

8 September, 2004

70 LENTHALL STREET
KENSINGTON NSW 2033

Mr. Heath

Dear Mr. Heath,

I write to express my concern with regard to a staff member in the employ of St. Andrew's Cathedral School, namely, Mr. William McCormack. For some time, the situation regarding this member of staff has been unpleasant, however an occurrence on Monday of this week has brought me to the point where I feel such concerns must be shared.

I was called out of a class on Monday 06 September 2004 (under no small degree of protest!) to go down to the M.C. Newth Auditorium (MCNA) for an undisclosed reason. Why under protest? Because I was aware that the bump-out from an event which I had deliberately chosen not to be involved with was occurring at that time, for reasons associated with other academic commitments and the impending Year 11 exams.

I was being called down to the MCNA with regard to some equipment which was apparently damaged at an event I was involved in two weeks prior – more about this later. Until a few months ago, I loved working in Technical at St. Andrew's. We don't have the most expensive or advanced equipment, but there's a "buzz" which comes from having things look excellent, sound excellent and generally run smoothly. And the destruction of equipment required to facilitate this isn't consistent with this desire, contrary to the apparent belief and opinion of Mr. William McCormack.

To be perfectly honest, in recent times I have had less and less reason to preserve that equipment if this reason is all that is holding my respect for property in place. The situation in the past year has deteriorated to the point where it is necessary for us to make several phone calls and wait hours for something as meagre as the opening of a window on the booth to occur; this is blatantly unproductive for all parties concerned. This could be acceptable, were there some kind of monitor audio facility available to us in the booth, however the speakers we had in there disappeared some time ago, with questions as to their whereabouts either avoided, or greeted with a change of conversation. This isn't productive, nor does it enhance the facility in any way. It certainly doesn't benefit either performers or technical, either.

In fact, the presence of Mr. William McCormack is apparently unnecessary and a general hindrance to all technical activities. The fact that his job purpose is unclear to myself is irrelevant – if he is required for other operations of the School, I am not entitled to comment on these operations, as I am not privy to what this may entail. Thus, comment shall be restricted to that which I have knowledge of.

If his purpose is to provide technical support, he fails. His knowledge of technology is inappropriate to the purpose and position. This is a subjective judgement.

If his purpose is to maintain equipment in a working and useful state to all parties, he fails. The equipment setup is inappropriate to many curriculum drama events. This is a subjective judgement, however may be substantiated by several other parties.

If purpose is to provide access to equipment, yet restrict its unauthorised usage, he fails. The use of automation software to control power to devices in the booth is inappropriate, as this has meant that required equipment has not been available in a timely manner for a variety of events. This may be circumvented through manually re-patching the system, if the cupboards are opened/unlocked, however this defeats the purpose of this system and has been frowned upon by Mr. William

McCormack for fairly obvious reasons. In this, he fails, and attempts to create a monopoly of control, which is not beneficial to any parties. This is not subjective, and may be substantiated by several other parties – not restricted to those involved in Drama A/ V support, but also including P&F functions and other events.

If his purpose is damage and loss prevention, he fails. This year, the functionality of equipment and facilities in the MCNA booth seems to have fallen to a new low. More equipment appears to be regularly failing or “disappearing”, to either be replaced in an apparently identical state to that of several weeks previously, or not to be replaced at all. Further, no parties other than Mr. William McCormack appear to be able to confirm these equipment “failures” in the first person. There is an implication there, however I shall not explicitly express it, instead preferring to cite examples.

In the last eight (8) months, both the LSC lighting console and Behringer sound console have been absent from the booth on several occasions that I have noted. Keeping in mind the regularity with which Drama A/ V events occur, and this is a remarkable “failure” rate, if the precautions being taken to prevent damage and/ or theft are being effective to any extent. The excuse that I recall for the disappearance of the LSC lighting desk was that “students spilt Coke on it”. I do not recall any other people having claimed to have seen this desk in its damaged state, with the exception of Mr. William McCormack. This is understandable, seeing he is the person theoretically responsible for this equipment, however the number of people using that facility would have perhaps have resulted in other witnesses. At any rate, none were to be found by myself.

This was either one or two days prior to an event (a curriculum drama event, probably Year 11), and a lighting console had to be urgently hired. At a cost unknown, Mr. William McCormack hired a lighting console from “a friend”. I didn’t incur the cost myself, and the desk functioned, so perhaps I should not comment on this. That said, I feel obligated to due to the apparently dubious nature of this. The school generally hires equipment from Lots of Watts, because we have an established relationship with them as a reliable supplier, their equipment is modern, and their rates competitive. I’m uncertain as to whether there are any formal policies in place at St. Andrew’s for supply of A/ V hire equipment, however I personally place far greater trust in the integrity and reliability of equipment supplied by Lots of Watts over that of an anonymous “friend” of Mr. William McCormack.

This would have been forgotten, but for the fact that the lighting desk we eventually used for this production was an earlier relic of the Digital lighting revolution, struggling to cope with basic functionality which we take for granted, such as the recording of scenes and chases. But I digress.

On at least two occasions, our sound desk, purchased last year after substantial campaigning from Steven Wylie (Year 12, 2004) and Katy Cracknell (Year 12, 2003), a Behringer sound console (well suited to the environment) has disappeared, to be replaced with a console not dissimilar to the desk we used prior to the purchase of the Behringer (in fact, one may go so far as to suggest that this desk is IDENTICAL to the one previously used, with the only difference being that it has been removed from its enclosure in an attempt to make it appear “new”). As of the last event with which I was involved, the Year 12 2004 HSC drama performances, the Behringer was still not present. I am uncertain as to what the current situation is.

Our wireless AKG microphone has disappeared on numerous occasions, however it was present at the most recent event at the time of writing, “Peta and the Great White Shark”, which was co-ordinated by Mr. William McCormack. The whereabouts of this microphone between earlier in the year and this time remains undetermined.

Significantly, the monitor audio speakers which are used in the booth to hear what is happening on stage, as well as what is going out of “Front of House” speakers, have disappeared as of earlier in the year. My last definite recollection of these being present was during the event “SACS Idol”. **Steven Wylie has been explicitly told by Mr. William McCormack that these monitor speakers are at his home.** Productions have suffered because of this, especially in circumstances where it has been impossible to open the windows of the booth, as Mr. William McCormack was not present and no other staff members present had the appropriate keys. This includes Mr. Stephen Goldrick, who oversees most Drama A/V events.

The 12 Channel lighting dimmer has been used by Mr. William McCormack outside of school (by his own verbal admission to myself) and not restored to a state compatible with the system St. Andrew’s Cathedral School has in place. This external event required the dimmer be set to DMX channel 9, whilst the St. Andrew’s system requires channel 1 be used – if the system were to be used by a person who did not understand the DMX system, equipment would not have functioned without physical intervention from an appropriately trained person. Whether this external use of equipment was sanctioned or authorised by St. Andrew’s is beyond my knowledge.

Those are the more significant instances of equipment failure or “disappearance” which have occurred in 2004, to the extent of my knowledge. In the process of cleaning and organising the booth by Mr. William McCormack, the location of other equipment has become unknown, however this other equipment is not of significant financial value in its own right. That said, operations without ready access to cables and the like are perhaps more difficult than they should be.

It was as a direct result of this absence of equipment that I was called out of Period 2 on Monday to see Mr. William McCormack, who was at this time “bumping out” from the event “Peta and the Great White Shark”. During the HSC ’04 Drama performances, it is appropriate to provide the Board of Studies markers with lights on their desk for the purpose of taking notes and identification of students, etc. The lights that we had used in previous years, which were durable, low-wattage lamps with clips, were unable to be located by the Technical personnel present at this event. Despite numerous attempts to locate the old lamps, including consultation with Mr. William McCormack himself, this did not occur in a timely fashion, and we were forced to use the halogen lamps installed in the booth, for the markers. This was done with the full knowledge of Mr. William McCormack.

During the course of the two days of shows, one or both of the lamps placed on the markers desk were knocked to the floor and the base snapped from the upper part of the lamp. The markers did not communicate this to Technical, and if they informed Mr. Stephen Goldrick of this damage, this was not conveyed to Technical. The second morning of performances, as we powered on and tested equipment, it was noted that one of the lamps had failed (the bulb inside had died). This was replaced with another halogen lamp from the booth, and the production proceeded.

It is worth noting that the telescopic extension on at least one of the lamps was broken prior to this event, however it is acknowledged that between the beginning and end of these two days of performances, by one means or another, one or both of these lamps were broken (presumably from falling from the desk) to the extent that they presented a potential electrical hazard (e.g. it would have been possible to reach inside the base of the lamp and touch the transformer housed there). That is granted.

Also granted is that Technical failed to inform Mr. William McCormack, or the staff member present (Mr. Stephen Goldrick), of this damage. This was a failure to communicate, and may be attributed to oversight more than malice. I accept that our response was unsatisfactory, however this is not due to any deliberate action on our part.

As Technical, we accept that we must be accountable to a point. This is not about accountability. This is about being insulted. I am insulted with the tone Mr. William McCormack employed when drawing my attention to this damage. I am insulted by the timing and circumstance in which he informed me. I am insulted that a non-teaching or disciplinary member of staff would *consider* pulling a senior student from class in the same week their yearly exam period commences.

I am not insulted by lack of recognition, nor do I crave this. Technical is not about that. It is ludicrous to think that this is true. It's not even about respect. There is, however, an element of this required, to the extent that TRUST is possible. We are working with equipment worth thousands of dollars. Theft is possible, as is damage from inappropriate usage. Both are unfortunate realities at St. Andrew's Cathedral School, however to the best of my knowledge, students working in Drama A/ V support are guilty of neither. To the best of my knowledge, I am not prepared to say the same with confidence of Mr. William McCormack.

His continued employment and apparent redundancy is insulting. The manner in which he deals with students is insulting. His skills and abilities are inappropriate to the position. His integrity is questionable, and the dependence that St. Andrew's Cathedral School currently has upon him is of his own devising, through the implementation of restricted access dependent on his intervention for a functional production environment.

For all these reasons, both myself and numerous other students that have worked in Technical roles in the past or continue to do so, consider Mr. William McCormack's activities to be of considerable concern.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries with relation to this matter.

Best regards,

Joshua Street
Year 11, St. Andrew's Cathedral School