



Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

Name BCG
Address Known to the Commission
Date 10 July 2015

1. 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 to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. 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.
3. I was born BCG in Brisbane, Queensland, REDACTED 1971. My full name is now BCG a name my children chose for me. I had previously been known as BCG and BCG having taken the surnames of my partners at the time. I am 43 years old and have four children, the oldest of whom is 23 years old.
4. I am currently in my final year of a law degree and I work in the hairdressing and beauty industry.
5. I was formally baptised as a Jehovah's Witness when I was about 16.

Early life in the Jehovah's Witnesses Church

6. My father is BCH (sometimes called BCH and my mother is BCI
Together my mother and father had seven children, of whom I am the second eldest. I have an older sister who is two years older than me. I also have three younger brothers and two younger sisters. REDACTED

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7. I don't know exactly when my parents became Jehovah's Witnesses, but I think my father joined a congregation in St George in Queensland when I was very young. My mother joined the same Jehovah's Witnesses congregation a short time after my father. My father initially worked as a REDACTED and later worked as an REDACTED. My mother stayed at home to look after the children.
8. When I was about ten years old, my family moved to REDACTED of Mareeba in Queensland. My parents joined the Mareeba Jehovah's Witnesses Congregation.
9. My father was a very strict and highly regarded Jehovah's Witness. When I was about 13 he was appointed as a Ministerial Servant at the Mareeba Congregation. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that when a man is appointed as an Elder or a Ministerial Servant, he is appointed by God's (Jehovah's) Holy Spirit to judge others. My father took his role as a Ministerial Servant very seriously. He used to quote the scriptures constantly, both at the Congregation's Kingdom Hall and at home. He regularly delivered talks from an elevated platform at the Jehovah's Witnesses meetings at the Kingdom Hall. My father was also given special responsibilities by the Congregation Elders, including conducting private bible studies with other congregation members, managing groups of Jehovah's Witnesses for Field Service (or door-to-door preaching), and teaching and counselling the Congregation.
10. When I was a child my father made me and my siblings attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall at least three times a week. There was a two hour meeting every Sunday, another two hour meeting on a Friday, and usually a one hour meeting mid-week. The meetings involved the Elders and Ministerial Servants teaching and counselling the Congregation about keeping the Congregation "clean" and righteous. In order to prepare for the meetings, my brothers and sisters and I had to study the bible and read daily scriptures.

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11. During the meetings my father would pressure me and my siblings to offer answers to questions posed by the Elders and Ministerial Servants leading the meetings. He would also make me deliver scriptural talks before the Congregation from the platform in the Kingdom Hall and take part in Field Service.

Jehovah's Witnesses rules

12. In the Jehovah's Witnesses Church, men are at the top of the hierarchy and hold all of the authority next to Jehovah. Man is the head of the house and his wife and children have to obey him and refrain from questioning his authority. Adult females are next in line, and then children are at the bottom of the hierarchy.
13. There were many rules to comply with and things that I had to do in order to be a good Jehovah's Witness. As head of the household, my father was the person who dictated and enforced compliance with the rules in our house. He was also answerable to the Elders in the Congregation and I think he was therefore really keen to impress the Elders and show how obedient his family was. In our house for example, we were only allowed to watch certain television programs and listen to certain radio programs. We were not allowed to read anything other than Jehovah's Witness material.
14. As a child growing up in a strict Jehovah's Witness family, the Church and my father dictated who I was and wasn't allowed to associate with. I certainly wasn't allowed to associate with anybody outside of the Jehovah's Witnesses community, other than the children at the school I attended. Even when I was at school, the Jehovah's Witnesses Church decided which lessons I could and couldn't attend. For example, I was not allowed to attend sex education lessons at school as the Jehovah's Witnesses counselled that it was the responsibility of Jehovah's Witness parents to

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teach their children about sex. My father also never allowed me to attend any form of extra-curricular activity (for example, sports) because the Church advised against it.

