

# Chapter Seven

## Impacts of abuse

### Introduction

- 7.1 Before entering Dilworth School, the former students we spoke to were very young students, often aged only 8 or 9, who came from a wide variety of backgrounds where many had experienced trauma and loss.
- 7.2 Regardless of their background or the era in which they attended the school, those young students carried many strengths into Dilworth – courage, resilience, intellect, hope, optimism, and, for many, the love and aspirations of their families. We heard of some who thrived at the school and graduated confident, well-educated young men. For a significant number, however, Dilworth failed them, and the qualities they had when they entered the school were lost or weakened. Lack of safety, care and protection created a void that was filled by grooming, sexual abuse, bullying and serious physical abuse.
- 7.3 In spite of these experiences, the adult former students we met during this Inquiry have mostly remained resilient and have retained or developed new attributes, as have the family members we spoke to. These have helped them through life after Dilworth, however difficult it has been. On the other hand, many have experienced ongoing pain, and family and friends have suffered profound grief. Some of the saddest accounts we heard were of lost hopes and opportunities: the failure to fulfil early intellectual promise, the change in personality from a happy confident child to a sad and angry adult, and the difference between one sibling's adult path (who was not abused at Dilworth) and that of the Dilworth student who was abused and ended with a major addiction, unable to trust, failed relationships and even prison.

- 7.4 In this chapter, we summarise the varied impacts of abuse on the former students and their whānau.<sup>944</sup> We note the observations of the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry in its interim report:

The consequences of abuse in care can be profound and lifelong. Some are more visible – damaged health, drug use, alcoholism, crime – and some are less apparent although no less real – emotional disconnection, poor relationships, damaged mental health, anger and grief. These effects reverberate beyond survivors to their families, whānau and society generally.<sup>945</sup>

- 7.5 The analysis of the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is also apt:

For many victims, the abuse can have profound and lasting impacts. They experience deep, complex trauma, which can pervade all aspects of their lives, and cause a range of effects across their lifespans. Other victims do not perceive themselves to be profoundly harmed by the experience.

Some impacts on victims are immediate and temporary, while others can last throughout adulthood. Some emerge later in life; others abate only to re-emerge or manifest in response to triggers or events. As victims have new experiences or enter new stages of development over their life courses, the consequences of abuse may manifest in different ways.<sup>946</sup>

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944 This chapter focuses on those who were sexually abused and may have been physically abused as well. It does not focus on those who were only physically abused. The large majority of those reporting serious impacts had been sexually abused. In this chapter we have not attributed the quotes to specific students as to do so could potentially identify the former students when information in this chapter is combined with information from other chapters. Additionally, many former students said very similar things, so we often selected only a representative quote.

945 Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, *Tāwharautia: Pūrongo o te Wā - Interim report* (vol 1), 2020, p 85.

946 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Final Report: Impacts* (vol 3), Commonwealth of Australia, 2017, p 9.

## Harm caused

- 7.6 Below, we summarise aspects of the harm done to former students because of the abuse they suffered. Impacts were both immediate and ongoing. Many former students we spoke to have experienced a combination of adverse consequences in their lifetimes. The impacts felt by former students are all-encompassing. There is a compounding impact. The depression suffered means being less able to deal with emotional needs, and the response is anger or shutting down. This then causes a relationship to break down, which further affects mental health, which then affects the ability to work. Those impacts can, as described to us, make life feel like walking through wet sand – tougher every step.
- 7.7 Impacts are sometimes circular. If the survivor cannot hold down a job, he has no money. The hidden costs of getting well become even more difficult to bear if he cannot pay for therapy to get well enough to hold down a job. Or the impacts cascade, addictions developed by a former student as a coping mechanism to deal with trauma may lead to physical and mental health complications, financial difficulties, criminal behaviour and relationship problems. Two students capture these effects succinctly:

The result that came out of Dilworth was an angry child, who did not know who to trust or turn to. Dilworth has destroyed my life. Every single aspect of my life has been affected by my time there – emotional, mental, and physical. It has never left me. I have been left with depression, anxiety, a low self-esteem, alcohol and drug misadventures, aggression, social anxiety, insomnia and trust issues. I have been on anti-depressants for nearly 20 years and require counselling.

I left school with a perception of myself as being disgusting and a bad person and I never knew myself as anything different. I was worthless and my body did not belong to me.

