

STRICTLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Report on Mater Dei School, Camden

Background

On 19 February, 1997, information was received by the Case Management Unit of the Department of School Education in relation to an alleged incident of sexual abuse of a former resident of Mater Die. The caller believed that the school had not properly investigated the allegation.

On 13 March 1997, a meeting was held with Ian Baker, Director of Policy, Catholic Schools Commission and Inspector Jenny Davidson, NSW Police Child Protection Enforcement Agency.

Cases relating to this matter :

	<i>Last Name</i>	<i>First Name</i>	<i>date of birth</i>	<i>CIS number</i>
1.	REDACTED			
2.	CIO			
3.	REDACTED			
4.	CIB			

The following could not be included as the case files have not been received

	<i>Last Name</i>	<i>First Name</i>	<i>date of birth</i>	<i>CIS number</i>
5.	CIN			
6.	CIL			
7.	REDACTED			

1. REDACTED

Notification date 11.3.88

This notification relates to allegations that this child had sexually assaulted an unspecified number of children attending the school.

Concerns relating to this matter are as follows :

1. School were aware, at an earlier date(mentioned in report dated 17.3.88), this child had assaulted other children -
 - a. Despite this knowledge, and the fact they held concerns that REDACTED at the time of the notification himself may have been sexually assaulted, the school did not notify this child to the Department until 14.3.88.
 - b. There is no evidence that the other children were notified to this Department as being at risk.
 - c. It is not clear what action the school took to protect other children in light of this knowledge.

2. CIO

Notification dates 19.3.92 and 1.9.92.

Both notifications relate to allegations of sexual assault. Both contain allegations that the perpetrator was another resident named REDACTED, then aged 14-15 yrs.

In this matter, a number of concerns regarding the practices of the school are in evidence :

1. One the first occasion, the REDACTED of the child was not informed of the alleged sexual assault incident until at least two days after it was alleged to have happened.
2. The REDACTED was not informed of the allegation by the school, but by her daughter CIO during a phone call home.
3. The Principal had given instructions that she was to be present when this Department came to the school. She was then not available the week of the notification as she was attending a school camp and would not be available until 8.4.92 - some 18 days after notification.

4. Carol Pournney, the Residential Co-ordinator, “ was not prepared to discuss whether there had been any previous incidents of this nature concerning [REDACTED] ”

Other concerns relating to the “incident” on 19.3.92 :

Carol Pournney, the Residential Co-ordinator, informed Departmental staff of an incident in which CIO [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were observed in the same room, [REDACTED] was dressed and CIO [REDACTED] undressed. No action appears to have been taken by the school in relation to this incident.

Concerns relating to the “incident” on 1.9.92 :

1. Although the school was aware that both children were subjects of previous sexual assault allegations, both were again brought to the attention of this Department, some seven months later. It is not clear if the school had introduced any policy or taken any action to ensure that such an event was not repeated.
2. The School’s withholding of information in relation to [REDACTED] did not appear to be conducive to a positive atmosphere of interagency co-operation, nor did such attitude assist in ensuring the safety of the children in their care.
3. It is not clear what action the school took to reduce the possibility of such incidents in the future.

3. [REDACTED]

Notification date 3.11.94

The notification relates to a sexual assault on this child by another resident of Mater Dei, named [REDACTED] (age not stated).

The concern in this matter is as follows :

1. The school did not inform the mother of the child about the incident until two days after the school had been made aware.

4.]CIB

Notification date 6.6.91.

Whilst this notification relates to allegations that CIB [REDACTED] was sexually assaulted by another resident, it was also alleged that she may have been assaulted by a staff member. This material has since been referred to NSW Police Child Protection

Enforcement Agency. However, the incident has raises further concerns about the manner in which this School has handled allegations of sexual assault of attending students.

