

**Submission to
The Assistant Ombudsman (Children and Young People)**

Audit Proposal for Independent Boarding Schools

Background

From an analysis of trends, reporting patterns and other intelligence gathered over the past two years, independent schools, particularly those providing boarding facilities, have been targeted in the Child Protection Team Business Plan as a priority area for closer scrutiny than that already exercised through our oversight and monitoring functions.

In the 2000-2001 Annual Report we stated that independent schools had significantly lower rates of reporting than government and Catholic systemic schools. We determined that this was likely to be due to a failure by independent schools to report a significant number of child abuse allegations. The continuing resistance of independent schools to meet their reporting obligations was noted as a concern.

During 2001 we spoke to the principals of independent boarding schools and explained their obligations under the Act and their reporting requirements. During 2002 we conducted numerous workshops with the assistance of the Association of Independent Schools. These workshops were to principals of independent schools to again highlight their obligations and requirements under the Act.

The above concerns still exist, however we have started to receive a small number of notifications from independent boarding schools

Five schools have been randomly selected to be audited in 2002 and 2003. Due to the low level of notifications received from boarding schools, we have chosen a random sample. This sample is to include metropolitan and country schools, single sex and co-ed and schools with a small and large number of boarders.

The chosen schools are:

Pymble Ladies' College – Pymble – Girls boarding school (K – Year 12)
 Mount Erin – Wagga Wagga – Girls boarding school (Years 7 – 12)
 The Kings School – North Parramatta – Boys boarding school (K to Year 12)
 Newington College – Stanmore – Boys boarding school (K to 12)
~~Barker College~~ – Hornsby – Co-ed boarding school (Years 3 - 12) **KNor**
 Scots School – Bathurst – Co-ed boarding school (Preschool to Year 12)
 Chevalier College – Bowral – Boys boarding school (Years 7 – 12)
 Frensham – Mittagong – Girls boarding school (Years 7 – 12)

Aim of Audit

1. To identify and assess the systems in place to prevent child abuse by employees.
2. To identify and assess the systems for handling and responding to allegations of child abuse.
3. To determine whether practice matches policy and procedures.

Key Issues for Audit

- (a) That the Policies and Procedures address the vulnerability of children who reside in boarding schools.
- (b) That staff training programs, supervision and support are adequate.
- (c) That records maintenance systems collect all allegations of child abuse and document the action taken to address the incidents.
- (d) That staff are aware of their responsibilities in regard to child protection and their requirements under the Ombudsman Act 1974.

Proposed Action

1. Preparation
 - i. Research information relating to the boarding schools identified. That is, have we received any notifications or enquiry calls from these schools, or have they attended any training provided by us, or the Association of Independent Schools.
 - ii. Planning meeting with identified CPT staff to discuss methodology, timeframes and links with other planned audits of schools (eg: the SSP audit).
2. Contact agencies to introduce the Ombudsman and explain its role.
3. Send letters to confirm audit process and call for documents and/or information *.
4. Analyse documents and formulate questions and audit tool.
5. Visit agencies and interview appropriate staff and stakeholders.
6. Analyse emerging issues.
7. Prepare report.

***Documents to be called for include:**

Policies and Procedures

- Child Protection
- Critical Incident Reporting
- Medication
- Behaviour Management/Discipline

Records– examples of

- Day Books
- Incident report forms
- Medication/treatment records

Paid employees/volunteers/specialists

- Numbers
- Positions/roles
- Experience
- Training in behaviour management
- Awareness of Child Protection Policies
- Number of current employees subject of previous allegations

Children

- Number of children enrolled
- Number of boarders

Proposed Resources:**Staffing**

SIO	Elizabeth Le Brocq
SIO	Julia McCosker
IO	Julie Ross
IO	Tamaris Cameron
IO	Sally Haydon
IO	Pauline O'Callaghan
AIOs	Judith Grant
	Joanna Jones

Transport and Accommodation:

- The country audits are to link in with the SSP country audits.
- Use of the office car for the boarding schools based within driving distance.

Julie Ross
Investigation Officer

Elizabeth Le Brocq
Senior Investigation Officer

Katharine Ovenden
Manager, Child Protection Team