- 7.8 Abuse also affects individuals differently. As we read or listened to accounts of abuse suffered at Dilworth, we observed that there is little correlation between what we might consider to be the severity of the abuse and its consequences. Some students, viewed objectively, seem to have endured less abuse than others but the impact on their lives has been much more profound than on those we would have considered more extensively abused. We infer from this that no abuse – physical, sexual, psychological or emotional – should be dismissed as ‘minor’. The effect of abuse is unpredictable, but almost always will affect the survivor’s life detrimentally. We agree with comments made in other reports that a holistic view of the impacts of abuse on the former students is important.<sup>947</sup>
- 7.9 In chapter 10, we note the school’s current focus on hauora (wellbeing) with reference to Professor Sir Mason Durie’s Te Whare Tapa Whā model. This is a holistic model that “uses the symbol of the whareniui (meeting house) to illustrate the four cornerstones of wellbeing: taha wairua (spiritual health), taha hinengaro (mental health), taha tinana (physical health), and taha whānau (family health)”.<sup>948</sup>
- 7.10 As the Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry commented in *He Purapura Ora he Māra Tipu*, its report on redress:

The model emphasises balance and interconnection between all the dimensions. Should the wairua, hinengaro, tinana, whānau or whenua be missing, neglected, or damaged in some way, the person and their collective or group may become unbalanced and unwell.

Te Whare Tapa Whā provides a framework through which puretumu torowhānui for purapura ora, or survivors, can be viewed holistically, as a process that restores, reconnects, empowers, and builds mana.<sup>949</sup>

947 For example, Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, *He Purapura Ora, he Māra Tipu: From Redress to Puretumu Torowhānui* (vol 1), 2021.

948 Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction, *He Ara Oranga: Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction*, 2018, p 22.

949 Abuse in Care Royal Commission of Inquiry, *He Purapura Ora, he Māra Tipu: From Redress to Puretumu Torowhānui* (vol 1), 2021, p 60.

- 7.11 The same can be said of the Fonofale model of wellbeing we also refer to in chapter 10, which was raised with us by current Pacific families. The Fonofale model conceptualises wellbeing as a fale,<sup>950</sup> which sits on the foundation of family, is supported by pou<sup>951</sup> of mental, spiritual, physical and other wellbeing. Culture provides shelter in the form of the roof, and the fale is surrounded by context, time and environment, relational matters encompassing the Pacific concept of the vā.<sup>952</sup>
- 7.12 Regardless of the framework used, this holistic approach not only informs the assessment of harm done but is also required to address that harm and will be important for the school to consider when completing redress. We apply that lens below as we discuss the impacts former students shared with us across each area of their lives.
- 7.13 In each impact section, we share a small selection of quotes from the former students and other individuals we spoke with. These quotes are representative of the range of experiences expressed by students.

## Mental health

- 7.14 Mental health difficulties were commonly experienced by almost all the former students we heard from. Almost all suffer or have suffered from anxiety and/or depression. Many spoke of suicidal attempts and ideation and of chronic insomnia, nightmares, feelings of guilt and shame, and low self-esteem.
- 7.15 Some former students have been diagnosed with psychiatric disorders. The most common of these appears to be post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Other diagnoses have included complex PTSD, major depressive disorder, dissociative amnesia, bipolar disorder, and borderline personality disorder or other personality disorders. Some have spent time in psychiatric institutions. While it is impossible to isolate the reasons for psychiatric disorders, those we spoke to all attributed their illness to their abuse, bullying or lack of care at Dilworth.
- 7.16 Students also described having body image and confidence issues arising from the sexual abuse imposed on them and the bullying (from students and teachers) relating to physical appearance.
- 7.17 Students described developing phobias that prevented them from being able to leave the house for extended periods, having debilitating panic and anxiety attacks.

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950 Pacific meeting house.

951 Posts.

952 Relationality.

- 7.18 Students described self-harming (often starting when they were at school). Some spoke of a self-hatred because they 'allowed' themselves to be abused.
- 7.19 For some, because the abuse happened in a counselling-type environment, this has prevented them from seeking counselling assistance.
- 7.20 Others spoke of having to avoid certain places (changing rooms, small offices, public pools, the Dilworth campus) or triggers such as a particular number (their Dilworth student number). A student saw The Dilworthian recently and that triggered a "crazy bender" for him that lasted 60 days. A former Board member described the reaction of two adult, highly successful brothers who attended Dilworth as students and who, years later, were unable to walk up the drive of the school without holding hands for support, such was the memory of their time at the school.
- 7.21 Students described this impact:

In the years directly following the [attack], I suffered anxiety and subsequent panic attacks. As the abuse happened when I was 13, this anxiety has been with me for most of my life. I have been hospitalised as a result ... I carry around an overwhelming feeling of shame and fear.

I have to live with what happened all those years ago. It is painful and it hurts. It's done irreversible damage. I don't think people understand how being sexually abused as a child affects you in your adult life.

The self-harming started in Form 3, as a result of Dilworth. The scars on my wrist from the cigarette burns are still visible. The second time I was sexually abused, I was ready to be washed down the drain. It made me loathe myself ... I just wanted to be invisible.

All I remember are the shadows, the faces, the breath, the fear of being 'got' or abusers coming to get me at night. I have experienced lifelong recurring nightmares about escaping MacMurray House, running from it.

