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אגודת הרבנים בסידני והמדינה

Rabbinical Council of New South Wales

September 30, 2016

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your communication and my apologies for the delay in my response.

In your letter to me, you asked me to detail what action the Rabbinical Council of New South Wales has taken as a result of Case Study 22.

In order to respond accurately to your question, I believe that it is appropriate to share with you a relevant section about the objects of the council from the constitution of the Rabbinical Council of New South Wales Incorporated.

"The objects of the Council are:

- (a) to be the professional and representative organisation of the members of the Orthodox Rabbinate and Jewish Clergy in NSW;
- (b) to promote the dignity, status and welfare of Orthodox Judaism, Halacha and the members of the Orthodox Rabbinate and Jewish Clergy in NSW;
- (c) to deal with all matters of concern to members of the Orthodox Rabbinate and Jewish Clergy in NSW; and
- (d) to administer funds, issue proclamations and publications or take any other action by itself or in collaboration with other organisations, in pursuance of the above objectives."

The Rabbinical Council of NSW does not have any legal or religious authority over any of the existing Jewish institutions within NSW.

What the Rabbinical Council of NSW is then, is a council of rabbis who have religious leadership positions throughout NSW. We support one another and get together to discuss issues that affect the Jewish community as well as society at large.

The reason I mention all this is to highlight that while the Rabbinical Council of New South Wales has many respectable members in prominent leadership roles in Jewish institutions, the Rabbinical Council itself as an Incorporation has no legal or religious authority over any of the independent Jewish institutions in NSW.

That said, we - as a council - have been proactive in encouraging our members to be well educated and up to date on policies and procedures in relation to child protection.

Every member of the Rabbinical Council of New South Wales would have received a copy of the attached Child Protection Toolkit booklet and is expected to be familiar with its contents.

We have, together with the Jewish House, coordinated a number of training sessions for the rabbis specifically relating to child protection.

in June 2015, the Rabbinical Council of New South Wales invited Family and Community Services staff Pam Swinfield and Sandy Abrams to facilitate a learning forum for the rabbis about child sexual assault.

We also organised a training session for the members of the Rabbinical Council of New South Wales conducted by Mr Kinmond, Deputy Ombudsman and Community and Disability Services Commissioner in March 2016

In addition, we helped coordinate a training session in March 2016 for the members of the Rabbinical Council of New South Wales on dealing with survivors of child sex abuse, conducted by Dr Catherine Kezelman OAM the chairperson of ASCA (Adults Surviving Child Abuse), a national organisation dedicated to meeting the needs of the more than 2 million Australian adults who were abused as children.

The Rabbinical Council of New South Wales is currently working closely with the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies Task Force on child protection (chaired by Professor Bettina Cass) to ensure that all synagogues as well as other Jewish institutions are following the best and most up to date child protection policies and procedures. Rabbi Mendel Kastel, a prominent member of the Rabbinical Council of New South Wales, is also serving as a member of the above mentioned Task Force.

We thankfully have a close working relationship with the ombudsman's office via Rabbi Kastel and are continuing to utilize every opportunity to provide rabbis with further training in this particular area.

In doing all the above, it is our hope that our community is being better served and our children are being better protected.

I hope this helps.

Please feel free to contact me with any further questions.

With blessings

Rabbi Eli Cohen
President Rabbinical Council of NSW