



Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

Name BCB
Address Known to the Royal 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. My full name is BCB. I was born on REDACTED 1967 and I am 47 years old.
4. I am married to BCC and we have two daughters. My husband owns a REDACTED business and I work for him keeping the books.
5. I was formally baptised as a Jehovah's Witness when I was 18 years old.

Early involvement with the Jehovah's Witnesses

6. I grew up on a farm near Wickiepin in Western Australia. I lived on the farm until I was around 19 with my dad, my mum and my younger brother.
7. In 1977 when I was about 10 years old, my mum became a Jehovah's Witness. Between about 1977 and 1979, my mum used to take me and my brother with her to a couple of Jehovah's Witnesses meetings each week in Corrigin. Corrigin was about an hour's drive away from where we lived.

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8. My Dad and I were quite close up until I was about 10 years old. However, when I started attending Jehovah's Witness meetings with my mum, we drifted apart emotionally. My dad wasn't a Jehovah's Witness and never attended Jehovah's Witnesses meetings with us. He never stopped my mum, my brother or me from attending Jehovah's Witnesses meetings.
9. In or around 1979, my mum and dad decided that I should go to high school in Narrogin. Narrogin was about an hour's drive from where we lived. Because I was at school in Narrogin, my mum decided to join the Narrogin Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. My mum, brother and I attended meetings there every Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.
10. The Sunday and Wednesday meetings of the Narrogin Congregation were held at the Narrogin Kingdom Hall and were attended by the whole congregation. At these meetings, one of the Elders would usually deliver a public talk from the platform based on a reading from The Watchtower magazine or give a talk from the Bible. At these meetings, the Elders would also lead question and answer sessions and give specific training about our door-to-door preaching.
11. The Wednesday meeting was referred to as the Theocratic Ministry School and children were allowed to give talks about the Jehovah's Witnesses beliefs at this meeting. I remember that I sometimes gave talks at these meetings.
12. The Friday meeting was referred to as Book Study and usually took place at someone's house. At this meeting, a small group of families would come together to discuss Biblical scripture.

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The Neill Family

13. I first met Bill and Bronwyn Neill and their children at a large Jehovah's Witness party in or around 1979 when I was about 12 years old. Bill and Bronwyn had a daughter named BCE who was two years younger than me. BCE and I became very good friends.

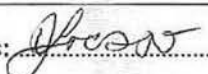
14. In or around 1980, Bill Neill was one of two Elders at the Narrogin Congregation. At the time, I understood that Bill's position as an Elder gave him authority in the Jehovah's Witness community. He used to give talks at the weekly congregation meetings from the platform in the Kingdom Hall. The other Elder in the Narrogin Congregation at the time was Jack Shaylor.

15. I looked up to Bill because he was an Elder. Everybody in the congregation respected and trusted Bill, including my mum.

16. Between about 1980 and 1986 I spent a lot of time with BCE at the Neill family house. I used to stay at BCE house at least once a week. Often, I would attend the Friday night Book Study meeting led by Bill at the Neill's house, and then stay over at the Neill's house until the Sunday meeting at Kingdom Hall. BCE mum, Bronwyn, treated me like a daughter and I felt really close to her. I used to call Bill "Uncle Bill".

17. I recall that the Neill family talked a lot about church issues in the house. They used to discuss their belief in Jehovah. Bill in particular used to explain that all ideas and ways of behaving should be figured out according to what the Bible says. I remember that Bill would discourage BCE and me from forming friendships with other children who were not Jehovah's Witnesses at school.

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18. The Neill family always seemed to me to be an affectionate family, which I really liked. For example, everyone always kissed each other on the lips when they said goodnight or goodbye to one another.

19. I remember that Bill and Bronwyn were very open with their kids about sex. Bill would often make sexual jokes in front of me. My mum never talked about anything to do with sex. I had grown up understanding that it was not something that you were supposed to talk about.

