



Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

Name BB

Address Public School 1

Occupation School Principal

Date 16 October 2013

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. I am the principal of Public School 1. I have held that position since 2006. My initial teacher education training was from 1974 to 1976 with my first appointment being in 1977 as a district relief teacher based at Public School. In 1979 I was appointed to Public School as a classroom teacher. In 1988 I went to Public School where I became an executive teacher and then transferred in mid-1991 to Public School where I taught the Opportunity Class (high achievers). In 1995 I was promoted to Assistant Principal at Public School where I had many opportunities to relieve in as Principal, and I also relieved as Principal at Public School for a short time. In 2001 I was promoted to Principal at Public School where I stayed until 2006, when I took up the principal role at Public School 1. I am currently in the 37th year of my teaching career.
3. There are currently 285 students enrolled at Public School 1 separated in 12 classes.
4. AH is a student at Public School 1. He has attended Public School 1 since 2008, when he commenced Kindergarten. He is currently in Year 5.
5. The YMCA does not operate an Out of School Hours Care ("OSHC") service at Public School 1. As far as I am aware, there are no students of Public School 1 who attend OSHC at any other school.
6. The purpose of this statement is to respond to the statement of AH's mother, AS, which was provided to the Royal Commission on 26 September 2013.

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Witness: *[Handwritten Signature]*

7. For the purpose of preparing this statement, I have consulted the records held by the school in relation to AH, including notes prepared by me and AH's class teachers in relation to AH's conduct at school and the school's interactions with his parents. I annex a copy of these records below, where relevant.

Response of the school to AH's behaviour prior to November 2011

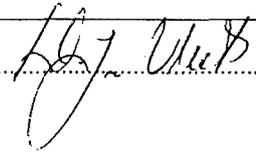
8. Prior to December 2011, I was aware that AH had been diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum and is "high functioning". I became aware of this diagnosis around the time it was made, that is, in 2009.
9. The school began to engage with AH as a result of 'naughty' behaviour when he was in Kindergarten in 2008. He began to see the school counsellor that year. Annexed hereto and marked "BB1" is a copy of a record prepared by School Counsellor, [REDACTED], in relation to that year.
10. Since 2008, I have spoken to AH's classroom teachers on a regular basis about AH.
11. Since that time, I have been aware from these conversations that it is common for AH to be disruptive when playing with other students in the playground. I am aware that it is often reported that AH is behaving in an aggressive way towards other students in the playground. He is, however, generally very well behaved in the more structured environment of the classroom.
12. From 2011 onwards, some of AH's classroom teachers instituted a practice of keeping a log book of behavioural incidents involving AH. Annexed hereto and marked "BB2!" is a copy of certain pages from that log book for the period 2 February 2011 to 7 June 2013.

Management of autism

13. I am aware that AH was diagnosed with autism and Asperger's Syndrome in 2009.
14. The school has a number of ways in which to deal with a child with special needs.
15. Public School 1 has a Learning Support Team comprising executive members, classroom teachers, support staff and the school counsellor.
16. Each week, the Learning Support Team meets at the school to discuss the needs of particular students requiring learning support. I attend those meetings. The needs of AH have been discussed at those meetings since 2009. Annexed hereto and marked "BB3!" is a copy of the Learning Support Team Individual Student Tracking Sheet, which records the occasions on which AH has been discussed at those meetings.
17. The school counsellor has engaged with AH on a regular basis to help him develop appropriate behaviours. I am also aware that the school chaplain has run similar

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- programs with AH, including one entitled "Friends for Life" which aims to help students understand the nature of friendships.
18. AH's parents have engaged a paediatrician and psychologist to work with AH, and staff from Public School 1 have communicated with those professionals to develop appropriate strategies.
 19. In October 2009, the school applied for and received autism outreach support, which involves a person from DEC attending the school, observing AH in the class room and assisting the classroom teacher to implement strategies to assist with AH's behaviour.
 20. In November 2011, Public School 1 applied for AH to receive funding support, which the school is then able to spend on a teacher's aide to work specifically with AH. However, that application was unsuccessful.
 21. In March 2011, on the advice of AH's psychologist, AH's classroom teacher reinstated a system whereby a behaviour contract was agreed with AH, which sets out behaviour that AH needs to control, how he can control it and what will happen if AH does not behave within the contract. AH was also issued with a yellow card called a "Playground Behaviour Card". This is a yellow slip of cardboard which teachers in the playground tick off if AH is well behaved. By way of example, annexed hereto and marked "BB4." are three examples of those cards.
 22. AH had previously been issued with a Playground Behaviour Card in 2008 and 2009.
 23. It appears to me that AH has responded positively to this system, and that AH's behaviour has improved as a result. Because that system appeared to work well for AH, it has now been implemented for other students.

The suspension of AH in December 2011

24. At [37] of her statement AS refers to a behavioural incident at the school on 2 December 2011 involving AH and at [38] she suggests that AH was suspended for two days following that incident, despite the fact she'd advised me that AH had given a statement to police on 1 December relating to sexual abuse he had suffered. The chronology of events recounted by AS in her statement is not correct. The true position is as follows.
25. On 2 December 2011, AH was involved in a playground incident along with a number of other students. Each student involved in that incident, including AH, was placed on recess and lunchtime detention for one day. A copy of a letter sent to each of the parents of the children involved in that incident, including AH's parents, outlining that incident as well as a copy of a letter written by AH about that incident is annexed hereto and marked "BB5".

