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Statement provided by the Association of Independent Schools of NSW in the matter of  
the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse -  
Case Study 23: Knox Grammar School  
9 February 2015

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**Name** Dr Geoff Newcombe  
**Address** 12/99 York Street, Sydney NSW 2000  
**Occupation** Executive Director  
**Date** 9<sup>th</sup> February 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.
2. My full name is Geoffrey George Newcombe. I was born in 1947 in Sydney and I am 68 years old.
3. I currently hold the position of Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales.
4. As Executive Director I am authorised by the Board of Directors of the Association of Independent Schools of NSW Ltd (**AIS**) to make this statement on behalf of the AIS.

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Annexure 1

The Royal Commission requests the Association of Independent Schools of NSW provide a statement setting out the Association's relationship with Knox in particular the assistance it provides, if any, regarding investigations, reporting and compliance with child protection legislation.

**1. Background to the Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AISNSW) and the independent schools sector in NSW**

1.1 The Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AISNSW) is the peak body representing the independent schools sector in NSW. The Association represents approximately 460 schools enrolling more than 187,000 students, accounting for some 16 per cent of NSW school enrolments. The governing bodies of independent schools are the Association's members.

1.2 The independent sector comprises a diverse range of schools many of which are faith-based or have a particular educational philosophy. They include:

- Schools affiliated with Christian denominations, such as Anglican, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Seventh-day Adventist and Uniting Church schools
- Non-denominational Christian schools
- Islamic schools
- Jewish schools
- Montessori schools
- Rudolf Steiner schools
- Schools constituted under specific Acts of Parliament, such as Grammar schools
- Community schools
- Schools that specialise in meeting the needs of students with disabilities and other special needs.

1.3 All independent schools in NSW are registered by the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) and must comply with a wide range of strict educational and other regulatory requirements in order to maintain their status as a registered school. They are also financially accountable to the Australian and NSW Governments with respect to government funding.

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1.4 There are 50 independent schools in NSW that provide boarding facilities for students. There are also 25 special schools that cater for students with disabilities and other special needs, including for extremely vulnerable students such as those with severe and multiple physical and intellectual disabilities, as well as approximately 20 special assistance schools that enrol students considered to be 'at risk' and who may have emotional and learning difficulties and/or behavioural issues. Some independent schools also cater specifically for students from indigenous backgrounds.

## 2. Child protection services provided by AISNSW

2.1 AISNSW provides a wide range of educational and related services to its member schools. As a member school of AISNSW, Knox Grammar School has access to the full range of services available, the majority of which are core services covered by membership subscription. A range of services are also provided on a fee for service basis in addition to the membership fee. Core services provided to a school as part of its member entitlements include:

- 2.1.1 Advice and support in interpreting and implementing its responsibilities in accordance with the *Ombudsman Act 1974, Part 3A* (NSW);
- 2.1.2 Advice and support in conduct or managing investigations into allegations of reportable conduct, as defined by the *Ombudsman Act 1974, Part 3A* (NSW), including investigating allegations that are exempt from reporting to the Ombudsman's Office;
- 2.1.3 Advice and support in interpreting and determining its mandatory reporting responsibilities in accordance with the *Children and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW), including Chapter 16A information sharing provisions;
- 2.1.4 Advice and support in complying with and when required reporting in accordance with the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* and advice and support in relation to risk management;
- 2.1.5 Access to professional development sessions facilitated by the AISNSW at the invitation of the school. These can be presented to whole staff, executive or leadership teams and/or the school Board.

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2.2 Examples of services for which a fee may be charged include:

- 2.2.1 Access to an AISNSW three-day child protection investigation course, which provides the accredited school personnel access to the NSW Ombudsman *Class or Kind Determination* as per an agreement between the NSW Ombudsman and AISNSW on behalf of its member schools. AISNSW also provides a refresher one day training course;
- 2.2.2 Access to the AISNSW-developed training package '*Creating Safer Independent Schools*', a course developed specifically for independent schools and designed to either enhance or develop a culture of child safety within the school;
- 2.2.3 Access to AISNSW child protection investigation services, where a school engages AISNSW to undertake an investigation on behalf of the school. The school remains the decision maker; and
- 2.2.4 Access to AISNSW audit services, where a school engages the services of AISNSW to undertake a child protection management system audit of all or part of its school. The audit report makes recommendations to the school's management for its consideration and implementation.

2.3 As a member association, AISNSW does not have any authority to compel independent schools to seek advice. The type and extent of contact with AISNSW is at the discretion of the member school. AISNSW encourages its members to seek advice and support at every opportunity.

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