
30 Don Henderson. Mr Pattemore appeared upset
31 by the allegations.

32
33 Mr Pattemore's response was that he would
34 report the matter to the police.

35
36 I think Don Henderson was stood down from
37 his position at Retta Dixon immediately.
38 He and Barbara, his wife, then left AIM
39 with their two adopted kids, although
40 I believe they remained in Darwin.

41
42 The police commenced an investigation into
43 the allegations and I remember that they
44 spoke with all the children involved.
45 I cannot remember all the names of these
46 children. I was also interviewed by the
47 police.

1
2 Eventually, Don Henderson was charged with
3 a number of offences relating to sexual
4 abuse. About a year later there was
5 a court matter and about four or five of
6 the children had to attend court and give
7 evidence. I only remember some of the
8 names of the children that gave evidence.
9

10 I also had to give evidence - it was an
11 extremely stressful day. At the end of the
12 court case, I believe Don Henderson was
13 acquitted of the charges and allowed to go
14 on his way. I was told that there was not
15 quite enough evidence to convict him. Some
16 of the kids who were supposed to give
17 evidence on the day had run off into the
18 long grass and could not be found to give
19 their evidence.
20

21 I had never witnessed Don Henderson
22 committing any acts of sexual abuse on the
23 children. Until the allegations were
24 mentioned to me, I was not aware that the
25 abuse was taking place. Once I became
26 aware of the abuse, however, it shed some
27 light on some previous incidents that I had
28 witnessed. I recall one night, in about
29 1975, when Barbara Henderson and I were
30 going out, that one of the kids from
31 cottages 1 and 2 that we were leaving in
32 the care of Don Henderson for the evening,
33 begged us not to go out. His name was
34 [AKO]. Some other kids from my cottage
35 also begged us not to go out. I did not
36 know why they did this at the time. In
37 hindsight, I believe [AKO] was afraid of
38 being abused by Don Henderson whilst we
39 were out.
40

41 The same year as the court case against Don
42 Henderson, I was speaking to Margaret
43 Clark, who was a house parent at
44 Retta Dixon before I arrived. I mentioned
45 to her what had happened and she stated to
46 me, 'We knew about that, it was going on
47 for years.' She meant that she knew that

1 Don Henderson had been sexually abusing the
2 children at the home. I don't know who she
3 referred to when she said 'we', and I don't
4 know if there were ever any reports made to
5 anyone about his behaviour.

6
7 I don't know if Mr Pattemore reported the
8 allegations about Don Henderson in 1975 to
9 AIM or to the welfare department. I heard
10 one couple of house parents were of the
11 view that the matter should have been dealt
12 with internally and not reported to police.
13 I disagreed. I believed that the matter
14 needed to be reported to the police.

15
16 As far as I know, no-one from the welfare
17 department came to speak with the children
18 at the time, and no counselling was offered
19 to them.

20
21 Leaving Retta Dixon.

22
23 I continued to live at Retta Dixon until
24 1978. I left Retta Dixon but continued to
25 have contact with some of the house parents
26 and some of the children that I cared for
27 there. I was sad to be leaving the
28 children behind but by this time, the
29 government policy had changed towards
30 neglected children and there was a focus on
31 keeping them with their families and
32 providing assistance to the family in order
33 for them to look after their children.

34
35 When I left Retta Dixon, I would have liked
36 to foster two of the children. Some other
37 house parents had fostered children from
38 the home. I discussed the option with my
39 husband, who I married after leaving the
40 home, but finally decided against it.

41
42 About four years ago I caught up with some
43 of the children I looked after at
44 Retta Dixon. I also keep in touch with
45 some of the children by telephone and mail.

46
47 Desired outcomes from the Royal Commission.

1
2 *When I went to work at Retta Dixon I had no*
3 *formal training in childcare, welfare work,*
4 *or working with indigenous communities.*
5 *I believe that anyone going to work in*
6 *these types of institutions or communities*
7 *should have the appropriate training so*
8 *they are able to identify children who have*
9 *been, or are being, abused and also*
10 *training in how to deal with the abuse once*
11 *it has been discovered. Anyone going to*
12 *work in these institutions should also be*
13 *thoroughly checked so any problems in their*
14 *background are known.*

15
16 *There needs to be a set of guidelines that*
17 *set out the responsibilities of everyone*
18 *relating to child sexual abuse. A clear*
19 *set of guidelines would ensure a consistent*
20 *approach and alleviate issues such as the*
21 *disagreement amongst the Retta Dixon house*
22 *parents relating to whether or not the*
23 *abuse should have been reported to police.*

24
25 *Children subjected to abuse need to be*
26 *provided with counselling. I know that*
27 *some of the children from Retta Dixon have*
28 *suffered ongoing problems from the sexual*
29 *abuse they suffered.*

30
31 Signed [AKR] on 12 September 2014.

32
33 Your Honour, the next witness is Mrs Lola Wall, and
34 I call her to give evidence. She will be giving evidence
35 in court, with the camera on.

36
37 MR ALDERMAN: I appear for Mrs Wall.

38
39 THE CHAIR: You seek leave to appear for her?

40
41 MR ALDERMAN: I seek leave to appear. I have permission
42 by correspondence. I received a letter saying I had leave
43 to appear.

