



Commission of Inquiry into
the Tasmanian Government's
Responses to Child Sexual
Abuse in Institutional Settings

WITNESS STATEMENT OF Kim [REDACTED]

I, Kim [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] in the State of Tasmania, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and contact number [REDACTED], do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

- 1 I make this statement on the basis of my own knowledge, save where otherwise stated. Where I make statements based on information provided by others, I believe such information to be true.
- 2 I ask that the contents of my statement be treated as anonymous. If the Commission wish to use any part of this statement as evidence or in the final report I ask that any identifying information not be included.

Background

- 3 I am the mother of [REDACTED] children. Paula was my [REDACTED] child. She was a very clever young girl, always a quiet achiever. She was motivated to do well at school, and for a time she really enjoyed school. She did tap dancing and jazz ballet, and participated in little athletics and netball. As a young child she was happy and active. I attach two photographs of Paula that show her the way that we like to remember her – happy and active. Now produced and shown to me and marked Kim-1 is a copy of two photographs of Paula

Paula's experience at school

- 4 Paula started high school in about [REDACTED]. In grade 7, she enjoyed school and did quite well. In grade 8, she seemed to like school, but she started to have some issues with body image and similar self-esteem issues.
- 5 In [REDACTED] Paula started grade 9. She was 14 years old, and she started to struggle even more. It was in this year that Paula formed a friendship with a teacher whose name I have provided to the Commission, who I will refer to in this statement as AB1. I believe he was in his late 30's at around this time.
- 6 I don't know if other teachers noticed that they had developed a friendship, but it seems like they must have noticed something.
- 7 Towards the end of the year, around September, things between Paula and AB1 escalated. He made an arrangement to pick Paula up from work on [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Paula told me that she was going to meet a friend in town. Instead,

she went with AB1. He drove her to a place just outside [REDACTED]. Paula later told me that she had been upset about a few things that were going on in her life and she was talking with AB1 about them.

8 He put his arm around her and he kissed her on the lips.

9 Paula became very upset. AB1 dropped her in town, and I went to pick her up. After I picked her up, she was at first very quiet. As we drove home, she started crying, but wouldn't tell me what was wrong. She was very distressed. When we arrived home, I asked her to please tell me what was wrong. After some time, she told me what had happened with AB1. She also told me that she wanted to die. She was so upset because she thought that he was her friend, and that he cared about her, but he took advantage of her.

10 I was very upset and distressed. Even though it was a Sunday night, I called another teacher at the school to tell them what had happened. The following day, I spoke to one of the Counsellors at the school. She advised me to write down what had happened, so both I and Paula did so. Now produced and shown to me and marked Kim-2 is a copy of the statements that both Paula and I completed the day after AB1 kissed Paula.

11 The following day, AB1 sent a letter to Paula in which he continued to profess his love for her. He also talked about harming himself, and about suggesting that she should have screamed or run away if she didn't want him to kiss her. Paula didn't want to talk to him, but he had repeatedly called her. It was very confusing and upsetting for Paula. I kept the letter. Now produced and shown to me and marked Kim-3 is a copy of the letter from AB1 to Paula dated [REDACTED].

12 Some members of the school community were very supportive. In particular, the school counsellor provided strong support to Paula. Our initial thoughts about what should happen with AB1 were set out in a letter to the Department of Education on [REDACTED]. Now produced and shown to me and marked Kim-4 is a copy of the letter I sent the Department of Education.

13 AB1 made attempts to contact Paula through her friends. Paula was quite fragile at the time, and so we informed the Department of Education about his conduct. We explained that there had been a "very significant and marked deterioration in her mental health since the incident with [AB1]." We told the Department of Education that she was saying that she was suicidal daily, and subject to lengthy bouts of uncontrollable sobbing, severe self-harming, with her overall presentation being very withdrawn. By this stage, we had learned that AB1 had taken Paula from the school "for a drive" earlier in term two. We explained all of this to the Department of Education in a letter dated [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. Now produced and shown to me and marked **Kim-5** is a copy of the letter that we sent. I also sent a copy of the letter to the Office of the State Service Commissioner in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. I wanted them to know that **Paula** attributed much of the anxiety she was experiencing to the events of [REDACTED].

[REDACTED]. Now produced and shown to me and marked **Kim-6** is a copy of the letter that I sent.

14 On [REDACTED], I received a letter from the Department of Education informing me that it had concluded that AB1 had breached the State Service Act 2000 *Code of Conduct* in relation to his inappropriate conduct towards **Paula**, and that he was dismissed from his employment with the Department. I was pleased because this was the outcome I had wanted. Now produced and shown to me and marked **Kim-7** is a copy of the letter that we received.

15 On [REDACTED], I received another letter from the Department of Education responding to a Christmas card that **Paula** had sent. Now produced and shown to me and marked **Kim-8** is a copy of the letter received on [REDACTED].

16 I don't know what happened to AB1 after that. I did hear a rumour that he volunteered to coach a [REDACTED], but I never heard anything else of him.

17 **Paula** really suffered because of what happened to her with AB1. The breach of trust was significant at a time when she was feeling vulnerable. She also felt shame because of what had happened with AB1.