## Suicide

- 7.22 The Inquiry spoke to many students and family members who had attempted or considered suicide and to family members who had lost a former Dilworth student to suicide. The pain inflicted on these friends and family members is immeasurable.
- 7.23 The Inquiry heard of over 40 students who had attempted suicide.<sup>953</sup> Some former students described attempted suicide while still at school, and we heard multiple accounts of a particular student's attempt that was well known within the school community and had a significant impact on each individual who spoke to us about it. We heard of several students who died by suicide within a year or so of leaving Dilworth.
- 7.24 Many former students attempted suicide multiple times, resulting in hospital stays, lasting injuries and scars. Many students spoke of welcoming death, as one said, "because then the pain and hurt that Dilworth did would go away". Others said:

The thing that hurts me the most about my time at Dilworth is that I was a child who was suffering, particularly with having suicidal thoughts, and no one offered support.

A big part of why I came forward is I haven't made it through a day where I haven't wanted to die and it's really difficult.

## Addiction

- 7.25 Turning to substances or external stimulus was a common form of coping mechanism for formers students. This frequently led to addictions that had significant effects on the lives of those we spoke to and of their family and whānau.

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<sup>953</sup> The Inquiry collated evidence from former students, the families of former students who have passed away, including a list noting students who had died by suicide or were believed to have died by suicide compiled by Mr Bruce Owen while he was still employed at the school.

- 7.26 Most commonly, students disclosed turning to alcohol and/or other drugs and sniffing glue from relatively early ages to cope with what had occurred. This often led to stronger substance abuse later in life. Students described using alcohol or other drugs to dull the feelings and memories from the abuse suffered, and as a result of heavy substance abuse have lost years of their lives. Some described addictions to pornography because of their exposure to it by adults at Dilworth and the abuse that followed. Some used food as a coping mechanism, which had health implications and led to further self-esteem issues due to their weight. Others have become addicted to gambling, which has caused major financial distress. Many students suffered multiple addictions.

Psychologically it has really messed me up. I turn to things like alcohol and drugs and sex to try and cope and repress certain emotions and feelings that I don't want to let out.

For the entire time from when I was 16 years old [and a student at Dilworth] to December 2021, I was on a form of some substance or another. It started off weekly, weekend drinking, and progressed to being on meth from 2012–2021.

I don't have an addiction to drink, drugs, or gambling. But my sexual addiction issues and porn are much more shameful.

Gambling helped me escape from the bullying at Dilworth. It gave me an immediate high, an escape from the low self-esteem. My gambling and alcohol problems became particularly bad when I was 18 ... At my worst I was gambling every day ... I have lost [millions] on gambling. I have been bankrupted. My addiction was responsible for the breakdown of my marriages.

- 7.27 Addiction has cost some students their careers; for others, it has cost the loss of a relationship with partners and family members, including their own children.
- 7.28 Some former students who spoke to us had taken their own steps to address their addictions. For those who had made progress in addressing their addictions through therapy, it was evident how important that was to their process of healing.



## Anger and guilt

7.29 While a significant number of students spoke of having anger and rage, the coping mechanisms adopted were different for each survivor. Some withdrew from family members and loved ones and some became involved in violent crime, but nearly all told us that the anger affected their ability to function properly. Students also spoke of guilt – guilt at not speaking up and not doing more to help their fellow students. Some spoke of shame for not being able to fight off their abuser or for “freezing” during the abuse.

7.30 One student described how he thought he was responsible for the abuser losing his job and that he was heartbroken over this, “I thought ... he had lost his job because of something I had said. I knew his [family]. I felt extremely conflicted”. Others said:

The immediate impact of the abuse was deep shame, a feeling of being inadequate, anger, hate and mental stress. I have felt this way for the last 50 years ... I had a lot of anger and rage, not just with my offenders but with myself. I struggled even to function properly at times.

I have walked around life with a ‘mask’ on to hide the hurt and pain I have ... I feel like I let my school mates down by not having the courage to say something knowing what happened if you did speak up.

I didn’t speak to anyone about this experience for about 35 years. It was my secret alone. I felt ashamed for not defending myself, fighting back or fending off [abuser]. But, how could I fight off a man? I was only a boy. I was ashamed of being scared and powerless.

## Relationships

7.31 Almost all former students spoke of the difficulty they had experienced in forming or maintaining healthy relationships, whether intimate or platonic. Students spoke of being afraid and distrusting any friendship or relationship. Of those students who had gone on to marry, most of those marriages had broken down, with the reason for that breakdown often relating to the abuse suffered by the survivor. Reasons included being unable to be emotionally available, not being honest, suffering from addiction, including to pornography, or anger issues. Many spoke of having no friends.

