



WITNESS STATEMENT OF GREGORY MCMAHON

I, Gregory McMahon, Executive Principal of Hallam Senior College and Strategic Director at Doveton College, of 74-84 Frawley Road, Hallam, Victoria, 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.

Background

1) Please detail your background and experience, including your qualifications

- 2 I am a Teaching Fellow of CBA Schools Plus. CBA Schools Plus is a joint initiative between the philanthropic organisation Australian Schools Plus and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia which issues fellowships to educators who have focussed on addressing challenges in schools with a disadvantaged population. I was awarded one of these fellowships in 2018. In my role as CBA Schools Plus Fellow, I have initiated the Leadership Learnings occasional lecture series with Victorian Association of State Secondary School Principals / Victorian Principals Association.
- 3 I am a Fellow of the International Specialised Skills Institute. I was awarded this fellowship in 2016 and visited England, where I spent time in various inner London schools and worked with Sir Kevan Collins, the CEO of the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). The EEF has developed the Evidence for Learning framework, where a toolkit of effective teaching practices are identified. Sir Kevan now works with the Our Place Principals Network as a challenge partner and advisor.
- 4 I was the Executive Principal at Doveton College from 2014 to 2019.
- 5 I have been an educator for 37 years, beginning my teaching at Camberwell Grammar school in 1983, and continuing at Mildura High School from 1983-86, Carwatha College from 1987-1992, Mordialloc College from 1993-1995, Patterson River Secondary College from 1996-2006 as Assistant Principal and Acting Principal, Parkdale Secondary College from 2006-2014 as Principal, Doveton College from 2014-2019 as Executive Principal, and Hallam Senior College from early 2019 as Executive Principal.

2) Please describe your current role and responsibilities

- 6 I am currently the Executive Principal of Hallam Senior College with the additional responsibility of Strategic Director of Doveton College working with the current Principal, Debra Gibson.
- 7 As Executive Principal at Hallam Senior College, I oversee the operation of the College, which educates students from year 10 to 12. My role is primarily a strategic role and I am currently working at reshaping and reimagining the college. There is also a Principal who is responsible for the day to day operations at this school.
- 8 The role of Strategic Director at Doveton College focuses on the effective operations of the 'Our Place' model. I work with the current Principal and the Our Place team to ensure the effectiveness of the 'Our Place' model (which I explain further below). The Principal of Doveton College oversees the day to day operations of the College.

3) Please describe any other roles or positions that you hold.

- 9 I am the chairperson of the Our Place Principals Network comprising the Principals of the ten Our Place sites.
- 10 This statement is primarily directed to my experience with Doveton College.

Doveton College model

4) Please describe Doveton College

- 11 Doveton College opened in 2012. Four local schools in the area were closed and merged to create the College.
- 12 It was the first school to adopt the 'Our Place' model, in 2013. In 2015, it began the implementation of the Berry Street Education Model. I describe both in more detail below.
- 13 Doveton College seeks to support, foster and develop opportunities for all members of the Doveton community including children, young people, and adults. The focus is on providing high quality teaching and learning programs for young people aged 0 – 15 with additional learning opportunities for parents and members of the wider community. It provides a wide range of wrap-around educational and allied health supports including baby college, maternal and child health services, play groups, medical and allied health services, engagement programs for children and adults, and adult learning opportunities.
- 14 Every day there are various medical and allied health services located at Doveton College. These work to support the Doveton College community and are also available to the wider community. The services wrap around the key learning platforms of the College which are Baby College, Playgroups, Early Learning, Primary School, Secondary

School and Adult Learning. The services include maternal and child health, paediatrics, paediatric fellows, general practitioners, nursing, and allied health services – occupational therapy, speech pathology, psychology, podiatry, physiotherapy and social worker services. These services are provided by third party providers including Monash Health and the City of Casey. We have social workers and psychologists directly employed by the College or provided by the Department of Education and Training (DET) who work with the school and Early Learning Centre staff, as well as directly with the students. The paediatrician is directly employed by Doveton College.

(a) How many students attend the College?

- 15 Doveton College has 650 students in Prep to Year 9 and 75 children in our Early Learning Centre each day. Parents are free to stay at the school all day. There are around 200 parents involved in Adult Learning over the year and about 75 volunteer at the school.

(b) Demographically, how would you describe the student body?

- 16 We have a diverse and often vulnerable student population. There are more than 50 nationalities and languages within the school. We have a significant number of students who have experienced trauma. The student population is constantly changing due to the area being a high rental area leading to significant student and family movement. When Doveton College opened in 2012, Doveton was the third lowest (non-country) school for socio-economic status in Australia, and 57 per cent of students commencing school in 2012 were developmentally vulnerable on at least one domain.

