Today’s Speakers

All of today’s speakers are warriors in the fight against child abuse. They are all mostly active not only in their own struggles for justice, but in supporting each other and other people who are confronted with the horror of child abuse and its devastating effects on victims and their families.

- Aletha Blayse is Lewis’s eldest child and a survivor of infant/childhood sexual, physical, and psychological abuse and multiple traumas throughout her teens and adulthood. She helped Lewis with his blog and cared for him for eight years before his death. She has honours degrees in law and economics, and a background in academia, the public service, and small business. She is now mainly occupied as a caregiver in her family, but has decided to continue her father’s work in advocating for the right of children to grow up in a safe and loving environment and to bring true justice to those who continue to be denied the ability to heal from the horrendous crimes perpetrated upon them by institutions such as the Salvation Army and the Anglican Church. She can be contacted through http://lewisblayse.net/contact/.

- Dr. Cathy Kezelman is a medical practitioner, mental health consumer advocate, ASCA President, director of Mental Health Coordinating Council (MHCC), foundation member of the national Trauma Informed Care and Practice Advisory working Group, member of Mental Health Community Advisory Council (NSW), member of reference group for ACCSA (Australian Centre Child Sexual Assault) and on Advisory Panel of Tzedek. Under her stewardship ASCA has grown from a peer support organisation to a leading national organisation representing the needs of adult survivors who have experienced different forms of childhood trauma including abuse and neglect, including those involved with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Cathy is a prominent voice in the media and at conferences, as well as author of a memoir chronicling her journey of recovery from child sexual abuse: Innocence Revisited. She is co-author of the ASCA document - Practice Guidelines for Treatment of Complex trauma and Trauma Informed Care and Service Delivery.

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- Chris Wilding is a long-time activist. She founded the organisation Broken Rites in 1992 as a support organisation for those abused by clergy. Chris ran Broken Rites for many years. During that time, she brought to public attention matters relating to clerical sex abuse. A qualified interior designer, Chris has spent the last seven years of her life working as a carer. She maintains her activist stance, speaking and writing widely on matters such as child protection, and is regularly consulted by the media and other organisations for expert insights into the issues.

- John Ellis is a survivor of child sexual abuse for 12 years in the 1970s and 1980s by a Roman Catholic monk. After unsuccessful attempts many years ago to seek redress, John has for the last 5 years specialised in claims against Churches and other institutions for the impacts on victims and their families of sexual, physical and emotional abuse. These matters require empathy, deep understanding, and a multi-disciplinary approach that takes into account a variety of needs and responses beyond the strict legal framework of a compensation case, and recognises the inter-generational searing caused by trauma. Institutions need to learn to be responsive to the impacts of complex trauma and to avoid further re-traumatisation. John has been a university lecturer, mentor, and author of numerous papers. He is presently a principal of Ellis Legal, Lawyers & Advocates, a practice he developed with his wife Nicola as a specialist practice established exclusively to assist victims of institutional abuse to achieve redress and accountability from those institutions. It is believed to be the first practice of its kind in Australia.

www.ella.net.au

- Judy Courtin is a lawyer and doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Law, Monash University. Her thesis is examining sex crimes and the Catholic Church. This PhD provides a useful vehicle for addressing the human rights and other needs of Catholic clergy victims and survivors of these crimes. Judy is also a campaigner for legal and other reform in this area. She advocated strongly for the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry and the Royal Commission and has written fairly extensively for Fairfax Media and the Conversation. She has also used other forms of the media to advocate and represent the voice of victims and their families, whilst addressing their legal and human rights.

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- Karyn Walsh is coordinator of Micah Projects, which works across many areas of engaging with people who are disadvantaged and marginalised. Over the past 17 years, this has included working with people who as children were in church or state care in institutions, foster care, and detention. Through Lotus House, we are providing state wide services and participate in the Alliance Forgotten Australians. Karyn has worked in support and advocacy roles in the non-government sector for thirty-five years. (http://www.micahprojects.org.au/).

- Nicky Davis endured six years of clergy child sexual assault from the age of 12. Nicky survived by pretending nothing was wrong, and was so convincing she was awarded Dux of her school. After a Masters’ Degree in Marketing, a successful business career, and a lifetime of re-abuse and re-victimisation, Nicky finally faced her demons, prompted by the hypocrisy of the Papal “apology” to victims in Sydney in 2008. Determined to end her terrified silence, Nicky reported her abuser to police, saw
him charged, and then struggled to recover when he escaped trial on a technicality, despite eyewitnesses to her abuse. Disgusted by the lack of support for survivors, Nicky has been involved ever since in supporting other survivors and lobbying for law reform and effective child protection measures. Nicky is a leader of SNAP Australia, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (www.snapaustralia.org).