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Page 4 of 6

26. I do not recall meeting with AH on this date, and it would not be my usual practice to hold a meeting with a parent as a result of a child being placed on detention.
27. On Tuesday 6 December 2011, AH was involved in a further incident at sport. AH was treading on the heels of a female student, and threatened to "bash" her the following day.
28. A copy of the log created by AH's classroom teacher recording AH's behaviour on both 2 and 6 December 2011 (being in week 8 and 9 of Term 4, 2011) is annexed hereto and marked "BB6 .
29. I learned of the incident of 6 December on either the afternoon of Tuesday 6 December or, more likely, on Wednesday 7 December 2011. As a result of that further incident, as well as the ongoing behaviour of AH, on 7 December 2011 I determined to suspend AH for 2 days.
30. I drafted a letter to AH's parents relating to the intended suspension. Annexed hereto and marked "BB7" is a copy of my letter to AH's mother and father dated 7 December 2011. That letter incorrectly identifies the date as "Tuesday 7 December 2011", however, I believe that I created it on Wednesday 7 December 2011.
31. When a student is to be suspended, it is my practice to arrange for a parent of the student to attend the school to discuss the suspension before the date the suspension takes effect. I do not suspend a student without meeting with a parent. Although I do not have a record of the date of my meeting with AH's mother, I am confident that I met with her on Wednesday 7 December 2011 as the suspension was to commence from Thursday 8 December. I provided AH's mother with the letter advising of the suspension at that meeting.
32. At the meeting with AS on 7 December 2011, I do not recall speaking to AH about the child sex abuse matter to which AS refers in her statement. I deny that I used the language "*despite this, there must be consequences for AH's actions*".
33. At some stage in December 2011, AS advised me that AH had been sexually abused and that he had given a statement to the police. I cannot recall the date on which AH's mother told me that information. I recall that the conversation was very brief and informal and I believe that it took place in the school playground at the end of a school day. This conversation did not occur at the time of the discussion on 7 December 2011. I was of the understanding from this discussion that this was not for public knowledge, however, I advised AS that I would inform AH's classroom teacher, to which she consented.
34. On 12 December 2011, I met with AS to discuss AH's return to school following the two day suspension. I cannot recall any discussion at this or any meeting with AS about AH

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being concerned that the suspension would affect his chance of going to the secondary school of his choice. AH was in 3rd grade at the time of this meeting.

35. In relation to the decision to suspend AH, if a child has already been placed on detention, placed on time out, excluded from privileges or excursions, and placed on detention, and the child continues to behave poorly, the process is to place a child on a short suspension. AH's suspension was for two days.
36. The school had previously advised AH's parents that suspension was a possibility by letter dated 2 November 2011. On 2 November 2011, AH had recently been involved in a number of anti-social incidents including hitting, kicking, spitting, swearing and threatening peers. AH was placed on detention and issued with a Behaviour Modification Card similar to the one issued early in 2011. AH was also provided with a "Behaviour Contract" which warned that if he continued to kick, hit or spit he would be suspended. A copy of that Behaviour Contract is annexed hereto and marked "BB8". The Assistant Principal sent a letter to AH's parents to advise them that AH's behaviour would be closely monitored and to ask them to discuss the matter with AH and warn that further offences could lead to suspension from school. A copy of the letter sent home on that date is annexed hereto and marked "BB9".

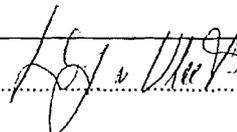
Leniency for AH

37. At [40] of her statement, AS states that she feels AH should be given some leniency and should be treated with a bit more understanding. She expresses the view that AH does not receive the same leniency that another child at the school who is on the autism spectrum receives. I deal with misbehaviour by AH in the same way as I deal with misbehaviour by all other students at our school and it is my experience that the teachers adopt a similar approach. However, when it is necessary to discipline AH, I am mindful of AH's diagnosis as being on the autism spectrum, as well as the fact that he suffered sexual abuse. I am conscious to attempt to employ appropriate strategies to deescalate and manage AH's behaviour so that it does not reach a point where disciplinary strategies are required. I am also mindful of the need to protect other children at the school, and the concerns that other parents have expressed regarding the behaviour of AH. In June 2013 we worked very hard to put systems in place to make it possible for AH to attend an overnight excursion to Canberra, even though his prior behaviour at school and the concerns of other parents could, in my opinion, have justified his exclusion from that activity. This is an example of the leniency we exercise and accommodations that we make regularly for AH.
38. The other student with autism, to whom AS refers, has received far more detentions and suspensions than AH. I do not accept that he is treated more leniently than AH or that AH has been "pigeon-holed" as suggested by AS.

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Steps taken to support AH following being advised of the abuse which occurred

39. I am aware that AS has said that she does not feel that the school, and me in particular, have provided AH with the support that he deserved and needed from the school.
40. Following AH's return to school in December 2011. After being told that AH had been sexually abuse, I ensured that AH's classroom teacher was informed, on a confidential basis, that it has been reported that AH was the victim of sexual assault. I asked AH's classroom teacher to be aware of that incident and may affect his behaviour.
41. I also informed the school counsellor of what I had been informed, however, I cannot recall when I did so. Public School 1 has a school counsellor attend approximately one day per week. We have had a number of counsellors working at the school since the beginning of 2008 but Ms Ingrid Scales has been the main counsellor for that time, while others have worked in a casual capacity when required.
42. I subsequently informed AH's classroom teacher in 2012 and 2013 of what had occurred.
43. As far as I am aware, after AS advised me that AH had been sexually abused, AS also advised AH's classroom teacher of the status of the investigation involving Mr Lord.

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Signed:

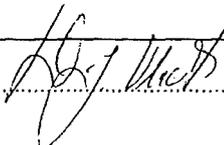
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