(c) What issues or challenges do the students face generally and, more specifically, with respect to mental health?

- 17 The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has a significant number of active child protection cases involving students at Doveton College at any one time. DHHS staff attend the school on a daily basis when investigating a report made to child protection services, or to drop off and pick up children who are in Out of Home care. The College would average several notifications to DHHS/child protection services each week. There are currently 25 Out of Home Care students at the College.
- 18 Over a six-year period, Doveton College has recorded 238 students with mental health care needs, leading to formal mental health care plans being put in place for them. The ten sessions of counselling, while important, often do not meet the long term needs of the students with more complex cases.
- 19 230 students have accessed free psychological service via the school. Accessing mental health care plans has until recently meant attending external general practitioners for their pre-psychological assessment. We can now shortcut the process – students see a general practitioner at the school, then see one of the psychologists at the school.

General practitioners have been at the College for about 12 months. They come in every fortnight, and see about 15 referrals each time. This service is not part of the Doctors in Secondary School Program because Doveton doesn't go up to year 10. This is Doveton's own initiative. The general practitioners can deal with anything, including referrals to the on-site paediatrician.

5) What is the Doveton College model (known as 'Our Place')?

- 20 'Our Place' is a place-based initiative of the Colman Foundation, working in partnership with DET at ten selected sites across Victoria. The Colman Foundation is a philanthropic organisation established by Julius and Pam Colman with a focus on support of the educational needs of disadvantaged children in Victoria. The initiative started at Doveton College and was highly successful. It was initially known as The Doveton Model. When it was decided to roll it out more widely to additional sites, a new name had to be chosen and 'Our Place' was selected because that was how Doveton College was referred to by much of its community.
- 21 The selected sites in this joint initiative were identified by DET based on their locations in disadvantaged areas. The model has been implemented at Doveton College over the past six years with excellent results.
- 22 The other sites at which 'Our Place' is currently being implemented are: Northern Bay, Robinvale, Seymour, Carlton, Morwell, Westall, Frankston North and Officer.

(a) What are its objectives?

- 23 Our Place works within selected sites to expand the opportunities offered to children and families in highly disadvantaged communities. Under the 'Our Place' model, local schools become community hubs that include early years' services, effective schooling, health and community services, adult education and employment support, and community engagement activities for children and families.
- 24 Our Place addresses the structural causes of disadvantage and aims to change policies and practices to enable local populations to increase their confidence and access to services, and to achieve positive impacts on the lives of children and families. Our Place seeks to realign government, NGO, philanthropic and community/local resources and funding to leverage the potential of local schools as community centres. Our Place does this by working hard to identify community needs and aspirations, develop a shared vision with local partners and then collaborate with those partners to ensure the services - and those providing them - do so in a way that ensure children and families can access these as seamlessly as possible.
- 25 In a nutshell, the Our Place vision is 'school as the hub of the community'.

(b) How does it operate?

- 26 At Doveton College, research has highlighted that welcoming and supportive interaction with the local community through the provision of high quality learning within high quality platforms (Baby College, Early Learning Centre, Playgroups, Primary, Secondary, and Adult Learning), the provision of wrap around health and allied health services for the whole community, and the support of engagement workers to help build community confidence, capability and aspirations is one of the best ways to turn around communities experiencing entrenched disadvantage. The results to date suggest that schools that have the skilled personnel, resources and partnerships can make a real difference in the lives of children and their families – even those in multigenerational disadvantage.
- 27 We have a single-entry point into our early learning, school, adult learning and community spaces because we believe in seamless integration. The single-entry point is based upon the idea that you tell your story once. For example, we make it clear when parents are enrolling their children that enrolment can be done all in one go. Parents do not have to come back to the school a few times to complete different steps in the enrolment process. The single entrance also provides the opportunity to engage with parents and carers to establish trust, provide support and assistance in identifying other services or supports that their children need as well as opportunities such as volunteering in the school, joining social groups such as sewing, or cooking classes to reduce social isolation. As adults feel more comfortable and confident in the school environment, they become more open to taking on further education opportunities that open up pathways to employment and to their attaining a sense of achievement.
- 28 We know that the early years set the foundations for lifelong learning, health and wellbeing – so our school has early learning, playgroup, child health and parenting support on site.
- 29 We promote education as a key ingredient in a child's success and have created a high quality teaching and learning environment that ensures that each child receives the challenges, support and direction they need to achieve and thrive.
- 30 As well as this, it is understood that parent education and employment is what changes intergenerational disadvantage and provides a more supportive home learning environment and role models. Children need to value education, so we provide a range of opportunities for families to engage in formal and informal learning, and link them into employment pathways. Because families in our community are often experiencing challenging life circumstances, we make it easier, less threatening and often more affordable to access effective support services because they are based at the school. When they succeed, the sense of achievement they exhibit is palpable – and often translates to their children.

