

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Witness Statement of Bronwyn Lee Steele

I, Bronwyn Lee Steele, of [REDACTED] in the State of Queensland, fulltime student in the Doctor of Psychology, Clinical, at the University of Queensland, make this witness statement.

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

1. I have been requested to assist the Royal Commission in its public hearing into the response of Knox to allegations of child sexual abuse perpetrated by a number of staff members including convicted offenders and unconvicted alleged perpetrators.
2. I make this statement by way of assistance to the Commission having regard to the matters raised in the letter from the Commission dated 9 February 2015, a copy of that correspondence is annexed and marked with the letter "A", and the report from [REDACTED] [REDA] which I have not annexed.
3. I was first notified about the request for me to assist the Royal Commission on 12th February, at 4:16 pm (AEDT), by Ms Wendy Blacker (Gadens) via telephone.

MY BACKGROUND

4. My qualifications are Bachelor of Education, Secondary (1993); Master of Educational Studies (1999); Bachelor of Psychological Science (Hons, 2012).
5. My employment history is as follows:
 - January 1995 to December 1996: Cleveland District State High School, Fulltime teacher of English and Studies of Society;
 - January, 1997 to December, 1998: Brisbane State High School, Fulltime teacher of English;
 - January, 1999 to December, 2003: Knox Grammar School (Senior School Campus), teacher of English, full-time 1999 & 2003, part-time 2000, 2001, 2002; school counsellor, part-time, 2000, 2001, 2002;
 - January, 2004 to December, 2006: Ravenswood School for Girls, Fulltime teacher of English;
 - January, 2007 to December, 2007: Pymble Ladies' College, Fulltime teacher of English;
 - January, 2008 to December, 2009: Loreto Kirribilli, Fulltime teacher of English;
 - May, 2011 to December, 2012: The University of Queensland, part-time research assistant;
 - March, 2010 to present: Fulltime student, The University of Queensland and Queensland University of Technology.
6. I was a teacher at Knox Grammar School in Wahroonga, New South Wales ("Knox"). I taught English in the middle and senior school. I commenced at the beginning of the school year in 1999, and left at the end of the school year in 2003.
7. From April in 2000, after I had obtained my Master of Educational Studies at the end of 1999, until the end of the school year in 2002, I was also employed by Knox Grammar as an additional school counsellor, on a part-time basis.

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8. In that role, my duty was to provide general counselling services to students from Years 7 to 12 who self-presented or were referred to me by staff or parents. This duty included documenting my provision of service each day. I was also responsible for running study-skills workshops, developing and implementing student bullying programmes, and liaising with parents and staff about students who required counselling services.
9. My allocated load to fulfil my duties and responsibilities as counsellor varied each year; in 2000 I was timetabled approximately 8 hours per week of time that would otherwise be used for class or other school activities. In 2001 and 2002, the allocated load for my counselling duties increased to approximately 15 to 20 hours per week.

THE WRITTEN REPORT BY [REDACTED]


10. I reported an incident in relation to Mr Adrian Nisbett that, to the best of my knowledge, is the matter subject of the written report by [REDACTED] (hereafter, "the matter") to the Headmaster of Knox, Mr Peter Crawley, at his soonest available time to meet with me. To the best of my recollection, my meeting time with Mr Crawley was arranged through his personal assistant as was the standard procedure for requesting a formal meeting with the Headmaster at Knox Grammar School.
11. Mr Crawley and I discussed the matter in his office. I recall that Mr Crawley advised me that he would consult with Mr Nisbett about the matter. I clarified my reporting obligations with Mr Crawley, and I recall that he commented to the effect that he saw no reason for me to report the matter further as it did not appear to be serious in nature.
12. Prior to reporting the matter to Mr Crawley, I consulted with the senior school counsellor, Mr Barry Griffin, who was supportive of my stated intention to report the matter to Mr Crawley. I later informed Mr Griffin of the outcome of my report of the matter to Mr Crawley.
13. I informed Mr Adrian Nisbett of my report of the matter to Mr Crawley. I cannot recall if I informed Mr Nisbett before or after I reported the matter to Mr Crawley. I can recall Mr Nisbett's facial expression as one of surprise and his comment to the effect that he understood my requirement to report the matter to Mr Crawley.
14. To the best of my knowledge, Mr Crawley did act on my report by speaking with Mr Nisbett about the matter. I recall that at a later date Mr Crawley commented to the effect that he was satisfied with Mr Nisbett's explanation of the matter.
15. I did not make an agreement with [REDACTED] to delay reporting the matter. I informed [REDACTED] before and after reporting the matter to Mr Crawley and discussing it with Mr Nisbett. I recall informing [REDACTED] that I would accompany him should he want to discuss the matter with Mr Crawley or Mr Nisbett.
16. As was my usual practice, I made typed-written notes about the matter and my provision of service to [REDACTED] and placed a hardcopy of those notes in the file I kept in respect of [REDACTED].
17. That file was kept with my other counselling files in a two-drawer filing cabinet in my office until I ceased counselling at Knox in 2002, at which time all of my files were given to Mr Barry Griffin who placed them in the three-drawer filing cabinets in his office. I have not viewed those files since I ceased counselling at Knox.
18. This was the first time I had made a report of this nature in my role as a school counsellor.
19. I did not report the matter to the police for reasons stated.

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SIGNED by Bronwyn Steele:

Date: 18th February, 2015

Signature: 

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