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QUEENSLAND CHILD PROTECTION COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Statement of Witness

Table with 2 columns: Field Name, Value. Fields include Name of Witness, Date of Birth, Address and contact details, Occupation, Officer taking statement, Date taken.

I, Irene Kathleen PARFITT nee COLMER state;

- 1. I am a former employee of the Department of Family Services [herein referred to as the department].
2. I commenced employment with the department on the 25th January 1996 at the Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Centre. There I performed duties in the capacity of Kitchen hand. In February 1987 I left Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Centre however continued working for the department at the Bayside Adolescent Boarding Inc. and the Windsor Youth Shelter for approximately six months. Around August 1987 I commenced employment at the John Oxley Youth Centre [herein referred to as JOYC]. At JOYC I held the position of youth worker, later attaining the position of senior youth worker. My duties as youth work required me to work in a designated family type unit overseeing children in custody. I would undertake duties with the children such as waking them up, having meals with them and teaching them basic skills and functions. I remained employed at JOYC until August 1990 before leaving and commencing employment with Corrective Services (10/09/1990-23/08/2001 & 20/04/2011-23/3/2012).

Signature of Witness: [Handwritten signature]

Signature of Officer: [Handwritten signature]

3. During my period of employment I became aware of problems arising at JOYC. These issues I would describe as being caused by staff not being sufficiently supported, a lack of staff training, violence committed against staff, lack of control of detainees and the use of controlled restraints within the facility.
4. Under my previous manager at Sir Leslie Wilson, Janice Doyle, the function of that facility centred around both structure and immediate supervision of the children. I recall that upon commencing at JOYC, Peter Coyne, the manager, focused on a more welfare orientated approach of the children. Physical layout of the centre, which I would describe as claustrophobic, and the mixing of sexes did not help either. Further, there was ongoing tension which I would describe as rivalry and bitchiness amongst staff competing for limited senior positions.
5. Shortly after finishing up at JOYC I was made aware of and asked to participate in an Inquiry relating to JOYC. I do not have recollection as to how or who approached me but believe I may have been working for Corrective Services at the time. This may have been some time around March or September 1990. I recall still being with my ex-husband Brad Parfitt at the time of giving the statement.
6. I recall attending what I believe was the Children's Court in Brisbane. I entered a room which I remember having soft wood furnishings. There was a male person in his 50's-60's present. I do not recall anyone else being present in the room that day. Our conversation was relaxed and I believe it was being recorded. I believe that sometime after this conversation I was asked to sign a statement of this interview.
7. When I spoke to this man I recall telling him about an incident that had occurred at JOYC involving a female child Annette who was 14/15 years old. I had spoken about this matter as there had been media hype about it as well as mention of numerous riots at JOYC happening around the same time. I formed the belief that this is what the Inquiry was about.

Signature of Witness:

B. K. Parfitt

Signature of Officer:

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8. I subsequently spoke at the Inquiry of a matter involving Annette. I remember thinking 'Why haven't these boys been charged'? The matter related to detainees having gone out on an excursion and sexual intercourse alleged to have occurred. I personally had not been on shift the day the incident had occurred, and spoke of my knowledge third hand. The extent of my knowledge was that there had been an excursion to a park of some sort. There had been male and female education officers on the trip. The incident involved Annette and 4 male children aged 14/15 years old. Annette later had to either been taken to a doctor or a doctor had been brought in to JOYC. As a result of what had happened excursions stopped for a period of time afterwards. Annette was moved to a different unit at JOYC and I think the boys involved were moved to Westbrook sometime later. I remember Peter Coyne being the manager at the time the excursion had take place and he was very young.
9. I do not have any other recollection of any other things that were said during this interview.
10. I believe that Gordon Teasdale gave evidence to this Inquiry. I was of the belief that everyone at JOYC was to.
11. I have other recollection of sexual abuse allegations/impropriety which occurred during my time at JOYC. One of those occasions related to me being asked to accompany a female detainee of 14/15 years ^{Possibility of} [REDACTED] to the Goodna medical centre for the morning after pill. I had been informed that the child had gone home for a night unsupervised. Such overnight outings could occur just prior to release. The child had returned to JOYC and I believe had made disclosures to a counsellor that during the overnight stay she had unprotected sex. As a result of the discourse I was approached to take [REDACTED] to the Goodna medical centre which was opposite Red Roster. I remember this event clearly as I was lectured by the Doctor for taking a child of her age for the morning after pill. I personally was disgusted at the situation myself as I had not been in the system


Signature of Witness: J. K. [Signature]

Signature of Officer: [Signature]

for too long. I may have been asked to do a report in relation to that event but honestly do not know. I believe that such disclosures by the child should have been reported at least to the centre manger, however unlikely to be reported higher as no charges were in the system. I think this event may have been late 1988 early 1989.

12. Another event in relation to sexual abuse allegations was when myself and Sabina Konnicanin were investigated after a complaint made by a male detainee who had been in for rape. He had stated that we had 'come on to him and touched him'. I only found out about the complaint third hand from a counsellor at JOYC. I was never approached or asked about it personally nor interviewed over it. I left JOYC soon after as there was just no safety net for staff.
13. I did not personally see any sexual abuses or concerns between staff and detainees during my time at JOYC. I just recall there being a lot of violence. Too much power was given to the detainees. Further there was it seemed no paperwork trail for incidents and injuries. There was little accountability.
14. What stands out now on reflection after leaving JOYC and working in other correctional facilities is that JOYC lacked training and operating procedures if something happened.
15. Whilst employed at JOYC I was a union member. I cannot recall ever proving any information or raising any concerns to my union.
16. On the 27th September 2012 Detective Parer attended my home address at which time I provided her with my knowledge of this matter.
17. During this conversation Detective Parer produced to me a photocopy of a hand written document dated 3rd October 1989 signed 'Very Concerned'. I am able to state that I am not the author of this document nor do I recognise the handwriting contained in the document.

Signature of Witness: J. K. Paragwidt

Signature of Officer: 

18. During my employment at JOYC recall fellow employees: Anne Dutney (Deputy manager), Youth workers: Marianna Pearce, Loraine Hayward, Fred Feige, Eileen Bisby (Senior), Trevor Cox (Senior), Jimmy Douglas, Lorraine Draper, Jane French, Scotty Healing (Cook), 'Juddy', Sabina Konnicanin, Peter McNeven, Nolan, Brad Parfitt (Casual), Rudi Pikelharing, 'Smithy', Gordon Teasdale, Bruce Cassidy (Senior), Mark Mills, June West, Paul Hamson, Colin Bray (Senior/Principal), Chris Edwards, Daryl Hood, Lyn Draper, Gary Truloff, Danny Lannen, Wayne Christensen, Jenny Foote (Counsellor/Psychologist), Lorraine McGreggor, Michael Roch, Ted Guzowski and teacher Karen Merciadies.

I.K. Parfitt

Irene Kathleen PARFITT

Declaration

This written statement by me dated 27/9/2012 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 5 is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I.K. Parfitt Signature

Signed at Forest Lake this 5 day of November 2012.

Witnessed:

PB Signature

Name Peter Brewer Rank Det Ins Reg. No. 7160

Signature of Witness: *I.K. Parfitt*

Signature of Officer: *PB 7160*