15. In the late 1980s, school attendance in Years 11 and 12 was not compulsory. My parents didn't allow me to stay at school after Year 10 because choosing higher education over Jehovah was frowned upon by the Church. Even after I finished school in Year 10, I wasn't allowed to pursue full-time work because I needed time to dedicate to preaching.

Isolation and the threat of disfellowshipping

16. My father used to tell me I was headstrong and that I needed more training to be more obedient, but it didn't matter how hard I tried, I was never good enough. He used to tell people in the Congregation and my family that I was a troublemaker. To the Congregation he appeared righteous and spiritual, but at home my father had a very short fuse and could become violent and abusive. He used to beat me frequently, often using a black leather strap that left welts on my skin. Out of my siblings, I was the one who bore the brunt of his aggression.
17. As a Jehovah's Witness I was taught to love and fear Jehovah and to respect my father and be obedient to my parents. I was taught never to question my parents or their decisions.
18. My father always threatened to kick me out and treat me as though I was disfellowshipped if I ever disobeyed him. A person would be disfellowshipped if they had sinned and did not adhere to the counsel given by Elders in a committee meeting. Disfellowshipped means excommunicated from the Church and nobody (family and friends included) would be allowed to associate with or talk to you until you were reinstated. Disfellowshipped people were ostracised and actively avoided by members of the congregation.

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19. I was always terrified of being kicked out of home or disfellowshipped because I feared what Jehovah would do to me. I was taught from a young age that people outside the Church (referred to by Jehovah's Witnesses as "worldly people") were bad and not to be trusted as they served Satan. Even the prospect of speaking to the police was extremely scary as they were also considered to be very bad people.

20. I felt enormous pressure from the Church and from my father to be a perfect obedient child. By the time I was in my early to mid-teens, I felt very isolated and alone. I became quite depressed and at times suicidal. I was allowed to see a "worldly" doctor about my depression, but I was forbidden from speaking about the Church as it would bring reproach on Jehovah's name.

21. By the time I was about 16, I was determined to leave home for many reasons, including that I wanted to escape the Jehovah's Witnesses without being disfellowshipped; I wanted to do it on my own terms. By this I mean that I wanted to fade away from the Church and become inactive while retaining my faith as this course was less likely to result in punishment from Jehovah. It is hard to explain, but I didn't want to be shunned by the only people that I knew as well as live in fear of Jehovah.

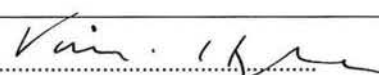
Sexual abuse

22. I think my father abused me when I was about five years old. I don't remember anything specific from that time, but I do recall feeling extremely uncomfortable and scared when my father put a nappy on me at night before bed. That memory made a lot more sense to me once I discovered what my father did to my sisters at a similar age.

23. When I was in Year 7, I recall my father asking me and my older sister to give him a kiss. It was a really sloppy kiss on the lips and I remember thinking that it wasn't right. I didn't like it at all. My

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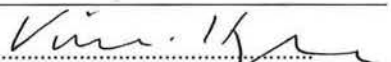
father used to tell me I was "sexy" and would sometimes say to me *"You have it, but your sister doesn't"*. My father often removed my bedroom door because I would either shut it to get dressed or lock it to try to keep him out.

24. I don't remember any other clear instances of feeling so uncomfortable again until I was 17. I suspect that I may have blocked a lot of things out.

25. In October of 1988, my mother took my siblings to Brisbane to see Expo '88. They were away for about two weeks. I had just turned 17 years old and I wanted to save money to buy a car, so I stayed at home with my father. Although my father beat me a lot, he could also treat me like a normal person. I wanted him to be proud of me, to accept me, and to recognise that I wasn't bad or evil. I thought it would be a good idea to stay at home with him and cook for him whilst my mother was away. I didn't think anything of staying alone at home with him because he was my father.

