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**STATEMENT OF
CARDINAL GEORGE PELL
ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY
17 July 2012**

Cardinal Pell has welcomed the announcement made today by Bishop Michael Kennedy of Armidale and Bishop Anthony Fisher OP of Parramatta that the Hon. Antony Whitlam QC, retired judge of the Federal Court of Australia, has been appointed to conduct an independent and impartial inquiry into the case of ex-priest F who was stood down by the Bishop of Armidale twenty years ago in 1992.

Cardinal Pell will ensure that the Archdiocese of Sydney, including Father Brian Lucas and Monsignor John Usher as priests of the Archdiocese, will cooperate fully with the inquiry.

"A couple of basics should be restated," Cardinal Pell said. "All church procedures have to be carried out within the law, respecting and following the provisions of the law.

"Mistakes have been made in the past. Our procedures have been progressively refined, with a new, tighter national protocol, Towards Healing, established in 1996 and two major external reviews of that protocol since then. We will continue to improve and develop our processes.

"I will continue to encourage victims of sexual abuse to contact the police", Cardinal Pell said. "Where victims are unable or too traumatised to do so or require assistance, the Church's Professional Standards Office can help by contacting the police on their behalf.

"The Archdiocese of Sydney cooperates fully with police investigations and I confirm that the Archdiocese will cooperate with any police investigation of the ex-priest F.

"I confirm that before being asked about it by ABC 4 Corners, I was not aware of the 1992 meeting with then-Fr F. I sought details and Monsignor Usher informed me, after contacting Father Lucas and Monsignor Peters, that the recollection of the three priests was that no admissions of actual criminal conduct were made at that meeting.

"The task now is to let Mr Whitlam get on with his inquiry".

ENDS