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Review of Policies Practices and ProceduresatBrisbane Grammar School15 September 2000Draft Minutes

In attendance: Professor Barry Nurcombe, Mr Sid Williams QC, Mr John Burge,  
Dr Peter Lennox

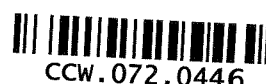
The Minutes of the previous meeting were read and minor changes made.

A document, drafted by Mr Williams, was distributed to attendees.

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The meeting initially considered several matters of clarification in the previous Minutes:

- i) Clarification regarding confidentiality.
  - Counsellor is both technically and in practice an employee of the School.
  - The Counsellor sometimes refers a student to a practitioner outside the school.
- ii) It was agreed that there should be a defined policy as to how a complaint is treated with a designated chain for complaints with multiplicity entry points.
- iii) Regarding Public Sector Ethics Act P26/27:
  - Specific exemption would override general inclusion.
  - Assume BGS would fall under (i)(ii) *a school that is not a State school*.
- iv) Regarding a Code of Conduct for BGS staff:
  - Mr Burge suggested that the Board of Teacher Registration has a preamble statement of ethical guidelines which could be used to derive a Code of Conduct for BGS.
  - It was agreed that a Code of Conduct should be prepared. Mr Williams prepared to do this, however Dr Lennox suggested that the School should be responsible in the first place for this, to promote understanding and acceptance.
- v) Protocols for reporting and dealing with child abuse:
  - It was noted that there could be risks of defamation and the vague concept of "natural justice" not being followed. A more defined procedure is required.
  - Suspension with pay usually occurs when police lay a charge or indicate that a charge will be made. In the State system there is the CJC Public Services Act with a liaison officer who has an obligation to record issues. Decision then is made that it will be investigated at the school.



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- It would be suggested that BGS have some form of protocol e.g. with juvenile aid.
    - School is right to do preliminary investigation.
    - Police are usually called in at the point where there is a view of breach of law or there is reason to suspect.
  - The process of reporting suspected child abuse is covered by a code supporting obligation to report suspected child abuse to Childrens' Services Department and police.
    - Obligation upon a school member to report suspicions.
    - Education Queensland has a policy that teachers must report suspected child abuse to Principal.
    - A decision is then made about whether they are going to proceed further.
    - This is strictly that harm is suspected.
    - Policy not to do anything beyond that when an employer is suspected of doing the harming.
  - Employer relationship with clients covers Code of Conduct more broadly.
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A review was then made of Mr William's draft paper.

- i) Mr Burge referred to Education Queensland's
- Policy on Child Abuse
  - Code of Conduct for employees. (this was copied for attendees).

It was noted that this Code is distinct from that of the Board of Teacher Registration Document about Ethics for Queensland Teachers.

What should be done in a case of reported child abuse?

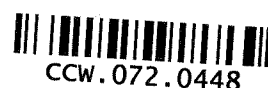
- Headmaster has an obligation to notify Board of Teacher Registration.
- He does not have a requirement to report to Director-General of Education.

- ii) Mr Williams spoke of problem between anonymity and confidentiality.
- Student making complaint may not want his name known.
  - Confidentiality will be respected to the point where it is a statement record of interview.
  - Corroborate the complaint.
  - If there is a breach of the law pass on to the police.
  - Anonymity for boys will encourage boys to report.
  - Encourage boys to raise the matter of suspicion.
  - Ability to take statement.
  - Offer confidentiality.



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- iii) Recording:  
It was suggested that interviews conducted be placed by Headmaster into own personal diary.
- Mr Burge suggests that a note be written back to those interviewed by Headmaster of content of discussion.
- iv) Under section on 'students' in Mr Williams brief:
- Dr Lennox noted that "Christian Education or Citizenship should be "Personal Development" (which includes Health Education). Year 11 at BGS offers a compulsory core study in Ethics.
  - Ethics: add topic ethical patterns of behaviour.
  - Sexual abuse. Boarding situations. Intimidation.
  - Sexual abuse report could be made to Form Teacher who would either go to Deputy Headmaster or direct to Headmaster.
  - Obligation for it to be a Head of Year or Deputy Head then on to Headmaster.
  - It is the responsibility of any staff member to take that to DHM or HM.
  - If a staff member suspects that there is potential for harm it needs to be in process.
- v) Policy:
- i) Add "abuse and harm" –child protection may need to specify (bullying, discrimination, racial)
  - ii) Incorporate a child protection policy not limited to bullying and discrimination.
    - School could either take following policy and A/D policy that we currently have and do one broad policy that covers harm generally or keep existing policies and simply lay down another policy that deals with harm and explicitly deals with abuse.
    - Dr Lennox would prefer to take the latter approach partly because we have taken a stakeholder approach to what we have now – parents, staff and students have ownership of existing policies.
    - Harm Policy  
Section 9 of Act  
Student protection policy  
Focus on aspects of harm and abuse.
  - iii) Student section F
    - Encouragement should be given to students to advise information, possibly to a family member if not a staff member;
    - Deal with internally at first;
    - Protocol – inform a designated juvenile aid bureau person. This could be done in advance and in writing. BGS could ask if there is



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- an opportunity to have a person nominated to the school from the JAB who can give assistance.
- Get ground rules sorted out in advance with police.
- iv) Detection  
last para – top of page “The school counsellor etc”
- Raised at previous meeting.
  - Important to regularly debrief Counsellor to monitor issues, trends in casework.
  - This is a less public feedback of information.
  - The Committee noted that current counselling occurs under good practice standards.
- v) 2<sup>nd</sup> page 2<sup>nd</sup> para  
(a) notified to the BTR (not Director General of Education).
- vi) Student protection policy to be advertised by consultative methodology.  
Have a cyclical review process for new staff and students.
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Concluding matters:

- Mr Williams is happy to incorporate everyone's thoughts.
- Dr Lennox is able to obtain an original Queensland Grammar Schools' Act
- Mr Burge will be away for 5 weeks from 25 September.

In preparing a final report:

- It was agreed that references to the Lynch matter should not be referred to.
- It would be wise to take a current view of good practice
- Bear in mind transparency of the outcomes of this committee
- Focus on current and future practices
- Confirm what is good managerial practice and good professional practice.

