

MINISTRY OF  
JUSTICE

LA 04 01 00 03  
MP-CJ-RP

4 July 2000

Rt Honourable Sir Thomas Eichelbaum

Dear Sir Thomas

**PETER HUGH MCGREGOR ELLIS**

You have requested that, for the purposes of the Ministerial inquiry into the Ellis case, the Ministry obtain information on Professor Amye Warren and Associate Professor James Wood.

We enclose brief biographies of each of these individuals, including selected bibliographies of relevant publications. We have also enclosed articles authored by Professor Warren and Associate Professor Wood.

In our opinion, both of these psychologists appear to be well suited to providing opinions as part of the Ellis inquiry. Professor Warren in particular has published extensively in the relevant areas of literature. We would also note that, from the literature we have examined, neither Professor Warren nor Associate Professor Wood appear to belong to either of the "camps" that are traditionally associated with the research on child suggestibility.

We would make the following comments in relation to Professor Warren and Associate Professor Wood. Of the two candidates, Professor Warren is likely to have greater international recognition. She has published more widely in the relevant areas, and has contributed to a number of major texts on the subject of child suggestibility and evidential interviewing. We would particularly recommend her review article titled *Research on children's suggestibility: Implications for the investigative interview*. It provides an excellent application of the research literature to interviewing practice.

*Te Manatū Ture*

While having published less extensively in the relevant areas of literature, Associate Professor Wood is still widely published, and would also be a good candidate. We would note in particular that he has been involved in an ongoing research project examining the techniques employed in a prominent United States mass allegation case (the McMartin preschool case), and is accordingly likely to be familiar with the issues involved in the Ellis case. He is also a qualified clinical psychologist, and is likely to be well suited to the assessment of child evidential interviews.

We have one qualification in relation to Associate Professor Wood. One of his research interests includes the application of Bayes's theorem, a theoretical statistical formula through which the likelihood of an event occurring, to the assessment of child sexual abuse and the evaluation of interview techniques. We have included his article *Weighing evidence in sexual abuse evaluations: An introduction to Bayes's theorem* as an example of the approach. You may recall that we supplied you with a similar article, authored by Professor Lyon, on the subject of Bayes's theorem.

Our concern relates largely to the fact that Associate Professor Wood's suggested methodology has only received limited endorsement by other academics. In addition, the technique places a strong reliance on quantitative techniques, in an attempt to systematise the area of child sexual abuse. We would note, however, that the remainder of the literature places a strong emphasis on the employment of qualitative methods in the assessment of child sexual abuse. In this regard, then, our concern is that Associate Professor Wood's approach is theoretical. It is unlikely to reasonably reflect the range of professional views in the area of child suggestibility and the evaluation of sexual abuse.

As discussed, we have also enclosed the transcripts relating to the following evidential interviews:

These transcripts relate to children who, while their evidence formed part of the depositions proceedings, were not complainants or the subject of any charges at Mr

Ellis's trial. You will see that the numbering alongside the "Tape Reference" heading at the top of the transcript corresponds with the number on each tape.

Finally, we have been informed by the Christchurch High Court that the labels on the two tapes labelled 92/435 and 92/454. We apologise for any confusion that this may have caused.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries, or if anything in this letter is unclear.

Yours sincerely



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