

OCCG: 1245

FILE NOTE

Agency: Hunter Aboriginal Children's Services
Nature of contact: Discussion on-site
Date: 31 May 2011

Notes:

During case file audit conducted 25 May 2011, Karen Menzies approached staff conducting the audit to discuss issues that had been raised during the day's debrief with staff. Karen is currently providing cultural debriefing for all staff each Wednesday.

- Staff have indicated to Karen that they feel the Children's Guardian are being insensitive to what is currently occurring within the agency, particularly around the accreditation process. They perceive that the Children's Guardian have been inflexible with regard to timeframes around accreditation and there appears to be a general lack of understanding around the purpose of case file audits.
- Alii Prior discussed having met with some members of the Board and Adrian Elliot and the decision they had made (supported by this office) that it was important for staff to see that while a significant event had occurred, the agency was strong enough to carry on with business as usual.
- Karen felt this decision may have been made in the heat of the moment and that perhaps there was a feeling now that things had settled, that this may have been somewhat hasty.
- There was also a feeling that the agencies who had initially engaged and were supportive (CG being one) were now nowhere to be seen. Karen also advised that Karen Elphick had lost her job last week.
- Karen Menzies discussed the fact that SL's grooming tactics had also been used on the staff; that he had kept them isolated and uninvolved in the process of accreditation and had told them that HACS was considered one of the leading Aboriginal OOHHC agencies and right on track for accreditation.
- AP discussed the fact that management had a responsibility also for ensuring that staff understood processes and the legislative responsibilities of the agency in the provision of OOHHC and not just SL. Karen agreed but stated that there were 'competency issues' involved as well.
- Karen asked if we would personally talk to the staff and let them know that contrary to what they may feel, the Children's Guardian are sensitive to what is happening and perhaps explain what CFA was about as many felt that there would be criticism levelled at their individual casework. AP discussed that while we were happy to do this, it was actually an issue to be addressed with management if staff felt uninformed. AP clarified the purpose of CFA with Karen.
- Karen also discussed that staff had informed her that SL had ensured that they never undertook child protection / protective behaviours training and that she was in the process of putting this into place.

Alii Prior
Senior Project Officer - Accreditation