



**KNOX GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

## **Section 1: Identifying the Institution**

### **Name**

*Knox Grammar School*

### **Location**

*2 Borambil Avenue, Wahroonga NSW 2076*

### **Contact Person**

*Rebecca Haynes*

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### **Specific organisational category**

*Independent School, Uniting Church in Australia (NSW & ACT)*

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### **School Context and Values**

FAITH WISDOM INTEGRITY COMPASSION COURAGE

Knox Grammar School is located at Wahroonga, Sydney. The history of Knox formally began in 1924 when it opened as a Presbyterian boys' school after founding members John Gilmore, William McIlrath, Robert Gillespie and Andrew Reid purchased what is now Gillespie Heritage House as the first Knox School Building.

The School offers a range of educational and developmental opportunities from Kindergarten, through to the NSW Higher School Certificate in Year 12, both to boarding and day students.

Knox is a school of the Uniting Church of Australia. Knox values its strong heritage, its close relationship with parents and the local community and exceptionally high educational standards. Underpinning these values is a deep and lasting commitment to our students' future.



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Knox has three campuses, Knox Preparatory School (boys, Kindergarten to Year 6), Wahroonga Prep (girls and boys, Pre-Kindergarten to Year 6) and the Senior School (boys, Years 7 to 12). In educating Knox students, we seek to develop their character and confidence and teach them to value commitment, actively recognise and reward those endeavours which lead to success, encourage innovation, and foster valued School traditions. Our secure environment and strong framework of values help our students to become valuable, responsible members of the wider community.

Many opportunities are available to challenge and enrich those who experience an education at Knox. At Knox, we strive to develop young men and women with a well-rounded education, encompassing an excellent curriculum and exceptional co-curricular opportunities. Our aim is to prepare students for a successful life beyond their Knox school years.

The School's vision is based on the premise that excellence comes when each boy and girl achieves his or her best in both the curricular and co-curricular environments and is well-prepared for their future beyond Knox. The School believes this vision can be realised within a supportive and stimulating educational environment that values and nurtures the wellbeing of its staff and students.

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### **Knox Grammar School Statement Regarding the Royal Commission**

In 2015, the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses of Child Sexual Abuse* ("the Royal Commission") held a public hearing into the response of Knox and the Uniting Church in Australia between 1970 and 2012 to concerns raised about inappropriate conduct by a number of teachers towards students at Knox.

Following this public hearing, on 13 September 2016, the Headmaster at the time John Weeks issued the following statement:

*Today the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse's final report into Knox Grammar School was tabled in the Federal Parliament.*

*The report was an investigation into the School's response to incidents occurring between 1970 and 2003. Those incidents had resulted in an investigation in 2009 and the charging and later conviction of one current and four former teachers.*

*The findings of the report reflect the commentary which has been prevalent since 2009 through the court cases and public hearings of the Commission. Knox welcomes that commentary and the recommendations, which despite relating to historic matters, have our full support.*



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*In 2009, the School and the Uniting Church issued an unconditional apology to the survivor and we have since been working together on redress. We remain deeply sorry for the pain and suffering inflicted on these men in their childhoods, and commend them once again for their courage in coming forward.*

*The last few years have been important for survivors of abuse- their stories have been heard and as a community we have been able to support them. They have also been important for us to come to terms with the past and accept responsibility for what was allowed to occur.*

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*Since becoming Headmaster in 2004, a number of initiatives have been introduced at Knox. These range from policies and procedures, to regular training and changed practices for teaching staff, to programmes for young people to know what is acceptable and that they are supported if there is a complaint to be made.*

*Whilst the tabling of the report represents the end of the Commission's role, it is not the end of our vigilance and commitment to ensure that the failures of the past are not repeated, and that as a community we work to ensure we never fail our young people again.*

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### **Section 2: General Reporting Against Recommendations Relevant to All Institutions**

#### **Theme 1: Making Institutions Child Safe**

##### **1. Measure 1.1: New or Revised Code of Conduct, Policies and Procedures for Child Safe Institutions**

#### **Report Volume:**

Volumes 6 and 7

#### **Recommendation(s) the measure is in response to:**

Recommendations 6.6 and 7.8



## Examples from the recommendations:

- All staff and volunteers comply with a Code of Conduct that sets out behavioural standards towards children, explains reporting requirements and handling complaints of child sexual abuse
- Requires all people working within the institution to undergo initial and periodic training of the Code of Conduct, and
- Ongoing documentation of policies and procedures related to child safe standards

## Description of measures implemented prior to December 2019:

### Child Protection and Complaint Handling Policies

Staff and Volunteer Codes of Conduct set out standards of behaviour expected towards children, explain reporting requirements and handling complaints of child sexual abuse. All staff and volunteers are required to comply with these Codes of Conduct. The standards and other information in the Codes are reinforced in the following policies and related documents:

- Knox Child Protection Policy and Behavioural Guidelines*
- Procedures for Handling Allegations of Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct*
- External Complaints Handling Policy*
- Knox Report Service for Raising Matters of Serious Concern*

These policies and procedure documents are publicly available on the Knox Grammar School website <https://www.knox.nsw.edu.au/>.