Sexual abuse

20. In or around 1982, when I was about 14 years old, I was staying over at BCE house, as I did almost every week. I was having a shower and BCE who I often shared the bathroom with, said "what's that on your tummy?" I looked down and noticed I had a rash on my stomach. Despite me not wanting her to, BCE went and got her mum. I only had my knickers and a singlet on. Bronwyn said she wanted to show Bill. I said "I don't want him to see me". I never let my Dad see me in my knickers so I was really embarrassed. Bill came and looked at my stomach and I remember feeling really uncomfortable about him seeing me like that.

21. Later in 1982, I was again staying over at BCE's house. On this night, as I was saying goodnight to Bill in the hallway of their house, he kissed me goodnight on the lips. Initially, this did not seem unusual to me, but he then stuck his tongue into my mouth. I pulled away and looked at him in shock. He looked at me and gave me a queer smirk-type smile. I found myself half-smiling back. I was so surprised by what he had done that I just froze. I didn't know what else to do.

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22. Every time I stayed at the Neill family house after that night until the end of 1986, I had to endure Bill tongue-kissing me goodnight. This often occurred in the hallway just outside BCE bedroom.

23. Apart from putting his tongue in my mouth when I stayed over at BCE's house, Bill's behaviour towards me did not seem to change. He continued to behave the same way around his family. He continued to lead the Jehovah's Witnesses meetings and to be respected by the rest of the congregation. Since nothing was said about what he was doing to me, I felt like I had to act like nothing was happening.

24. I didn't really know what to do. I was scared and ashamed. I felt that I was somehow responsible for what Bill was doing to me. I felt like I couldn't say anything about it, because I was worried I would get into trouble and that Bill would belt me like he belted his kids when they were naughty.

25. I respected Bill because he was an Elder. He was also BCE dad, and the head of the Neill household. But I had also come to fear him. Because of his position as an Elder, I felt that I couldn't tell anyone about what he was doing to me. I felt that if I told someone, it would upset Bronwyn and BCE as well as the members of the congregation.

26. Every time I thought about bringing what was happening to me out in the open, the consequences were too scary, so I stopped thinking about it. I felt like no one would believe me.

27. A few months later, after Bill had once again tongue-kissed me goodnight at his house, BCE said to me "Did my Dad just kiss you for a long time?". I assumed that BCE must have seen Bill kiss me. I was scared of getting into trouble and so I said to BCE "Don't worry, it's okay". I thought at the time that by not telling BCE what was

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happening, I was protecting her. I thought that if she found out, it might cause her family to break up. I now wish I had told her.

28. On one occasion in or around 1983, Bill and I were out doing door-to-door preaching together. I remember that at some point, we were alone in Bill's Combi van. Bill said to me *"What shall we do about our little problem?"*. I said to him *"I don't know"*. Bill then asked me *"Do you want me to talk to Brother Shaylor about it? You know if I do that though, your mum and dad will find out"*. I replied *"No"* to Bill because when he mentioned that my parents would find out, I got scared.

29. I was surprised that Bill suggested speaking to Brother Shaylor. At the time, I already felt guilty about what Bill was doing to me. But when Bill suggested speaking to Brother Shaylor, it removed any doubt in my mind that what was happening between Bill and me was my fault.

30. At the end of 1983, having completed Year 10, I left high school. The following year, I studied a business course and in around April 1984, I got a job REDACTED
 REDACTED I continued to stay at the Neill house regularly from around this time until the end of 1986.

31. One night, in or around 1984 when I was about 17, I stayed overnight at the Neill family house. While I was showering in the bathroom with the door locked I heard a noise. I looked up and saw Bill peering on me over the top of the shower curtain. I guess he must have been standing on the basin to be able to see. I don't know how, but I assume that Bill had unlocked the bathroom door from the outside. I screamed *"Get out!"* at Bill and he left the room. Bill and I never spoke of the shower incident.

