STATEMENT OF PAUL CLARIDGE

Name: Paul Claridge
Date: 4 September 2015

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.

BACKGROUND AND STRUCTURES OF GOVERNANCE AT GEELONG GRAMMAR SCHOOL

2. In January 1986, I was employed by the Geelong Grammar School ("GGS") as Deputy Master of the Highton campus.

3. I remained in that position until June 1993.

4. Throughout my time of employment at Highton my family and I lived in a school house on the campus. The expectation was that staff with children at the school would perform Boarding House supervision duties in exchange for fee concessions. I supervised boarders for one day per week and one weekend per month.

5. During my time at GGS, Mr John Lewis, was the Head Master and Mr John Bugg was the Master of the Highton campus.

6. GGS had a hierarchical structure. At the top was the Head Master. One key feature of GGS as a whole was the acknowledgement at all levels of the organisation that the position of the Head Master was of paramount importance. Each campus had its own Master and Deputy. There was also a structure of House Masters and Mistresses.

7. It appeared to me that Mr Lewis was doing his best to address issues that had resulted in a decline in the overall performance of GGS. This included trying to address and reform cultures and practices that had become embedded over time.
order to do this, the Head Master maintained strict control over any meaningful decisions that were to be made.

8. At Highton, Mr Bugg tried to keep strict control over all decisions. If he did not agree with something, it did not progress to the Headmaster for consideration.

9. Leadership at Highton was also very hierarchical with the Master maintaining a very strict control over all decisions. This was also a result of the inherently formal structure of the school and the nature of the person who had been appointed as Master. Mr Bugg was consistently centralist in maintaining control at Highton and insisted on all matters being under his ultimate control.

**ABSENCE OF ANY POLICY ON SEXUAL ABUSE OR CHILD PROTECTION AT GEELONG GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

10. To the best of my recollection, there was no specific policy on dealing with allegations of sexual abuse during my time at GGS.

11. In relation to matters of this nature, the usual protocol of informing the campus Master and Head Master applied.

**PHILLIPE TRUTMANN AND THE SEXUAL ASSAULT OF (BIW)**

12. In 2005, I was asked by Victoria Police to make a statement regarding my knowledge of Phillipe Trutmann and his activities at GGS.

13. At the time I made my statement, I was living in Queensland. I did not have access to any documents or any material that could have assisted me. I made the statement to the best of my recollection regarding events that had occurred some 16 years earlier.

14. A copy of the statement that I made to the police on 2 June 2005 is annexed to this statement.
15. More recently, I have been shown the statements that Cate Parsons and (BIW) made to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

16. I wish to address the following matters in relation to the sexual assault that was committed upon (BIW) in August 1989.

17. It is my recollection that on a Sunday night in August 1989, Cate and I were having a coffee together at the Boarding house. I was on duty as part of my employment arrangement with GGS to assist in the Boarding House.

18. Later that evening, and after the boys had gone to sleep, one of the boys approached Cate and wanted to speak with her in private. The boy who I now know as (BIW) disclosed to Cate that someone had entered his room and interfered with his genitals. I refer to paragraphs [21]-[22] of my police statement as to my recollection of what Cate had told me (BIW) had said to her about the circumstances of the sexual assault against him.

19. (BIW) told Cate Parsons that although he did not see the male person, because it was dark, he thought it could have been Tony Inkster or Phillipe Trutmann who had entered his room.

20. Cate and I discussed how to deal with the situation and we decided that we should inform Mr Bugg immediately. We did not immediately inform the House Master, Tony Inkster, as he may have been a suspect.

21. I immediately telephoned Mr Bugg and informed him of the disclosure. He told me that he would come to the boarding house to collect (BIW) so that he would be looked after for the night. Shortly after Mr. Bugg and his wife arrived at the Boarding house, and took BIW to their residence. I did not go to the Bugg residence that night and cannot recall attending a meeting at his residence.

22. After (BIW) had left the boarding house, I told Tony Inkster what had happened and that he was a suspect. Tony was visibly distressed.
23. I then called the Head Master of GGS, Mr Lewis, at around 9.30pm and informed him of the disclosure and the action taken at that point in time.

24. Over the next few days there may have been a meeting at the school that involved (BIW) however I do not have a specific recollection of such a meeting.

25. I deny:

   a. That at any stage I spoke with (BIW) in an inappropriate, harsh or accusatory tone or manner;
   b. Telling (BIW) not to discuss the matter with anyone;
   c. The matters alleged by BIW in paragraphs 15 and 16 of his statement to the Commission dated 1 September 2015; and
   d. Any involvement with the expulsion or withdrawal of (BIW) from GGS.

EVENTS IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS FOLLOWING THE SEXUAL ASSAULT UPON (BIW)

26. In the days and weeks after the incident where (BIW) had disclosed the sexual assault against him, I made inquiries with Mr Bugg as to what had occurred. The response by him to those inquiries is set out in paragraph [28] of my police statement. I my ex-wife, Ms Christine Sutherwood Claridge recalls a conversation very shortly after these events when I had come home at lunchtime time and said words to the effect of ‘they’ve done the wrong things, the boy has been expelled and they haven’t dealt with this issue properly’.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

27. I am truly sorry for the all the damage that has been inflicted on students at GGS. The fact that one person, Phillipe Trutmann, could cause so much harm to so many students is reprehensible. have a particular insight into the trauma as I now believe that one of my sons may have been a victim whilst a student at Highton and that his subsequent death may have been connected to the abuse.

Signature........................................... Witness...........................................
28. I believe that the handling of this matter demonstrated how GGS operated at that time: major decisions were handled and made by the Master of each campus and the Head Master. Other members of staff had little or no say in final decisions. The preservation of the reputation of the school seemed to be more important than individual student welfare.

29. There may be reasons why (BIW) left the school so peremptorily but the staff were not privy to those reasons. However, in the absence of further explanation it seems to be that the wrong person was punished and the matter was not properly investigated.

30. I am saddened by the fact that certain behaviour has been attributed to me. It is simply not true. I have devoted my entire professional life to education and the welfare of children. I am certain that I have made mistakes along the way, however I would never treat a student or an allegation of sexual abuse in the manner that has been alleged against me.

Signed: ........................................

Date: ........................................

Witness: ....................................

Date: ........................................