



NSW Ombudsman

Our reference: Y/2002/20

11 November 2003

Mr Peter Crawley
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Dear Mr Crawley

Ombudsman Audit of Knox Grammar School on 16 and 17 September 2003.

I wish to thank you for your co-operation and willingness to assist during our recent visit to your school.

As previously advised, we have been auditing a number of independent boarding schools during 2002 and 2003. The purpose of these audits has been to assist agencies to improve their practices with regard to child protection and to provide practical support in the way of training and policy development where applicable.

This letter and the attached document 'Provisional Ombudsman Audit Assessment' constitute our provisional findings and recommendations from the audit. I would ask that you treat this letter and the assessment as confidential and not make them available to anyone other than authorised school staff. I am providing it to you so that you have an opportunity to make a submission in relation to its contents. We will consider any comments you make before we issue our final report to you.

You are not required to make a submission, but if you wish to do so, please provide it by **Friday 28 November 2003**. If we have not heard from you by that date, we will assume you do not wish to make a submission and will proceed to finalise the report.

Provisional Findings

The audit interviews that we conducted showed that staff were committed to the well-being and education of the students in their care. The staff indicated their respect of and support from the school's executive management team and we were impressed with the school's commitment to the professional development of all staff. The students stated that they felt safe at the school and they were all able to nominate staff members who they felt confident would deal with any concerns they may have.

The school had worked hard in implementing positive strategies to minimise the risk of child abuse and bullying within the school environment, and creating a culture where students, parents and staff felt comfortable in reporting any concerns.

The school had three handbooks: Boarding – Student and Parent Handbook; Boarding Staff Handbook; and a Staff Handbook which included comprehensive information on what was required from staff, parents and students and included information about a number of school policies.

Staff displayed a good understanding of practices that are inappropriate in the workplace and were clear about their responsibility to report allegations of child abuse against employees to the senior staff and/or the Principal.

The school demonstrated that it was committed to good practice and ensuring the safety and welfare of the students in its care. We have made some provisional recommendations for the school to consider. These are detailed more fully in the attached document 'Provisional Ombudsman Audit Assessment'.

We make the following provisional recommendations:

That the school:

1. Reviews and updates the school and boarding school child protection policy (refer to pages 4 and 8 of the provisional audit assessment for suggested information to be included in the school's child protection policy). The updated child protection policy should be included in the school's handbooks.
2. Request that the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) provides the school with an updated version of its protocol for undertaking disciplinary investigations, if available and/or with information to replace outdated legislation.
3. Provides information and training to all staff about the school's code of conduct and relevance to child protection legislation.
4. Develops a central register for complaints, including child abuse allegations against employees (refer page 8).
5. Includes information about the complaints procedure (including allegations of child abuse against employees) in the 'Student and Parent Handbook', 'Boarding Staff Handbook' and 'Staff Handbook'.

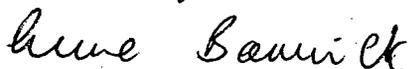
Once we have received further information from you, we will issue you with a final report and will contact you again to request information about how you plan to implement our recommendations.

The Ombudsman will also review the school's central register for complaints by June 2004.

Again, I would like to thank you and your staff for your cooperation during our visit to the school. I also encourage you to complete and return the 'Audit Questionnaire' that I have enclosed with this letter. It contains questions that are designed to assist us with the evaluation of our audit process.

Any feedback that you provide would be greatly appreciated. If you would like to discuss any of the matters raised in this letter or in the attached documents, please contact Kylie Symons on **REDACTE** or Elizabeth LeBrocq on **REDACTE**.

Yours sincerely



Anne Barwick
Assistant Ombudsman (Children & Young People)