26. While my mother and siblings were away at Expo '88, my father sexually assaulted me on a number of occasions. The first time that he tried to have sex with me, he came naked into my bed at night whilst I was sleeping and touched me all over my body. When I protested I remember him saying to me *"Shhhh, it's okay I'm your father. Be obedient to your father"*. I couldn't believe what was happening. After the first time, I tried to lock my bedroom door but this made him so angry. While my mother was away, my father touched me and tried to have sex with me on at least four or five different occasions. I resisted as much as I could each time, but he was a violent man and prone to snap. I was absolutely petrified of him and tried not to make him angry. While my father sexually assaulted me, he quoted bible scriptures and referred to the scriptures about being more obedient that he made me put up on my bedroom wall. He said to me while he sexually assaulted me *"You have to be obedient to me"*.

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27. While my mother was away my father also gave me alcohol and made me watch pornographic movies with him.
28. After my father had touched me and tried to have sex with me, he behaved completely normally towards me, as if nothing had happened. I convinced myself that it was all nightmares, but I always knew that it was real. I used to pray to Jehovah to put angels around my bed to stop my father from coming to me, but he didn't help me and my father didn't stop.
29. While my mother and siblings were away at Expo '88, my father took me on a motorbike to a Jehovah's Witness working bee in Cooktown. When we got home, my back was really sore from the motorbike ride and my father told me he would massage my back for me. He started massaging my back, but moved down and started touching me where I didn't want him to. I told him I didn't want him to do that, but he said *"Shhh, be quiet. I am your father. Be obedient"*.
30. On the last occasion that I remember my father sexually assaulting me while my mother and siblings were away in Brisbane, he started touching himself and tried to make me touch him as well. When I refused, he said to me with money in his hand, *"I'll give you \$300 to help with your car and \$300 after if you bend over the bed"*. I said to him *"I don't want to do it. I don't need your money"*. My father became very angry and pushed me onto the bed. I managed to get away from him and ran outside the house. My father chased me through the backyard of our house, but I managed to escape to a neighbour's property.
31. Once my mother and siblings returned from Expo '88, my father started to tell everyone that I was *"mental"*, a *"nutcase"*, and that I *"served the devil"*. He also continued to tell everyone I was a *"troublemaker"*. I think that because he was so respected in the Congregation, the way he treated me dictated how everybody else in the Congregation, including my own mother and family, treated me. My father also tightened his control over who I could talk to in the

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Congregation, forbidding me to speak to anybody who he thought I might tell about the abuse. If I broke his rules, he flogged me.

32. I knew that as a Jehovah's Witness it was my duty to report any wrongdoing to the Elders in the Congregation. Although I wanted to tell them, I was terrified of doing so. My father had threatened to beat me and to kick me out of home if I ever spoke to anyone without him present.

Physical abuse

33. I am sure that everyone in the Congregation knew that my father was a violent man and beat me frequently. I was often forced to attend meetings having just been beaten by my father with his belt and still bleeding from the welts.
34. On one occasion after my mother returned from Expo '88, I remember that my father wanted to get into the bathroom when I was in there. He couldn't get in because I had locked the door, which I wasn't allowed to do. He bashed so violently on the door that it finally broke down. Just before the door broke, I had managed to grab a towel to cover myself and I was standing just behind the door. The door hit me in the face. Not long after that, I went to a meeting at the Kingdom Hall with a black eye. I remember that one of the Elders, Zini Ali (Dino Ali's brother), asked me *"What happened to your eye?"*. I replied to him *"My father kicked the bathroom door in my face"*. Zini just laughed in response and said *"Oh did he!"*. I felt that Zini was dismissing what I had told him as though it were a joke.
35. After my mother returned from Expo '88 the sexual abuse stopped but my father kept knocking me around. He took the door to my bedroom off its hinges. There was no privacy and no safety for me at home, not even in the toilet, which had no lock or properly closing door.

