

STATEMENT

My name is John Francis Kelly of 4 Lucia Crescent, Lismore in the State of New South Wales.

I am the Director of the Catholic Education Office for the Catholic Diocese of Lismore. I am responsible directly to the Bishop and his Consultors, however, I do rely on policy matters to be decided by the Advisory Board to his Lordship the Bishop and his Consultors.

The Catholic Education Office serves as a Secretariat for matters relating to education within the Diocese, and further, is available to Parishes of the Diocese to offer advice and assistance in relation to matters relating to education.

I obtained the Leaving Certificate in 1950 and thereafter, attended Armidale Teachers College from 1952 to 1954 and thereafter, qualified as a Teacher in 1954. I then taught for 19 years for the New South Wales Department of Education in both Primary and Central Schools. In December 1972 I joined the Catholic Education Office for the Diocese of Lismore. Initially, I was the Co-ordinator of Schools, then I was appointed Acting Director in approximately 1979, then Deputy Director in 1980, then I became the Director in November, 1981, a position I currently hold.

During the years 1985 and 1986 Sister Julia O'Sullivan, then Principal of St. Carthages, came to see me and Mr John Reilly at the Catholic Education Office. She came to us on at least two occasions. Her concern relating to Brother Gregory Sutton was not following the directions on school procedures. In addition, Sister Julia O'Sullivan complained Brother Gregory Sutton resisted offers of assistance to complete programmes.

On the first visit by Sister Julia O'Sullivan I asked her if she was speaking to Brother's superiors and she said she was. This was the normal recourse between religious orders.

On another occasion I suggested she write a disciplinary letter to Brother Gregory Sutton and send a copy to the provincial house of the Marist Brothers.

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These visits by Sister Julia O'Sullivan probably took place in late 1985 and early 1986 because she told me at a Valla Park Conference held in the winter of 1986 that she had done what I suggested.

In 1987 Sister Julia O'Sullivan became ill and while on leave Mrs Jan O'Grady became acting Principal.

In the week prior to Easter (6th to 10th April) Mrs Jan O'Grady came to see me and gave me copies of reports that had been collected since 1985 concerning Brother Gregory Sutton.

Some of the matters raised in these reports were far more serious than professional negligence and serious enough for me to immediately ring the provincial house of the Marist Brothers. I asked to speak to Brother Alman, the provincial, but was told he was away. The Brothers agreed to locate him for me and within a couple of days he advised he would be in Lismore and could see me. I saw him on a Public Holiday during the Easter break.

Our conversation on his arrival in Lismore was not lengthy as I asked for Brother Gregory Sutton's removal and Brother Alman agreed. I asked him if he wished to read the reports Jan O'Grady had given me and he said it wasn't necessary. I assumed he had read copies of the complaints about Brother Gregory Sutton.

Following Brother Gregory Sutton's removal I asked Sister Julia O'Sullivan why she had not told John Reilly and me about her other concerns. She replied that she didn't want to be responsible for the break down in relationship between the Brother and the Nuns.

Sister Julia O'Sullivan on her visits to the Catholic Education Office spoke to both John Reilly and myself and we discussed the concerns and ways of dealing with the poor programming and teacher responsibilities that she raised.

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It was not until Mrs O'Grady's visit before Easter 1987 that we understood the concerns to be more serious.

At no stage however, did we believe it was more than negligence of duty and professional misconduct until we read Mrs O'Grady's reports in 1987.

Brother Gregory Sutton did not return to St. Carthages School after the Easter break.