

— MV15 —

25 November, 2011

Dear Mr Tant and Ms Vallance,

We would sincerely like to thank you for attending our Parent Forum meeting on Child Protection in OSHC on Thursday 24th November 2011. If we work as a community to address these crimes, the risk of further abuse of children in care can be minimised.

You will have been aware that Phillip Hare was present at this meeting as well as parents, and some other concerned people who work in the accreditation of child care centres.

During this meeting Ms Sue Stuart-Watt examined the Child protection policies, best practices and regulation of OSHC. Sue has 20+ years experience in children's services and has been / is involved in the licensing and legislation of OSHC, and staff training and development at a NSW government departmental level.

Sue's presentation highlighted that there are certain OSHC practices which present a risk to the protection and safety of children in OSHC. Of particular concern is that OSHC is not currently regulated by community services.

The greatest risk with OSHC procedures is that a minimum of two staff supervising all times is not guaranteed. When we consider the recent incidents, it is our belief that by not ensuring supervision by two staff members at all times in OSHC in the future, this may provide opportunities for child sex offenders to approach and/or groom children and we are aware from research that child sex offences are crimes of opportunity.

In addition, there are concerns that the YMCA may not be able to meet the new requirements for regulation on 1st January 2012. There are concerns that no one will be investigating the present safety of the children who attend OSHC and the changes will not be externally audited by the new regulation body until September 2012. There needs to be a re-evaluation of their child protection procedures with risk management as the focus and these new procedures or new supervising procedures by the general co-ordinator to ensure that the intended procedures are practiced. These need to be communicated to the parents and the public.

We also refer to a letter to the editor which was published last Tuesday 16th December in the Leader. Shelley Ross from Kogarah Community Services, a provider of before and after school care in the Kogarah Community for the past ten years, raised many of the same concerns that we ourselves hold. Most notably Ms Ross states: "While the National Quality Framework is being introduced from January 1, 2012, these regulations for out of school hours care and vacation care are only a half measure, and these services will still not be as heavily regulated as preschool and long day care services."

As requested, we have not publically identified you as being present at our meeting but have informed the other principals that two primary school principals were in attendance.

In addition, we have sourced some organisations who are able to run a course for parents on protective behaviours, and also a separate course for primary school aged children to help them identify acceptable and non-acceptable adult behaviours , how to tell an adult to stop, who to tell and where to go etc. We also have collected several useful contacts for expert counselling and resources. Education is an important preventive strategy to attempt to save any child and their family and friends, and the whole community from the trauma of child sexual abuse. I/we would be happy to help you arrange these for your school families in your school hall for very early next year.

I would like to share an excellent resource that you can communicate to your parents " Paedophile, get the hell away from our kids". This booklet is freely available for downloading and printing from the web if you google the booklet's name.

Please contact us if you would like any further information. We are working to address what we see as a need in our community.

We wish you a joyful and peaceful Christmas season.

Yours Sincerely,

AW and AT

On Behalf of Shire Before And After School Care Parent Forum