- 7.32 Many also spoke about their inability to trust others, particularly romantic partners. They described a deep suspicion of why anyone would want to be acquainted with them and questioned the motivation of their partners or potential partners, often ending relationships prematurely.
- 7.33 Former students spoke of having tense and difficult relationships with their partners due to being unable to regulate emotions especially in stressful situations. The stresses and fatigue caused by maintaining a façade would result in him lashing out verbally or physically.
- 7.34 Others spoke of not being able to show physical affection or reacting impulsively when certain body parts were touched. One student told the Inquiry he could not hold hands with his partner due to years of being made to hold hands with boys at school. Another student said he impulsively reacts violently if his buttocks are touched due to the abuse he survived.
- 7.35 Some older former students have managed to settle into relatively stable relationships later in life, after one or more failed long-term relationships. Some spoke of recent counselling, disclosure of the abuse and Operation Beverly as being factors improving an ability to sustain relationships. Some have not been able to sustain one:

I have not had a romantic or sexual relationship ... I don't feel comfortable touching anyone, I don't feel comfortable being close to anyone and I don't feel comfortable being naked.

My intimate relationships and personal ones have been dysfunctional and tended to the unhealthy. I thought I had to subsume myself and my needs to my detriment.

I have massive body issues, self-esteem issues [due to the abuse]. My time at Dilworth has affected my ability to have relationships, including business, physical relationships.

Being abused in those circumstances has meant that I have been left with this idea that if someone is interested in you it means they want something from you. That you're not being loved for who you are.

## Specific impact of abuse by chaplain

- 7.36 Students also spoke about having anger issues and/or an enduring distrust of authority figures (especially men). This was particularly concentrated in the students who had been abused by a chaplain as they had actively adopted him as a “father figure”. Students spoke of how they felt taken advantage of by the abuser, feeling he had preyed on them due to their vulnerable state. Many described a confusion they could not reconcile where the person that they looked up to or idolised was also their abuser.
- 7.37 Other students have said they left the Anglican (or indeed any) faith, because of its close connection to the abuse they suffered at the hands of the chaplains.

The one adult who I thought would finally look after me actually robbed me of what little hope or trust in people remained.

I was devastated by these supposed role models’ actions and felt like I could trust no one – especially those people in authority. My innocence had been destroyed by those that were meant to aid in our development and be upstanding role models to us.

He was a father figure to me and I looked up to him. Then he used my respect for him to abuse me and now as an adult I realise how he affected my life permanently ... Every day I think about what he did to me.

## Relationships with their own children

- 7.38 The Inquiry heard of the intergenerational impacts the abuse has had, particularly the former students’ relationships with their own children. Some spoke about being avoidant and emotionally disconnected with their children. Some former students, due to relationship breakdowns and mental health struggles, have no relationship at all with their children. Others have found their ability to participate in all aspects of parenting is limited. Some students have no access to their children due to addiction issues. Students spoke of the impact their addiction and mental health struggles had on their children and the guilt and shame associated with that.
- 7.39 Many former students spoke of their hypervigilance around their children. They struggled to show affection to their children, and this escalated when the children reached the age the student had been when he was abused.
- 7.40 Some former students told the Inquiry that as a result of their experiences at Dilworth, and the abuse suffered, they decided not to have children.

- 7.41 Former students said they found themselves doubting themselves around children, worried that they would turn out to be a “groomer or paedophile”. It has caused them to avoid volunteer work (such as coaching their child’s sports team) or going on school camps.

The abuse also led to difficulty hugging and physically touching other people, especially children and women ... that difficulty has even extended to my own sons ... as they became young boys – around the age I was when [named person] offended against me – I could no longer hug or touch them for fear this was inappropriate and wrong. Sadly, this is still the case today ... the assault on me has damaged my bond with my sons.

My abuse has damaged my kids as well. It’s very far-reaching and has rippled down the generations. I [was an] angry man and they copped it.

I realise now that it has affected the quality of my parenting. I materially provided for my children, but I didn’t give them the time I should have. I am ashamed of that now.

- 7.42 A wife of a deceased survivor, spoke of the generational impact:

The flow-on effect of having a father who was traumatised as a child has caused the children to have emotional and abandonment issues. They learnt that their father could trust no one and were taught to do the same ... several times they witnessed their father answer the door with a machete.

## Relationships with parents

- 7.43 Former students spoke about the negative impacts on their relationships with their parents, particularly mothers. They often felt unable to tell their mothers about what was happening. Some felt their parents were partly to blame for what happened to them. Many told us they had not spoken to their mothers in decades. Those who had discussed the abuse with their mothers, said it has sometimes led to distancing in the relationship. Some feel guilty about that and a responsibility to ensure their mother does not blame herself.
- 7.44 Others are very concerned to ensure their mothers never learn of the offending, wishing to protect them from the inevitable guilt they would experience. Many of the students' mothers are very elderly now, and their sons do not believe they are physically or emotionally strong enough to cope with any such disclosures. Some students have had their mothers die before they were in a place where they could discuss the abuse.
- 7.45 One student said leaving Dilworth was shameful for him, he couldn't explain to his mother why he was leaving, and he was "bearing the weight of the burden placed back on his mother's finances" by him leaving the school in addition to the processing of the sexual abuse he had suffered. Others said:

My mother is still with us and lives close to me she is 89 years old and only knows about what happened to [my brother]. She is totally devastated and feels massive guilt for sending us to Dilworth. I cannot bring myself to tell her what happened to me I think it would only make things worse and crush her spirit, I just change the subject when she asks me about Dilworth, she is very much a victim as well.

