

**Witness Name:** Neil Harding

**Statement No.:** [WITN0010001]

**Exhibits:** [WITN0010002 – WITN0010005]

**Dated:** 13/10/2020

## ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO ABUSE IN CARE

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### WITNESS STATEMENT OF NEIL CONRAD HARDING

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I, Neil Conrad Harding, make the following statement: -

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. My name is Neil Conrad Harding.
2. I am providing this evidence to the Royal Commission about my experiences at the Anglican school, Dilworth, in Auckland, and my attempts to gain acknowledgement and an appropriate response from the school.
3. As I will explain, I have taken significant steps to encourage Dilworth to support the old boys that suffered abuse at the school. This has not been easy and there are many lessons to be learned from the process I have been through.

#### ***Special nature of Dilworth school***

4. Dilworth School provides scholarships and enrolls boys on the basis of family need, rather than academic or sporting criteria. This selection approach means that in light of their family

backgrounds the students may be particularly vulnerable. At the time I attended Dilworth, being a child of a single parent family meant I met the entry criteria.

## **ABOUT ME**

5. I am a 55-year-old male living in Auckland. I identify as European/pakeha. I am in a de facto relationship. I have three children from a previous marriage, as well as three grandchildren who all live in Australia.
6. It was due to my own family circumstances that I was accepted into Dilworth School when I was 11 years old. That background included:
  - a. I had been abandoned by my father who left my mother for a younger woman. He then departed for Australia and did not look back. I had infrequent and random contact with him throughout my childhood and adolescence. I did not see him because he did not visit New Zealand as he probably would have been detained at the border for not paying child support.
  - b. I was rejected by my maternal grandfather. I think this was because I reminded him of my father. My grandfather died when I was fifteen and I never felt accepted by him.
  - c. My paternal grandfather died a few weeks before I was going to meet him for the first time when I was about ten.
7. The abandonment from my father and his lack of any financial support to my mother, qualified me in 1976 to receive entry into Dilworth School.
8. The absence of male role models in my life left me vulnerable to predation from those who stepped in to fill those roles. I was isolated from all family support and protection at Dilworth, and worse still, I was seeking a father figure. This is an important context to the events I now describe.

9. I was christened in the Church of England in Masterton, and my family considered themselves Anglican, although I did not attend Sunday School or go to Church services. My first significant introduction to religion was at Dilworth.

### **MY EXPERIENCE OF ABUSE IN THE CARE OF DILWORTH SCHOOL**

10. I have included experiences of abuse that I suffered at Dilworth, an Anglican school.
11. My mother and I were very excited when I was accepted into Dilworth. This was a big thing for us, and the scholarship was going to take considerable financial pressure off her.
12. It was my opportunity to really help the family, and I wanted to. I needed to give this my best effort. I had no idea of what I was going to experience and endure to achieve this end.
13. I arrived at the beginning of the school year in 1977 and was put through the induction process into MacMurray House (or Mac House), the junior school.
14. It was a 'bit of a shock' coming into such a completely new environment and at eleven years of age - I felt very alone.
15. I watched others going through this process, experiencing differing degrees of homesickness, and soon realised I just had to tough it out.
16. It was very hard entering a harsh military style establishment that brutally punished those who did not conform immediately to the Dilworth way.
17. We were all isolated from the protection of our respective families and, as eleven-year olds, did not have the insight to form a 'Roman defensive circle', so were picked off one at a time. We did not know, united we stand and divided we fall.
18. As well as 'Harding' I was also to be known as '409', a much simpler 'identifier'. We were depersonalised.

19. I was desperate to be picked up by my mother at midday each Saturday to go home for the weekend and was devastated to be returned on a Sunday night.
20. Every Sunday morning began the dread feeling in the pit of my stomach, as I prepared for the 6pm church service and drop-off, that signalled the next week of hell at Dilworth.
21. I tried to conceal my feelings because I knew I was helping my mother. However, the feeling of distress never left throughout my time at Dilworth. My mother assumed that any homesickness that I revealed, was a natural process of the change from a "mummy's boy" into a man. She felt it was good for me.
22. I was not a naturally aggressive child and soon discovered that being gentle or passive was not useful. The alternative to aggression for me was invisibility. However, this tactic created a degree of isolation.
23. There was a shared bond with the other boys in my dormitory of about twelve beds.
24. The dormitory absorbed the existing school culture and we learned new words like "Tick! Tick!" which meant look-out, a staff member is coming. I learned that "pimping" or telling on someone was bad and would make me a target.
25. The more you quietly copped, the greater the mana, unless you were considered weak - there was no mana in weakness. Silence was expected.
26. I experienced a general lack of warmth or kindness, no-one can replace a small boy's loving mother, but they could have done much better.
27. There were many instances of unreasonable corporal punishment. One tactic was for students to put toothpaste on someone's toothbrush after they had cleaned their teeth, to make it appear that they had forgotten. The consequence was

that they were then caned after the evening House Meeting. I always brushed my teeth just before House Meeting to avoid this from happening to me.

