

GRAMMAR'S RESPONSE TO LYNCH COMPLAINTS

Brisbane Grammar School has undertaken an extensive investigation into allegations of improper behaviour by its former teacher and School Counsellor, Kevin Lynch, who was employed by the School between 1973 and 1988. Allegations regarding Mr Lynch's conduct during those years were first brought to the School's attention through recent press articles and the investigation was undertaken as the articles suggested the likelihood of legal action against the School.

The investigation has been limited by the long passage of time since the relevant events, the fact that Lynch is deceased, and the fact that former students who are thought to be taking legal advice have not yet communicated their complaints to the School. Nevertheless, the School accepts there is now evidence which indicates Lynch engaged in behaviour which was seriously inappropriate in respect of a number of boys. The School also accepts it has a clear moral responsibility towards any student affected by Lynch's behaviour, and that it should take positive steps to assist in a healing process where that is necessary.

To that end, Dr Joan Lawrence, one of Queensland's leading psychiatrists has agreed, at the School's request, to oversee a clinical assessment of the needs of any former students affected by Lynch's behaviour and who choose to accept this offer. Where appropriate, she will refer them for treatment within a panel of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers selected and monitored by her. All such processes will be at no expense to the persons affected. Formal agreements on appropriate terms, including confidentiality, will be put in place between the School, Dr Lawrence and former students.

It is the School's opinion that its investigations to date do not establish any legal liability on the School's part, and it will avail itself of all defences available. Furthermore, difficult and complex issues, combined with the period of time that has elapsed, and Lynch's death in 1997, make it impossible to ascertain accurately what occurred.

Brisbane Grammar School acknowledges its clear ethical and moral responsibilities for its students and has continued to develop policies and practices that demonstrate this commitment.

There are three key policy documents relevant to the current areas of concern. These are the School's Code of Expectations and Behaviour, its Policy on Bullying and Discrimination, and its Sexual Harassment Policy. These documents are contained in each student's handbook. They are well publicised to students, parents and staff, and the intent of these policies is explained and discussed between staff and students in various forums. These policies have been consultatively developed as part of the School's commitment to providing a secure and friendly environment for its students and staff.

Awareness and understanding of these policies is part of a comprehensive system of pastoral care for students that the School considers is of a high quality. The system provides structures for support and communication as well as a personal development program.

Moreover, the School is committed to enhancing continuously all such policies and practices. To this end, it has decided to undertake an independent review of relevant policies and practices by a panel consisting of an eminent lawyer, an experienced independent educator and Professor Barry Nurcombe (Director of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Queensland and Royal Children's Hospital).

This review will benchmark the School's present practices and policies against international Best Practice. Its results will be published for the benefit of the School's community and education generally.

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