

"A2"

This is attachment "A2" to the statement of AT

9th May 2012

**Mr. Rodney Tant**  
**Principal**  
**Laguna Street Public School**  
**Caringbah**

Cc: parent forum subscribers and interested parents  
Enclosures: copy of letter to Mr. Phillip Hare dated 30/4/12  
And copy of YMCA parent permission note dated 3/2/12

AT

[Redacted signature area]

By hand and by email

**RE: CONTINUED CONCERNS REGARDING YMCA**

Dear Mr. Tant,

Again I would like to take the opportunity to say thank you for your time and the many discussions we have had surrounding this very important matter. I still hold many concerns about the practices and policies of YMCA. At this stage I would like to highlight two of my current concerns to you, as I believe they may also raise concerns for our school.

During term one, I believe around the 23rd February, we had a discussion in your office regarding my concern that YMCA were still asking parents to sign blanket permission slips for children to sometimes be alone with one worker on the YMCA bus. This is subsequent to YMCA's CEO, Mr. Hare attending our parent forum where the childcare expert canvassed the risks associated with these practices.

In addition to this, it has come to my attention that as a parent of a child who was in care at the time that Jonathan Lord was removed from YMCA I am yet to receive any correspondence from YMCA or from anyone else regarding any outcome or recommendations of the 'external audit'. As you will see from the letter I have attached, the YMCA put in writing in their handout to parents that YMCA management had engaged Network-the peak childcare body in NSW to conduct this external audit, and that results would be made known to parents. Given that I had not received anything from YMCA I contacted the CEO for Network. The CEO indicated to me that at no stage had Network agreed to do an external audit, she explained the role of Network is to provide training and support if sought by childcare providers and that performing an audit would not be a proper function for them to undertake.

Please see a copy of my most recent letter to YMCA dated 30th April 2012. Mr. Hare is away until the 10th May 2012 and YMCA has indicated that they will address my concerns then. Please also see a copy of YMCA's blanket permission

note requesting permission for children to sometimes be alone with one worker on the YMCA bus.

**IN SUMMARY:**

It appears that YMCA is still adopting practices and policies that enable children to be one on one with a worker. It appears that they are accountable to no-one with respect to whether an external audit is or has been undertaken and whether those results are being made available to parents as promised by YMCA. If YMCA is not taking responsibility for this, then someone in the government needs to. Mr. Tant, given that we have many children at our school who attend this service, I urge you to act to ensure YMCA are accountable and are operating at best practice to ensure the safety of the children. And if YMCA are not able to provide a childcare service that operates at best practice, I urge you to replace them with an alternative childcare provider who **IS** willing to operate at best practice. All children are entitled to this.

As a community we all have a role in contributing to ensure the safety of our children and minimize the risk of child sexual assault.

I look forward to receiving your response and as always am happy to discuss my concerns with you.

Yours Sincerely,

AT

30<sup>th</sup> April 2012

**Mr Phillip Hare  
Chief Executive Officer  
YMCA of Sydney  
Level 5, 91 George Street  
Parramatta  
NSW 2150**

AT

[REDACTED]

By email and by registered post

**RE: CHILD PROTECTION IN OOSH CARE**

Dear Mr Hare,

As you are aware there are many concerns that AW and myself have brought to your attention with regards to child protection in your organization. At this point, we would like to reiterate and further canvas the following:

**1. YMCA Meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2011**

***External Audit of YMCA Practices***

After the removal of one of your childcare workers, Jonathan Lord, the YMCA held a series of meetings for parents whose children attended OOSH childcare services in the Sutherland Shire. As you will recall, at the meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November at Caringbah, both AW and myself were in attendance. YMCA staff in attendance included yourself, Liam Whitley, Jacqui Barnat and Irene Minnos.

At this meeting, parents were handed a copy of the overheads that were presented. The document was dated 11/23/2011 and on page 5 it is stated:

Management has organized an external audit of our practices through the NSW Peak Organization for Outside School Hours Care-Network of Community Activities. Any changes or recommendations will be communicated to families assessing our services.

In addition to this, Mr. Whitley verbally indicated that the peak body, Network, was currently reviewing childcare policies. I had previously requested to receive all correspondence to parents regarding the charges against Jonathan Lord, then referred to as the POI. Jacqui Barnat confirmed by email dated 24/10/11 that I would 'receive all correspondence'. To date, neither AW nor myself have received any information regarding the external audit that was being carried out, in spite of our asserted concerns.

I phoned Ms. Robyn Miller, Executive Officer, Network of Community Activities, on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012 to enquire about the external audit. Ms Miller indicated to me that at no stage was an audit performed for the YMCA in relation to this matter. Ms Miller indicated that Network provides resources for childcare services and that it would not be appropriate for Network to perform such a function.

We ask that you explain who then has performed the external audit and that you make public the changes which you have and will implement.

### ***Complaint about transportation of children***

During the meeting, you invited parents to speak with you one-on-one at the conclusion of the meeting. AW and myself accepted this offer and as you will recall, we spoke with you for quite some time. We discussed many of our concerns with you.

In particular, I disclosed to you that my son attended vacation care where Jonathan Lord, then referred to as the POI was a childcare worker. When I left my son at the YMCA vacation service, there was a bus, on which I assumed my child was travelling to the excursions with the other children. At some stage later, my son disclosed to me that in addition to the bus, that Jonathan Lord would often drive other children to the excursions in the YMCA car. My son explained to me that Jonathan Lord would choose the children that were to go with him in the car. On one occasion he chose my son to travel in the car with him and three other children. At no stage had YMCA sought my permission for my son to be driven in a car with only one worker present. It is my understanding that this is not best practice and not good risk management.