The Knox Child Protection Policy is reviewed annually. The *Procedures for Handling Allegations of Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct* and the *Complaints Handling* are new or significantly revised policies this year. They were prepared following a review of the complaints handling processes in 2019 and in response to changes introduced to the registration requirements for individual non-government schools.

The *Knox Report Service for Raising Matters of Serious Concern* was created in 2016. This policy documents the processes for making a complaint via the Knox Report Service, an external complaints system managed by Deloitte.

The policies cross reference reporting requirements and handling complaints of child sexual abuse.



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Policies and procedures in this area are reviewed by the Deputy Headmaster and the Manager of Risk and Compliance. Revised versions of the *Staff Code of Conduct* and *Child Protection Policy*, with greater emphasis on the Child Safe Standards, have been prepared for implementation in January 2020.

### Initial and Periodic Training: Code of Conduct and Child Protection

Employed staff are given copies of the above Child Protection and Complaint Handling Policies. They must sign and return a form confirming they have read/understood the *Knox Child Protection Policy*.

Volunteers must follow the *Volunteer Code of Conduct*. They are required to sign and return a form confirming they have read and understood the *Volunteer Code of Conduct*. Subject to the nature of the volunteer work, volunteers may also receive an induction and initial training in child protection. In the School's conditions of enrolment, parents/guardians who have a child attending the school agree to the Volunteer Code of Conduct.

Working with Children Check requirements and exemptions for volunteers are in keeping with legal requirements and follow the guidelines set out by the Office of the Children's Guardian.

As part of the NESA registration (NSW Government Education Standards Authority), the *Procedures for Handling Allegations of Staff Misconduct and Reportable Conduct and Complaints Handling* were published this year.

In addition to the *Knox Child Protection Policy*, other child protection policies are at least annually reviewed and updated by the Deputy Headmaster and Manager of Risk and Compliance. The School also collaborates with Bravehearts who works through the procedures and the practical application of the policies.

New staff are required to undergo child protection training with Bravehearts. There is also ongoing online training with Bravehearts. Compliance is monitored and followed up by Staff Services.

### **Prospective work that will be undertaken post-2019 to implement this measure:**

From 2020 all new staff must complete initial training modules with Bravehearts before they commence their employment.

A review of the *Knox Report Service for Raising Matters of Serious Concern* will continue.



An updated *Knox Child Protection Policy* will be prepared for introduction in 2020.

A *Parent Code of Conduct* will also be introduced in 2020. This will include reference to and use of *Complaints Handling Policy* and framework (and indirectly the procedures document).

A review of the use of volunteers will be conducted including clarification of volunteer roles requiring and not requiring working with children check clearances and/or an induction and initial training in child protection.

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**2. Measure 1.2: Improvements to Institutional Responding and Reporting**

**Report Volume**

Volume 7

**Recommendation(s) the measures is in response to:**

Recommendation 7.7 and 7.8

- There is an effective complaint handling policies and procedures in place that sets out how the institutions should respond to complaints of child sexual abuse, and is understood by children, staff, volunteers and families
- If a complaint is made, there is a risk assessment framework followed immediately and appropriate discipline of any internal perpetrators or decision-making of staff on allegations undergoing investigation

**Description of measures implemented prior to December 2019**

Please see the list of child protection and complaints handling policies above.

If a complaint is made Staff Services conducts an investigation and an audit of policies and procedures.

**Prospective work that will be undertaken post-2019 to implement this measure:**

Please also see above.

