



Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

CLA

Name

Address

Known to the Royal Commission

Date

24 October 2016

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 (**Royal Commission**). The statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. Where direct speech is referred to in this statement, it is provided in words or words to the effect of those which were used, to the best of my recollection.
3. I must admit that writing this statement has been a very difficult process, however, I believe that sharing my story will finally close the door, for me personally, on a traumatic period of my life.
4. When I started at Trinity Grammar School as a year 7 student in 1997, I thought it was an amazing school for boys. It had a great reputation with great facilities, and, more importantly, a fantastic community that made boys feel part of an extended family. I still hold the view today that Trinity Grammar School is a great school for boys, as it provides opportunities for boys to excel, both academically and socially and emotionally.
5. As a day boy, I excelled in many sports including Rugby, Basketball, Cricket, Swimming and Athletics. I was in the top band of classes and had a nice group of friends. I had some great teachers and I looked up to many of the male teachers who I had grown a rapport with through my sporting exploits. Thus, when my parents decided to move out of Sydney when I was in year 9, I had some mixed emotions. I was excited to move

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away with my family but also upset that I would be leaving a Trinity community where I had immersed myself.

6. When Mr Milton Cujes called me and my family into his office and offered me a boarding scholarship to stay at the school, I was very proud and honoured of this offer. It said to me that Milton Cujes and the Trinity teaching community saw my potential as a future leader at their school. I accepted the offer.
7. I suppose that my sense of pride of this scholarship overshadowed the fact that I knew, through talking to my peers at the time, that the boarding house had a reputation for being a rough and tough environment for boys. However, I was confident I would fit in, as I knew some of the boarders in my year group, the boarders who eventually turned my world upside down.
8. I remember the first few weeks being tough. I missed my family, but I suppressed this by keeping busy with my studies and my sporting activities. Over these weeks, I realised that the rumours of rough and violent behaviour were true in the boarding house.
9. I witnessed, on many occasions, incidents of racial bullying towards international students, particularly Asians. Incidents of violence between boys was endemic, and reconfirmed my suspicions that these were not isolated incidents, but part of boarding house culture. You had to be tough, stand your ground, and be able to handle yourself physically and emotionally. If you could not do that, then you suffered at the hands of older and stronger boys. There was a clear hierarchy with year 7 and 8 students at the bottom and year 12 students at the top. What amplified this situation was an unspoken culture of silence, as 'dobbing' on fellow boarders was a sign of betrayal and ultimately, weakness.
10. I remember the first round of assaults by the two perpetrators as incidents where wrestling got out of hand. Every incident mirrored itself in that one of the boys would start to wrestle me, then the other would jump in and pin me down. I believe Mr

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Green, Mr Scott and Mr Cujes called this 'rumbling'. As these incidents kept reoccurring, the more violent and invasive they became. This went on for many weeks.

11. I remember feeling hopeless and very vulnerable during this time, but most of all, alone. All I wanted was for them to stop, for someone to help me, but it never came.

12. However, it was on one morning when I thought this abuse was going to end. I remember standing at my bunkbed for morning dorm inspection. During this inspection, the inspecting teacher, Mr Michael Spratt a boarding house staff member, lifted the perpetrators mattress to find one of the wooden implements that had been made in woodwork class. I remember an initial feeling of relief as I thought the discovery of this item would result in the perpetrator being found out, but more importantly, bring the abuse to an end. The implement was not seized.

13. I remember the feeling of despair as it was laughed off by everyone in the room, including the teacher, as it was dismissed as a joke. I remember the staff member saying to the perpetrator, "you are sick." I remember trying to tell myself to get through this and hope that this period of attacks would end. It did not. This incident occurred roughly 2 weeks before ^{CLB} made his allegations.

14. In my eyes, this was a moment that I will never forget. I look back at this moment with anger now, knowing that even after the discovery of this weapon by a member of staff, I was still on the receiving end of this abuse, and I was further abused with that implement until Kate Pierce called me to her office a number of weeks later. As an adult, looking back on this 16 years later, I find it incomprehensible that the member of staff did not report this discovery. I honestly believe that the failure to report this was a result of a culture where 'boys will be boys' and this was reflected in the ways that boarding house staff members dealt with the cohort of boarding students. Incidents of violence were often dismissed as 'rumblings' between boys.

15. In the 16 years since this traumatic time, I have worked really hard to rebuild my life. I graduated from High school with a good UAI, I travelled the world and had the

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opportunity to study and work in a foreign country and return to Australia and get married to my wife and soulmate. We are expecting our first child in February.

