27 March 2009  

MEMORANDUM TO: Diocesan Directors  
Principals of Congregational Schools  

FROM: Ian Baker  
Director – Education Policy and Planning  

SUBJECT: Work placements involving animal handling

Under the terms of coverage for insurance policies for work experience and work placement, activities involving the handling of animals require special approval through Catholic Education Commission, NSW.

Approval is given on a case-by-case basis, with a few exceptions. No special approval is required in the following instances, though appropriate risk assessment and management practices must be followed:

- Activities required by participation in a BOS Primary Industries ICF Courses
- Attendance at retail pet shops selling small domestic animals.
- Participation at work experience / work placement activities at Taronga Park and Dubbo Zoos under the management of their education unit.

For other activities involving animal handling, applications for special approval must be made on an annual basis to Patricia Strauss, CEC, NSW by fax at 02 9264 6308 or by email to patricia.strauss@cecnsw.catholic.edu.au.

Annual applications for special approval to CEC should include:

- Details of the host employer as listed on the student record form for work placement, including details of the duties to be performed and length of placement
- Numbers of students to be placed in the enterprise
- Relevant student details - e.g. special needs, health issues, relevant experience

Activities involving placements in animal sanctuaries, veterinary practices and the like may be considered under the following circumstances:

- Small animals only are involved. Handling of large animals, including horse riding, is unlikely to be approved.
- Students have been assessed as to their suitability for a placement working with animals.
- Students have been well prepared and have provided evidence of appropriate inoculations/vaccinations – for example tetanus shots.
- The workplace had been risk assessed and the supervisor has been briefed in relation to the need for instruction and supervision and any restrictions on student activity.
A guideline document *A work experience guide for students working with animals* has been developed for Victorian schools. This includes a student self-assessment form. It is recommended that schools use this form to assess student suitability for placement. Schools are reminded to consider the potential risks to the animals by placing students in particular situations as well as the risks to the students that animal placement may present.


A fact sheet entitled *Work place hazards in working with animals*, developed under the Victorian program will assist further in risk management.


If you wish to discuss this matter further please contact Patricia Strauss at 02 92871 575.

Sincerely

Ian Baker  
*Director - Education Policy and Programs*