

**STATEMENT OF DAVID COOTE**

I, David Coote of David Coote & Associates, Suite 1, 38-40 Railway Parade, Burwood, New South Wales
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. Kevin Lynch was still employed at Brisbane Grammar School at that time. 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. The circumstances under which I became aware of the allegations were that 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 newspaper 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.

8 At the time I was employed at the school, I had a daughter who was a student at State High School. She had quite a few friends who were Brisbane Grammar students, a number of whom were clients of Kevin Lynch. She and I had quite a troubled relationship in those years, and at one point I encouraged her to see Kevin Lynch for counselling. She was very opposed to that idea and we argued a lot before she agreed to go. She saw him once and he advised her that it was not appropriate for him to counsel her given that he and I were close friends, so he gave her the name of a female counsellor to consult. She saw that counsellor once and then refused to attend any more.

9 She resented the closeness of the friendship between myself and Kevin Lynch, and given the poor state of our relationship at the time, I firmly believe that if she had had any reason to undermine his friendship with me, she would have done so. Therefore, I am firmly of the view that if she had heard any rumours about him behaving in an improper fashion, she would not have hesitated to throw that in my face.

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.

11 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 anything at all amiss, I would 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 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.
- 14 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.
- 15 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.
- 16 As Deputy Headmaster, it was part of my duties to arrange supply teachers when the School had need of them. I recall on one occasion, Max Howell came to me in the morning tea recess. He told me that Ron Cochrane had seen in the grounds a particular male teacher who had come in for the day as a supply teacher. Ron Cochrane had advised Max that he recognised this teacher as a teacher against whom a complaint of sexual abuse had been made many years earlier when Ron and the supply teacher had both been teaching in Rockhampton. Max told me to get rid of this teacher immediately and make sure he was off the grounds by lunchtime.
- 17 To my mind, this episode indicates the attitude Max Howell would have shown if he became aware of any allegation of misconduct occurring at the School.

DATED this day of 2002



.....
DAVID COOTE

