

**ROYAL COMMISSION INTO INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

Case study 31: Geelong Grammar School

Statement by Lister W Hannah

A My association and roles held at GGS

1. I am a GGS alumnus/old boy, an Australian but born and brought up overseas and sent back to Australia and GGS to complete my secondary schooling as a boarder (1957-61).
2. I was appointed GGS Principal and served as such from January 1, 1995 until December 31, 1999.

B My knowledge and understanding of the systems, policies, and procedures relating to any child sexual abuse in effect at the school in my time as principal

3. There was no singling-out and systematically addressing institutional child sexual abuse. Whilst there was a sensibility to the possibility of sexual abuse happening, I do not believe its nature and impact was fully understood. There was probably the implicit assumption that existing structures of care were sufficient for prevention and detection. In my experience, GGS has always strived to provide quality care of its students, but I believe that this needs to be seen in the context and level of awareness of the times.
4. The late 90s saw some significant changes for the school, a major one being the closure of the Highton campus, and with this the creation of the Bostock day campus in Geelong and an expanded day-boarding Middle School at the Corio campus. The Timbertop campus was not affected. At this time, there was a strong "one school" thrust from the seat of central authority, the Corio campus with its middle and senior school, to more tightly coordinate, both operationally and educationally, these four distant, different and semi-autonomous campuses.
5. There was also a strong, intensive focus across the school to further develop the right balance between nurture, care and a safe environment as the school addressed major societal issues impacting on our students.
6. Staff-student pastoral care ratios were reduced and structured supervision of care was increased. Considerable staff professional development was initiated to raise awareness and preparedness to deal with the broad range of challenges in counseling and caring for students, and in particular heightening sensitivities to the insidiousness of harassment and bullying of all types with a clear school policy resulting. A drugs policy was also developed with great care over several years, accessing expertise beyond the school and involving in-depth consultation.
7. Dr John Court was appointed as School Medical Officer and helped spearhead this emphasis on student well-being and delivery of support services. There were two psychologists based from Corio who also served the other campuses as needed, and a part-time psychologist at Glamorgan. All were available to students on a confidential basis; they were also sensitive to existing or imminent concerns and could alert the school appropriately.
8. The school was becoming better placed to effectively identify and deal with students needing help. However, with the benefit of hindsight, this was certainly insufficient in covering child sex abuse. A structure of policies and procedures systematically implemented that explicitly and comprehensively addressed this abuse would have given a proactive, targeted framework for detection and prevention, and provided a heightened awareness across the school community and a more specific deterrent to a would-be abuser.

C Incidents, allegations and complaints during my Principalship

9. In early 1995 the Head of the Glamorgan Campus, Philippa Beeson, arranged for us to meet with a Mary Jean Hunter who, I recall, was possibly a past parent of the school. During the meeting general

allegations of inappropriate relationships with children were made against a former teacher, John Buckley, while at Glamorgan some years earlier. While general allegations were made I do not recall mention of any specifics.

10. I discussed the situation regarding Buckley with several members of Council, including the Chairman, who were more familiar with the campus in those times and I also rang John Lewis (the Principal at the time) in England, to try to get a better grasp of the situation. I remember that there appeared nothing that could give traction to proceeding with the general accusations, but I considered the issue remained open pending any more specific developments.

11. At the Timbertop campus boys and girls live in gender-specific Units (dormitories) clearly separated by the geography of the campus. At no time of day or night are boys or girls allowed to visit the other genders' Units. Understandably there is zero tolerance. Sanctions are clear and could lead to expulsion. In mid-1995 there were incidents of some boys visiting some girls in their respective Units in the early hours of the morning, and these visits were being reciprocated by the girls involved. The problem surfaced when other students concerned by this behavior brought the matter to the notice of staff.

