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HeadMaster
HutchinsSchool
SandyBay
Tasmania7005

Friday, 9 September 1994

Dear Headmaster

Many thanks for your letter of 19th August, for your visit on June 1st and for your generosity in disclosing the information you offered at that time. It moved my healing process along further than I expected. I didn't think I would be affected by news of Mr Lawrence's death. I was shocked. I felt a mixture of relief, compassion and disappointment.

It has taken me some time to respond to your visit. I appreciate the intensive enquiries you have made in response to my November 29th letter. I know you and the Board are concerned about my predicament and yet wonder what you can provide beyond the information that you have given. Our meeting and the Board's recent instructions to you do not answer the two agendas of my November letter. So allow me to recap the story so far and then go onto a proposal for addressing my concerns.

The information you gave me at our meeting is, as I understood it, as follows: Lawrence was not fired as a result of my letter. He resigned. [By the way, did I understand you correctly that you still have it on file? If so could I please have a copy?]. Part of the reason for his resignation was discovery of his membership of a homosexual club of Hobart business men. He left his marriage and the country. His children and ex-wife still reside in Hobart. He died three years ago. [Could you also tell me the dates of Lawrence's tenure at the school and of my time in Hobart].

Following his resignation, and knowing of his homosexuality, the School invited the State Attorney General and the police to investigate. A number of students and staff were interviewed - presumably the Deputy Head Kerr was also interviewed. The latter had, some months or years previous to these events, fired a teacher for homosexual activity [or was this paedophile activity?] and had not told Mr Lawrence of the reason for the

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termination of employment. Mr Lawrence himself had fired another teacher, Mr George, for his homosexual activities in the School.

As I remember it from Mr Lawrence this involved boys in the boarding School and included them standing naked in front of him. So he, like Mr Lawrence, was a paedophile.

Mr Kerr was in possession of the letter I had written to Lawrence and did not pass this on either to the police or to the Board. This letter has only now come to your and the Board's attention. Kerr's son suicided around this time. When I indicated my wish to talk with Mr Kerr directly, you advised me that this was still a painful topic for him because of his son. ?

This failure in performance of the Deputy Head's duties meant that I was not contacted by either School or police at the time of Lawrence's departure. As a result of this failure to discharge his duties as Deputy Headmaster, and yet with the full discharge of the School's duties by inviting the A.G.'s and police investigations, you are advised the School is not liable for negligence in its duty of care to me.

You personally have undertaken discussions with former students and staff. You have taken professional psychiatric and legal advice.

You said you had found no evidence of any boys at the School having been victims of Mr Lawrence. When I said I was a victim you assured me that you and the Board do not disbelieve my claim of abuse but don't know what to offer as assistance.

I said I wanted an apology.

I said I thought the School was on the back foot in its response to me. This is because, naively, I thought you could give me an apology when you came to Canberra. Asking me what I wanted from the School confused me because it is clearly submitted in my original requests of November 29th.

When you said the School was not on the back foot, I felt I was getting a verbal message contradicting the message in your lack of apology.

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We discussed at our meeting that I could not hurt the School; that you have been assured by your lawyers you were not negligent; that a media beat up would only last a few days, leaving little contemporary damage, because Lawrence's history is known in the Hobart community. You may know I wouldn't go public with it, but you have no reason to trust me on this.

So, from my point of view in our interview, I believed you were in the driver's seat. I thought you could have given me a personal apology for the actions of your predecessor, if not one on behalf of the School, and yet you didn't. That felt like you held back something I believed you had the power to give. It would have been, in other circumstances, a gift costing you little which would have gone a long way.

My reasons for wanting it are for personal growth. From the standpoint of a Clinical Psychologist in 1994, sexual abuse, either experienced or witnessed, can make a lifelong difference to a person's sense of safety, the limits of their personal space, their self-sovereignty, self-worth, the expression of their authority, love and sexuality. An apology and an acknowledgment that it happened is part of the process of recovery.

I assured you then and now that I mean the School no harm. I want to lay this thing to rest knowing that I have done everything in my power to solve my unrest and fulfil my sense of professional duty by reaching out to other survivors.

Until I had a first consultation with Clinical Psychologist, The Reverend Dr Bruce Stevens, I didn't understand that you couldn't give me an apology at our meeting because of the constraints you are under. He is Chairperson of the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn Policy Committee for handling allegations of sexual abuse.

I am hoping we can continue to keep the lines of communication open. Your recent letter appears to conclude communication, with the Board having no basis to proceed with 'my concerns' and unable to identify evidence that similar allegations might arise. Those disavowals do not meet my needs.

That one teacher was fired for paedophile activities [Mr George] and another for as yet undefined 'homosexuality', increases the likelihood that at least one other boy was molested and another witnessed one of their friends being approached by a paedophile teacher.

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Even the knowledge of that possibility reduced my sense of isolation, of being a lone survivor.

Everything we know about paedophiles tells us they have multiple victims. On the basis of twenty years of professional experience, I now know Lawrence's approach was well practised. Paedophiles repetitively re-enact seduction rituals in identical settings. It has the quality of a fetish for the perpetrator, usually based on their own experience of abuse as children. I was also not his only private French student.

Have you contacted all those old boys who were his private students? Likewise with Mr George. Have you contacted all those boarding school old boys who as a group blew the whistle on his abuse?

Given the influence of the Headmaster, why wouldn't there have been a climate or a culture of permission for inappropriate touching by other teachers. I can still remember one teacher leaning over me as I did class work on my desk, resting his arms around me, resting his hands on the desk next to mine, and putting his cheek in contact with my face. I think his surname was that of a **REDACTED**. Maybe he was the maths or science teacher.

I believe you are doing your very best to meet the requests I asked of you in November. You must have known that in supporting my process to the extent that you have, my belief that I am not the only one would be reinforced. The information you gave me could have been at some risk to the School. I thank you for taking care of both of us.

I want to be sure I have done everything in my power to comprehend the year I was at Hutchins, who else was targeted by Lawrence or his teachers and the consequences for me in the years that followed.

I want to be sure I have used all my professional expertise to melt the wall of silence for other survivors from the School. They are unlikely to have had the wealth of experience I have in this area, nor access to the healing I have enjoyed. My professional conscience won't let me rest if I have not exhausted all possibilities to facilitate my healing process, and that of others who are yet to make this journey back to the School.

Within your constraints, you have shown concern for me, as well as finesse in managing a situation potentially damaging to both of us. It carries me a long way in correcting the

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insults of the past. I appreciate it and hope that we can continue to navigate this minefield by taking small risks with each other and making concessions where possible.

I am willing to accept an informal, private, verbal apology off the record from the Headmaster as representative of the Board.

I am willing to sign any legal document guaranteeing I would at no time make any financial claim on the School for any matter arising from my experience at the hands of your predecessor or of the schools omission of its care for me after I was abused.

I want the School to send out a discrete invitation, perhaps through the Old Boys' network, in the hope that other survivors might make contact. I don't know what form this could take. Clearly it will have to keep both the School and me safe. I want to discuss this further.

Yours Sincerely

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