- 31 In recognition of the needs of families, we have an extended school day which starts at 7.00am and goes through until 6.00pm. In the afternoons, children participate in all sorts of activities including music, sport, science and dance. The DEEP program – Doveton Enhancement and Enrichment Program – has seen student participation rates in after school programs rise from seven per cent of students being involved in any community program in 2015 to 80% of students in 2019. These activities not only provide health and wellbeing benefits, but also important opportunities to develop social skills and teamwork as well as to discover talents and interests in areas outside the school curriculum.
- 32 We also offer after hours programs for the community like 'Men of Doveton' and 'Women of Doveton'. These programs are run by the YMCA in conjunction with Doveton College and are based on the Sons and Daughters of the West programs run by the Western Bulldogs Football Club. They provide social interaction with a healthy life focus and build understanding of key social issues including domestic violence, mental health and personal wellbeing. These programs have resulted in ongoing social connections and community participation for many of the participants including roles as leaders of subsequent programs, thereby contributing to growing capability and confidence within the community.

(c) Who is it designed for?

- 33 The community of Doveton was the driver for the Our Place model. It is a complex community which had a lack of integrated service provision and access to services. The students in the community had low attendance, engagement and academic outcomes at school. There were significant wellbeing issues including significant trauma and high child protection numbers. There was also a lack of safe and secure home environments due to high mobility of families and very high levels of domestic violence. In addition, there are language and cultural barriers for families in Doveton. Research also found high rates of disability or developmental delay in children in the community. Finally, there were found to be extremely high rates of intergenerational poverty and unemployment.

(d) Is it suitable for all students?

- 34 The Our Place model provides an approach to the community where the school is the hub of the community. The model builds an array of supports to enable and support readiness for learning. The philosophy of the model is vital - children and families can succeed when given appropriate, accessible support and resources, and the confidence to activate pathways (which might otherwise have been unavailable to them). Education is the key to the door to these pathways, and this educational readiness needs to begin as early as possible. The Our Place model provides a positive context for resource provision based in an educational setting and supported by a philosophy of enabling

student readiness for learning through accessing community, health and allied health services.

(e) In your experience, what benefits does Our Place provide to participants?

- 35 The narrative of the Doveton model as shown through data and interviews highlights the growth in the community. The data shows improvement in the following areas:
- (a) Children are happy, healthy and develop well
 - (b) Children engage in learning and social opportunities
 - (c) Children achieve as learners
 - (d) Families are happy, healthy and well with strong self-worth
 - (e) Families are confident as parents/carers and engage in their children's learning
 - (f) Families engage in learning, are skilled and are employed
 - (g) Community members are connected and feel socially included
 - (h) Community members actively contribute skills and knowledge to community productivity
- 36 Our Place provides participants with a whole of family learning focus. We, in effect, enrol the whole family as we have an early learning centre, baby college, play groups, school for adults and we provide additional components including the extended day programs and support services for identified issues.

(f) What challenges does Doveton College face in delivering Our Place?

- 37 The key challenges are as follows.
- (a) Doveton College has faced institutional challenges relating to government and not-for-profit understanding of the Our Place model, given that it challenges existing orthodoxies. The model is integrated and applied, with 'soft entry' rather than formal bookings being required. For example, to access Council maternal and child health services on site, parents used to be required to book via the Council. This meant that services could not be immediately accessed even when they were physically on site and would otherwise have been available. While requiring parents to book online might work for other demographics, at Doveton, many parents face difficulties such as language barriers. We have to get institutions to understand how parents at the school operate and accommodate them, rather than each institution having its own systems, in 'silos' that do not 'talk to each other'.
 - (b) The transition points – between various sectors and services – each service needs to understand the Our Place model and how it works across the various learning

sectors – Baby College, Playgroups, Early Learning Centre, Primary, Secondary and Adult Learning in order to enable students to move more easily from one sector to the next.

- (c) The pathway of progress and how the model needs to reflect where the community is at and the next steps.
- (d) The ongoing financial and resource support - the model is currently financially supported by the Colman Foundation. What it challenges Government to do is see Doveton College as more than a school – a hub servicing the wider community. Given the results being seen, government investment into the model in lieu of expenditure which would be required to service disadvantage should be a priority.

Berry Street Educational Model (BSEM)

6) What is the Berry Street Educational Model?

