

From: [Atma](#)
To: [Bert Franzen](#)
Subject: RE: Immediate priority - be media ready
Date: Saturday, 22 March 2014 2:22:55 PM
Attachments: [image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)

Hari Om Bert

Many thanks for your input.

Sw. Ahimsadhara and I feel that a correction (marked in red in your email) is necessary.

Om

Blessings of peace, joy and inspiration.

Hari Om

Swami Atmamuktananda

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From: Bert Franzen [mailto:bertfranzen@electassociates.com.au]
Sent: Saturday, 22 March 2014 12:25 PM
To: 'SYTA Secretary'; 'Suryamitra'; Atma; 'Ahimsadhara Saraswati'; 'Poornamurti (Phil) Connor';
 'Amarnath (Anthony) Cormack'; haribodhananda@REDACTED 'Sarah Tetlow'
Cc: 'Yogasandhan'; 'Gurubhatka'
Subject: Immediate priority - be media ready

Dear all

The immediate priority is that a media representative is nominated to whom all media communications are directed. Suryamitra was initially nominated for this role but not sure if that's still the case. I sent Suryamitra the email below as a guide to 'how to manage the media'. The media in all likelihood will sniff this out so it's important that we're "media ready" now!

In the meantime, with Swamiji's appointment of Ratnashakti to provide oversight, I think we should sit tight and await direction. Everything else is pretty much in hand.

Cheers

Bert

Good Morning Suryamitra

Further to your question about managing the media.

There are a number of very definite rules when dealing with the media that are simple and if followed should keep you on safe ground.

1. Clear Messages you want to convey.
 - a. Determine three of four simple and uncomplicated messages that you wish to convey to the media. I suggest the following:
 - i. The instances referred to took place more than 30 years ago
 - ii. The party was Jailed for his crime.
 - iii. The **Most Ashram residents** had no knowledge of this at the time **or (Ashram residents)**
 - iv. Since that time we have had very strong safety checks put in place to ensure it does not happen again. These comply with the protocols established by the NSW Commission for working with Children and Young People.
2. Answer every question with one or more of the messages...Never answer the question askedAlways answer the one they should have asked.
 - a. This takes a bit of practice so it might be worth having Yogasandhan throw a number of questions at you to practice, e.g.
 - i. Q: "I believe that Ashram tried to cover up the child abuse" A: the incidents under question occurred 30 years ago and the responsible party was brought to justice and Jailed.
 - ii. Q: "How can we be sure this won't happen again?". A: We have very strong safety checks in place which comply with the protocols established by the NSW....
 - iii. Q: "How do we know that you don't have paedophiles pretending to be swamis residing in the ashram at the moment?" A: These matter happened 30 years ago, the perpetrator was jailed we now have systems in place to ensure the safety of all children.
 - iv. Q "But how do you know?" A: Our standards comply with the protocols established by the NSW Commission for Working with Children and Young People.
 - v. Q: "We believe that a number of people donated large amounts of money to the ashram. Are you going to give that money back?" A: As I said the incident's under question happened 30 years ago. The party responsible was brought to justice and Jailed, since that time we have implemented stringent measure to ensure that it doesn't happen again.
 - vi. Q: "Are you going to give the money back". A: As I said, the party in question was jailed and we now have strong process in place.
3. Do not be tempted to go "off piste".
 - a. Remember, no matter how friendly and charming the interview isthey are not your friend. Under all circumstances, no matter how persistent or friendly the interviewer is; do not move away from the messages and try to make it up as you go. You'll dig a hole that you won't be able to get out of. This guys are very experienced and will try to trick you into going "off Piste" if at all possible
 - b. Keep your answers short and on message.

Lastly, go slow. Don't feel rushed, take your time, consider your response before you answer. It may feel like an eternity to you but to the interview you will appear to be "Considered"

Bert

Bert Franzen

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From: SYTA Secretary [mailto:secretary@syta.org.au]

Sent: Friday, 21 March 2014 11:16 PM

To: Suryamitra; Atmamuktananda Saraswati; Ahimsadhara Saraswati; Poornamurti (Phil) Connor; Amarnath (Anthony) Cormack; Bert Franzen; haribodhanand **REDACTED**

Cc: Yogasandhan; Gurubhatka

Subject: Re: Mangrove History Task Force

Hari Om All

Thanks for forming the task force and I personally think it a very good move after this week's events which left SYTA MC and members feeling totally exposed and at the mercy of others.

As SYTA is managed by a committee I am seeking agreement to join but have indicated my support as have others. Our primary role is to support teachers and our independence important but as this week demonstrated we are a target and our Satyananda family easily merged into one by others.

I am unsure of our representative but am diligently keeping all emails and a record of events. As secretary my role is hands on dealing with members and organising Management committee business so am reluctant to take on more. We have an ethics committee and I've asked them. Perhaps it may be both secretary and an ethics committee member if this is agreeable. Within SYTA we will have to work on ways to work as a committee and with the task force – keeping all on the same page so to speak.

FYI to date STYA (via Sec & members) have been subjected to the following:

1. Publically available teacher's emails were taken from the SYTA website and a list created. Bhakti Manning(16/3/2014) and Mary Smith (18/3/2014) used this list to send alarming details of events to our members and any others they knew. Mary added an additional person from Wollongong.
2. Legal action threatened over our Facebook page (20/3/2104) – from Rosie

Wise. It was Mangrove's and we let her know we are a separate organisation. The message was both rude and demanding.

