

Witness Name: Shayne Troy Mechen
Statement No.: WITN1371002
Dated: 21 June 2023

ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

SUPPLEMENTARY WITNESS STATEMENT OF SHAYNE TROY MECHEM

I, Shayne Troy Mechen, states as follows: -

Introduction

1. That is my full name.
2. I have already provided a witness statement to the Royal Commission in 2022.
3. This supplementary statement is made to provide further detail on the day-to-day activities within the Jehovah's Witness (JW) religious group, and particularly in regard to my role as an Elder within the faith.
4. There are any number of opportunities for children to be alone/unsupervised with Elders and Ministerial Servants from within the faith. This stems from the teaching carried out within the religion that "Ministerial Servants and Elders can be trusted". Elders are appointed by "Gods Holy Spirit", by this I mean the Congregations Elders looking at passages in the scriptures that outline the good qualities of a man. These scriptures known as 'inspired qualifications' can be found at:
1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; James 3:17&18 and 1 Peter 5:2 & 3.
Helpful comments on the Scriptural qualifications can be found in chapters 5 and 6 of the Organisational book. This includes things like having a good reputation. The Elders then put the nomination forward and the decision is that of the Circuit Overseer. Just because a name is put forward does not mean that it is

automatically approved. I am aware of times approval was not forthcoming. I am also aware of where the Elders have been approved by the Circuit Overseer but was not agreed by all the Elders.

5. When carrying out Witnessing for the Field Service Group (FSG), frequently Ministerial Servants or Elders can have a child with them, this might be assigned by the group conductor or because a child gets along well with the MS or Elder or the MS or Elder seek out a particular child to go with them. There will often be only the MS or Elder and a child.
6. This occurs on a daily or sometimes twice daily FSG meeting where locations are assigned.
7. There would frequently be a child alone with a MS or Elder in a vehicle and during the Witnessing (door knocking) or travelling to and from the location which can sometimes be rural or in a town or city
8. I recall one time, when I was an Elder, when I had five children in my van for witnessing activities, all were aged between 12-13, and no other adults were present. They were in my care and the parents trusted me to keep the children safe
9. The children would generally be in school Monday to Friday but frequently they were out witnessing with us, as Elders, in the weekends or school holidays.
10. This was very common as we had the complete trust of the parents.
11. During pastoral care is another opportunity for Elders to be alone with children, during my time as an Elder, Under the direction of the Service Overseer I recall at one point a couple of parents wanted me to study with their children as they felt I was the best one to do it. The parents were never present during this study.
12. There are times when the children want to help and come along on site and while the parent is busy doing other things, they could help others other than their parents. When a child is going over the Questions for baptism there is one Elder

and the young person. They will sit in an area without interruptions, there is 3 sets of questions that need to be gone through. I remember being in rooms doing this with both male and females they were around 12,13 to 14 years old by myself and with no other adults present, this would take about an hour. I recall doing these questions with alone in the bedroom of a young girl called GRO-B and then again with her sister, there was no adult or parental supervision.

13. There is s also pastoral care in respect of the Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC), the parents would hand care over to the HLC to speak to children and or on behalf of the children to or about the view of blood transfusions. This can be unsupervised depending on the age and the situation.
14. There would also be working bees where there may only be one Elder who would be in charge and take care of the goings on during that time with a group of children and sometimes other adults.
15. In their magazine, the Jehovah Witnesses talk about fatherless children. If there was a widow with children an Elder would take the place of the father and take them on outings or for a meal to be a role model for them. This would be unsupervised by the mother. As an example, all elders were to take care of these children as I did, I refer to 'The Awake' Feb 8th 2000 page 10 which says "Christian men can often 'rescue the fatherless boy' by taking a sincere and healthy interest in him." This involves setting aside time doing things with the child not only with his family but also away from his family.
16. If a father was not part of the congregation and the mother was, an Elder or other member could fulfil a similar role as that of a fatherless child. I recall that occasionally caused issues with the fathers.

17. There would be opportunities for both Elders and MS's to be alone with groups of children for sport, I organised a lot of that for the children, a predator could easily take advantage of that situation.
18. There used to be a thing called the Theocratic Ministry School – this no longer exists in the form that it was once but effectively it would be taken by an Elder and there would be a number of children attending along with parents. I used to take this and I do not recall another adult ever being present when I would talk to them at the end of the meeting.
19. There is also the normal family situations where parents are alone with their children, that happens in all families, but within JW there is the two witness rule where the word of one child is not believed unless a second witness comes forward. Interestingly if a JW woman was to say she was raped, that doesn't require a second witness they may well tell her to go to the Police. The thing is this is not carried out the same way, all the time. A case I know very well is a woman was reported as doing something that allegedly was against the beliefs of the JWs and so they set up a judicial committee. In the meeting there was not two witnesses and yet she was found guilty and unrepentant. She was disfellowshipped. There is another example of this on the back page of the September 2018 Watchtower. Clearly if there is not two witnesses to the case and they feel there is evidence enough they will form a judicial case and act on it.
20. That was all considered normal, it was just the way it happened because everyone was taught that you can trust the MS or Elders.
21. Anecdotally, I recall that an Elder in Field Service in Auckland sexually abused a young girl he had with him for a return visit this was 15 to 20 years ago. He also had access to other children.

Statement of Truth

This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and was made by me knowing that it may be used as evidence by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

Signed: GRO-C

Date: 21 June 2023