28. On one such occasion I heard a young boy pleading with the house tutor to smell the toothpaste on his breath because he had cleaned his teeth and that he had been framed, to no avail.
29. I can still recall the 'bend over', whip and strike of the cane and the crying of that boy in pain, but it seemed to me that he was crying more for the injustice of it all.
30. Luckily that did not happen to me. That was where being invisible was a useful strategy. Having said that, I also learned that being targeted could also be a random act of fate. There was always the fear.
31. I recall that the smaller boys, around eight and nine years old sought protection from the matron who 'clucked over her brood' and looked after them. It was nice to see, but unfortunately, I was too old for that and so it was just another reminder that I was alone. Seeing others being nurtured was painful.

#### ***Involvement in activities***

32. I decided to audition for the chapel choir and the music teacher placed me in the treble section.
33. We recorded an album that year and toured parts of the North Island with a younger soloist at the school. I remember the beauty of his voice which made ladies cry.
34. It felt good and that was a moment when I was proud to be from Dilworth and proud to be in the choir.

#### ***School Bullying Culture***

35. In 1978 I returned to Dilworth and was moved to the senior school and into Hobson House (Armagh sports house). My new number was '320'.

36. I moved into a dorm of about nine beds, plus a partitioned cubicle for a senior student. I am not sure of the senior student's role. I assume it was to either help supervise or protect.
37. We certainly weren't protected and suffered night raids from older boys who would attack while we slept, punching and kicking us through our bedding with all their might. It really hurt, and I cried quietly, so no-one would hear.
38. My locker was being broken into by older kids and anything good, stolen. I caught an older boy breaking into my locker, but he just carried on in front of me, knowing that I wouldn't do anything about it, being younger and smaller - such was the 'silence' culture. He rummaged through all my personal belongings, even reading my personal letters and eventually settled on only stealing my vanilla milk biscuits.
39. I felt violated but had no choice but to accept it. I just copped it. I felt I was far less safe than in Mac House. The big kids were horrible.
40. Once I remember walking down the corridor past two older boys. One of them unexpectedly punched me forcefully in the stomach. I was winded and in pain for a long time. I just copped it.
41. I remember walking through the toilet block with another boy who was on my left. Two older boys randomly grabbed him and "bog-washed" him (tipping him head-first into a toilet and flushing). He said nothing and I said nothing. I felt guilty for feeling lucky that it was not me.
42. I remember a new boy to the school who was in my dormitory. He, somehow, was too passive and too quiet and became a target. In nature, there is a critical point where weakness is sensed and anything stronger goes in for the kill. Every night he was short sheeted, the victimisation was incessant and unrelenting, going on for weeks.

43. One night he cracked and displayed his anger by kicking the short sheet until his foot went through the sheet with an almighty rip. He was laughed at.
44. The next day the matron was angry with him for the act of ripping his sheet and he was caned. I wanted to reach out and befriend him, but knew that I would only become a target myself, so did nothing. I still feel guilt.
45. A fortuitous piece of luck occurred at the beginning of 1978. My sister would accompany me and my mother to church service on Sunday night when I was returned to School after the weekend.
46. The Head Boy took a liking to her. The word went out from him to leave me alone.
47. I spent quite a lot of time with him and he was a really cool guy, gifted in rugby and music, gentle yet the toughest guy in the school; he didn't need to show it, everyone just knew.
48. I felt uncomfortable being made 'visible' but the upside was, that I was now protected from the other boys. An older boy called me a 'brown finger' and I didn't know what it meant so I asked my friend (the Head Boy). That was unfortunate and when it was explained to me, I wanted to hit the rewind button but couldn't.
49. He 'took care of things' and the boy probably came to regret saying it, but I now had an enemy, waiting for him to leave so he could seek retribution. Like a hyena, he approached me one day, telling me "you wait, when he leaves you are going to get it".
50. In 1978, my second year, thanks to my friend, I had had a year of relative, but not complete, immunity from attack by other boys. In 1979, when he was gone, the ledger would be rebalanced. I was petrified and decided that when he left, I was leaving too.

51. One moment stands out in this academic year. I had Mrs Morgan for English and she was my favourite teacher. We studied the book by William Golding "The Lord of the Flies". I don't think the irony was missed by any of us and each one of us believed himself to be "Piggy".

52. That also sums up my second year at Dilworth. There seemed to be an absence of supervising staff and it was a free-for-all of violent physical assault with the rules being made up by the older boys - a real "Lord of the Flies". The only difference was, we had to deal with predation from staff as well.

53. For all our meals we had to queue outside the dining room. This became the opportunity to sort out who was above who, a 'pecking order'. No respect was given to who arrived first.

54. It was all about who should be in front or behind. This was never done politely it was always with a shove or a charge. Words were not required. It was a 'free-for-all'.

