

Cujes, Milton

From: Terry Chapman [tchapman@aisnsw.edu.au]
Sent: Tuesday, 17 October 2000 9:13 PM
To: tfhawkes@kings.edu.au
Cc: cgleeson@riverview.nsw.edu.au; Cujes, Milton
Subject: Re: Bullying publicity

Dear Tim, Chris and Milton

I agree that it is appalling journalism - or at least headline writing. I am also very concerned about the source of the information and do not want the Telegraph to "seize up" while I am quietly trying to get that information. If the info was leaked by DOCS or the Police, action will be possible even if we have to recruit the Ombudsman's assistance.

I will happily make a formal complaint to the Telegraph but in the meantime we need to try to minimise the damage and potentially get some sympathetic mileage out of it by showing how responsibly the school has acted. I have taken steps in this regard with the Minister's office and with the Board of Studies and Milton's actions and statements are certainly working effectively so far.

Any other ideas about steps AIS can take? We have to be careful not to elevate the debate about Trinity itself as such publicity tends to attract madmen.

Terry

>>> "Tim Hawkes" <tfhawkes@kings.edu.au> 17/10/2000 1:37:39 >>>
 Dear Terry and Chris,

I was deeply disturbed by the front-page article in The Daily Telegraph recently with the headline "Shamed", and a photograph of Trinity Grammar.

This is irresponsible journalism in the extreme...the public denigration of a school, indeed a sentencing of the school on a matter which is merely under investigation. No matter what sort of a spin is put on it, the headline and all its implications is such that Trinity's good name was sullied in a manner I find to be totally irresponsible. I accept that the article said such things as "under investigation" but that is not good enough. The clear inference was that Trinity was guilty, and that is neither fair nor accurate.

What action can, or should, be taken by AHISA or AIS(NSW) on this matter? I believe very strongly that some action should be taken lest this public erosion of a school's reputation be allowed to happen again.

One approach that might be considered is that irresponsible reporting of this nature will work directly against the government's wishes to have schools reporting such things as abuse and bullying. If in reporting an incident it means that the broad flapping ears of the press will be allowed to sensationalise the case on the front page of their newspapers, then this will be a very strong disincentive to report anything. The newspaper article the other day would have served a clear warning to Heads that responsible reporting of an incident is an ill-advised action, and is best avoided as much as possible. No threats from legal quarters will come close to persuading a Head that it is worth reporting something if this is the reward they are going to reap.

This is very worrying, and I would ask that this matter be taken up with politicians, press, and other relevant authorities. If I can do anything to help in this regard, then let me know.

With warm good wishes,

Tim Hawkes