

CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE

DATE : 20 August, 1996

INTRA - OFFICE MEMO

CONFIDENTIAL

REF. NO.:

TO : Rev. T. M. Doyle

FROM : Ms Maria Kirkwood

CONFIDENTIAL

RE : FATHER PETER SEARSON - HOLY FAMILY, DOVETON

As you would be aware complaints have consistently reached this Office with regards to Fr. Searson since 1982. The complaints range from concerns over financial management issues (Building program - Sunbury 1982; purchase of a motor vehicle 1982) to alleged harassment of parents, (Mrs. REDACTE 1989) and pupils (April 1993 - knife to chest of female student) and some reference to possible sexual advances to children (November 1985). Advice received at this Office from Richard West (3 May 1993) presents a summary of these issues. The letter from Richard West notes that while name of the allegations appear strong enough to warrant charges it states "the fact that over the years a number of suggestions have been made from a number of different people that there is something untoward about Father Searson's behaviour with children is, in my view, sufficient to warrant some investigation of his conduct in view of his position of responsibility to the children in his Parish".

On Friday June 25, 1993 a meeting was held in the VG's Office. Present were, Monsignor Cudmore, Fr. Searson and yourself. Notes of the interview indicate that the VG informed Fr. Searson that he was being given a formal warning in accordance with Canons 1740 and 1741, to be confirmed in writing.

Further concerns have been raised at various times this year by Mr. Ray Adams, the Principal of Holy Family, Doveton. His complaints range, yet again, from financial matters (qualified audit 1995; use of school funds for maintenance of the presbytery) and issues of staff harassment

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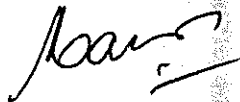
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as well as continuing but unsubstantiated concerns about Fr. Searson's dealings with children.

A formal letter of complaint reached this Office on 9 August from two members of staff who experienced public humiliation during a parish weekday Mass.

I believe that the school community requires more support than the Office can give in the pastoral sense. A full investigation and / or the removal of Fr. Searson would seem to be a reasonable request at this time.



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Mitch McKenzie

Faye Skandlas

May the U
Holy Family
Mt Veneris

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① Kefa Vaughan

Private Fax of a Pooky

0883016614

Maryann Goodacre
Deputy to G. Gleeman

G. School Board Kefa Vaughan
June

Joan Power
Principal at Endeavour Hills