44
45 THE CHAIR: Yes, very well.

46
47

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

<LOLA FLORENCE WALL, sworn: [3.20pm]

<EXAMINATION BY MS DAVID:

THE CHAIR: Q. Can you hear me?
A. Yes.

MS DAVID: Q. Mrs Wall, did you provide a statement to the Royal Commission on 12 September 2014?
A. Yes, I did.

Q. And can I ask you to just look at this document. Do you recognise that as a copy of your statement?
A. Yes, I do.

Q. Prior to coming to the hearing to give evidence, have you had an opportunity to read through that statement?
A. Yes, I have.

Q. Is it an accurate account of your recollection of events at the Retta Dixon Home?
A. Yes, it is.

MS DAVID: If your Honour pleases, I tender the statement.

THE CHAIR: That will become exhibit 17-13.

EXHIBIT #17-13 STATEMENT OF LOLA FLORENCE WALL DATED 12/09/2014

MS DAVID: Q. Mrs Wall, can I ask you to read the statement to the Royal Commission?
A. "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.

My full name is Lola Florence Wall and I was born in 1939. I am 75 years old. I married Norman Wall in 1961. Prior to my marriage, my name was Lola Williams.

My husband, Norman, and I, are Christians and felt

1 called by God to do some mission work. About 1971 we were
2 living in Budgewoi, New South Wales, and we saw an
3 advertisement in a Baptist newspaper or magazine
4 advertising for people to work as house parents at the
5 Retta Dixon Home in Darwin. Retta Dixon was a childcare
6 facility caring for mostly part-Aboriginal children who had
7 been made wards of the State, though there were some
8 children placed there voluntarily by parents in an effort
9 to get their children to go to school. The home was run by
10 the Aborigines Inland Mission (AIM) funded by government
11 welfare. Norman and I submitted an application, but the
12 application was misplaced.

13
14 In 1972, we were in contact with Mr Collins at AIM
15 headquarters in Sydney. A little while later, we travelled
16 to Concord, in Sydney, to the AIM office where we met with
17 Mervyn Pattemore, the superintendent of Retta Dixon. We
18 were accepted as childcare workers to be house parents at
19 Retta Dixon.

20
21 In March 1973, Norman, myself and our three children,
22 a daughter aged 9, a son aged 7 and a son aged 2, left the
23 Central Coast of New South Wales and moved to Retta Dixon.
24 We were placed as the house parents for cottage 5.

25
26 I don't recall receiving any training in relation to
27 working at Retta Dixon. Later on we were given a book
28 outlining the role, duties and rules of our position.
29 Regular discussions with other house parents and the weekly
30 meetings gave us further information about our role and
31 duties at Retta Dixon.

32
33 Norman and I had some experience that was relevant to
34 our position at Retta Dixon. My dad, who cared for me
35 growing up, was Aboriginal. There were also other
36 Aboriginal relatives on both my and Norman's side of the
37 family. Norman had been in the army, following which he
38 worked for Liverpool City Council. We attended Liverpool
39 Baptist church where Norman was the warrant officer in the
40 local church boys' brigade. Norman and I also worked with
41 church people who ran a kiosk at holiday cabins on the
42 Central Coast of New South Wales. Norman worked for three
43 years at Mt Penang boys home near Gosford. I had
44 experience in religious instruction at school with my
45 church minister and wife in Grafton. While living and
46 working at Retta Dixon, Norman and I received an allowance
47 of \$17 each, but I can't recall if it was weekly or

1 fortnightly. Our food and accommodation were included as
2 part of the conditions of our work.
3

4 Retta Dixon consisted of the main residence, where the
5 Pattemore family lived, and eight cottages, where the
6 children in care lived. Each cottage had a house parent or
7 parents. When we arrived, the other house parents were
8 Gwen Platt, Judy Fergusson, David and Beryl Barnes, Don and
9 Barbara Henderson, Milton and Ruth Williams, Ethel McKay,
10 Ms Shankleton and Ms Spohn. Dawn Elliott lived and worked
11 at Retta Dixon in the office. She worked in the church
12 office.
13

14 In cottage 5, we had about ten children in our care.
15 I remember some of the children we cared for whilst at
16 Retta Dixon were Fred Bedgegood, Mercia Huddleston, Rhonda
17 and Jack Clancy, David and Andrina Petrick, Mervyn
18 Campbell, Jeffrey and Dennis Winsley, Leanne Kunoth and
19 Jeffrey, Lesley, John and Sandra Waters.
20

21 Each of the cottages was like a self-contained house.
22 There were bedrooms, kitchen, lounge and dining area, and
23 a big playroom. There was also a laundry and bathroom
24 facilities for each cottage. We looked after the children
25 in our care, completed all the domestic duties such as
26 cleaning, washing, preparing meals, ensuring the children
27 completed homework, sewing school uniforms and all
28 maintenance and outside work like mowing the grass. The
29 children were expected to help with the chores in
30 accordance with their age and what they could do. For
31 example, the older children were expected to do the washing
32 up after dinner.
33

34 The children would attend church on Sundays. They
35 also would attend Sunday school and there was a girls
36 brigade and boys club. Norman and I would sometimes take
37 the children out of the home, after notifying Mr Pattemore.
38 I remember taking children to Kununurra in Western
39 Australia so Mercia could visit her father, and taking
40 Leanne to Alice Springs to visit family. In school
41 holidays, I remember taking the younger children to the
42 Retta Dixon camp site at Lee Point for a camping holiday,
43 whilst the older children went to Coomalie Creek. We also
44 took the children to Katherine to go swimming and fishing.
45

46 The children attended the local schools. I remember
47 children going to Rapid Creek Primary School, Nightcliff

1 Primary School, or Millner Primary School, and when they
2 were older, Nightcliff High School. Usually, Norman or one
3 of the other house parents, would drive the children to
4 school in the Retta Dixon bus, and then pick them up again
5 at the end of the school day.