- 38 The Berry Street Educational Model (**BSEM**) is an educational approach developed by the Berry Street Childhood Institute. It has developed from extensive research. The BSEM involves developing strategies for teachers to increase engagement with students and improve the students' self-regulation, growth, and academic achievement. It was adopted at Doveton College because we saw the need for our teachers to be equipped to respond to the needs of children who had experienced trauma. In that context, the strategies focus on teaching towards student self-regulation, relationships and wellbeing. The BSEM involves five domains which correspond to developing the capacities of each student: the body (involving their physical regulation of the stress response), stamina, engagement, character (including self-knowledge) and relationships.
- 39 Attached to this statement and marked “**GM-1**” is a copy of an information sheet published by Berry Street, which briefly describes the BSEM.

(a) When did Doveton College start participating in BSEM?

- 40 Doveton College started implementing the BSEM in 2015/2016.

(b) What is involved in the BSEM?

- 41 The whole school approach of BSEM focuses on ‘the interior condition of the teacher’ to facilitate change in the classroom. This is about teachers developing understanding and having empathy for children’s experiences of trauma and providing teachers with strategies for implementing a positive road forward. It enables teachers to teach within a social and emotional framework where trauma is the underpinning condition.

(c) What are its objectives?

- 42 The objectives of the BSEM are about upskilling staff to better understand trauma and its characteristics, and implementing routines, languages and processes to enable student growth.

(d) What is its relationship to mental health and wellbeing?

- 43 The BSEM provides a framework of strategies to allow teachers to understand the impact of trauma and approaches to dealing with students in the learning environment. Having students ready to learn is the aim of BSEM. The wellbeing of students is an outcome of a positive and consistent integration of the BSEM. It does not directly deal with issues of mental health.

(e) Is it suitable for all students?

- 44 Yes.

(g) What is your involvement with the BSEM at Doveton?

- 45 I initiated the work on BSEM with a teacher and established the first trainings for staff. As the Principal, my role was to lead using the BSEM approaches, enable professional learning in the meeting schedule and develop the BSEM leaders.

8) Please describe the initiatives or programs that have been implemented at Doveton College as part of the BSEM.***(a) How are the initiatives or programs delivered (e.g. school-based, external people)?***

- 46 There were initially four days of training for all staff provided by Berry Street. We considered strategies in the context of the five domains: body, relationship, stamina, engagement, character. These strategies identify ways to question existing frameworks, structure and processes and protocols in school and classes to maximise student engagement through positive relationships and language.
- 47 The BSEM leader, the leadership and the Professional Learning Team leaders then prioritised the strategies and planned for their implementation within the whole of Doveton College teaching and learning approach.
- 48 This led to consistency in language, processes and routine at Doveton College. For example, using positive language, teaching students that actions have consequences and outcomes, distinguishing between a student's *actions* and the student as a person, and using de-escalating language to avoid conflict.

(b) How often are they delivered?

- 49 Delivery of the BSEM is not a matter of running individual lessons, rather the BSEM is a whole school approach embedded inside all lessons that are taught and all interactions with students. For example, it shapes language, develops protocols and routines, provides strategies for teaching moments and highlights strategies students can use to facilitate learning readiness.
- 50 For example, under the BSEM, acknowledging that students may have difficulty in focusing for long periods, lessons might be 'chunked' into smaller components or short sharp exercises, and gradually building up the duration of components over time to increase stamina.
- 51 Another theme of the approach is the 'Track the Speaker' approach, relating to ensuring that a person speaking gets the whole attention of the teacher and classroom, by both watching and listening to a person when they are speaking.

(c) Who participates in them?

- 52 In addition to the participation of teachers, there is communication with parents about what BSEM involves. We share the strategies that we work on at school that could be used at home - for example, how to de-escalate situations when challenges arise. In this way, parent and school collaboration is essential.
- 53 Students have focus plans; these plans are built around a young person or a class which identifies the key areas for them to work on. These focus plans are front and centre in classes and the students know what they are currently working on – for example, learning stamina or de-escalation. These areas are then worked on through their other classes, such as maths class or English class.

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

- 54 Please refer to my response to question 8(a), above.

(e) In your experience, what benefits does the BSEM provide to participants?

- 55 BSEM enables the school community with a philosophy, set of strategies and understanding of how trauma can influence/ impact on learning. to articulate values and put them front and centre. It provides a whole of community philosophy.
- 56 While it is difficult to measure causation, I can say that there are correlations with improved outcomes. The College has shown high growth in NAPLAN outcomes in Years 5 – 9, attendance rates have improved to state averages and student survey (DET) results have moved from the lowest quartile in 2014 to the highest quartile in 2017.

