

Pocket Guide to Concerns Regarding the PMSA

Context:

The PMSA has had a chequered relationship with the school communities going back decades. In the last 5 years there have been issues of concern at BBC, Somerville House, and Clayfield College. But the events of the last six months have galvanized the overall parent group and alumni to more closely question this governing group and the future of the four schools. Questions about strategic governance, commodification of education, treatment of staff, child safety issues, and where the fees end up raise valid and serious concerns.

Some of these concerns are outlined below – for full details it is recommended that you access the full [Beyond PMSA submission](#) to the Chesterman review.

Governance:

Better Practice	PMSA
<p>Legal Structure The expectation is that the legal structure is adapted to further the organisation’s aims – in this case education of children</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PMSA operates under Letters Patent, an outdated system which is not designed to provide appropriate oversight or regulation of activities. 2. The absence of adequate regulatory oversight of the PMSA guaranteed by the Letters Patent will always remain a material obstacle to good governance, stakeholder confidence in matters of governance, and it will continue to undermine trust.
<p>Council Composition</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transparency of appointment 2. Good mix of skills including governance and skills appropriate to understand the challenges faced by the relevant industry 3. Limited terms of appointment 4. Clear performance expectations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Six Council members appointed by each Church with three independent councillors appointed by the Council. No publicly disclosed process. 2. Until October 2017 no Council member had an education background. 3. There are no Council members with background/ qualifications appropriate for a half billion dollar enterprise. See end of this document for the full listing of Councillors and their qualifications. 4. No limitation on service 5. The Constitution provides no guidance on expected performance standards and the legal structure does not allow for any oversight or accountability.

Communication

Open communication between an organisation and stakeholders is critical.

1. Stakeholders have no effective and free means of providing or receiving information which is relevant to the operation of the schools and the well-being of the students.
2. Recent examples include
 - restricting the ability of P&F groups to communicate directly with the parent body,
 - refusing to disclose the so-called independent workplace investigation into the actions of Rick Hiley to the independent members of the SH School Council, let alone anyone else,
 - removing and prohibiting communications by the independent SH Foundation on its page of the school website in breach of service agreements, and
 - censoring public Facebook posts and blocking many stakeholders from its page for asking the hard questions and objecting to the PMSA's own actions & inactions.
3. Where issues of concern need to be discussed and debated and such issues are at odds with the views or interests of the PMSA, these restrictions pose a potential risk to the safety and welfare of students and staff, and this is entirely unacceptable.
4. Additionally, the PMSA has implemented an adversarial approach to engagement with legal correspondence served on members of school groups, as well as overt and veiled legal threats to Facebook users, in an attempt to control and limit communications with the stakeholders they represent.

<p>Financial Management</p> <p>Providing information about the financial performance of individual schools is important to allow stakeholders to make informed decisions about value for money, for fees and fundraising, as well as the viability of each school and its ability to provide the level of stability and education expected. .</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PMSA reporting of financial results is on a consolidated basis with no clarity on individual school financial performance. 2. Multiple requests for the information have been refused by the PMSA attempting to rely on legalities, including that it is 'commercial-in-confidence'. 3. As a result, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents and other stakeholders can have no confidence in how schools' fees are expended and what percentage goes to their child/ren's school. • there is no accountability for the mounting legal and communication costs incurred by the PMSA, and • there is no clear information about the funding and financial performance of Grammar Early Learning Limited and cross-subsidisation, including leases at roughly 1/3 of market rate. 4. There are concerns that the implementation of the Deloitte "As One" report will further obscure the financial performance of the schools.
<p>Child Safety</p> <p>Protection of and safety for children through policies and procedures that are aligned with best practice and are robustly implemented, and pro-actively improved.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PMSA policies are focused on the bare minimum required to achieve legislative compliance (which is itself the bare minimum in societal expectations), rather than achieving best practice in providing a safe environment for children. 2. In addition, they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are unclear & contradictory, • provide no or insufficient processes and guidance to be followed to enable staff & others to implement best child protection practices and meet legislative requirements, • are considerably out of date, • are, in several areas, non-compliant with legislative requirements, very poor practice or simply wrong,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show a complete lack of qualifications and experience in and knowledge and understanding of child protection by the PMSA Council. <p>3. A recent example reported by <i>The Courier Mail</i> in October 2017 of an incident involving BBC students highlighted the poor handling of the case by the PMSA which resulted in unnecessary stress and reputational damage.</p>
--	--

Future Direction of PMSA Schools

Perhaps the issue that has galvanized stakeholders more than anything else is the Deloitte “As One” Report, which recommends homogenizing the four schools into one institution with four campuses. This would remove the individual character and history of each school and commoditise education. Indeed, students are referred to as “Business Units” in the report.

The PMSA has already commenced the implementation of this policy through:

- *creation of an Executive Manager position with oversight of all four schools,
- * a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement which allows the PMSA to redeploy staff between schools at will; and
- *the centralisation of school communications through the PMSA central office.

PMSA Council Composition

As at 20th December via the PMSA website the PMSA Councillors are:

Name	Qualifications	Date of Appointment	Other committees	Church affiliation
Mr Greg Adsett	Architect	2011	Chair Audit and Finance Appointment and Remuneration Education and Pastoral Care Sunshine Coast Grammar School Council Chair	Uniting Church

			Grammar Early Learning Limited Director	
Dr Anne Bennett	Medical practitioner	2011	Deputy Chair Clayfield College School Council Chair Appointment and Remuneration Committee	Presbyterian
Mrs Helen Murray	Nurse	2014	Clayfield College School Council BBC School Council	Presbyterian
Mr Jim Demack	Solicitor	2013	Somerville House School Council Chair Appointment and Remuneration Committee	Uniting Church
Mr Greg Skelton	CEO Prescare	2015	Audit and Finance Committee Chair Appointment and Remuneration Committee	Presbyterian

Name	Qualifications	Date of Appointment	Other committees	Church affiliation
Mrs Jacqueline McPherson	Lawyer	1992	BBC School Council Chair Appointment and Remuneration Committee	Presbyterian
Mr Kevin Standish	Lawyer	2010	BBC School Council	Presbyterian
Mr Richard Niessl	Principal of Reymont Residential College	2016		Presbyterian
Mr Con Graves	Psychologist	2017		Uniting Church
Vacant				Uniting Church appointee
Vacant				Uniting Church appointee
Vacant				Uniting Church appointee
Vacant				Council appointee
Vacant				Council appointee
Vacant				Council appointee