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36. Some months after the sexual abuse that happened while the rest of my family was away, I started to leave Watchtower magazines open around our house so that my father could see the articles on misconduct. I remember saying to him on one occasion *"I know what you did to me and it's wrong"*. He said to me in reply *"You're mental"*.

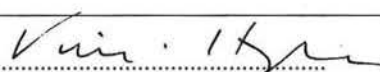
Reporting my father's abuse

37. My father left home some eight or nine months after October 1988. Before my father left, I tried to talk about the abuse to Lyn Bowditch, who was married to one of the Elders at the Congregation, Kevin Bowditch. Kevin was a friend of my father's who had helped build parts of our house. I said to Lyn *"I need to talk about some stuff that's happened between me and dad"*. Lyn spoke to Kevin and reported back to me *"Kevin says that he can't speak to you without your father present"*.

38. I also tried speaking to another Elder called Dino Ali. Dino was also a good friend of my father's. I remember calling Dino on one occasion from the pay phones near the Post Office in Mareeba while on my lunch break from my part-time job. I remember sobbing and saying to Dino *"I want to talk to you about things in my family that you don't know about. What my father is doing"*. Dino said to me *"No, you have to talk to your father first or he must be present"*. I said to him *"I can't do that"*. All I can remember after that is crying. I called Dino to try to talk to him about my father at least twice.

39. In May or June of 1989 — about eight months after my father sexually abused me while the rest of my family was away — my father left my mother for another woman and moved out of the family home. Once my father left, I found the courage to tell my friend (who later became my husband), BCG, about the abuse. I told him that *"My father has been rude to me"*.

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BCJ's first response after I said this was "Are you making this up to get back at your father for belting you all the time?". I said to BCG "No and if you don't believe me then no one will". The next day when I saw BCG again he told me he had spoken to my father, and he said to me "It all makes sense now". BCG did not tell me everything that he and my father spoke about. I don't recall what BCG said to me, but I do remember getting the impression that my father had admitted to BCG that something had happened. After that BCG said to me "We need to go to the Elders". At the time, BCG and another friend of mine were probably the only people in the whole congregation who treated me nicely.

40. Soon after I told BCG he arranged a meeting between us and Dino Ali at Dino's workplace. I remember saying to Dino Ali "My father has been rude to me". He seemed incensed and said to me "You do know that this is a very serious allegation you are making". I said to Dino "I know; that's why I'm saying it". I assume that Dino then spoke to Kevin and to another Elder called Ron de Rooy because within the next couple of days they wanted me to attend what I understood to be a "Committee Meeting".

41. I didn't tell my mother about what had happened because she was an emotional wreck after my father had left.

The Committee Meetings

42. I remember meeting with the Elders (Dino, Ron, and Kevin) by myself on a number of occasions for a couple of hours at a time. On one occasion, they brought my father into the room so that I could tell him what I had told the Elders. I cannot recall exactly how many times I had to meet with the Elders. I didn't want to be there and I felt so uncomfortable. I had nobody to support me. I don't remember anyone really explaining the purpose of the Committee Meetings to me, but I understood at the time that the Elders were investigating what I had alleged.