(f) What challenges are faced by Doveton College in offering the programs?

- 57 The constant churn of students and to a lesser extent staff, means that there is a regular need to update BSEM knowledge and strategies.

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print name Gregory McMahon

date 1 July 2019



ATTACHMENT GM -1

This is the attachment marked 'GM-1 ' referred to in the witness statement of Greg McMahon dated "1 July 2019" .

When teachers create a proactive, pre-emptive, strengths-based classroom, students learn better.

The Berry Street Education Model is a progressive training course that enables teachers to increase engagement with challenging students and successfully improve all students' self-regulation, growth and academic achievement.

Our Model is an initiative of the Berry Street Childhood Institute and originates from Berry Street's 140 year history of supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children to thrive. It is based on proven positive education, trauma-informed and wellbeing practices to enable students' academic and personal growth, and has been successfully applied in both mainstream and specialist schools.

"The Berry Street Education Model gave our school relevant strategies that were immediately successful in building student willingness to learn. All our students, even the most engaged kids, found them useful."

This unique approach equips schools with strategies to facilitate students' cognitive and behavioural change, thereby increasing student engagement to significantly progress their academic achievement.

The Berry Street Education Model is offered as a suite of structured professional development, consultation and mentoring programs for school leaders and teachers. The programs employ a blended learning methodology based on instructor expertise, peer-collaboration, and opportunities for participants to pilot learned strategies in their schools. Support between sessions, including the option for individual conferencing or other consultation, is provided by facilitators.

"Our students have achieved more than two years learning in one academic year."

Proven outcomes of increased engagement and academic success

In 2016, nearly 5000 Australian school teachers from more than 500 schools undertook the Berry Street Education Model program. Alumni of the program consistently report that students' connection, engagement and learning are all significantly improved once BSEM strategies are applied in their classrooms.



"Very practical and relevant. Lots of strategies that can be used across all year levels."

Formal evaluation of the pilot program by the University of Melbourne affirms the positive impact of the program on student wellbeing, behaviour and engagement. AUSVELS data indicated this also translated into significant academic growth across reading, writing and number.

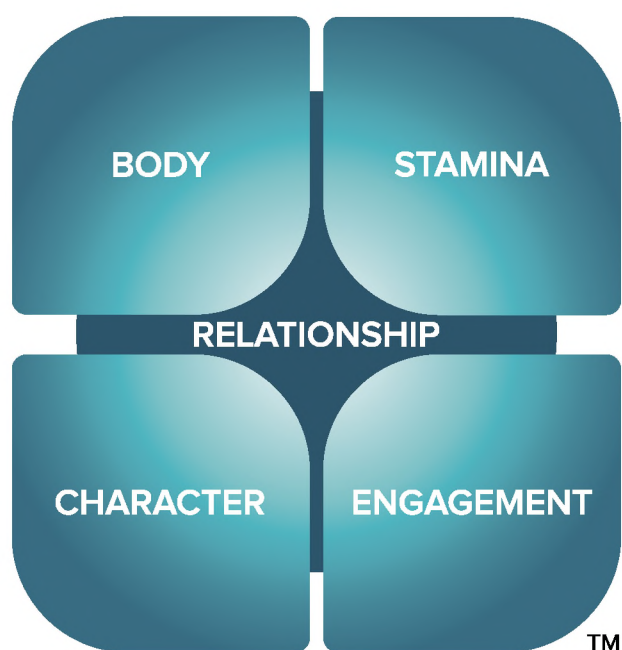


In addition, the Berry Street Education Model has made possible significant academic growth in some of Victoria's most vulnerable students. The Model is used by teachers at the Berry Street School, where students average 1.8 years' learning in one academic year.

Every student should have opportunities to develop a regulated body and meet their own needs in healthy ways.

Five building blocks to achieve academic and personal growth

The five domains of the Berry Street Education Model correspond with the child-development capacities that each student must build in order to be 'ready to learn'. When considering how to best meet the needs of students, we focus first on building their capacity to engage and then nurturing their willingness to engage.



Body – Building students' capacity by increasing physical regulation of the stress response, de-escalation and focus.



Relationship – Nurturing on-task learning through relational classroom management strategies.



Stamina – Creating a culture of academic persistence by nurturing resilience, emotional intelligence and a growth mindset.



Engagement – Motivating students with strategies that increase their willingness to learn.



Character – Harnessing a values and character strengths approach to instil students' self-knowledge for future pathways.

"It was brilliant. All of our training days were positive, engaging and full of strategies I can start using tomorrow."

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