



WITNESS STATEMENT OF SHAUN MCCLARE

I, Shaun McClare, Principal at Kalinda Primary School, of 39-49 Kalinda Rd, Ringwood VIC 3134, say as follows:

- 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. This statement replaces the statement I produced to the Commission on 26 June 2019.

BACKGROUND

Question 1 - Please detail your background and experience, including your qualifications.

- 2 I have been working for the Department of Education and Training (DET) for the last 15 years, and have held leadership positions for the last seven years.
- 3 I hold a Bachelor of Education.

Question 2 - Please describe your current roles and responsibilities.

- 4 I am currently the Principal at Kalinda Primary School, a position I have held since April 2019.
- 5 I was the Principal of Marlborough Primary School in Heathmont from 2016 to 2019.
- 6 I had Acting Principal roles at Thornbury Primary School and Brunswick North Primary School.
- 7 I was an Assistant Principal at Brunswick South Primary School.

Question 3 - Please describe any other roles of positions that you hold.

- 8 I am currently the Chair of the Maroondah Principals Network. I have held this position for most of this year.

ORGANISATIONS

Question 4 - Please describe Kalinda Primary School.

- 9 Kalinda Primary School is a public primary school in Ringwood, Victoria. It has classes from the Foundation year to Year 6.

How many students attend the School?

- 10 The School has around 580 enrolled students.

Demographically, how would you describe the student body?

- 11 The demographic at Kalinda Primary School is best described as middle class with a small percentage of students from backgrounds with English as a Second Language. Within the student body there is a diverse range of backgrounds and levels of socio-economic opportunities.

What issues or challenges do the students at Kalinda Primary School face with respect to mental health?

- 12 The issues or challenges that our students face are likely to be similar to those experienced by students in other primary schools. We have students who suffer from anxiety and depression, and we have a small number of students who have suicidal ideation.
- 13 Generally, the challenges faced by students at the primary level are different to those faced by students at the secondary school level. Much of our work in mental health is focussed on building a child's resilience to help them when they may encounter greater challenges when they get to high school.

Question 5. What is the Maroondah Principals Network?

What are its objectives?

- 14 Within the DET framework, principals and schools may form a Community of Practice with the objective of working collaboratively on any issues which are of common concern or interest to the schools. In about 2016, the Maroondah Principals Network came together as a Community of Practice with a shared vision of improving wellbeing outcomes for all students in our schools. The Maroondah Principals Network includes principals of Victorian government primary and secondary schools within the Maroondah City Council region.

Who is part of the Maroondah Principals Network?

- 15 The following schools are members of the Maroondah Principals Network:
- a) Ainslie Parklands Primary School
 - b) Bayswater Primary School
 - c) Bayswater North Primary School
 - d) Bayswater West Primary School
 - e) Bayswater South Primary School
 - f) Bayswater Secondary College
 - g) Croydon Community School
 - h) Croydon Hills Primary School
 - i) Croydon Primary School
 - j) Croydon Special Development School
 - k) Dorset Primary School
 - l) Eastwood Primary School
 - m) Great Ryrie Primary School
 - n) Heathmont College
 - o) Heathmont East Primary School
 - p) Kalinda Primary School
 - q) Marlborough Primary School
 - r) Melba Secondary College

- s) Mullum Primary School
- t) Norwood Secondary College
- u) Ringwood Heights Primary School
- v) Ringwood North Primary School
- w) Ringwood Secondary College
- x) Ruskin Park Primary School
- y) Tinternvale Primary School
- z) Warranwood Primary School
- aa) Yarra Rd Primary School

What is your role in the Maroondah Principals Network?

- 16 I am the Acting Chair of the Maroondah Principals Network. I lead meetings of the Maroondah Principals Network and convene and lead the Maroondah Principals Network executive, which has strategic and planning responsibility for the activities for the Maroondah Principals Network which includes the Maroondah Positive Education Network.
- 17 A steering committee for the Maroondah Positive Education Network will also soon be established to lead the planning of the Maroondah Positive Education Network positive education activities. The steering committee will include as members principals, teachers, positive education leaders, members of Maroondah City Council and some parents of students in the schools in the Maroondah Positive Education Network, with the objective of having involvement from a range of stakeholders in the positive education project. I will be a member of that steering committee.