32. On another night, also in 1984 and not long after the shower incident, I remember that Bill came into BCE room where she and I were making lots of noise and threw

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me over the bed. He started belting me across my buttocks with his belt. It really stung me and afterwards I had a dark welt across my backside. Apart from the physical pain, I remember feeling humiliated, angry and shocked by what Bill had done.

33. On 26 October 1985, I was formally baptised as a Jehovah's Witness in a ceremony that involved being submerged in a pool of water. At the baptism, many of the other girls wore modest swimming costumes with t-shirts over the top. I remember that Bill refused to let BCB or I wear t-shirts over the top of our swimming costumes.

34. In or around 1985, when I around 18, I noticed Bill's behaviour towards me became more sexual. He used to say things to me in front of his wife Bronwyn and in front of BCB like "You're a nymphomaniac" and "If you weren't in the truth, you'd be a prostitute". What he said didn't make sense to me because I was a virgin.

35. I recall that on one occasion in or around the end of 1985, Bill tongue-kissed me in his lounge room. As he was doing it, I heard Bronwyn say sharply "Bill!". I remember thinking that we would be trouble but nothing more was said about the incident by Bronwyn or Bill.

36. Up until the summer of 1985-86, I thought Bill's behaviour was just something unpleasant that I had to put up with so I could have a good time with BCB and the rest of the Neill family, who I liked.

37. One day in the summer of 1985-86, while I was in the pantry in the kitchen of the Neill family house, Bill came in, shut the door and started kissing me. As I was older by then, I felt able to try and resist his kissing. Bill yelled at me and said to kiss him. He pushed me up against the wall and told me to pull my dress up so he could see

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my underwear. Thankfully, someone came into the kitchen at that point and Bill stopped and left me alone in the pantry.

38. In or around October 1986, I left my job REDACTED I was very unhappy at the time because I was feeling pressured by people in the Narrogin Congregation to preach full-time.

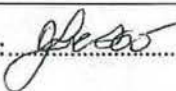
39. After I left my job REDACTED, I moved in to the Neill's house for a couple of months, while I was looking for a new job in Narrogin. BCE was still living at home when I moved in with the Neill family.

40. Bill continued to harass me while I lived at the Neill house. At the same time, he remained a respected Elder in the Congregation. I became really resentful of him. I stopped referring to him as "Uncle Bill" and instead referred to him as "Bill". Looking back, I think this was my way of rebelling against him.

41. One day, at the end of 1986 when I was 19, I had been having a shower in the family bathroom at the Neill's house. Although the rule in the Neill house was not to lock the bathroom door, I used to lock the door because I wanted my privacy. That day, I had just stepped out of the shower and was naked when the door suddenly opened and Bill walked in. I don't know how Bill unlocked the door. I guess that he may have unlocked it with a knife, or even his finger nail. I know that Bill didn't walk in by accident because of the way he quickly opened the door, closed it again behind him, and stood against it, trapping me inside.

42. Bill then told me "*Sit on the floor and open your legs*". I didn't want to do what he was asking but his manner was very threatening. I felt humiliated and scared. Bill then started fondling me and put his finger in my vagina. He then told me to stand up and he proceeded to perform oral sex on me. I felt disgusted and uncomfortable. I

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knew that sex was something that people were meant to enjoy and I remember thinking that there must be something wrong with me because I didn't like what was happening.

43. The next day I was lying in bed in my room feeling sick when Bill came into the room. He said to me *"Did you like it?"*. I assumed he was referring to the bathroom incident. Pointing at his crotch he said to me *"It's better with this in"*. I asked him to leave and he did. Once he had left the room, I got up, packed my bags, and went home to my parents' farm without saying goodbye to BCE

44. In or around early 1987, I remember telling BCE that I had been seeing a couple of boys. Not long after I told her that, BCE told me that Bill wanted to talk to me about my relationship with boys. She told me to meet Bill at the Neill family house. Even though the meeting was at his house, I understood that I was being asked to see Bill in his capacity as an Elder and that I had to do as I was told. I would never have chosen to speak to Bill about my relationships with boys otherwise.

