



BRISBANE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Newsletter

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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.

DR PETER LENNOX
HEADMASTER

MR HOWARD STACK
CHAIRMAN

FROM THE DEPUTY HEADMASTER (STUDENTS)

In last week's newsletter Dr Lennox wrote of the School's investigation into matters raised in the Courier Mail in recent times. He indicated that this week there would be a brief outline of our current Pastoral Care system. The Pastoral Care system at BGS has two broad aims. It seeks to provide an ordered structure that will assist students to enjoy a secure, supportive and encouraging environment, where the students themselves also care for and value each other. It also provides a learner-centred Personal Development Programme aimed at enhancing students' social competencies, thoughtful decision-making abilities and ethical behaviour.

There is a clearly defined structure for the operation of Pastoral Care at Grammar. It is led by the Pastoral Care Committee, which is comprised of the Deputy Headmaster (Students) (Chair), Heads of Year, Student Counsellor, Senior Boarding Housemaster and Careers Counsellor. This group meets weekly to oversee the development of the Pastoral Care system. At the ground roots level all teachers are Form Teachers and all classroom teachers and sports and activity coaches have an important pastoral role with their students. Form Seniors and Prefects also play a significant peer role in the pastoral support of all boys. In Years 8 to 10 each class has two form teachers, whilst in Years 11 and 12 the classes become smaller and each student has one Form Teacher. The structure provides multiple opportunities for students to find teachers that they can relate to and discuss personal issues with. Our Heads of Year do a wonderful job as the key pastoral agents of the School. Specialist services are provided by the Student Counsellor (a trained psychologist) and a Careers Counsellor. As Deputy Headmaster (Students) my door is always open to students to discuss any issue relating to student welfare.

An important element in our pastoral provisions is the Personal Development Programme that is coordinated by Heads of Year and implemented by Form Teachers. In Years 8 to 10 there is one period per week allocated to the Personal Development Programme. In Year 11 there are three lessons: one for the Personal Development Programme, one for independent study and one for the provision of our School-developed courses in Political Education, Ethics Education, Legal Education and Finance Education which are each studied for one term. In Year 12 there are also three lessons given over to personal development, student committee work and a blend of independent study, QCST preparation and Course/Career counselling. In the Junior years major themes include orientation, relationships, self-awareness, healthy lifestyles, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, sexuality and careers. In Year 11 there is significant coverage of sexuality education by the Family Planning Association, Careers Education, stress management, time management and leadership. In Year 12 post-school life issues are covered in some detail, along with Year 12 specific issues such as School/University transition. Such issues as Study Skills, Goal-setting, the Values and Principles of the BGS Code of Expectations and Behaviour, Bullying and Sexual Harassment are covered at every Year level.

There is a strong programme of professional development operating within our pastoral provisions. Over the last twelve months there has been a focus on further developing inter-personal and counselling skills in all staff. In the previous year staff have participated in sessions on recognising depression, and sexuality and careers education. The Pastoral Care Committee is currently developing two topics (Behaviour Management and the Role of the Form Teacher) for discussion by the whole staff at the Term 3 Staff Development Day.

All aspects of the School's academic, pastoral and extracurricular offerings operate in an annual cycle of strategic planning and review. Major issues for consideration in the 2000 Pastoral Care Development Plan include further refinement of the Personal Development Curriculum, and student leadership development and structure. The Detention system was recently reviewed (and outlined in a previous newsletter) and appears to contain some useful modifications. There are also changes in the suspension system. While retaining some flexibility, boys suspended for serious breaches of discipline or behaviour will now normally be required to serve the period of suspension at school working under supervision and in isolation from other students.

Pastoral Care at Grammar is not just about structures and programmes. It is about the daily interaction between staff and students. I visited 9E at Moogerah this week. We kayaked and walked to a campsite alongside Reynolds Creek, sleeping out underneath the stars. Some boys were woken at 6am to be surprised by the sight of frost on their sleeping bags and enjoyed a brisk morning run. We then hiked to the summit of Mount Greville on a picture-perfect Queensland winter's day. Unfortunately I had to return to school at the completion of the hike with the boys busily gathering firewood, water, preparing to cook dinner and learning to tie knots. It is great to see the boys in a different environment, facing difficult challenges and learning to cooperate with each other in a less formal and artificial sense. I have come back from Moogerah certain that it enriches the educational experiences for our boys and have certainly enjoyed seeing at least one group of boys from another perspective.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries or concerns about the Pastoral Care offerings at Grammar -
-David Gee (Deputy Headmaster Students)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Olympic Torch Running Ceremony Thursday 15 June - Please be advised that there are likely to be road closures on the morning of Thursday 15 June of many of the main feeder roads into the School due to the Olympic Torch moving by. Neither the City Council, nor the Police Traffic Branch can offer anything more specific than the following.

7.42 am - the torch moves along Boundary Street

7.45 am - turns right into Gregory Terrace

7.55 am - turns left into Bowen Bridge Road.

It is probably advisable to leave for work/school earlier on Thursday morning given the inexact information available to us. It was suggested (albeit not officially) that the road closures might last anywhere between 10 and 20 minutes.