16. I often wonder if I would be here today if Kate Pierce had not called me into her office to speak to me. I must admit, in my darkest days, I often flirted with the idea of taking my own life. I wonder what my life would have been like if this had never been revealed. I feel that I have been very lucky in having such a supportive and loving family, who endured emotional hell to ensure that they could protect their son and give him the best possible future. I am grateful that Kate Pierce supported me and investigated my circumstances at the time, but most of all, I am grateful that she provided the support to my parents. A role, I believe, should have been facilitated by the school.
17. When I look back at those events, I feel I have reconciled with what happened to me. In my mind, I have forgiven the perpetrators for what they did to me. I now know that their behaviours were a product of a long history of institutional bullying in the Trinity boarding house prior to the year 2000. I know that those boys, and others like them, had to endure bullying and assault at a young age, from more senior boys in the boarding house. One of my perpetrators had told me about the bullying that he had been subjected to in year 7.
18. The benefit of time and reflection has allowed me to move on with my life, however, my experience and training as a teacher and House master at my current school, has allowed me to review these sexual assaults through a different lens.
19. When I look back at this traumatic time, I am offended with the way the school has defended their position. I need Milton Cujes and the Trinity community to know that this was not an isolated incident. I was offended that he described it like this in a school letter to the Trinity community. What happened to me was not an isolated incident, but manifested itself from a culture of hierarchical bullying, where young vulnerable middle school boys (years 7-9) were subject to assaults and bullying from senior boys (years 11-12) in the boarding school. A culture that was entrenched before

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I arrived. This, along with a 'code of silence' between boarding school boys, meant that young boarders had to live through years of abuse where the opportunities to reveal these incidents to teachers were few and far between, as there was a fear of retribution from older boys.

20. I'm appalled by the lack of supervision that was in place at the boarding house in the year 2000. All the incidents that have been documented were a result of a lack of supervision and a complete breakdown of the schools safeguarding duty. It frustrates me that the boarding house staff were so oblivious to this culture, partly due to the fact that they were not present to witness this abusive culture in action. In most instances, the periods of abuse occurred during lunchtimes, recesses, after school-periods when no staff members were present to supervise the boys. As a result, these toxic behaviours manifested themselves into serious criminal acts.

21. I'm offended that there was no formal investigation by the school in instances of severe breakdowns in the safeguarding of their students. When I was tied up and assaulted on my birthday. I was left to untie myself, recompose myself, and turn up 20 minutes late to class, without a blink of an eye lid from my class teacher. Why wasn't this investigated? When the perpetrator made a wooden dildo in Design and Technology class, why was there no investigation into the breakdown of supervision in this class?

22. I'm offended that Mr Cujes has taken the view that the schools supervision policy reflected a balance between supervision and privacy for the boys under his care. It is my opinion that a proper safeguarding policy always needs to put the supervision of the students as its primary objective. Schools have this policy to ensure that all students are safe under their supervision and allows them to negate any foreseeable risk. This was not the case at Trinity in the year 2000.

23. I'm shocked that Mr Cujes suggested to my family and I that we take a route of mediation to resolve these incidents. Where the perpetrators and the victims would 'talk it out' until there was a resolution. This has highlighted to me that Mr Cujes is

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out of touch with his pastoral responsibilities and the needs of the victims in his care. Victims of sexual abuse should never be re-exposed to their perpetrators. I feel that this course of action, which was pushed by Mr Scott and Mr Cujes, was an attempt to sweep the severity of these incidents under the carpet.

24. I am also offended with the lack of support the school offered me to transition back into the school when this was made public. I remember returning to the school and being isolated from my peers and boarding house staff. Not once did any of the boarding staff support me through this time. Once again, I was left unsupervised to fend for myself and this resulted in a number of senior boarders seeking retribution. I was bullied, called names and, as a result, removed myself from the school a few days later. I want Mr Milton Cujes, and particularly Mr Robert Scott to know, that this happened to me. As an educator, soon to be parent, and as a victim, I find it completely unacceptable that I was left to fend for myself upon my return to school. The school had a responsibility to support and provide adequate pastoral welfare to the victims of these incidents. Incidents that occurred on their watch. Milton Cujes has said that his duty is to protect his school community. He failed to protect me.

25. Most of all, I feel betrayed by the Boarding House Master, Mr Robert Scott. It is clear to me that upon discovery of these horrific incidents, he did nothing to protect me during this time. It makes me sick that my parents put their trust in him to be my guardian at school and to look after me in the boarding house, only for him to neglect this office. Mr Scott, had a strong relationship with the families of the perpetrators and this allegiance was confirmed when he supported them during their criminal convictions at court. I want the public and Trinity community to know that at no stage did me or my family receive support during this court case. It has been made clear to me that, following the allegations from ^{CLB} Mr Scott and the school did no formal investigations into these incidents. Nor was the school transparent in their course of action. I believe that the school did not have the mechanisms in place to deal with such incidents, so they buried them.

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26. I am hoping that this testimony can provide an insight into my experiences and thoughts of this traumatic event in my life. I am hoping that the Royal Commission can highlight the key failings by Trinity Grammar School in dealing with its responses to Child Sexual Abuse. I have no doubt that Trinity is a great school for boys, who, just like any school, has to rise and address the challenges of an ever changing society. Nevertheless, I am hoping this Royal Commission will reveal that there had been a catastrophic breakdown in the pastoral responsibilities that Trinity had towards its boarders in the year 2000. Schools have a responsibility to be provide a well-rounded education to its students in an environment that is safe. When parents send their children to a school, they should be reassured that the school has the mechanisms and the experience to foresee risks, prevent harm and ensure the safe welfare of its students under their care. I am hoping that the recommendations that come out of this Commission, will pave the way for more robust ways in which schools address the pastoral welfare of their students and ensure that no family will have to endure what my family had to go through, ever again.

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Signed:

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