My parents were distraught when I told them what happened at Dilworth and when they realised they had forced me into that situation ... That caused a strain on our relationship ... part of me blamed my parents for forcing me to stay at Dilworth ... I have a lot of resentment towards them for that. I still don't 100% forgive them but we are getting there with repairing the relationship ... my father asked me why I hadn't told them at the time. I thought how the fuck could I describe this sort of stuff to my parents when I was that age?

## Loss of self

### Disconnection from culture

- 7.46 For the few Māori students who provided statements, the monocultural nature of the school and their physical separation from their families and culture negatively affected them. During their time at Dilworth, there was no exposure to tikanga, which was a significant change from the deeply Māori environment some students had been raised in. Any representation of culture was heavily controlled by Dilworth. We heard of the racism present in the school, and this caused some students to reject their culture for fear of being “different” (and therefore a target for bullying).

I didn't come from a perfect home, but my mother was gentle, my Grandmother made sure I understood Tikanga and was exposed to it. There was none of that when I went to Dilworth. It was a very white school, and it was the opposite of the aroha and manaakitanga that I felt from my mother and my grandmother.

There was no Māori Tikanga at Dilworth, no kapa haka group or anything like that. The only context in relation to my heritage was being called names ... I can recall my Mum saying to me if anyone asked what nationality I was, I should tell them I am European. I felt stripped of my Māori culture.

## Confusion of sexual identity

- 7.47 Three themes presented here. The first was that many students spoke of being confused as to what was happening to them due to their age (pre-pubescent) when the abuse occurred. Students spoke of not understanding what erections or ejaculation were. They did not understand what was happening – other than it did not feel right to them. The second was that their first sexual experience was not a consensual one and the impact that had on their future sexual experiences and relationships.

I will forever feel the shame, embarrassment, and menacing of that big fat man who emotionally, physically and sexually took advantage of me. Breaching my trust in my innocence in taking away so many of the things that a young boy should be true to himself ... What Ross Browne did to me made it hard to trust people and to feel safe in a relationship, it confused me about my sexuality.'

I carried a lot of shame that my first sexual experience was with a man with a beard.

My identity and sexuality have been destroyed by the abuse. What I'm told is one of life's great pleasures (sex) has forever been tainted by this abuse of not only my body but my trust.

- 7.48 The third theme was that the abuse by a male adult caused years of confusion about sexual identity.

I was struggling with my sexuality after Dilworth. I feel like it put me back a few years in terms of discovery because I was sort of locked in this identity crisis thing.

I have questioned my own sexuality and whether I am this way because of what had happened to me ... It has caused confusion and anxiety ... it has greatly impacted my ability to form long-term relationships with partners.

After leaving school I often found myself in situations where I allowed myself to have sexual physical contact with older men which led to a lot of confusion and guilt afterwards. Because of my confusion with respect to my sexuality I often feel the sense of guilt after having a physical interaction with a male. I consider myself a straight man.

## Lost opportunities

### Loss of education

- 7.49 Many students spoke about the impact on their education, both at the time of the abuse and later in life. Many students who suffered abuse did not feel able to report it<sup>954</sup> and felt trapped at the school. Some withdrew into themselves, many disengaged from their schoolwork. Students spoke of trying to get expelled by engaging in behaviour at school they knew would not be tolerated (usually stealing, drinking alcohol or leaving school premises). Students also spoke of running away or pleading with family members to pick them up. Students spoke of stopping the hobbies and extracurricular activities that had brought them joy and an escape (such as Scouts or music) because it was where they had suffered abuse. Some spoke of staying awake at night fearful that they would wake up to their abuser touching them.

I had always had a mischievous streak, but my behaviour was markedly worse after Mr Taylor's abuse. My school reports over my years at Dilworth show this decline. Eventually, I was asked to leave the school several years before my education should have ended ... I am also angry that I didn't get the education that I was entitled to.

I enrolled to pursue my dream of becoming a physiotherapist and was accepted in [omitted] physiotherapy program after leaving school ... [d]uring attendance of one of my first classes, when asked to practice manual massage on a classmate to illustrate some physiotherapy treatment, I panicked, excused myself and could not stop sweating. I could not explain this at the time and could not attend the course any further. My dreams of becoming a physiotherapist were shattered.

- 7.50 Students who left Dilworth and went on to other high schools spoke of the struggle of fitting in as their Dilworth experience was so different in comparison. One student spoke of the differences and his difficulty at fitting in, using as an example, "I thought masturbating in class was normal". Another student said that due to his anger issues and disrespect for authority, consequences of his time at Dilworth, he did not and could not fit into his new school. Instead, he just stopped going and started spending his days wandering the streets and drinking. This experience was not unique to him, and we heard several similar accounts.

