The Sun, News Group Newspapers Limited
G. T. O'Shea
First Statement
"GTO1 – 2"
17 January 2012

**IN THE MATTER OF THE LEVESON INQUIRY INTO THE CULTURE, PRACTICES AND ETHICS OF THE PRESS**

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF**

**GARY TIMOTHY O'SHEA**

I, Gary Timothy O'Shea, c/o The Sun, News Group Newspapers Limited, 3 Thomas More Square, London E98 1XCY, will say as follows:

**A.** I am a news reporter at The Sun. I have worked for The Sun in this capacity since 2003, prior to which I worked as a reporter at Mirror Group Newspapers.

**B.** The purpose of this witness statement is to respond to the questions addressed to me set out in a letter from the Inquiry dated 1 December 2011 concerning The Sun's coverage on 1 January 2011 of the arrest of Christopher Jefferies.

**C.** The coverage of Mr Jefferies which appeared in the edition of The Sun published on 1 January 2011 comprised three separate articles presented over a front page and two inside pages. On the front page was an article headlined, "Obsessed with death", which turns on to the inside right-hand page. I was involved in producing this article and discuss this further below. The inside left-hand page of the 1 January 2011 edition contained two articles headlined: "What do you think I am...a pervert?" and "Meddler let himself in our flat". I had no material involvement in the preparation of these two articles and so do not comment on these in the rest of this statement.

**D.** I have set out below the questions raised by the Leveson Inquiry and my answers to them as regards my involvement in the article identified above.

**1 Insofar as this article contains assertions of fact, please set out, without naming individual sources, from where the evidence allegedly supporting such assertions came: in particular, stating (a) whether such evidence came from the police (if so, when, and in general terms by what means), (b) the nature of the investigations and inquiries you carried out, and (c) whether such investigations and inquiries entailed contacting Mr Jefferies ' former pupils (if so, setting out how many, providing the gist of what they said, and supplying your notes of any relevant conversations, redacting them to protect sources as appropriate).**

**1.1** The first half of the article that I was involved in producing in the 1 January 2011 edition of The Sun, headlined "Obsessed with death", was based upon interviews that my colleague, Caroline Grant – a staff reporter at The Sun based in London – had had with an ex-pupil of Mr Jefferies. I understand that the source for this interview had telephoned The Sun's night news desk in the evening of 30 December 2010 and spoken to Caroline. Later that

evening, Caroline called the source and spoke to him a second time. Please see Exhibit GTO1 for a copy of the transcript of these interviews with which I have been provided for the purposes of preparing this witness statement.

**1.2** As is standard practice with potential stories received by those working on the night news desk, Caroline produced a memo setting out the nature of the contact, followed by a summary of the information received, drafted in the form of story to appear in the newspaper. Please see Exhibit GTO2 for a copy of the memo produced by Caroline. Despite the presentation of the information, the contents of such memos are merely meant to be an indication as to what a final article could look like once further work on it is done and is not intended to be and is not treated as final copy. This memo would then have been filed into an electronic system and put on the night news log by the night news Editor. This log is provided to the day news desk.

**1.3** At this time, I was working on the story in Bristol and was covering multiple aspects of the Joanne Yeates' murder investigation. Caroline's memo was emailed to me on 31 December 2010 and I was asked by the news desk to make contact with the source to follow up this potential story. This was usual practice for stories received by the night news desk. Accordingly, I sought to meet up with the source to verify the material he had provided to Caroline and with a view to seeing whether he had any further information or relevant photos or could introduce me to anyone else who may have other information. I recall making several attempts to contact the source by telephone during the day and I believe I also texted him to explain who I was and that I was keen to meet him. My attempts to make contact were unsuccessful and I did not hear back from him. I did not carry out any further checks on the source. I would have done so once I had spoken to him.

**1.4** That day (31 December), I was asked by John Sturgis, the duty news editor, to write up a story covering a number of the aspects of the case that I was working on for the purposes of the 1 January 2011 edition of The Sun. I told John that I had not been able to make contact with the source but was asked to include at the top of my story the material from Caroline's memo. I incorporated this material into my story with no changes to the substance (although I may have added, for example, some introductory wording) and did not alter any of the quotations Caroline had recorded in her memo.

**1.5** The story I prepared and sent to the news desk was quite lengthy and I filed it under my name and Caroline's name. I noted that the story which was published on 1 January 2011 was much shorter and focused on the material from Caroline's memo, with most of the additional aspects covered by my original story excluded. In the circumstances, I was surprised that my name was listed in the byline rather than Caroline's, although bylines are sometimes not indicative of the journalist who has contributed most to the story. I sent Caroline an apology regarding the fact the story appeared under my name.

