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## STATEMENT OF KEVIN BOWDITCH

ADDRESS:

D.O.B:

**1. An overview of your involvement with the Jehovah's Witnesses Church, including but not limited to an overview of:**

- (a) the congregations you have attended;
- (b) any roles you have held within the Church; and
- (c) your role as an elder in the Mareeba Congregation.

1.1. I was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1964.

1.2. Between 1964 and 1969 I attended Mareeba Congregation, where I was appointed as a ministerial servant in 1968.

1.3. Between 1969 and 1976 I attended Bowen Congregation.

1.4. I was appointed as an elder some time in the 1970's, I do not recall exactly when.

1.5. Between 1976 and 1994 I attended Mareeba Congregation and served there as an elder.

1.6. From 1994 to the present I have served as an elder in Mossman Congregation apart from a period from 1994 to 1998.

**2. Your knowledge and understanding of the systems, policies and procedures in place within the Jehovah's Witness Church between 1988 and 2000 to;**

- (a) respond to allegations or complaints of child sexual abuse made within the Church;
- (b) prevent child sexual abuse within the Church; including but not limited to, your understanding of those systems, policies and procedures as they related to your role as an elder in the Church.

2.1. All complaints were taken seriously and where possible acted on right away.

2.2. Two elders investigated the allegation, and when they found it had any substance, the body of elders appointed a judicial committee of three elders to deal with the wrongdoing.

2.3. If the judicial committee found that the wrongdoer was repentant, he would immediately lose any privileges (such as serving as an elder or ministerial servant) and would be allowed no role where he could have contact with children. The wrongdoer would be reprovved and this would be announced to the congregation.

2.4. In speaking with a victim who was a child, the elders always made sure the innocent parent was present.

- 2.5. If the judicial committee formed the view that the wrongdoer was not repentant, he would be disfellowshipped from the congregation. The disfellowshipping would be announced to the congregation. Other members of the congregation would then not associate with him.
- 2.6. I recall that earlier the reasons for the disfellowshipping or reproof would also be announced, but by the end of the 1970's the reasons were no longer announced.
- 2.7. The elders would also privately inform parents with children when a case of child sexual abuse was established, that they should exercise vigilance with their children and not allow them contact with the abuser, because of the potential danger he posed.
- 2.8. All members of the congregation were informed from time to time that they were responsible to inform the elders of cases of wrongdoing they were aware of, if the wrongdoer would not come forward himself.
- 2.9. Jehovah's Witnesses also publish information in magazines and books for the public and congregation, warning of the dangers of child sexual abuse, how it can be identified, how to protect children from it, and how to support and assist victims.
- 2.10. Since the 1990's, elders have been directed to contact the Branch in cases of child sexual abuse, for advice on their obligation to report to the authorities and on handling the case in the congregation.
- 3. Any training that you have received, participated in, and/or delivered in relation to responding to allegations, prevention, and/or identification of child sexual abuse prior to and/or during your consideration of the allegations made by BCG [redacted] in 1989.**
- 3.1. Elders received training at elders' schools, which were held every 2 or 3 years, in handling cases of serious wrongdoing including child sexual abuse.
- 3.2. Elders also received articles and letters from time to time from the Branch Office which assisted us in dealing with such cases.
- 3.3. From about the 1990's the elders received specific direction and instruction in handling cases of child sexual abuse. We received this direction and instruction at elders' schools and in letters from the Branch.
- 3.4. Our magazine articles (Watchtower and Awake) also provided training, as I have stated at paragraph 2.9 above.
- 4. A summary of your experience, both prior to and since the allegations made by BCG [redacted] in 1989, of responding to allegations of child sexual abuse within the Church.**
- 4.1. Apart from BCG [redacted] case, I have been involved in about 4 judicial committees dealing with allegations of child sexual abuse.
- 4.2. In 1 of these cases the abuser was repentant and was reproofed, lost all privileges and as far as I know was never reappointed as an elder or ministerial servant.
- 4.3. In 3 of these cases the abuser was unrepentant and was disfellowshipped.



5. The response of the Mareeba Congregation to allegations of child sexual abuse made by BCG [redacted] in relation to BCH [redacted] in or around 1989, with specific reference to:

- (a) when, and in what circumstances, you became aware of the alleged abuse;
- (b) any correspondence, including the substance of that correspondence, that you, alone and/or together with any other member of the Mareeba Congregation, had with the Legal and/or Service Departments of Watchtower Australia after you became aware of the alleged abuse;
- (c) any discussions or meetings that you, alone and/or together with any other member of the Mareeba Congregation, were involved in, including the substance of those discussions or meetings, with any person about the alleged abuse, including but not limited to any discussions or meetings with:
  - i) BCG [redacted];
  - ii) BCH [redacted];
  - iii) any other member of the REDACTE family; and/or
  - iiii) BCJ [redacted]