I indicated to you that several times I had attempted to speak with Jacqui Barnat to make a complaint about what my son had disclosed, but I had great difficulty being transferred to her when I rang YMCA at Caringbah. Eventually on Thursday the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2011 at around 10.07 am, Mr. Liam Whitley, General Manager for Children's Services at YMCA, returned my call. When I explained the details of my complaint to him, he asked whether it was a private vehicle or YMCA car. He said to let him know if it was a private vehicle but if it was the YMCA car then that happens all the time and it is industry practice. I specifically asked him if it was acceptable to him and to YMCA, for a worker to be alone with students in a car, to transport them to an excursion and he said it was 'OK', and that it happens all the time.

What actions have you or the YMCA taken to deal with my complaint?

## **2. Parent Forum, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2011 at Cronulla**

The Parent Forum held a meeting at 8pm on Thursday the 24<sup>th</sup> November at Central Hall in Cronulla. Thank you for your attendance at this meeting where parents' concerns about childcare practices at YMCA were presented. Thank you for taking notes about parents' concerns and for indicating to AW and myself, at the close of the forum that you would make changes and work towards addressing each issue.

One of the many concerns that you indicated that you would address, was the concern about the policy, which enabled one worker to drive vehicles transporting children. Mrs. Sue Stewart-Watt, a childcare specialist, explained that having a single worker driving a vehicle was not best practice and was not good risk management. Another concern was the use of blanket permission notes. Mrs. Sue Stewart-Watt also explained that blanket permission notes were also not best practice. With regard to permission notes, best practice would require one permission note per event.

It has come to the attention of the parent forum, that sometime after the 3/2/12, some parents were given a blanket permission letter requesting parents permission for some children in certain circumstances to 'travel by themselves on the YMCA bus to and from school.' This letter was dated over two months after you attended our parent forum and after you indicated that the YMCA would be making changes and working towards addressing each of the parents concerns.

We ask you to explain how the YMCA is working towards addressing the concerns about single drivers transporting children and blanket permission notes? We ask how can parents trust your organization when you make a representation that you will address the issues, yet continue to operate at below best practice?

## **3. Text message received from Mr Hare dated 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011.**

Further, thank you for the text message dated 2<sup>nd</sup> of December 2011, which you sent to AW and myself in which you stated: 'I will work with our Childcare team to try and address each specific issue. Based on the items we can both implement some actions immediately and respond to you and the parent forum on other items that will be more challenging.'

You also asked the parent forum for a copy of the power point presentation, which included each of the parental concerns. These were presented in the presence of school principals, other parents and childcare workers. AW and myself had discussed our concerns with you at length, following both the YMCA meeting and the Parent Forum. In addition to this, you had stated that the YMCA had engaged an external audit of your practices with Network of Community

Activities, and that you would be hiring a staff member who was responsible for assisting your organization to implement new policies and procedures in order to be compliant with the new National Quality Framework which commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012.

Provision of the power point presentation was not necessary, given that the YMCA were sufficiently resourced with parent concerns, the expertise of the external auditor, and a staff member whose role it would be to drive the implementation of the National Quality Framework.

If this role has been filled, we have not received any further correspondence regarding this role and YMCA's ability to comply with the National Quality Framework.

#### **4 Parental Consultation**

The Parent Forum also understands that parental consultation is a new and important requirement under the National Quality Framework. AW and myself, would be willing to be part of your parent consultative committee in the interests of working together towards safer childcare practices at YMCA.

#### **Conclusion**

We ask that you explain who has performed the external audit on your organization. We ask that you make the outcome of the audit public. We believe that this is in the public interest. What actions have you or the YMCA taken to deal with my complaint? We ask you to explain how the YMCA is working towards addressing the concerns about single drivers transporting children, blanket permission notes and other concerns raised by the Parent Forum? Who is the person who is currently employed to assist the YMCA to comply with the National Quality Framework? How is your organization complying with the requirement of parental collaboration required under the National Quality Framework?

Yours Sincerely,

AT on behalf of AW and the Parent Forum



We build strong **PEOPLE**  
strong **FAMILIES** strong **COMMUNITIES**

YMCA of St

3/2/12

Dear parents of Before and After School Care,

I am writing to inform you of a change to our transportation of children procedure and to ask for your assistance in this matter.

Currently we transport children to and from school in YMCA buses that are driven by YMCA Children's Services staff. While this aspect of our procedure will continue we have noticed an increase in the number of times where we will have the need to transport only one child to certain schools.

Presently in the situation where we have one child being dropped off we have included into our procedure the need to have two staff on the bus. In some of our centres that are shared with other groups such as a school class or a play group we have found that the late pack up is impacting on their program. It is for this reason that we are suggesting that the children travel on the bus with just the driver.

Our staff will be speaking with individual families that may have this situation arise with their children. We are asking that you take the time to consider allowing a single bus driver to take your child to school.

Further to this we have set clear procedures to allow this to happen in the safest possible manner which includes

- Parents to be informed about this procedure if it is applicable to them and written permission is to be given.
- Mobile phones to be taken by bus driver on each trip
- No child to be sitting in the front passenger seat of the bus
- Clear timelines given to the drivers - if they are delayed due to traffic or bus issues they are to contact their direct Manager immediately and alternate arrangements made where necessary.

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I \_\_\_\_\_ (parents name), give permission for my child

\_\_\_\_\_ that attends \_\_\_\_\_ (centre

name) to travel by themselves on the YMCA bus to and from school.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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