



Statement


Name Anthony Aulsebrook
Address Known to the Royal Commission
Occupation Former principal
Date 11th November 2015

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. My full name is Anthony Joseph Aulsebrook and I was born in 1948. I am 67 years old.
3. In 1969, I graduated from the Education Department's in-service teacher training. In 1976, I completed a Bachelor of Education at the University of La Trobe. In 1982, I graduated with a Diploma of Religious Education and a Diploma of Business and Administration (Education Administration).
4. From 1968 to 1980, I taught at Catholic primary and secondary schools in Victoria. From 1980 to 1982, I worked for the Catholic Education Office (CEO) in Ballarat. During that time, I met Gerald Ridsdale, but I never heard of any allegations about him in relation to children until years later, when he was charged and it became public knowledge. While I was in Ballarat, I attended monthly Diocesan Education Board meetings from mid-1980 until the end of 1982, as a school evaluation consultant for the Catholic Education Office. I think I attended around 20-30 meetings. Doctor George Pell, now Cardinal Pell, also


Signature: Anthony Aulsebrook Witness: [Signature]

attended those meetings as Chairman. I did not hear any allegations about any priests during my time in Ballarat or at those meetings.

5. In November 1982, I applied for the position of principal at St Anne's Primary School, Sunbury ('St Anne's'). It was my first principal position.
6. Father Peter Searson ('Fr Searson') was the parish priest. He and a panel of school and parish representatives interviewed me for the position, but I can't remember much about the interview.
7. I started as principal of St Anne's in January 1983. I would see Fr Searson once a week at principals' meetings. Those meetings were attended by me, Fr Searson and Sister Mary Gaveghan. Sister Mary Gaveghan was the principal of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, which was the other parish school in Sunbury.
8. Sister Mary Gaveghan gave me advice about how to manage Fr Searson. She told me that he was a difficult person to work with, that I should not allow him to bully me and that I should stand up for what I believed in.
9. Fr Searson regularly visited St Anne's. Early in 1983, a couple of St Anne's teachers, whose names I cannot recall, asked me to accompany Fr Searson around the school when he visited. The teachers told me that they did not trust him and that they thought he was a bully. The teachers also reported to me that Fr Searson would turn off classroom lights and heaters.
10. Occasionally, I saw Fr Searson in his army uniform. I don't remember how often he wore the army uniform. My recollection is that Fr Phil O'Donnell, who was assistant priest at Sunbury, told me at the time that Fr Searson had a gun. I never saw the gun myself.

Signature:  Witness: 

11. In mid-1983, Fr Searson asked me to sign some financial statements for St Anne's for the 1982-1983 financial year. I refused to sign them as I had not been at the school in 1982. I could see from his facial expression that Fr Searson was not happy that I would not sign the financial statements. I can't remember what he said or what happened. I think I might have eventually signed the statements, but I wrote that I had not been at St Anne's in 1982.
12. In late 1983, I received a telephone call from someone from a car dealership. The person from the car dealership said words to the effect of 'It is time to book the school car in for a service'. I said 'What school car?' I realized that he was talking about Fr Searson's car. I was shocked that Fr Searson had said that it was a school car. My recollection is that I telephoned the CEO regional consultant Vincent Egan and told him about the phone call.
13. On 17 September 1983, I wrote a letter to Bishop O'Connell. This letter is marked as CTJH.222.02002.0051. Bishop O'Connell was close to my wife's brother who also lived in Sunbury. He had known my wife's family for a long time. I used to see Bishop O'Connell regularly at family gatherings and special celebrations.
14. In October or November 1983, Bishop O'Connell visited St Anne's, possibly for a sacramental program or a bishop's visit. I don't recall exactly when it was or why he was there. He pulled me aside in the school playground and said words to the effect of 'I got your letter. Things are in motion. Keep your powder dry.'
15. In November 1983, I found out that Fr Searson had been appointed as parish priest of Doveton to commence in 1984.

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