

Professor S. Arasaratnam
Head

18 January 1993

Most Reverend Kevin Manning,
Bishop of Armidale,
c/- P.O. Box 93,
Armidale, 2350.

Dear Bishop Manning,

I am writing to you with reference to Rev John Farrell's historical studies. I spoke to John last week and he told me of the possibility of his beginning his Ph.D work this year. We talked at some length about his research topic and he encouraged me to write to you.

His topic of study is a history of the Armidale Catholic diocese. Until John has made a thorough study of the available sources, it is not possible to be certain of the precise scope or focus of the history but we are fairly confident of the general outline. The history will trace the Catholic Church and community in the New England region from the beginnings of European settlement in the 1830s to recent times. This topic is an important one in the present state of historical study in Australia because it relates the themes and issues of the general or national history to a region. There have been in the past twenty five years several good studies of aspects of the Catholic Church in Australia: education, the debate with the liberal state, politics and the Labor Party, and Patrick O'Farrell has presented a comprehensive account of the Church and community. What has been scarcely attempted is historical study of the Church at the regional level. It is too easily assumed that each region's history was merely a small reflection of the bigger picture.

It is, then, important to investigate the Catholic Church and community from the perspective of regional history. Were the Catholic people of New England similar to their co-religionists elsewhere? Did they have similar Irish and Scottish origins; were many transported convicts? Did the clergy face in New England similar problems when they started to establish churches and schools? Was sectarian rivalry as strong in New England as it was elsewhere? And the questions go on.

John is very well equipped to handle this topic. His Master of Letters thesis on Bishop O'Mahony showed that he had an excellent grasp of the particular sources and the general context of historical scholarship on that topic, which is, of course, a small part of the present project. He presented his work in an ably written manner - quite an achievement given the severe time constraints of that degree. I am sure



that John will be able to complete a doctoral thesis within the normal three years prescribed.

The first task which John will undertake, as suggested earlier, is to identify all possible sources for his study: letters and diaries of the clergy, minutes of Church organisations, school records of all types, published and private histories of parishes and schools, financial accounts, and so on. There may be much held in the Diocesan Archives in Armidale and perhaps something remains in the presbyteries of the diocese. I am sure you will be able to facilitate John's search in these areas. There will also be material in the St Marys archives in Sydney and possibly something in Rome.

I am very pleased to learn of your support for John in his further studies and I would be happy to answer any question you may have about his research.

I would like to make your acquaintance in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bruce Mitchell".

Dr. Bruce Mitchell
Senior Lecturer in History