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AD:CL

20th October, 1986.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE
OF VICTORIA

Wantirna South Group
Suite 2, 173 Boronia Road,
Boronia 3155

CONFIDENTIAL

Rev. T.M. Doyle,
Director,
Catholic Education Office,
P.O. Box 146,
EAST MELBOURNE. 3002.



Dear Father Doyle,

Re: Holy Family Primary School, Doveton.

I am writing to inform you of the matters with which I have been involved over the past few weeks, specifically in regard to Mr. Graeme Sleeman's resignation as Principal of the school, and in several other matters that have arisen as a consequence of his resignation.

I have attached, for your information, a memo listing in chronological order the matters in which I have been involved as Educational Consultant for Holy Family School, and below I have listed my reflections on the situation as it stands currently.

I hope that this letter, and the attached notes, provide you with an accurate summary of my involvement to date, and of my opinion in regard to the current situation.

MY REFLECTIONS ON THE SITUATION AS IT STANDS AT THE MOMENT:

1. I believe that Graeme Sleeman has acted within the conformity of his own conscience in his resignation as the differences between he and Father Searson are not able to be reconciled in a meaningful way.
2. Whilst staff and Father have agreed to begin again, it is my feeling, based on several meetings with Father Searson over the past two weeks, that nothing of any significance will change in their relationship. I believe that, whilst Father Searson has always acted within his rights, he is intensely provocative in his manner, ambiguous in many of his statements and clearly lacking in any tact whatsoever in relationship with his staff. I believe that they have good cause to be dissatisfied and I have expressed such to Father Searson.
3. Whilst I have not entered into discussion about the rights and wrongs of any matters raised with parents, it is clear that they reflect a similar frustration to that of staff and have raised serious matters which should be addressed.

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4. Given the current situation, I am most concerned that once again the Doveton community is undergoing a major trauma which is clearly beyond their control. The resultant effect on the children of the school will not be good, and it is significant to note that this is the third such event that has occurred since 1981, which has seen a major change to the leadership and staff of the Parish and School.
5. Whilst I have not been involved with the letter or action from the Doveton Cluster of Schools, I believe that their involvement is not appropriate. I acknowledge the fine work that is undertaken between the schools in the area, however, I cannot accept that their current involvement does not have a hidden agenda which, in particular, could be a resurfacing of the enrolment debate which took place earlier this year. (A previous report from me contains details of this debate).
6. I acknowledge that Father Searson has made serious attempts to hear the many issues that are being put to him and has, in his own way, sort to 'begin anew'. In doing so, he has averted many angry resignations, however, I do not believe that he understands the full implications either of the complaints, or of his intention to begin again. To begin again would involve such a change in his mode of operation that it does not seem to me that such is possible. I have good and open communication with him, and have been quite honest in presenting my views on many matters to him. We have made some progress on some issues in the past, but they are usually minor advances which do not result in any major change.
7. If there is to be a major development arise from these events, it will be in the area of skills development by the staff and parents who have been involved in this process. I believe that in future they will be better able to respond to Father Searson when he makes inappropriate requests or statements and stronger in expressing their views. In this way they will not be as easily intimidated as in the past, and this may result in a more mellow approach on the part of Father Searson. This, of course, remains to be seen.

Yours sincerely,



Allan Dooley,
Educational Consultant.

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