6
7 Mr Pattemore, as the superintendent of Retta Dixon,
8 was responsible for the day-to-day management of the home.
9 He looked after the budget, employment of house parents and
10 liaising with AIM and any government agencies.
11 Mr Pattemore was also responsible for overall control
12 within the home. As house parents, we would discipline the
13 children ourselves, sometimes giving them a smack if
14 required. Sometimes, we would send the children to
15 Mr Pattemore for him to speak with them and for him to know
16 what was going on. I think he always had their best
17 interests at heart.

18
19 House parents were entitled to a full day off every
20 fortnight and a part-day off every alternate week. Norman
21 and I had our day off every second Thursday. On these
22 days, the children from our cottage would be dispersed
23 amongst the other cottages for the day and we would get
24 them back at 8pm. At these times, the children from
25 different cottages got to mix with each other. Sometimes
26 the children from different cottages would play games and
27 sports on the oval together.

28
29 In 1974, Retta Dixon was badly damaged by
30 Cyclone Tracy. On Boxing Day, about 60 of the people from
31 Retta Dixon, including children and house parents, left
32 Darwin for Batchelor, a town to the south of Darwin. The
33 Pattemores" - sorry, I don't know where I'm up to.

34
35 Q. Mrs Wall, would you go to the top of page 5?

36 A. "The Pattemores remained up in Darwin, so Norman was
37 placed in charge of everyone at Batchelor. From Batchelor,
38 we went to Katherine, then to Tindal air force base, where
39 we were evacuated to Adelaide, then on to Sydney, staying
40 at Blackheath in the Blue Mountains. I think we stayed
41 there for about six weeks. At this time, Gwen Platt became
42 ill and went on leave. Andy and Thelma Gough joined us at
43 Blackheath and took on the responsibility for most of the
44 children from Gwen's cottage. Norman and I took
45 responsibility for some as well. We then travelled back to
46 Darwin, then to Batchelor again, where we stayed at the
47 Batchelor vocational training centre. The accommodation

1 consisted of dormitory style buildings, with the boys
2 sleeping along one side of the building and the girls on
3 the other. The house parents remained responsible for
4 their own children at Batchelor.

5
6 I believe that the welfare department was informed
7 that we took the children to Sydney following the
8 evacuation of Darwin due to Cyclone Tracy. There was
9 a substantial amount of organising that had been done to
10 arrange the evacuation flights, accommodation and support
11 that we had, and I don't believe that this could have been
12 achieved without the welfare department and AIM head office
13 helping out.

14
15 I recall during our time at Retta Dixon, there were
16 occasional visits by welfare officers. I specifically
17 recall an older, more efficient lady, coming to check on
18 Rhonda Clancy, a child in our cottage. She would talk with
19 Rhonda on her own in the playroom at the front of the
20 cottage. There was also a younger lady who did not seem as
21 helpful and was trying to arrange for Rhonda to leave
22 Retta Dixon to live with her.

23
24 Six weeks after I arrived at Retta Dixon, I was
25 standing with some of the girls at the front fence of the
26 home. The girls were talking about Don Henderson and how
27 he was behaving inappropriately with some of the boys.
28 I spoke to Norman about it and discovered some of the boys
29 had also spoken to him. We decided to report the matter to
30 Mr Pattemore.

31
32 I recall that a short time later, Mr Arthur Collins,
33 the AIM mission secretary from Sydney, arrived at
34 Retta Dixon. I was later informed by Mr Collins that there
35 was not enough evidence against Don Henderson to take any
36 action. I do not know if the matter was reported to the
37 police or if any of the children were spoken to about the
38 alleged abuse. As far as I am aware, nothing else happened
39 and Don Henderson continued to be a house parent.

40
41 Norman and I were very wary around Don Henderson and
42 very watchful in relation to the children in our care.
43 Henderson was a very tall, friendly man, but his manner at
44 times seemed overbearing.

