



St Stanislaus' College

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Child Protection Initiatives at SSC – Mr John Edwards, Headmaster's Report to Board Meeting, October 2012

In recent times, a question that has been put to the school is that of asking about information concerning initiatives that have been implemented at Stannies to better safeguard students from instances of possible abuse at SSC. In answering this question, the following points were addressed and in this time of change it might well be wise and prudent to consider what has been done and how these changes operate at the school. The list is not exhaustive but does cover a number of the substantial developments that have been implemented by the school, with the strong support of the Board and the Vincentian Fathers.

1. There have been a number of physical changes to buildings and plant to better safeguard the interests of children. Some of these changes include:
 - a. The Boarding Centre has been moved to a new location where windows have been created that allow persons walking along the busy Old Boys corridor of an evening to look directly into the Boarding Centre. All offices within the Boarding Centre also have glass partitions from the waist up, adding to the openness of the area. Students being interviewed by boarding staff, seeing Matron or sent to the Boarding Centre for disciplinary reasons, are all in a location which is open to public view at the front of the school, where visitors also arrive and depart, increasing further the accountability of those in this critical area for boarding operations.
 - b. The school has demolished areas like the old Salle that provided for showering and amenities with minimal privacy and replaced them with modern amenity areas in every residential space that much better provide for privacy and security.
 - c. Many offices throughout the school have had glass panels installed in doors, to provide for greater openness and passive supervision of students being interviewed by persons from outside.
 - d. In the Priest's corridor, full glass partitions and doors were installed to delineate the private space of the Priests from the school space but the doors and partitions were made of clear glass to dissuade any students from entering the area or entering the area without proper authorisation and following proper procedures.
 - e. In new buildings such as the Performing Arts Centre, great care was taken to cater for child protection needs. For example, all the private

practice rooms, where an instrumental music teacher may be with a student or small group of students, have glass walls that front the Hall space that means that there is often passive supervision from outside of the private practice rooms.

2. Two Counsellors (one as a permanent, full time staff member and one as a 0.4fte permanent staff member) now work within the school covering both day hours and four nights per week. The school has ensured that both Counsellors are registered psychologists, as their own professional association provides a range of further benefits from their separate registration, professional inservices and professional standards perspectives in facilitating the more effective protection of children. When I first arrived at Stannies, counselling was provided by Centrecare at the request of staff. Counsellors are now members of staff, can be accessed directly by students independent of school authorities and the boys know that there is a measure of confidentiality in their dealings with Counsellors that is to a degree independent of the school and that this affords them further protection.
3. The school works closely with outside mental health support agencies that simply were not present in past years. For example, the College has a relationship with the young person support agency known as *Headspace* and students are informed of the agency's existence and of how to access its services. In the event that a child is being mistreated or troubled, this is another important resource that students may utilise. The fact that this agency is external to the school adds a further important dimension to the support made available at the school to our students.
4. A Matron, who is normally a registered nurse (there is one enrolled nurse), is on duty throughout the day and also on six nights per week to 10 pm at night. When I first came to Stannies, Matrons were not on duty of an evening. The separate registration of the nurses also afford children further protection as they are also accountable outside of the school through their own professional registration and standards which protect the interests of children.
5. On my arrival at Stannies in 1993, Boarding House Study was supervised overwhelmingly by College prefects who were typically Year 11 or Year 12 students. Study is now supervised by adults in a number of different settings. The adult supervision, the inservicing of those staff, combined with the presence of Matrons and Counsellors, along with the changes to buildings and policies and practices all combine together with other factors to further protect the interests of children.
6. A range of policies and practices have been introduced by the school to better protect children. For example, staff may not interview children in one on one situations removed from outside view and supervision. Even in the case of the Headmaster, in addition to the HM's Office having a number of glass panels to the busy outside corridor, the Headmaster normally only interviews students (and staff for that matter) in the presence of another staff member. Staff have been informed of their duties to report any concerning conduct and have been given a number of options in terms of the staff personnel to whom they may report. The channel for ensuring that concerns get through to the relevant persons in the

school have also been secured to ensure that concerns are not lost in the system. Policies and practices that reinforce measures to protect children from at risk situations have been very important at St Stanislaus' in helping us better look after the students in our charge.

