



MEDIA STATEMENT

Systemic failures put children at risk: CCC report

2.11.12

A teacher with a history of alleged inappropriate behaviour with young boys continued to have contact with children after a further allegation was made because of systemic failures according to a Corruption and Crime Commission report tabled in Parliament today.

As a result of a Commission investigation the teacher was convicted in 2010 of five charges relating to accessing child pornography on the internet and was sentenced to two 12-month jail terms suspended for 18 months, and a \$12,000 fine.

Commission Manager Investigations, Barry O'Connor, said the Commission has worked with and received cooperation from the Department of Education, Western Australian College of Teaching (WACOT) and the Department of Child Protection since its investigation started in 2008.

Since then a number of important changes have been made to close loopholes in the system.

The Commission investigation started after the Department of Education reported a complaint to the Commission in 2007 that the teacher had engaged in inappropriate contact with a student.

The Department also promptly issued an order prohibiting the teacher from entering any public schools.

Despite this, the report found the teacher:

- Maintained his WACOT registration which would have enabled him to be employed as a teacher in a private school if he had chosen to do so;
- Was granted a Working with Children Card by the Department of Child Protection that enabled him to continue working with children;
- Was able to work with children as a volunteer in a public school and go onto school premises on several occasions;
- Used his own computer to access child pornography from which the criminal convictions resulted;
- Continued to maintain email contact with then current and former students and sent them text messages,
- Could still work with children through his wife's business; and

- Continued as a senior office bearer of a sporting association involved in activities with children.

Also, a Department of Education computer supplied to the teacher was used for internet searches for naked male children. However, the searches were not detected by the Department as he used his own internet connection rather than a departmental server.

Mr O'Connor said the report deals with the need to manage the risk represented by anyone alleged to have inappropriate contact with children.

"It revealed a systemic failure by the departments and bodies involved to respond in a coordinated, comprehensive and complete way to the potential risk to children.

"While some positive steps have been taken to address the situation, a report of the *Review of the Working with Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act* was recently tabled in Parliament and included a number of recommendations which are still to be acted on," Mr O'Connor said.

The teacher, who is now in his sixties, had been employed by the Department of Education since the 1970s, most recently in a district high school.

In 1996 he was acquitted of three charges of indecently dealing with a child.

Investigations by the Department of Education arising from the 2007 complaint resulted in five adult males, who as children had been students at a school where the teacher had taught in the 1980s, making allegations of sexual misconduct against him.

The complainants were reluctant to pursue the matters criminally.

The teacher has not been named in the report to protect the identities of those involved – some of whom were juveniles at the time of the alleged incidents. He is no longer employed in the sector.

The report is available at
<http://www.ccc.wa.gov.au/Publications/Reports/Pages/PublishedReports2012.aspx>

Media Contact: Owen Cole 9215 4802, 0439 910 161