

# School's file on sex case missing

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By COLIN JAMES  
and NIGEL HUNT

A CATHOLIC school's file detailing alleged sexual abuse by a bus driver of intellectually disabled children is missing, it has emerged.

Church officials have been unable to find the file since they were first alerted to the allegations last July.

The revelation came yesterday as Police Commissioner Mal Hyde said police had already been investigating allegations of sexual abuse by the driver before the church requested him to intervene.

No moves had been made to find the man, but detectives from the police child exploitation unit had been conducting inquiries in the long-running case.

"There was contact between the child exploitation unit and parents over the last couple of years and there were certain inquiries taking place," Mr Hyde said.

The investigation had been upgraded after he was contacted by the church. Mr Hyde also has established an internal inquiry to determine why the original case stalled.

Meanwhile, a new principal appointed to the school four



months ago has told officials she has been unable to find the file. The previous principal, who was relocated to an administrative role, says the file was there when he left.

The absence of the file is hampering attempts by the church to determine what happened when the school first learnt of the child sex abuse allegations in the early 1990s.

The file contained details of alleged victims, their families, the employment history of the alleged perpetrator and official correspondence.

Officials want to determine: **WHOM** the principal told about allegations.

**WHAT** disciplinary action the principal took.

**WHETHER** appropriate counselling was offered to victims and their families.

Parents of several alleged

victims told *The Advertiser* they had never been contacted by the school about the allegations. About 10 parents found out for the first time during a social event last July.

Another 50 parents learnt about it through letters couriered to their homes by the Catholic Archbishop of Adelaide, the Most Rev Philip Wilson, as late as 10pm on Wednesday.

The parents said they were never contacted by any government department, including police and Family and Youth Services, about the matter.

A FAYS search of its files in December found only one dossier on an alleged victim, indicating the department did not conduct a full investigation when alerted in 1991.

The file details allegations involving one of two alleged

victims identified during initial police investigations in the early 1990s.

Public Advocate Jol Harley, who represents intellectually disabled children, has sought details about the department's investigations in the allegations following several meetings with parents.

Former human services minister Dean Brown wrote to Mr Harley in January saying the police, not the school, had reported the allegations to the department.

This was despite the principal being made aware of the allegations when he was approached by police seeking identification of two alleged victims. By law, schools must report suspected cases of child abuse or face a fine of up to \$2000. Mr Brown's letter says FAYS was notified by police about one alleged victim although parents of another pupil were also asked by the principal to contact police.

"Recently, FAYS has been provided with the names of two possible victims allegedly abused in 1991 by a former bus driver at (the school)," it says.

A hotline set up by the Catholic Church for concerned parents has received 19 calls. The number is 0417 088 054.