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9th April, 1998

Most Rev. D. Hart, DD.,
Vicar General,
ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE.

My Lord,

I write further to our recent conversation concerning Mr Graeme Sleeman, former Principal of Holy Family School, Doveton and the copy of letter to Archbishop Pell from Mr Sleeman dated 19th March, 1998.

I attach for your information a chronology of events as far as our records show with respect to Mr Sleeman during his period as Principal from April, 1982 till the end of the 1986 school year. Mr Sleeman indicated by letter to Fr Searson on 28th September, 1986 that he would be resigning at the end of that year and indicated that "the major reason for my decision is that I feel there now exists irreconcilable differences between you and your understanding of my role as Principal of the Holy Family Primary School and between that which I believe to be my role". Mr Sleeman attached a copy of his letter to Fr Searson in a letter to me of the same date i.e. 25th September, 1986. In that letter he says "I would like to take this opportunity of thanking you for the support and assistance that has been offered to me through your office during this difficult period especially from Mr Allan Dooley and Mr Peter Annett."

Our confidential file note of 23rd September, 1986 records discussion between Peter Annett and Mr Sleeman in which Mr Sleeman referred to irreconcilable differences between himself and Fr Searson and that if Fr Searson was to remain at Doveton he would resign.

During 1987 and 1988 Mr Sleeman was a teacher at Salesian College, Chadstone. During 1987 he applied for some principalship positions but he was unsuccessful. It would seem he operated a General Store at Longford

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from 1988 to 1992. He again applied for a principalship position during 1992 but was unsuccessful.

In his time at Doveton, whilst Fr Searson was Parish Priest, there are reports of inappropriate behaviour involving Fr Searson and children. Perhaps the most significant relates to allegations in the confessional. It was indicated at the time that a formal complaint by the parents/teachers would be necessary if the matter was to be proceeded with – this involved consultations with Bishop Connors who was Vicar General at that time. This formal complaint was not made.

Certainly there is material on file to indicate it was extremely difficult to function efficiently as principal with Fr Searson. However, it is also as well to indicate there are indications that Mr Sleeman was “hot headed” and intemperate on occasions and the staff at this office had occasion to be involved in reconciling differences between Mr Sleeman and others.

At the time of the resignation of Mr Sleeman it would seem that the reasons for it related to difficulties between Mr Sleeman and Fr Searson with respect to his role.

I trust this is helpful.

With every best wish,



(Rev. T. M. Doyle)
DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Attachment



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