

PO-7

file 7

17

3.2002



Scouts Australia (New South Wales Branch)  
**MEMBERS SUPPORT BACKGROUNDER**

"The Bunyas"  
 Rogers St  
 HABERFIELD  
 (02 9799 9244)

**SUGGESTIONS FOR DEALING WITH  
 GROUPS/DISTRICTS/REGIONS WHERE  
 A LEADER HAS BEEN SUSPENDED OR ARRESTED DUE  
 TO  
 ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE.**

The NSW Branch believes that all those involved and/or effected by any allegations should have support and/or consider counselling however we must respect the rights of the individuals concerned, their privacy and justice.

The Association doesn't provide counselling, as it is important that such counselling be at arms length, completely independent, and provided by local experts in the field. Both sides and the public could easily misconstrue scouting's involvement.

**In dealing with:**

**A. The media,**

This is simply:

"I would suggest you contact our Branch Headquarters who would be only too pleased to assist you." *If they persist* "I have little to no factual information on the matter if you want the facts I suggest you contact our Branch Headquarters on 9799 9244."

**B. The Accused:-**

In most cases the accused will have received, or will receive legal advice to make no statement or comment to anyone. Most don't appreciate that this means ANYONE including friends and scouting. That anyone could be summonsed by the prosecution to give evidence as to what the accused said to him or her.

It is very common that the accused will not appreciate that it is important to follow legal advice, even to the extent of trying to explain themselves to scouting. They often claim scouts have abandoned them but it is in their interest for us not to investigate or hear their story.

They should be encouraged to seek counselling. To ask their legal advisor, medical practitioner, religious advisor or Community Health Centre or some other accredited agency for support.

That it is in the best interest of all for members of the Association to remain at arms length.

**C. The Victims:-**

i. In most cases the victim will have received, or will receive legal advice to make no statement or comment to anyone. Most don't appreciate that this is means ANYONE including friends and scouting. That anyone could be summonsed by the prosecution to give evidence as to what the accused said to them

ii. It is very common that the victim will not appreciate that it is important to follow legal advice even to the extent of trying to complain to scouts. They often claim scouts have abandoned them but it is in their interest for us not to investigate or hear their story.

- iii. They should be encouraged to seek counselling. To ask their legal advisor, medical practitioner, religious advisor, school counsellor, Community Health Centre or some other accredited agency for support. In cases involving the police they usually direct the victims to appropriate support people as soon as practical.
- iv. Any contact the police have with us concerning the matter we seek reassurance that they are referring the alleged victims for appropriate counselling/support and impressing on them the need for prompt action.
- v. That it is in the best interest of all for members of the Association to remain at arms length.
- vi. We are co-operating fully with the authorities and police,

**D. Those associated with the section:-**

- i. To reassure that the Association has acted promptly to maximise protection for all members, including youth members, by suspending the accused, without any implication of guilt or innocence. To allow the authorities to carry out their investigations to ascertain the facts.
- ii. That for the Association, or its members, to be involved with either side could not only be misconstrued but might prejudice any investigation or judicial hearing.
- iii. That they should not interrogate their children, and possibly exacerbate the problem. If concerned they should seek the help of an independent counsellor through their own medical practitioner, religious advisor, school counsellor, Community Health Centre or some other accredited agency for support.
- iv. Legal advice is that it is in the best interest of all concerned, and justice, for all members of the Association to remain at arms length.
- v. That the only person who can make comment as a member of the Scout Association is the Chief Commissioner or his/her delegate.
- vi. We cannot, or should not, discourage any private citizen from providing evidence or support. That they should make it clear that any opinion is their own and not that of the Association.
- vii. The accused or victim should be aware that anyone could be called to give evidence, in court, as to what was said. So they must be encouraged to follow their legal advice.

Warwick Bateman OAM  
Branch Commissioner  
Members Support