



Christchurch Girls' High School | *Te Kura o Hine Waiora*

Manaakitanga. Whanaungatanga. Aroha. Rangatiratanga.

28 June 2021

Tēnā koutou katoa parents, caregivers and whānau

As you read this, we are meeting with our students regarding the release of the sexual harassment survey in which 725 of our young people participated. This report was commissioned by the Christchurch Girls' High School / *Te Kura O Hine Waiora* Board of Trustees to explore the extent of the issues raised by our students in Term 1. We are very proud so many of our students had the courage to respond.

Your copy of the survey report is attached. We are supplying this letter and the report to Year 12 and 13 students and ask parents to discuss the report with Years 9 to 11 students, at their discretion.

We are sure you will agree that the report makes concerning reading in the scale of incidents, the range of incidents through to the most serious, and in the normalisation of harassment as part of the daily lives of our young people. We have no doubt that the results of this survey would also be the experiences of young people in schools around Aotearoa New Zealand, and that these issues are part of a societal problem.

The discussions generated from this report are important for all of us - for all principals in both co-educational and single sex schools, for parents and young people, and for our wider society.

Our first and absolute priority is for the safety of our students. To that end, the following strategies have been implemented by the school:

- **Assembly this morning – communicating the survey to our students**

The communication of the release of the survey and what it contains has been carefully considered and implemented with the wellbeing of our students and staff at the forefront of the decision making. Hence the sending of this letter to you now, at the same time as our assembly. This is to ensure they are hearing this information from the school in the first instance, and that we have appropriate support available for our young women and Rainbow community, at school, as soon as the information is communicated. The support at school this morning includes female police staff if needed, our school counsellors and additional counselling support.

Please be assured that all students are being well supported.

- **Speakers of relevance – directly addressing the silence and non-reporting problem**

The Minister for Women and Associate Minister for Education, Hon. Jan Tinetti, met with our Year 13s on March 30, and discussed sexual harassment issues.

Community Law Canterbury senior solicitor, Louise Taylor, who is also counsel to the Royal Commission on Sexual Abuse addressed the school assembly on March 31 on legal issues regarding consent and reporting.

- **Activism – supporting the students to take constructive action**

On May 2, Jahla Lawrence, Victoria University, Masters in Criminology, National President of Thursdays In Black and founder of Alliance Against Sexual Violence (Wellington), spoke to a Year 10-13 assembly and ran a workshop for students on positive activism.

- **Survey by Dr Liz Gordon**

We have commissioned and undertaken this survey to give our students a legitimate and powerful voice which we can use in the public domain to advocate for change.

- **Further research**

We have agreed to be part of research “*Did #MeToo change anything?*” being conducted by Dr Sue Jackson from Victoria University under a Marsden Grant about young adults’ views on the influence of social media in MeToo issues. This research involves discussions with small focus groups of students.

- **Access to counsellors**

The school now has three full time permanent counselling staff, two of these have been resourced from Board of Trustees funds.

- **Police strategy**

Police have provided support and worked alongside CGHS and we wish to thank them for their work with us and for our students. Tomorrow expert female police officers will be speaking to each year level around reporting processes and the ability to “bank” a report without requiring further action at the time. This “bank” can be accessed at any time in the future.

- **School reporting strategy for sexual harassment**

Our staff and a student team are working on a school reporting strategy for students to report daily harassment on the streets, parks, buses and so on. Students are encouraged to report harassment in the first instance to their year level dean, and an online upload process is being developed. This supports them not to accept this totally unacceptable behaviour, which not only allows the perpetrators to continue but also normalises it. Students will be encouraged to use their phones to record harassment, where it is safe and possible to do so.

Deans, counsellors and our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are available for students to confidentially report any type of harassment. Should we receive reports of serious harassment - which should be the domain of the police - we will maintain confidentiality, support the young person to report if that is what they wish, and involve parents as appropriate.

Also attached with this email is a list of appropriate helplines.

- **Parent meetings**

We are planning parent meeting(s) for early next term with a panel format to enable you to hear about the issues raised by this survey so we can work together to create change.

- **Media interest**

No doubt there will be significant media interest in this survey and we have a robust Communication Plan in place. We will also be letting the students know that this coverage will likely be across all media organisations and platforms (web, broadcast, print), and social media will be active. We intend to monitor our CGHS social media platforms, and suspend them if need be – it might be worth having that conversation with your teen as well. If students are approached directly by the media, please feel free to

refer them to the school and let me know about the approach. The wellbeing of our students and staff is our number one priority.

The most important piece of work is to lift the code of silence where young women and our Rainbow community suffer in shame and guilt which is not theirs to bear.

We will also continue positive work with other schools and colleagues to address the cultural norms that allow sexual harassment of our young people to proliferate, unchallenged.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to make a real difference in the lives of our students, their families and society as a whole.

Please do not hesitate to contact the relevant year level dean if you have a specific student concern or contact me directly on principal@cghs.school.nz for more serious matters.

Ngā mihi



Julian Bowden
Chair, Board of Trustees



Christine O'Neill
Principal