45
46 When we were living at Batchelor in 1975, Ethel McKay
47 approached Norman one day asking if she and Henderson could

1 take their children on a camping trip to Tortilla Flats.
2 There was a farm at Tortilla Flats owned by the Sullivans,
3 where we could go and camp with the children. Norman was
4 hesitant and told Ethel he did not think it was a good
5 idea. However, I remember that they did go.
6

7 The morning after they left, a Saturday, Ethel came to
8 Norman and me. She was really upset and asked us to take
9 her and her children to Darwin. Norman and I were planning
10 on going to the Retta Dixon site in Darwin anyway. Ethel
11 did not tell us why she wanted to go, but Norman and
12 I guessed it was in relation to Henderson and the
13 possibility that he had abused some of the children.
14

15 Norman and I, our children, Ethel, and her children,
16 then went to Darwin. The Pattemores were still at
17 Retta Dixon and the home was being rebuilt. Ethel and her
18 children then went to see the Pattemores. Later that day,
19 Ethel asked to see Norman and me. She told us she was
20 sorry for going on the trip to Tortilla Flats against the
21 advice of Norman. I believe Ethel became aware of
22 inappropriate behaviour by Henderson. I don't recall
23 exactly what happened, but I know the matter was then
24 reported to the police by Mr Pattemore.
25

26 Norman and I returned to Batchelor and I remember the
27 police coming late in the evening to speak with Henderson.
28 I think it was the same day. I don't know if the police
29 spoke to any of the children. I remember one of the girls
30 from Henderson's cottage coming to me and talking about
31 Henderson abusing one of the other little girls at their
32 cottage, [AJW].
33

34 I don't recall any more about the police investigation
35 or what happened, except that the Hendersons left
36 Retta Dixon very shortly after. I believe that they stayed
37 in Darwin, at least for a while. I never saw Henderson
38 abuse any children whilst at Retta Dixon or at Batchelor.
39

40 We continued to care for the children and prepared for
41 the move back to Retta Dixon site in Darwin. We moved back
42 in December 1975. We were the last house parents to move
43 back to the Retta Dixon site as we waited for the end of
44 the school year.
45

46 A court matter about the child abuse was held in 1976.
47 Norman drove some of the children, and Ethel, to the

1 courthouse. I think there were about six children who were
2 giving evidence in the matter. I remember two of them were
3 [AKM] and [AKN].
4

5 Norman told me at the time that as he and the children
6 approached the court and were getting out of the car, they
7 saw Henderson standing on the street with some older boys
8 from Retta Dixon. He told me that the older boys spoke to
9 the younger children, but Norman didn't know what was said.
10 After this, the younger children would not speak about the
11 matter and would not give their evidence in court.
12

13 I understand that Henderson was acquitted of the
14 charges against him. The prosecution lawyer, I don't
15 remember his name, came to Retta Dixon after the trial to
16 apologise for what had happened. He stated that Henderson
17 should never have been allowed to stand near the car and
18 the children should have been better cared for during the
19 court process. He also stated that Henderson was acquitted
20 because some of the children wouldn't give evidence against
21 him.
22

23 I remember that after the Hendersons had left
24 Retta Dixon, Don Henderson came for a visit one time.
25 I don't know why he came, but he acted as though nothing
26 had happened.
27

28 Norman and I continued to work at Retta Dixon. By the
29 early 1980s, the government policy in relation to neglected
30 children had changed from taking them and placing them in
31 foster care, to keeping them with their families and
32 supporting the family unit. Norman and I continued to work
33 at Retta Dixon after this change, as we had a private
34 boarding arrangement, looking after children who came from
35 rural areas to Darwin to attend Marrara Christian school.
36 Norman was also responsible for maintenance at the
37 Retta Dixon site.
38

39 We stayed at Retta Dixon until the end of 1985, at
40 which time we moved to Alice Springs and took up positions
41 as missionaries at the AIM Aboriginal missions. We
42 remained there for 21 years, moving back to Darwin in 2007.
43 In 2012 we moved to Adelaide where we currently reside.
44

45 I think it is important that carers working with
46 children receive training in how to communicate with and
47 identify children who are being abused, and how to deal

1 with any situation where children are, or have been,
2 abused. I believe Norman's experience working in the boys
3 home made him aware of the possibility of these things
4 happening and that is why he became concerned about
5 Henderson.
6

7 When we applied to work at Retta Dixon we were not
8 required to provide any information about past criminal
9 history or any allegations involving abusing children.
10 I know that today there is a requirement for people to
11 complete Working With Children Checks and it is important
12 that people are properly investigated for previous offences
13 or wrong behaviour around children."
14

15 Q. Mrs Wall, I just want to ask you some questions about
16 when you first applied to work for AIM and, in particular,
17 at Retta Dixon. I want to show you a document which is
18 under number 56 of the tender bundle. It will come up on
19 the screen. Can you see that document?

20 A. Mmm-hmm. Part thereof.
21

22 Q. We might just scroll down. Do you recognise that as
23 the type of application form you had to complete?

24 A. Yes, I do.
25

26 Q. Is that what your application form looked like?

27 A. Yes.
28

29 Q. We will just scroll right down through it. We can see
30 22 questions. When you completed that application form,
31 did you have to provide any other information?

32 A. No, no. What, do you mean like a police check or
33 something like that?
34

35 Q. No, put aside police checks for the moment. Did you
36 have to provide any other information about why you wanted
37 to work for AIM or what qualities you might bring to AIM?

