



Knox Grammar School,  
Wahroonga, N.S.W. 2076

(02) 487 0122

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From the Headmaster

14th February, 1989.

ATH  
REDACTED

Dear ATH

Thank you for your letter and for the appreciative comments you made on our Academic results.

You then embarked upon a remarkable litany of complaints, especially about the boarding "system" with accusations of "violence... back-stabbing..." and the like - well, you know what you've written. You also ask for "Christ-like" examples in Teaching staff - oh, indeed, but where are they in Schools on Earth?

Of course, we understand the "tensions" that exist in our House and the growing adolescent boy. We desperately try to resolve them in appropriate ways. Frankly, ATG was one of our most difficult fellows - we had to bear the brunt of his charge through adolescence, not you! On his own, he was a fine fellow, but my goodness, don't "cross" him or stand in the way of something he expected to have or to do, without facing turmoil and upset. Logic and reason seemed, then, to go out the window with him.

I must stop - for I don't seek to defend our "system" as "perfect" nor to shield the school from criticisms.

It is difficult to address your concerns:

"rigidity of the system" - means?

"lack of consistency of non-teaching staff" - means? Gardners, Cooks, Cleaners? Consistency in what?

"absence of praise" - for what? I assume for something worthwhile that went unnoticed? My Knoxonian is full of praise for boys, as are our Assemblies, House meetings etc.

"absence of adequate pastoral care" - no school in Sydney has a finer reputation for Pastoral Care than Knox - ask the locals. I cannot ensure, however, that it is always "adequate".

"no meaningful" contact with female teachers - every boy is very likely to get one female teacher in each of his first four years at secondary school and possibly for one of his senior years. But, "meaningful contact" means?

"treated as kids" – that is the constant complaint of every adolescent boy who is denied a request by school or parent, and who has to abide by rules set by school or parents.

"... naturally produces rebellion" – fortunately, not so. Only in those few boys who constantly buck the system. The record of "misconduct" is there for you to read in the daily House Reports; of the 84 senior boys, only the names of a few would appear with any regularity.

"...impeccable domestic arrangements" – regrettably, no longer in a school's control. You will know that Discrimination in Employment cannot be practised against those who are divorced, separated or otherwise broken in marriage.

"I was not asked to express views on staff, curriculum or boarding house". No – one is ever asked to express such views! However, anyone is entirely welcome to express views to myself, at any time.

"involve parents in making rules etc". No big school can afford that process – it is simply unworkable. What is good for one parent, is anathema for another... However, we are not sitting in the very best of boarding schools, and we can always do better – I'll try, especially when I have some specifics to correct.

All good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr.) Ian Paterson  
Headmaster