


Bundaberg Hospital Commission of Inquiry

STATEMENT OF R I

I R I of an address known to the Commission swears:

1. I am currently employed by the
2. To ensure that patient's confidential information is protected, I understand that the Commission has developed a system where patient names are not used and instead a patient number is assigned.
3. I am the mother of patient P26 who I will refer to in this statement as "my son".
4. My son was injured in an accident on 23 December 2004. My son was staying with friends who were on holidays, and they had brought their motorbikes with them. My son went for a ride on one of the motorbikes along with his friends.
5. I did not witness the accident but the following paragraphs 6 to 8 of this, my statement, list what I have been told by other witnesses to the accident about my son's accident. My son has no memory of the accident.
6. At about 10:00 that morning he had an accident where he hit a tree stump that was in some long grass between the car tracks. He fell off the motorbike and was bleeding from the groin area.



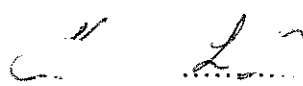
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7. One of the boys who was with my son had to ride about 10 kilometres through the national park to get help. This boy got his father and they drove back to where my son was, when they got there they called an ambulance and then gave my son first aid while they waited for the ambulance to arrive.
8. The ambulance arrived and called in a helicopter to take my son to the Bundaberg Base Hospital ("the Hospital"). My son was then admitted to the Hospital.
9. I received a phone call at about 11:30 that morning telling me about the accident and that my son was being taken to the Hospital.
10. When I arrived at the hospital they told me that they had a trauma team set up waiting for my son to arrive.
11. When my son arrived his breathing was really bad and I was told that he had lost a lot of blood, Dr Patel waived him straight through to theatre so they could operate on him straight away.
12. That was when I first saw Dr Patel but at that time I did not know that was his name. I did not realise who he was but I saw him waiting to take my son straight to the operating theatre.
13. I don't recall how long my son was in the operating theatre but it seemed to be a long time. During that operation a nurse from emergency kept coming over to speak to me and let me know how everything was going. She was trying to be very nice and caring but I wasn't really in a state to talk to anybody.
14. Once my son came out of the operating theatre he went straight to ICU.

15. Dr Patel then came in to see me and he spent the first 10 minutes telling me what a great doctor he was and that he had run the ER section of a New York Hospital for 10 years. He then told me about my son's injuries. Dr Patel told me that my son's femoral vein had been severed and his femoral artery had been damaged and that he had to replace part of the femoral artery with gortex, which he told me was an artificial substance and if it lasted 24 hours it would last forever. Dr Patel also told me that he had stopped the bleeding and that my son would be alright.
16. Dr Patel came back later that afternoon and told me that he had to take my son back to theatre to do a fasciotomy which entailed an incision from the hip to the knee and the knee to the ankle on both sides of my son's leg. Dr Patel told me that this was necessary because my son's legs were swelling and the pressure from the swelling might make the muscles die as the swelling would crush the muscles and stop the blood flow. I was told that the fasciotomies would allow the leg to swell and then when the swelling went down they would repair the fasciotomies.
17. I asked Dr Patel why this had to be done as I didn't think the swelling was that bad as it didn't look that bad to me. Dr Patel insisted that it was necessary. Dr Patel also told me that he couldn't find a pulse in my son's foot but another doctor who was there told me that he found a pulse in my son's foot although they could not pick up the pulse using the Doppler machine.
18. They took my son to theatre and did the fasciotomies and then put him back in ICU. Around 10:00 or 11:00pm on the 23rd of December, they had to take my son back to theatre. Dr Patel and another doctor who might have been an anaesthetist and another short overseas doctor were debating whether to send my son to Brisbane.
19. There was just a group of them standing at the end of my son's bed discussing whether to send my son to Brisbane. In the group of doctors was

Dr Patel and an overseas trained doctor who might have been Indian and possibly a doctor named Dr Robinson an orthopaedic doctor, but I cannot be sure if he was there or not. When I asked the doctors what was wrong they fobbed me off. Dr Patel just told me that the first operation was to save my son's life, the second operation was to save my son's leg and the third operation was necessary too, but he would not tell me why my son needed the third operation or what that operation would involve.

