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Hon Peter Collier MLC
Minister for Education; Energy; Indigenous Affairs

Our Ref: 34-20840

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 Chair
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Dear Chair of the Governing Body

The State Government is strongly committed to the safety and welfare of all children in Western Australia. As the recently appointed Minister for Education, I intend to do all that I can to assure parents that their children are safe, and their welfare is protected, when they are attending schools.

Under the *School Education Act 1999* (the 'Act'), registration of non-government schools requires that I must be satisfied that a school:

- provides satisfactory levels of care for the children concerned [s.160 (1)(e)];
- complies with any written laws affecting the operation of the school [s.160 (1)(g)]; and
- meets any standards which the Minister for Education determines [s.160 (1)(c)].

The current standards under s.159 of the Act require that I take into account when registering a school:

- the qualifications of the teachers;
- the means by which disputes and complaints about the provision of education at the school may be dealt with;
- the arrangements (if any) for board and lodging for students on school premises or premises associated with the school; and
- any other matter prescribed by regulations.

The current *Registration Standards 2012* that apply to non-government schools require schools to provide evidence in relation to child safety and welfare. For example, under the Level of Care requirements, schools must submit evidence of their policies and procedures for student welfare, safety and health and of their procedure for notification of critical and emergency incidents. In addition, under the explanatory notes in the Standards document for student welfare, reference is made to school's obligations in relation to mandatory reporting of sexual abuse of children.

I have recently requested the Department of Education Services to review the registration requirements related to safety and welfare of students and the notification of critical incidents. I have asked that this review be undertaken urgently in consultation with the Catholic Education Office and Association of Independent Schools in WA. I want to be able to consider for approval any changes prior to the end of the 2012 school year. Once approved, I intend to write to you again to outline what changes to the registration requirements and standards will apply from the beginning of 2013.

In the meantime, I seek your support in undertaking a self-review of your school's current policies and procedures for ensuring the safety and welfare of children at your school **by 30 November 2012**.

In conducting this review reference should be made to the existing registration standards. These are available at:

<http://www.des.wa.gov.au/Documents/Searchable/Non-government%20Schools%20Registration%202010%20updated.pdf>.

Advice on these standards can be obtained from the Department of Education Services and from the Association of Independent Schools in WA. Such a review should also encompass aspects such as:

- the administration of complaints regarding alleged misconduct against children;
- processes for timely investigation of complaints relating to misconduct;
- coordination of all disciplinary processes;
- completion of internal risk-assessments in relation to safety and welfare of students; and
- provision of proactive professional learning strategies related to professional standards and the safety and welfare of students.

Parents and the community need to be assured that their children are safe and protected when at school. School governing bodies, in maintaining proper oversight, equally need to be assured that all is being done at the school to be able to confidently provide such an assurance.

Thank you for your continuing commitment to providing high quality education whilst ensuring that the safety and welfare of students at your school is a paramount consideration. Your support and concerted efforts to undertake this school self-review at this time is appreciated.

Kind regards



Hon Peter Collier MLC
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION; ENERGY; INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS
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