

MEMORANDUM TO PRINCIPALS

97/227 (S.209)

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS

During the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service it became evident that some teachers were unclear about their professional responsibilities.

To ensure students in the New South Wales public education system are provided with every opportunity for a quality education in a safe environment it is essential that all teachers are aware of and comply with their professional responsibilities which are outlined below.

Introduction

Teachers have a responsibility to ensure that students gain the knowledge and skills they require to become effective learners and ultimately effective and responsible citizens and understand and appreciate the values and beliefs supported by Australian society.

Teachers also have a responsibility to meet the high standards of professional and ethical behaviour required by the Department, the public, parents and the profession itself.

Teachers undertake this responsibility within the framework of the law and lawful instructions from the employer.

The responsibilities listed below provide guidance for teachers as members of the teaching profession and will assist in giving direction to their interaction with teaching colleagues. They will also guide teachers in meeting the needs of students, in working with parents or caregivers and other staff, in liaising with the public and in being responsible and committed employees of the Department.

fairness at all times;

- ensure that decisions are made fairly and conveyed promptly both within the Department and to those students and members of the public who have a right to know;
- use information gained in the course of employment only for proper and appropriate purposes;
- use public resources economically; and
- behave in such a manner as to protect and enhance the esteem and standing of public education. In particular:
 - teachers must not, under any circumstances, have sexual relationships with students. It is irrelevant whether the relationship is homosexual or heterosexual, consensual or non-consensual or condoned by parents or caregivers. The age of the students or staff member involved is also irrelevant;
 - teachers must not, under any circumstances, engage in conduct of a sexual nature with a student. Improper conduct of a sexual nature by a teacher against a student includes sexual intercourse and any other form of child sexual abuse (which must be notified) as well as but not limited to the following:
 - * inappropriate conversations of a sexual nature;
 - * obscene language of a sexual nature;
 - * suggestive remarks or actions;
 - * jokes of a sexual nature;
 - * obscene gestures;
 - * unwarranted and inappropriate touching;
 - * sexual exhibitionism;
 - * personal correspondence with students in respect of the teacher's sexual feelings for the student; and
 - * deliberate exposure of students to sexual behaviour of others, other than in the case of prescribed curriculum material in which sexual themes are contextual;
 - teachers must not give students alcohol or other drugs, nor are they to encourage or condone the use of alcohol or other drugs by students. They may, however, administer or supervise the administration of prescribed medications consistent with Departmental guidelines.
 - teachers must not, under any circumstances, use any form of discipline which involves corporal punishment or engage in any form of behaviour which could cause physical or emotional abuse to students.