

## PRELIMINARY ADVICE RE TRINITY GRAMMAR

On the afternoon of 8 September (last day of the school term) the school counsellor at Trinity Grammar contacted Strathfield CSC to report inappropriate sexual behaviour on four students by two perpetrators, also students of the school. It is understood that all students involved are boarders of the school.

The allegations primarily relate to sexual abuse of students by other (mostly older) students, including the penetration of wooden "dildos" made in the woodwork rooms at the school, into student's bottoms through clothing while children were forcibly held and tied down.

The age of the victims ranges from 14-17 years (Years 7-10). The perpetrators are mostly around 17 years (Year 10). The youngest victim has alleged he was assaulted on 50 occasions. The oldest victim has alleged being assaulted on at least 25 occasions.

An assessment was made by the intake officer and the Assistant Manager at Strathfield CSC that the victims would be safe from harm, given it was school holidays and the students involved were boarders. The matter was referred to Ashfield JIT on 5 October. The referral process is being reviewed by the Acting Director Child and Family (Metro South West).

The school was apparently aware of the allegations for four weeks before they notified Strathfield CSC. When the school counsellor contacted Strathfield CSC, they reported that the school was aware of abuse allegations earlier in the year. The school made the perpetrators apologise to the victims and according to the school counsellor, the incidents declined. DoCS were not notified at the time.

Ashfield JIT commenced interviews at the school on 9 October and, as at 12 October the JIT will have interviewed 15 alleged victims and 7 alleged perpetrators.

Cheryl McDuff Assistant Manager from JIT Ashfield is currently coordinating the investigation for DoCS.

A police warrant was issued on the school today, 12 October.

Parents have been notified and many are flying to Australia from overseas to be with their children. Most of the alleged offender's families have engaged solicitors, as has the school. The school has apparently contacted their insurance company, which could imply that they expect parents to sue them.

Two meetings will occur tomorrow (13 October). A planning meeting will take place at 9.30am at Ashfield JIT. Given the seriousness of the allegations, it is anticipated that senior police will attend including CPEA Commander John Heslop, Insp Sue Lightfoot, the police analyst, and JIT police. DoCS officers at this meeting will be Wayne Penniall, Acting Director Child and Family (Metro South West); Assistant Manager Ashfield JIT Cheryl McDuff and Strathfield CSC Manager Barry Ward.

This meeting will focus on the evidence obtained through interviews and will develop planned actions to be taken by police, DoCS and the school.

A second meeting will be held with school staff and school solicitors at 11.30 to discuss the issues with the school. This will be attended by DoCS officers and police.

Following these meetings a comprehensive briefing will be prepared for the Minister.

Mandatory reporting by non government schools was introduced on 14 March 1997.

It is believed the alleged perpetrators have been suspended from Trinity Grammar.

Given the sensitivities of the allegations, the age of both perpetrators and victims and agencies involved, the Director General has requested there be considerable liaison prior to any comment being given to media.

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12.10.00