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954 The reasons for this are discussed in chapter 8.



## Failure to achieve to expected level

- 7.51 Another theme that arises is that of former students failing to achieve what they, and often their families and whānau, had hoped for them. Dilworth was supposed to provide them with the opportunity of a lifetime and an education they could never otherwise dream of. Many of the students were accepted because of the academic ability they had already displayed. However, time and time again students told us the abuse experienced meant they were unable to concentrate on school work or spent their entire time trying to escape. The education promised was not delivered, and their potential was not realised. Students spoke of being robbed of their ambition, self-esteem and drive. They became shadows of their former selves. Some compared their lack of success with the success of a brother, who also attended Dilworth but was not abused:

My siblings have done well in life. I haven't. That is ironic because my mother and teachers identified my skills and abilities when I was young, and I was sent to Dilworth to develop those. My siblings stayed in [named place] then moved with mum to [named place]. They had hopes I might be a doctor or a lawyer or some other successful profession. The difference between my siblings and I is that I got sent to Dilworth and was abused there. They didn't. I have never been the same since and my life has suffered as a result.

In my family I was the one who was supposed to succeed: go to university, have a career. But I didn't get a chance to do any of that: no family, no career, no kids, nothing.

When I left the school, I had absolutely no self-esteem whatsoever and it wasn't helped by my parents thinking I was a total failure. They thought I had wasted all this time and money and had not made the most of attending such a prestigious school.

## Loss of work and/or career opportunities

- 7.52 Many former students spoke about their inability to maintain stable employment or make progress in their careers due to the impact of the abuse. This may be a cascading impact from an addiction and being unable to regularly attend work or deal with workplace stress in a healthy way. For others, the inability to emotionally regulate has caused them to be confrontational when challenged and respond with inappropriate aggression in professional settings. Some former students have developed a deep distrust for authority and management that has affected their ability to progress within corporations. Other students simply never gained the necessary qualifications in order to obtain skilled roles. A few former students spoke of wanting to pursue a career in education (and specifically teaching), but being unable to fulfil this ambition because of the close connection between the abuse suffered and the school environment:

My work history has been marred by periods of mental unwellness, which has caused me to lose more than one job, which given my work as a [health] worker, has impacted on the lives of people in my care. Ultimately, my ability to work has been affected from the abuse, and while I can work for periods, my mental health begins to suffer, and I require more support than most to stay well.

My teenage years were influenced by drugs and alcohol, and I had no will to do well at high school. This later impacted on my ability to pursue certain career opportunities.

My porn addiction has had an impact on my career. I lost quite a senior role. I crossed the line ethically, but at the end of the day I sensed that my judgement and performance was being undermined. That had quite a traumatic impact on me.

It wasn't until my mid 30s that I reluctantly accepted a role in senior management, and this only lasted 6 months. The company changed directions and I was so enraged to be let down by people I had grown to trust, that I quit on the spot. An emotional overreaction that cost me my first decent salary and career prospects at [workplace].

## Financial loss

- 7.53 In addition to the financial loss associated with loss of work or career described above and the cost of addiction, students also spoke to the financial cost of funding their own counselling and mental health professional consultations. Students have required regular (often weekly) appointments for prolonged periods. Limited, if any, funding assistance has been provided.<sup>955</sup> This cost has had a compounding impact on those students who were also unable to hold down a job or unable to complete a qualification that saw them earning above a minimum wage.
- 7.54 One student said as he was not able to finish his secondary school education and go on to tertiary education, he had been affected financially. He has had to fund many sessions of counselling and has gone into significant debt from substance and alcohol abuse.
- 7.55 The wife of a deceased former student said, “[he] only ever felt safe at home ... He never wanted to go to hospital or respite which meant I had to look after him. This caused financial hardship as [he] had been the main breadwinner”.

## Homelessness

- 7.56 Some students ended up homeless as a direct result of the abuse suffered. After one student left school at 15 because of the abuse he was suffering, he felt he could not return to live with his mother due to shame and embarrassment. He ended up living on the streets.
- 7.57 Other examples include a student who survived by stealing and breaking into spaces in order to sleep; another student who was also homeless after he left school at 14, living in cardboard boxes in hollow trees; and another student who is currently homeless, going out of his way to avoid talking to anyone other than his psychologist (and more recently the Inquiry).

## Criminal justice involvement

- 7.58 Several students spoke to the combination of addiction, isolation from family (and therefore financial) support and their lost self-identity, leading to criminal activity and gang connections. Several of those who left Dilworth early (usually due to having their scholarships withdrawn) became homeless and joined gangs, which often led to offending and borstal and, soon after, imprisonment, while still in their teens. Criminal sentences have had a restricting impact on students in terms of careers, travel and social integration.

