

S. A. Wilson

FILE COPY



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January 13, 2012
 12/0028

Mr Ray Ham

REDACTED

Dear Mr Ham,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter of 4 November 2011.

The factual inaccuracies and the misleading inferences in your letter constrain me to respond by way of correction. In that respect I will deal with only the most glaring of the errors.

You assert that Claude was "*under considerable pressure*" when he claimed to have carried out a police check on the bus driver. The reality was that, at the expense of the Catholic Education Office, Claude accessed separate legal representation throughout the whole interview process. The statements which he made in the interviews were made with the benefit of legal counsel. If he was under any pressure, it was of his own making. I have little doubt that a major contributing factor to the "*pressure*" he claims to have been under was that he was fully aware that he was misrepresenting the true position in making that claim.

You assert that Claude "*was dismissed*". The reality is that, after admitting that he had misled the Director of Catholic Education, he chose to resign, again with the benefit of legal counsel in making that decision.

You assert the view that a Principal misleading the Director of Catholic Education about a matter of critical importance to the issue in question is of lesser moment than failing to observe CEO policy of the day. I must say that I find that view astonishing in light of your former role in Catholic Education. Whether or not obtaining police checks was required of Principals at that time, Claude chose to raise the matter in purported defence of his position. He was appropriately accountable for having done so by way of a misrepresentation.

You assert that the police, the CEO and the School Board Chairperson "got off scot-free". Such a sweeping statement is misconceived and indicates your lack of knowledge about relevant matters. In saying that, I allow for the fact that you would not be expected to have any knowledge of all or many of those relevant matters.

You assert that "*the 2008 confidential report was leaked to the press*" which necessarily infers that it was intended to remain privileged and confidential. The reality is that I chose to publish the report voluntarily in the full expectation that it would be provided to the media.

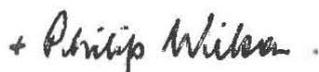
While I note your claim about how carefully you have followed this case over the years, it is clear from your letter that, for one reason or another (some of which were no doubt beyond your control), many important aspects of the case have escaped you.

It is disappointing that you seem to have no knowledge of, or that you have chosen not to recognise, the extent of the very careful and very sensitive work which was done over some years during my stewardship to ensure, as far as practicable, that just outcomes were achieved in this most difficult of matters. In doing so, we reached out to all potential victims and their families and provided them with pastoral and financial support on an entirely unconditional basis.

As to the common view which you say has been expressed by your fellow retired Principals that "*there but for the grace of God go I*", I can only say that if they had misled the Director of Catholic Education in respect of an issue of such a critical nature, then indeed they might well expect to have been faced with a similar outcome.

Having addressed those matters, and while I acknowledge your concern and compassion for Claude, the fact remains that several of the affected families are still aggrieved by the events of some twenty or so years ago and are pursuing their grievances through litigation. As you will appreciate, I cannot comment on that litigation; but the fact that it is ongoing and that Claude will or may be involved as a witness means that, even if there was to be any re-consideration of Claude's position, it would have to await the outcome of that litigation.

Yours sincerely,



Most Rev Philip Wilson DD JCL
Archbishop of Adelaide