

An Important Message to Maccabi Stakeholders

July 18, 2014

In September 2013, Maccabi Australia appointed an ad hoc committee of review to investigate misconduct by Shannon Francis towards Maccabi members in 1999 / 2000 and respond to the concerns of the victims who have expressed their concerns about the Maccabi organisation's internal processes and actions during this period as well as when Francis was charged in 2011 and his subsequent sentencing in 2013.

On 3 April 2014, Maccabi Australia received the committee's report. The report noted that whilst Maccabi as an organisation did not respond as it should have done, they found no evidence of a "cover up" in the sense of active concealment or a deliberate failure to act. Maccabi Australia has been studying the report with some care, taking advice from various experts, and considering how to best implement the recommendations contained in the report.

The independent committee, consisting of community leaders Nina Bassat AM, Harry Rosenberg and Daniel Aghion, spent considerable time conducting an investigation including the interview of witnesses. After their deliberations and based on their findings, they have provided a series of recommendations to ensure the better handling of such matters in the future. As can be expected there was much for Maccabi to take on board with the findings and recommendations, all of which were unanimously adopted by the MAI Board.

Maccabi has committed to rolling out an extensive training program that will help educate everyone in a position of authority at all levels of the organisation about the Maccabi Member Protection Policy (MPP) and codes of conduct that they are required to adhere to and what they should do if any breach occurs. This includes coaches and other paid professionals as well as all Maccabi members and volunteers.

An entirely new MPP structure is in the process of being put in place. This includes Member Protection Compliance Officers at club level, State and National Integrity Officers as well as independent Grievance Tribunals and an Appeals Tribunal.

Overseeing the implementation and development of the Policy and its roll-out is a national MPP Sub-Committee, chaired by Philip Sheezel. This Sub-Committee will also monitor actual experiences at all levels to ensure that our MPP processes are up to date and that Maccabi continues to learn. Philip, along with Ellana Aarons (Executive Director MAI) and Maccabi Victoria's Jacquie Lerner have completed the JCCV "Safeguarding Children in Organisations" Training Program, a program which the community in NSW is looking to provide for its organisations.

In addition a comprehensive MPP policy document and procedure Handbook has been developed and is in the final stages of review. Importantly, Maccabi has consulted widely both internally and with outside child protection experts in the development of this Handbook. We believe this document will be able to be utilised by other community organisations as a model manual for child protection policies and procedures.

The intention is to roll out the Handbook to all clubs coupled with appropriate training for all members of the organisation in the coming weeks. We understand that without proper training at all



levels of our organisation, our MPP Handbook (not matter how well written) will be ineffective and our members will not be protected.

With respect to the recent report in the AJN – it is important to note Barry Smorgon Chairman MAI and Executive Director MAI Ellana Aarons met with the victims some weeks ago to not only work through the findings and recommendations of the Committee but also list in detail the steps that have been undertaken to develop the required systems, protocols and processes. In addition they provided the victims with a full apology of behalf of all Maccabi organisation and officers involved in the incident.

We have through the process opened a very honest dialogue with the victims to work through the report and have provided them full disclosure to the findings and recommendations of the committee. They are now working with us on the development of our policies to ensure we limit the chances of anything of this nature occurring again.

The report was generated through many hours of interviews with the various people involved in the incident – each person interviewed did so under confidentiality, to protect them and to ensure the full detail of the events were disclosed.

As such the report contains material of a confidential nature and ultimately if made public would breach our obligations. We understand the need for full disclosure and transparency and have within the context of our obligations provided as much as we possibly can.

As the committee found there was no cover up then and neither is there one now. The MAI board has taken this matter to be their highest priority and have implemented most of the recommendations of the committee and are prepared to be measured by their behaviour in the future.

Any queries about this statement or the MPP can be directed either to your state office or to Ellana Aarons, Executive Director Maccabi Australia on 03 9563 5865 or ellana@maccabi.com.au