45. When I got to his house, Bill asked me to wait in BCE's room. He came into the room and asked me: *"Can you show me your boobs?"*. Although I had come to expect this behaviour from Bill, I remember feeling shocked that he was asking me this. I remember that I let him look down my top. I don't know why I did what he asked. Looking back, I feel as though he could control me. Bill then said to me something like: *"Can you make yourself orgasm?"*. I said "Yes" and he replied to me *"I thought so, you dirty bitch."*

46. Bill was an Elder for as long as I knew him. I wasn't able to see at the time, but everything he did to me was in complete disregard of all the Jehovah's Witness rules, some of which he preached, about sex and association between Brothers and Sisters.

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Disclosure of the abuse

47. In 1989, I told my now husband, BCC that Bill used to kiss me. I dreaded telling him and I couldn't bring myself to tell him any more detail about what happened than this. When I told him, he started asking me questions about what exactly had happened and I said to him *"Don't worry, it's all over now"*. I didn't want to say anything more because I was scared that BCC would tell someone.

48. Later, in or around 1991, a Jehovah's Witness acquaintance of mine, BCF told me that she had been abused by her uncle and that she had tried to commit suicide. I told her what happened to me but I didn't mention any names. Somehow she guessed that I was talking about Bill. I freaked out and asked her not to tell anyone.

Response of the Jehovah's Witnesses to the abuse

49. I guess that BCF did tell others in the congregation as, a week or so later, a young Elder from the congregation called Max Horley came to speak to me. Initially, I had no idea why he had come to see me, but he eventually revealed that he had come to talk to me about Bill and me. When he said this, I burst into tears.

50. I told Max about most of what Bill had done, but I couldn't mention the final bathroom incident when Bill had had oral sex with me. I was so ashamed. Max was very kind and supportive. He told me that what had happened was not my fault and that I shouldn't blame myself.

51. Soon after, Max arranged a meeting with Bill, BCC and me at my house. I don't remember anyone explaining the purpose of the meeting to me. At that meeting, Max said to me *"I believe Bill asked you if you wanted to see his penis, and you said no"*. I assumed that he was referring to the incident in the bedroom the morning after Bill had oral sex with me in the bathroom, even though I had not told him about this

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incident myself. Bill looked at me and said *"Don't you think I was joking?"* and I said *"I don't know"*. I didn't understand why someone would joke about that sort of thing. Nobody at the meeting said anything about Bill's comment. I still don't understand why no one at the meeting told Bill that you shouldn't joke about those sorts of things.

52. I did not talk about the incident in the bathroom at the first meeting. I didn't feel comfortable talking while Bill was in the room.

53. After that first meeting, I felt like there was a lot of stuff I had been unable to say in front of Bill. I decided to go to Max's house after the meeting to clarify things. As a result of our conversation at his house, Max organised a second meeting at my house.

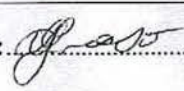
54. The second meeting was attended by Max Horley, Doug Jackson, Bill, my husband BCC [redacted] and me. Doug Jackson was the Circuit Overseer for the Narrogin Congregation. Max told me this meeting was a "Committee Meeting". I was not aware at the time what the purpose of the meeting was, or why Doug Jackson was attending.

55. During the Committee Meeting, Bill was defensive. He said that I used to wear revealing clothing. I remember that Doug Jackson made it quite clear to both of us that the Church has never allowed the victim's clothing as an excuse.

56. Throughout the meeting, Bill looked at me defiantly. I felt like he was challenging me to tell the full story of what he had done. I felt uncomfortable and could not bring myself to tell the Elders everything that had happened. I felt like I was still Bill's victim. I was still so scared of saying anything that would get me or Bill into trouble.

