



## Summary of conclusions in relation to 4 Corners allegations

### Background briefing paper

\* ORIGINAL approach - 'TH' - Melb Response  
↳ 25 Q&A - Seltsias / Armidale

6 July 2012

1. The Cardinal was asked to be interviewed by the ABC 4 Corners program to discuss the Church's practices in relation to handling of complaints of sexual abuse. 4 Corners submitted questions to the Cardinal which included references to a meeting in September 1992 between Fr Brian Lucas, Mgr John Usher and Mgr Wayne Peters from Armidale with a Fr F. It was suggested by 4 Corners that admissions of criminal conduct were made at this meeting.
2. The Cardinal sought feedback from Mgr Usher about this meeting prior to appearing on 4 Corners. Mgr Usher advised that his recollection was that Fr F made no admission of actual criminal conduct. He said he had spoken to Fr Lucas and Mgr Peters and they had also confirmed that no admissions of actual criminal conduct had occurred at that meeting. Mgr Usher confirmed that he would have reported any admissions of actual criminal conduct to the police, consistent with his well established practice then and now.
3. Based on this clear advice from the three priests involved, the Cardinal advised 4 Corners that he understood that no admissions had been made at the 1992 meeting.
4. In response to a question from 4 Corners, Mgr Usher advised on 29 June that he, on behalf of the Archdiocese of Sydney, had a policy of reporting any disclosures of criminal conduct to the police and, when required, the Department of Community Services. This was a practice prior to the 1990's and Mgr Usher confirmed that Fr F had made no personal disclosure of criminal behaviour during the meeting in September 1992.
5. Fr Lucas and Mgr Peters made similar statements to the 4 Corners program. Their statements were not quite as definitive as Mgr Usher's but were consistent with the advice they had provided Mgr Usher that there were no admissions of actual criminal conduct at that meeting in September 1992.
6. When the 4 Corners program was aired, it was revealed that Mgr Peters had sent a letter to the Bishop of Armidale, Bishop Manning, about the meeting. The letter from Mgr Peters suggests admissions of criminal conduct were, in fact, made at that meeting. At a meeting on 4 July, Mgr Peters said he had no other notes of the meeting and no recollection of what had occurred and that he planned to stand by the claims made in the letter to the Bishop which was prepared 8 days after the meeting with Fr F.

Mgr Peters advised the letter was a private memo to his Bishop and that he had not discussed its contents with Fr Lucas or Mgr Usher.

7. In a telephone call with Fr Lucas on 4 July, he indicated that no one had said that no admissions were made. Rather, he said, there were "no admissions of a specific nature". Fr Lucas said that Fr F had not conveyed the level of detail set out in the Mgr Peters letter and, if so, he would have reported it to the police. Fr Lucas said that he was investigating this issue on behalf of the Bishop of Armidale, that he did not take any notes and that he may have spoken to the Bishop of Armidale the day after the meeting.
8. Mgr Usher prepared a detailed statement of his involvement with the Fr F matter including copies of his notes taken on the day of the meeting. These records and Mgr Usher's recollection confirm that no admissions of criminal conduct were made at that meeting.
9. On 5 July and on 6 July, Fr Lucas advised media outlets that wrong doing was acknowledged by Fr F during the meeting and that this included admissions of criminal and wicked conduct. Fr Lucas indicated that as no names had been mentioned he did not feel he had a duty to report it to the police – without names there could not be a successful prosecution. Fr Lucas advised the media outlets that the responsibility for reporting to the police rests with the victim.