

Tribunal of The Catholic Church Diocese of Armidale

26th October, 1992.

Most Rev. K.M.Manning D.D.,
Bishop of Armidale,
Chancery Office,
Dangar Street,
ARMIDALE, N.S.W. 2350.

Dear Bishop Manning,

I wish to communicate a report on the meeting that took place on 24th September 1992 between Rev. John Farrell and members of the Australian Catholic Bishops Special Issues Resource Committee. This was a follow-up meeting to the previous meeting of 3rd September 1992. At your instruction, I attended the meeting as a representative of you and the Diocese of Armidale.

The meeting was held at the Cathedral Presbytery, St. Mary's Cathedral Sydney on Thursday 24th September 1992 commencing at 7.30 p.m. Present were Rev. John Farrell, Rev. Brian Lucas, Rev. John Usher and Rev. Wayne Peters.

Father Brian Lucas opened the meeting and informed Father Farrell that the committee members had given consideration to the matters discussed at the previous meeting of 3rd September 1992 and now wished to offer concrete proposals as a way forward for Father Farrell. Father Lucas then led the meeting through seven points contained in the proposal.

1. *For the reasons previously explained and taking into account all the circumstances there is no possibility of an appointment at this stage.*

There was little if any discussion on this point.

2. *This is subject to on-going review.*

There was no discussion on this point.

3. *In the event of an application for laicisation the recommendation would be that the diocese support this and assist in its implementation.*

Farther Farrell indicated that he did not see this as a way forward for him. To begin with, he was quite opposed to any thought of this way of proceeding. The idea of the laicisation of Father Farrell was returned to on a number of occasions during the course of the meeting. It my impression that while Father Farrell was still against the idea, he was more inclined at the

end of the meeting to at least give some thought to that way of proceeding. However, I do not think it would be his preferred way of proceeding as on the 24th September 1992.

4. *In the event that laicisation is resisted then some significant proof of the possibility of successful ministry must be provided.*

There was no discussion on this point.

5. *To assist in the preparation of the proof required in (4) the following is recommended:*

- 5.1 *That there be a period of extended leave of say 5 years with an initial review in two years.*

It was agreed that the details of the implementation of any review in two years would have to spelt out in a concrete way.

- 5.2 *That there be a full-time secular employment and secular living situation.*

I questioned the committee members on some aspects of this recommendation. The committee members advised that this meant that Father Farrell not take any employment that was associated with the Church or a Church agency; that Father Farrell not live in a Presbytery or Convent or Monastery or such like accommodation that was associated so closely with the Church. Further implications to this recommendation were that Father Farrell should refrain from using the clerical titles such as Reverend or Father, that he should refrain from the wearing of clerical dress and that he should not promote himself as a priest.

The preferred location for this secular employment and secular accommodation was inter-state. However, it was seen that Sydney as a second preference might have to prevail. This was because of the availability of a suitable therapist for on-going treatment. Dr. Alex Blaszczynski, the committee's preferred choice as a therapist is a resident of Sydney. The committee was strongly adamant that the employment and education would not be Armidale or within the Armidale Diocese because of Father Farrell's high profile in the Diocese.

Father Farrell raised the possibility of further study in preference to employment in the strict sense. The committee members believed this was a real possibility as study is employment of sorts. However, the committee members again stressed that any such further study not be at the University of New England in Armidale because of Father Farrell's high profile in Armidale and the Diocese of Armidale.

- 5.3 *That there be no ecclesial ministry (either clerical or lay)*

There was no discussion as such on this point. It was covered in the committee's observations that Father Farrell seemed to have difficulty in maintaining a low profile.

- 5.4 *That there be an approved programme of therapy and in this respect on-going therapy with Dr.Alex Blasczynski is recommended.*

Father Farrell indicated that he was not happy with Dr.Blasczynski. He indicated that he felt Dr.Blasczynski was vague and forgetful. He cited the example that he had asked the doctor to send a written report to Bishop Manning on the meetings between Father Farrell and Dr.Blasczynski which had never been done. When he asked the doctor about it, the doctor seemed vague.

Father John Usher pointed out to Father Farrell that he needed a strong and capable therapist such as Dr.Blasczynski who would challenge and push issues with him.

Father Farrell indicated he was not absolutely opposed to Dr.Blasczynski. However, he was clearly not happy with the prospect of Dr.Blasczynski.

- 5.5 *That Father Farrell pay for such therapy and further, as a gesture of goodwill, attempt to meet some of the previous costs expended in the legal process.*

This point passed without comment from Father Farrell.

- 5.6 *That there be an approved person appointed as a monitor, to whom there was be regular reporting.*

Father John Usher strongly expressed the view that the monitor be appointed by Bishop Manning since the monitor was a representative of the Bishop and ultimately responsible to the Bishop. Father Usher also expressed the view that it may be preferable for the monitor not to be a priest.

- 5.7 *That there be a positive report that unambiguously recommends a future appointment.*

There was not much discussion on this except that a future appointment would depend on such a positive report.

6. *In the event of some possible future appointment it will not be in the Diocese of Armidale and will not be parochial and will be limited to a specialised ministry of minimal risk.*

There was no significant discussion on this point.

7. *The Special Issues Resource Group for the Province will supervise the implementation of the above if so directed by the Bishop.*

There was no further discussion on this point.

It was hard to ascertain just what emotions were going on in Father Farrell. He seemed to act in a calm and business like manner throughout. When asked his reaction to the proposals, Father Farrell indicated that he was quite angry about it all.

On a couple of occasions there were some small indications that Father Farrell is perhaps beginning to appreciate in some way the very difficult position his actions of the past have placed him, his Bishop, those offended against, the priesthood and the Church. However I stress that the signs were small and I cannot be confident of that.

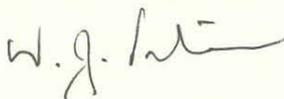
The matter of salary payments to Father Farrell was discussed. The committee members indicated that should Father Farrell accept the proposals as a way forward, the recommendation would be that Bishop Manning pay him say two months salary to assist him as he seeks suitable employment and accommodation. Father Farrell indicated that he had not received any salary from the Diocese of Armidale or the Diocese of Parramatta where he had been employed since July 1992.

Father Farrell indicated that he did not accept the proposals at the time and wished to give the matter some thought before replying to the proposals.

The meeting adjourned for a break at about 9.30 p.m. Apparently, further discussions took place between Father Farrell and Father Brian Lucas during that adjournment. I was not privy to the details of that meeting. However, when the meeting re-convened, the meeting was informed that Father Farrell wished to think the matters over for a month. During that time he would spend time with his family and think about the proposals that the committee had put forward.

The meeting finally ended close to 10 p.m.

Yours sincerely,



(Rev. W. J. Peters)
Judicial Vicar