

Conversation with Cardinal Pell

The Cardinal's recollections are somewhat unclear. He remembers receiving a delegation at Mentone when he was auxiliary bishop. He was sympathetic to their concerns and followed the matter up. He was not aware of anything more than vague rumours of wrongdoing on the part of Father Searson in any previous situation. At that time these matters were normally followed up by discussion at Curia (the Archbishop, auxiliary bishops and Vicar General). He took advice in this way.

Cardinal Pell then spoke with Father Searson and advised him to follow strictly prudential norms in these matters. It wasn't an amicable discussion because he resisted the suggestions of wrongdoing and resented them. The Cardinal then discussed the matter with Graeme Sleeman. These matters at that time were dealt with by the diocesan office, usually the Vicar General or his delegate. The Cardinal's recollection is that there was insufficient evidence to do anything except to warn Father Searson to conduct himself properly.

The Cardinal believes that he discussed this conclusion subsequently with Graeme Sleeman explaining what had been done. As far as the Cardinal recalls, the problem with the Searson case was the lack of clear and sufficient evidence for action.

24 August 2012

ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE