

Special Inquiry into St Andrew's Hostel

Hearing

Held at: Courtroom 2, Level 18,
111 St Georges Terrace, Perth

Tuesday, 6 March 2012 at 10.04am
(Day 9)

Before: The Hon Peter Blaxell

1 (Recording Malfunction).
2

3 MR URQUHART: ...Cant - Mrs Cant is in the back of the
4 hearing room, and Mrs Cant will take the affirmation,
5 please.
6

7 HIS HONOUR: Very good. If you come forward, Mrs Cant,
8 thank you.
9

10 <ROSEMARY LILLIAN CANT, sworn:
11

12 <EXAMINATION-IN-CHIEF BY MR URQUHART:
13

14 MR URQUHART: Q. Mrs Cant, your full name is Rosemary
15 Lillian Cant?

16 A. That's correct.
17

18 Q. And you're a consultant and Director of Social Systems
19 and Evaluations; is that correct?

20 A. That's correct.
21

22 Q. But based in Highgate?

23 A. That's correct.
24

25 Q. You have a Bachelor of Psychology and Honours from the
26 University of Western Australia; is that right?

27 A. That's correct.
28

29 Q. That was in 1968?

30 A. Yes.
31

32 Q. And in 1971 did you obtain your Masters of Psychology?

33 A. I did.
34

35 Q. Again, from the same university?

36 A. From the same university.
37

38 Q. And the area there concerning your Masters, was that
39 in aspects of juvenile delinquency?

40 A. That was the area in which my thesis was written.
41

42 Q. Yes.

43 A. The Masters itself was in clinical psychology.
44

45 Q. I see. So you are, in fact, a registered clinical
46 psychologist?

47 A. I am.

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Q. And have been for some many years?

A. Yes.

Q. And you've been in private practice as an evaluator and researcher since 1994; is that correct?

A. That's correct.

Q. Mrs Cant, will you be able to give an overview of your work experience? As I understand it, it has concentrated in the area of the children, with respect to clinical psychology; is that correct?

A. That's correct. I started my career with what was the Department for - Department of Child Welfare, and I continued to work for that department until 1994, in its various evolutions. Since then I have worked as a researcher and evaluator. I have been a member of the department's Child Death Review Committee, which the previous government had set up. I have been on the department's Case Review Board. I have undertaken audits for the department. I have also undertaken a number of evaluations that relate to children, to child protection matters. And mostly in this State, but also for the New South Wales Department of Child Protection and the Police Department over there.

Q. And does your area of work specifically cover the area of child sexual abuse?

A. Yes, it has, it has.

HIS HONOUR: Q. So what extent has that been your focus, child sex abuse?

A. It has come up in a variety of ways. For example, the work I did in New South Wales was to evaluate the joint investigation teams, which was set up between the equivalent for Department of Child Protection and the New South Wales Police, and child sexual abuses as part of that. A number of audits that I've done for the department have involved allegations, substantiations of child sexual abuse. I have undertaken an evaluation of the Specialist Child Interview Unit, where the primary focus is on child sexual abuse. I have also evaluated community child Protection teams and child protection - remote child protection workers that were appointed following the Gordon Inquiry. So I've had --

Q. So you've had a great deal of experience in this area

1 over many years?
2 A. I have, over many years.
3
4 Q. Yes.
5 A. Yes.
6
7 HIS HONOUR: Right, thank you. Yes, Mr Urquhart.
8
9 MR URQUHART: Yes, thank you very much, sir.
10
11 Q. And have you actually prepared a CV with respect to
12 your qualifications and what areas you have carried out
13 researching --
14 A. Yes.
15
16 Q. -- including the area of child sexual abuse --
17 A. Yes.
18
19 Q. -- treatment?
20 A. Yes, I have.
21
22 Q. I'll just show you that, thank you.
23 A. Yes, that's the CV that I've prepared.
24
25 Q. I notice it's dated the 18th of May 2007.
26 A. I updated, but --
27
28 Q. Yes, sorry, I was going to ask you is there anything
29 that we need to put there that's - in order to update that,
30 but that is current?
31 A. That is actually current.
32
33 MR URQUHART: Thank you. Sir, I'll just tender that.
34
35 HIS HONOUR: I think that's exhibit 20, is that correct?
36 Yes, it's exhibit 20.
37
38 EXHIBIT #20 CURRICULUM VITAE OF ROSEMARY LILLIAN CANT
39
40 MR URQUHART: Q. And, Mrs Cant, were you asked by this
41 Special Inquiry to prepare a report with respect to several
42 questions that were asked of you?
43 A. Yes, I was.
44
45 Q. And in answer to those questions, have you examined a
46 range of literature?
47 A. Yes, I have.

1
2 Q. And that's been sourced through the internet and
3 computerised databases?
4 A. Yes.
5
6 Q. And you've also read the transcript of the Inquiry's
7 public hearings to date?
8 A. Up to Friday.
9
10 Q. Yes.
11 A. Yes.
12
13 Q. Which I think would be up-to-date as well, yes.
14 A. Right.
15
16 Q. And as a result of that, did you subsequently prepare
17 a report that numbered nine pages, plus the two-paged
18 bibliography which set out the 24 references that are cited
19 throughout your report?
20 A. Yes, I did.
21
22 Q. And do you have a copy of that report there in front
23 of you now?
24 A. I do.
25
26 MR URQUHART: And I think your Honour's associate has some
27 copies there as well. And does your Honour have one?
28
29 HIS HONOUR: I do, thank you, yes.
30
31 MR URQUHART: Q. The first question that was posed to
32 you, Mrs Cant, is the characteristics of grooming in
33 relation to child sexual abuse?
34 A. Yes.
35
36 Q. If I can just firstly ask you, that word "grooming" -
37 I'll ask you to define it in a moment, but when did it
38 become common in the literature?
39 A. Well, I looked at that. I think the earliest
40 references appeared to be perhaps in the early 1980s. And
41 certainly by the 1990s it was becoming much more common in
42 the literature. I haven't seen anything before about 1981.
43 That doesn't mean to say there isn't anything, but it
44 clearly was not common.
45
46 Q. Right. And it's now a very commonplace term?
47 A. It's now very commonplace.

1
2 Q. And have various attempts been made to define exactly
3 what it is?
4 A. Yes.
5
6 Q. Right.
7 A. Yes, they have.
8
9 Q. And is there reasonable agreement from those who are
10 expertise in this field as to the core aspects of this
11 behaviour?
12 A. Yes. As to the core aspects, I think it's a
13 definition that's evolving, but the core aspects are common
14 across the various writers.
15
16 Q. And with respect to some of those writers, is there a
17 definition that's been commonly cited as to exactly what it
18 is?
19 A. Yes. This definition by Craven 2006 is starting to be
20 commonly cited.
21
22 Q. And does that appear there in paragraph 6 of your
23 report?
24 A. It does.
25
26 Q. And would you just be able read that out, please, the
27 definition?
28 A. Yes:
29
30 A process by which a person prepares a
31 child, significant adults and the
32 environment for the abuse of this child.
33 Specific goals include gaining access to
34 the child, gaining the child's compliance,
35 and maintaining the child's secrecy to
36 avoid the disclosure. This process serves
37 to strengthen the offender's abuse of
38 pattern as it may be used as a means of
39 justifying or denying their actions.
40
41 Q. And you cite Craven from 2006?
42 A. Mm-hmm.
43
44 Q. And did that appear in a journal in that year,
45 'Journal of Sexual Aggression' under the article entitled
46 'Sexual Grooming of Children: Review of Literature and
47 Theoretical Considerations'?

1 A. That's correct.
2
3 Q. So it's evident there, Mrs Cant, that grooming
4 behaviour goes beyond concentrating on a potential victim?
5 A. Yes, it is clearly so.
6
7 Q. Right. So there's three - I think go on to
8 paragraph 7 - there are three types of sexual grooming
9 present in the literature. Grooming the child is one --
10 A. Mmm-hmm.
11
12 Q. -- grooming the environment and significance of others
13 is the second, and the third is self-grooming.
14 A. Yes.
15
16 Q. Now, for the purposes of your evidence here today,
17 it's the first two that are of significance, rather than
18 the third?
19 A. That's correct.
20
21 Q. Just for sake of completeness, can you just define to
22 us what self-grooming means?
23 A. Self-grooming is essentially the process that someone
24 who is involved in the sexual abuse of children uses to
25 justify to him or to herself, but usually to himself,
26 undertaking that - that abuse.
27
28 Q. So it's a process of self-rationalisation?
29 A. Sir, it's a process of self-rationalisation.
30
31 Q. To persuade themselves they are not doing any wrong,
32 is that what you're saying?
33 A. That's correct.
34
35 Q. Yes.
36 A. It usually involves a degree of cognitive distortion
37 in the person's thinking; so, "I'm not doing any harm, it
38 doesn't hurt anybody, the child wanted it" - that sort of
39 thing.
40
41 HIS HONOUR: Q. And just to clarify, I understand you to
42 be saying that over the years it's become recognised that
43 this grooming characteristic is very common with sexual
44 abuse of children; that the offenders do go through this
45 process leading up to and during acts of sexual abuse of a
46 child?
47 A. Yes, that is - that is correct.

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Q. Yes.

A. And there is probably a group of offenders that doesn't - the sort of stranger danger, the - that type of offender, but certainly offenders that target particular children in particular situations, this would - this is a very well-recognised process, your Honour.

HIS HONOUR: Right.

MR URQUHART: Thank you, sir.

Q. And just on that aspect of stranger danger, is it the case that the studies have shown that that just represents a very small percentage of those that sexually abuse children?

A. Indeed. The majority of abuse occurs where the person is familiar to the child, knows the child.

Q. Mrs Cant, if we can deal then first with the grooming of the environment and significant others. Now, I suppose following on from that - that answer to my last question about strangers representing a small minority of child sex abuse offenders - is it in fact the case that anyone can be responsible for sexually abusing a child?

A. That's correct. It's very clear that you can't assume that because somebody has a particular position or is a nice person, or is well thought of, that they would not abuse a child.

HIS HONOUR: Q. So experience shows that even the most respected members of the community can occasionally become offenders of this type?

A. That's correct, yes.

MR URQUHART: Q. And do such people that have these tendencies, often seek situations in which they'll have access to children?

A. That is correct.

Q. And is there a particular way that that - those type of people and how they operate is defined as "institutional grooming"?

A. Yes, that term has been used in the literature by McAlinden.

Q. What exactly does it mean?

1 A. Well, essentially they find their way into an
2 institution that gives access to children, be it a child
3 care facility, a hostel as in this case, a school, sporting
4 organisation, and they essentially groom that organisation
5 to accept - accept them to see them in a positive light in
6 order to ensure that they can get access to the children,
7 and as - as a defence, if you like, against complaints, you
8 know, "This person wouldn't do that because they are such
9 nice" --

10

11 HIS HONOUR: Q. Citizen of the Year, whatever it might
12 be?

13 A. -- "Citizens of the Year".

14

15 Q. Yes.

16 A. "Such a nice person, so helpful", et cetera.

17

18 MR URQUHART: Q. Would it be right to say therefore that
19 an ideal setting in such an institution would be one where
20 there is ready access to potential victims at night-time?

21 A. I couldn't think of a better situation. It's --

22

23 Q. May I suggest an even better one than that - access to
24 children at night time in circumstances where there are no
25 other adults able to supervise the environment.

26 A. Yes, well, that clearly leaves the children absolutely
27 vulnerable to that person. And, you know, it's the exact
28 situation of a fox guarding a hen house. There is absolute
29 free access to the children without hindrance.

30

31 HIS HONOUR: Q. In fact, the evidence shows they were
32 locked in at night?

33 A. Yes, so I understand.

34

35 MR URQUHART: Q. And, indeed, you've mentioned a study
36 by McAlinden. Do you actually cite a paragraph that's
37 relevant to this matter in paragraph 12 of your report?

38 A. Yes.

39

40 Q. And, again, you virtually paraphrased that in your
41 answers already, but does that read:

42

43 Childcare institutions appear to be
44 self-protected, secretive and closed by
45 nature. As such they discourage the
46 drawing of attention to any deficiencies in
47 policies and procedures, signs of abuse.

1 Furthermore, if these organisations are
2 held in high esteem by local agencies or
3 parents, children may experience added
4 difficulties in both resisting and
5 disclosing the abuse.

6
7 End of quote.

8 A. Yes, yes. I think that's an excellent example.

9
10 Q. And, again, this institutional grooming - if you also
11 add the fact of unlimited and unsupervised access to
12 potential victims at night, together with the fact that of
13 significant proportion of hostel staff members were
14 children - sorry, were relatives of the offender, does that
15 also have an impact?

16 A. Well, as I've written, it virtually eliminates any
17 independent adult scrutiny of behaviour. The key
18 positions - you know, when the key positions are
19 supervisory, the people that the children might have been
20 able to go to are relatives, and where do they go?

21
22 Q. And in this case that's the subject of the Inquiry
23 regarding Dennis McKenna. We know that he was the warden
24 --

25 A. Yes.

26
27 Q. -- of the hostel. Does that also have an impact on
28 his ability to groom the environment?

29 A. Yes, indeed it does. As the warden, he's the person
30 who basically sets the tenure of the institution, the
31 hostel. He's the person that if there was anything
32 untoward, you would normally expect the children to be able
33 to go to, and the warden would be the person that you would
34 expect to keep an eye out for anything that was not right,
35 et cetera. And when the warden is, in fact, the person who
36 is abusing, the - both the children and the institution are
37 extraordinarily vulnerable. There is nobody within the
38 institution that the children are able to go to to
39 complain. If the children do attempt to complain, then the
40 warden is in a position to counter those claims, to
41 discredit, to use intimidation, to stop the person talking.
42 I mean, very, very clearly the warden is, I guess, again in
43 the ideal position both to access the children and also to
44 prevent anything coming out.

45
46 Q. And your reading of the transcript of the public
47 hearings as of last Friday, did you note anything about the

1 culture this man had created at the hostel?
2 A. Yes. Indeed, I did.
3
4 Q. Does that have an impact on his ability to commit this
5 sexual offending undetected?
6 A. Very clearly it did. And in various ways. The - some
7 aspects of his behaviour - the so-called horseplay et
8 cetera, the going into the showers under an excuse - those
9 sorts of things tend to normalise what's, in fact, highly
10 inappropriate sexualised behaviour. He clearly, from the
11 evidence, demonised, discredited, some of the students -
12 particularly the girls. It's also evident that he
13 discredited the parents. He clearly, from the evidence
14 that was given, conveyed that the board members - another
15 group that parents might have gone to - were not to be
16 trusted. So there was the atmosphere of mistrust that he
17 would have created. He was clearly in a position and used
18 the threat of expulsion to control the students in the
19 hostel. There's clear evidence that that threat became a
20 reality for some of the students who attempted to draw
21 attention to what was going on. He - the whole culture was
22 clearly one that encouraged secrecy, bullying, favouritism,
23 normalised sexual inappropriate behaviour and so on, yes,
24 and clearly from all the evidence that stemmed from
25 Mr McKenna.
26
27 Q. That normalising of inappropriate sexual behaviour,
28 which I think you described as horseplay - was that
29 actually a description used, I think, by one of the
30 witnesses --
31 A. It was.
32
33 Q. -- Mr Parker --
34 A. Yes.
35
36 Q. -- which involved Dennis McKenna grabbing boys' groins
37 and their bottoms and the like?
38 A. And the like, yes; hands up shirts, that sort of
39 thing. And, again, within the literature, that sort of
40 behaviour and horseplay is a part of grooming.
41
42 HIS HONOUR: Q. Can I just ask you about that? The
43 evidence from at least two boys, and I think they were only
44 Year 8 at the time, is when this happened, the
45 inappropriate touching --
46 A. Yes.
47

1 Q. -- they were told by Dennis McKenna it was normal, and
2 it was normal to happen within families --
3 A. Yes.
4
5 Q. -- and they believed that. Now, that may reflect some
6 degree of naivety on the part of boys. It may reflect a
7 failure of sex education within families and schools at the
8 time. Have you got any comment on that?
9 A. Certainly would reflect a naivety; and, yes, probably
10 sex education doesn't cover this sort of behaviour. It --
11
12 Q. What about today? I mean, I know that schools have
13 stranger danger education, but it's a small minority of
14 sexual abuse cases.
15 A. Yes.
16
17 Q. Are you aware of whether or not the school system
18 presently provides any form of education which might make
19 such children less vulnerable to such approaches?
20 A. Yes, the protective behaviours program would be
21 intended to do that, which encourages children to
22 distinguish between good and bad touch, and tell people
23 about it. But some of the work by Briggs, which I've
24 cited, suggests that that can be less than adequate in
25 terms of preparing children to cope with inappropriate
26 behaviour.
27
28 HIS HONOUR: Right, thank you. Yes, Mr Urquhart.
29
30 MR URQUHART: Thank you, sir.
31
32 Q. Just following up from that, was there an overemphasis
33 on this aspect of stranger danger in years gone by, and I'm
34 talking about the 1970s and the 1980s in particular?
35 A. Yes, yes. There's a clear comment in some of the
36 literature that, in fact, this overemphasis on stranger
37 danger has distracted attention from the very real dangers
38 where the abuser is actually part of the child's network.
39
40 Q. And in particular someone who ought to be trusted?
41 A. Yes, someone who's trusted. And, indeed, that's in a
42 sense what grooming is all about - building up trust within
43 the child, trust within the parents, trust within the
44 community. And then, of course, betraying that trust, that
45 trust.
46
47 Q. I was going to ask you about the grooming of

1 significant others, which in this case would be parents and
2 the community.
3 A. Yes, yes.
4
5 Q. Mrs Cant you've told us about the grooming of the
6 environment within the hostel, but is there also another
7 aspect just as significant to grooming, and that is in this
8 instance grooming outside of the hostel environment?
9 A. Yes, indeed. It's very clear from the transcripts and
10 so on that Mr McKenna was actually very good at, if you
11 like, grooming the community. So I understand from the
12 transcripts that he lifted the reputation of St Andrew's
13 Hostel, which clearly also increased the enrolments to the
14 hostel, which would have been important for the hostel's
15 continuing existence. He clearly had the hostel children
16 undertaking works in the community that would have been
17 greatly appreciated by the community, and would have
18 certainly brought accolades on himself as the manager. So
19 I understand that he had children mowing the lawns of women
20 who'd been widowed, assisting farmers with picking up
21 sticks and stones and so on, undertaking fundraising
22 activities that brought amenities to the hostel, et cetera,
23 all of which would have, and clearly did, result in him
24 being seen as a very upstanding citizen, somebody who was a
25 credit to the hostel and the town.
26
27 Q. And, indeed, has a book written by a US clinician by
28 the name of Carla van Dam - that's two separate words,
29 small "v" and capital "D"-A-M - examined this, has examined
30 this area of grooming?
31 A. Yes, indeed.
32
33 Q. And does that appear in a textbook from 2006, which is
34 titled 'The Socially Skilled Child Molester:
35 Differentiating the Guilty From the Falsely Accused'?
36 A. Yes.
37
38 Q. And as I understand it, this text book has been peer
39 reviewed; is that right?
40 A. That's correct.
41
42 Q. And have you cited two relevant paragraphs from that
43 book - at paragraphs 19 and 20 in your report?
44 A. I have, indeed.
45
46 Q. Would you be able to just to read that into the
47 transcript, please --

1 A. Certainly.
2
3 Q. -- Mrs Cant?
4 A. Talking about child molesters:
5
6 They groom the parents, school, church,
7 clubs or any other organisation where
8 children congregate into accepting them as
9 upstanding citizens in the community.
10 These child molesters are known, loved,
11 trusted or possibly feared, and their
12 conduct is unfortunately assumed to be
13 above reproach. As a result these
14 offenders obtain continued free access to
15 victims by the very adults responsible for
16 the protection of children.
17
18 And she goes on in another part of the book to say:
19
20 Their skill of efforts often result in a
21 variety of public accolades, including
22 awards such as Man of the Year, Volunteer
23 of the Year and Teacher of the Year;
24 expressions of community gratitude for
25 their goods works.
26
27 HIS HONOUR: Q. Well, that description is a neat fit for
28 Dennis McKenna in the Katanning community, isn't it?
29 A. Yes, it is, your Honour.
30
31 MR URQUHART: Q. And as you've noted in the following
32 paragraph of your report, Mrs Cant, this helps to ensure
33 that when complaints arise, they will be ignored, hushed
34 up, discounted or excused as misunderstandings or errors of
35 judgment, which is something that's been identified by
36 Ms Van dam?
37 A. Yes, that's correct.
38
39 Q. Can I just follow up from that, Mrs Cant. Is it the
40 case that it doesn't appear in your report that Ms van
41 Dam's studies have also noted about how when complaints are
42 raised, how they are dealt with by those to whom the
43 complaints are made to?
44 A. Yes.
45
46 Q. Could you just --
47 A. Yes.

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Q. -- explain that, what she's found in that regard?

A. Certainly. On the first instance there probably aren't many complaints made, which is the point that she makes, but when they - when they are, then people quite typically find it very difficult to believe that someone who is such a good person, such an upstanding person, could actually have abused children, so they tend to discount what they've been told. You can also have a situation that when somebody makes a complaint, it's not to the police and, in fact, typically, according to van Dam, it's not to the police, and that would certainly be well and truly supported across the literature, that only a small number of complaints are made to police. The person goes, in fact, to the organisation involved.

HIS HONOUR: Q. Can you just elaborate on that? Is there any suggestion as to why there's minimal complaints to the police?

A. People are not necessarily confident that what they are concerned about is a matter for the police. They are uncertain, particularly if what they are concerned about is the inappropriate touching-type behaviour. They can be unwilling to - they may be concerned about unnecessarily tarnishing the image of an upstanding person without first going to the organisation. They may have a relationship with the person. By that I simply mean they know and like the person, so they feel they ought to take another tack before they go to the police. They may be concerned that if they go to the police, it will bring disrepute on the particular organisation that they are concerned about. I think --

Q. Those sorts of reasons?

A. Those sorts of reasons. And, again, van Dam talks about this. Often if the complaint is to an organisation, the person will go to the offender and ask them about - you know, did this happen; and, of course, often receive reassurances, "No, it didn't, it's all a misunderstanding", or, you know, "You can't believe what children say", or, "This is a troublemaker" - you know, a lot of discrediting of the people making the complaint. All of that happens. Van Dam is actually very clear that it is inappropriate for organisations to investigate the complaints themselves. They don't have the skills.

MR URQUHART: Q. Has Ms Van Dam recognised situations

1 where a person receives more than one complaint --
2 A. Yes.
3
4 Q. -- and how they deal with it?
5 A. Yes. Again, according to her research, it's very
6 common that each complaint is dealt with in isolation, so
7 there isn't one complaint after another that builds up to a
8 very concerning pattern, it's one complaint that's dealt
9 with. The next complaint comes in. That's dealt with as a
10 new issue. And so it goes on.
11
12 Q. Yes.
13 A. So the pattern does not emerge.
14
15 Q. So the increasing number of complaints doesn't
16 necessarily increase the suspicion that something is
17 actually taking place?
18 A. That's correct, yes. Particularly if there is no
19 continuous documented record, yes.
20
21 Q. Yes. And again have you also cited from another often
22 quoted article by Lanning in 2010, at paragraph 22, which
23 was an article, as I understand it, from the US National
24 Centre For Missing and Exploited Children?
25 A. Yes.
26
27 Q. And you've cited him at page 23 of that article:
28
29 Many individuals do not prevent, recognise
30 or accept the sexual victimisation of a
31 child by a respectable member of society
32 because they cannot believe a man who is
33 good and spiritual and who seems to truly
34 care for children, could be a child
35 molester.
36
37 A. That's correct.
38
39 Q. And once more in the evidence that you've read in this
40 matter --
41 A. Yes.
42
43 Q. -- does Dennis McKenna and what he did fit that bill
44 rather neatly?
45 A. Yes.
46
47 Q. I just turn now to paragraph 25 of your report, Mrs

1 Cant, where you emphasise the type of children that could
2 be subject or more easily targeted by a child sex
3 offender --
4 A. Yes.
5
6 Q. -- is that right?
7 A. That's correct.
8
9 Q. And could you just elaborate there on what is recorded
10 as a more vulnerable child, bearing in mind, of course,
11 that any child is vulnerable --
12 A. Yes.
13
14 Q. -- but there is some more so than others?
15 A. Yes. Certainly children where there are family
16 problems, parents are separated, parents who don't spend a
17 lot of time with their children, where there are situations
18 where there is less limited parental oversight and
19 supervision, where the child has low self-esteem and is
20 very vulnerable to somebody appearing to give love and
21 attention. Those children are particularly vulnerable.
22
23 Q. And all the children who stayed in this hostel would
24 fit in that category of having less parental oversight?
25 A. Indeed they would.
26
27 Q. Can I ask you to comment on this, because we do know
28 that the very first victim who came forward was very
29 quickly, after he had been sexually abused, it was - and he
30 doesn't mind his name being made public, and that's Mr Todd
31 Jefferis --
32 A. Yes.
33
34 Q. -- he raised the abuse by Dennis McKenna of him --
35 A. Yes.
36
37 Q. -- within 24 hours, by alerting his mother.
38 A. Yes.
39
40 Q. Now, it would appear from the evidence he was actually
41 a confident teenager, and that he had actually stood up to
42 Dennis McKenna on occasions prior to Dennis McKenna
43 sexually abusing him. And whilst his parents were
44 separated, which comes under one of those categories,
45 potentially more vulnerable children --
46 A. Yes.
47

1 Q. -- both his parents immediately stood by him and
2 accepted what he had to say?
3 A. Yes.
4
5 Q. So bearing that in mind, would it appear that with
6 Mr Jefferis, Dennis McKenna made a bad choice?
7 A. Indeed, it would, yes.
8
9 Q. Insofar as - yeah, concealing his behaviour?
10 A. Yes. Yes. He, in that instance, clearly misjudged
11 the young man concerned, and clearly the young man did have
12 the confidence to tell someone, and the person that he told
13 believed him and took action that, as I understand it, went
14 to the police rather than to somebody --
15
16 HIS HONOUR: Q. Well, first of all it went to the high
17 school principal?
18 A. Right.
19
20 Q. The high school - on the evidence so far --
21 A. Right.
22
23 Q. -- the high school principal didn't believe it and
24 there were threats of defamation and the like, but the
25 young man nevertheless ended up going to the police.
26 A. Right. Yes. So it was a situation that clearly he
27 was not able - Mr McKenna was not able to - to control.
28
29 MR URQUHART: Q. So given the fact that this would
30 appear to be thereabouts 15 years after Dennis McKenna
31 first started sexual abuse of students at the hostel --
32 A. Yes.
33
34 Q. -- the one explanation for him sexually abusing this
35 particular man who didn't seem to fit the profile of a
36 vulnerable person was just simply complacency?
37 A. I would think complacency. He made an error of - a
38 very fortunate error of judgment --
39
40 Q. Yes.
41 A. Yes.
42
43 Q. -- and complacency, but then --
44 A. Well --
45
46 Q. -- but a belief though that he would still be able to
47 ride out --

1 A. Yes.
2
3 Q. -- any complaint should it follow.
4 A. Yes, yes. And interestingly, van Dam gives an example
5 of a not dissimilar situation, where a - someone who had
6 been abusing children for many years made the mistake of
7 abusing a child who did immediately tell his parents, who
8 did listen, and that resulted in a similar outcome.
9
10 Q. Yes. Because there's a two-stage process there, isn't
11 it, because if the child goes to their parents, which is, I
12 would assume, is the logical --
13 A. Yes.
14
15 Q. -- person to go to first --
16 A. Yes.
17
18 Q. -- a lot depends on whether the parent decides to take
19 it up and support their child?
20 A. Yes.
21
22 Q. And if the parent was to say, "No, I essentially don't
23 believe you", the child is left with virtually no other
24 option?
25 A. Yes, that's absolutely so. If the parent either
26 doesn't believe or allows themselves to be talked out of
27 believing the child, then there really isn't --
28
29 Q. Yes.
30 A. -- anywhere for a child to go.
31
32 Q. I might just ask you about that. We heard from
33 Mr Kerry Stephens - again, another victim --
34 A. Yes.
35
36 Q. -- who doesn't mind his name being disclosed publicly.
37 He was allegedly, which is the evidence that we've heard at
38 this point in time, that when he complained to his father,
39 his father told him, "Stop telling lies and get on with
40 it." You cited in your report --
41 A. Yes.
42
43 Q. -- what Mr Stephens said in his evidence regarding
44 that, "Well, if I was a liar in my father's eyes, where do
45 I go next?"
46 A. Yes.
47

1 Q. So is that, in fact, a common reaction that a teenage
2 boy, or a common stance a teenage boy would take?
3 A. I would think so, yes. I would think any child whose
4 parent didn't support them would probably not know where to
5 go, not know what other action to take, consider they
6 wouldn't have support if they told somebody else; so, yes,
7 I would think that is quite a typical - quite a typical
8 reaction. And I think from the evidence, Mr Stephens
9 senior allegedly spoke with Mr McKenna --
10
11 Q. Yes.
12 A. -- and it was after speaking with Mr McKenna that he
13 told his son to stop telling lies, which again fits that
14 pattern of speaking to the person who allegedly has
15 committed the act, and being talked out of it, being
16 convinced that the person who's raised the allegation is
17 not telling the truth, is discredited.
18
19 Q. Yes. Thank you, Mrs Cant. I was going to now look at
20 what you had to say regarding the grooming of a child.
21 You've spoken about the grooming of the environment and
22 significant others. And now if we can just turn our
23 attention to that aspect of grooming. Is it the case that
24 from your reading of the transcript of the public hearings
25 as of last Friday, that there were characteristic
26 behaviours by Dennis McKenna that suggested clear grooming
27 behaviour?
28 A. Yes, indeed.
29
30 Q. And can we just go through some of those, please. Did
31 they involve the - the giving of special privileges to some
32 students over others?
33 A. Yes.
34
35 Q. And also did it also involve those privileges
36 involving what you've described in paragraph 34 as a
37 forbidden fruit-type activities?
38 A. Yes.
39
40 Q. And you've identified there the activities would
41 include the showing, particularly to boys, of
42 pornography --
43 A. Yes.
44
45 Q. -- the telling of inappropriate jokes --
46 A. Yes.
47

1 Q. -- introducing sexual themes into the conversation --
2 A. Yes.
3
4 Q. -- and then providing illicit material for them, such
5 as alcohol and cigarettes, and encouraging rule breaking?
6 A. Yes.
7
8 Q. Those activities that you've described as forbidden
9 fruits, would they be more attractive to boys than girls of
10 a high school age?
11 A. I would think so, yes. They potentially could apply
12 to both boys and girls, but I think more attractive to
13 boys, definitely, and they are in - in the literature,
14 certainly specifically talked about in relation to boys.
15
16 Q. We also heard evidence that - from one witness - that
17 although Dennis McKenna would allow students to smoke he on
18 one occasion threatened to tell the parents of those
19 children about their smoking habits even though he
20 permitted them to actually smoke?
21 A. Yes.
22
23 Q. Could you see an explanation for that tactic deployed
24 by Dennis McKenna?
25 A. Well again, it would be a tactic to control the
26 student's behaviour. It's a threat that, you know, "If you
27 do something I don't like, I will tell your parents that
28 you have been smoking". It is intimidation, yes.
29
30 Q. Then I am assuming, then, if it went that far and the
31 threat was carried out and if the child was to say to their
32 parents "Well, Mr McKenna let me do that" --
33 A. Yes.
34
35 Q. -- no doubt I would expect Dennis McKenna to deny that
36 and it comes back to this question of who would you
37 believe --
38 A. Yes.
39
40 Q. -- in that instance?
41 A. Yes, indeed. So, most of these things certainly begin
42 to entrap the child in whatever illicit behaviour and again
43 that further entraps them into - well, in this - in the
44 case into accepting other very inappropriate behaviour from
45 Mr McKenna.
46
47 Q. I don't want to downplay the seriousness of this but

1 the behaviour that we have heard of Dennis McKenna with the
2 inappropriate touching, such as the hand down the shirts --
3 A. Yes.
4
5 Q. -- of boys --
6 A. Yes.
7
8 Q. -- the grabbing of their groin --
9 A. Yes.
10
11 Q. -- and the grabbing of their bottoms as well as they
12 walk past, just to site three examples --
13 A. Yes.
14
15 Q. -- that's all part of the grooming process, is it?
16 A. That is all part of the grooming process. If we - and
17 I think it is a process that starts with befriending the
18 child, moving through to sort of being a special friend, a
19 special relationship et cetera, the introduction of the
20 forbidden fruits, the introduction of touching to
21 desensitise the child to see how the child responds to
22 that. Yes, it is all part of the process.
23
24 Q. Going back to that, that book that has been written by
25 van Dam - I'm looking at paragraph 38 of your report - does
26 van Dam recognise that inappropriate touching in public,
27 when it is witnessed by adults and they don't do anything,
28 it confers approval in the eyes of the child?
29 A. Yes. Yes, she has, and you know, "Well, somebody saw
30 it, nobody said anything so it must be all right".
31
32 Q. Just with that, we have heard some ex-students say
33 that some of the inappropriate behaviour by Dennis McKenna
34 of boys at the lower end --
35 A. Yes.
36
37 Q. -- such as holding hands and the placing of his hand
38 down the front of their shirts --
39 A. Yes.
40
41 Q. -- that that had been witnessed --
42 A. Yes.
43
44 Q. -- by other adults --
45 A. Yes.
46
47 Q. -- namely, hostel staff?

1 A. Yes.
2
3 Q. So that's exactly a situation that van Dam --
4 A. Yes.
5
6 Q. -- has recognised?
7 A. Yes. Yes, people may feel uncomfortable about it but
8 not do anything and, of course, it's the not doing anything
9 that the child sees.
10
11 Q. Mrs Cant, if I could take you now, please, to
12 paragraph 54, which was the second question that you were
13 asked to address; that is, the reasons why children or
14 adolescents, particularly males, tend not to make
15 complaints?
16 A. Yes.
17
18 Q. Is it widely accepted that there is underdetection and
19 underreporting of child sexual abuse in general and among
20 males in particular?
21 A. Yes, it is.
22
23 Q. Boys?
24 A. Yes, it is.
25
26 Q. Have you been able to look at some studies that have
27 been undertaken in the US, Canada and here in Australia
28 that have looked at exactly what the percentages are with
29 respect to reporting --
30 A. Yes, I have.
31
32 Q. -- of child sex abuse involving boys?
33 A. Yes, I have.
34
35 Q. If we look at the first study, was that done back in
36 1990 involving a survey of men and women in America. I'm
37 looking at paragraph 57 of your report?
38 A. Yes.
39
40 Q. And their relevant findings there, are you able to
41 that for us?
42 A. Certainly. This was a telephone survey of over two
43 and a half thousand American men and women and they found
44 that in that general population telephone survey - so it
45 wasn't a survey of people where sexual abuse was known, it
46 was a survey of the general --
47