The concerns in this matter are as follows :

1. This child was the only female in a cottage with boys in which the house parent was male. There was no female house parent in attendance.
2. The school had been previously informed by this child's mother (date not recorded on file) that the child had been observed coming out of the bathroom with a male resident.
3. The notified assault on the child was serious enough to cause an ulcer in the child's bowel which then resulted in haemorrhaging. (the child's local General Practitioner examined the injury, reporting his belief that the cause was a sexual assault)
4. The school, though stating that the male house parent (CID) had been asked to resign, would not state what the reason for the action (though they had been informed of the concerns). It was later made known that the school had requested the alleged perpetrator known as CID , resignation following concerns about his relationship with the child, CIL
5. A list of 17 children's names is attached to the file. The inference is that the list contains concerns that these children had been sexually assaulted. 5 of these children were known to this Department, of which two children refer to allegations against the house parent known as CID . The list also states that a number of concerns were raised with the School's Executive, by both staff and children's parents, regarding the house parent CID . In one instance it quite clearly states the concern was that CID had sexually assaulted a child by the name of CIL . This child was not one of the children already known to this Department.

Issues in relation to Casework practice

Following perusal of the available files, a number of issues regarding casework practice are evident:

1. It is not clear what, if any, discussion took place by Campbelltown CSC with the school regarding the delays in informing this Department of the allegations contained in the files. It would appear that this was not raised with the school Principal, Sue Dickson nor any action or process implemented to render a solution by Campbelltown CSC.

2. It is not clear what action was taken, by the CSC, in relation to the school not notifying other children, who according to the files, the school identified during the investigations conducted.
3. The information on the REDACTED file reports that REDA allegedly assaulted a number of other children. The names of these children are not recorded. Given the lack of information recorded in this matter, it is not possible to check the CIS to inquire if any action was taken. It would appear therefore, that children who the school were concerned about as being at risk were not interviewed by the CSC.
4. In the case of CIO, the notification states that prior to the notification, the child had been examined vaginally. The notification alleges this examination revealed the child's hymen was not intact. The child was again taken for another examination, by the mother, following the revelation by the child she had been sexually assaulted. There is no explanation on the file for the first medical, nor any exploration as to its relationship to the assault (or any other concerns).
5. In the case of CIB, though the CIS record clearly indicates that Sutherland CSC was aware of the concerns surrounding CIO, no contact appears to have been made with Campbelltown CSC by Sutherland CSC to establish the validity of the school's claim that the concerns were being dealt with.

Summary

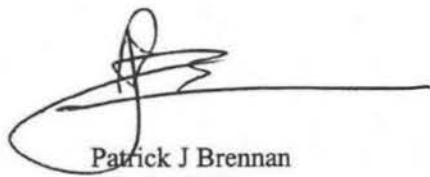
Despite the number of sexual assault allegations in relation to students of this school, it is not clear if any discussion was held with the school, by the management of the Campbelltown CSC, into the concerns such a rate of notifications belies. It would appear that the development of a strategy aimed at reducing the occasion of such behaviour would have been of paramount importance.

This needs also to be seen against the background of a series of other apparent disquieting failures by the school to take appropriate action. eg. not notifying other concerns of sexual abuse, the lack of appropriate investigation of personnel about whom concerns exist as well as the continued employment of such staff.

The District officers file notes state that school staff are reported to have stated to departmental officers they would not provide information about children which was important to be able to adequately determine the level of risk to which children were exposed. (eg. Case number 2 about CIO wherein a staff member would not reveal if a child had previously engaged in sexualised behaviour)

Recommendations

1. Therese Flood, (A/ Senior Project Officer) to bring to the attention of Ann Shandley, Principal Project Officer, Child Protection Unit.
2. A planning meeting to include the following participants :
 - Ann Shandley - Principal Project Officer, CPU.
 - Therese Flood - A/Senior Project Officer, CPU.
 - Tammy Stojanovic - Senior Project Officer, Disability DCS.
 - Jenny Davidson - Inspector, CPEA.
 - Ian Baker - Catholic School Education.
 - Father Brian Lucas - Catholic School Education.



Patrick J Brennan
District Officer
(Assisting Child Protection Unit with DSE Project)
21 March 1997