57. I remember that at one point in the meeting, Max said to me *"is there anything else you wish to tell us?"*. I remember looking across the room at Bill and saying *"no"*. It

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was already very hard to talk about sex in a room full of men. It was especially hard to talk about what Bill had done to me while he was sitting there in front of me. I didn't feel like it was a safe environment and I was scared of what the consequences would be if I told the whole truth. Perhaps if a Sister who I was comfortable with had been there too, it might have been easier.


58. At the end of the meeting, the Elders asked Bill to say something to me, so he said "I'm sorry". I took that to mean that he was sorry for everything that had happened, although his demeanour was not in any way remorseful and I could tell that he wasn't sorry. Nobody explained to me what the outcome of the meeting was or if anything would happen to Bill as a result of what I had reported.

59. After the meeting, Doug Jackson gave me a magazine article that had been published by the Watchtower a few years before. He encouraged me to read through it. The article was about child sexual abuse. At the time, I don't think I had thought of what had happened to me as child sexual abuse, because Bill hadn't had sex with me. But reading that article made me realise that what happened to me was child sexual abuse.

60. I don't remember discussing contacting the police with anybody at any time either before or after the Committee Meeting.

61. Not long after the Committee Meeting, Bronwyn Neill rang me and asked me about my conversation with BCF. I said to Bronwyn BCF told me that she had been abused by her uncle and I told BCF what had happened to me. Bronwyn said to me "Bill didn't abuse you". I got scared so I said to Bronwyn "I didn't actually say that". What I told Bronwyn was true. I had never actually used the word "abuse" when I spoke to BCF or during my discussions with Elders as I hadn't understood at the time that I had been abused.

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62. As soon as I got off the phone to Bronwyn, I rang Max Horley to tell him about what Bronwyn had said to me. He told me that he'd sort it out. Later that day, Max rang me back and said to me BCB *the Neills have asked that you not tell any more people about Bill out of respect for the family*". I respected Max and did as I was told. I didn't tell anyone else about what had happened to me, not even my best friend at the time. Thinking back, I now see that I was being asked to respect the man who had done those things to me, but nobody was offering me any respect or proper support.


63. A few weeks after the Committee Meeting, the Elders announced to the congregation that Bill had stepped down as an Elder. I was sitting in the congregation at the time. The Elders did not announce to the congregation why Bill was standing down. Although I understood the reasons for privacy, I have since felt that people in the congregation should have been warned about someone like Bill.

64. After the Committee Meeting, I don't recall being offered any support by Doug Jackson or Max Horley, though it's possible that they may have said something to me. Overall however, I remember that I didn't feel supported. No one in the congregation talked to me about what had happened to me, and Bill's wife, Bronwyn, ignored me for some time. This was especially hard because I loved Bronwyn like a mother.

Life after reporting the abuse

65. Even though I had reported what Bill had done, I was still expected to attend Book Study meetings that were being held at the Neill's house. I continued to see Bill several times a week at congregational meetings and at annual district conventions. Everything just seemed to carry on as normal, but I felt physically sick every time I saw Bill.

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66. I continued to attend the Narrogin Congregation for three more years, and continued to see Bill at meetings during this period. In 1994, I moved out of the area and started attending a different Jehovah's Witnesses congregation.

67. I understand that Bill has since died, although I don't know when.

68. I still consider myself to be a Jehovah's Witness, and until very recently, attended meetings at the REDACTED Congregation in Western Australia.

Reporting to the Royal Commission

69. In or around December 2012, I provided a written statement to two Elders in the REDACTED Congregation. Their names are Joe Bello and David Wood. The statement summarised Bill's sexual abuse of me. I provided Joe and David with my statement as I thought that others might have also been abused by Bill and that my statement might be able to help to support their cases.

