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QCPCI Reference: Authors initials / eDocs document number

Date: 26.11.2012

Exhibit number: 11



QUEENSLAND CHILD PROTECTION  
COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Statement of Witness

<i>Name of Witness</i>	Gordon COOPER
<i>Date of Birth</i>	02/03/1939
<i>Address and contact details</i>	Known to Detective Senior Constable Denise PARER
<i>Occupation</i>	Retired
<i>Officer taking statement</i>	Detective Senior Constable Denise PARER
<i>Date taken</i>	03/10/2012

I, Gordon COOPER state;

1. I am a former employee of the Department of Family and Youth Services [herein referred to as the Department].
2. I commenced employment with the department sometime in 1985/1986. Originally, in 1981, I commenced employment as a teacher at the Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Detention Centre. There I was employed by the Department of Education, however around 1985/1986 teachers within the youth detention centre came under the supervision and control of the Department of Family and Youth Services. In October 1987, I transferred from the Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Detention Centre and commenced teaching at the newly opened John Oxley Youth Centre [herein referred to as JOYC]. I remained employed as a teacher at JOYC until my retirement in February 1994.
3. My role as teacher was to instruct the child detainees in remedial subjects such as mathematics, language and social studies. I also provided manual arts instruction. Essentially my role as a teacher was to assess the child's current ability and improve on it. My employment conditions were similar to that of a regular state school teacher as I worked 9am-3pm Monday-Friday and had the regular school holiday periods off. The major difference was that of class sizes. At JOYC I instructed 3-4 children at a time for 1

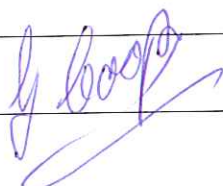
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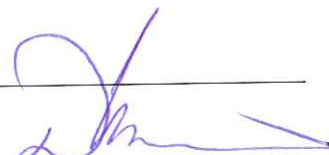
½ hour sessions. On occasions I accompanied selected detainees on excursions external to JOYC.

4. During the majority of my employment at JOYC I recall the centre's manager as being Peter Coyne. Whilst Peter was the manager I believe Anne Dutney was the deputy manager. Later on I recall these positions were undertaken by manager Ian McIntyre and deputy managers Barry Collings & relieving deputy manager Rudi Pekelharing.
5. Other staff I recall working at JOYC are as follows: Senior/Youth Workers – Elizabeth Bisby, Irene Colmer, Trevor Cox, Jim Douglas, Lynn Draper, Scotty Healing, Brad Parfitt, Dave Smith, Gordon Teasdale, Bruce Cassidy, Michael Roch, Lex Clemence, Darryl Hood, Mark Mills, Brian Cartledge, Colin Bray, Archie Olde-Woblers, Olly Isaacs and Ken Kleidon. I further recall staff members Judy French, Bruce Goggins, 'Connie', Peter McNeven, Peter McNeven's mother (Cleaner), Alexander Meulenberg (Mechanic), Sara Moynihan (Art teacher), Brian Parker (Admin officer), Loraine McGreggor (Nurse), Jeff Manitzky (Youth worker / psychologist), Jody Preston (Administration), Bob O'Hannley (Teacher), and Karen Merciadies (Teacher).
6. Whilst employed at JOYC I recall being asked to furnish a report to the then manager Peter Coyne. The incident on which I was to report related to a field excursion to the Lower Portals area of the Mt Barney National Park. On that date I, in the company of fellow staff members Bob O'Hannley, Jeff Manitzky, Karen Mersiadies and Sarah Moynihan, took several male and female detainees on the field excursion. Around lunchtime that day I recall being near a creek and several of the children within the group had moved away from us out of our sight. Jeff Manitzky and I went to look for the children up a nearby hillside as we suspected they would more than likely move away from the creek line. Jeff and I located the group on a nearby hillside and ushered them back to the rest of the group at the creek. After a further period of time at the creek the group walked back towards the car park where our vehicles were parked. I recall that as I was packing the vehicles with everyone's back packs I recall being advised that some of the boys had taken off. I remained at the car park with the vehicles and other children whilst the other staff members conducted an immediate search of the area. It was then arranged that Bob and I would return to JOYC with the remaining children and make a report to Police of the ones who had absconded.