1 Q. So randomly selected people?
2 A. Randomly selected survey of the general population.
3 They found that 27% of women and 16% of men reported a
4 history of child sexual abuse. Of those who did report
5 that they had in some way been sexually abused, 42% only
6 had reported - had disclosed the incident of abuse within a
7 year of the incident and that disclosure could be to
8 anyone. So it's not a disclosure to authorities. Then 27%
9 told of the event later and 38% had never told anyone up to
10 the point of that survey. So the survey itself was the
11 first time that they had told anybody of the incident.
12

13 Q. Does that include men and women?
14 A. That includes men and women, and if we look at the
15 abused men, by the time of the survey 42% of men had never
16 disclosed the abuse compared to a third of the women. So
17 much more common for men not to have told anyone.
18

19 Q. And then there was a Canadian study as well?
20 A. Yes.
21

22 Q. In 2009?
23 A. Yes, and again that's of a representative sample and
24 at the time of the survey 34% of men had not told anybody
25 and that again compared to 21% of the women. So men much
26 less likely to have told, and half the victims had waited
27 five years or more before telling someone.
28

29 Q. So, of course, that doesn't mean that - as you said
30 before, you clarified it by saying just telling someone?
31 A. Someone.
32

33 Q. Not necessarily someone in authority or a police
34 officer or someone like that so there would be a smaller
35 percentage?
36 A. Yes.
37

38 Q. Well, a larger percentage rather still?
39 A. Who I think in the - some of the studies that London
40 et al look at, I think the percentage that had actually
41 disclosed to police or authorities, I can't remember, was
42 very small.
43

44 Q. More relevantly, there has been an Australian study
45 undertaken in 2001 in this area?
46 A. Yes. That's a smaller sample but they certainly again
47 found that men took very much longer than women to

1 disclose. That nearly three-quarters hadn't disclosed at
2 the time compared to just over a third of the women and
3 that 73% of their sample of 145 men took more than 10 years
4 to disclose the abuse and 45% took more than 20 years.

5
6 Q. And again when you say "disclosure", that study, did
7 that say --

8 A. That's anybody.

9
10 Q. To anybody?

11 A. It's to anybody. So it might be a friend, it might be
12 a partner but it's to anyone.

13
14 HIS HONOUR: Q. Just dealing with those three studies --

15 A. Yes.

16
17 Q. -- in America, 42% of men hadn't reported childhood
18 sexual abuse?

19 A. Yes.

20
21 Q. In Canada 34% of men hadn't reported childhood sexual
22 abuse?

23 A. Yes.

24
25 Q. In Australia 73.8% of men hadn't reported childhood
26 sexual abuse. Can you suggest any reason for the much
27 higher figure in Australia?

28 A. Not really. The studies are each different so they
29 are not strictly comparable and so what a random sample of
30 the Australian population would report, I don't know.

31
32 Q. There can't be any cultural factors in Australia which
33 would explain that?

34 A. Not really, no. There may be greater awareness or
35 there may have been greater awareness at the time of the
36 study in America and Canada.

37
38 Q. The American study was in 1990?

39 A. 1990.

40
41 Q. Canada --

42 A. 2009, so that's a very --

43
44 Q. 2009, Australia 2001?

45 A. Yes. Certainly at the - the American study, 1990,
46 there may have been greater awareness of child sexual abuse
47 in America than in Australia. Briggs, who quotes the

1 Australian study, suggests that awareness may be a factor
2 in the O'Leary study but then discounts that.

3

4 MR URQUHART: Q. And Mrs Cant, if we can look at now
5 what the studies say about why children and males in
6 particular either do not disclose the sexual abuse of them
7 as children or delay disclosure, have you, in fact,
8 identified from the studies seven such factors?

9 A. Yes, I have.

10

11 Q. And dealing with the first one in paragraph 62, is it:

12

13 Some male victims may be confused about
14 what constitutes reportable sexual abuse
15 and may consider it as normal behaviour or
16 a private matter.

17

18 A. Yes.

19

20 Q. Indeed, you have already read evidence of the public
21 hearing of how one victim in particular thought his
22 relationship with Dennis McKenna was normal even though he
23 was subjected to sexual abuse?

24 A. Yes.

25

26 Q. The second one is:

27

28 Some may be afraid to tell what is
29 happening because of violence or other
30 threats.

31

32 Now, there is no suggestion that Dennis McKenna ever made
33 threats of violence towards his victims, however, can
34 threats just be as persuasive to prevent a child from
35 reporting what's happening to them?

36 A. Yes, indeed. Yes, they can. And the threats of -
37 well, in this case of ostracism, threats of expulsion were
38 obviously very real, threats to the children concerned, not
39 I think here but, you know, threats to - along the lines
40 of, you know, "I'll tell your mother and she will" - you
41 know, "Your family will disown you" or "Your family will
42 never survive this sort of thing becoming public". Those
43 sorts of threats are very real.

44

45 Q. But in this instance here, would you place this threat
46 of expulsion from the hostel as one that would be
47 particularly compelling because it would in some instances

1 effectively mean that the child is expelled from the
2 school --
3 A. Yes.
4
5 Q. -- unless they find alternative accommodation?
6 A. Yes, that was very clear in the evidence, that
7 expulsion from the hostel could potentially mean the end of
8 a child's education because there weren't alternatives.
9
10 Q. Yes, and that would be particularly relevant to a
11 child who is in Year 12, for example?
12 A. Yes.
13
14 Q. With end of school exams approaching?
15 A. Yes. Yes, it would, or a child who wanted to go on
16 and study, yes.
17
18 Q. And we have heard instances where Dennis McKenna would
19 just not threaten expulsion from the hostel but then say he
20 would use his influence to ensure that the child would not
21 be able to be placed at another hostel --
22 A. Yes.
23
24 Q. -- in another country town?
25 A. Yes, yes. So - and the children concerned would have
26 actually seen other children being expelled.
27
28 Q. The third one you have identified at paragraph 66 is
29 that:
30
31 Some children may not report what is
32 happening to them because they are afraid
33 of being disbelieved.
34
35 A. Yes.
36
37 Q. You have already looked at the instance of Mr Kerryn
38 Stephens in that regard?
39 A. Yes.
40
41 Q. And then the fourth one is that:
42
43 Some children may fear getting into
44 trouble.
45
46 A. Yes.
47

1 Q. And did we see a clear instance of that with respect
2 to again what is alleged to have happened by Ms Kylie
3 Haddow?
4 A. Yes. Yes, that was a clear example.
5
6 Q. The fifth one:
7
8 Fear among male victims of being taunted as
9 gay or effeminate.
10
11 A. Yes.
12
13 Q. Could that have a bearing of particular significance
14 in Australian culture, and I'm talking about going back to
15 the 70s and the 80s?
16 A. I would - I would think so, yes.
17
18 HIS HONOUR: Q. And I think especially in a rural
19 community?
20 A. In the rural community. Certainly Briggs's work was
21 done in New Zealand, which I think would be - or part of
22 her work was done in New Zealand, and that I think would be
23 fairly allied to the Australian culture and certainly her
24 work found that being taunted as gay would have impacted --
25
26 Q. In fact, in those days I don't think the word "gay"
27 was used in this connection?
28 A. Probably not.
29
30 Q. "Gay" is a terminology which has arisen since then, I
31 think?
32 A. Yes, you're quite right. Being taunted as a poofter
33 or whatever would have happened, yes.
34
35 Q. And, of course, back in the 70s homosexuality illegal?
36 A. It was illegal. That's the other element, of course.
37 So all sorts of taunts that could be made would certainly
38 impact on a young boy's willingness to tell anybody, I
39 think, and again it's not just Briggs. The literature is
40 actually quite clear, that is a concern and why people
41 don't tell, why boys don't tell.
42
43 MR URQUHART: Q. Would that be more so if the victim
44 believed that he was the only one within the hostel
45 environment actually being abused sexually?
46 A. Yes, I think so. Yes, if that was their belief, yes,
47 I think so.