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43. At the first Committee Meeting, the Elders sat me in a room at the Kingdom Hall and came in one at a time and asked me to tell them what had happened. After that they came in together and asked me more questions. They repeated this process several times. It felt like I was being interrogated and that the Elders were trying to find inconsistencies in my story to catch me out. Now in hindsight I understand that the Elders were investigating whether or not I was a credible witness and if my allegations could have been truthful.
44. Because the Elders were all male, and all were friends of my father's, I was reluctant to speak to them about what had happened. Unless they asked me a direct question, I didn't really offer the full detail of the sexual abuse.
45. I never felt as though any of the Elders believed me. In fact, they seemed incensed by what I was saying and took the allegations personally. They asked me questions like *"Did you enjoy it?"* and *"How did you react to that?"*. At times, it felt as though they were getting off on what I was telling them.
46. The Elders told me that I had to tell my mother about my abuse. When I told her that my father had abused me, she asked *"Really? What did he do?"*. I didn't want to tell my mother any detail so I said to her *"He has been rude to me"*. She said to me *"He did that to [your older sister] when she was two"*. I was absolutely gutted and upset. I asked my mother *"How could you have left us alone with him knowing what he had done to my sister?"*. My mother said to me *"I didn't think he would do it again because he had become a Jehovah's Witness"*.
47. After my mother told me about what my father had done to my older sister, it occurred to me that I should check with my two younger sisters if he had ever done anything to them. Together my mother and I spoke to my younger sisters. They were about five and seven or eight at the time. Both of them said to me *"Yes, dad has been rude"*. I remember my youngest sister saying

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words to the effect of *"He put his penis between my legs when we were laying down in the lounge room watching TV"*. I remember my other younger sister saying words to the effect of *"He made me have a shower with him and he touched me and massaged my pee in the shower"*.

48. My mother came with me to tell the Elders about my younger sisters. I remember that Ron de Rooy said to us *"We don't want to talk to your sisters because they are too young to know what they are taking about"*. This response made me so upset because irrespective of their ages, my sisters were victims too and the abuse should have been considered by the Elders.

49. At some point after I told the Elders about my younger sisters, the Elders told me that I had to meet with my father and put my allegations of sexual abuse to him. I remember being in the room at the Kingdom Hall when they brought my father into the room. They sat him down at the opposite end of the table at which I was sitting. I was extremely terrified but I was trying to be strong and brave; I kept thinking of my little sisters. I remember my hands shaking and my knees knocking together with fear.

50. The Elders asked me to tell my father what I had told them, which I did. My father became angry and I remember him saying to me *"I will flog you"*, *"I'll hit you"*, and *"Just wait till I get you out of this room"*. The Elders didn't stop him from saying all of those things. I remember that later in the meeting my father said to me *"You seduced me"*. I responded by saying to him *"You are my father, you are big and fat, why would I want to seduce you?"*.

51. Then I confronted my father about my sisters. I said, *"You touched my little sisters. I suppose you are going to say that a four year old and a six year old seduced you as well. How could you do that? You always taught us not to lie and here you are sitting here lying! You are a hypocrite"*. My father got very angry and said to me *"I will kill you!"*. He stood up and started to move towards

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me but the Elders stopped him. I felt very intimidated and anxious about the threats that he made and I didn't feel at all protected by the Elders.

52. The Elders decided to disfellowship my father. I remember that Ron de Rooy came to visit me at home and said to me *"We want to make it very clear that we are not disfellowshipping him for what he did to you, but for other 'loose conduct'".* I asked in reply *"Why?"*. Ron said to me *"Well, we need to have two or more witnesses to the same event"*. I said in reply *"What about my sisters though?"*. Ron said to me *"It has to be the same event"*.

53. I was mortified and devastated. It felt so wrong that my father's abuse affected me so much yet it did not even qualify as something wrong in the eyes of the Jehovah's Witnesses, who professed to be acting with the authority of Jehovah and the Holy Spirit, which is considered to be above Australian law. I felt betrayed by my mother because she didn't protect my sisters and me or warn us when she knew what my father was capable of. I consider her to be complicit in my abuse and in the abuse of my sisters.

The Appeal Committee Meetings

54. About a week after he was disfellowshipped, my father appealed the decision of the Elders. In or around July 1989, I remember that an Appeal Committee was formed. Three Elders from other congregations in the area, Joe Mirarziz, Don Wilson, and Jim Bennett, sat on the Appeal Committee. Don Wilson was the father of my best friend at the time. The Elders from the first Committee Meetings, Kevin, Dino, and Ron, also attended the Appeal Committee meetings.