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<sup>955</sup> While the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) provides funding for victims of historical sexual abuse, several men reported they were not given sufficient counselling or were not funded to cover the addictions or anger problems they developed as a result of the sexual abuse. For men living in Australia, sexual abuse-funded counselling by ACC was not available.

7.59 Many students likened prison to Dilworth:

My time in Borstal was easier than Dilworth. There was no fear involved, Dilworth was just about fear!

I ended up in a street gang at about age 16. This led me to spend time in [the] Boys' Home ... by 17½ years old, I was in ... Prison.

The rest of my life thus far is a long story of anger, violence, depression, self-harm, suicide attempts, addiction, broken relationships, bankruptcy, crime and gaol. I am finding it hard to break the cycle of addiction and crime even now.<sup>956</sup>

## Bystanders to abuse

7.60 Several former students who spoke to the Inquiry and had not been sexually or seriously physically abused also reported negative life consequences that they attributed to having been a Dilworth student. They believed the negative life effects were the result of spending years as children in a boarding environment of fear and terror, witnessing violent physical abuse of their peers and hearing persistent rumours of adults sexually abusing students.

## Lack of response by Dilworth

7.61 Dilworth's response to complaints of abuse and to known bullying has also had an impact on former students. Former students told us how Dilworth failed to respond to their direct and indirect complaints about abuse or perpetuated abuse by punishing students for disclosing it. They were left feeling betrayed and isolated. Some former students have since learned they were not the only ones to be abused by a particular individual (staff or student) and are devastated that the school could have stopped that abuse, but chose not to do so. This has left them with deep anger. The response by Dilworth allowed preventable and known abuse to continue. Former students have felt patronised and discarded by the school, especially by suggestions that the student made up the abuse in order to benefit financially. Former students frequently spoke of the feeling that the school valued its reputation over their wellbeing. This was illustrated by Dilworth taking no steps to assess the impact on the wider student body of disclosed abuse or to determine whether other victims existed.

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<sup>956</sup> This former student wrote to the Inquiry from prison.

7.62 Below are quotes from six students about the impact of the Dilworth response on them:

All I ever needed was support. Not to be dismissed and left with my whole world broken. I think the way my situation was handled was extremely unfair. I have had a lifetime of depression and am very socially awkward preferring to not engage with others and just stay at home waiting for life to pass.

I have been dealing with the re-emergence of either anger or resentment or a combination of both at the school for the last twelve months ... The school has been so self-serving for its own needs it has abrogated its responsibilities to the very people it was pretending to look after.

I do feel angry towards Dilworth for not fixing the problems in the school when they were there, they had the opportunity to fix it and they didn't.

After I disclosed the abuse, instead of talking to me and trying to help me ... I was given detention for an entire term. I was not allowed to leave the school, not allowed to return home on Sundays ... nothing happened to my abuser.

[The offender] really did a number on me. I think about it a lot. I don't think I am ever going to forget it. Every time I have a shower, I see the scar on my stomach [from a suicide attempt] so it's a reminder. It was something that should never have happened. There could have been safeguards in place to stop it.

The most distressing and reprehensible thing about this whole mess is if the school had actioned the complaints about [the offender] or [another offender] when they first surfaced, multiple boys including myself, ... would not have been abused. Their lack of action is indefensible.

## Mothers' voices

- 7.63 It is not only former students who have been affected by the abuse that occurred at Dilworth. The students' mothers have also been greatly affected. The Inquiry received accounts from 22 mothers of former students. Several spoke of the pain of losing their son to suicide.
- 7.64 The three topics common in the mothers' accounts were the:
- breakdown in the relationship with their sons
  - change in personality of their son
  - guilt they felt for sending their sons to Dilworth.
- 7.65 JG told the Inquiry her son suffered from many mental health issues following his time at Dilworth, including depression, anxiety, PTSD and obsessive-compulsive disorder. He spent time in a mental health unit. While he was able to obtain a job, "the negative effects of what happened to him at Dilworth dogged him. He couldn't work full time due to mental health. He continued to suffer from severe insomnia and psychiatric treatment didn't help". JG said, "His relationship with me was severely damaged. He blamed me for sending him to Dilworth. I have suffered huge emotional damage over 20 years, with worry, anxiety, now enormous sorrow at the pain he suffered".
- 7.66 JP said, "[my son's] experience at Dilworth has undermined his view of me as the mother. I have never forgiven myself for not doing more".
- 7.67 KR sent her son, to Dilworth because his academic ability had been realised by his primary school and she wanted to provide the best academic opportunities for him. Within months she noticed her son change, and he was eventually suspended and asked to leave. The son returned to her was angry, confused and detached. KR said:

He has had significant drug addiction, mental health and health problems. He has spent time under the Mental Health Act, received drug and alcohol counselling ... While [student] has spent long periods in and out of prison, I think we, his whānau have always been in 'prison' since he got back from Dilworth. It really has had a major impact on our whānau, and [student's] life since Dilworth has meant his relationships with his siblings have broken down.