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Q. The sixth fact that you have identified in paragraph 69 is:

Some victims may have welcomed the attention that they received.

A. Yes.

Q. Would that have particular relevance to a child in a hostel environment who would be suffering from homesickness?

A. Well certainly I think having somebody pay you a lot of attention, make a fuss of you, give you special treats et cetera, if you are feeling very homesick, yes, I think that would certainly be an important factor. And then, of course, that can lead to feelings that they were complicit in some way with what happened or that they were responsible for the abuse, and that's something that abusers well and truly play on. You know, "It's your fault", you know, "You wanted it", et cetera.

Q. And then the seventh factor you have identified in paragraph 70 is that:

Victims may also feel guilt, shame and embarrassment about their experiences.

A. Yes.

Q. And again, has that been well documented?

A. Yes, it has. That's very well documented, yes.

HIS HONOUR: Q. With regard to paragraph 69 of your report --

A. Yes.

Q. -- that:

Some victims may in some ways welcome the attention.

-- in my 20 years experience as a judge dealing with many sexual abuse cases, I was often surprised how often the child felt guilty for what happened --

A. Yes.

1 Q. -- and I often wondered whether it was because perhaps
2 at the time of the abuse they themselves were aroused and
3 felt that they were partially responsible for what
4 happened?
5 A. That is very probable. Again it is very clear from a
6 number of studies in the literature that is part of it and,
7 you know, teenage boys are easily aroused but feel they
8 shouldn't have been and do feel partly responsible and
9 abusers play on that. That's very clear.
10
11 Q. Of course, that use of pornography as part of the
12 grooming is a factor in that regard, isn't it?
13 A. It is indeed, yes.
14
15 MR URQUHART: Q. Mrs Cant, does the research which has
16 been done also identify other reasons for nondisclosure of
17 sexual abuse that takes place in institutions?
18 A. Yes.
19
20 Q. You have identified two such factors there in
21 paragraph 72, one being distrust and no expectation of
22 action if disclosures are made?
23 A. Yes. I have cited there a major report on abuse in
24 children's institutions in the UK in Wales and that issue
25 of distrust and no expectation of action is very clear.
26
27 Q. And then the second reason which you identified is if
28 there are no complaints procedures. So that is that there
29 is no guidance as to how complaints could be made or
30 instructions given to staff as to how to respond to
31 complaints dealing with allegations?
32 A. Yes, yes.
33
34 Q. Again was that something identified in that Waterhouse
35 report?
36 A. It was indeed, and I have just cited that particular
37 report but I think those findings would be not uncommon in
38 other investigations on institutional child abuse.
39
40 Q. The third and final question you were asked to look at
41 was whether there were increased rates of suicides in later
42 life amongst children who had been sexually abused and in
43 particular boys who had been sexually abused?
44 A. Yes.
45
46 Q. Were you able to find some studies in this particular
47 area?

1 A. Yes, I was.
2
3 Q. Do those studies indicate that child sexual abuse
4 significantly increases not just the risk of suicide but
5 also mental health problems --
6 A. Yes, they do.
7
8 Q. -- to victims in later life?
9 A. They do.
10
11 Q. And in particular was there an Australian study
12 undertaken in this area?
13 A. Yes, there was. In fact, both of the studies I cite
14 are Australian.
15
16 Q. Are you able to take us through those, please.
17 Dealing with the first one, at paragraph 76 --
18 A. Yes.
19
20 Q. -- this was a study undertaken by - I will try and
21 pronounce the surname - Cutajar & Others?
22 A. Yes.
23
24 Q. Cutajar, we better spell that for the transcript.
25 That's C-U-T-A-J-A-R, is that right?
26 A. Yes, that's correct.
27
28 Q. And it is a relatively recent study from 2010?
29 A. That's correct.
30
31 Q. Are you able to take us through how that study was
32 undertaken?
33 A. Okay. Again the study is, in fact, a large sample
34 study which is one of its very strong points, a sample of
35 2000 individuals where there was documented evidence for -
36 that they had been sexually abused. So this is not a
37 self-report, this is actually clinical and forensic
38 evidence that they had been sexually abused.
39
40 HIS HONOUR: Q. At what stage after the sexual abuse
41 were these individuals questioned?
42 A. The study - well, the study looks at up to 44 years
43 after --
44
45 Q. The event?
46 A. -- the event. The individuals concerned were 16 and
47 under at the time that they were diagnosed as having been

1 sexually abused, and I used the word "diagnosed" because it
2 was within a medical setting. They looked at these 2000
3 individuals up to 44 years after they had experienced the
4 child sexual abuse and that's quite important because it
5 covers the sort of early 30s et cetera where you may well
6 get suicides as well as suicides in younger people, and
7 they found that compared to the general Australian
8 population - so that's their comparison group, the general
9 Australian population - that male child sexual abuse
10 victims were 14 times more likely to commit suicide and 38
11 more times likely to die from an accidental overdose than
12 males in the general population, and that is highly
13 significant at the 95% confidence interval. So it's a very
14 strong result. There is actually no differences between
15 males and females who have been sexually abused on their
16 rate of suicide and fatal drug overdose but because females
17 are much more likely - in the general population are much
18 less likely to commit suicide or to die of a fatal drug
19 overdose, the risks are greatly increased.

20
21 Q. Of greater proportion?

22 A. Of greater proportion, thank you.

23

24 Q. So what you are saying is in the general population
25 there is a much lower rate of suicide amongst females than
26 males?

27 A. Correct. Yes, that is correct, your Honour.

28

29 MR URQUHART: Q. But given the knowledge that there are
30 sexual abuse victims in the sample --

31 A. Yes.

32

33 Q. -- you are saying that the actual rate of suicides --

34 A. Is not --

35

36 Q. -- is roughly the same within that sample?

37 A. Correct, is not significantly different.

38

39 Q. So for this inquiry, though, it's the fact that male
40 child sexual abuse victims, so far as this study was
41 concerned, was 14 times more likely --