55. I was called back to appear alone before the Appeal Committee, although no one explained to me why. This time my father was sat in a corner of the room and was not allowed to speak to me or threaten me. The Appeal Committee Elders asked me questions and I had to say everything

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about the abuse all over again. This time, they were not as accusing as the Elders in the original Committee Meetings.

56. Towards the end of the Appeal Committee meeting, I remember that Kevin Bowditch said to the room "Can BCG confirm what he did to BCG for her sake?". My father said words to the effect of "Yes, I stepped out of line". At the time I understood that in saying this, my father was admitting to having sexually abused me.

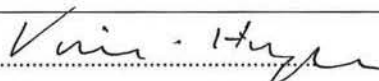
57. At some point not long after the Appeal Committee finished their meeting, one of the Elders came and told me that my father's disfellowshipping had been upheld. I don't remember which Elder spoke to me or exactly what he said.

58. After his appeal was rejected, my father moved away from Mareeba to live in Cairns. Before he left, he used to stalk me and tamper with my mail by opening it and adding handwritten notes, which I tore up and never read. I remember telling Kevin Bowditch about what my father was doing as it was very intimidating. At one point I moved out of home to stay with another Jehovah's Witness couple to try to escape my father's stalking and intimidation, but he still managed to find me.

59. I am aware that my mother told a lot of people in the Congregation about what my father had done to me. After he was disfellowshipped, many people said things to me like "I don't believe this happened", and "I think you lied". I felt worthless, helpless, and embarrassed.

60. I continued to live in Mareeba and remained a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses Mareeba Congregation. In November 1989, I married BCJ. Not long after I married BCJ still felt worthless and alone and I tried to commit suicide by taking an overdose. I had to report my suicide attempt to the Elders as it was a sin against Jehovah. I remember that I spoke to Ron

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de Rooy about it and I was chastised because attempting suicide is viewed as a serious wrongdoing within the Church.

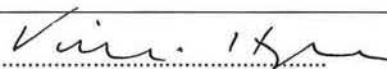
Reinstatement of my father

61. A few years later, I can't recall exactly when, Ron de Rooy came to tell me that my father was going to be reinstated. Nobody had ever asked me if my father had apologised to me so I said to Ron *"Why are you letting him be reinstated?"*. Ron replied to me *"There comes a time when we can't hold him back any more. He is doing all the right things."* I asked Ron *"What right things?"*. Ron replied, *"He's attending meetings"*. I said to Ron *"How can you say that? He was attending all the meetings and giving talks from the platform while he was touching all four of his daughters. He's been tampering with my mail. He's been stalking me. He's not sorry"*. Ron said to me *"We can't judge that"*.

62. After Ron de Rooy told me about my father's reinstatement, I said to Ron *"Well, I want to take it to the police because the congregation is not safe. Children are at risk"*. Ron replied to me *"He is now a Brother again"* and he quoted me the scripture that says that we don't take brothers to court. Ron said to me *"So if you take it to the police, you will bring reproach upon Jehovah's name and you will be disfellowshipped for doing that"*. I was very upset and disappointed. It seemed that there was to be no justice or acknowledgement for what my father had done to my sisters and me. I felt like we didn't matter; that the abuse was not considered bad enough in the eyes of Jehovah. Once again I felt helpless because I feared Jehovah and I feared being disfellowshipped; my life would be worse than it already was.

63. In or around November 1992, my father returned to Mareeba to be reinstated. I remember that when it was announced to the Congregation, all of the Brothers crowded around my father, shaking his hand and patting him on the back. Despite many people in the Congregation knowing

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what he had done to me and my sisters I heard members of the Congregation say "Welcome back BCG" and "Congratulations BCG it's good to see you". I was petrified to be so close to my father, but I stood my ground and refused to acknowledge him.