55. Despite not being a violent person there were times when even I had to defend my position in line, otherwise 'equals' or even younger kids would take me on. Luckily, this only occurred three times a day.

GRO-C-1

56. During my first year at Dilworth I was noticed by GRO-C-1 GRO-C-1. He was married with young children. As I mention below, I understand he is now deceased.

57. It was nice to receive positive attention from him, because it was rare at Dilworth and made me feel special.

58. I was starting to learn about and believe in God and thought that one day I might even consider becoming an GRO-C GRO-C.

59. One weekend GRO-C-1 arranged, with permission from my mother, to take me flying in a small plane, just the two of us. It made me feel important. There had been an absence



of male role models in my life and so it seemed kind of him to do this. I remember being taken flying again by him. Once was in a Cessna and once in a Piper Cherokee. I preferred the Cessna because the wing was above me and I got a better view of the ground.

60. Later in the year, I came top in [GRO-C] in my class and subsequently became a target of ridicule for a while. This was a source of embarrassment and I regretted trying hard in that subject because it meant that I wasn't invisible.
61. In my second year at Dilworth, I was invited, or it was arranged, to visit [GRO-C-1] at his home. I do not remember how this happened. I do recall it was during the day and walking past his wife in the kitchen. I followed him into his dedicated [GRO-C] room, which seemed a bit odd as I associated this room with his [GRO-C] club, a club where boys [GRO-C] [GRO-C] I had been in this room with other boys before, but never by myself.
62. He then said that he wanted to speak to me about God, or something along those lines.
63. He had me sit cross-legged on the floor in the darkest corner of the room and then sat cross-legged directly facing me. I was trapped.
64. He proceeded to place his left hand on my right knee and started moving his hand up my right thigh towards my groin. It was a 'bit of a shock' and I quickly grabbed his hand, pushed it away and leaped to my feet.
65. I then promptly left, passing his wife in the kitchen on the way out.
66. I dared not say anything. It was inconceivable that I would "pimp" on [GRO-C-1], (I would become a target) so I did not say anything to anyone. I did not inform my mother, because I was required to be at Dilworth. I felt the pressure to stay at Dilworth, as her and my sister's life was better if I was

there. I was making an important contribution to the family and this was part of the sacrifice.

67. I now felt even less safe. I just copped it. Besides, I was confused about whether it was bad because I had stopped him before anything more serious had happened. I made myself believe it was nothing. Even as an adult, I remained confused as to whether it was abuse or, merely, a lucky escape. After all, nothing had happened because I had stopped him. But I always remained deeply affected.
68. I was devastated about what had occurred. I now knew that I could not trust [GRO-C-1] and, even at twelve, knew he had only been paying attention, in order to take advantage of me. I thought I had a place of safety around him and now, again, it was gone.
69. I knew another student who was in the Dilworth [GRO-C] the same time as me, who was older. He was allegedly sexually abused by [GRO-C-1]. I have been informed that he told the school at the time and was never believed. I know his mother and brother who are very clear about what happened here. Apparently, the school were quick to close this down and sweep it under the carpet.
70. Approximately ten years ago he was killed in a car accident. If not for his premature death, I am sure that he would be presenting his submission to this Royal Commission. This has given me more determination, strength and courage to be here, to also do this for him.

### ***Sporting Coach***

71. In [GRO-B] I had a new sporting coach. I know his name. He was one of the tutors at [GRO-B] and I think he was also studying at University.
72. I was always well-behaved, respectful to him and tried my hardest for the team.

73. One day, while our team was GRO-B he sat next to me while no-one else was around and said out of the blue, "*I want to cane you*". It was a 'bit of a shock' and I had to process it quickly. I then said, "*I would have to do something wrong first, wouldn't I sir?*" He replied, "*I will be watching*".
74. One evening in prep, after I had finished my homework, I decided to play patience with a pack of cards. I was unaware this wasn't allowed, I only knew that I could not talk.
75. He was on duty and approached me with a smile on his face and said, "*got you, go to the duty room*".
76. Once there, he began a prolonged ritual of bending all of the canes, one at a time, to see which one he wanted to use. He then selected the thinnest one, which from my own experience, knew would hurt the most but leave less bruising. He then proceeded to cane me. I now felt even less safe at Dilworth. I just copped it. At the time, this sadism enraged me more than any other trauma I experienced at Dilworth. I had no doubt, this time, that it was wrong and a vicious, unnecessary, and premeditated act from someone who was supposed to be protecting me. Now, I am enraged by all of it.

### ***Takapuna Grammar***

77. After the end of the second year at Dilworth, I pleaded with my mother to let me leave. Because my friend was leaving, I was adamant that I was not going back. I wanted to be safe and the only way that was going to happen was to leave Dilworth. She fortunately agreed and wrote a letter of deep appreciation to the school, thanking them for the wonderful opportunity given to me. I have seen the letter in my file and did not miss the irony.
78. I wanted to go to a co-ed school. My local secondary school had a reputation for being rough, so I did not want to go there. Instead, I wanted to go to Takapuna Grammar School, so we applied as an out of zone student. The agreement with mum

was that I would buy my own pushbike and get myself to and from school.

