

CONFIDENTIAL

SUMMARY OF REPORT OF INVESTIGATION INTO INCIDENTS AT DRIPSTONE HIGH SCHOOL INVOLVING MR GREGORY KNIGHT

BACKGROUND

In October 1993, the Northern Territory police laid charges against Mr Gregory Robert Knight, formerly a teacher at Dripstone High School, alleging sexual assault on male students at the school.

Mr Knight was convicted in the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory on 7 December 1994 of 15 counts.

Mr Knight was then sentenced by the Supreme Court on 16 December 1994 to eight years of imprisonment with a non parole period of three years.

On 12/2/95, the inquiry officers, Mr Glyn Rhys-Jones of the Department of Sport and Recreation and Ms Jane Hogan of Territory health Services, were appointed by the Secretary Department of Education to conduct an inquiry, and as an outcome to provide a written and a confidential report to him.

The investigating officers presented their report to the Secretary in May 1996.

CONDUCT OF THE INVESTIGATION

The names and telephone numbers of the inquiry officers were published in the Dripstone High School newsletter. This enabled independent and discreet access to inquiry officers by a wide range of readers. Additionally the School Council President was notified, so that parents were able to make contact.

Meetings were held with various key players to gain necessary background information.

Personal interviews were conducted to gain both information and an understanding of individual perceptions of the operating environment at the school. Interviewees included:

- Persons referred for interview
- Persons selected for interview through process
- Self referrals for interview

Every one who sought an interview was accommodated.

Records and other documents that were relevant to the inquiry were assessed to gain an understanding of organisational processes and information networks.

This information was then assessed to determine whether any incident identified during the inquiry corresponded to the date, circumstances, nature, or persons involved in the incidents which led to Mr Knight's conviction.

A set of guiding principles was determined to ensure the inquiry was managed with sensitivity:

- confidentiality and privacy was maintained throughout the inquiry and all persons interviewed were guaranteed that their comments would remain confidential to the inquiry officers and hence the Appointing Authority.
- The avoidance of interviewing students who were directly affected by Mr Knight's activities unless personal interview was critical to satisfying the terms of reference.
- All persons interviewed would be invited to read the terms of reference.
- Interviews with employees would allow personal comment and be recorded in a brief anecdotal format. Where practicable the record would be signed by the employee. Issues raised would be clarified as needed.
- Interviews with parents would inform them of the terms of reference, allow comment and provide them with factual information and seek their perceptions of what a satisfactory outcome to the Inquiry would entail.

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND FINDINGS

To consider whether there is any evidence that any employee of the Department -

- a) **had knowledge, or reasonable suspicion, of the activities of Mr Knight at Dripstone High School prior to October 1993 which resulted in Mr Knight being charged and convicted of offences; and**
- b) **failed to report such knowledge or suspicion or failed to take such action as might reasonably be expected of such an employee.**

The investigating officers found no substantiated evidence that any employee either had reasonable suspicion of Mr Knight's activities or failed to report such knowledge or suspicion. In addition, the investigating officers found no evidence to suggest that any employee witnessed any activities which led to Mr Knight's conviction.

To consider whether adequate procedures were in place at Dripstone High School, prior to October 1993, pursuant to which -

- a) **staff and/or students could report any knowledge or reasonable suspicion regarding conduct towards students of the kind which resulted in Mr Knight being charged and convicted of offences with a view to having the reports investigated; and**
- b) **such reports could be properly investigated.**

The investigating officers found that there were no formal "incident reporting" procedures in place in the school prior to October 1993 but that the established administrative reporting system was "more than adequate" to register and process any concerns of a serious nature.

The investigating officers also found that, at the time, formal procedures for students to report any matters of concern were minimal but that there were several established school based support structures in place which students and or parents could readily access to report any incident or concern. The investigating officers concluded that if any staff or students had reported any

knowledge or reasonable suspicion of Mr Knight's activities there was nothing to suggest that such reports could not be properly investigated and "brought to finality".

To consider whether, if such procedures existed, they were followed to any extent and, if so, to what extent.

The investigating officers found it difficult to quantify to what extent such procedures were prior to October 1993 but noted that the procedures were followed quickly and effectively at the time the first written complaint was lodged about Mr Knight's activities.

To consider whether there are any procedures which are not currently in place which should be implemented at Dripstone High School to assist in the prevention or early detection of conduct towards students of the kind which resulted in Mr Knight being charged and convicted of offences.

The investigating officers formed the opinion that there were procedures that were not in place at Dripstone High School that need to be considered for implementation to assist in the prevention of and detection of conduct towards students as perpetrated by Mr Knight. They made a number of procedural recommendations in their report for consideration by the Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The establishment of a simple well publicised and accessible critical incident reporting and follow up process for complaint lodgement to provide a "transparent complaint resolution process which ensures the accountability of all involved".
2. The establishment of a formalised performance management process for all staff.
3. The establishment of formalised professional history and critical incident records on all staff.
4. The preparation of a consolidated information package for school clients which specifies school services and details school policies on various issues including harassment. The package should also identify staff who would be responsible in any complaint resolution process