What is the relationship between the Maroondah Principals Network, Maroondah City Council and the Victorian Government Department of Education and Training?

- 18 In about 2016, a Student Wellbeing Survey was commissioned by Maroondah City Council in conjunction with the Maroondah Principals Network and the University of Melbourne. The findings¹ of that survey found that there were wellbeing and mental health issues amongst young people in the Maroondah area – stress, lack of sleep, and school attendance - were all areas of concern.
- 19 Following the survey, the Maroondah Positive Education Network (formerly called Maroondah Plus 10 Schools) was formed.

MAROONDAH POSITIVE EDUCATION NETWORK (FORMERLY MAROONDAH PLUS 10 SCHOOLS)

Question 6 - Please describe the Maroondah Positive Education Network. Who are the partners in the Maroondah Positive Education Network?

- 20 The Maroondah Positive Education Network is a joint initiative between Maroondah City Council, DET and the Maroondah Principals Network. The Maroondah Positive Education

¹ Chin, T-C., Jiang, J., & Vella-Brodick, D. A. (2016). *Understanding the needs of young people in Maroondah: Findings from the student well-being survey*. The University of Melbourne, VIC, Australia, available from <http://www.maroondahyouth.com.au/files/assets/youth/documents/student-wellbeing-survey.pdf>.

Network is a formal network of 26 primary and secondary public schools in the Maroondah region. The Maroondah Positive Education Network provides school principals and assistant principals within the Maroondah area an opportunity to get together and work collaboratively and conduct initiatives together, including initiatives focussed on the wellbeing of students.

- 21 I understand, through my now role as the Chair of the Maroondah Principals Network, that the Maroondah Positive Education Network initially received funding from each of the schools in the Maroondah Positive Education Network² to implement Positive Education – about \$8,000 to \$10,000 each. This initial payment was for professional learning for the principals and assistant principals of the Maroondah Positive Education Network schools given by the Institute of Positive Education (Geelong Grammar). This created ‘buy in’ for the Principals and a commitment to their schools working in this space in the future. We have since received funding from DET for two years. The DET funding has been used to engage a Project Manager to provide further positive learning in the field of positive education to schools and manage the implementation further.

What are its objectives?

- 22 The objectives of the Maroondah Positive Education Network include increasing the wellbeing and educational outcomes of students in Maroondah, through the implementation of Positive Education and targeted wellbeing initiatives. Positive Education is an initiative that has been developed by various institutions, including Geelong Grammar School. I describe further below what Positive Education is.

When did Kalinda Primary School start participating in the Maroondah Positive Education Network?

- 23 Kalinda Primary School was a foundational member of the Maroondah Positive Education Network, participating from 2016.

Question 7. What is Positive Education?

What is the idea behind Positive Education?

- 24 Positive Education looks at the way in which education is delivered. It is not simply a matter of implementing a program, but building a culture of positive wellbeing amongst teachers and students. There is a strong focus on staff wellbeing on the basis that staff who have a good understanding of and experience of their wellbeing are able to lead students in creating the positive wellbeing culture for students. Wellbeing can be embedded in teaching but is also an important part of building the school environment having regard to building good relationships and supporting wellbeing.

What is its relationship to mental health and wellbeing?

- 25 Positive Education uses the science of ‘Positive Psychology’, where rather than waiting for a person to require acute mental health intervention to improve their lives, they use the skills and thought processes associated with resilience, mindfulness, gratitude, character strengths to build positive relationships with themselves and others to tackle the negative aspects of life, in a more positive and helpful way – they are not just coping, but flourishing.
- 26 Positive Education involves creating environments that provide opportunities to improve wellbeing. For example, wellbeing might be improved by connectedness to nature or by

² This includes all but one of the schools in the Maroondah Principals Network.

ensuring a child has an adult they can trust – the school will look to how to deliver those things.