7. Students are regularly addressed at Assemblies and through other communication channels, of how they may access support in circumstances where they feel that they are being mistreated. Students are given contact information about a range of personnel who may be able to support them from both within the school and from sources external to the school.
8. A number of staff have been trained and accredited as investigators of allegations of reportable conduct and this expertise is important in reducing risks to children in the school environment. Research has shown that children often find it difficult to both report and explain to an adult their experience of mistreatment. Trained adults help to ensure that possible problems are identified early and are addressed in required ways.
9. Students participate in surveys of their school experience at Stannies, inclusive of the coverage of a range of child protection related areas. The College closely analyses these surveys and keeps a longitudinal analysis that is examined at peak meeting groups within the school. Issues and concerns may come forward at this level that can be addressed prior to them becoming more serious concerns and the school also has access to important information that provides us with important insights into the school community that may not otherwise have been known or understood.
10. The introduction of the Edumate system to the school has been another vital plank in our Child Protection safeguards. Edumate allows parents, under password protection, to gain wide access to their son's school experience. Parents can check whether their sons are in class at any given time, whether they are on excursion, whether they are regularly seeing Matron or not, whether they have a history of absences or lateness that might alert persons to other problems or concerns, as well as to a great deal of other information that makes the school experience a much more transparent and open one than it was in times gone by when communication channels were much more basic and limited. The fact that most students now carry mobile phones also affords much more protection, as students may readily contact their parents or other support persons or resources in at risk situations.
11. Outside agencies now also check the school's child protection performances. The Board of Studies now checks this area as part of its Registration and Accreditation Inspection and agencies such as the Ombudsman have completed audits of aspects of child protection measures at the school. Schools are now far more open and accountable places than they were in the past and this affords children and others far more protection.
12. The NSW Government's various pieces of Child Protection Legislation also help us to better protect children. Mandatory reporting, investigations supervised by the Ombudsman, employment screening, legal protections for persons raising possible concerns about the mistreatment of children, resources publicly

available from the Commission for Children and Young People, the operation of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act all provide specific areas of support to both children and to staff and others seeking to protect the interests of children. They also provide an overall framework within which children may be protected and in instances where wrongs may have taken place, the mechanisms for these wrongs, or possible wrongs, to be comprehensively followed up by investigation and reported upon under oversight of organisations such as the Ombudsman.

13. Some years ago, the school created leadership positions known as Senior Administration Co-ordinators. The school funded these positions at a senior level and provided substantial release time to facilitate the pastoral and discipline work of these senior staff members in the school. The positions have attracted the interest of highly skilled and senior staff who have child protection as one of their key responsibilities. These staff members are some of the staff who have been trained and accredited as investigators of allegations of reportable conduct and play a key role within our school. In other schools this role is taken by year co-ordinators who tend to be younger, far less experienced staff and with less release time. Senior staff operating in key pastoral roles that are publicly understood to be significant within the school operate as a further support for children. These staff for some years have regularly been in positions to take up the cause of children with other staff members and where there has been a need for early intervention and advice on the effective management of children, this has been able to be implemented promptly and effectively.
14. Some years ago, the school instituted a fortnightly minuted Pastoral Care Meeting. This meeting draws together a significant number of senior and pastoral staff within the school to discuss specific pastoral needs and concerns which focus on the needs of children. Attending the meeting are the Headmaster, Deputy Headmaster, Boarding Director, the Senior Administration Co-ordinators, the two Counsellors, two Matrons, the two Chaplains and the Director of Curriculum. This meeting has again proven to be a valuable resource in identifying important issues related to the wellbeing of our students and in facilitating action where required to safeguard their interests. Greater openness and accountability have been important initiatives in fostering a climate where the interests of children are more effectively nourished and safeguarded.

Child Protection Update – Dr Anne Wenham, Head of College Report to the Board of Directors, August 2016

1. Update to Report tabled by John Edwards (October 2012)

Introduction

Former Headmaster, John Edwards, provided a very thorough Report to the Board in October 2012 detailing the extensive processes and changes that had been implemented in response to Child Protection Agenda (Appendix I).

Some of these initiatives have now been superseded and there have also been a number of developments and initiatives since that time. Following is an update of progress since the last Report.

Staff

1. College Counsellor

Rosemary Clifton is the full-time Counsellor. She attends school throughout the school day as well as the Boarding House two nights per week. She is on call 24/7. The former part-time Counsellor resigned. Rosemary considered various options and advised that she considered the most workable and effective way to move forward was to continue to restructure the Pastoral Care support structure of the College including the appointment of additional staff in Pastoral Care positions of responsibility. This is the path the College has taken.

2. Appointment of Year Coordinators and Development of Pastoral Care Leadership Team

In 2012 the College had three Year Coordinators (Years 7, 11 and 12). Each Year group now has a Year Coordinator and these six senior staff have a staff room/office next to the Office of the Counsellor. There is a shared sense of leadership, support, camaraderie and focus on the wellbeing of the students. They also form the nucleus of the Pastoral Care Leadership Team chaired by Rosemary Clifton. This team also includes Head of Boarding, Director of Curriculum and Head of College. Initiatives focus on enhancing the wellbeing of all students and have moved towards a commitment to developing a positive school culture, addressing bullying issues, keeping students safe and being aware of and responding to those who are most vulnerable.

