

**T.E.S.S. DEPARTMENT RESPONSE TO J.I.T. INVESTIGATION**  
**AS AT 18/10/00**

**To: Head Master  
Peter Green**

We feel we need to update you on our perceptions of the investigation to date and to make recommendations concerning appropriate responses.

1. The Joint Investigation Team (J.I.T.) advised us in a meeting on Friday 13th October that five incidents of sexual assault and five counts of aggravated indecent assault had been substantiated as at that date.

2. In a meeting held this morning with Mr David Taplin, Co-ordinator of Sexual Assault Counselling Service at the Childrens' Hospital Randwick, we were advised that these incidents mentioned above represent a critical incident and would require the implementation of the School's Critical Incident Plan. In his view this plan should incorporate the following strategies:

- A plan of action be developed in order to meet the current needs of different groups within the School, including staff, parents, individual victims, boarding house students, alleged perpetrators and the wider School student body. In our discussions it became apparent that each group would require somewhat different interventions. Therefore we may require professionals from outside the School to assist in this process. The outcome of our discussions with respect to each group are as follows:
  - Staff - A meeting or meetings be held with staff as soon as possible in order to inform them of the facts as established by the J.I.T. and to permit any staff members who have been distressed by these events to have access to counselling. Their knowledge of the established facts in the case are essential for them to respond appropriately to student comment and behaviours. This should include teaching and non-teaching staff.
  - Parents - There is a need to inform parents again of the established facts so that the seriousness of the incidents is understood and they can respond appropriately to their sons' needs. They too may require access to counselling services.
  - Identified Victims - These boys and their families need to be informed of the sexual assault counselling services available. Through a process of group work their rehabilitation is sought principally by -
    - (a) acknowledgment of their assault(s)
    - (b) affirmation that they have acted appropriately and bravely in reporting the incidents
    - (c) availability of ongoing support

As we understand it, there are different levels of experience of the assaults and so intervention will depend on the personal involvement of each student.

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- It is also apparent from teacher and student reports that incidents of verbal harassment of some victims continues throughout the broader school community. A mechanism for reporting harassment needs to be clearly defined and implemented. The Co-ordinator from the Children's Hospital has specifically recommended a policy of zero tolerance for any type of harassment of the victims because such a policy would indicate to the School community our recognition of the gravity of the established sexual assaults. This policy will send a clear message to everyone in the School community that such behaviour will have profound consequences for the perpetrators.
- Boarders - Given the confusion and diversity of views expressed by students it is vital that we intervene to debunk the prevalent myths regarding sexual assault and establish what research actually says about perpetrators and victims.

Many boarders were also victims in the sense that they were witnesses to sexual assaults or feared being future victims themselves. These students need to be aware that they too are entitled to counselling services.

- Alleged Perpetrators - ongoing individual counselling support for families and students.
- Wider Student Body - Once again, an information session would be advisable for all students in order to present the facts and thereby reduce uncertainty, gossip, innuendo, fears, harassment of victims, inappropriate questioning of boarders and staff.

In summary, different levels of information and support will be required for each group within the School community. Our consultation today with Mr David Taplin confirmed our own view that elements of the Critical Incident Plan be activated immediately. Mr Taplin believes that inaction on our part would be perceived under the Child Protection Act as irresponsible given that we have a duty to ensure the care and safety of children.

**KATE PEARCE**

**PAULL MAYNE**

REDACTED