- **Detective Chief Inspector Peter Fox** is the brave NSW police officer who risked his career to blow the whistle on child rape and abuse in the Catholic Church and the state police force’s failures to achieve justice for victims and survivors. Peter Fox’s demand issued to the NSW Premier, Barry O’Farrell, that there should be an inquiry into Church and police cover-ups of child abuse, led to the establishment of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Matters Relating to the Police Investigation of Certain Child Sexual Abuse Allegations in the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. This inquiry is due to report by 31 May, 2014.

### Sponsors / Acknowledgments

Many people have contributed to this event, whether through contributions in the form of messages of love and support, promotion of this event, or through much-needed practical or financial assistance. Lewis’s family would particularly like to acknowledge the generous contributions of Gerald (Jerry) Slevin (http://christiancatholicism.com/), Beth Brosgarth, Karyn Walsh (http://www.micahtprojects.org.au/), Gina Tilley, Adrian Butler (http://www.theworldfiresafetyfoundation.org/), and the University of Queensland (http://www.uq.edu.au/) for making today’s event possible. Very warm thanks also to the Courier-Mail, JohnB, Leonie Sheedy (www.clan.org.au), Manny Waks, Elizabeth, Emma the Brave, Connor Duffy, Act for Kids, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and all of the many, many other people who are too many to list who helped promote or otherwise encourage this event and make it the special day it has been. Thanks also to Matt and Wayne from Select Audio Visual (www.selectaudiovisual.com.au).

### Lewis’s Life

#### Childhood

Lewis was in and out of ‘care’ between the ages of 5 months and 12 years. Lewis was horrendously abused at the St George’s Anglican Home, in Rockhampton, when he was aged 4. He suffered permanent physical injuries, including having the top of his thumb being cut off as punishment for thumb sucking. His growth was retarded because he was frequently starved. He was locked under a building in solitary confinement during the day when the other children were at school. His face was ground into his own faeces as a punishment. In and out of care after that, including a stay at Wooloowin, he finally found himself in the hell-hole that was Alkira (Indooroopilly Boys’ Home), run by the Salvation Army, where he was abused in every possible way as an already vulnerable and traumatised child. During his fear-filled time at Alkira, he organised a coordinated escape attempt, with the objective of getting on television to tell the world what was happening at Alkira. He failed, and vowed from that point on to make sure the world knew of the atrocities being committed by the Salvation Army and other institutions trusted by society to ‘care’ for children.

Upon his release from Alkira, after informing his local MP of what happened at Alkira, he lived in poverty, caring with his siblings for his sick mother. They were so poor they often raided rubbish bins at night to get enough to eat. When the electricity was cut off, they cooked over a Bunsen burner he stole from his school, and he studied under the streetlight in front of his home. Despite such appalling deprivation and strain, Lewis went on to become Dux of his school at age 16 (he skipped a year of school due to his astonishing intelligence) and won a full scholarship to the University of Queensland to study science.

#### Adult Life

The vigour of youth allowed Lewis to go far, despite his traumas, but things soon turned sour. The impacts of his horrific childhood caught up with him, and he suffered throughout his life severe and complex PTSD, nightmares, flashbacks, anxiety, depression, dissociation, an inability to be close to people for more than about an hour without throwing up, life-long stomach pain, difficulty keeping food down and other gastrointestinal problems, insomnia, difficulty battling suicidal feelings, low self-esteem, learned helplessness, pervasive and lifelong guilt and shame at not having been able to protect the other boys from abuse, waking up every day (including up to the day before he died) in a state of terror in which he believed he was still in Alkira, difficulties with authority figures, inability to trust people, inability to relax / hypervigilance, and being ‘triggered’ by the sight of dozens of everyday, innocent-to-other things that reminded him of Alkira that made being out and about in the community and the workplace like walking through a minefield. He tried, many times, to hold down a job, but rarely lasted more than a year.

Lewis lived most of his life in conditions of extreme stress and dire poverty, ashamed and humiliated, and desperately unhappy at his inability to provide a better life for his wife and children than he could. For more information about Lewis’s adult life, please see here: http://lewisblayse.net/site-directory-2/first-person-posts-about-the-blogger/. From this, you’ll see that Lewis, with his genius-level IQ and polymath abilities, could have and should have been anything – a professor, scientist, parliamentarian, company director – anything but what he actually was, welfare-dependent and unable to provide for his family and enjoy the fruits of what should have been a normal life of work. That a man possessed of such extraordinary abilities and intellect was crippled and unable to achieve the soaring heights he should have achieved is a crime perpetrated not just on Lewis and his family, but society as a whole.

