



YMCA of Sydney

20th October 2011

Parents, Carers and Families
YMCA Children's Services
Via email and mail

**THIS IS ANNEXURE "G" TO
THE SUPPLEMENTARY
STATEMENT OF LIAM
JOSEPH WHITLEY DATED
28 OCTOBER 2013**

Dear Parents, Carers and Families,

RE: YMCA Information to Parents, Carers and Families of our Children's Services

Please be assured, at this very difficult time, the YMCA is doing everything possible to communicate with the families and communities we serve. Integral in our communication process is the need to keep you as informed as possible throughout these challenges times.

As you would already be aware, the Kogarah Joint Investigation Response Team (JIRT) has been established to complete the investigation and is a triage of support involving NSW Police, the Department of Families and Communities and NSW Health. They are a specialist response team and will continue to liaise directly with the YMCA throughout the entire investigation.

Whilst ensuring we keep our families as up to date as possible with information as released, we must proceed with caution so as not to jeopardize the investigation in its sub-judice state. As updated information is released through the NSW Police Media Department we will directly communicate this to you and your community.

As mentioned previously, the JIRT has an established Child Protection Helpline. The helpline is the official form in which concerns can be reported. Rest assured, this helpline is fully equipped to deal with all enquiries from parents and carers with any concerns and will support all enquiries with the full assistance they require.

It's imperative that parents and families use the Child Protection Helpline for support – 132 111.

We would like to assure you that the YMCA operates our Children's Services at the industry's highest standards and we ensure we comply with all legal and industry guidelines. We are recognised as the preeminent Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) provider in NSW with endorsements from TAFE lecturers, School Principals, Industry partners and most importantly our families. Everything the Y does is based on providing the highest level of safety and care to children in our OSHC programs.

Attached to this communication is detailed information answering concerns and questions raised by parents and families from across the YMCA community. By providing this information we hope to reassure you of our policies, procedures and guidelines for our Out of School Hours Care.

On behalf of the YMCA I would like to thank you for the opportunity to communicate with you at this time. We hope our communication meets your expectations.

Yours sincerely

Liam Whitley
General Manager
Children's Services



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Information to YMCA Parents, Carers and Families

Specifically, the YMCA provides the following information for parents, carers and families:

1. When and how will I be communicated to?

The YMCA is committed to keeping parents informed throughout these unprecedented times. The YMCA will, as information is released by NSW Police, ensure it is distributed from the YMCA via both electronic email and direct mail.

2. What child protection checks do staff undergo as part of the recruitment process;

All applicants for employment with the YMCA undergo the Working with Children Check under the auspice of the NSW Commission for Children and Young People. This is the standard for the Childcare industry.

In addition to Working with Children Checks the YMCA leads the Outside School Hours Care Industry in providing additional relevant and frequent staff training to all its employees. As recent as July this year the YMCA held a staff training day for our 55 OSHC Centre Coordinators which included a specific session on Child Protection. This Child Protection training session was facilitated by a trained officer from the NSW Commission for Children and Young People. This was the fourth such training day for 2011.

3. What are the policies with regard to minimum numbers of staff present at all times;

The current policy and minimum Industry Standard is 2 staff members present with children at all times and a 1 staff to 15 children ratio within the centre.

4. What information has been provided to Schools and Parishes with regard to these allegations against this staff member;

All schools serviced by the YMCA Children's Services program in the Sutherland Shire have received 2 documents from the YMCA:

- a. A letter to Principals via email last Friday 14th October following a direct call from YMCA Management. This letter was identical to that emailed and mailed to parents by the YMCA on Thursday 13th and Friday 14th October.
- b. A JIRT approved Statement of Key Facts release that was emailed directly by the YMCA on Tuesday 18th October. This was supported by a Police Media Release.
- c. This information advised that the Police will conduct all investigations and we will fully comply. It confirmed to Principals that the YMCA and its staff cannot discuss the case internally, or any way externally.
- d. Further, during this time the YMCA must cooperate with external governing bodies to ensure the process is not subject to any sub judice or factors that may alter, impact or influence the investigations.



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- e. It confirmed that we must advise Parents or carers with concerns of risk or harm to their children should contact the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111. This hot line is a comprehensive and fully integrated service equipped to deal with all issues.

5. Is the YMCA reviewing its policies and procedures;

The YMCA through its policies, procedures and protocols, educates trains and mentors staff on the expectations of the organisation and external governing bodies in the appropriate conduct for the staff in all Children's Services positions. This ensures a safe and secure environment for children and it also allows us to be adequately prepared for the unknown and equips our staff with the knowledge and processes to follow if something serious was to occur.

The YMCA reviews such policies on an annual basis and when Legislation changes.

Throughout the course of this ongoing investigation we will proactively and diligently review and implement policies to ensure the safety and well-being of all OSHC children.

The YMCA confirms its commitment to all families that it will continue to support the JIRT investigation and provide regular updates to families as information is given to us.

6. Support for Parents – The Child Protection Helpline 132 111

It is imperative that parents, families and carers use the Child Protection Helpline for support. The helpline is the official form in which concerns can be reported. Parents or carers with concerns of serious risk of harm to their children should contact the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111.

Please find below the following common questions on the Child Protection Helpline:

1. I am not sure whether the child or young person has been abused or not, but I am worried. Should I make a report?

You can make a report to Community Services if you suspect that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm. This means you have current concerns for the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person. You don't have to be certain, you only need to make sure your concerns are well founded and based on information you know or have from a reliable source.

2. How does Community Services assess reports?

When you telephone Community Services to make a report, a child protection caseworker at the Helpline will make an initial assessment to determine what action needs to be taken. The caseworker is specially trained to ask you relevant questions, to ensure that they get all the information they can about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child. The caseworker can also consider any information held by Community Services about the child and/or family such as previous reports or recent contact with the family. What happens next depends on the information received by Community Services. The matter might be closed as no risk of significant harm is indicated or they may ask a local Community Services Centre to make further assessment. Sometimes the child and family is visited immediately because the information indicates the child is in immediate danger. If the child or young person is at risk of significant harm, they try to work with the family, other agencies and professionals to make sure they are safe. If they think a child is in immediate danger, they will move them to a safe place. They involve the child or young person and their family as much as possible in decisions that affect them.