42 A. Yes.

43

44 Q. -- to commit suicide than the general population?

45 A. That's correct.

46

47 Q. Now, did the people responsible for this study point

1 out a couple of clarifications or observations with respect
2 to these findings?
3 A. Yes, they did. The first clarification was that it
4 was not possible to reliably attribute the suicide or the
5 fatal drug overdose just to child sexual abuse because
6 the - it is not a random sample and in the - generally
7 children tend to come from more advantaged homes et cetera,
8 or that was their conclusion.
9
10 Q. More disadvantaged?
11 A. More disorganised and disadvantaged families.
12
13 HIS HONOUR: Q. So a child in a broken family or a
14 disadvantaged situation is more likely to be vulnerable to
15 sexual abuse?
16 A. More vulnerable to it, yes.
17
18 Q. And those other factors may also contribute to a later
19 suicide?
20 A. Correct, yes.
21
22 MR URQUHART: Q. And indeed was this sample for this
23 study from precisely that group?
24 A. That is what the authors indicated, yes.
25
26 Q. And did they also make another observation or
27 clarification regarding this that appears at paragraph 80
28 of your report?
29 A. Yes, yes.
30
31 Q. Can you indicate to us what that was?
32 A. Well, essentially that indicates that in the authored
33 opinion some systemic biases in the study suggests that
34 they may have - that the study may underestimate the true
35 rate of suicide and fatal drug overdose amongst victims.
36 So in a sense what they are saying is that the 14 times
37 more likely is conservative.
38
39 HIS HONOUR: Q. So it could be even greater proportion?
40 A. It could be even greater than that.
41
42 MR URQUHART: Q. Why were they saying that?
43 A. Several reasons. Firstly, the sample comprised
44 medically identified rather than self-reported cases of
45 child sexual abuse. So the inference from that is that
46 they are cases of child sexual abuse that had occurred that
47 probably - that would not have been within their

1 population. There are cases - the cases who did commit
2 suicide would have formed part of the general population
3 because of the statistics they used. They - the cases
4 would have been in those - in those statistics from the
5 general population.

6
7 HIS HONOUR: Q. So what you are saying there, as I
8 understand it, is that the undiagnosed cases of sexual
9 abuse --

10 A. Yes.

11
12 Q. -- which presumably had also had a disproportionately
13 high rate of suicide, that disproportionately high rate --

14 A. Yes.

15
16 Q. -- would be reflected in the general rate?

17 A. It would indeed. Yes, that's exactly - that is
18 exactly the inference. So --

19
20 Q. So if you had been able to take those out of the
21 general rate, the general rate would have been lower,
22 presumably?

23 A. Yes, that's right, but not only the undiagnosed case
24 would be in the general rate but also those diagnosed cases
25 would also be in the general rate.

26
27 Q. They are too, that's right, yes?

28 A. So you have got it both ways. And their final point
29 was there may have been failures of matching, so if a name
30 had been misspelt or something in their 2000 samples with
31 the database that they used to identify the deaths, then
32 somebody may not - somebody who died as a result of suicide
33 or of a fatal drug overdose may not have been picked up.

34
35 Q. It sounds very much as if one could confidently say
36 that the actual increased risk of suicide amongst male
37 sexual abuse victims is higher than 14 times the general
38 rate?

39 A. Yes, I think so, at the very least. At least 14
40 times.

41
42 MR URQUHART: Q. If I can clarify one matter, one of
43 those reasons is that the sample comprised of medically
44 identified cases of child sexual abuse?

45 A. Yes.

46
47 Q. So did you know what that entailed, having a look at

1 this study?
2 A. The study doesn't detail what that would involve but
3 it does detail that the cases included where there had been
4 sexual penetration but it also included cases of
5 inappropriate touching et cetera. So I think it likely,
6 but this is my interpretation, that it would have been
7 partly on the basis of a forensic physical examination but
8 also on the basis of a forensic and clinical interview of
9 the children concerned.
10
11 Q. And you mentioned another study that you looked at
12 again from Australia. Does that appear at paragraph 81,
13 the final paragraph in your report?
14 A. Yes, yes. This was a study that, in fact, used the
15 Childhood Trauma Study as its source of individuals and
16 they surveyed this group to identify those who gave no
17 history of any sort of child sexual abuse and those who
18 gave some sort of history of child sexual abuse and again
19 it ranged from penetration through to inappropriate sexual
20 touching interference, and they certainly found
21 significantly associated child sexual abuse and risk of
22 major depressive disorders and also post-traumatic stress
23 disorder and also suicide behaviour. They didn't look at
24 actual suicides, what they looked at was suicidal attempts
25 or suicidal ideation, and with further analysis controlling
26 for the major depression and the post-traumatic stress
27 disorder they found that there was still a significant
28 associated risk of child sexual abuse and suicidal ideation
29 or attempted suicide.
30
31 Q. And that was a study from 2011?
32 A. That's right.
33
34 Q. And it used 2559 twin and sibling respondents?
35 A. Yes. That would have been - some of those, and I
36 don't have the exact figures with me, would have been those
37 who had indicated that they were not abused and those that
38 indicated they had been abused, but again a large sample.
39
40 Q. And that did include self-reported?
41 A. That did include - that was based on self-report, yes.
42 I included these two studies because they are actually the
43 Australian population, and also, because they are large
44 sample studies so they are particularly strong studies.
45
46 Q. And also very recent as well?
47 A. And very recent.

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MR URQUHART: Thank you, Mrs Cant, that's all the questions I have. So thank you, sir.

HIS HONOUR: Thank you, Ms Morgan --

MR URQUHART: Sorry, I should tender that report, yes.

HIS HONOUR: That report will become exhibit 21.

EXHIBIT #21 REPORT OF ROSEMARY LILLIAN CANT

HIS HONOUR: Ms Morgan, do you have any questions?

<CROSS-EXAMINATION BY MS MORGAN:

MS MORGAN: Q. You have gone into quite a lot of details about the grooming of the community and how that works?

A. Yes.

Q. Obviously in the transcripts there is evidence of Dennis McKenna doing such things?

A. Yes.

Q. From the evidence that you have read in the transcripts, do you think that the poor handling of complaints by people in authority like the school principals and other parents, could that be attributed to successful grooming of the community by Dennis McKenna or is there just a failure to act upon complaints?

A. I think that certainly one of the intentions of grooming is to mitigate against complaints. So a successful groomer would certainly I think create a situation where people were reluctant to firstly believe, and secondly, to act in a way that would discredit somebody that they believed was a very upstanding person who contributed a lot to the community, and also, if they took action, would potentially discredit the hostel and perhaps also the town itself. So I think there are factors there that grow out of the sort of grooming that Dennis McKenna has done. Whether there are other factors and, you know, clearly people didn't take action but whether there were other factors involved, the transcripts that I have read don't really allow me to comment on that. I did see in one of the more recent transcripts threats of legal action if action was pursued et cetera, potentially another factor, but yes, I can't - I can't go beyond that.

1
2 MS MORGAN: Okay, thank you.
3
4 HIS HONOUR: Mr Jenkin, do you have any questions?
5
6 MR JENKIN: No, thank you, sir.
7
8 HIS HONOUR: All right, well no re-examination?
9
10 MR URQUHART: No, thank you sir.
11
12 HIS HONOUR: Thank you, Ms Cant. That evidence is very
13 helpful. That completes your evidence. You are now free
14 to go.
15
16 THE WITNESS: Thank you, your Honour.
17
18 <THE WITNESS WITHDREW
19
20 HIS HONOUR: That completes today's hearing.
21
22 MR URQUHART: That completes the hearing of evidence
23 today, sir. At this point in time the hearing will be
24 adjourning until 2.15 this Friday.
25
26 HIS HONOUR: Very well. Right, well, I adjourn the
27 hearing until 2.15 Friday.
28
29 AT 2.47PM THE HEARING ADJOURNED TO
30 FRIDAY, 9 MARCH 2012 AT 10AM
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