38 A. Yes, we explained the change that had taken place in
39 our lives and how we had become Christians and that we were
40 wanting to do what God wanted to do with our lives.
41

42 Q. And was that part of a written application?

43 A. We wrote it down as a testimony to go with our form
44 that we filled out. Mmm.
45

46 Q. And you have told the hearing that you didn't have to
47 provide any police check or police clearance check?

1 A. No.
2
3 Q. Did you have to provide any information about any
4 allegations or convictions that you might have?
5 A. No, didn't hear about those things then.
6
7 Q. And after you provided this written application, which
8 was in this form that we have seen, did you have a meeting
9 with AIM - an interview?
10 A. We went to Concord to where the AIM office was. We
11 met Mr Pattemore, and after that we were accepted as house
12 parents.
13
14 Q. And what happened at that meeting?
15 A. He just talked to us and I think he said something
16 about there being a washing machine there. That was what
17 I was concerned about.
18
19 Q. In the application form you had to refer to the name
20 of at least two Christian friends. We can see that at
21 paragraph 22.
22 A. Can you scroll that down, or can I?
23
24 Q. If you look at the last paragraph, paragraph 22:
25
26 *Please give the names and addresses of at*
27 *least two Christian friends who have known*
28 *you for over two (2) years and who could*
29 *give a reference ...*
30
31 A. Yes.
32
33 Q. Did you provide a reference --
34 A. Yes, we would have done.
35
36 Q. To your knowledge, was that reference checked?
37 A. I don't know, but I'm sure it would have been. Mmm.
38
39 Q. And when you had this meeting with Mr Pattemore, was
40 there anyone else present?
41 A. Mr Collins and his wife, because she brought us in a
42 cup of tea.
43
44 Q. And were you asked any further questions about your
45 background and your suitability for the job at that
46 face-to-face meeting?
47 A. It was just like an informal meeting where we just sat

1 around and talked about, you know, our children and - you
2 know, all those things, and whether we were looking forward
3 to going up there.

4

5 Q. Prior to the meeting, had you been told whether or not
6 you had been accepted by AIM as a missionary?

7 A. I can't - I think there must have - I don't really
8 know. I can't tell. I know that after we had that
9 meeting, everything became more definite, mmm.

10

11 Q. So is this correct: you submitted a written
12 application?

13 A. Mmm-hmm.

14

15 Q. In the form that we have seen brought up on the
16 screen; is that correct?

17 A. Yes.

18

19 Q. And you also added a precis, or a paragraph or two
20 about yourself?

21 A. Mmm-hmm.

22

23 Q. And then you had a face-to-face meeting at Concord, or
24 the offices of AIM?

25 A. Yes, mmm-hmm.

26

27 Q. And then, after that, you started work as a missionary
28 at Retta Dixon home?

29 A. Yes. We weren't called - well, I - we weren't called
30 missionaries at that time. We were house parents, yes.

31

32 Q. But you started your work as house parents at
33 Retta Dixon Home?

34 A. Yes, and we were associate missionaries, mmm.

35

36 Q. Was there any other step in that process that I have
37 missed out? Was there any other information that you were
38 required to provide or any other meetings that you were
39 required to attend?

40 A. No, no. Not that I can remember. Mmm.

41

42 Q. So is your recollection there was a formal written
43 application, and then one face-to-face meeting with
44 Mr Collins and Mr Pattemore, and his wife?

45 A. Yes.

46

47 Q. Prior to leaving for Retta Dixon, did you receive any

1 training from AIM?
2 A. No.
3
4 Q. Did you receive any handbooks or policy guidelines
5 from AIM?
6 A. No.
7
8 Q. Did you receive any written material, for example,
9 about what to expect or what your requirements were?
10 A. Not that I remember, mmm.
11
12 Q. I think you have said in your statement that you have
13 read out to us, at paragraph 7, that later on you were
14 given a book outlining the role, duties and rules relating
15 to your position?
16 A. That's right, mmm.
17
18 Q. Just now I want to bring up another document. If we
19 can bring up the document under tab number 54. We will
20 just scroll down so that you have an opportunity to look at
21 it. We can see the headings of "Home" and "General - At
22 Home".
23 A. That's right.
24
25 Q. And "School" and "School Activities", "School
26 Charges", "School Dress", "School Lunches", "Dress &
27 General Appearance"?
28 A. Yes.
29
30 Q. And then we have "First Aid", "Equipment and
31 Furniture", "Equipment Repairs", "Finance and Purchasing",
32 "Gift and Donations", "Interest Prayer and Gifts". Just
33 pausing there, do you recognise this document?
34 A. Yes, I do.
35
36 Q. We will just keep going so that you have an
37 opportunity to look at the whole document. We have a topic
38 of "Visitors to Home and Cottages" and "Complaints". If we
39 just pause on "Complaints", we can see a reference to
40 complaints by visiting parents regarding treatment of
41 a child.
42 A. Yes, I can see that.
43
44 Q. And then visiting parents are expected to behave in a
45 regular manner. And if we keep going down, "Children
46 Visiting", "Courting", and some other references to the
47 food store. There is a reference to the places which are

1 out of bounds for the children, if we keep scrolling down,
2 and then there is a reference to "Children Returning to
3 Parents for School Holidays", so we have seen that in its
4 completion. Is that the book of guidelines that you were
5 referring to in your statement?

6 A. Yes.

7

8 Q. And other than that, do you have any recollection of
9 any other guidelines or policies that were provided to you
10 at Retta Dixon Home?

11 A. No, I don't remember anything like that. This was the
12 first thing, and that happened - it may have been over that
13 first year that we were there. I remember it took them
14 a while to put it together.