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**3. Measure 1.3** *Improvements to Record Keeping and Information Sharing*

**Report Volume:**

Volume 8

**Recommendation(s) the measure is in response to:**

Recommendations 8.1 and 8.4

**Example from the recommendations:**

- Institutions should implement the Royal Commission’s principles for records and record keeping that responds to child sexual abuse occurring within institutions

**Description of measures implemented prior to December 2019:**

- i. An increased understanding of the importance/significance of records and how to exercise good record keeping.*

Examples:

- There have been presentations to staff on the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse re record keeping
- Staff meetings include information regarding data breach

- ii. To ensure administrative and personnel records reflect qualifications, completion of mandatory training and Working with Children Check Clearances*

Example:

- A training and qualifications register has been implemented so Staff Services can identify staff who have not completed requirements

- iii. To ensure staff make informed decisions regarding file management, retention and disposal and to limit risk of neglect or illegal activity*

Examples:

- Staff training in Records Information Management (RIM)
- Records of key personnel including email are backed up



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- Digital records have access hierarchies
- Physical records are kept securely
- A custody register is maintained for archived physical records

*iv. To ensure records containing sensitive information are accessible and kept securely*

### Examples:

- Archived physical student records, current staff records and past staff records are kept in locked areas with restricted access
- Physical legal records are kept in locked areas with restricted access
- Counselling files are retained in a locked area with restricted access
- Key physical records and digital records have been scanned. They are kept on a server with restricted access
- Records are cross referenced
- There is a Data Breach Response Plan in place

*v. To ensure records are destroyed according to legislative requirements*

### Examples:

- All current digital records are now permanently retained
- Physical personnel, student and legal files are permanently retained
- Risk management procedures are implemented regarding security of files
- Disaster recovery plans are in place

### **Prospective work that will be undertaken post-2019 to implement this measure:**

*i. Increase understanding of the importance/significance of records and how to exercise good record keeping*

### Examples:

- RIM Policy is to be implemented in 2020
- RIM information in the Staff Handbook is to be updated to reflect current practice



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- Staff brochure introducing RIM policy and procedures are to be made available in 2020
- Staff induction/training to include Records Management component in 2020
- Staff training program is being designed, for implementation in 2020
- Further work on records checklist for departing staff

ii. *To ensure records are maintained as being in the 'best interests of the child'*

Examples:

- The creation, maintenance and retention of records will be informed by the need to serve the 'best interests' of the students. To this end the School will aim to implement a system of record keeping which exceeds the requirements
- There will be a record survey, to be undertaken in 2020 to ensure the required records are created, maintained and retained

iii. *To ensure staff make informed decisions regarding file management, retention and disposal and to limit risk of negligent or illegal activity*

Examples:

- New staff training is to include RIM
- RIM policy and procedures are being reviewed and will be republished
- Digital copies of RIM Policies and Procedures and Retention Schedule for Non-Government Schools will be available to all staff

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### Theme 2: Children's Voices

**Measure 2.1:** *Children participate in all decisions that affect them*

**Report Volume:**

All relevant volumes and recommendations.

**Recommendations:**

Information about how children are able to express their views and how their voices have been incorporated into child safe practices, including the design of policy and decision-making.



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### **Description of measures implemented prior to December 2019:**

There is a senior student leadership group. This is a forum for students to express their views to teachers, staff and the School Council on school practices. The senior student leadership group includes both day and boarding school students. Therefore it is an opportunity for both day and boarding school students to express their views.

Every year the School conducts Stakeholder Satisfaction Surveys for the purpose of identifying the satisfaction, needs and views of students in years 7, 10 and 12, and the parents of students in Years 7 and 12.

The surveys are developed by MMG Education, and they provide deep insights into the attitudes, expectations, satisfaction, and loyalty of students and their parents.

### **Prospective work that will be undertaken post-2019 to implement this measure:**

Student Portfolio leaders will be included in the design and development of child safe practices.

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### ***Section 3: Reporting Against Institutions Specific Recommendations***

#### **Report Volume:**

Non-government schools Volume 13

#### **Recommendations:**

Volume 13, recommendations 13.1-13.8

Child Safe Standards (Chapter 5)

#### **Recommendation 13.1**

All schools should implement the Child Safe Standards identified by the Royal Commission



**Description of measures implemented prior to December 2019:**

- The School is liaising with the NSW Association of Independent Schools to provide professional advice, support and workshops in implementing the Child Safe Standards.
- Child protection is a standing item at School Council meetings and here, the Headmaster provides a report on child protection issues
- Bravehearts child protection training is available online for all School Council members
- As mentioned above, all staff are required to undertake Bravehearts training
- Key staff members undertake specialist child protection training
- As mentioned above there is a senior leadership group. This group considers school practices within both the day and boarding school contexts
- Any Knox student, staff member or member of the community may contact the Knox Report Service. This is an external service operated by Deloitte where anyone may report a matter of serious concern
- As mentioned above the School conducts a MMG survey for parents/members of the community. There are elements in this survey that relate to a safe campus and bullying
- The School has established a panel, to manage child protection incidents. By way of review, after these incidents have been managed the panel considers whether it is necessary to revise or modify child protection policies and procedures. The panel may also decide on further action to enhance/develop student wellbeing. For example staff training, further education for boys and training for parents
- The School analyses child protection and incident data for trends and systemic issues. A database is maintained and reviewed by senior management. Actions and interventions have been instituted post the reviews to respond to emerging trends
- Applicants for teaching roles are required to complete at least one interview. Applicants must provide details/evidence of their education and qualifications
- Verbal and written reference checks are conducted. Records of these checks are kept on staff files. Reference checks include specific questions relating to child protection
- Letters of offer/employment contracts provide clear expectations about safety responsibilities
- The School has a diverse workforce that includes both men and women. Further, there are staff from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- The School has a staff member, the Head of Department Justice and Stewardship with a dedicated focus on diversity. The role aims to broaden the experiences of students in keeping with Uniting Church policies and teachings about diversity and inclusion. There are also partnerships with indigenous communities and interfaith groups



