

240134 FILE NOTE (1) 29 APRIL 2004

**MATTER: ADRIAN NISBETT**

**CLIENT: KNOX GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

I telephoned Stuart Pearson. His wife answered the phone. I asked for Stuart.

I said, "Stuart, it's Grahame Wilson."

He said, "How are you Grahame?"

I said, "Good. You'll remember I'm carrying out that investigation at Knox. I'm in the final stages. I'd like to clarify a couple of things with you."

He said, "Yes."

I said, "I've now interviewed Adrian Nisbett and put the allegations to him. He basically says that there was the sort of contact between him and boys that you would expect in a boarding situation. He denies that anything inappropriate occurred."

He said, "So he dismisses it?"

I said, "Yes. The point I want to clarify with you is the allegation relating to ARO and the darkroom. In responding to this Adrian Nisbett told me the darkroom was in his quarters at Ewan House, in a pantry near the kitchen. He did allow boys in there to show them how to make prints but that ARO wasn't a boarder and he doesn't believe he came to Ewan or was ever in the darkroom. Do you know anything about him being a boarder?"

He said, "I can't recall. I believe Adrian's right. The darkroom was in a pantry. I'll agree. Other people had access. Adrian, in the main school, had a number of boys who followed photography - 4 or 5 went over to Ewan House at various times to have rolls of film developed. It's not right that only he (Nisbett) and the boarders had access. ARO was over in Ewan - on one occasion at least he was offered alcohol. Other day boys were there - some at the invitation of the boys and Adrian."

I said, "Are you sure ARO told you about the darkroom?"

He said, "Yes. ARO was several times over at Ewan House - what's he doing spending frequent visitations at Ewan at the invitation of Adrian Nisbett?"

I said, "I've established that Adrian Nisbett left Ewan House at the end of 1986, so it would appear your investigation may have occurred in 1986."

He said, "Yes, I would have put it later but that led to him leaving."

I said, "I have spoken to Adrian Steer. He regarded you highly and indicated you were very helpful to him."

He said, "Thank you for telling me that."

I said, "I taught for a long time and helped lots of children. I still run into some of them and they remind me of things I did. It's nice to know. He couldn't recall talking to you about Adrian Nisbett but also indicated he wasn't sure about this. He told me about an incident in the darkroom. He believed he hadn't told you about this."

He said, "The only person I spoke to about the darkroom was ARO"

I said, "Do you recall whether you interviewed any members of staff during your investigation?"

He said, "Les Harvey I treated him with some caution. Les was a resident at Ewan and worked closely under Adrian. The relationship seemed ok. Les seemed anxious, I'll use the vernacular, to drop the bucket. When dealing with it some people couldn't keep quiet. It became an open secret. Les Harvey came to me with more innuendo, repeating what he had heard."

I said, "I've faced the same difficulty. You can't just approach someone because they were there at the time and may know something - you've got to be mindful of reputations."

We discussed seeking evidence and confidentiality generally.

He said, "I wound it up - felt it would get out of hand. There was Michael Probert and two others, Michael Lee he left the school a long time ago and one.....(He thought for a while)"

I said, "it wasn't Damien Vance?"

He said, "Yes. There may have been one more. David Degotardi came in and out of boarding but I have no strong recollection. Not one had direct evidence. It was in danger of becoming a witchhunt. Michael Probert, the stuff I recall was later, '89,'90, '91. Kooyong occurred after I left."

I said, "You left in late '90 I think."

He said, "Yes. One other thing - all four of them had problems with their own sexuality - not all of them, maybe most. Les Harvey had baggage, problems. He was doing it to help himself. Did Adrian Steel mention his parents?"

I said, "No but I didn't ask him."

He said, "That's right, Adrian Steel didn't want his parents to be involved. Have you spoken with ARO

I said, "No. He's in England. Adrian Nisbett told me that. He told me he visits him when he goes to England. He's close to the family. He attended the father's funeral last year."

We discussed the difficulties this presented in terms of approaching and not knowing what you were opening up.

He said, "ARO came to see me because he was concerned - now 25 years later you still have the person coming, maybe he couldn't say no."

He said, "Did Adrian Steer tell you any other names?"

I said, "Yes, he did?"

He said, "Do you mind telling me to see if they ring any bells?"

I said, "REDACTED and ATR were mentioned in relation to Damien Vance."

We agreed we both had some awareness of Damien Vance but would not discuss this further.

I said, "REDACTED"

He said, "They were all close friends - going to houses, going to Ewan - 3 or 4 of them. Adrian Nisbett was a friend to all of them - they were good sportsmen - the more they achieved, the more he befriended them."

I said, "REDACTED"

He said, "No REDA was a friend of Steer's. RED was the son of D REDACTE REDACT at the time. REDA was no a source of new information. ARO and Adrian still seem to be two who had new information, not repeating what they had heard."

He asked me could I tell him if Adrian Steer was married. I told him that he was.

Grahame Wilson