15

16 Q. So is it your evidence that that wasn't in existence
17 when you first arrived?

18 A. Not to my knowledge. I don't know whether there was
19 an older guide book or not, but that's the first one that
20 I saw.

21

22 Q. And you didn't receive that until part way into your
23 time at Retta Dixon?

24 A. Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm.

25

26 Q. Can you say now how long after you arrived that you
27 received that?

28 A. I wouldn't - wouldn't really know. I just think that
29 it was during that first year, because there were
30 discussions about, you know, what should be done, what
31 shouldn't be done, so they put it in a book.

32

33 Q. Mrs Wall, while you were at Retta Dixon Home, were you
34 ever given any guidelines about how to respond to
35 allegations of sexual abuse?

36 A. No.

37

38 Q. For example, were you ever given any guidelines about
39 what to do if a child complained to you directly about
40 sexual abuse?

41 A. No. No.

42

43 Q. Or, for example, what to do if you suspected, through
44 observations or behaviour, that a child was being sexually
45 abused?

46 A. No.

47

1 Q. Were you ever given any guidelines about what to do -
2 what to look for in terms of the indicators of child sexual
3 abuse?
4 A. No.
5
6 Q. While you were at Retta Dixon Home, as a house parent,
7 did AIM ever provide you with any training? Did you do
8 courses, for example?
9 A. I don't remember that, but I've heard from other
10 people that there was something that we did.
11
12 Q. But do you have any recollection --
13 A. No, I don't have any recollection, no.
14
15 Q. Did you ever receive any advice or training from
16 government welfare authorities?
17 A. No.
18
19 Q. You have given evidence about an occasion relating to
20 Mr Henderson and becoming aware of allegations that he had
21 sexually abused children at Retta Dixon Home. Can I just
22 ask you about the sequence of events in respect of that,
23 just so that we are clear. You say in your statement that
24 it was shortly after you arrived at Retta Dixon Home that
25 you heard some of the girls talking about Mr Henderson
26 showing an interest or a sexual interest in some of the
27 boys; is that correct?
28 A. Mmm-hmm.
29
30 Q. Can you remember the types of things that were said?
31 A. No, I don't know their exact words. I just know that
32 it was inappropriate behaviour.
33
34 Q. And when the girls were talking about this, about
35 Mr Henderson, was that done openly, or was that something
36 that you were listening in to a conversation?
37 A. We were just standing at the front fence, side by
38 side, leaning on the fence, and we were having a little -
39 they were having their little quiet conversation, and
40 I asked what they were talking about.
41
42 Q. And were they reluctant to speak with you, or is that
43 something they spoke about openly?
44 A. No, they talked about it there to me at the fence.
45
46 Q. And at that stage, you hadn't long been a house parent
47 at Retta Dixon, had you?

1 A. No, only about six weeks.
2
3 Q. As a result of that, you spoke with your husband,
4 Mr Wall?
5 A. That's right.
6
7 Q. And between the two of you, did you decide on a course
8 of action that you were going to take?
9 A. Yes.
10
11 Q. And that was to report the matter to Mr Pattemore?
12 A. Yes.
13
14 Q. And at the time, he was the superintendent?
15 A. That's right, yes.
16
17 Q. Was that something that you had any instruction or
18 guideline on, or was that something that you decided to do
19 between the two of you?
20 A. No, well, Mr Pattemore was our - he was our boss, our
21 superior. There was a chain of command and it was our
22 responsibility to go to him.
23
24 Q. So you thought it was preferable to go to him rather
25 than directly to the police?
26 A. Definitely.
27
28 Q. After you spoke with him, is it the situation that at
29 that time someone from AIM came out to the Retta Dixon
30 Home, someone else?
31 A. Mr Collins arrived up there from Sydney.
32
33 Q. Is that the same Mr Collins that had interviewed you?
34 A. That's right, mmm.
35
36 Q. And when Mr Collins came to Retta Dixon Home, was that
37 shortly after you spoke with Mr Pattemore, or did that take
38 some time?
39 A. It was around about the same - I don't know how -
40 whether it was just days or a couple of weeks or what,
41 I don't know, but I know that he arrived up there at the
42 time, and that happened.
43
44 Q. And did Mr Collins speak with you about the
45 conversation that you had heard involving Mr Henderson?
46 A. He spoke to Mr Pattemore first, and then he talked to
47 my husband and then said that there was no - there was no

1 evidence.
2
3 Q. When you spoke to Mr Pattemore, did you tell him the
4 names of the boys that were mentioned?
5 A. No, because I didn't know.
6
7 Q. Did you tell him the names of the girls who had been
8 talking about the matter?
9 A. Well, I - I don't know whether I did or not, but they
10 were just the girls from my cottage, yes.
11
12 Q. And to your knowledge, when Mr Collins came to
13 Retta Dixon Home, did he speak with any of the children?
14 A. I don't know.
15
16 Q. To your knowledge, did Mr Pattemore speak with any of
17 the children?
18 A. I don't know.
19
20 Q. As a result of Mr Collins coming to Retta Dixon Home,
21 were you told that there was nothing more they could do in
22 terms of the allegations against Mr Henderson?
23 A. That's right, yes.
24
25 Q. Who said that to you?
26 A. Mr Collins stated that there was no - not enough -
27 there was no evidence, no --
28
29 Q. Can you remember the words he used, or was it too long
30 ago?
31 A. Too long --
32
33 THE CHAIR: It might be hard, Ms David.
34
35 MS DAVID: It might be.
36
37 Q. In any event, from your conversation with Mr Collins,
38 that was the end of the matter, in terms of Mr Henderson?
39 A. Yes, yes, but I - I don't know what our superintendent
40 was still doing, because he had our trust, it was up to
41 him.
42
43 Q. Mr Henderson stayed at the Retta Dixon Home?
44 A. At that time, yes.
45
46 Q. And he continued to work at the Retta Dixon?
47 A. Mmm-hmm.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