#### Activism

Despite a lifetime of poverty and deprivation due to the traumas and resulting disabilities he faced that prevented him
from having a normal life and from being the provider to his family he should have been, Lewis Blayse never stopped working to improve society, whether publicly or behind the scenes. His first act of resistance was at the age of 10, while at the Salvation Army Alkira / Indooroopily Boys’ Home, where he organised a coordinated escape movement. For this, he and the other boys were brutally punished by the Salvation Army staff, and Lewis himself, suspected of being the ringleader, suffered two days of torture designed to make him confess. He never did. His daughter, Aletha Blayse, will never forget the spark in his eyes when he told her what they did to him and how he toughed it out.

Throughout his life, Lewis was active both publicly and behind the scenes, on issues such as Children’s Homes (Forgotten Australians), anti-Vietnam war activism, better treatment of welfare recipients, indigenous rights, women’s rights, prisoners’ rights, rights for the sight-impaired, child migrants, forced adoptions, child sex tourism, educating the medical professions about the impacts of abuses in Children’s Homes, rights for farmers, mandating seatbelts on school buses, activism for the right to protest publicly, and teaching practices, amongst many other areas. In his earlier years, before he changed his name by deed poll, he was Lewin Blazevich, and is remembered by many for that name too.

As a Family Man
Lewis was a gentle, compassionate, wise, and loving father and husband. Lewis always made time for his children, and always put on a brave face to them to mask his sorrow – a mask his children only learned to see through when they got old enough. His wise counsel helped many in the family through dark and painful times. He taught his children to live with integrity, compassion, and courage. All his extended family loved him unreservedly. He attempted to compensate his family for the poverty in which it lived in creative ways. His daughter, Aletha Blayse, especially remembers the time he built a flower garden in the shape of her name, in ten-foot high letters, so that it could be seen ‘from outer space’. His children will always remember him as the best father a child could possibly wish to have. His family suffered vicariously by witnessing Lewis’s suffering, however. It struggled valiantly to communicate to him how valuable he was to them despite his poverty and the shame he felt at being unable to provide materially in the way he wanted to provide. They hope that he understood or that if he didn’t understand then, that he does now know that he was the perfect father. His children, all through their childhoods and adulthood, called him ‘Daddy’ as a way of reminding him of the saying that “anyone can be a father, but it takes someone special to be a Daddy.”

Death
Lewis died of an abdominal aortic aneurysm overnight on the 31st January/1st February, on the anniversary of his marriage to his wife, Sylvia, and just after having given an interview with ABC’s 7:30 Report. His daughter, Aletha Blayse, found him dead in the living room when she woke up on Saturday morning. He was only 64, and there had been no signs of anything being wrong with him beforehand. His death came as a complete shock. He had always expressed the wish to live to 100. Lewis’s training in biochemistry meant he was extremely careful about good nutrition, self-care, and exercise. If Lewis had been feeling any stomach pain in the time leading up to his death, he probably ignored it, as he suffered his entire life after leaving Alkira with stomach ailments, including difficulty keeping down food, throwing up when near people for more than about an hour, and other problems. His family remember him as constantly pressing gently upon his stomach throughout his adult life in a futile attempt to alleviate his anxiety-induced stomach pain. They feel he was taken from them far, far too soon, and mourn not only his loss, but also the loss of the period of happiness, stability, and safety they truly believed they were on the verge of achieving. Justice was so close. But the struggle for justice will continue all the same. Responsible institutions cannot be allowed to wait for victims to die and then avoid doing the right thing.

Lewis’s Wishes

Wishes for the Future
Lewis envisaged a future in which institutions responsible for abusing children, covering up such abuses, and protecting abusers would no longer be able to get away with their appalling behaviour. He believed that if the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse did its job, this would be the outcome. He was keenly aware, however, that the Commission’s final recommendations would only be the beginning, and that public pressure needed to mount for its recommendations to be translated into law. He also believed that we did not have to wait until the recommendations and that pressure should start to be brought to bear upon our elected representatives to institute necessary changes now. Lewis’s daughter, Aletha Blayse, intends to take up from where Lewis left off in this regard.

Wishes for His Family
Lewis and his family have fought unsuccessfully for decades for restorative justice for Lewis – for adequate compensation to meet the bridge between what he should have been in life and where he ended up – which was in the gutter. Lewis’s daughter, Aletha Blayse, and his wife, Sylvia Blayse, are continuing on Lewis’s fight because they believe that the responsible organisations should not be able to get away with simply waiting for people to die without ever doing the right thing. To quote Lewis from his appearance on the Four Corners’ program, ‘The Homies’:

“If anybody is to be compensated, I’d say it was my family, because they, you know… You compensate a breadwinner if he’s killed at work or something. If they’re psychologically killed...the family should still be compensated.”