20. I said to one of the doctors who was standing at the foot of the bed that if there was any doubt about my son's treatment they should just send him to Brisbane but the Doctor said that by the time they organised the plane from Brisbane it would take six hours and it would be too long by the time my son got to Brisbane. They decided to take him back to theatre. I am not sure which doctor said this to me but it might have been Dr Boyd.
21. I have since been told that during the first operation to repair the femoral artery Dr Patel had left a clamp on the main artery in my son's leg and I have been told that in the third operation they located and removed the clamp although I have no knowledge of what went on in the operating theatre or the nature of the third operation.
22. At no stage did I sign a consent form for the first operation that my son underwent, and I don't remember signing a consent form for the other two operations my son underwent, however I am informed that I did sign them.
23. I wanted my son to be transferred to Brisbane at that stage.
24. I never got an answer out of Dr Patel or any of the other doctors about what the third operation was for they just told me that it was necessary.
25. At some stage Dr Patel told me that my son had a slight fracture to his hip but that it was not significant. He also said that my son might also have a slight fracture to his pelvis.



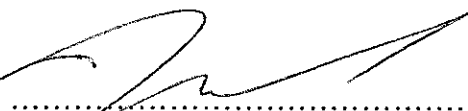


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26. After the operation my son went back to ICU and they put him on morphine for the pain, he had these huge incisions in his leg that were covered with bandages. He stayed in ICU for a few days.
27. On the morning Dr Patel went on holidays he came to see my son. He told me that he was leaving on holidays to New York that afternoon and at that stage I thought that Dr Patel was very dedicated coming in to see my son before he went on holidays. Dr Patel said that my son was doing really well and that the absolute worst case was that he might lose one toe, he convinced my son's father that he should return to work because the worst was over. Dr Patel also told me that my son would be under the care of Dr Gaffield, and I recall Dr Patel telling me that Dr Gaffield was a plastic surgeon.
28. I also recall Dr Patel at some stage telling me that he had done all of the vascular work on my son. I recall him telling me that there were no vascular surgeons in Bundaberg but that he had done all the vascular work on my son.
29. They then transferred him to the surgical ward.
30. While he was in the surgical ward the nurses had to keep rolling him over to prevent bed sores. One of the surgical nurses dropped my son's leg while rolling him over and it hurt him considerably. I also remember another occasion when a nurse dropped my son's medical chart on his leg.
31. I kept complaining to the nurses that my son was not getting enough pain relief and each time I was told by the nurses that the doctors know what they are doing, I also got the same response from Dr Boyd.
32. Every day Dr Boyd and a female doctor named Hazel and another German doctor would come in and change his dressings. The doctors would give my

son a tablet for the pain but that obviously wasn't enough because he still felt everything when the doctors changed his dressings and he was in a lot of pain.

33. After Dr Patel left it was mainly the nurses who attended and did the observations.
34. Every day Dr Boyd and the other doctors would come and change my son's dressings and would tell me that he was doing well and that everything was fine.
35. Every couple of days Dr Gaffield would come and check my son's wounds but he would go before I had a chance to speak to him. I waited outside the curtains while Dr Gaffield checked the wounds because they were so horrific I couldn't look at them.
36. Dr Gaffield only spent a few minutes with my son each time he visited.
37. On the Tuesday night one of the nurses was going to give my son an injection of Heparin when I stopped her. My son was going in for another operation on the next day and I knew that Heparin thins out your blood and he should not have it if he was going to have an operation. The nurse then went away and told me that his operation had been cancelled.
38. Sometime during this period I had seen many relatives and friends and spoken about what was happening to my son. One of them asked me whether my son had seen a vascular surgeon.
39. On one day when Dr Boyd and the other doctors were changing my son's dressing, I think it was about the 29th of December, I called them back and I said that I wanted my son to see a vascular surgeon. Dr Boyd told me that my son did not need to see a vascular surgeon as Dr Patel had done all of the vascular work. When I asked whether my son needed to see a vascular


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surgeon Dr Boyd said word to the effect of "absolutely not, we have done all the vascular work" and then he walked off. Dr Boyd also said that there were no vascular surgeons in Bundaberg. He also seemed very annoyed that I had asked about vascular surgeons.