Q. Is it the situation that there was then a period of time before the allegations that were raised by the other house parent came to light?

A. Yes, that was after Cyclone Tracy.

Q. So there was a few years between the time that you overheard these conversations and raised allegations against Mr Henderson to the time that the second house parent did; is that right?

A. Well, the first time was 1973. After the cyclone, 1974, so it was 1975, when it became --

Q. So we're talking about two years?

A. Yes.

Q. And during those two years, Mr Henderson continued to work at Retta Dixon Home?

A. Yes.

Q. And to your knowledge and from your observations, did anything change in terms of his duties or his contact with children?

A. No.

Q. Things went on as before?

A. Mmm-hmm.

MS DAVID: Thank you. I have nothing further.

THE CHAIR: Q. Ms Wall, you, I think, and your husband, would have become members of AIM when you became missionaries; is that right?

A. Yes, yes.

Q. Are you still members?

A. No, we retired in 2007.

Q. But, having retired, you cease to be a member of AIM, do you?

A. Well, I suppose - can you - what do you mean, "a member of AIM"? We don't - we're not working with them, your Honour.

Q. You have no ongoing connection with them?

A. We get their literature, we spend time with them. We've got some very good friends in the AIM, and so on.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

Q. In your time as a missionary, I understand the organisation was funded by contributions by various people; is that right?

A. Yes, that's right.

Q. Have you heard the evidence that has been given in the last two days?

A. I certainly have.

Q. I assume, from what you have said in your statement, that what you now hear from people who have survived is consistent with what you can now recollect of the circumstances that existed at the home at the time you were there?

A. Some of it, yes. Some of it, your Honour, I must admit, I was horrified by. I did not have a clue.

Q. As a member of AIM at the time, have you thought about what AIM's response should be to those survivors?

A. I can see that they need to be listened to. I can see that they need to tell their story, and as far as AIM, I don't speak for the AIM. They will say what they think their response should be. I think they are one of - you know, as reaching out, people that still work within the AIM, reaching out to those who they know are hurting, who they can now identify as hurting people, that our response should be to reach out to them and help them. And I don't mean that to be in a compensation way, I mean it to be there to help them, to guide them, to maybe counsel them.

Q. You know that various churches have accepted responsibility for abuse not dissimilar to that which we have heard about at Retta Dixon - do you know that?

A. Yes, I have heard that.

Q. And they have provided redress schemes of one form or another for those people. Are you aware of that?

A. No, I don't really - what, your Honour? Can you explain that, please?

Q. What they have done is provided, in different ways, three things: firstly, an engagement with the person to help their spiritual journey and assist them along the way; secondly, some have provided different levels of ongoing counselling; thirdly, some have provided a lump sum payment by way of a recognition at the very least of the hurt that

1 was occasioned to those people when they were within the
2 care of that church. Do you understand all those things?
3 A. (Witness nods).

4

5 Q. Have you thought about whether AIM should be thinking
6 about responding in a similar way?

7 A. In some of those things, yes, but, I mean, it comes to
8 finance. Our mission is a faith mission.

9

10 Q. But - perhaps you can explain that to me, what do you
11 mean?

12 A. It means that they believe in - that people support
13 the mission and support the people that are out on the
14 field. So it's not something where they get their regular
15 wages every week. And so an institution - so our mission,
16 to my way of thinking, that wouldn't come into the picture.
17 I'm sorry, I'm not making myself clear.

18

19 THE CHAIR: No, I understand.

20

21 Does anyone else have any questions?

22

23 MS McLEOD: Yes, if I may.

24

25 <EXAMINATION BY MS McLEOD:

26

27 Q. Mrs Wall, my name is Fiona McLeod and I'm here for the
28 Commonwealth. In this context, this is the welfare
29 officers, before 1978. Can I ask that the witness be
30 shown, please, document 129 - we will start with that, but
31 I also want to show her 130 and 131 in the tender bundle,
32 please.

33

34 Mrs Wall, were you familiar with - and I will take you
35 through it if you need me to - a "Handbook For the Use of
36 House Parents and Staff Workers"? If you have a look at
37 the screen, that's the start of the handbook. Just
38 indicate if you need the scrolling to stop at any stage to
39 have a close look at that document, please, Mrs Wall. Does
40 that look familiar to you, Mrs Wall?

