

QCPCI Reference:

Date: 22.1.2013Exhibit number: 272

**QUEENSLAND CHILD PROTECTION  
COMMISSION OF INQUIRY**

**Statement of Witness**

<i>Name of Witness</i>	Karen Mersiades
<i>Date of Birth</i>	31/05/1947
<i>Address and contact details</i>	Known to Det. Senior Sergeant Barber
<i>Occupation</i>	Retired
<i>Officer taking statement</i>	Det. Senior Sergeant Brett Barber
<i>Date taken</i>	

I, Karen Mersiades state;

1. I am a former employee of the John Oxley Youth Centre (JOYC).
2. I am a qualified teacher. I resigned from the Department of Education to commence work with the Department of Children's Services in 1984 as one of the first teachers employed by the department. I initially worked at the Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Centre at Wilston, however after a couple of years the JOYC opened and shortly after it opened I transferred across to JOYC. I remained with the Department for approximately 14 years before resigning in about 2002. I worked at JOYC from the year it opened until it closed.
3. On 8 October 2012, Detective Senior Sergeant Brett Barber attended my residence and spoke with me regarding my experiences at JOYC and some events that followed.
4. When I started at JOYC there were three teachers in the teaching unit; Ken Turnbull, Gordon Cooper and I. The teacher in charge was Ken Turnbull. After about twelve months, Ken left and Bob Hanley took over as the Teacher in charge.
5. There was also an art teacher at JOYC who was not part of the teaching unit. I'm not sure if she was a qualified teacher. The art teachers changed a couple of times. She would have answered to the manager, not the head teacher. The teachers didn't work

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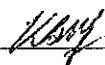
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closely with the art teacher. We did know each other and talked about a whole variety of things, but we didn't socialise together. The teachers didn't socialise much together either.

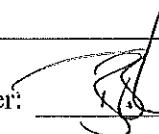
6. There was also a nurse at YOYC. I don't recall her name.
7. I recall the manager at JOC was Peter and the deputy manager was Jenny Foote. Detective Barber asked if the manager's surname could have been Coyne and I remembered that the manager's name was Peter Coyne. I remember Anne Dutney later came and replaced Jenny as the deputy manager.
8. I also remember Lynn Draper was a senior youth worker and a Lorraine who was also a senior youth worker. I also remember Col Bray. He was also a senior youth worker.
9. I remember that after the Public Service Act review, they decided that education was the core business of the Education Department and we all transferred back to Education. We then got more staff and I relieved as the principal for a couple of years.
10. I recall the Heiner Inquiry being conducted while I was a JOYC. I gave evidence. They asked for people to come forward. I don't recall who asked for people to come forward. I was advised when and where my interview was. The interviews were held in the conference room of the centre. There were two people in the room, Heiner himself and a woman whom I knew from Sir Leslie Wilson days. She was a nun. Her first name was Barbara. I don't remember her surname. No one else was in the room. I think it was taped. They asked me questions about Peter Coyne. What I think of him as a manager. I told them that I thought he was an efficient manager, but it seemed to me that they wanted to hear bad things not good things, so I wasn't much use to them. I did not provide any kind of written submission.
11. The inquiry seemed to be driven by a few youth workers who had a grievance against Peter Coyne and they were out to get him. Some youth workers were always whining about not agreeing with directions they were given.
12. The interview questions were pretty innocuous. There were questions about one of the children being chained to a fence overnight. The interview was less than ten minutes.

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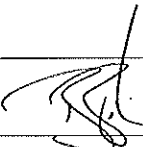
Heiner asked the questions. Heiner never asked me any questions regarding sexual abuse and I didn't provide any information regarding sexual abuse.

