

STATEMENT OF DAVID COOTE

I, David Coote of REDACTED

STATE:

- 1 I am currently engaged in my own consultancy as a Migration Agent. I was employed at the Brisbane Grammar School in the position of Deputy Principal from 1979 to 1983.
- 2 Kevin Lynch was the School Counsellor at the Brisbane Grammar School during the period I was employed there. I met him through working at the School and we became very good friends.
- 3 I left the Brisbane Grammar School in 1983 to take up the position of Headmaster at Blue Mountains Grammar School. I remained friends with Kevin Lynch, although I did not see him very often. We would speak on the phone about four times per year and I saw him on a couple of occasions over the years when I returned to Brisbane for work related purposes.
- 4 The first occasion on which I became aware of the allegations of improper behaviour by Kevin Lynch towards boys was on the day of his funeral. I had come up from Sydney to attend and give the eulogy at the funeral. Prior to the service, Gilbert Case, the Headmaster of St Paul's School, told me that at the time of his death, Kevin Lynch had been under investigation for alleged sexual impropriety towards a student at St Paul's.
- 5 At that time I did not know that there was any suggestion of any impropriety occurring during the period of his employment at the Brisbane Grammar School. I first became aware of allegations in relation to Grammar boys towards the middle of last year. When those allegations first appeared in the Brisbane newspaper, a former student telephoned me in Sydney and told me of it. Around that time, several other people also contacted me to advise me of the allegations.
- 6 During the period that I was employed at the Brisbane Grammar School I did not ever hear any rumours or allegations against Kevin Lynch of sexual or any other abuse. Like most large institutions, gossip tended to flow fairly freely around the school. For example, rumours (always, as it turned out, untrue) regularly circulated that the then Headmaster, Max Howell, was about to resign etc. I am fairly confident that if there were rumours circulating in relation to suggested impropriety by any teacher, those rumours would fairly quickly come to my attention, and to the attention of the staff generally.
- 7 In terms of the environment at the school, I would think that if a boy had a problem of this nature, he would bring it to the attention of a staff member. If the boy was a boarder, I feel fairly

confident that he would have spoken to the Boarding House Master, Ron Cochrane. Ron Cochrane had the sort of open relationship with the boys that I think they would have felt they could go to him in circumstances like that.

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10 I should also say that since I left the school, I have been to a number of Old Boys functions and talked to a lot of old boys and parents over the years since. At no stage during any of those interactions did anyone ever make the suggestion to me that Kevin Lynch was behaving in the way that is now alleged.

Had a student come to me and reported inappropriate physical contact by Kevin Lynch, my reaction would probably have depended upon the seriousness of the complaint and my assessment of the particular student. I would certainly have spoken to Kevin Lynch about the boy, probably without disclosing the particular nature of the complaint. From that discussion I would have formed my own assessment from his reaction as to whether there was any reason for concern.

12 If I sensed something was amiss, I would probably then have taken the complaint to the Headmaster, Max Howell. If I satisfied myself that the complaint was without substance, I probably would have gone back and spoken to the boy again. Without telling the boy that I thought the complaint was untrue, I would have endeavoured to find out whether there was some other reason behind the complaint and assist the boy in dealing with that. I would probably have suggested he keep a written record of any further meetings with Kevin Lynch and to come back

to see me after the next appointment to discuss what had occurred, and I probably would have given the boy about some directions about what to do if anything inappropriate happened.

13 If I had received only one complaint in isolation from one boy, unless I was convinced it had occurred, I probably would not have believed the boy. However, if more than one boy had approached me, I would certainly have gone straight to the Headmaster about it.

14 Kevin Lynch and I had no formal discussions, and there was no reporting by him to me about the counselling he did. On occasions, he would mention to me that he was seeing a particular boy. He would not discuss the specifics of the boy's problems, but sometimes he would communicate the fact of him seeing the boy if it was relevant. For example, if a boy was to be subject to disciplinary action by me for some behaviour, he might let me know that the boy had issues which might have caused the poor behaviour, and that the boy should be dealt with in a more sensitive manner.

15 We did not discuss counselling techniques in any detail. I am aware that he used a conversational style with the boy, and that he did use relaxation tapes and analytical tools such as particular interviewing techniques. I don't recall him ever mentioning to me that he used hypnosis.

16 If a boy had complained to Max Howell about inappropriate behaviour by any teacher, I have no doubt that he would have treated it very seriously and would have investigated it thoroughly. He would not necessarily have discussed it with me, and there is no particular reason why he should necessarily do so. I also firmly believe that if, having investigated the complaint, he considered the complaint to be substantiated, he would have gotten rid of the teacher instantly.

17 I recall a student at the school by the name of BQA. I do not remember him well, but I recall that he was one of two brothers, both of whom were fairly undisciplined. If he is the brother I am recalling, he was a dark and sullen child and certainly very troubled. He was generally very untidy in his appearance and he was often not where he was supposed to be. He was constantly involved in minor infringements of the school rules.

18 I can recall on one occasion running into Kevin Lynch and he looked quite unwell. I asked if he was unwell and he said that he'd "been called out in the middle of the night for BQA". I do not know, and did not ask, the specifics, but I assume that this meant that Mr BQA's parents had contacted him and requested he go out and see BQA during the night.

19 I cannot recall the circumstances under which Mr BQA left the school.

20 As to the allegations made in the letter from [BQA] solicitors dated 24 August 2000, my comments are as follows:

- (a) It is true that Mr Lynch used relaxation techniques with the students, but I am not aware of the specific nature of the techniques. I would not be surprised if it included encouraging the boys to loosen their tie, but I would not have believed that it involved the boys removing their clothing;
- (b) I do not know and cannot comment on any of the other allegations as to what is said to have taken place in the counselling sessions. If any abuse occurred, I did not know anything about it at the time or later. I was not aware of any allegations in that regard until I was shown a copy of the solicitor's letter on 10 February 2001 by the School's solicitors;
- (c) I cannot recall the circumstances under which Mr [BQA] left the school;
- (d) I never interviewed Mr [BQA] regarding Mr Lynch nor had any conversation with Mr [BQA] about Mr Lynch or his relationship with students;
- (e) I did not say to Mr [BQA] that I had received concerning reports about Mr Lynch and his relationship with students. I had not receive any concerning reports nor did I have any reason to be concerned about Mr Lynch. I did not discuss any such matters with Mr [BQA], or in fact with Mr Howell. I had no reason to do so because I had no concerns and had not received any concerning reports.

If Mr [BQA] had approached me and asserted these things, I would probably have raised them with Kevin Lynch, given the seriousness of the allegations. I have to say that I probably would not have believed Mr [BQA]. Unfortunately, because of his general standard of behaviour, I would likely have thought that it was attention seeking behaviour and was untrue. I would, nevertheless, discussed Mr [BQA] with Kevin Lynch and if that discussion had indicated to me that there was any cause for concern, I would then have gone to Max Howell.

DATED this day of 2001

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DAVID COOTE