

MEDIA RELEASE

Praying Centre
133 Liverpool Street
Sydney NSW 2000

04 July 2012

MEDIA STATEMENT: ARCHDIOCESE OF SYDNEY

The Archdiocese of Sydney does not accept allegations that its priests have failed to disclose the existence of crimes committed by a former Armidale priest.

Father Lucas and Monsignor Usher separately told the ABC 4 Corners programme in emails that no specific admissions were made at the meeting with Father F and they stand by these statements.

The recollections of Fr Lucas and Monsignor Usher accord with the information provided to Cardinal Pell and subsequently conveyed by him to ABC 4 Corners. In 1992, Cardinal Pell was an auxiliary bishop of Melbourne. He was not aware of the meeting held in Sydney in 1992 between the three priests and a priest of the Armidale diocese until it was raised by ABC 4 Corners.

Cardinal Pell made 4 Corners aware that each Bishop is responsible for his particular Diocese and, as such he has never had any authority over Fr F. This was always a matter for the Bishop of Armidale.

Contrary to reports, the letter of Father Peters to Bishop Manning was not an official record of the 1992 meeting. The letter was a private report from Father Peters to Fr F's then Bishop.

Neither Fr Lucas nor Monsignor Usher was aware of the existence and contents of Fr Peters' letter until it was raised by the 4 Corners program. The letter does not reflect their recollections of the meeting or notes of the meeting held by the Church's Professional Standards Office.

The Archdiocese of Sydney welcomes the announcement today by Bishop Kennedy, the Bishop of Armidale, of a full independent investigation and strongly supports his call for any victims of sexual abuse to contact the police. Where victims are unable to do so or require assistance, the Church's Professional Standards Office can assist by contacting the police on their behalf.

In addition, the Archdiocese of Sydney, through the Church's Professional Standards Office, has contacted the NSW police and offered its cooperation with any investigations that may arise.

The suffering of victims of sexual abuse reported by 4 Corners is tragic and terrible. Cardinal Pell and all at the Archdiocese extend their deepest sympathies to all those affected by the evil of sexual abuse. The Archdiocese reiterates its commitment to bringing sexual abuse to light and to ensuring that victims are treated with compassion, respect and justice.

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