

*Private & Confidential*

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***Geelong Grammar School  
Strategy brief  
April 2007***

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***Observations on likely outcomes***

There will be negative consequences for GGS regardless of its good, bad or otherwise handling of this issue:

- bad media coverage (construction of media “facts”)
- reputational issues
- angry/upset feedback from existing and potential parents
- staff unrest
- OGGs disquiet, agitation and interest
- further [linked] legal actions
- link to UK-related issues

There is a high probability that the JH “statement to friends” will end up in the hands of the media. This would, on the face of it, work in GGS’s favour given that the statement contains apologies and contrition on JH’s behalf: he makes no secret of the fact that the relationship took place (indeed the contrary), but admits wrong-doing in that it *did* take place. This is *not* to suggest that the school in any way make public JH’s statement.

The relationship is understood to have continued for eight years. The school’s awareness or otherwise of this could be a pointer to tough questioning. Media doubts either way will be high. [The recent Xavier College case in which the school expelled a student for trafficking drugs did not let the school off the hook.] Ignorance is no excuse.

GGG should be sure that it can categorically state that the school treated the statement in confidence and did *not* release the statement.

If the relationship was *not* known about, then GGS must be prepared to state that the relationship was indeed by its very nature clandestine. It ought not to comply with suggestions that it ought to have known about a covert [illegal] and furtive arrangement led (presumably/allegedly) by JH.

If the relationship was known about, the school will require a frank explanation as to why it did nothing about it. This may be problematic given that staff/students with such awareness are no longer employed by, or in attendance at, GGS. That is, even given it was before Stephen Meek’s tenure as headmaster, it is he who has the task of explanation on the school’s behalf.

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### ***Actions***

Do nothing in terms of adopting a position/bias on the matter now due before the court.

Do nothing in terms of making any public statements ahead of the court hearing.

Prepare the school for media enquiries or approaches:

- Stephen Meek should be the only GGS spokesperson
- review entry and exit security at the Corio campus
- ensure staff are briefed effectively
- do *not* provide background on either party to the litigation
- prepare a succinct “courtesy” message for parents, staff, students, OGGs *et al* key stakeholders
- prepare message strategy for media – telephone enquiries and visits to school

### ***Questions***

The timing of the relationship is vital in terms of public perceptions about the school’s role:

- did it run for eight years including time after the student left the school?
- did it run for eight years 22 years ago?

What is the Victoria Police official position on this matter?

Will the school have a/any representative at the hearing?

Are the background/history and connections of the party bringing the case sound and not open to any negative disclosures?

Are there any other past issues related to JH that we should be aware of?

Does the school (staff/students/alumni) have existing relationships with members of the media that need to be closely monitored?