- 7.68 KS's son confided in her about the abuse suffered at Dilworth. He has suffered from psychiatric issues for over 20 years. She said:

Their father and I had no idea of the stress and mistreatment our boys were subjected to at Dilworth School. We had enrolled them, hoping they would have a really good education and caring staff. No way we could know some masters and teachers were sexual deviants ready to prey on innocent young boys ... I feel so much guilt about this. I am 80 now and cannot keep [from] thinking about it.

- 7.69 KQ told the Inquiry of the hope with which she sent her son to Dilworth and the trauma that followed. She noticed her son's behaviour change from loving and cuddly to angry and difficult. He developed a drug addiction. She said:

All this links directly back to the abuse he suffered at Dilworth. [student] told me he wanted his brain to stop thinking about what happened to him at Dilworth and meth was the only thing that would numb his brain ... The abuse [student] suffered at Dilworth has destroyed his life, and consequently mine. It has also destroyed his relationship with his sister. I cannot adequately put into words the level of anger I continue to feel about what happened to [student].

- 7.70 JV withdrew her son from Dilworth because she suspected he had been abused:

Seeing the changes in [student] ... hurts and I don't want to see him suffering. A few times more recently he has said that he has been thinking about taking his own life. I hate seeing him in pain and want him to be released from that pain.

- 7.71 JT recalls her outgoing, popular and academically talented son changed dramatically a few months into his time at Dilworth. He became reluctant to return to Dilworth from weekend leave, and JT had to coax and encourage him to get into the car. On the third Sunday he refused to return, she could not persuade him. He flatly refused to get into the car. JT couldn't get an answer from him about what was wrong. She rang the school and said he wouldn't be returning. The school never contacted her to ask why. While he refused to ever speak of Dilworth again, after his death, JT found a small book in his possessions that had notes written in it from during a Group Life Laboratory camp. Four of the notes are by Mr Ross Browne and Mr Ian Wilson, indicating that they "hope to get to know him better". JT said her son was a different child after returning from Dilworth. He became angry with no respect for authority. He never settled in school again. He turned to drugs and ultimately died from a drug-related condition having never been able to participate in his own child's life due to his drug addiction. JT has been left with many questions and no answers, including the complete lack of interest from Dilworth as to why he left the school so abruptly after only a few months. When she heard news of Operation Beverly in the media she and other family members immediately realised what must have happened to him.
- 7.72 JH noticed her son become more introverted, depressed and reluctant to return to Dilworth on Sundays, despite doing well academically. To this day, she does not know if he was abused. Both JH and her daughter noticed that over time his behaviour changed, he became withdrawn and began to shut down. JH recalls trying to get help for her son, and she recalled Dilworth's communication with her about her son was almost non-existent. He died by suicide a year after leaving Dilworth.<sup>957</sup> JH asked the school for any photos it had of her son, and received a reply from Dr Murray Wilton that the school had only one photo and stating, "The lack of any pictorial record of [student] is a sad commentary on the fairly anonymous existence he led".

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957 Finding of the Coroner.



## Final words

- 7.73 There was no discernable difference in the impact of abuse, depending on whether the abuser was a staff member or former student. Those who were abused by other students of Dilworth while students at Dilworth have suffered, and continue to suffer. The abuse has had emotional, physical and financial impacts. The information we have collated through interviews and by reviewing relevant material has satisfied us that much of the disturbing behaviour by students at the school up to the early part of the 21st century was due to the abuse perpetrated on the student, the environment that fostered it and the failures of school leadership to confront it. In terms of causation, we have not distinguished between staff abuse of students and former student abuse of students because in our view the factors are the same and the abuse was able to occur and continue due to the school environment created by Dilworth.
- 7.74 It is difficult to capture comprehensively the impact on former students and their families and whānau. We have summarised and grouped the impacts for the purposes of this report, but acknowledge that the effects do not sit neatly in boxes. There are a handful, at most, of former students who feel they come out unscathed following abuse at the school. They may have suffered a less serious degree of abuse or extricated themselves very early. For the vast majority, each student, family member or individual we spoke to has had to deal daily with far-reaching impacts of the abuse in ways that those who have not been in the situation cannot imagine.
- 7.75 We adopt the statement of the Australian Royal Commission:
- We learned that child sexual abuse has intergenerational effects, affecting children and grandchildren of victims. Most of what we heard about the effects of child sexual abuse on children – in private sessions and public hearings – came from survivors of abuse, speaking as adults about their fears for their own children. However, we also heard from some children of survivors, now adults, about how the impacts of the child sexual abuse affected them and their children.<sup>958</sup>
- 7.76 We too are satisfied that there has been and will continue to be an ongoing impact from the sexual abuse of former students that their children, grandchildren and wider family will bear.

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958 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Final Report: Impacts* (vol 3), Commonwealth of Australia, 2017, p 216.