

NORTHSIDE CENTRE

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VICTORIA POLICE
STATEMENT

Name: SMITH, Denis
Address:
Occupation: Minister of Religion

Ph Home:

Ph Work:

REDACTE

STATES:

My full name is Denis Vernon SMITH. I am a Minister of Religion of the Assemblies of God in Australia.

In 1981 I was called by the church to be the Senior Pastor of the Northside Christian Centre Church. The college is part of the incorporation of Northside Christian Centre Inc. The Board of the church invited me to be the Pastor of the Church. In 1981 the church had just purchased nine acres of farming land at the current McLeans Rd. site in Bundoora and were planning a new church and administration centre. The school had been underway about one year before I got there. It was running from two sites, the Reservoir church hall and the secondary school in an Anglican hall in Preston. I was the chairman of the school council and the church board. The school council was composed of mainly parent representatives. The school was essentially run by staff, the school council and church board. I don't recall how many children were in the school in 1981. As the school council chairman I signed the employment contracts and as such represented the employer. In these initial years the church was administered under the Religious Successories and Trustees Act. We later incorporated under the Associations and Incorporations Act.

There was not a school principal as such but a head teacher. The supervising teacher in 1981 was Mr. Hank DEVRIES. I don't recall any specific policy at the school in relation to handling complaints at the school other than normal school procedures. These procedures were that the school teacher or person making the complaint would take the complaint, usually initiated by a parent or student to the principal or head teacher, the head teacher would then communicate this complaint to a member of the school council or directly to myself as council chairman. I do not know if this procedure was formally recorded anywhere but this is standard school practice for schools everywhere, and is probably still going on today. The principal and his staff investigated all complaints, not me.

I don't recall the year but I recall employing Ken SANDILANDS as a teacher at Northside Christian College. Detective Senior Constable MONK has advised me the year was 1983 and if that's what the school records say that's what I'll go by. There were a number of interviews before he reached me but I recall employing Ken because at that time he was technically blind. I had no concerns about employing Ken at this time. He had been teaching at another school prior to our hiring him and he was a registered teacher. We rely on the Education Department's guidelines as well to recommend Ken as suitable and capable of teaching.

Detective Senior Constable MONK has described to me an incident involving a student called AGD REDAC. I do not recall this student at all. Detective Senior Constable MONK has advised me that a teacher's aide at the time, Ann BROWN has made a statement alleging she may have reported this incident to me. I do not recall Ann BROWN mentioning this incident to me at all. I do not recall any of the teaching staff mentioning this incident to me.

Detective Senior Constable MONK has described to me an incident involving Ken SANDILANDS drawing pictures of a vagina on the blackboard while talking to two female students, as witnessed by Tim Brown a pastor on the staff. I do not recall this incident or being informed of it by any member of

staff. Detective Senior Constable MONK has advised me Pastor BROWN alleges he advised me of this incident but I do not recall this and did not document this in anyway.

Detective Senior Constable MONK has shown me a hand written letter from the Principal of Northside Christian College Mr. Ken ELLERY dated 30/12/1986. In the letter he refers to "imprudent relationships" with students between Ken SANDILANDS and female students. I recall this referred to Ken SANDILANDS practice of putting children up on his knee and hugging them. I recall this was partly due to his blindness. I believe Ken ELLERY fully investigated these incidents and was writing to me to advise me had had not found them to be improper but had warned SANDILANDS to cease the practice, to stop putting himself in situations where others could "impute evil".

In April of 1987 Keith INGRAM, the Deputy Chairman of the school council, in consultation with staff, drafted a set of guidelines in relation to Ken SANDILANDS behaviour. These guidelines were explained to Ken and he agreed to abide by them. I had no input into these guidelines but was aware of them. These were in the teaching sphere and would have been the responsibility of the teaching staff.

Detective Senior Constable MONK has shown me documentation dated 20/10/1987 relating to an incident and prior to viewing this documentation I did not recall the name Emma HUGHES or the incident. Following the investigation documented in the papers shown to me that related to this incident, I met with Ken SANDILANDS, along with Keith INGRAM and principal Neil ROOKES. SANDILANDS vehemently denied doing anything wrong. SANDILANDS admitted he had been foolish and had broken the spirit of the guidelines we laid down to him by putting students up on his knee, but that was all. In relation to this incident by 1987 I was in the situation where I had to give three warnings before I could terminate a teacher, and I had to also be sensitive in Ken's case because he had a sight disability.

Detective Senior Constable MONK has mentioned some names to me. I do not recall any incident involving AGG [REDACTED]. I do not recall any incidents involving Ken SANDILANDS and the AGN [REDACTED] family. I do not recall any incident involving AGS [REDACTED]. I did speak to the parents concerning a number of matters relating to their daughter and their family situation.

Detective Senior Constable MONK has shown me documentation in relation to a complaint by parent AGR [REDACTED] made in November 1993 in relation to an historical complaint about Ken SANDILANDS and his son AG [REDACTED]. I did not recall the incident until I refreshed my memory with the notes I and other staff made at the time. Kerry LOVELL the school councillor and teaching staff investigated it. We requested Ken reply to the matter in writing. We sent excerpts of Ken's letter, in which he denied everything in a covering letter to the parents. We were unable to substantiate the claims but due to the fact that Ken had been warned before he was advised he could no longer teach at the school. The parents were advised that counselling would be provided for students if it was required and they could pursue the matter further, meaning police involvement if they chose.

SANDILANDS left the school in 1993 under an insurance scheme. He was legally blind at this time. As the employer I had no reason to fire him because he protested his innocence throughout and I had no evidence to disprove what he said. He resigned from the staff some years later.

In relation to Ken SANDILANDS I believe I have followed the laws of jurisprudence, innocent until proven guilty, and the teaching staff who handled the matter at the time were doing their best to be fair to everyone.

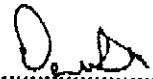


(Denis SMITH)

Statement taken and signature witnessed by me
at 12:04 on 27/06/2000 at Sexual Crimes Squad

J.L. MONK
Detective Senior Constable 25439

I hereby acknowledge that this statement is true and correct and I make it in the belief that a person making a false statement in the circumstances is liable to the penalties of perjury.



(Denis SMITH)

Acknowledgement taken and signature witnessed by me
at 12:05 on 27/06/2000 at Sexual Crimes Squad

J.L. MONK
Detective Senior Constable 25439