64. On 19 December 1995, I wrote a letter to the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society about the reinstatement of my father. In my letter I described what he had done and the way in which the Elders had responded to my allegations. That letter is at QLD.0068.001.1410. In response I received a letter from the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society dated 26 February 1996, which said that the Watchtower would look into the points of concern that I raised in my letter. The letter also counselled faith in Jehovah. That letter is at QLD.0068.001.1409.

65. I did not believe that the Watchtower would or could do anything and I considered the letter to be a token gesture only. I had already put my faith in Jehovah and prayed to him to protect me from the abuse when it was happening, and he didn't. I had already put my faith in the Elders when I reported the abuse to them and they didn't protect or support me either. I felt angry, upset and let down, and I began to feel suicidal again because I felt as though there was no way out for me.

Reporting to the police

66. In or around 1998 or 1999, my then husband BCJ and I moved to Townsville with our two sons. Not long after I had my third son in Townsville, BCJ and I separated and I left the Jehovah's Witnesses Church. I couldn't stand the hypocrisy anymore and I was finding it hard to believe that the Elders and Ministerial Servants were really appointed by the Holy Spirit. Once I left the Church my three children and I were completely shunned, ostracised and actively avoided by members of the Townsville Jehovah's Witnesses Congregation.

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67. The very first thing I did after I left the Church was call the police. I was initially scared of the police because I had grown up being taught that everyone outside of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church was to be feared. But the officer in charge of my case, Natalie Bennett, had an awesome manner and was very supportive. Throughout the court cases, my only support was from the police and a support person assigned by the court.
68. I gave a statement to police in about September 2000. In my statement I limited what I said to the police about my interactions with the Elders. I didn't include in my statement that I had tried to speak to Dino Ali and Kevin Bowditch whilst my father was still at home, and I didn't go into detail about the Committee Meetings. When I made that statement to the police, I had only just left the Jehovah's Witnesses Church and I was still very fearful that if I said too much about the Elders at the Mareeba Congregation I would bring reproach upon Jehovah's name. I was still scared of making Jehovah angry and suffering punishment from him. I didn't immediately give my letter to the Watchtower of December 1995 to the police for the same reason.
69. At trial my father denied all charges against him. It took six years and three trials before he was finally convicted for the indecent assault of me. The Elders who presided over the Committee Meetings and the Appeal Committee Meeting gave evidence at the committal and at a voir dire during the first trial, but that trial resulted in a hung jury. The second trial was declared a mistrial. My father was convicted at the third trial at the end of 2004. He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment.
70. The trials were easy compared to what I had been through with the Elders during the Committee Meetings. I would go through it twenty more times if I had to. At least the court has rules when questioning survivor witnesses; the Jehovah's Witnesses can do and insinuate whatever they want and there are no protections for the victim at all.

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Witness:.....
Vain. 1/1/20

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Statement of BCG continued

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71. I have had no contact with any of the Elders involved in the Committee Meetings, or from the Mareeba Congregation, or from the Watchtower since my father was convicted.

Impact of the abuse

72. During my teens I was at times depressed and suicidal and this became worse after my father's sexual abuse of me while my mother was away at Expo '88. I also attempted suicide several months after the Committee Meetings in 1989 as a result of my experience of the Committee Meetings with the Elders. I couldn't bear the judgement of those around me, the public vilification and ostracism. I wanted to dig a hole and die.

73. My relationship with my mother is now strained, but civil. This is because I still hold her partly responsible for the abuse of my sisters and me. To this day, I never felt I had her full support or protection. The only time I felt my upset feelings were heard was when I went to police. Nobody else, up until that point, had acknowledged that what my father did to me was wrong and that he should be made to answer for it.

74. I have at times lived a life in fear of being ostracised, shunned, and vilified by those around me. I have always lived in fear of my father. I have lived in fear of Jehovah. I thought I had done all the right things. I had put my trust in Jehovah, but nobody protected me. They only made it worse.