The responsible organisations, including the Salvation Army and the Anglican Church, not only have not properly compensated Lewis’s family for his ‘psychological death’, they have not compensated them for his physical death, which occurred far, far, far too young. The struggle for justice continues. This justice must take the form of compensation that breaches the gap between what Lewis actually received on welfare most of his life and what he should have achieved if he
hadn’t been disabled. It must also compensate family members for the career sacrifices they made to care for Lewis. Finally, there must be a contribution for the years and years of pain and suffering.

More than 20 years after first being informed of what happened at Alkira, and only after the airing of the Four Corners’ ‘Homies’ program featuring Lewis, the Salvation Army paid Lewis a mere $30,000 for a lifetime of suffering and deprivation as an expression of ‘regret’ (initial offer was $20,000). No legal representative was present at the meeting between Lewis and Peter Farthing from the Salvation Army. The money from the Salvation Army went to paying for Lewis’s remaining teeth to be removed and save his life (he was in danger of dying from infection). His lifelong poverty meant he couldn’t afford dental work to care for his teeth; his dental problems started in Alkira, where he wasn’t even provided with a toothbrush. The Salvation Army, through James Condon, has refused to further compensate Lewis and his family, although he has offered to pay for them. The Salvation Army paid for Lewis to buried but the family believes this is the very least they should have done and is not enough.

The Anglican Church, only after years of legal and other approaches, finally offered $10,000 (which would have left Lewis with $4,000 after legal fees and Medicare deductions) – Lewis, disgusted and hurt, refused the offer. Ellis Legal is currently in new talks with the Anglican Church regarding compensation.

Sylvia’s Wishes

Lewis and his wife Sylvia (herself a survivor) spoke often of the need for a Chair in Survivor Studies with Forgotten Australian Studies at an Australian university and a Card of Recognition. A Card of Recognition would be issued by the Government that survivors could carry with them. The holder of such a card may wish to produce it when interacting with authority figures, as a way to signify that the cardholder has a mental injury that was caused by an institution.

Sylvia says, “I can’t tell you how bad it has been, interacting with welfare, medical and administrative personnel who have never heard of Forgotten Australians or Institutional Abuse Survivors.”

“The worst part is that Forgotten Australians are expected to take charge of their own care, with no support for their carers or families. When they do accept help from agencies, they are routinely mistreated. It is not that anyone is trying to hurt them. But imagine how it feels to be different from others, in a way that seems invisible to all but themselves? The Forgotten Australian population, like the survivor population, views a lot of things differently from mainstream society, whatever that is. Their children experience their difference as soon as they attend school. Studies of second-generation effects haven’t caught up with Forgotten Australians’ kids yet. That’s also why we need a chair in Forgotten Australian and Survivor Studies.”

“We could empty the jails of welfare ‘criminals’. Count how many in the jails were institutionalised as kids! It may or may not surprise you to know that in 1993, when Lewis and I did some work at Wacol Prison, they did a poll. 70% of the inmates had been in care as children. Imagine a future where each of those individuals has experienced restorative justice. What will it mean for their rehabilitation? I hope it will mean a lot to them. We’re only asking for what we would have had if Forgotten Australians had not been abused. Our families just want the level playing field that is offered to others. We need affirmative action specifically directed at restoring our trust in authority, authority that has been found wanting, authority that has created terrible disability in Forgotten Australians, survivors and their families.”

Help Lewis’s Family

If you would like to help Lewis’s family, there are a number of ways you can do so:

1. Sign the petition demanding justice for Lewis Blayse and his surviving family: www.lewisblayse.net

2. Donations to help the Blayse family while it fights for justice may be directed to Ellis Legal (please, no victims should make donations – Lewis would not have wanted that). www.ella.net.au

3. Aletha Blayse hopes she might receive funding from a philanthropic source to allow her to devote her life to continuing Lewis’s daily writing (which occupied him full-time). If any organisation or company wishes to make this possible, please contact Aletha via the Contact page on www.lewisblayse.net

Remember this Day

If you want to listen again to any of the speeches given today, this entire event is being filmed. Shortly, the film will be available on www.lewisblayse.net. Please check this site over coming weeks. Feel free to share the film as widely as you like – facebook, YouTube, etc.

Thank You!

Thank you for coming and showing your support today. The Blayse Family is deeply grateful. Please help continue the fight for child safety by supporting the many activists who are struggling in the ‘War on Kids’ waged by evil people and the culpable institutions who protect them. There are more ‘us’ than ‘them’, and if we support each other in this terrible war, we will win. And, if you’ve found today’s event inspiring, or have been inspired by any of today’s speakers, contact them and let them know. Sometimes, the fight for justice is a lonely one, and it’s nice to know people care.

Aletha Blayse