

STATEMENT OF JAMES MICHAEL FITZPATRICK**GIVEN TO BRIAN WILLIAMSON
14TH DECEMBER, 1993**

1. My full name is James Michael Fitzpatrick. I am a Catholic Priest of the Oblate of Mary Immaculate, Rome, Italy.
2. I am aged 58 years and I hold a Master of Arts Degree (Education) from St. Louis Missouri and a Doctor of Philosophy (Rome).
3. I was appointed by the Australian Bishops' Conference as National Director of the Catholic Enquiry Centre of Maroubra in 1978 and I held that position until 1988. I was the only employed Priest. There are six/seven employed woman and a number of volunteers.
4. The Catholic Enquiry Centre commenced operations in 1958-59. The first Director was Fr Tom White, who held the position for 14 years. He was replaced by Fr Les Cashan and I became the third incumbent. The Centre moved to its Maroubra premises in 1961. There are two houses, side by side. One is the office and the other is the Priests' residence.
5. Fr. Ridsdale was seconded to the Enquiry Centre. Until his secondment, other Priests helped part-time but there was a need for a full-time worker as the previous full-time priest had left before Fr. Ridsdale arrived.
6. I had requested the Bishop's Conference for assistance, as I was away from the premises a great deal. Bishop Mulkearns responded to my request and offered Fr Ridsdale.
7. Shortly after Bishop Mulkearns made his offer, I was in Ballarat and called upon him. He said words to the effect of "Fr. Ridsdale has problems with young boys and I want him out of the Diocese".
8. I indicated to him that "at the Enquiry Centre he'd deal with people by mail and he would be separated from young children".
9. Bishop Mulkearns indicated that Ridsdale was receiving assistance and Fr. Fitzpatrick said words to the effect of "Good, for I cannot help him. His behaviour could reflect on the Bishop's Conference. I am not from the Diocese of Ballarat so therefore I cannot be put in charge of him and I am away a great deal."
10. Further discussion ensued and Fr. Fitzpatrick agreed to take Ridsdale for a period of one year. At the end of that time Ridsdale wished to stay on. In the meantime, Fr. Fitzpatrick was seeing Bishop Mulkearns once or twice a year at Bishop's Conferences. Bishop Mulkearns said that he had done well and wanted Ridsdale to stay on at the Enquiry Centre. That occurred, with Ridsdale's appointment being approved by the Episcopal Deputy of the Bishop's Conference.
11. Two incidents brought Ridsdale's relationship with the Enquiry Centre to an end. The first resulted from a contact from a Brother at Campbelltown College (St Gregory's). He indicated that Ridsdale was visiting boys staying at the college who had lived in the Ballarat Diocese. Fr. Fitzgerald said that he did not know about those visits but that he would let Bishop Mulkearns know. Bishop Mulkearns apparently indicated he would talk to Ridsdale about the matter but nothing developed.

12. A second incident was more serious. Ridsdale came to Fr. Fitzpatrick and said words to the effect of "I have been out with a family last night and got back late. Their son drove back with me and the boy spent the night at the Centre." Fr. Fitzpatrick told Ridsdale that this should not happen and accordingly, called Bishop Mulkearns and said "I want him out".
13. Ridsdale apparently pestered Fr. Fitzpatrick during that week with continual request to stay. Fr. Fitzpatrick did not relent and Ridsdale left a short time later. Before returning to Ballarat he provided several months supply at a local parish. He cannot recollect the Parish name but Bishop Heaps would know of it.

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James Michael Fitzpatrick