- 27 Positive Education training is delivered in schools through building the wellbeing literacy of staff and students. Specific training sessions with staff focus on various aspects of wellbeing (such as gratitude, character strengths, positive relationships and meaning). These training sessions build the capacity of staff members to care for their own wellbeing as well as building the capacity of their students to do the same. From this capacity building, schools develop curriculum and planning documents to deliver lessons for students that focus on some of these aspects of Positive Education. This may include a unit of work on gratitude or on developing positive relationships.

In your experience, what are the benefits of implementing Positive Education in primary schools?

- 28 I've not been at Kalinda Primary School long enough to see any actual benefits. In my experience culture and behaviour change take time and the benefits of implementing Positive Education need to be measured over an extended period of time. These benefits include an increased level of wellbeing and resilience for staff and students.

Question 8 - Please describe the initiatives or programs that have been implemented at Kalinda Primary School as part of the Maroondah Positive Education Network.

- 29 Under the umbrella of Positive Education, Kalinda has implemented the Play is the Way program throughout the school over the last 12 months. Play is the Way teaches students emotional and wellbeing skills through a range of games and role playing activities that place students in challenging situations that they can respond to. Then, with the guidance of the teacher, the students can reflect on their responses and discuss different ways to emotionally respond. This curriculum is delivered in all of our classrooms and involves all of the students.
- 30 We have also just begun a new program over the last few weeks called the Rock and Water program. The program involves a series of physical activities (based on martial arts) that build self-confidence, self-awareness and positive social interactions between students. This program is being delivered to 60 students from years 3-6 who have been selected for a range of reasons - low resilience, anxiety, regular playground issues, potential leaders etc. They meet together once per week.

How are the initiatives or programs delivered (e.g. school-based, external people)?

- 31 The delivery of Positive Education depends on the school and its needs. An assessment takes place to determine what those needs are. Training is then directed to professional development with teachers. We regularly use Appreciative Inquiry and Growth Coaching for our teachers, to develop plans in schools and develop strategies going forward. This may be facilitated by the Maroondah Positive Education Network Project Manager or within the school itself. Each school will choose from a range of different modules based on their needs. These may be delivered by each school's HOPE (Head of Positive Education) Leader or the Maroondah Positive Education Network's Positive Education Project Manager. These modules include:
- a) Character Strengths
 - b) Positive Emotions
 - c) Engagement

- d) Growth Mindset
- e) Positive Relationships
- f) Meaning and Purpose
- g) Strengths Based Coaching
- h) Health (including Sleep and Nutrition)
- i) Brain Breaks.

- 32 Each school then appoints a HOPE Leader to oversee Positive Education at their school. The HOPE Leaders from each school attend Maroondah Positive Education Network meetings to share good practices and discuss professional development opportunities and training for staff.
- 33 The Maroondah Principals Network made a commitment to working in this space as a collective at the beginning of 2017 although some schools had been working in Positive Education for longer than this.

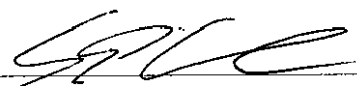
Are teachers at your school trained as part of the program? If so, what is that training?

- 34 All schools within the Maroondah Positive Education Network have or are developing a Positive Education Plan. The training is different for each school, depending on where they are in their journey. The Project Manager is highly skilled in Positive Education training and delivers learning through the modules as schools require them. At the start of this year, the entire Maroondah Principals Network went to a 'Live it today' program at Melbourne Convention Centre which focussed on their own wellbeing.
- 35 The HOPE Leaders within each school also get additional training from the University of Melbourne. All HOPE Leaders have completed the Certificate of Positive Education, delivered by the University of Melbourne. This was highly specialised training allowing them to deliver further training and projects within their own school.

In your experience, what benefits do the program provide to participants?

- 36 In my view, there is a real impact that Positive Education has on staff wellbeing, which ultimately impacts on student wellbeing.
- 37 At my previous school, I noticed a change in the conversations that were being had amongst teachers and the language that was being used. There appeared to be a real celebration of what each teacher could bring to the school.

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print name Shaun McClare

date 28 June 2019