

This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence which I would be prepared, if necessary, to give in court as a witness. The statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

I am Stuart Laurence Pearson and my date of birth is **REDACTE** 1952.

On the 2nd March 2009 I attended Hornsby Detectives Office. At this time I participated in an Electronically Recorded Statement Number **REDACT**. I now produce a copy of this electronic statement. This copy is a true and correct record of the interview. During the interview the Detectives asked me about a specific incident that I shall call, "The Balaclava Incident" at the time of the interview at Hornsby I did not have a strong recollection of the circumstances surrounding this incident and I informed the Detectives accordingly.

However, since returning home I have remembered more details about this matter and I would now like to add the following comments to my previous interview.

To the best of my recollection it was the mid-to-late 1980s when, at night, an unknown person entered the dormitory of one of Knox Grammar School's Boarding Houses. The Boarding House in question was, to the best of my recollection, MacNeil Boarding House, one of three boarding houses on the campus of the senior school at Wahroonga.

The circumstances as I remember them are that an unknown assailant entered the boarding house, went upstairs to a boy's dormitory and fondled at least two boys on the genitals who were asleep at the time. I understand that this incident occurred between 11pm and 2am while the boys were all asleep. If it is the same dormitory I am thinking of, then the room would have slept about a dozen boys in their own separate beds. One or both boys who were being touched woke up and screamed out in alarm and woke the rest of the boys up. The unknown man ran from the room and out of the boarding house. Resident masters and the Boarding House Master were awoken and conducted a search, but found no one in the boarding house or in the outside grounds surrounding the boarding house.

I think I was informed about this matter the next day, but I am not sure as this incident happened twenty years ago. If this incident coincides with a divorce that I was going through then I may have been living on school grounds, which means I could well have been notified immediately.

Nevertheless, whether my involvement was immediate or the next morning I can remember being deeply suspicious of the circumstances surrounding this matter because all external doors to all the boarding houses are supposed to be locked at night, in order to prevent people from outside gaining access to the boarders or their property.

Jim Ko
[Signature]

This is standard procedure for all resident masters on duty and the last thing they do before they turn in for the night. Make sure all external doors are closed and locked. Of course they can be easily opened from the inside in case of emergencies, but they cannot be opened from the outside without a key.

The second piece of information that caused me concerned was the description of the person involved. Although several boys could only give a sketchy description as they awoke from sleep, there were one or two boys who could give a slightly better description. The consensus was of a slight-built male of medium height who was wearing dark pants and dark top, which could have been a skivvy. The most striking feature was that this person was wearing a dark-coloured balaclava over his head and, according to one boy at least, possibly wearing dark leather gloves on his hands. For some reason, which I cannot remember at the movement, the boys thought the person was an adult in his 20's or 30's. This last piece of information was, and still is, important, but unfortunately I cannot remember now why the boys came to this conclusion.

What I can recall is that from the outset, I became deeply suspicious that this incident could have been caused by a stranger entering the boarding house from the outside. I concluded that someone inside the boarding house had to be responsible. There were only a limited number of adult males to choose from and two names stood out as fitting the description and having the opportunity. They were both resident masters and both in at the time the incident occurred. Their names were Damien Vance and Chris Fotis.

I interviewed all the four or five adult males who as boarding house masters and residents were present on the night, but with the majority I interviewed them as witnesses. However, with Vance and Fotis I questioned them as suspects. Unfortunately, neither person said anything incriminating. I was left to conclude that one of these two people probably committed a serious interference on boys but I just did not know which one. I related my findings and my suspicions to the Boarding House Master and the Head Master. The Headmaster was definitely Dr Ian Paterson, but I'm less sure about the identity of the Boarding House Master at the time. It could have been Dr Timothy Hawkes.

An incident like this generates much excitement in a school community and soon boys, teachers and parents were discussing the matter to the point whereby the incident was being blown out of all proportion. It was difficult enough trying to ascertain the facts of the matter when students and adults alike are inflaming and enlarging the matter. We even had concerned parents ringing the school threatening to withdraw their sons if the school could not guarantee their safety.

In the end the boarders were gathered together and informed that a young Asian man had broken into the house, been disturbed and fled, but had been arrested. Police were dealing with the matter and everything was back to normal. The matter was closed.

Tin Ko 

Of course, this story was a complete fabrication. It was delivered to the assembled boys by either the Boarding House Master, or by the Headmaster himself to lend more credibility to the words. Even though I am not sure twenty years after the event who spoke to the boys, I can remember strongly advising the person not to tell lies about the incident. The argument I used was that we should be honest with the boys and tell them we have our suspicions but we do not really know who did this. But the counter argument won the day. That is it was better to tell lies in order to calm the boys down.

I left the School in 1990 and year's later Knox staff past and present were still discussing the matter. On one occasion, when we had all drunk too much wine and were reminiscing about the School this ex-teacher who had also been one of the residents in the Boarding House at the time of the "Balaclava Incident" said he knew who the man in balaclava was. He told me a name. I believe the ex-teacher and ex-resident was David Degotardi.

Made by me this 3rd day of March 2009

Signed


3/3/09.

Stuart Pearson

Jim Ko
rule

