

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Case Study 45: Sexually harmful behaviours of children within schools

Statement by Michael John Spratt

1. This statement 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. I joined the staff at Trinity Grammar School as a Design and Technology teacher at the start of 1995. I am still a member of staff at the School.
3. On 19 October 2000, I made a Statement to the New South Wales Police, a copy of which is annexed (Annexure A). I have re-read that Statement before making this Statement and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, everything I said in that Police Statement is true and correct.
4. I have also been shown a Statement prepared by CLA for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse dated 24 October 2016. I have been told the identity of CLA and remember him well as a student of the School from 1997 until 2000. He was a fine young man and I had a lot of respect for him. He was a great sportsman – athletics, cricket, rugby and basketball. I knew him particularly well as a fine 400m runner in the Track and Field Team of which I was the Master in Charge. I thought that CLA and the boys whose abusive behaviour had been directed towards him were all friends. They were all sporty kids together and I believe they often spent time together in the school holidays and weekends.
5. Throughout 2000, I was a Year 10 Tutor in the School's Boarding House. This involved me being on duty one weekday per week from 7am until between 10.30pm and 11pm. My daily duties are set out in paragraph 6 of my Police Statement.
6. I attach a photograph of a boarder's bed/desk/cupboard unit which I am told was taken in about 1996 (Annexure B). I think the same units were still being used by the boarders in 2000.
7. I refer in paragraph 6 of my Police Statement to doing a dormitory inspection at 7.45am. As the boarders went to breakfast five minutes later, this inspection was a cursory one. Basically, I glanced at the boys' beds to make sure that they were made and that the area beneath the bed was tidy with their things put away in their cupboard.
8. I refer to paragraph 12 of CLA's Statement. I have no recollection of ever lifting a boy's mattress during the many, many morning dormitory inspections that I conducted during my years as a Boarding House Tutor at the School. I do not recollect ever lifting a mattress at any other time. It was not my practice and there was no reason for me to do



so. I also have no recollection of ever finding a wooden implement beneath a boy's mattress either during the morning dormitory inspections I undertook or at any other time.

9. I refer to paragraph 9 of my Police Statement. I still recall the Police Officer showing me sketches of what appeared to be wooden objects. I do not recall ever seeing objects like those in the Boarding House at the School.
10. If I had found an object like those shown in the sketches, I believe I would have confiscated it immediately and then gone to tell the House Master about it.
11. I refer to paragraph 13 of CLA's Statement. As I have no recollection of the incident described by CLA in paragraph 12 of his Statement, I also have no recollection of the events described in the first two sentences of paragraph 13. I believe I would remember something like this if it had happened.
12. As a Design and Technology teacher, I take classes in the Technology Workshop where the boys have the opportunity to use machinery to shape timber pieces. In Year 10, the boys make a table or a cabinet. If I ever leave the room, the power is always turned off before I leave, to go to the storeroom for example. I have occasionally seen boys sharpening a stick, creating a spear like object, using the machinery in the workshop. Whenever this happens, the stick is confiscated, cut into pieces, and thrown in the rubbish. I understand this to be the practice of all teachers in the workshop. This has been workshop practice for many years.
13. In his statement, CLA refers to a number of things he observed taking place in the Boarding house whilst he was there and negative aspects to the Boarding Houses "reputation". That was not my experience of the Boarding House. I was often present in the Boarding house and I would like to think that boys would come to me and tell me if there were issues. I considered myself to be approachable. I was completely shocked when I read the article headlined "Shamed" in The Sunday Telegraph on 15 October 2000. This was the first I was aware of what had been happening. I was not aware of a culture of bullying in the Boarding House. I had never seen a boarder who had had boot polish applied to his face or any other part of his body. I had never seen boarders use implements of any sort to attack or assault one another.



Michael John Spratt

Date:

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2016