



Friday 14 August 2020

Media Statement re: Historical Harm in response to query from *The Age*

Background: Geelong Grammar School has responded to a media query from *The Age* about a known perpetrator who was a member of the School's teaching staff in the 1970s. Whilst the media interest in this individual and their offending is long-standing, until recently a Victoria Police suppression order has prohibited the disclosure of their identity. The School deeply regrets the terrible abuse which was perpetuated against students in the past and the hurt it has caused. The School is sorry for the shocking betrayal of trust, for the shameful conduct of former staff, for the inadequacy of the School's response and for the School's failure to provide a safe environment for all its students.

"Since commencing as Principal of Geelong Grammar School two years ago, I continue to meet with survivors of abuse, and I feel a profound sorrow for their pain and suffering. Through hearing the voices of survivors, inspired by their strength to speak about their experiences, I remain steadfast that the School must acknowledge and learn from the hurt inflicted upon innocent children. We can only support healing and energise hope if we recognise the devastating effects of childhood sexual abuse, keep sight of the learnings as to how this depravity was enabled, and by never relenting in our efforts to prevent such trauma being repeated."

Rebecca Cody

Principal

Healing and Hope

Members of the Geelong Grammar School community have faced significant challenges from hurt of the past. In recent years, the School has been working to provide an authentic response to survivors of sexual abuse. More information is available on the [Healing and Hope](#) page of the School website.

Recognition Committee

The GGS Recognition Committee was established in 2016 in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Childhood Sexual Abuse and comprises dedicated and uniquely experienced volunteers – including survivors, Old Geelong Grammarians, past and current parents, and past and current staff. It continues to collaborate with the School, providing advice and feedback to shape a fair and humane response for all.

Survivor Liaison Coordinator

An independent Survivor Liaison Coordinator was appointed by the School in 2016 to connect with survivors of historical child sexual abuse and provide outreach and support. The School also continues to provide the services of an independent counsellor for those in our community wishing to access counselling or support regarding abuse.

Redress Framework

In January 2019, the School joined the National Redress Scheme, which offers an independent, workable and non-adversarial option for survivors and importantly ensures choice for survivor voice. The School's own Redress Scheme provides an alternative reparation pathway which seeks to capture and transparently articulate the School's responsibilities regarding redress, thereby enabling a procedurally fair and accountable approach. It is informed by the School's trauma informed and survivor focussed response to provide redress for the harms of the past.

Child Safety

Geelong Grammar School has in place a Child Safety Risk Management Strategy and Child Safety Policy and Code of Conduct together with a suite of policies for broader obligations, including Mandatory Reporting in line with the Victorian Child Safety Standards introduced into schools following the learnings of the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry and the Royal Commission. The School's current [Child Safety Policies](#) can be found on the School website. In addition, the School has partnered with [dutyof.Care](#). This allows the School to conduct real time Working With Children Checks (WWCC) in order to further safeguard child safety processes. dutyof.Care provides email notifications if a WWCC is due to expire, has expired or has been revoked, and has allowed for a move away from internal record keeping to an auditable, permanent record of checks. The School's partnership with dutyof.Care assists in its continued prioritisation of the safety of all current students.

Child Safety Learning Integration and Response Team

The Child Safety Learning Integration and Response Team meets once a term to provide a whole school approach to keeping the learnings of the Royal Commission into at the forefront of our practice. This Committee has worked to date on reviewing current child safety practices, embedding the reportable conduct scheme, providing standards to strengthen our culture and more recently is focussing its work on the enhancement of policies and procedures for our digital environment.

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