

To the Executive

YMCA Children's Services

13 November 2011

Dear Executive,

In my meeting with Jaqui Barnat and Irene Minos on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2011, and in recent correspondence: emails to James Ellender and a telephone conversation with the CEO, I have conveyed the concerns of a significant number of parents in the YMCA community who believe that the child protection practices of your organisation need to be re-evaluated in light of the recent allegations of sex abuse by one of your child care workers on children in BASC care/vacation care.

AT another parent and myself, have met several times to discuss these issues. Of particular concern is the fact that your BASC care service and BASC services in NSW are not currently regulated by Community Services. Whilst you have policies which may reflect industry standards, we wish to ensure that your operational practices effectively achieve these standards. We have contacted many relevant organisations to ask advice about how to achieve timely consideration of and implementation of our concerns about child protection and BASC. We are aware that BASC will become regulated as of 1 January, 2012. However, as there will be a phasing in period, we believe that any changes should occur as soon as possible in order to increase the safety of children who use your BASC service.

We believe that parent participation in the form of a joint committee with parents and YMCA representatives, can help ensure that your organisation is responsive to the needs and concerns of parents and children of the YMCA. As parents we have a right to determine how our children will be looked after. Parents currently need to increase their confidence in your organisation in the area of child protection practices. We need more than verbal re-assurance that our children are protected from any pedophile that may slip through all screening methods or may be a first time offender.

As you have acknowledged, the current situation has been very distressing for parents, children, our community and indeed for your organisation in particular your staff members who have been been the frontline people dealing with our concerns.

To address these issues, we have formed the Shire Before After School Care Parent Forum. Details about the structure of this Forum are listed below.

- i. Public Notice / Advertisement of Parent Forum in Leader Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November.  
(see attachment Leader ad 1)  
Parents/ community members are asked to express concerns/ suggestions about BASC child protection issues to our email address  
[REDACTED]
- ii. Meeting 1: 8p.m. Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November. at Cronulla Central Hall for parents and concerned members of the community. To present a summary of expressed concerns, facilitate a group discussion of these concerns and add any other identified issues.
- iii. Meeting 2: TBA To present suggestions to address identified concerns and discuss these.

- iv. Meeting 3: TBA To present a document asking for timely changes to address our concerns in the way we have suggested. Parents will endorse this document which will then be presented to YMCA executive.

Note: We will invite a representative of the Police to enforce the court suppression order. We in no way wish to undermine court orders or jeopardise the criminal investigation.

We wish to express our desire to work with, not against the YMCA. We have faith that the criminal investigation will do all that is possible to bring the person / persons responsible for these very serious alleged sex crimes on our children to justice. Our objective is purely to prevent child abuse.

We ask you, please, to put the welfare of our children and families before your efforts to repair the integrity of your organisation. Restoration of the YMCA brand will be a natural by product of working with us.

We invite you to work collaboratively with us to achieve our shared goals of protecting children. Your participation will demonstrate your genuine commitment to listen to and consider parent's opinions, and will increase our confidence and satisfaction with your organisation in relation to these issues.

We invite you to consider participating in the following ways.

- i. In order to collect a fair sample of concerns expressed by parents we need to make all parents aware of this Parent Forum. We ask you please to email/mail/hand out letters in care room centres to YMCA families with details of this Parent Forum and to publically endorse it: (to be supplied)
- ii. Provide a copy of all your policies and practices for us to examine asap. I took up the offer by Jacqui and Irene to examine them at the Caringbah centre on Friday afternoon. I was concerned that the section i was particularly after was removed from the folder. I advised Kara of this and she said that she would contact Irene as to the whereabouts of the workplace practices and i would be contacted on Monday.
- iii. Consider contributing to, or funding the cost of the hall/hire equipment for our three scheduled meetings.
- iv. To specifically answer a list of questions that we will provide to YMCA about your procedures in the three meetings which you have scheduled for the parents in the week beginning 21<sup>st</sup> November. In doing so, parents will develop a better understanding of important issues.
- v. Be open to a meeting with parent representatives for us to present the document listing concerns and suggested solutions to YMCA executive.
- vi. Hold regular meetings with parent representatives to update progress and action and to include parents in your ongoing evaluation process.

As stated previously, our aim is to work with you to prevent child abuse. Preventing child abuse is everyone's responsibility. By working together we can achieve this common goal more effectively.

We look forward to your response in writing by email to the email address provided.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further clarification.

Yours Faithfully,

AW

On Behalf of Shire Before After School Care Parent Forum

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