3. Appointment of Boarding House Parents

Focus on student wellbeing in the Boarding House is a high priority. The College has committed to appointing appropriate staff as House Parents. Over the last four years these staff have varied in effectiveness. The current House Parents are having a significantly positive impact on Boarding House culture and student wellbeing.

4. Appointment of Aboriginal Education Worker

In recent years the College appointed two Aboriginal men as Residential staff in the Boarding House. They have each resigned their positions. In 2016 we welcomed a part-time Aboriginal Education Worker whose two main responsibilities are liaison with Boarding students and their families and support of individual students within the classroom.

5. Appointment of Specialist Special Education Teacher and Specialist Special Education Support Worker

These appointments have enhanced the focus on and support of students with a range of additional needs and disabilities – physical, emotional, mental health, intellectual.

6. Discontinuation of the role of Senior Administration Coordinator

With the appointment of Year Coordinators and a renewed focus on the work of the Pastoral Care Team, the role of the Senior Administration Coordinator was discontinued.

Facilities

We continue to monitor all College facilities with a view to ensuring that all parts of the school enhance student safety and wellbeing. At the commencement of the Board meeting in December 2014, Directors and Fr Michael Walsh were taken on a tour of the school during which time suggestions were made to address potential child protection issues. Top of this list were some identified 'blind spots' within the Boarding Centre and the need to ensure that the glass doors at the entrance to the Vincentian wings were kept locked when any adult is in residence.

In addition, the location of the Vincentian Laundry was identified as a major concern as it was located on the outside of the Vincentian wing adjacent to student accommodation. A refit of an existing Vincentian bathroom was immediately completed such that it was converted into the new laundry.

All senior students (Years 10-12) are now housed in individual rooms and policies are very clear in terms of staff entering these rooms. The three junior dormitories are well-set out so that every student has privacy for dressing and sleeping.

Senior students who are appointed as Dormitory Prefects are housed adjacent to junior dormitories. They have the phone numbers for House Parents and Senior Duty House Parent on speed dial.

Policies

Currently Mark Neill and I are reviewing all Child Protection Policies. We have been given access to all CEO Bathurst Policies for comparison and will amend and update where required.

The College has reviewed and implemented policies and procedures in response to *National Safe Schools Framework*. These are currently being documented according to the framework headings and will be tabled at the next Board Meeting.

National Safe Schools Framework headings to be addressed:

1. Leadership commitment to a safe school
2. A supportive and connected school culture
3. Policies and procedures
4. Professional learning
5. Positive behaviour management
6. Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum

7. A focus on students wellbeing and student ownership
8. Early intervention and targeted support
9. Partnerships with families and community

Processes

There are a number of processes which have changed/been implemented in recent years.

1. The implementation of the new mandatory Working with Children (WWC) Check (Appendix J).
The College does not proceed to the offer of an employment contract until the applicant's WWC Check is confirmed. Similarly, volunteers must submit their volunteer WWC Check prior to commencement of their volunteer role (e.g. presently some students from CSU, all of whom have validated WWC checks are voluntarily tutoring some of our junior boarders during evening study).

Hard copies of the validation report are kept on file by Head of College Secretary.

2. Signing in Register
After becoming aware of the number of regular visitors who do not sign in or wear a visitor's badge or identity badge, the College has instituted a number of new procedures. E.g. Music Tutors who park at and enter the PAC from the adjacent entrance now sign on in a Visitors book housed at the PAC for this purpose.

Brad McCormick ensures that all tradesmen who work on site are fully briefed regarding Child Protection requirements.

Fr Greg Walsh ensures that all visitors who stay overnight on the Vincentian floor are also signed in.

3. Staff Professional development
All staff, teaching and support staff, are now required to complete online Child Protection training. This is conducted through CCER and the College is updated regularly with a record of completion.

Mandatory Reporting

All staff – teaching and support staff – know their responsibilities as mandatory reporters. Any notification that has recently been communicated has come via student meeting with Rosemary Clifton. These have been family-related. On each such occasion, Rosemary informs me, and in my absence, Deputy Head of College, Mark Neill, then proceeds with the Mandatory reporting online "decision tree" that requires specific information about the allegation to be uploaded online following which the school is provided with specific directions to follow.

A hard copy of this process and its outcomes for each reported notification is kept in a confidential file.

NB: All 145 number of boxes of files that were subpoenaed by the Director of Public Prosecutions in September and November 2008 have now been returned to the College. They have taken up most of the available space in the Cullen Room.

Relevant legislation that underpins the College Mandatory Requirements

Principal Acts:

- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998

Other relevant Acts:

- Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Amendment (Parental Responsibility Contracts) Act 2006
- Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000
- Crimes Act 1900
- Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
- The Ombudsman Act 1974
- Family Law Act 1975 (Cth)