79. Over the next five years, rain, hail and shine I rode my bike the seven kilometres each way and I hardly recall being dropped off. Even when I broke my leg in seventh form, I hobbled on crutches for nearly two kilometres each way to catch the bus. It was all worth it because I felt safe.

### **IMPACT OF THE ABUSE**

80. My Dilworth experience was one of lost opportunity, melancholy and sadness.
81. My time there was characterised by ongoing trauma in various forms. Paradoxically, it created both vulnerability and resilience. However, none of these experiences should a young boy have to endure.
82. I spent my adolescence and adult life confused as to whether I was an abuse victim or not. If I had been in a room with survivors who were raped or sodomised, I would have been conflicted as to whether I had the right to be there.
83. I had always qualified my abuse as "attempted abuse". It is only since analysing the definition of child sexual abuse that I realise that I AM a victim of abuse, a survivor, and can now drop the word "attempted" from "attempted abuse". The impact of what I endured has remained with me and has affected my actions, thinking and behaviour to this date.
84. The following definition is from Dilworth School's new Child Protection Policy:

*Definition: Sexual abuse involves enticing or forcing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities (penetrative and non-penetrative, such as rape and sodomy, oral sexual connection, kissing, touching, masturbation) as well as non-contact acts such*

*as involving children in the viewing or production of sexual images, sexual activities and sexual behaviours. A sexual relationship between an adult and a child will always be wrong, unequal and unacceptable.*

85. Mine was non-penetrative, but it was inappropriate and unwanted touching!
86. I realise that the violation and breach of trust has had the greatest impact on me, more than the inappropriate and unwanted touching.
87. It is only through noticing the difference and changes in my life from consistent and expert counselling that I realise how much this abuse has affected me. I have been attending regular, mostly weekly, counselling for the last three years.
88. There was no escape for me, only a reaffirmation of breach of trust from father figures, and from a young child onwards, left me reeling, abandoned and rejected, as well as blunting my spirit.
89. It consequently changed my life and only now, in my mid-fifties am I really coming to terms with who I am.
90. It is only now that I am not desperately seeking to 'belong'.
91. It is only now that I am not striving and striving and striving to be good, to be worthy, to be good enough.
92. It is only now that I am recognising that I do not have to always try to be funny - to be liked.
93. It is only now that I recognise the empty void in my chest, battling loneliness, hyper-sensitivity to rejection and that I over-eat to provide self-comfort.
94. It is only now that someone is really stepping up to protect that child that still hides somewhere in my chest.
95. It is only now that I am learning to say no, to even my parents and sibling, to put my needs first.

96. It is only now that someone is speaking up for that child that was abused, to say, that was not good enough.
97. It is only now that the child feels protected, safe, validated and can relax enough to be himself and it is okay.
98. I lost touch with my Anglican faith because of what happened to me at Dilworth. Recently, I had occasion to attend a funeral service at a church. It was only when I was inside and viewed the programme, that I realised it was Anglican. I spent much of the time looking at the Reverend wondering if he was a paedophile.
99. Unfortunately, my mother, my father and my sister have, for whatever reason, been unable to provide the support that I have asked of them during the last three-year journey.
100. I therefore stand here without them, somewhat isolated, feeling a broken link to my bloodline and to those who have gone before me.
101. However, it is enough, that I stand here for myself, along with the people who have chosen to support me, including my children overseas.
102. What is the price of a young boy's faith? What is the price of dressing a wolf up as a sheep, giving them the title GRO-C-1, and releasing them amongst the lambs to groom and sexually abuse, for GRO-C one-sided sexual gratification? Then, move them along quietly and quickly, into another paddock, and not ask any questions... the lambs might forget. This lamb hasn't forgotten AND the price is difficult to measure because the effects are ongoing. There is a consequence. Since the age of twelve and for the last 43 years, even as I stand here now, I observe every Anglican representative and wonder, are you a wolf in sheep's clothing...are you a complicit harbourer... are you a paedophile? That is the consequence of blatant hypocrisy.

103. The Anglican Church lost a young boy and what is really sad, is that no-one came looking for me. Luke XV: 3-5 says "And he spake this parable saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing." There has been no search party, there has been no rejoicing. The Shepherd has lost one of its flock forty-three years ago and still no-one has noticed.

### **ATTEMPTS TO SEEK REDRESS**

104. I would like to describe the processes I have gone through to obtain some sort of redress from Dilworth but also from the Police.
105. I have not sought any legal or financial redress. I have however been keen to ensure the abuse was recognised, and support put in place for my fellow students at Dilworth.

