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Education Centre

Against

Violence

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Mr.N.Cowdery Q.C
 Director of Public Prosecutions
 265 Castlereagh St
 Sydney N.S.W. 2000

22nd June 2001

Dear Mr. Cowdery,

On behalf of The Education Centre Against Violence I would like to thank you for approving Margaret Cuneen's participation in delivering our recent training for doctors who are expert witnesses. The doctors who attended this training on 26th May 2001, evaluated it very highly and commented on the depth of experience and knowledge Margaret imparted to them, as it was highly relevant to their role. Her understanding of the medical role in such cases and the complexities involved greatly enhanced the training provided.

As you may be aware, the Education Centre Against Violence is a NSW Health statewide specialist organisation providing training and resources to staff responding to victims of domestic and sexual violence and child abuse. Our target groups are NSW Health and interagency professionals. One aspect of our work is the provision of training to doctors on medical management of adult sexual assault, and their responsibilities as expert witnesses.

An additional purpose for writing to you is to inform you that the Education Centre Against Violence is funding the production of a training video which will focus on the doctor's role as an expert witness in criminal proceedings involving adult sexual assault matters. Due to the subject matter, we would need to ensure Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has opportunity provide feedback on the script before it proceeds to filming. The Education Centre Against Violence is working with New South Wales Film and Television Office and EE Films Pty Ltd to produce the video.

As a key stakeholder and to ensure an accurate and quality product, I am requesting assistance from ODPP in a number of ways:

- If at all possible, attendance by the EE Films scriptwriter Norman Neeson, at a sexual assault Trial where a medical expert witness is required to give evidence. This would be purely for research purposes for the film and the video would not draw on specific details of the case involved. Norman was the scriptwriter for 'Your Day in Court' (Attorney General's department) and found this type of research enormously beneficial to the project.
- Once the script is developed we believe it is of utmost importance and essential to this process that ODPP read the script and ensure legal information contained is accurate and role of prosecutions is correctly represented. As Margaret Cunneen is held in high esteem by Health Services and has a thorough understanding of the role of the medical expert and their learning needs in relation to court appearances, it would be most helpful to have

Margaret check the script. I do understand however if this is not possible, your nomination of a suitable person from your Office would be greatly appreciated.

- The video would include dramatisation as well as interviews with doctors who are confident in giving evidence. We would also like to include interviews with a prosecution and defence lawyer explaining their roles and information about the expert role. The scriptwriter met Margaret Cunneen at the doctor's training and considered her highly suitable for this, subject to your approval.

For further information about the video, please see Appendix 1.

Could you please advise about the feasibility of our request for assistance from your Office. There is some urgency to this request as a scriptwriter is in the process of conducting the research and beginning to write the script. I look forward to your response.

Pam Swinfield
A/Director
Education Centre Against Violence