

Date: 19.02.13



Exhibit number: 333

**QUEENSLAND CHILD PROTECTION
COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**

Our reference:

Statement of Witness

<i>Name of Witness</i>	Heather Ruth DEN HOUTING
<i>Date of Birth</i>	13/02/1964
<i>Address and contact details</i>	Known to Commission of Inquiry
<i>Occupation</i>	Director of Mission
<i>Officer taking statement</i>	Detective Sergeant John Mison
<i>Date taken</i>	14/02/2013

I, Heather Ruth DEN HOUTING state;

1. I am an ordained Minister of the Uniting Church and currently hold the position of Director of Mission, Blue Care.
2. I am a qualified solicitor with previous practice experience.
3. In 1991 I held the position of Principal Solicitor, Community of Inala Legal Aid Service [herein referred to as C.O.I.L.S]. I held this position until 1993.
4. The service provided by C.O.I.L.S is best described as a community's 'First stop shop' for persons seeking any form of legal support. It was a generalist practice funded at that time from both state and federal governments.
5. C.O.I.L.S was quite separate in its operations from Legal Aid. C.O.I.L.S purpose was to either receive and deal with very minor legal matters, or act as a referral point to other agencies. The office was extremely busy. I recall regularly having appointments booked every twenty minutes all day, five days a week. There was a three week waiting list for consultation. Should a matter of urgency or seriousness be received, we had the capacity to rearrange appointments to accommodate those types of requests.
6. C.O.I.L.S dealt with all types of law – general, criminal, civil, preparation of wills, some Magistrate Court representations, etc. C.O.I.L.S did not take on full

Witness signature..... Signature of officer.....

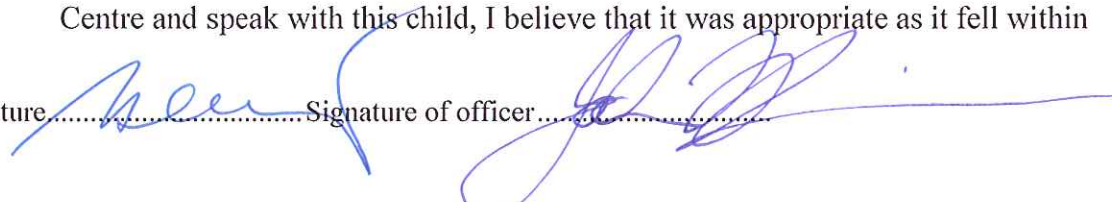
and protracted cases. Those were passed on or referred to a private solicitor or Legal Aid.

7. Due to my previous practical experience an area of expertise was in Juvenile Justice. I would regularly receive those types of files.
8. Any person, whether they were from the general community, schools, Department of Families, or another agency could make referral to us for services. These could include 'walk ins' or telephone calls.
9. I do not recall how I became involved in an incident involving a female detainee of the John Oxley Youth Centre in 1991.
10. I do have recollection of having been in my position for a reasonably short period of time. I had had minimal liaison with the John Oxley Youth Centre as matters of such a nature were protracted and referred to Legal Aid.
11. I can only surmise that it may have been one of C.O.I.L.S other workers, Lisa Marie Seddon, who at the time had been doing contact work in the community who may have received a call. I do not recall being the recipient of a call myself.
12. I do recall that I was to attend the John Oxley Youth Centre to speak with a female child. At this point in time I cannot recall the nature of the matter. I recall that it was not to take the child on as a client in a criminal matter. The purpose of my attendance was to provide support, advice and education.
13. I have recollection of my first visit out to the John Oxley Centre. I clearly recall this visit due to my own hesitations in never having attended there before. I recall driving to the location, parking my vehicle and being shown through security. Unfortunately due to the lapse in time since, I have no recollection of the actual meeting.
14. My usual practice was to make extensive hand written notes of any meetings held with people. I believe I would have done so in relation to that meeting with the child, whose name I cannot recall. As this child was not an ongoing client, I believe that those notes would have later been filed at the C.O.I.L.S office in a 'miscellaneous' file. This file contained matters which were not to proceed any further. I do not believe that this file would be now in existence due to time passed.
15. I do recall that the task of speaking to the child was unusual, as it was not a criminal matter. There was something very different about the meeting.

Witness signature.....

Signature of officer.....

16. From memory I believe I spoke with the child one on one however cannot be completely sure. Again from my usual practice I would not have discussed the outcome of this meeting with any other party due to client confidentiality provisions. I cannot recall the content of our conversation.
17. From my present reflection back on the matter I do not recall feeling shocked by information shared during that conversation. Should information provided to me by the child have been of a shocking nature I believe I would have recalled such information. My summation is that because I have no recollection of the conversation, the child was likely to have minimised my assistance and/or advice.
18. On the 14th February 2013 I was shown a copy of a document by Detective Mison dated the 14 May 1991. Review of that document does not refresh my recollection of the meeting held with the child. In relation to the comment contained within the document stating 'the legal implications and to represent her interests during the police investigation' indicates to me that I could have explained the process, legalities and rights of a victim in making a complaint to police. Information I would have provided to the child would have been to allow her to make an informed choice and to provide her with necessary support if required.
19. From my own personal beliefs and values, and if the allegation was that of a sexual nature, I would have encouraged her to make a formal complaint. Should the child not wished to have pursued the complaint I would have respected her wishes and ensured appropriate supports were available.
20. I do not recall hearing anything further after my meeting with the child, or being advised that the matter was followed up. I would have left my details with the child should she wish to talk with me further. From memory, although an unusual task, the actual event in my mind was not a huge event or shocking. I know from memory that the purpose of my trip to the John Oxley Centre was to visit this child and no other.
21. I may have provided a very broad briefing to staff of John Oxley or Police should I have been asked. I cannot recall if I did. If I had it would have been along the lines such as 'She's been explained the process' in my capacity as a legal advisor.
22. Although it was an unusual and unique task to attend the John Oxley Youth Centre and speak with this child, I believe that it was appropriate as it fell within

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The first signature is on the left, under the 'Witness signature' label, and is a cursive signature that appears to be 'A. Lee'. The second signature is on the right, under the 'Signature of officer' label, and is a more complex, stylized cursive signature.

the charter of C.O.I.L.S. C.O.I.L.S was an organisation able to provide independent advice and was freely available to be accessed.


23. After leaving C.O.I.L.S I continued in both private practice and later was employed in the Juvenile Justice Branch in the Department of Justice and then later at Families Youth and Community Care where I further developed my expertise in juvenile justice law in Queensland.
24. From my personal experience, I would not be surprised if she [the child] would not have a recollection of our meeting as a result of her wanting to minimise the situation at the time.
25. On the 12th February 2013 I was contacted by Detective Inspector Peter Brewer, who sent me an email with the details of Mr Gordon Harris representative of Shelly Neale. I contacted Mr Harris and during this conversation he advised me that I had approval from his client to waive any legal professional privilege in relation to this matter in order to assist the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry.
26. On the 14th February 2013 I spoke with Detectives Mison and Parer of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry at which time I provided them with this my statement.



Heather Ruth DEN HOUTING



Declaration

This written statement by me dated 14th February 2013 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 4 is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

 Signature
Signed at Brisbane this 18th day of February 20 13

Witnessed:

 Signature
Name J. A. MISON Rank Det Sgt Reg. No. 8065

Witness signature.......... Signature of officer..........