

**IN THE MATTER OF  
THE BOARD OF INQUIRY  
INTO HISTORICAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN BEAUMARIS PRIMARY SCHOOL  
AND CERTAIN OTHER GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

**Witness Statement of Kara Krusche  
Director, Working Places and Sustainability**

I, Kara Krusche, Director, Working Places and Sustainability, Department of Education (**DoE**), say as follows in response to the Notice to Produce a Statement issued by the Board of Inquiry and dated 16 October 2023:

**A. CURRENT ROLE**

1. As the Director, Working Places and Sustainability, I am responsible for overseeing the total lifecycle of the corporate office accommodation to ensure the DoE's working places are healthy, safe, inclusive, sustainable and fit for purpose. I am also responsible for coordinating broader DoE-wide reforms and commitments to sustainability and climate action.

**B. WORK HISTORY**

2. Prior to my current role, I held the following roles:
  - (a) 2021-2023 – Project Manager, 150 years of public education in Victoria and Project Manager, Schools Records Management Program; and
  - (b) 2018-2021 – Manager, Records and Digitisation Services, Knowledge Privacy and Records.
3. My work history is set out in my resume, which is attachment **KK-1** to this statement.

**C. CONTEMPORARY CHILD SAFETY PRACTICES**

**Qn 14. What legislative framework and child safety policies and practices are in place as at the date of this notice in government schools, including:**

- (c) what record-keeping and management policies and practices are in place in relation to allegations or incidents of child sexual abuse in government schools; and
  - (d) what record-keeping and management policies and practices are in place in government schools in relation to allegations or incidents of historical child sexual abuse in government schools?
4. Current records management legislation and policies apply to records relating to allegations or incidents of child sexual abuse, regardless of whether those allegations or incidents are current or historical.
  5. Schools and DoE are responsible for creating, managing, and appropriately disposing of public records in accordance with:
    - (a) *Public Records Act 1973* (Vic) (**Public Records Act**),
    - (b) *Crimes Act 1958* (VIC); and
    - (c) Standards issued by the Public Record Office Victoria (**PROV**).
  6. The Keeper of Public Records is a position created by the Public Records Act. Retention and Disposal Authorities (**RDAs**) are legal instruments issued by the Keeper of Public Records that specify:
    - (a) the minimum retention time for different classes of records;
    - (b) how records can be disposed of;
    - (c) how to authorise the destruction of records which are no longer required (time-expired records); and
    - (d) how to identify records that are to be permanently retained as State Archives.
  7. RDAs relevant to both current and historical allegations of child sexual abuse are:
    - (a) PROS 19/08 Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Organisational Response to Child Sexual Abuse Incidents and Allegations (attachment **KK-2** to my statement);

- (b) PROS 22/06 Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Schools (attachment **KK-3** to my statement);
  - (c) PROS 10/09 VAR 2 Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Education and Early Childhood Development Functions (attachment **KK-4** to my statement);
  - (d) PROS 07/01 Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Common Administrative Functions (attachment **KK-5** to my statement). The relevant part of this RDA is Reference 12, which sets out the requirements for the management and disposal of 'Personnel Management' records, including records related to misconduct and performance management, on pages 103 to 116.
8. The first explicit requirement for public sector agencies to retain records related to child abuse allegations was outlined in PROS 10/09 (attachment **KK-4** to my statement). PROS 10/09 was first issued in 2010.
9. The Keeper of Public Records issued PROS 19/08 (attachment **KK-2** to my statement) in response to recommendation 8.2 of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Recommendation 8.2 stated:
- The National Archives of Australia and state and territory public records authorities should ensure that records disposal schedules require that records relating to child abuse that has occurred or is alleged to have occurred be retained or at least 45 years.*
10. Within scope of PROS 19/08 are all records concerning organisational responses to allegations and incidents of child sexual abuse as well as the provision of support and redress to individuals. There are three classes of records that must be retained by public sector agencies, including DoE:
- (a) records relating to policy, strategy and procedure (at Reference 1.1, which are required to be retained permanently);
  - (b) records relating to reporting and investigations (at Reference 1.2, with a minimum retention period of 99 years after the action is completed);
- and

- (c) records relating to training and Development (at Reference 1.3, with a minimum retention period of 45 years after the action is completed).
11. Each of PROS 22/06 (attachment **KK-3** to my statement), PROS 10/09 (attachment **KK-4** to my statement) and PROS 07/01 (attachment **KK-5** to my statement) refer the reader to PROS 19/08 for records relating to investigations of allegations and incidents of child sexual abuse.
12. There is footnote that appears in the Reference sections of those RDAs that says:

*This Retention and Disposal Authority must not be used for records about child sexual abuse incidents, allegations nor an agency's prevention, identification and response to such incidents and allegations. This includes records of this nature created through an agency's reporting, oversight or regulatory relationships with other agencies. Instead agencies must use PROS 19/08 Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Organisational Response to Child Sexual Abuse Incidents and Allegations.*

13. The scope of PROS 19/08 does not include "contextual records" (for example, staff rosters, attendance records) unless those records form part of an investigation or report of child sexual abuse. Where they do not form part of an investigation or report, contextual records would be within the scope of, and be required to be retained by, PROS 22/06, PROS 10/09 and PROS 07/01.
14. As part of the consultation process for the creation of PROS 19/08, DoE proposed, and it was accepted by PROV, that the retention period for student safety, health and wellbeing records in PROS 22/06, be extended to a minimum retention period of 75 years. Page 2 of PROS 22/06 now states:

*A number of student safety, health and wellbeing related records described in this Retention and Disposal Authority attract a lengthy minimum retention period of 75 years. The Department of Education and Training recognises that a person may rely on these records throughout their life, and long after they have left the state school system.*

15. DoE provides specific records management guidance and instruction to its staff through:
  - (a) the Records Management – School Records policy (attachment **KK-6** to my statement);
  - (b) the Records Management – Employee Information policy (attachment **KK-7** to my statement);
  - (c) the School Administration Systems policy (attachment **KK-8** to my statement).
16. The above policies are publicly available online via the School Policy and Advisory Library. The policies support schools to comply with the legislation and standards outlined above.
17. DoE holds central records of policy instruction, guidance, and other functions relating to the administration of state education, as well as records relating to DoE-managed student support services and records from closed schools.
18. Schools hold the vast majority of records, and have had decentralised responsibility for storage, maintenance, and disposal of their own records since the early 1990s.
19. In the past, records management practices have been inconsistent, which has led to significant gaps in records holdings. 160 schools are known to have lost irreplaceable student and personnel records due to fire, flood and water damage, although the actual number is likely to be much higher.
20. Since the early 1990s, DoE has provided records management instruction and advice to schools via a centralised unit. When first established, the unit was known as the Archiving Unit. It is now known as the Records and Mail Services Unit.
21. Further to the services offered by the Records and Mail Services Unit, DoE has been delivering the School Records Management Program since 2019. The program aims to reduce records loss by retrieving irreplaceable permanent value records from schools for transfer to State Archives, reduce the burden on schools for storing hardcopy records by supporting them to dispose of time-expired records, and increase discoverability and availability

of records. This includes records used as evidence including summary enrolment records, annual school group photographs and annual school publications (e.g. yearbooks).

Signature:

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Printed name:

Kara Krusche

Date:

3 November 2023