

email



KNOX GRAMMAR SCHOOL

15th December 2009

Message to Knox Grammar School Community from the Headmaster

In February this year, Mr Craig Treloar, a teacher at our School, was arrested and charged with child abuse offences against students at Knox in the 1980s. His arrest and the resultant publicity sent shockwaves throughout our community. As you know, several other former teachers were also charged with offences against students in their charge who were at Knox in the 1970s and 1980s.

Following these revelations the School immediately established a team to work with the Police and our Knox Community to ensure that these allegations were investigated as fully and transparently as possible. The investigating Police have had unfettered access to all relevant School records and our team has worked closely with them to establish facts relevant to the cases. The working relationship has been built on our mutual desire to ensure justice prevails.

Mr Craig Treloar, Mr Damien Vance and Mr Roger James have recently pleaded guilty to the charges they faced in relation to the offences which took place in the 1970s and 1980s. Mr Vance and Mr James have subsequently been convicted. Following these guilty pleas, the School and the Uniting Church in Australia have issued a joint public statement today saying they "are sincerely sorry and unreservedly apologise for the abuse of these students by these three teachers while they attended the School".

Counselling has also been offered, on a confidential basis, to the victims and their families.

Furthermore, the School and the Uniting Church in Australia have, via the investigating Police, jointly offered a written apology to each Old Boy involved in these three cases, to let him know that we are sincerely sorry for the abuse he suffered.

Neither the School nor the Uniting Church in Australia makes any excuse for such abhorrent behaviour.

Our major concern is for those former students who have been affected by the actions of people they should have been able to trust and who by their own admissions, were not worthy of that trust. These actions have affected boys in their care (and the boys' families), as well as their colleagues, and today's School community is left with the fall-out.

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Child Protection Legislation has been significantly revised since the time when these events occurred. New requirements, guidelines and reporting procedures were introduced in 1999. With these revisions came training for all people working with young people and the introduction, for the first time, of mandatory Police checks for all people working with children.

At Knox those guidelines and procedures are in place, enacted, monitored and regularly reviewed internally and by external authorities. The regular training and retraining of staff occurs and all boys are instructed through the Personal Development Syllabus K-10 of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours.

It is also relevant to mention that one of the charges to which Mr Treloar pleaded guilty involved dissemination or production of child pornography which related to one morphed image held on his personal home computer hard drive, not a School computer, the use of which are subject to stringent controls.

The current staff at Knox have all been subjected to the mandatory employment checking processes. In addition, Knox has its own checks which extend beyond those mandatory requirements. The current investigation has been "broad and deep". The Police are now concluding their investigations and have reassured me that they are not investigating any current members of the Knox teaching or support staff in relation to any child abuse allegations.

Over the next few months there will undoubtedly be the occasional report of these matters in the media. This is all part of the legal process and it will be painful, especially for those former students who have been affected. It is, however, the School's responsibility to ensure that we deal with this openly and sensitively for them and to do our utmost to ensure that boys are never subjected to this kind of abuse in the future.

I believe that the current policies and procedures at Knox, in relation to Child Protection issues, are the strongest possible, and that parents can have every confidence in the staff who care for their boys.

Yours sincerely



John W. Weeks
Headmaster