40. Later on I found out that there is a vascular surgeon in Bundaberg but he only works privately, but my son was in the Hospital as a private patient.
41. Later that day I was trying to get my son to eat something when a woman I now know as Di Jenkin came in and had a look at my son's foot. After she had looked at it she waited to speak to me. She was the matron or unit manager and she needed to talk to me after I had finished feeding my son. I immediately thought that something was wrong with my son and quickly finished feeding him.
42. She took me into a room behind the reception desk and shut the door. She said to me words to the effect of "I hear you have been heavily questioning my doctors". I said that I had been asking the doctors questions and she said to me words to the effect of "that I was not to question the doctors, that this was her ward and that she would not have her doctors questioned in her ward and that if I did not like it I should take my son somewhere else". She then asked me if I was happy with the treatment that my son was getting and I responded that the doctors keep telling me that he is doing well. I said that his father wanted him transferred to Brisbane but the doctors here were looking at his wounds and telling me that he is doing great.
43. I don't remember mentioning Dr Patel as Dr Patel was overseas and no longer looking after my son, Dr Gaffield was my son's doctor. Nor did we discuss whether I should get a second opinion. I was in tears when I left the room.
44. I was upset at how Di Jenkin had spoken to me so I then rang Brad, my son's father and said to him that I had to deal with my son and I didn't couldn't deal

with Di Jenkin. Brad told me to find out the name of the Director of Nursing and he would deal with it. When I returned to my son's bedside, one of the nurses, who I believe is names Michelle asked me if I had met her boss who had returned that day from holidays. I started to cry and she asked me what was wrong. When I told her what Di Jenkin had said to me Michelle told me that she was like that with everyone. Later that day while I was getting my son a drink I walked past the nurses' station and another nurse handed me a complaints form and said to me words to the effect of "we might have to put up with her but you don't". I took that to be a reference to Di Jenkin. Given everything that had happened I never got around to filling out the form.

45. Then on the Thursday when one of the doctors was changing my son's dressing I asked if he had an infection. I was told that my son was fine and that he didn't have an infection. My son's foot was all motley and purple and black and after the doctor left I noticed that sections of my son's foot which had been pink in some places had turned red. I asked some of the nurses whether that meant that he had an infection. I was told that he did not have and infection and one of the nurses said to me that it was better that his foot was red rather than black.
46. All throughout my son's treatment at the Hospital I remember the nurses asking me how I thought my son was doing. I usually said that he is in a lot of pain and he has a temperature but the Doctors keep telling me that he is fine. In hindsight I think that it was unusual that they kept asking me how I was thought my son was doing.
47. For the whole of this time the nurses were using the Doppler machine and they said that even though they can't find a pulse on the top of his foot they know that the blood was getting through and circulating.
48. The next Friday again I asked the doctor, I believe it was Dr Hazel, although I don't know her last name, whether my son had an infection. I kept on pushing her about whether he had an infection as I was concerned that he

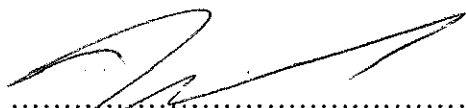
had a temperature. She eventually told me that he has a small infection but it's on the outside of the skin and it was nothing to worry about. But he was in a lot of pain and he had a temperature of about 41 degrees

49. By the 1st of January 2005 I knew that my son was really sick, he had a high temperature. A nurse named Judy called me into the tea room and asked me how I thought that my son was doing. I told her that the doctors keep telling me that he is doing great but that morning when they were changing his dressing when I asked how he was doing they fobbed me off. Judy then asked me why I thought the staff were using the headphones when they used the Doppler machine. She then told me that they were using headphones on the Doppler machine because they hadn't been able to find a pulse for four days.
50. I rang Brad my son's father and said to him to get my son out of the Hospital and transferred to Brisbane.
51. I then went back to my son's room and there was a doctor there who I hadn't seen before, I believe his name was David and he was an orthopaedic doctor. He was feeling for my son's pulses. He then said that he would be back in two minutes. When he came back he said that they were airlifting my son to Brisbane but he didn't tell me why. I was told that they would be sending him by helicopter and that I couldn't go with him. My son started panicking because he didn't want to go to Brisbane on his own.
52. I was told that when my son got to Brisbane they were going to run some tests on him.
53. I then left the Hospital and drove to my mothers and picked her up because she wanted to come with me to Brisbane. When we got past Maryborough I got a message on my phone to call Dr Mark Ray from the Royal Brisbane Hospital ("RBH"). Dr Ray is a vascular surgeon.