- 4.1. The case of BCH [redacted] took place about 26 years ago and I don't recall the exact sequence of events or the details.
- 4.2. I was in Mareeba Congregation when the REDACTE family moved there, some years before the allegations were raised. My family and I soon became friends with the REDACTE family. We had children of a similar age. I have a daughter a bit younger than BCG [redacted] and the 2 of them were friends.
- 4.3. As I recall, BCH [redacted] came before a judicial committee for carrying on an inappropriate relationship with a married sister in the congregation, and resisting the counsel of the elders and lying to them when confronted with his conduct. The committee consisted of Ron de Rooy, Dino Ali and myself.
- 4.4. BCH [redacted] left his family at this time and BCG [redacted] moved into my home for a few months. She was engaged to BCJ [redacted] at the time. My daughter was living at home at this time.
- 4.5. My family and I helped BCI [redacted] (BCG [redacted]'s mother) and the other 6 REDACTE children find a home to live in, and helped them move in. BCI [redacted] said she couldn't bear to stay in the family home any more. My family and I often had BCI [redacted] and the children over for meals and to spend time with us at this time.
- 4.6. BCG [redacted] married BCJ [redacted] a few months later. She asked me to give her away at her wedding. My family and I helped her with her wedding plans and organization. We contributed to the cost of the wedding. We wanted to give her the best we could.
- 4.7. Around the time she moved into my home, BCG [redacted] disclosed to me and (I think) Dino Ali that her father BCH [redacted] had been abusing her sexually when she was a child. Her first disclosure to me was vague but was enough to raise my suspicions. As I recall, BCG [redacted] revealed more details bit by bit over time, with support from BCJ [redacted] who I recall was very supportive of her. I and the other elders on the committee did not push BCG [redacted] but allowed her to reveal the information in her own time.
- 4.8. The judicial committee informed BCH [redacted] of the allegations but he strongly denied them at first and was quite verbally aggressive towards BCG [redacted]. At the committee hearing I recall his body language was physically threatening and BCG [redacted] appeared frightened of him.

- 4.9. On further questioning by the judicial committee, BCH said he could see her side but it was not his intent to molest her. He said because of his upbringing by an Eastern European father he had become a disciplinarian.
- 4.10. I recall the judicial committee had discussions with other members of the REDACTED family but I cannot remember the details. One thing I recall telling BCJ was that BCG would need a lot of support.
- 4.11. We as a Committee informed the Service Department at the Branch that we had disfellowshipped BCH. I cannot remember the details of that or any other correspondence.
- 4.12. BCH appealed the disfellowshipping. At the appeal committee hearing, when confronted with BCG's allegations against him, he eventually agreed with them, saying "Yes, yes, I did do it, let's get this over with."
- 4.13. The appeal committee confirmed the decision to disfellowship BCH.
5. The decision of the Elders in the Mareeba Congregation to disfellowship BCH in 1989 and the reasons for that decision.
- 5.1. The decision to disfellowship BCH was based on his immoral relationship with another woman and leaving his wife and family, and his lying about this to the elders. I recall also that we felt the sexual abuse had been established. The appeal committee confirmed the decision to disfellowship him. Both committees found that he was unrepentant.
6. The decision of the Elders in the Mareeba Congregation to reinstate BCH in 1992 and the reasons for that decision.
- 6.1. I do not recall as I was not involved in this decision.
7. Your knowledge of any correspondence between the Mareeba Congregation and any other Congregation and/or Watchtower Australia relating to the allegations of child sexual abuse made by BCG.
- 7.1. I cannot recall the details of such correspondence.
8. Your knowledge and/or understanding of any specific systems and/or procedures that the body of elders in the Mareeba Congregation put in place in relation to BCH's contact with children while he was a member of the Mareeba Congregation.
- 8.1. The congregation was informed that BCH had been disfellowshipped but not the reasons for this. BCH left Mareeba Congregation very soon after this announcement.
- 8.2. I do not recall any specific measures put in place at the time.
9. Your involvement, if any with the Queensland Police in relation to their investigation of BCH.

9.1. I gave a statement to the Police and was pleased to do so.

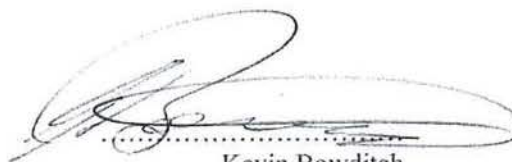
9.2. I recall the police also subpoenaed the congregation records. We had notes concerning [BCH] s original committee hearing and provided these to the police.

10. Your involvement, if any, in the criminal proceedings against [BCH]

10.1. I gave evidence in court against [BCH] at 3 trials concerning the sexual abuse of [BCG]. I recall the other elders involved in the committee hearings gave evidence at the first trial.

10.2. I recall that the first 2 trials were mistrials but at the third trial [BCH] was found guilty of the abuse and was convicted.

10.3. I was happy to give evidence for the Crown at each trial.



Kevin Bowditch  
12 July 2015