

23 February 2018

Mr Sam Weir
Editor
The Courier mail

By email: sam.weir@news.com.au / karen.lewis@news.com.au

Dear Mr Weir

Presbyterian and Methodist Schools Association (PMSA)

I write to appeal to you about the way The Courier-Mail is currently reporting on the PMSA and our schools.

Over the past three months and specifically over the last two weeks, including again today, it seems there has been a persistent movement by The Courier-Mail to report damaging and sensationalist stories about our schools and our students. I am deeply concerned about the significant damage that your stories are having on our students and staff. Despite the sensationalist headline, Kylie Lang's article – quoting one parent and trying to shed light on how the media is involved – demonstrated this concern among our parent community and deep effect on our students.

You recently wrote an article about 'boldly and fearless pursuing the truth'. Your Cairns-based journalist Peter Michael writes his stories with inaccurate information, errors, and little respect for people's personal privacy. From the articles he has written, it would seem that Peter Michael has a personal vendetta against the PMSA and our schools and is siding with the Beyond PMSA group. Articles openly promote Beyond PMSA meetings and activities, base stories on hearsay from concerned parents without naming or quoting them, and selectively use information and partial comments to reflect negatively on the Schools and the PMSA.

Some recent examples and incorrect statements are below:

- That Tony Moore is a forensic accountant (14, 16 and 22 February)
- That the schools are losing student numbers (14 February)
- That the PMSA is failing to detail an interim report (9 February)
- That one school gives funds to another school (14, 22 and 23 February)
- That the PMSA is refusing to apologise (22 February) despite our admittance of mistakes (16 February)
- That Beyond PMSA represents 4500 parents and alumni (22 February, 9 February)
- That schools have an embarrassing decline in the top bracket of OPs (23 February)
- That Flo Kearney was summarily dismissed and forced to resign (23 February)



We are happy to show you many more inaccurate and false statements in previous articles.

The schools don't deserve this. The real losers are the students, parents and staff. Why is The Courier-Mail allowing such a clear bias towards a group that is only intent on damaging the PMSA and the Schools? They openly promote that they will not engage with us. We have tried to engage with them and we openly promote that we are happy to speak directly to anyone about their concerns.

Until recently, Peter Michael would run stories without asking the PMSA for comment. He now asks for comment, but late in the afternoon with a 5pm deadline or runs the story before we have any opportunity to provide comment.

As we have stated to Peter Michael, out of the respect of people's privacy, the PMSA will not name people, not comment on people's personal lives, and not comment on past employees.

As we have already stated several times, with the benefit of hindsight and consideration of a wider audience, the PMSA may have dealt with things differently last year. We apologise for that. However, the PMSA Council is still bound to follow existing governance instruments that were drafted years ago with the intent of protecting the school community as a whole. The PMSA are taking active steps to improve our governance, and increase our transparency with a governance review process that is currently underway.

Sam, I would be grateful if you would call David Mallam on 0427 699 205 to discuss the above and how we might be able to improve this situation which is currently so damaging to our students and staff.

Yours sincerely,

Presbyterian & Methodist Schools Association

Greg Adsett
PMSA Chairman