54. I called Dr Ray who told me that my son was the sickest 15 year old boy he had ever seen. He was completely septic and he had gangrene. Dr Ray said that my son's foot had been dead for days, the femoral artery graft was infected and they might have to do a hindquarter amputation however he didn't expect my son to survive the surgery.
55. He also told me that before he had put my son to sleep for the surgery he had told him that he would probably wake up without a leg.
56. I told him to do whatever he had to do to save my son's life, then had to drive the other 300 kilometres to Brisbane.
57. When I got to Brisbane my son had just come out of surgery and Dr Ray told me that they had held off on the amputation as he had decided to stabilise him and clean out his wounds. He had also redone the femoral artery graft. He told me that they had taken a vein out of my son's other leg and repaired the femoral artery. The Hospital had organised to do an amputation the next day on the 2nd of January. At that stage Dr Ray was still talking about a hindquarter amputation but he told me that they would not know until they had gotten in and had a look at how bad the infection was. Dr Ray also told me that had my son arrived in Brisbane even two hours later it would have been too late to save him.
58. My son then underwent the surgery on the 2nd January, then returned to the ICU and was put on life support.
59. After they did the amputation Dr Jason Jenkins came and spoke to me about the operation. He told me that he had reattached the muscles to his hip and sewn a flap of muscle over the femoral artery to give it more protection. I asked him why he was talking about reattaching muscles as I didn't understand what he was talking about. Dr Jenkins told me that all of the muscles attached to that part of my son's body had been ripped away and

that it did not appear that those injuries had been picked up in Bundaberg. I didn't know anything about it until it had been repaired in Brisbane.

60. The doctors at the RBH also did more x-rays on my son's hip as the x-rays that had been taken in Bundaberg were not clear. The RBH x-rays showed that my son had seriously fractured his pelvis and hip and he would have been in a lot of pain while he was being rolled around in Bundaberg.
61. All of the doctors I spoke with were very unhappy about the condition my son had arrived in from the Bundaberg Base Hospital and also the treatment that he had received there, and went out of their way to help me. They told us how to go through the complaints process and offered to get people to assist me. They also arranged sessions with all of the doctors and nurses involved in my son's treatment at the RBH where everyone involved would sit around and answer all of our questions about my son's treatment. They were really helpful.
62. I remember that often the doctors would come around with the medical students to see my son and they would say that the Bundaberg Hospital had kept my son for 9 days but they couldn't understand why the Bundaberg Hospital didn't transfer him to Brisbane.
63. After his amputation they did about 8 more operations. My son was having an operation every second day or so.
64. My son is still under the care of Dr Jenkins and we go to Brisbane for treatment and specialist appointments regularly.
65. The use of a prosthetic limb has proved unsuccessful for my son as the fragile skin that has been grafted along the length of his left leg, where they

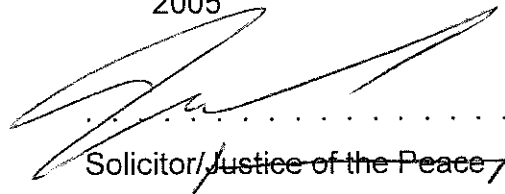

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repaired the fasciotomy, keeps breaking down from the pressure of the prosthetic limb.

66. For my son to be able to wear a prosthetic limb for prolonged periods of time, he will have to undergo further surgery which involves grafting muscles from his back to replace the existing skin grafts with full thickness grafts.

Dated this 1ST day of JULY 2005

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