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- The School offers scholarships for indigenous students via the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation. The Knox Grammar School Indigenous Program is focused on partnerships with local Aboriginal communities and the AECG (Aboriginal Education Consultative Group), cultural competency for staff, a Reconciliation Action Plan, cultural opportunities for indigenous students and mentoring by an Aboriginal Liaison Officer (employed at Knox in the boarding houses). There is an emphasis on refining a process of cultural mentoring as the School believes this is fundamental to their individual success and wellbeing, as well as inspiring and informing their future goals.

### **Recommendation 13.2**

State and territory independent oversight authorities responsible for implementing the Child Safe Standards (see Recommendation 6.10) should delegate to school registration authorities the responsibility for monitoring and enforcing the Child Safe Standards in government and non-government schools.

As a non-government school Knox Grammar School must be registered with NESA. Further, it must abide by the *Education Act 1900*.

### **Recommendation 13.3**

School registration authorities should place particular emphasis on monitoring government and non-government boarding schools to ensure they meet the Child Safe Standards. Policy guidance and practical support should be provided to all boarding schools to meet these standards, including advice on complaint handling.

The Boarding handbooks outline the School's boarding specific policy and procedure in the area of child protection.

Boarding staff receive boarding specific child protection training.

The Boarding houses have their own particular informal and formal complaints handling procedures.

### **Prospective work that will be undertaken post-2019 to implement this measure:**

The boarding houses informal and formal complaints handling procedures will be reviewed.

There will also be a review of the general Complaints Handling Policy and the Knox Report Service for Raising Matters of Serious Concern. The review will take place in conjunction with the development of a stand-alone whistleblower policy.



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### Case Study 23: Public Hearing into Knox Grammar School, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Report of Case Study No. 23 dated June 2016

#### Description of measures implemented prior to December 2019 to address the findings in Report of Case Study No. 23:

##### i. Governance structure at Knox

Child protection is a standing item at School Council meetings and here the Headmaster provides a child protection report.

The *Knox Constitution* was reviewed and an updated version approved by the Uniting Church in Australia (NSW & ACT) Synod in June 2018.

The *Knox Constitution* specifically sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Headmaster and Council. In particular, it refers to reports on key issues from the Headmaster to Council.

The School reports to the Synod Risk and Compliance unit on child protection claims via the Headmaster, Chief Financial Officer and/or legal counsel.

Bravehearts training is available and undertaken by School Council members.

##### ii. Record keeping practices

Please see above.

Relevant material about teachers' conduct with students is systematically documented and kept securely with either Staff Services, the Headmaster, archives or legal counsel. It is accessible to incoming Headmaster and/or other relevant senior staff.

The *Knox Constitution* requires the Secretary of the Knox Council to keep written records, to retain these records for the minimum period legally required and to take reasonable steps to ensure these records are kept safe.

Council records are retained indefinitely physically and digitally. Records are kept secure and require authorisation for access. Physical records are monitored by a Custody Register. Digital records are backed up regularly and access is controlled and can be monitored. All Council members are advised of information privacy and confidentiality.



**iii. Recruitment practices for employees with direct contact with students (including boarding students)**

Roles requiring direct contact with students, including boarding students involve a formal application process. Applicants are required to undergo an interview process and there are referee checks. Responses are documented and kept on staff files.

A Working with Children Check Clearance is required for employment of all staff and the engagement of many volunteers.

Please also see above.

**iv. Training/education for staff on mandatory reporting obligations imposed by legislation**

Please see above.

**v. Prospective work that will be undertaken post-2019 to address the findings in Report of Case Study 23:**

Governance policies for the School Council will be reviewed further in 2020. This will include a review of School Council record keeping and reporting practices.

Staff Services is currently reviewing referee and background checking practices for job applicants, in particular job applicants applying for roles with direct contact with students.

As mentioned above there is currently a review being conducted of the Knox Report Service of Serious Matters of Concern.