ROYAL COMMISSION INTO INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO 
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Case study 31: Geelong Grammar School

Statement by John E Lewis

1. My full name is John Elliott Lewis. I am now retired and reside in New Zealand. My contact details are known to my solicitors Harwood Andrews. I took up the position of Head Master at Geelong Grammar School (School) at the start of term 3 (of 3) in 1980, and left at the start of term 4 (of 4) in 1994.

Issues raised by schedule 4 of letter 14 July 2016 from Royal Commission to Gadens

2. Systems, policies and procedures dealing specifically with the possibility of child sexual abuse were not formally in place when I began at Geelong Grammar, or when I finished. From the standpoint of 2015 that will seem surprising. The need for such systems, policies and procedures is more clearly apparent now than it was then. That does not mean, however, that child abuse was not clearly understood to be unacceptable. It would have been helpful for pupils in particular had they been made clearly aware in a policy document that that was the position of the School, and that they must not hesitate to raise any such complaint in an appropriate quarter.

3. There were no specific systems, policies and procedures in place to prevent child abuse at the School. Much emphasis was placed, however, on general arrangements designed to ensure that the general welfare and well-being of students were a top priority. At the Corio and Timbertop boarding campuses almost all members of staff were required to live on campus so as to enable them to carry out their pastoral responsibilities, whether as housemasters in charge of houses (unit masters at Timbertop) or as tutors attached to houses or units. In addition pupils had confidential access to medical staff and chaplains. Similar arrangements applied for day students at Corio (day boarders) who remained at school until mid-evening, having taken their evening meal at school and doing all, or at least the first part, of their homework in their houses under the supervision of housemasters and tutors. The involvement of all staff in the pastoral care of students was considered to be a strength of the School.

4. Similarly, there were no specific systems, policies or procedures for taking disciplinary action for child sexual abuse. What was fully understood, or should have been understood, was that any serious matter of staff misconduct would be brought to the attention of the Head of Campus or equivalent or direct to the Head Master.

5. Arrangements for staff training on matters concerning child safety were of a general nature and not exclusively, or specifically, addressed to child sexual abuse.

6. There were no agreed systems, policies or procedures for reporting allegations of child sexual abuse to the Victoria Institute of Teaching, Victorian Police or to any other person or body.

Issues raised by Commission letter 27 July 2015 from Royal Commission to Harwood Andrews

7. I have knowledge of certain allegations or complaints of child sexual abuse occurring at the School when I was Head Master. I have attempted to set out my recollection in the specific instances which follow to the best of my knowledge having regard to the lapse of time. My recollection is better in some instances than others, and my recollection in relation to any instance involving the Corio campus which was the principal campus of the School is clearer than recollections involving other campuses. In providing my responses below, it is emphatically no part of my intention to downplay the hurt of those involved.

8. All new members of the teaching staff were appointed in letters written by the Head Master. I was directly involved in the processes of interview and selection for senior appointments and
for teaching appointments at Corio and Timbertop, but for primary appointments at
Glamorgan and Highton I was usually involved only at the final stages. The occasional
appointment of a live-in (non-teaching) assistant in a boarding house was usually made on
the recommendation of a campus head or equivalent.

9. The material provided by the Royal Commission indicates that the senior management at the
Highton campus took prompt steps to ensure BLs left the School. I do not recall
whether alleged sexual abuse was a factor in his departure.

10. BKM, a senior and responsible day boarder, brought his complaint about his
housemaster Jonathan Harvey direct to me. The complaint involved an unwanted attempt to
massage a rugby injury to the thigh. I made prompt arrangements to see Mr Harvey, who
insisted that his action had been unwise, but that it had never been his intention to cause
distress. Mr Harvey took the immediate initiative of apologising in person to BKM’s
mother as well as to BKM and I recall some sort of accommodation was reached.

11. Although Mr Harvey was clearly given to understand that nothing of the kind must happen
again, I subsequently came to think that I was outmanoeuvred. I certainly did not know
anything at that time of misconduct by Mr Harvey in the late 1970s which, I understand, led to
charges being preferred in about 2005 by Victoria Police.

12. I thought highly of both BKM (not least for his readiness to bring the matter up) and his
mother, but I must insist that I made no such statement to BLA as has been alleged
in paragraph 2 of the Royal Commission’s 27 July 2015 letter. I can only think that something
I did say was misinterpreted or has been misrepresented.

13. I have no comment to make, except to say that the point of Mr Harvey’s communication
seems to be that BLJ had abused his trust by extending to others the permission
granted to him personally.

14. I have no recollection in relation to the issues raised in paragraph 4 of the Royal
Commission’s 27 July 2015 letter other than to make it clear that references to Term 2 (of
1986) must refer to Mr Harvey being away from the School altogether on long
service leave.

15. In approximately the early 1990s the father of a day boarder reported to me that his son had
been disturbed by the interest allegedly taken in him by Andrew MacCulloch. There was no
allegation of physical or sexual misconduct. What was alleged was that Mr MacCulloch had
been encroaching on the privacy of the boy in a way that appeared prurient.

16. I recall there had been perhaps one similar indication of excessive interest in the case of
another boy, though I do not recall that there was any formal complaint. In discussion with Mr
MacCulloch I recommended that he seek counselling from an appropriately qualified medical
practitioner, and took steps to arrange an appointment in the school holiday period that was
imminent. When it subsequently became apparent that the appointment had not been kept, I
explained to Mr MacCulloch that he should seek an appointment in a non-residential school,
and made it clear that his position at the School would be terminated at the end of the year. I
must report with very considerable regret (I had formed the view Mr MacCulloch was in
general an excellent and committed schoolmaster) that he took his own
life.

17. My recollection of the issues concerning BIV REDACTED is very limited and,
in my opinion, too imprecise to be helpful to the Commission.

18. I do not recall that any such complaint was brought to my attention in relation to BLB
and I am certainly not aware that there was any history of such complaints about BLR.

19. The context of the 1991 exchange about Mr Harvey living in REDACTED was that he was applying
(exceptionally, but not uniquely) to reside off-campus but close to the School.
20. I have no comment to make regarding a particular student looking after Mr Harvey’s home. However concerns regarding Mr Harvey were raised informally with me by that student’s father (in conversation on the boundary of cricket matches) on, perhaps, a couple of occasions. The father could never bring himself to give me authorisation to investigate the matter formally for fear of the embarrassment that would result for his son. I considered myself bound (and hampered) by his wishes of that time. His concern was that his son had travelled overseas with Mr Harvey in a school holiday, on what was apparently a private trip. He was concerned by what he said he had learnt about the treatment of his son while overseas with Mr Harvey. While no details were provided to me, I understood the concern related to contacts of Mr Harvey.

21. I am reminded by Alby Twigg’s memo of 18 June 1991 in particular that questions arose about the conduct of Mr Harvey in mid-1991. I do not now recall what discussions followed my receipt of Mr Twigg’s memo. The person identified by name in Mr Twigg’s memo was never a member of the School; the person identified by initials was, apparently, a former student.

22. In relation to my letter to Mr Harvey of 27 November 1991, housemasters at that time had been concerned to ensure that any invitations to visit Mr Harvey’s house were properly subject to the normal processes of approval by housemasters and not waived because Mr Harvey was a member of staff.

23. I learned from Stephen Meek’s letter to the School community of 20 July that a former member of staff at Glamorgan had recently pleaded guilty to offences committed over 30 years ago, but not precisely dated in the letter. I now know that former staff member to be John Buckley, but nothing in my memory has been jogged by that identification. I have no recollection of any matter concerning Mr Buckley being raised with me.

John Lewis
August 2015
14/8/2015