70. In or around July 2014, Joe Bello came to visit BCC and me at my house on an unrelated matter. During this visit, I raised the subject of Bill's sexual abuse of me and told Joe that I was considering reporting my story to the Royal Commission.

71. Around the same time, Joe Bello rang and had a conversation with BCC on the phone. During the conversation, Joe said to BCC "You should ask BCB if she really wants to drag Jehovah's name through the mud". When BCC told me what Joe had said, I felt upset. It was not me that gave Jehovah a bad name, it was Bill.

72. For some time after the visit from Joe Bello, I was quite upset. My mother encouraged me to write down my feelings, so I wrote a note recording my feelings at the time about Bill's sexual abuse of me, the response of the Elders at Narrogin congregation, the response of the Elders at the REDACTED Congregation and my

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reasons for reporting my story to the Royal Commission. Some time after, my mother handed this note to David Wood, one of the Elders in the REDACTED Congregation. The handwritten note is at WAT.0001.002.0497.

73. In around September 2014, I contacted the Royal Commission and reported my story. I have huge feelings of guilt about coming forward with my story. I feel as though I am betraying the Jehovah's Witnesses and bringing reproach onto them. When I speak to officers at the Royal Commission, my chest gets tight, I have heart palpitations, and I have difficulty breathing because of my anxiety about the betrayal.

74. Since reporting my story to the Royal Commission, I have stopped attending meetings at REDACTED Congregation. I am sad about this, because it means that I no longer see a lot of my friends from the congregation. Telling my story to the Royal Commission has brought up a lot of feelings of anger in relation to what Bill did to me, and the way I have been treated by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Impact of the abuse

75. I've spent too many years suffering over this whole situation. It has held me back from living a normal life and I really want to move on.

76. The abuse definitely changed who I was. It destroyed my confidence and my self-esteem. Even though the sexual abuse stopped when I was 19, I have continued to feel like Bill's victim well into my adult life.

77. I continued to keep Bill's sexual abuse of me a secret for a long time. Over the years of our marriage I have told BCC more detail of what happened with Bill. It wasn't until just before my nervous breakdown 10 years ago that I finally confided fully in some of my friends. Once I started talking about what happened, it was like opening

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a can of worms, and I became very ill. I was lucky to get help from a wonderful psychiatrist.

78. I've had a lot of therapy to address what Bill did to me, but I still have trouble feeling a sense of closure about what happened. I still feel that Bill was never made to face any consequences for what he did to me.

79. I feel like Bill's position as an Elder contributed to his power over me. I now think that I was brainwashed into thinking that speaking to people outside the church, or to the "worldly" people, would bring reproach upon Jehovah's name. I think that had I been allowed to speak to other non-Jehovah's Witness children at school, maybe someone might have reported what happened to me and I wouldn't have become the victim that I feel I am now.

80. As Bill is now dead, I don't have to worry about seeing him at Jehovah's Witnesses conventions anymore. I still struggle with my thoughts and feelings about the abuse, but I have an amazing group of "spiritual" sisters and friends, as well as my lovely husband BCC and my two beautiful daughters.

81. I would like to see a number of things change in the way that the Jehovah's Witnesses deal with child sexual abuse. First of all, I would like the Jehovah's Witnesses to take allegations of child abuse more seriously and report them to the police.

82. I also think that those victims that are brave enough to report to Elders should be properly supported and protected. I definitely did not feel protected when I disclosed my abuse to Max Horley and Doug Jackson in 1991. I found the experience of reporting my abuse to a room full of men, including the man who had abused me, very distressing.

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83. I have never been offered any compensation by the Jehovah's Witnesses for what happened to me. I have never made any claim for compensation because I didn't think that I would be entitled to any. I am worried about what others will think of me asking for compensation. I know that many people have been through worse suffering than me in their lives. I don't want more than I am entitled to. I only want to be treated fairly as a victim of abuse that was perpetrated by a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses. I just want fair and just compensation for what Bill did.

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