

BRIEFING NOTE

ISSUE: Update Briefing Note on outcome of investigation into allegations of physical and sexual abuse involving students at Trinity Grammar School.

CURRENT AS AT: 17 November 2000

BACKGROUND:

- On 5 October 2000, the Joint Investigation team at Ashfield received a notification from Strathfield Community Service Centre. The notification contained allegations of a number of physical and sexual/ indecent assault offences committed upon four victims, who are boarding students at Trinity Grammar School. During the investigation it became apparent that other students would need to be interviewed to ascertain if there were additional victims or whether they had witnessed the alleged abuse.
- It appears from our investigation that many of the witnesses were themselves victims but were unable to provide sufficient details in order for charging to occur.
- The principal of Trinity Grammar School and many of the teachers there have also given statements to Police to assist in the investigation.
- Twenty-one boarding students from Trinity Grammar were interviewed as part of the Joint Investigation team investigation.
- On 10 November 2000 a Protection Planning Meeting attended by Trinity Grammar School, Department of Health and DoCS was held to ensure services are in place for the victims, to address the personal and psychological safety of the victims and witnesses at the school, and to address issues in relation to the School's Duty of Care regarding the future safety of all students. This PPM was chaired by the Acting Director, Child and Family.
- At this meeting decisions were made in order to address the above issues. These decisions are listed below.

KEY ISSUES:

- Trinity Grammar has made a commitment to the points listed below in order to provide safety for all its students as well as supporting the victims and witnesses.
- The school has agreed that the alleged perpetrators will be suspended indefinitely.
- Students will have ongoing access to school counsellors. This is to provide assistance and counselling, and to monitor how the students are coping, and assess the need for additional services to be put in place. The school organised for the school counsellors to be available for students and their families on a Sunday evening when the boarders were

returning from a compulsory weekend at home. This was to address any questions or concerns that families wished to raise.

- The school joined with the New South Wales Police service in addressing the year twelve students at Trinity Grammar School. The purpose of the address was to acquaint the students with the seriousness of the allegations and to ensure that there were no further abusive incidents directed at the victims.
- The school has advised the whole school community by letter of their co-operation with the JIT investigation. The Principal has addressed a number of meetings, including the Annual General Meeting, Parents and Friends of Trinity, Old Trinity Union Meeting, the Trinity Connection meeting and the Ladies Auxiliary to ensure that information is consistent.
- The school principal has spoken with all parents of boarding students that reside overseas to answer any queries or questions that they wished to clarify.
- The school has had continued contact with the families of the victims, witnesses and alleged perpetrators in order to offer support and services to them.
- The school has increased the level of supervision of the boarding house in light of the allegations and the length of time that the alleged abuse had been going on. Currently, the boarding house is closed during the day to ensure the protection of the boarders. This will be reviewed in the near future. The school has undertaken to engage an outside consultant to assist with a review of the current boarding house arrangements and to make recommendations to assist the school in ensuring the future safety of its boarding students.
- The school in conjunction with the Department of Health has devised a critical response checklist to ensure that there are procedures in place, which would enable students to be appropriately resourced.
- The Department of Health has put in place the following services to assist victims, witnesses and their families, and provide information and assistance to all members of the staff at Trinity Grammar School. All the families involved have been contacted and offered services such as, sexual assault medicals, sexual assault counselling, general advice on the effects of sexual assault and assistance in assessing when a child or young person is not coping. Information has been provided to the victims, witnesses and their families on the process of prosecution and the supports available to assist them through this process. This included the Witness Assistance Scheme.
- Appropriate services have been put in place for the victims, witnesses and their families to assist them both in the interim and in the future. The school has taken the appropriate measures to ensure the students safety and wellbeing. The Department of Public Prosecution will hold a meeting for the witnesses and their families in order to answer questions about the court process.
- The Joint Investigation Team will continue to liaise with all parties to ensure that the decisions made at the Protection Planning Meeting are being implemented.

ATTACHMENTS:

Nil