13. I have never given a statement or evidence to any other inquiry.
14. I also remember an incident that occurred during an excursion to Mount Barney National Park. I think the trip was in the first couple of years of JOYC opening as Sarah and Jenny (Foote) were still there. Gordon Cooper planned the trip because he was a great outdoorsman. Gordon, Bob Hanley and I went along with Jeff Manitzky and Sarah the art teacher. The students were [REDACTED] I don't remember his surname, Annette Harding and [REDACTED] I don't remember her surname, and some others. I think there were about six boys and two girls, maybe about nine students. There were about five adults and nine students.
15. We took a government car and a minivan and parked in the parking area. We started to walk up Mount Barney. Jeff and I and Sarah could not keep up to the pace. Gordon and Bob hooted up the mountain with all of the kids except for [REDACTED] and went out of sight. When we got to a certain point we could go left or right and we didn't know which way they went. After a while we thought we had taken the wrong turn so went back, and went left, and then we found Bob and Gordon. Jeff said, "Where are the kids?"
16. Bob and Gordon said, "They are up there on the rocks behind us."
17. I couldn't get up there so Jeff went up. Then they all came down.
18. They had a swim we all had lunch and then we went back to the cars. I let two boys go to the toilets but then never returned. They disappeared into the bush so we called the police. Bob, Gordon and Sarah took the mini bus with the kids back to the Centre. Jeff and I waited for the police who later returned the boys and we drove them back to the centre.
19. On the way back to the Centre, Jeff said to me, "I think something happened up on the rocks."

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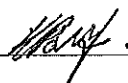
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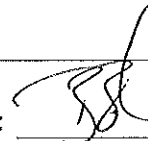
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20. When we got back to the Centre we met with Peter Coyne and all wrote a statement about what had happened.
21. Jeff later told me that the next morning he was watching the boys playing pool and [REDACTED] was complaining because he was the only one that 'missed out' on having sex with Annette. Jeff said that he then knew something had happened and advised Peter and Jenny.
22. I had nothing further to do with the matter. I believe the mother was brought in to the centre when Annette was interviewed. I later saw Jenny Foote who had been in the interview. Jenny told me that when the mother asked Annette how many of the boys were white, Annette said, "None of them", and they both burst out laughing.
23. I don't know what happened after that.
24. Detective Barber then showed me a document that I recognised as the incident report I completed for Peter Coyne after the Mount Barney Incident.
25. As I read the document I recognised Sarah's surname to be Moynihan.
26. My recollection is that I hand wrote the report in the first instance. I don't have any recollection of typing this incident report. This report may have been typed up by the girls in the office and I later signed it. I may have given my hand written report to Peter Coyne.
27. I believe I also wrote a ministerial briefing note regarding the Annette Harding incident.
28. Detective Barber showed me a list of names. I recognised Eileen Bisby; Colin Bray; Brian Cartledge; Bruce Cassidy; Irene Colmer; Trevor Cox; Jimmy Douglas; Chris Edwards; Jan French; Geoff Galas; Guy Gibson; Paul Hamson; Lorraine Hayward; Daryl Hood; Margaret Jack; Marge Judd; Arena Karatsis; Rudy Peckelharing; Jane Thirnbeck; Gary Truloff; and June West as senior youth workers. Lorraine Draper; Mark Freemantle; Sabina Konicanin; Danny Lannen; George McAulay; Peter McNeven; Brad Parfitt; Mariana Pearce; Vince Robertson; David Smith; and Gordon Teasdale were youth workers. Alex Meulenberg was the Trades teacher. Sarah Moynihan was the art teacher.

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Jane Mumford was a cook. Bruce Goggins; Scott Healing; Michael Roch; Jill Wesche; and Mark Mills were unit officers. Trudy Lewis was Anne Dutney's sister. Jodie Preston was an office worker.

29. Detective Barber also showed me a document signed 'Very Concerned'. I did not write this document. It is not my hand writing. I did not recognise the handwriting and could not assist with identifying the author.

*K. Mersiades*

Karen Mersiades

**Declaration**

This written statement by me dated 16/01/2013 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to Five is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

*K. Mersiades* Signature

Signed at Brisbane this 16<sup>th</sup> day of January 2013

Witnessed: *[Signature]* Signature

Name B. Barber Rank Det. Senior Sergeant Reg. No. 6382

Signature of Witness:

*[Signature]*

Signature of Officer: \_\_\_\_\_