

File Note - Re: REDACTED

On 26 August 1997 REDACTED attended the offices of the Commission, accompanied by his mother, REDACTED.

REDACTED had made contact with me as a result of receiving a letter I had forwarded to him. He stated that his date of birth is REDACTED 1981 and his present address is REDACTED Narre Warren.

He is presently a Year 11 student at St. John's Dandenong. REDACTED commenced at Holy Family, Doveton in Grade 2 in 1988. He remained as a student there until the end of Grade 6 in 1992.

When REDACTED arrived Fr. Searson was the Parish Priest and as such he was involved in the religious education of students and played a prominent role in the school affairs.

REDACTED indicated a very strong dislike of Fr. Searson and when pressed to explain his reasons he cited the following incidents:

- (a) That Fr. Searson continually pressured him and other boys to act as altar boys when they did not wish to do so.
- (b) Fr. Searson continually asked for favours such as weeding his garden.
- (c) Fr. Searson punched REDACTED in the ribs so as to wind him in approximately Grade 5 or 6. This occurred when REDACTED, REDACTED and some other boys were standing in the room adjoining the Church at Holy Family. Fr. Searson struck REDACTED quite forcefully and then attempted to laugh it off as a joke.
- (d) Fr. Searson was sometimes drunk at the start of Mass, could barely walk straight and he smelled strongly of alcohol.
- (e) One day in Grade 5 or 6 REDACTED arrived earlier than usual for school, at approximately 5 to 8. Fr. Searson approached him and told him to come

with him over towards the presbytery. When they approached the presbytery Fr. Searson commenced screaming abuse at [REDACTED] for arriving at school too early and told him that he should never do it again. [REDACTED] was extremely fearful and was on the verge of tears as he believed Fr. Searson was about to hit him. Fr. Searson's telephone then rang and went he to answer it and told [REDACTED] to stay where he was. [REDACTED] then sprinted to the school office and banged on the windows pleading to be allowed in. The secretary (whose name [REDACTED] cannot recall) let him in to the office and told him to hide under the table. Some minutes later Fr. Searson appeared at the office and asked the secretary whether she had seen [REDACTED]. The secretary stated that she had not.

- (f) Some students accidentally stood on some of Fr. Searson's plants when they were playing in the vicinity of the presbytery. Fr. Searson demanded \$160 each from the boys. Most of the boys refused to pay but one boy did pay Fr. Searson \$160.

[REDACTED] stated that he did not have any direct knowledge of sexual abuse by Fr. Searson, but that he remembered hearing from [BTW] many years ago that Fr. Searson had two beds at the presbytery and one of the beds was used to rape people. [REDACTED] said that this was probably just fabrication by [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] also stated that at St. John's Dandenong on the day before our interview [BTW] had informed [REDACTED] that Fr. Searson made him sit on his knee when he was a student at Holy Family School. [REDACTED] obtained the impression that this had only happened the once although he was not sure.

I read to [REDACTED] the contents of the typewritten document contained in the papers relating to Fr. Searson. This typewritten document states in relation to [REDACTED]:

"Father gives me the no feeling when he touches me. Once I went serving and father his me in the neck. And once father felt me. I thick father is gay. I recon his will start to feel us all over. I should have not served but father

pushed me to serve. If I never served this would never happened to me or the order boys that this is happening to them too. Next year father will be picking on the other boys. Last term on the holiday's father rang me up and told me to come and serve so I had to and about 4 weeks ago father came to my house and started talking to my parent's and he was liing. Maybe this holiday father is going to ring me up and tell me to serve. And last of all father calls me (a play on his name - REDAC TED says this should be "REDA") and I hate it."

REDAC TED seemed surprised at first when he heard the contents of that document, but he then stated that he did remember making those comments to Carmel Giddings. He remembered that she took notes and then typed those notes up. He stated that he did remember being hit in the neck by Fr. Searson now that he had been reminded. He was adamant however that Father had never "felt" him. It is possible, that in the presence of his mother, REDAC TED was reluctant to discuss this issue. I attempted to reassure him in this regard. He insisted that he had not been touched or assaulted in that way by Fr. Searson.

REDAC TED asked for my email address in order that he could forward me the details regarding BTW [redacted]. He stated, on departing, that he would try to remember anything else. It may be that he will provide further information to me in the absence of his mother.

Jeff Gleeson
27 August 1997