18 I believe that this contributed to her struggles with anxiety and her eating disorders. She started taking Panadol and self-harming. She participated in online self-harming "games" that caused her significant damage.

19 She still tried her best to emerge from the difficult times she was facing. She became a [REDACTED], which I think reflected her intelligence and potential.

20 However, by the [REDACTED], it was clear that the medication she had been prescribed was not working, and that she would need to be admitted to hospital. So far as I recall, she was admitted to Launceston General Hospital (LGH) in around mid-[REDACTED]. She was admitted to Ward 4K.

Launceston General Hospital

21 When **Paula** was admitted to LGH, James Griffin (**Griffin**) was there, working as a nurse. I knew Griffin from many years earlier. I had first met him in about [REDACTED]. At that time, he had a [REDACTED]. He was doing some work near my home and he introduced himself. He was very friendly and charming. I remember the

kids would go and watch the machinery he used to dig, and he asked me if I would mind if the kids had a turn on the machine with him.

22



23

The next time I saw Griffin was in around [REDACTED]. At this time, he was a volunteer ambulance officer, and he was part of the crew that attended for a member of my family who needed transport to hospital. When I saw him then we didn't have time to speak much, but I believe he told me he was studying nursing.

24

In [REDACTED], when I arrived at LGH with Paula, Griffin was a familiar face at a time when I was feeling scared. He told me not to worry, that he would look after Paula. I thought that he was a kind man, and that his offer to look after Paula was part of that kindness.

25

Paula was in LGH for months, and Griffin took a particular interest in her. He spent a lot of time with her, including when I wasn't there. I observed him to be a "touchy-feely" person, but I thought he was friendly and caring.

26

Paula would have "leave" from hospital for a few weeks at a time, when she would return home. However, even when she was out of hospital, she continued to remain in touch with Griffin on the phone, and she would visit his home. I felt like it was okay because he had [REDACTED] at the house. I thought he could see how hard it was for me with [REDACTED] children, trying to work, and to care for Paula, and that his interest in Paula was part of him caring about other people.

27

Looking back, it seems that Griffin enjoyed being a "rescuer". He was someone who liked being the centre of attention, and to be needed by others. I remember one night, Paula took an overdose of tablets, and Griffin contacted me, and he told me that Paula needed help.

28

Paula was in hospital on and off for three years. In about [REDACTED] Paula was transferred to the Children's Ward in Hobart where she remained for about [REDACTED]. After her stay in Hobart, she returned to LGH, where she returned to Ward 4K.

29

There is no doubt that she was vulnerable while she was a patient at LGH. At one point during her admissions at LGH, she told me that a [REDACTED] had kissed her. I recall that I complained about this occurrence to staff at LGH at the time, although I don't recall who it was that I reported it to. This incident only served to make Paula more anxious.



30 Paula continued to spend time with Griffin when she was not in hospital. Griffin would invite her to his house for functions or a BBQ. My husband and I were also invited on some occasions. There was a swimming pool at his house, and he often had kids around. Paula also stayed at his house for a sleepover on occasion. He occasionally took Paula riding on his motorbike.

31 On another occasion, [REDACTED] had to attend [REDACTED] Paula was not in hospital at the time, and so Griffin [REDACTED] took her to [REDACTED] for three days. She told me that they went shopping and sight-seeing while [REDACTED]

32 We have a photo of Griffin and Paula taken while they were seeing quite a lot of each other. Now produced and shown to me and marked Kim-9 is a copy of that photograph.

33 For Paula [REDACTED] birthday, we all went out for a meal, with Griffin [REDACTED]. After that birthday celebration, Paula didn't have much contact with Griffin. I mentioned this to Paula at one stage, asking why she didn't see Griffin anymore. She was evasive when she responded to me. She said [REDACTED] that she didn't feel welcome at their house anymore. I didn't know what Paula meant by that. I also texted Griffin at around the same time to ask him if there was anything that was wrong. He said everything was fine, and he just fobbed me off.

34 Paula didn't see much of Griffin again after that.

35 Paula never fully recovered. When she was discharged from hospital, she moved into a [REDACTED]. She ultimately went [REDACTED], and it was there that she passed away from an [REDACTED].

Concluding comments

36 I read reports about what Griffin had done in the newspaper along with everyone else. I was horrified. Because Paula has passed away, she was never able to tell us what Griffin had done. We are left not knowing.

37 [REDACTED] was also cared for by Griffin at LGH, briefly. [REDACTED] doesn't recall much of that time, and fears she may have been drugged by Griffin.

38 We trusted the doctors and nurses, we trusted our children to LGH when they were at their most vulnerable.

39 I don't understand how Griffin was able to work for so long on a children's ward without something been detected, and without something being done to stop him.

40 The effect of all of this on our family has been overwhelming. We hope that in telling Paula's story, we might be able to help bring about change in the systems that let her

down. We hope that no other families will have to go through what we have gone through.

I make this solemn declaration under the *Oaths Act 2001* (Tas).

Declared at [redacted] in the State of Tasmania

on 20/04/..... 2022

Before me:

[redacted]

[Full name of Justice, Commissioner for Declarations or Authorised Person]

[redacted]