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18 April 2000

Mr W D Toppin
Headmaster
The Hutchins School
PO Box 254
SANDY BAY TAS 7006

Dear Bill

AOA

I refer to your letter 12 April 2000 addressed to Rob McKay. He is currently engaged in an inquest and he has asked me to respond.

I agree with you that a simple "no comment" response would not be beneficial to the School's position. However, I consider that the following matters could form the subject of a statement by the School. I suggest that they should be put into the form of a press release. Consideration can then be given to whether or not there will be further interviews on the release. If there are to be further interviews, I suggest that the person speaking on behalf of the School should ensure that they use the release as a "brief" and do not make comments outside its ambit.

The following points can be made:

- the School has been aware of the complaints by Mr AOA for some time;
- as a result, there have been previous confidential discussions between Mr AOA and the School;

- the School has carried out extensive investigations into the matter, but is unable to find independent evidence in support of Mr^{AOA}'s claim. Nonetheless, it is concerned that Mr^{AOA}, as a past student of the School, claims to have suffered as a result of activities alleged to have occurred when he was a student a significant time ago;
- the integrity of the School and its ability to deliver an excellent standard of education to present and future students is not in doubt.

It may be advisable to ask a media consultant to put this material into an appropriate form. I would be happy to review the statement, before it is released.

Yours sincerely



MICHAEL O'FARRELL

Direct line: REDACTED

Email REDACTED