### ***My approach to Police***

106. In December 1997, on visiting New Zealand for a holiday (I lived in Australia from 1985 to 2001), I decided to report my abuse to Auckland Criminal Investigation Branch of the Police. I was motivated to help protect the safety of any other children.
107. Unfortunately, the Detective that I spoke to was disinterested in my experience and did not even take a statement from me.
108. He was only prepared to check the database and confirmed for me, that GRO-C-1 was GRO-C.
109. The Detective seemed dismissive and I felt like I was wasting his time. I had made a special trip to the Auckland central police station from Waiheke Island. It had taken courage because I was nervous and emotional discussing

these traumatic childhood experiences. It was invalidating and I was surprised by the lack of interest.

110. In early 2020, I was contacted by Steve Brown, current President of the Dilworth Old Boys' Association, to inform me that there was a current Police Investigation into historical abuse at Dilworth School. He gave me the name of the Detective investigating the school. Steve Brown had already been aware of my circumstances as he had attended my private hearing to this Royal Commission, in a support role.
111. I have been in contact with the Detective in charge of the investigation regularly this year and have given him a statement about my time at Dilworth.
112. That Detective has informed me that GRO-C-1 is now deceased. At the time of making this statement, it is public knowledge that Police's investigation, Operation Beverly, has resulted in charges being laid against seven former Dilworth staff.

***My approach to the Dilworth Trust Board***

113. In early 2018, I approached the Dilworth Trust Board outlining my concerns regarding historic abuse at the school. I initially met with John Wain, who was the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the time, and Rob Campbell, General Manager of the Board of Trustees at the time.
114. John Wain resigned from the Trust Board a couple of weeks after our meeting. Rob Campbell resigned from the Trust Board in February 2020.
115. On the 18 April 2018, I submitted a letter that I sent to Rob Campbell to be passed on and considered by the Dilworth Trust Board. I refer to this letter as Exhibit WITN0010002.



116. In this letter I outlined the abuse that I had suffered as a student of Dilworth in 1977 and 1978.
117. I queried why even after [GRO-C-1] had been identified as a paedophile, dismissed [GRO-C], [GRO-C], no member of Dilworth, senior management or Trust Board, had ever approached me in relation to whether anything happened to me, despite being closely connected with him in the time I was at Dilworth.
118. I communicated to the Trust Board that there had been an increasing accountability for historical child abuse, that had resulted in a recent Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the New Zealand Royal Commission into Historical Abuse in State Care.
119. I told the Trust board that I believed that it was only a matter of time before questions were asked of the Dilworth Trust Board, in relation to historical abuse of boys in its care.
120. I challenged the Board to try to put some redress processes in place for the historic abuse that had occurred at Dilworth.
121. I encouraged Dilworth to adopt the Four Steps of Repentance: Recognition, Remorse, Restitution and Refrain.
- a. **Recognition:** recognising and accepting that this occurred
  - b. **Remorse:** communicating genuine remorse that this occurred
  - c. **Restitution:** considering how things can be made right
  - d. **Refrain:** putting into place policies and measures to avoid this from reoccurring in the future.

122. I sought to work collaboratively with the Board, with the intent of helping myself find peace and closure and at the same time providing a pathway that may help others.
123. On the 27th of August 2018, the Dilworth Trust Board arranged for an experienced psychologist, an expert in the field, to brief the board members on the issue of abuse. Furthermore, that the expert was going to review the current Child Safety policy and look to establish a framework for dealing with issues as they arose.
124. On the 6th of September 2018, I received an email from Rob Campbell apologising for the delay in contact after that meeting. The Dilworth Trust Board were now going to commence a process of reviewing their Child Safety Policy and developing a pathway for dealing with historical abuse.
125. On 9 July 2019, I met with Rob Campbell and the experienced psychologist at the Dilworth Trust Board office to review the proposed new Child Safety Policy. I requested, but was disappointed to be denied, a hard copy of the draft policy, to peruse and consider prior to this meeting.
126. Instead, on my arrival, I was taken to a room and given the document to read. This caused significant pressure as there was limited time before the meeting. It felt like an exam.
127. I was reading this document as a survivor, and at the same time feeling the weight of responsibility for other Dilworth Old Boy survivors.
128. It also felt like a token read and I would not be expected to offer anything additional, because it had already been peer-reviewed by 'the experts'. This was not the 'collaboration' that we had discussed.
129. Despite this, my critique of the draft document revealed some omissions and I offered changes that I felt were

valuable. The fact that I discovered faults with the document, supported my feeling of disappointment that I had not been given more time to peruse it. The 'experts' had not got it completely right and my role in the process should have been respected more.

130. One of the issues preventing survivors coming forward to report abuse is the fear that they will not be believed. In the introduction to the Child Safety Policy, there was reference to survivors "telling their story". To me, the word "story" is a synonym for "fiction" or "make-believe" and does not help THIS survivor feel that he is going to be believed. I feel that it is patronising. I voiced this concern and it was explained to me by the psychologist how this was accepted vernacular within psychology. As part of my university degrees, I took some psychology papers, and feel that just because experts decide to use this term, it should not necessarily override or negate feedback from a survivor. My concern was noted by Rob Campbell and said that he would change the wording. However, I got the sense that the contracted Dilworth psychologist was frustrated with me and felt I did not understand that this was a widely used and accepted term. I requested that "telling their story" be replaced with "sharing their experiences". I believe that the distinction between these two terms is significant.
131. I was acknowledged by the trustees of the Dilworth Trust Board for my contribution to the new child abuse policy and addressing historic child abuse, with a gift basket.
132. This arrived at home by courier one day. I was upset to see that the note attached to the gift basket said, "thanks for sharing your story". This felt like a gut punch and was particularly insensitive to my request.
133. I would like the Royal Commission to consider and analyse all jargon and use of terminology, from the perspective of

survivors, as opposed to accepting existing terms that may not be useful.

134. On the 20 August 2019 I sent a further letter to the Trust Board advising that the Royal Commission of Inquiry had extended to faith-based institutions and encouraged them to look at how the School was to address the terms of reference and the issues arising from the Royal Commission. I refer to this letter as Exhibit WITN0010003.
135. In this letter I applauded the Board's commitment to addressing my original concerns. The fact that their new policies had taken a long time to formulate, gave me confidence that nothing was being rushed, and it was being taken seriously. I was impressed with the advocacy from Rob Campbell. I was grateful for his professionalism and sensitivity.
136. However, I was disappointed when I was advised, at late notice, that I was not required at a Dilworth Trust Board meeting on 29 July 2019. I had cancelled a day's clinic from my practice and had emotionally prepared myself for what was to me, an important meeting. This affected me more than I thought it would. This was not respectful, and the lack of notice did not give me enough time to rebook patients. There was no acknowledgement of the financial implication to me. Instead, I would now have to give up another working day.
137. I was then invited to attend the Dilworth Trust Board meeting on the 26th of August 2019 to meet the Board. During this meeting, the Board Chairman, Aaron Snodgrass, a former Old Boy, apologised for what had happened to me in my time at Dilworth. I was deeply moved as this was a spontaneous act on his part and he displayed genuine emotion. For the first time, I experienced a sense of validation. It was a very powerful moment for me.

138. Rob Campbell offered to reimburse me my expenses incurred in taxi fares and ferry tickets for the trips to Dilworth Trust Board. I declined this offer and instead requested two tickets to the upcoming school reunion. I said no because I wanted to demonstrate that my intentions were genuinely collaborative and there was no ulterior motive.
139. I was given two tickets, for my partner and me to attend the centenary gala dinner and reunion dinner on the weekend of the 20th and 21st of September 2019.

***Dilworth Old Boy's Meeting***

140. On 10 September 2019, the Dilworth Trust Board sent an email and letter to its former students in relation to the Royal Commission and its position on safety and steps being taken to handle historical abuse. I refer to this letter as Exhibit WITN0010004.
141. From the position of collaboration, I was surprised that I did not receive prior warning that this letter was coming and expected that I would have at least seen a draft.
142. The letter apologised for the abuse of students in their care and offered support services such as a free listening service and on-going counselling.
143. At this point Dilworth Trust Board picks up the tab for the counselling and if you do not wish to use an independent psychologist from their panel, there is a process where you can use another clinical professional, that they first need to approve.
144. I believe it would be appropriate for Dilworth to inform Old Boys of the ACC sensitive claims process, which they have not done even after bringing this to their attention. Otherwise, this may give the perception that Dilworth are controlling the process. In other words, either ACC Sensitive Claims Unit is not considered

- competent enough to be provided as an option for an Old Boy entering this process, or, the independent panel have advised the Board this, to ensure they get most of the business, or, Dilworth want to pay other 'experts' so that they can own the stats and keep them 'in-house'. If the latter is the case, avoiding transparency is the reason why we have this Royal Commission and consequently why we are all here today.
145. The letter also invited Old Boys of Dilworth to a private meeting to discuss the support services in place and the steps now being taken to make the school a safer environment.
  146. On Friday 20 September 2019, I attended the private Old Boys meeting at the Heritage Hotel arranged by the Dilworth Trust Board and overseen by an independent psychologist.
  147. There were approximately twenty Old Boys that attended the meeting. We were not allowed to bring any support person into the room with us – it was "Old Boys' only. There was no professional support organised that could be available to us at the end of the meeting, other than the psychologist.
  148. I was of the understanding that it was going to be acknowledged that an Old Boy had come forward as a survivor of sexual abuse and prompted the Dilworth Trust Board to review its Child Safety Policy as well as developing a pathway for dealing with historical abuse. This did not occur. At the eleventh hour, the Dilworth Trust Board decided to remove the reference to this being survivor-initiated and instead made it appear that it was a proactive Board initiative.
  149. I was disappointed that, after doing nothing for a long time, Dilworth was trying to create the impression that it should

take the credit. It certainly would not have been where it was, if not for my prompting and persistence.

150. The reason I wanted the letter being "survivor initiated", was that, if an Old Boy knew that someone had already come forward and broken the code of silence, then it might be psychologically easier for them to follow. As an Old Boy and survivor, I believed that this was very important.
151. The meeting was not run well and there was minimal support offered. The psychologist was meant to facilitate the meeting, but he did not attempt to coordinate the agenda.
152. During this meeting I shared that I was a survivor of sexual abuse and had initiated the Dilworth Trust Board's review of addressing historical abuse and their child safety policy. I was prompted to make right Dilworth's omission. I felt uncomfortable having to do this.
153. I also became privy to confidences from some Old Boys; one of extreme physical abuse resulting in lifelong health problems, and the other, sexual abuse involving a member of staff during my era.
154. The survivor of the extreme physical abuse, who was in his eighties, collapsed in front of me. I caught him as he fell to the ground in a state of catatonic paralysis and I was left by myself to perform first aid on him. The facilitator/psychologist walked off and had a cup of tea and a chat with others. Apparently, I was doing a good job with first aid.
155. As the patient lay on the ground recovering, he explained that he was a medical doctor and his catatonic paralysis had first presented in his late twenties when he was doing hospital rounds as a junior doctor. He felt that it was a direct result of physical abuse at Dilworth when he was a young boy. He recalled that older boys would grab him

from behind, crushing his chest so that he could not breathe, until he would pass out.

156. He said that he would then wake up on the ground, and that this had happened on multiple occasions. He confided in me that he was unsure how long he was going to live and did not want this information to die with him.
157. He wanted me to make sure that I let others know what had happened to him. It seemed that he too had been part of a system that had not supervised and cared for boys in their care.
158. This experience was incredibly upsetting and not what I expected to occur at this meeting. It was way out of control, that a fellow survivor should be left to provide first aid and deal with this. Not a lot of thought went into what survivors might need during and subsequent to this meeting. For some, it stirred up emotional trauma without the appropriate protocols to support it. Given the way the meeting was not guided, it was always going to be a recipe for disaster.
159. I shared this man's experience with the Chairman of the Dilworth Trust Board, Aaron Snodgrass.
160. Over the course of that weekend, I met with other Old Boys and had some conversations that resulted in some startling revelations for me.
161. This new information gave missing pieces to the jigsaw suggesting collusion by staff, and, along with other confidential information, the possible existence of a paedophile ring.
162. On Friday, 20 September 2019 I attended the Dilworth Old Boys Association ('DOBA') centenary celebration dinner. The Dilworth Trust Board had my partner and me seated at a table with the current Dilworth School Reverend, the



Head Boy, as well as some other Dilworth Trust Board members.

163. During this evening I met Steve Brown, a Welfare Officer from the Dilworth Old Boys' Association (DOBA) and developed a dialogue and rapport. Steve has since been supporting me throughout my journey with the Royal Commission of Inquiry.
164. I sent Steve an email on the 22nd September 2019 detailing my experience as a student at Dilworth, informing him of some of the information I had obtained during the centenary weekend and urging that DOBA support and validate the men who may wish to speak out about their abuse and potentially contact the Royal Commission of Inquiry.
165. I sent Rob Campbell an email on the 22nd September 2019 which I refer to as Exhibit WITN0010005. In this letter I mentioned the further disturbing information I had gathered from speaking with former students at the centenary.
166. I also detailed how disappointed I was with the fact that it was not mentioned that the child safety policy and process of dealing with historical abuse was initiated by a survivor working collaboratively with the Dilworth Trust Board over the previous 18 months.
167. I felt that the fact that a survivor had come forward might pave the way for others to do so. I asked the Trust Board to reconsider making this public.
168. I also made it known that I was not happy with how the meeting unfolded at the Heritage Hotel and how I was left to care for the elderly man by myself.
169. The Board did not reply to this request to reconsider. Instead I was contacted on the 27th of September 2019 by the psychologist apologising for the distress that the

meeting caused and offering to meet with me to discuss a safer more sensitive process for all concerned.

170. I had a conference phone call with the psychologist and my counsellor, to discuss the situation and the psychologist's response to my counsellor's question about leaving me to care for the gentlemen was just "*I thought he could handle it*". The psychologist also said that he knew that something like that would happen. If this was indeed the case, I wondered why he hadn't organised paramedics in advance!
171. I informed Aaron Snodgrass, Chairman of the Dilworth Trust Board, that I was making a submission to the Royal Commission of Inquiry in March 2020. I invited him to attend my private session with Commissioner Sandra Aloffivae. Aaron wished me the best and told me that he supports the Royal Commission but that it would not be appropriate for him to attend in his capacity as Board Chairman.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

172. I have been asked to comment on what I think Dilworth could have done better when I raised the fact of the historic abuse with them and what they could do better in relation to supporting and helping survivors. I understand this aspect of my evidence may help the Commission when it is making recommendations about how redress processes can be improved in the future.
173. As a survivor, it is not my place to define Dilworth School's relationship with the Anglican Church, or to determine which one is ultimately responsible. But because there is an overlap, including that GRO-C was abusing children, I am concerned that one may attempt to hide behind the other. I am not seeking to blame, but I am wanting each to take responsibility for their own part, in the sexual abuse that occurred. I want them to consider both

commission and omission, in other words what was done, and what wasn't, in terms of prevention, support for the abused children and investigation. I would like to know when they reported instances of sexual abuse to the police.

174. The relationship between the Church and the School, then and now, is an area that I would like the Royal Commission to analyse carefully.

175. There is no doubt that, in the past, the approach to dealing with abuse was to sweep it under the carpet. It seems that perpetrators of abuse were often 'moved along' rather than being made accountable for their actions. This makes the institutions responsible. Their historical records will therefore be inadequate and inaccurate when it comes to providing transparency, analysis, or justification of the decisions that they made. They also failed to record the names and experiences of those boys affected.

176. Dilworth was complicit through their knowledge of abuse as well as their inaction. I am unaware of any steps being taken to determine the prevalence of abuse of boys that were associated with known offenders under their care.

177. The Anglican Church was also complicit, because it was their representative, [GRO-C-1] [GRO-C]

[GRO-C]

at Dilworth and they never took steps to determine whether other boys were affected. [GRO-C]

[GRO-C]

178. The Anglican Church now needs to consider its response to the Royal Commission. I would be disappointed if I only received a weak apology about the actions of [GRO-C-1]

[GRO-C-1] This would be inadequate.

179. The Church needs to explain if it had a culture of 'moving offenders along' rather than exposing and holding them to account. If that was the case, who were these people who did that? I am sure they have names, for they would be just as responsible for further offending, as if they did it themselves. It seems it could be that the reputation of the Church was more important than its most vulnerable, the children. Sexual abuse then became acceptable and normalised.
180. I would like the Royal Commission to consider the four "R's" of repentance, which when thinking about it are actually five "R's".
- a. **Recognition:** recognising and accepting that this occurred
  - b. **Remorse:** communicating genuine remorse that this occurred
  - c. **Recompense:** making appropriate financial reimbursement.
  - d. **Restitution:** considering how things can be made right
  - e. **Refrain:** putting into place policies and measures to avoid this from reoccurring in the future.
181. I do not believe that it is appropriate for a survivor, perpetrator, or organisation responsible to determine any recompense or restitution. This requires an independent third party.

### CONCLUSION

182. I do not really consider myself a true Old Boy of Dilworth because I did not stick it out to the end. I checked out early.
183. I believe Dilworth School missed out on a good student and alumni member with a promising future.

184. I know that the events of this chapter cannot be rewritten and has influenced the following chapters in my life. The boy that did not have anyone to stand up for him then, is now representing himself forty odd years later.
185. I would like to think the next chapter also involves the Dilworth Trust Board backing me by collaboratively supporting personal healing, as well as considering how it addresses the same issues that will have affected other members of the 'Dilworth family'.
186. A theme in my childhood was having numerous 'a bit of a shock' experiences. Emotional, physical, and sexual trauma somehow became normalised for me into 'a bit of a shock'. I would like to see organisations and institutions focus on all elements of safety, share their policies and knowledge with each other, so that best practice standards will provide safety for all.
187. The questions for me are now, how do I now obtain closure from these experiences and what in fact, does that actually mean? Does it require ownership from those responsible and/or complicit? Do I need to work on forgiveness?
188. If I am indeed the sum of my experiences, I must consider that perhaps there will never be true closure. Despite this, I still do carry the hope that eventually, despite all that happened, I will find peace.
189. And an important part of this has come from finding my voice. The Dilworth motto may as well have been "cop it and shut up". Generations of Dilworth Boys were trained to silence, and it is only now, some of us are finding our voice AND being heard. When the Royal Commission's scope of inquiry did not originally include faith-based institutions, it felt like another unjust situation where the eleven-year old in me was to be ignored and was still not allowed to speak. I applaud the insight and decision to

include faith-based institutions, which has given me a voice. I also applaud the Police for the changes that they have made since 1997, when my experience and concerns were negated. There has been a societal shift, and not only in relation to sexual abuse. Children now have a voice, are empowered to speak and most importantly, are taken seriously. I hope that today's eleven-year olds do not have to wait until they are 55 to be heard.

190. Recently, I watched Making Good Men, an account of bullying, honesty and forgiveness. In this Manu Bennett said to Norm Hewitt, his childhood bully: *"We have to travel this far to understand the past"*. This resonated with me. I am now only beginning to understand the trauma in myself and the Royal Commission has provided a vehicle for my journey. For this, I am truly grateful.

**Statement of Truth**

This statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and was made by me knowing that it may be used as evidence by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care.

GRO-C

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Dated: 13 October 2020