Signature of Witness:



Signature of Officer:





7. Upon our return to JOYC I remember being met by Peter Coyne. It was around that time that I had learnt that the four boys who had absconded had been located and were on their way back to JOYC.
8. During discussions with Peter Coyne I was requested by him to complete an incident report in relation to the matter. As a result I authored a hand written document which I then provided to Peter Coyne.
9. I cannot remember if it had been later that day or the following day that I was advised by Peter that one of the girls from the excursion, Annette Harding, had made allegations that she had been sexually assaulted by one of the male detainees whilst on the excursion. Peter indicated to me that the girl was to undergo a pregnancy test as a result. At the time of Peter informing me of this I had no knowledge of such matters and was surprised by this information.
10. Again I do not know the time frame involved, however I remember sometime after, Peter advised me that the female detainee's pregnancy test had returned a negative result. I believe Peter had told me this as a courtesy. Nothing further was ever spoken about this matter.
11. It would have been six or more years ago I was approached by Queensland Police officers asking me to outline my knowledge of the above described incident. I provided officers with my recollections of events and advised them that I had not learnt of any sexual assault allegations which were said to have occurred during the field excursion until being advised by Peter Coyne sometime after the excursions return.
12. I further recall being approached by Queensland Police officers on a second occasion sometime after 2000, well past after I had retired. On that occasion I recall the Police asking me about a field excursion I had accompanied several detainees on to the Logan Reserve at Wivenhoe Dam. I recalled having been on the said excursion with fellow staff members Alexander Meulenberg and youth worker [REDACTED]. On the day of the excursion I do not recall there being any issues of concern identified by or to me. It was during my conversation with police that I learned that sexual assault allegations had been made by one of the female detainees. Prior to police providing me with this information I had no knowledge of this matter.

Signature of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_



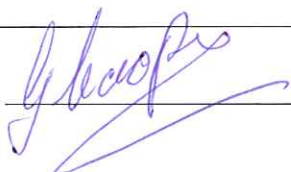
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13. In late 1989 early 1990 I became aware that an Inquiry was being conducted at JOYC. I recall not knowing what it was about and having to ask fellow staff members. I vaguely remember being advised that it had to do with Peter Coyne's behaviours. I recall that a gentleman in his late 50's early 60's attended JOYC to speak with staff in the meeting room at the centre. I was never asked to be interviewed by this man nor did I ever provide any statement or submission to the Inquiry. I remember feeling at the time that 'we', the teachers, were insignificant to the operations of the centre and not important enough to speak with.
14. During my period of employment at JOYC I was a member of the Teachers Union. My only involvement with the teachers union during my employ was in reaction to attempts being made to transfer the teacher's wages from the Education Award to the Public Service Award. This occurred sometime in the preceding 12 months before my retirement in 1994. At no other time did I make any approach to the union about the operations of JOYC.
15. At no other time have I given any evidence, made any statement or submission to any other person or Inquiry in relation to my employment at JOYC or in relation to any sexual abuse allegations.
16. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2012 Detective Parer attended my home address at which time I provided her with my knowledge of these matters. During this conversation Detective Parer showed me photocopies of several documents. My response to those documents are as follows:
17. Document one titled 'Outline report on the excursion from John Oxley Youth Centre to the 'Lower portals' area of Mt Barney National Park.  
Upon review of this document it appears to be an accurate typed copy of the original hand written incident report I provided to Peter Coyne after the field excursion to Mt Barney National Park. I do not recall typing this statement however recognise and acknowledge the signature on it as my own.
18. Document two titled 'Pre-planning form'

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Signature of Witness:



Signature of Officer:



Upon review of this document I recognise it as being a copy of a hand written document authored by me in preparation to the excursion to the Mt Barney National Park.


19. Document three: 'Letter signed very concerned'.

I am not the author of this document nor do I recognise the hand writing contained in the document.

Gordon COOPER

**Declaration**

This written statement by me dated 5<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2012 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 5 is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

 Signature

Signed at EATONS HILL this 5<sup>TH</sup> day of OCTOBER 20 12

Witnessed:

 Signature

Name DENIS PARER Rank DSC Reg. No. 10736

Signature of Witness:



Signature of Officer:

