



The NSW Coptic Orthodox Board of Education

5 February 2020

Media release

Recent allegations made against St Mark's Coptic Orthodox College

The purpose of this media release is to respond to recent allegations that have been made against St Mark's Coptic Orthodox College (the **College**) and in particular allegations pertaining to:

- the manipulation of student marks;
- the rewarding of students deemed to have engaged in plagiarism;
- the integrity of College staff; and
- third party meddling into College affairs.

Following notification of the above allegations, in October of 2019, the NSW Coptic Orthodox Board of Education (the **Board**) undertook an inquiry with relevant stakeholders to assess the merits of the allegations made and to determine, if necessary, the next steps to be taken. As part of its inquiry, the Board:

- met with the relevant stakeholders;
- undertook a comprehensive review of relevant records and materials;
- and
- reviewed all processes undertaken to determine student marks.

In concluding its inquiries, the Board found no evidence to support the allegations made. Specifically, there was no evidence of manipulation of student marks and no evidence of meddling by third parties in the College's affairs, particularly in the award of student marks.

On the contrary, the Board found that the College followed all prescribed processes in the determination and award of student marks.

Following the Board's inquiry, the College was then audited by the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (**NESA**). The College complied as required with presenting all requests of evidence to NESA, including all students results and assessments for 2018/2019. NESA's audit also concluded that there was no evidence to substantiate any allegations made against the College.

The College is required by law to work within all regulatory frameworks required by Federal and State governments and in particular the statutory authority NESA, who is directly responsible to oversee all curriculum matters in NSW independent schools.

Historically, the Board and the College did not publicise inquiries/steps undertaken into allegations or concerns raised due to the basic principle of privacy. The privacy of our students will always be the Board's and the College's first priority and is not negotiable. It is for this reason that the Board and the College has not publicly commented previously on the above allegations. However, unfortunately certain individuals, some of which are unrelated to the College or privy to certain matters, have decided that the best way forward is to publicly slander the College and its staff. Such conduct cannot be left without a response.

The allegations made against the College and its staff are without merit and are made without an appreciation of the full facts, from all stakeholders. The comments made recently on social media

by third parties are defamatory, serious and attack the very essence of the College's values and ethos. This undermines the hard work College staff put in on a daily basis to deliver the best education possible to our students. The Board strenuously rejects such comments and deems them baseless.

As a Coptic Orthodox community-based school, inevitably many of our staff and students (including families) attend and belong to the numerous parishes within Sydney. Rest assured that our Church, and our Church fathers and any specific parish, do not involve themselves in any shape or form in curriculum matters and requirements or within the operational requirements of the College, as all are fully aware these procedures and requirements are dictated and mandatorily required by our Government authorities. The Board has not and will not allow the meddling or involvement of any third parties in any aspect concerning the operation of the College. The integrity and reputation of the College has and continues to be an enduring priority.

The Board reaffirms that its staff have always acted in an ethical manner consistent with what is expected beyond the prescribed processes and guidelines. Our College staff consistently work hard to ensure that every student has an opportunity to excel. It is this work ethic that continues to be demonstrated daily in the achievements of our students.

The well-being, education and success of all students will always be the College's first priority.