12. An inquiry conducted by the Head of Campus at Timbertop, Murray Guest, and staff exposed the scale and the seriousness of these visits and I was informed. I brought into consultation the Deputy Principal Hartley Mitchell, and the Head of Pastoral Care, Sean Burke, at Corio and informed the Chairman of Council, Jo Breadmore. The decision was made that 10 students be expelled from the Timbertop campus; a conditional option to reapply for Year 10 at Corio was extended. There were some further limited suspensions from Timbertop and some other disciplining.

13. I have only recently become aware of the case of Philippe Trutman and of his conviction in 2005 for child sex abuse at Highton during the period he served as a boarding assistant, I believe, from 1983 to 1996. I did not recognize his name and have no recollection of his presence at Highton during my first two years at GGS.

14. Heads of Campus had the delegated authority to hire and dismiss support staff at their campus and were expected to keep the Principal generally informed of any such developments. On the Corio campus, operations were on a far larger scale and the then Head of Campus, Hartley Mitchell, was responsible for the hiring and dismissal of educational and pastoral support personnel and the Business Manager for the other support staff. The only comment I can proffer in the case of Trutman is that the Head of Campus, Malcolm Powys, in dismissing a support staff member felt he was operating within his remit.

15. In late 1996, a former student, BIR, requested compensation from the School for the sexual abuse that he had suffered from a teacher when attending the School many years before. I consulted the school psychologist and also sought advice from several Council members and a lawyer.

16. I met with BIR, his lawyer and the then Business Manager of GGS, Andrew Patterson. The claim for damages was settled through negotiations between the Business Manager, BIR and respective lawyers.

17. My recollection of the claim made by BKX in 1997 relating to sexual abuse in the 1970s, is that it was dealt with by the Business Manager and lawyers and was ultimately settled.

18. In 1996 a Head of Campus reported to me his unease with some comments made by students of the overfamiliarity of a teacher, BKF, widely regarded as a good and caring teacher. I, together with the Head of Campus, discussed this concern with the teacher and counseled him to keep a professionally appropriate distance from students.

19. In early 1998 I received a call from an off-duty policeman, indicating his unease with an overfamiliarity being demonstrated by a teacher with a group of boys during a bike education exercise the policeman

was conducting. Meanwhile another teacher present with the group at the time reported the policeman's concerns to the Deputy Principal, Sean Burke. Legal advice and also Dr Court's counsel were sought and Sean Burke and I met with the teacher concerned.

20. Dr Court agreed to interview one of the students in the group considered most vulnerable. The police agreed that it was sufficient for Dr Court to keep them apprised of the process and the outcome. The conclusion reached was that there was no apparent evidence of any sexual impropriety. After legal advice, the teacher concerned was given a formal warning and further counselled about the inappropriateness of his behavior. This incident is referred to in the memorandum of the Deputy Principal dated March 1998 provided to me by the Royal Commission.
21. In mid-1998, there was an unassociated episode. A small group of Thai students returning to school had left amongst other things some pornography on the plane. With this cache there was also a picture of the students with a teacher, who happened to be the teacher in question. The police notified me and requested to interview the students in my presence. This took place and they confirmed that they saw no connection between the pornography and the teacher and they required no further follow-up.
22. In December 1998, the original concern reemerged, when a parent expressed to the Deputy Principal her own unease with the level of attention her son was receiving from this teacher. With the Deputy Principal, legal advice was again sought and the matter was discussed with Dr Court and also with the psychologists.
23. Dr Court had indicated in our discussion that another student had mentioned this overfamiliarity, and had mentioned it to his parents. The psychologists indicated that they had not heard anything from students. However, all shared unease that the teacher's behavior was too persistent and a matter of serious concern.
24. A further meeting was held with the teacher together with the Deputy Principal. Our lack of confidence now in his ability to change and the potentially damaging impact of the accumulating perceptions, was again shared with the teacher and he was requested to resign, which he did. The Chairman of Council had been kept apprised of developments.
25. Throughout the teacher's time at GGS there was no allegation of child abuse raised and I do not want to unfairly tarnish the reputation of the teacher concerned.



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Lister W Hannah

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