

USA Tuesday 6th February 2001

A Note From Kate

Dear Colleagues

I would really like to be there to speak to you in person but since I cannot do so I have written this statement.

I was told when I went away that the case would be held mid-year 2001 but the DPP Lawyer, in the best interests of all the boys concerned, decided on an earlier date. We have remained in the USA waiting to see if the case was to proceed and I was booked to fly home on Wednesday evening this week. I have been in regular contact with ^{CLA} and his parents through January and February. I understand that Paull Mayne has been assisting ^{CLB} and his family since school resumed.

Firstly, I would like to make clear the enormity of the suffering experienced by ^{CLA} and ^{CLB} and their families, especially when the facts were not publicly known and some people thought that reports were exaggerated. As many of you know, ^{CLB} REDACTED

REDACTED
REDACTED Moreover, ^{EAD}
^{EAD} has been ill in recent years. You would all understand that ^{CLB} really lost a year of his high school education last year because of the events in the boarding house. To his great credit, ^{CLA} had a highly successful year. ^{CLA} has left the school because it became too difficult for him to cope with the comments of other students and because of this he has had to give up his REDACTED

REDACTED
REDACTED The impact of the assaults on both boys may diminish over the years but it will always affect them.

I am mindful of the suffering of the perpetrators and their families since the beginning of term four 2000. Their situation was always a consideration when ^{CLA} and ^{CLB} families decided how to approach the court case. They decided that they preferred that the boys be tried in a children's court with a magistrate hearing the case rather than in a local court with a jury. They decided to accept a plea of guilty to the less serious charge of aggravated indecent assault rather than persist with the charge of aggravated sexual intercourse.

Secondly, I am aware of the suffering of all the other boys in the boarding house, especially those who were victims who chose not to press charges, and also those boys who witnessed many incidents but did not report them. There are many students in the boarding house who feel guilty because they did nothing and told no one. However, most of them have now told their stories even up until the last day of term 4, 2000 and have felt very relieved for doing so. I have documented everything they have told me.

The boarding house staff found the information given to them about the incidents in the boarding house difficult to comprehend and they have suffered enormous sadness and disappointment. You would be feeling the tremendous impact this case has had on the school community – yourselves, current students and their families and ex students. Regrettably also the reputation of the school has suffered because of the actions of four boys.

In spite of the ordeal that everyone has been through I admire the strength and determination of the victims' families to persist with their case. The result they had on Tuesday is the only way that ^{CLA} and ^{CLB} could obtain any form of restitution. The perpetrators admitted to participating in incidents documented but they would not agree that sexual intercourse had been intended or had in fact occurred. Despite the strength of their case, ^{CLA} and ^{CLB}, the DPP and parents agreed to accept the less serious charge of aggravated indecent assault so that all the boys would not have to endure what would have been a long and distressing court case.

Like any parents or grandparents, those involved pursued the only path possible given the seriousness of the charges and the general disbelief and in some cases denial, of what has proved to be fact.

The process, which led to court hearings was never vindictive. ^{CLA} and ^{CLB} families, while determined to obtain an admission of guilt from the perpetrators, always expressed concern for those boys' welfare and rehabilitation. Ongoing counselling could not take place without such an admission of guilt.

It has always been important for me to confront the reality of situations no matter how unpleasant, unsavoury or difficult they may be and that, in the long run, to ignore, deny or hide this reality would be a terrible mistake. For me the welfare of every child in the school is far more important than hair cuts, shiny shoes and well pressed clothes. How they really communicate with, and relate to each other,

is paramount. More than anything else, as parents and teachers, what we attempt to teach our children is respect and compassion for others, responsibility and honesty.

I would also like to clarify the sequence of events which led to charges being laid against four boys from our school. The incident which was the catalyst occurred on Friday 11/08/2000. Because of information revealed by ^{CLB} on that day, no assaults occurred after that date. While I interviewed the first and youngest of approximately twenty boarders on 14/08/2000, the delay in providing documentation to the Head Master was because year 7 - 11 examinations were in progress and I was reluctant to interview them about such a sensitive matter. Furthermore, I flew to Queensland on 29/08/2000 when my mother collapsed, was hospitalized and subsequently died on Friday September 1st. Because I was not able to interview ^{CLA} on 30th August I returned to school on Monday 4th September so that all documentation could be presented to the Head Master and forwarded to DOCS by 7th September. From that point on the matter was entirely in the hands of DOCS as we were bound by the regulations laid down in the Child Protection Act, which specifies that school personnel cannot contact any party involved until DOCS has notified them. Because of the long vacation at the end of term 3 DOCS did not contact the parents of any of the boys involved until early in term 4, 2000.

I would like to thank a number of people who have supported me over the last 6 months. Annette and Vicky in my department encouraged me to persist after the first boys revealed the terrible events which commenced in February 2000. They comforted me often when I was tired and overwhelmed. I would like to thank Paull for dealing with the distress of the perpetrator's families and for taking over the **REDACTED** of the boarders this year in preparation for the court case. Maureen McK. and Heather showed a genuine concern for me and for all the boys including the many day students who had also been aware of some of the incidents in the boarding house. Thank you to all who expressed concern for my welfare during last term. I was able to cope with the events at school by talking with Peter who knew the students involved and was deeply affected by what had occurred. I am indebted to him because he was the only person in whom I could confide as I listened to the boys' stories and counselled them when they were so distressed.

I am grateful for the efforts of the DPP lawyer and the DPP staff and their sexual assault counsellors who assisted in preparing ^{CLA} and

^{CLB} for the ordeal of possible court proceedings. I spoke to ^{CLA} on Tuesday night (Sydney time) and could hear in his voice not only his relief that the case was now closed (for him) but his pride in being able to see events through to a reasonably satisfying conclusion. Some of his dignity has been restored thanks to the strength of his ^{REDACTED} and a newfound belief in himself. I am in the process of writing a letter to ^{CLB} and ^{REDACTED}.

Thank you for reading this statement. Pete and I will now commence our travels to Mexico, Cuba and South America. We will send a postcard or two along the way. See you in July.

Warmest regards,
Kate