3. Members asking not to receive emails – all week - we have indicated (via email 19/3/2014) we did not distribute the emails from Bhakti and Mary and an individual created the list and the content is an opinion only.
4. Resignation of a member (20/3/2014) and will not use Satyananda name due to non-apology and allegations Satyananda and Niranjan knew based on the information from Bhakti Manning and Mary Smith. An apology seems to be the main issue for many but who is to say this was not issued at the time to those involved. No response to this person as yet from SYTA– again we need to handle sensitively.
5. Emails received in support of our communication and Mangrove's management and apology.

We have issues in common with Manly as we both work in the community and will ask some questions of Kate Eastman via Armanath tomorrow. We are at the point where we think expert advice necessary and would also like to make sure the task force and our involvement is the right move from a legal and probity view.

Suryamitra is both a SYTA and MMC member and although we very much appreciate her involvement with SYTA it may not be the right thing to do.

In general I think SYTA has needs but can also contribute to this group:

1. Communication – we need advice on what we can say as we do not want to inflame
2. SYTA is independent and would continue to communicate and meet the needs of our members. We may need to do more under their guidance as well as with the input of expert advice sought by the task force.
3. SYTA can be a communication channel and provide information to members about the task force actions and decisions.
4. We can refer our members to talk to Mangrove and confirm our confidence in the handling these events or refer members to any other services
5. We can provide feedback about what is happening from the teaching community. Members need more information about how this is being handled to regain confidence and the apology day is a really important event to move forward but appreciate this all takes time. From my feedback many are in shock at these revelations and even those close to the organisation in those days did not know about what is being alleged.

Will let you know the SYTA rep asap.

Om
Krsnadhara

----- Original Message -----

From: [Suryamitra](#)

To: [Atmamuktananda Saraswati](#) ; [Ahimsadhara Saraswati](#) ; [Poornamurti \(Phil\) Connor](#) ; secretary@syta.org.au ; [Amarnath \(Anthony\) Cormack](#) ; [Bert Franzen](#) ; [haribodhananda@REDACTED](#)

Cc: [Yogasandhan](#) ; [Gurubhatka](#)

Sent: Friday, March 21, 2014 12:39 PM

Subject: Mangrove History Task Force

Hari Om

In consultation with other members of the team it has been proposed that we form a task force to manage the current issues arising re Mangrove's history. This task force will be made up of representatives from SYTA, Manly Yoga and SYA, so that all three parties can agree on the appropriate path forward.

There are a number of reasons for doing this, but I think most importantly it will ensure that all communications/responses/actions are determined based on full information and appropriate advice (legal and otherwise), we give consistent messages to our community and the public, and we do the best we can for all affected parties. We also don't want to over-engineer it.

It is important that the responsibility for managing this issue be limited to a few so that it can be done effectively and with full awareness of the potential consequences of any action taken. These matters are sensitive, which is another reason for not including more people than we need to in the decision-making process. As I'm sure you're all aware, it is essential that we get the tone and wording right for any communication as it is so easy to misinterpret what has been written and cause unintended harm.

I will represent the Mangrove management committee on this task force but we (the MMC) will not be active in the decision-making as I think it's important for some distance and perspective to be applied, and we are also busy running the day to day operations here.

It is proposed that the task force be made up of:

- Atmamuktananda (SYA)
- Ahimsadhara (SYA)
- Suryamitra (SYA)
- Poornamurti (SYA)
- Haribodhananda (SYA)
- Krsnadhara (SYTA)
- Amarnath (Manly Yoga)
- Bert Franzen (HR Consulting)

We will take advice from the Royal Commission and potentially others such as Kate Eastman (legal).

I have attached below Bert's email from last night as I think he has very clearly outlined what our next steps should be. Most importantly, we should limit our actions to only what is essential so that we don't fan the flames and keep the issue going.

Please let me know if you are in agreement with this and we can start the ball rolling on communicating between us. I have cc'd Yogasandhan and Gurubhakta to let them know what is happening but they don't need to be included on communications going forward.

Om

Suryamitra

Message from Bert:

Hello Everyone

My view is that we should not escalate. I think it would be unwise to get Niranjanananda involved publicly as it puts him in a very difficult position and could put out the wrong messages. On a private level however he should reserve his right to take legal action regarding the Bhakti/Smith emails.

I'd also guard against the potential to over-engineer internally. Keep it simple and the people involved to a minimum. Invite the distressed initiate (recipient of Bhakti/Smith email) in to meet with someone to discuss her concerns. This will allow the chance to correct misconceptions.

Be media ready. I believe Suryamitra is the media person so all media should be referred to her.

Proposed next steps

- In the immediate short-term, we issue a 'cease and desist' letter to both parties (I'll have draft by close business tomorrow) shutting that down from causing further damage.
- I believe Suryamitra has sent an email to the recipients of the Bhakti/Smith emails, putting them in the picture. How detailed were we in these communications?
This was sent from SYTA to the SYTA members - I'll send it to you separately, Bert (SM)
- If not already done, we should consider some form of damage control initiative focused on the initiates affected by the Bhakti / smith emails.
- Suryamitra has shut the Facebook forum. Removing that as a problem.
- Focus our energies on the apology and the healing ceremony. In so doing emphasising that we have implemented systems and processes that have ensured 29 years of trouble free growth and development for the Ashram, Sannyasins and community alike.
- We should push the apology/healing day loud and clear for everyone to hear and attend.
- Hold the special day where we sincerely acknowledge what went wrong, those who were hurt and join together in healing;
- Ensure that we have proper referral services available. There will be those who will not be satisfied but, unfortunately, there's nothing that we can do other than offer support and understanding. Referral to independent support and counselling services are available and should be utilised.
- After the Apology / Healing day we continue to provide ongoing support to those affected and in need. This could involve invitations to free stay/s at the Ashram and/or attend specific programs, referral to external experts etc.

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