

Commission into Sexual Abuse

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30 May 1997

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Dear Sir,

Re: Farther Searson

I have been appointed to act as Counsel assisting the Independent Commissioner.

I accordingly advise that at the hearing fixed for 4 June 1997, the following complaints will be enquired into and reported upon by the Commissioner, namely:

1. On a number of days in 1985 (the precise number of which cannot be identified) when students in the fourth grade at The Holy Family School, Doveton were attending reconciliation, at the Holy Family Church, Farther Searson in the room set aside for reconciliation indecently assaulted a fourth grade student (herein called "Julie"),
 - (i) by requiring Julie to sit on his lap (which she did) whereby she came in contact through clothing with his erect penis;
 - (ii) by rubbing his hand up and down Julie's thigh;
 - (iii) requiring Julie to kiss him and to tell him that she loved him.

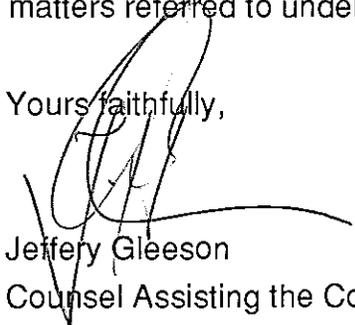
2. On a day in second term 1985, when students in the fourth grade at The Holy Family School Doveton were attending reconciliation at The Family Church Doveton in the room set aside at the Church for hearing reconciliation Father Searson indecently assaulted Julie by having her kiss him and by moving his hand across and in contact through clothing with her vagina.
3. On a number of days (the precise number of which cannot be identified) in 1985, when students in the fourth grade at The Holy Family School, Doveton were attending reconciliation, at The Holy Family Church, Father Searson indecently assaulted a Fourth Grade student (herein called "BTV") in the room set aside for reconciliation,
 - (a) by requiring BTV to sit on his lap (which she did); and
 - (b) by placing his right hand on her leg.
4. That Father Searson on days during 1985, (the date or number of which cannot be identified) during lunch time or at recess walked around the school wearing a holster carrying a gun and thereby engaged in professional misconduct.
5. That on a date in or about 1985 Father Searson engaged in professional misconduct in that he permitted two female fourth grade students to be with him in the foyer Holy Family Church Doveton and to do hand stands with their skirts tucked into their pants.

With respect to complaints 4 and 5 above I advise that they have been included so as to allow persons who will be at the hearing in respect of complaints 1, 2 and 3 to give evidence and thus negate the necessity to bring them back on a further occasion. The evidence in respect of paragraph 4 will be given by BTV and the evidence in respect of paragraph 5 will be given by Shirley Barrett.

With respect to the latter Shirley Barrett was a signatory to a letter dated 23 June 1989 which was sent to the Catholic Education office and which was also the subject of a deputation to Bishop Pell as he then was. A copy of this letter and enclosure is provided herewith.

It is proposed to adduce from Shirley Barrett evidence in relation to the matters referred to under the headings "Incidents and Grievances".

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey Gleeson', written over the typed name and title.

Jeffery Gleeson
Counsel Assisting the Commissioner