75. During the criminal trials, I felt as though all of my nightmares had gathered together in the one place and I was terrified that Jehovah would kill me for having reported to the police and for bringing reproach upon his name.

76. I now have four children of whom I am fiercely protective. When I separated from my partner last year, I felt like I didn't belong anywhere and didn't really have a name that wasn't associated with an unhappy past. I talked to my eldest son about it and he suggested that he make up a

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name for me. He did this [REDACTED] and made up my current surname.

Victims of child sexual abuse within the Jehovah's Witnesses Church

77. Jehovah's Witnesses Elders sit in judgment of congregation members in relation to matters of wrongdoing. My experience is that when a person reports wrongdoing, the Elders judge that person's credibility as a witness by reference to his or her position within the congregation, their age, their sex, and their outward displays of spirituality. In assessing spirituality, the Elders will take into consideration how frequently a person attends and offers answers at congregation meetings, how well they know the bible, how they are treated by their family and that family's reputation within the congregation, how often they go out preaching, and how submissive they are to the Elders.
78. I had reported my father's abuse to the Elders because that was what I believed I was supposed to do in accordance with Jehovah's expectations. I thought Jehovah and the Elders would protect me and my sisters. Instead I felt that rather than protect me as the victim, the Elders primarily sat in judgment of me and of my credibility as a witness. The Elders refused to speak to my younger sisters because of their ages at the time and did not even entertain consideration of their credibility as witnesses to their own abuse.
79. Even when a victim is assessed by Elders as a credible witness, if an alleged abuser denies an allegation then the Elders will only believe the victim's testimony if there are two or three credible witnesses to the same incident of abuse (see Deuteronomy 19:15; John 8: 17).
80. Although they receive reports and investigate wrongdoing, and then make assessments as to a witness's credibility, it is my understanding that Elders have no training in interviewing

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Witness: *Vin. Hye*

techniques, counselling, or psychology. Elders interview and interrogate child victims of sexual abuse and, in my experience, cause more damage to the victim. In my case the Elders, who were friends of my father, interrogated me, offered me no emotional support or protection, and made me feel as though I was insulting them and that I was to blame.

81. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that they should not take one another to court (see 1 Corinthians 6:1-8). I understand that this includes reporting child sexual abuse to the police. I was told and believed that to take such matters outside the Church would bring reproach upon Jehovah's name. Child sexual abuse is a crime. The Church and the Elders have no right to interfere with, prevent or threaten victims of abuse if they choose to report their abuse to the police. I felt unable to report my father to the police when the events were fresh in my mind, and in the minds of others who were or could have been witnesses. If I hadn't been so scared of reporting to police, I don't think I would have been subjected to such a drawn out criminal process in which I had to relive the abuse and the subsequent interrogation by the Elders over and over again.

82. I feel that the children in the Jehovah's Witness Church are vulnerable and will continue to be easy targets. This is because in my experience, the Church's current beliefs and practices — such as the rule requiring two witnesses to the same event, the practice of dealing with allegations privately and within the Church, and the factors that are taken into consideration by Elders when determining whether to reinstate a person against whom an allegation of child sexual abuse has been made — appear to favour and even protect paedophiles. I think it is paramount that uniform mandatory reporting laws are introduced across Australia to apply to institutions like the Jehovah's Witnesses Church in order to protect children. I believe that making the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and the Church financially accountable is essential for the protection of

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children and to redress the suffering of past, present and future victims of child sexual abuse within the Church.

83. I hope that my traumatic experience of abuse and of the Jehovah's Witnesses Church beliefs, practices, and processes can be used in a positive way. I have come forward today because I want to advocate for all victims who have been sexually assaulted within the Jehovah's Witnesses Church. I know so many victims of sexual abuse within the Church whose fear of repercussion prevents them from coming forward. I would like to promote change and set a precedent by exposing the way my case of sexual abuse was handled and encouraging other victims to speak out.

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