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St Mark's College

## NEWS RELEASE

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### NEW ACTION PLAN FOR CULTURAL RENEWAL AT ST MARK'S COLLEGE

New St Mark's College Independent Chair Linda Matthews has launched an *Action Plan* to support continued cultural renewal at the College with the aim of creating an environment where all students feel respected, valued and safe.

Ms Matthews, who will lead the Plan's implementation, has recently been appointed as College Chair. Linda brings more than twenty-five years' experience leading change in social service organisations.

Her previous roles include South Australian Commissioner for Equal Opportunity, Director of Funding and Advocacy at the S.A. Intellectual Disability Services Council. As Executive Director of Women NSW she led reforms for victims of family and domestic violence. She was also Queensland's first Privacy Commissioner.

She currently serves as a Board member of Catherine House and is President of Scosa.

The *Action Plan* has been informed by research undertaken by KPMG for the College Board, findings of the *Cultural Renewal at the University of Sydney Residential Colleges Report* by Elizabeth Broderick, work of Universities Australia and University Colleges Australia, and the *University of Adelaide: Review of Student Residential Colleges Report* prepared by the South Australian Equal Opportunities Commission.

Key elements of the Action Plan are:

- Ensuring greater controls are in place for College events to reduce harmful drinking and reduce the likelihood of unacceptable activities and behaviour;
- An expanded and more extensive leadership training program will provide ongoing personal and professional development for student leaders;
- Planning for a new Welcome Week to replace Orientation Week. Welcome Week focuses on building an inclusive and diverse student body. Unacceptable past traditions and activities will not be tolerated;
- Strengthen existing training for all students and staff on the College's Values, sexual assault and harassment, consent, bystander awareness, drug and alcohol harm minimisation, mental and sexual health by increasing its frequency throughout the year and introducing cultural sensitivity training;
- Seek expert advice and engage an independent investigator for sexual misconduct;
- Communicate the consequence of unacceptable behaviours such as expulsions and suspensions while providing a safe and supportive environment for those who report;
- Monitoring and reviewing progress to ensure the Action Plan achieves its targets and adapts to leading evidence-based practice and feedback.

Furthermore, the College reiterates that there is zero tolerance for sexual misconduct.

The College states that any student who witnesses or experiences sexual assault or sexual harassment will be listened to, believed and supported. Students are encouraged to take their responsibilities as ethical bystanders seriously and to encourage a culture of reporting.

If any student, past or present, has experienced unacceptable behaviour or sexual misconduct, they are encouraged to report to the College or authorities for investigation.

The [Action Plan](#) can be viewed on the College website. The College will report regularly on progress to its community and key stakeholders on the implementation of the *Action Plan*.

### **Quotes from St Mark's College new Chair Linda Matthews**

Ms Matthews said the *Action Plan* recognises past failures and provides a vital roadmap for cultural renewal.

“While for the overwhelming majority of students their time at St Mark's College is positive and greatly enhances their university experience, it hasn't been the case for all students,” said Ms Matthews.

“Some student behaviour has breached the College's stated values and fallen short of community standards. This is unacceptable, and the Board and College leadership apologise unreservedly to anyone affected by those failings”.

“We must do more to ensure that the College environment is one where all students feel respected, valued and safe”.

“College is committed to creating an environment in which unacceptable behaviours are called out by fellow students, students feel comfortable reporting and the College takes firm action and publicises consequences of any behaviour that breaches the code of conduct.”

Ends.

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