41 A. I can see some things that are very similar to the
42 other one that I read, but - maybe it's an older book.

43

44 Q. Yes, okay, there are three versions I have, and
45 I don't know the dates, I'm sorry.

46 A. Oh, right.

47

1 Q. Could I ask you to drop down to page 7, the heading is
2 "Discipline". We can check the other versions, but it is
3 pretty similar for each version. In this document, do you
4 see the reference there that house parents and staff
5 workers are expected to discipline the children?

6 A. Yes.

7

8 Q. There is a reference in that paragraph to government
9 regulations prohibiting corporal punishment being applied
10 to the children. "This must be strictly observed"; do you
11 see that?

12 A. Yes.

13

14 Q. Did you understand that was the prohibition at the
15 time that you were working at the home?

16 A. Yes.

17

18 Q. And you understood that that was a matter of
19 government regulation?

20 A. I don't remember, but I'm just reading through the
21 rest of it here, but I don't remember a lot of - I don't
22 really --

23

24 Q. I will give you a chance to read all of that. Perhaps
25 if we can just drop down towards the bottom of the page.

26

27 THE CHAIR: Ms McLeod, how long do you expect to be?

28

29 MS McLEOD: Only these questions, your Honour, so it will
30 just be a couple of minutes. I am in your Honour's hands,
31 of course.

32

33 THE CHAIR: That's all right. You continue.

34

35 MS McLEOD: Q. Mrs Wall, do you see the reference to
36 "Any serious cases of disobedience and trouble" being
37 reported to the superintendent?

38 A. Yes.

39

40 Q. The last paragraph on the page says:

41

42 *Dealing with outside bodies.*

43

44 *No approach shall be made by any House*
45 *Parent or Staff Worker direct to Welfare*
46 *Branch or any outside body unless first*
47 *fully discussed with the Superintendent and*

1 *then only with his sanction.*

2

3 Did you understand that was the direction to staff at the
4 time?

5 A. No.

6

7 Q. You didn't understand that?

8 A. No. My understanding was that Mr Pattemore was our
9 superior and he was the one that we relied on, respected.

10

11 Q. Right. I think we might be at cross-purposes. So
12 staff were not to approach anybody seen as outside the
13 home, at least without speaking to Mr Pattemore first; is
14 that correct?

15 A. That would be true.

16

17 MS McLEOD: For the Commission's benefit, there are
18 similar references in document 130, at pages 9 to 11; and
19 then at document 131 a similar reference. I probably don't
20 need to take the witness to each of those documents.

21

22 Thank you, Mrs Wall.

23

24 COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD: Q. Mrs Wall, could I just
25 clarify, you answered in response to a question from
26 counsel that you did understand that there were regulations
27 against corporal punishment - is that a correct
28 understanding of your evidence?

29 A. Well, to my way of thinking, it was - I don't remember
30 actually seeing that particular document, but we knew
31 that - we just knew in ourselves that it wasn't something
32 that we needed to be dishing out corporal punishment.

33

34 Q. I am sure this is a matter that other counsel will
35 come to. Are you aware that your husband, during your time
36 at Retta Dixon, did, in fact, administer corporal
37 punishment to children in your care?

38 A. I heard that in that statement, but I am not prepared
39 to say - to agree with just what they said.

40

41 COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD: Thank you.

42

43 THE CHAIR: Does anyone else have any questions?

44

45 MR GEORGIU: Yes, I do.

46

47 THE CHAIR: How long will you be?

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

MR GEORGIU: I think about five minutes, your Honour.

THE CHAIR: Does anyone else have questions?

MR LAWRENCE: I will be longer than that, your Honour.

THE CHAIR: The Commission has other commitments, so I think we had best adjourn until 10 o'clock tomorrow.

Ms McLeod, can I just ask you this: does the Commonwealth accept that it was the guardian of these people when they were children in this home?

MS McLEOD: Can I clarify that for you when we resume, your Honour, because - yes, the director was the guardian of these children, although there are some direct findings on the issue, as you would be aware, in the *Cubillo* case about the extent of the supervision.

THE CHAIR: I know. You will need to help everyone to clarify the Commonwealth's position. I assume it is consistent with what the Full Court had to say, but everyone would like, I think, to know what the Commonwealth's position is, so that this audience and those watching the video-link have it clearly understood as to the Commonwealth's role.

MS McLEOD: Yes, certainly, your Honour. There is a statement that has been provided that sets out the legislative requirements.

THE CHAIR: I understand that. What I am saying, I suppose, is you need to simplify it. I asked you a direct question, and you would understand that the audience watching this is a very broad one, and there will need to be some crystallisation of the position.

MS McLEOD: Yes, thank you, your Honour.

MS DAVID: Your Honour, before we adjourn, as your Honour is aware, the evidence of [AKV] raised an issue in respect of a person he had told about the allegations. There have been some attempts to obtain a statement from that person, but, in doing so, we seek to have an unredacted copy of the witness's statement to go to the person who needs to answer that. So I hand up a direction which amends your Honour's

1 earlier "Do not publish" direction, to that effect.

2

3 THE CHAIR: Yes. I have made that direction.

4

5 MS DAVID: Thank you, your Honour.

6

7 THE CHAIR: Very well, we will adjourn until 10 o'clock in
8 the morning.

9

10 **AT 4.13PM THE COMMISSION WAS ADJOURNED**
11 **TO WEDNESDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2014 AT 10AM**

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47