

YMCA Caringbah Major Incident

Internal Confidence Memo

CONFIDENTIAL: For internal use only

September 2012

What you need to know

- A former employee of the Y, Jonathan Lord, pleaded guilty to 29 charges of indecent assault against 12 boys between the age of 6 and 11 on August 23rd. Some of these incidents occurred while some of the children were in YMCA care as well as outside the Y, including private babysitting.
- At a hearing at the Downing Centre District Court on Friday August 31st 2012, it was confirmed Lord will be sentenced on November 9th.
- The YMCA has been named in media nationally in relation to this issue. We have responded to key media after consultation with a crisis media expert and seeking legal counsel and have a solid media position. As always, **our primary concern is for the safety and wellbeing of our children**, and protecting their identity.
- From the moment the Y became aware of the allegations we took action, with Lord being immediately stood down. **The Y did not hide from the issue** but instead began communicating with parents and schools across our Children's Services community in the Sutherland Shire, providing as much information as was legally possible.
- The Department of Education and Communities (DEC), which conducted two Compliance and Assessment Audits of our Caringbah centres, commented that **the Y should be confident in our policies and procedures which were of a "gold star" standard**.
- Now, and at the time of the incidents, **we continue to operate above and beyond industry regulation** requirements. This is evident through the following:
 - While there are no set staff ratio levels to adhere to in NSW, even under the new National Quality Framework (NQF) introduced in 2012, the Y has always met the National Standards with a ratio of **one adult to 15 children**, which we believe is best practice. We are also committed to always having **two staff members on at all times**, even when numbers drop below 15.
 - Despite no formal qualifications required to work in the industry in NSW, even under the NQF, **all childcare coordinators who start at the Y gain qualifications through TAFE** (Cert IV in Children's Services and Diploma in Children's Services) and we are hiring more and more tertiary-qualified staff.
 - The transport policy does not allow 1 on 1 access to children on excursions or activities. **Whenever a YMCA vehicle is used in addition to a bus, they are part of YMCA Vehicle convoy**. If there is an incident where there is a YMCA driver and 1 child in a YMCA vehicle (due to the child be the first child picked up or last to be dropped off), the child must sit at the back of the bus/car. Parents need to give written acknowledgement and signed permission where there is only one child to be transported – in the situation where there are only 3 kids who normally travel they get parents to sign just in case two of them are away – they always make sure parents re aware of the possibility of their child being the only one transported and seek authorised permission. **Our policies and practices follow the industry standards in NSW and align with and are compliant with national regulation**.
- The YMCA has also **conducted a complete review of our Child Protection policies and procedures** and we are pleased to advise that all standards including Working With Children Checks, supervision levels and training were in place. Lord complied with all mandatory pre-employment procedures including police record checks on his commencement with the Y in 2009.



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- **Our hearts go out to those children and families** who have been affected and we are doing everything possible to ensure they feel supported. We have continued to communicate with our parents and schools throughout the year and have offered support, in the form of professional counselling, to any family in need.
- From the beginning, we have worked closely with NSW Police and the Kogarah Joint Investigation Response Team (JIRT) which was established to investigate the case. Again, **we have nothing to hide** and are doing everything possible to ensure something like this never happens again.
- While we know we are the leading provider of Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), these allegations have **caused great internal stress to many at the Y and we are devastated by the impact** it has had on our children and families. As a result of this we conducted additional Child Protection Training for all Children's Services staff across the organisation. We have also just appointed a Child Protection Manager to oversee all our centres in NSW. This is a first for an OSHC provider in NSW. Support and counselling is also available to staff who feel this would be of benefit.
- While this is a terrible incident, **the Y should feel confident of our policies and procedures** and the leading position we hold in the childcare industry.

Media support

In the event of media calling, please refer all enquiries to James Ellender, General Manager of Marketing, Communications and Fundraising or Celia Britton, Public Relations Officer.

Phillip Hare, CEO, YMCA of Sydney, is the only spokesperson for the Y on this incident.

James Ellender

Ph:

Mob:

Email:

Celia Britton

Ph:

Mob:

Email:

Other support

Concerned parents, Y members or other members of the public who approach the Y in relation to this incident are to be directed to Catharine Clements, YMCA Child Protection and Compliance Manager or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