**1.6** The second half of the article discusses the developments in the police investigation. The sources for the assertions of fact in this section are as follows:

**1.6.1** I (and many other journalists based in the area around Ms Yeates' flat at this time) observed the police going to speak to Peter Stanley and were aware that Mr Stanley's car was taken for examination;

**1.6.2** The fact that Mr Stanley and Mr Jefferies had helped Ms Yeates' boyfriend to get his car started was widely known;

1.6.3 Similarly, the belief that Mr Stanley had told police Mr Jefferies knew Ms Yeates' boyfriend was leaving Ms Yeates alone was widely held. I believe Mr Stanley may have told one of his neighbours he had said this and this information was then passed on;

1.6.4 I do not precisely recall the source for the assertions regarding Lawrence Penny's whereabouts and questioning by the police. It may be that his quotes were provided by a news agency or a colleague of mine or a reporter on another paper spoke to him (it is not unusual for reporters to pool certain information when working on a big story with multiple lines of inquiry);

1.6.5 Details regarding the reasons for Mr Jefferies' arrest and the extension of time allowed to question him would have been received from the police press office or were otherwise a matter of public record;

1.6.6 As I was not aware that any evidence linking Mr Jefferies to the crime had been found (as no statements to this effect had been made by the police), I included wording reflecting this in the story; and

1.6.7 We were aware that neighbours of Ms Yeates and Mr Jefferies had been asked by the police to supply any private CCTV footage they had and some had been provided to the police for review.

**1.7** I confirm that I had no direct dealings with any police officers in connection with the Joanna Yeates' investigation and stories relating to this. I (or one of my colleagues at The Sun) would, however, contact the police press office daily for updates.

**1.8** I was in regular contact with one ex-pupil of Mr Jefferies for several days, although I do not think that this source contributed directly to the material published on 1 January 2011. This ex-pupil had phoned The Sun news desk and I visited him at his home and spoke on the phone and via email. It is possible that I spoke to this individual regarding the information provided to Caroline to see whether this was in line with his recollections but I cannot recall for sure. Attempts were made by myself and others at The Sun to contact other ex-pupils during the period of time that I was in Bristol by working, for example, from information available on the Friends Reunited website.

**2 State the nature of the steps, if any, you took to verify the accuracy of any information you received.**

**2.1** As I have stated above, I attempted to contact the source to whom Caroline had spoken but was unsuccessful. In such circumstances, I would not usually have included the information received from the source in a story I filed but in this instance, having informed the news desk of the position, I was specifically instructed to include this.

**2.2** I did not take any further steps to verify the accuracy of the other information included in this article because I considered that the sources of this information were sufficiently robust.

**3 State the nature of the discussions, if any, which took place between you and the sub-editor and/or editor in relation to the foregoing matters.**

**3.1** I do not recall whether I dealt directly with the sub-editors on 31 December 2010. I can recall that I did not deal directly with the day's Duty Editor, Stephen Waring. The usual chain of command is that I deal with the news desk, and that they in turn work under the

Duty Editor. If a sub-editor has a query, sometimes they will phone me directly, or otherwise they will approach the news desk.

**4 What legal advice, if any, was taken in relation to any of the foregoing matters; and if you are prepared to waive privilege, what was the nature of that advice?**

**4.1** As a reporter, I generally seek to supply the news desk with a pool of draft stories and information, and from this pool they then decide what material to publish. I do not recall whether I dealt directly with or spoke with any lawyers on 31 December 2010, or otherwise obtained any legal advice.

**5 What consideration, if any, was given to the Editors Code?**

**5.1** While I always seek to abide by the Press Complaints Commission's Code of Conduct, I defer final decisions on which material is within the public interest to senior executives at The Sun and the newspaper's lawyers. I feel I am duty-bound to include what my sources have told me when providing my reports to the news desk. The news desk then decides, with respect the PCC Code and advice from lawyers, what is or is not in the public interest and fit for publication.

**6 What consideration, if any, was given by you to public interest issues?**

**6.1** I was aware that the tragic murder of Ms Yeates and the ensuing police investigation was being widely publicised and closely followed by the public. As with my response above, I seek to report on what the sources have confirmed and consider it to be in the public interest to do so, subject to the news desk and editors confirming that such material is not in breach of the law or PCC Code.

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

Dated 11-1-12