

PICKERING  
CONFIDENTIAL

FILE NOTE

At approximately 3.30pm on Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> August 2002, Ms Rhonda Graham telephoned Archbishop Hart regarding Father Ron Pickering. Archbishop Hart was unavailable to take the phone call. On his behalf I spoke to Ms Graham.

Ms Graham identified herself as Father Ron Pickering's carer. He lives in her care in her home in England. She was simply visiting Victoria, preparing to sell her home and then to return to England to live permanently. Here in Victoria her present address is REDACTED Colac 3280. However, she is soon to sell this house and move permanently to England.

She was irritated that Archbishop Hart was unable to talk to her directly and only reluctantly spoke to me. She registered her total frustration that Father Pickering's stipend had been stopped. She was calling for the stipend to be reinstated immediately.

I explained to her that Archbishop Hart was very keen to make contact with Father Pickering. The Archdiocese has no knowledge of his whereabouts in England. He would need to speak to the Archbishop to respond to serious matters that the Archbishop wanted to talk to him about.

She protested. She indicated that Father Pickering was now an elderly sick man. This approach, according to Ms Graham, was nothing short of blackmail. I did indicate to her that I am sure the Archbishop would be prepared to review the matter but he needs first of all to make contact with Father Pickering and discuss serious matters with him immediately.

I asked her if she would be prepared to give me Father Pickering's address. She refused completely. She declared that she would never give his address to me or to anybody else. She said that she must now look after him and stopping his stipend was most unfair. She indicated that she also had power of attorney over him.

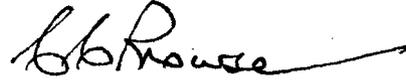
She indicated that when she went back to England shortly, she would relay the information to Father Pickering. She predicted that he would be greatly distressed by this approach of the Archdiocese. I reiterated that the Archdiocese may wish to review the matter but only after seeking direct contact with Father Pickering himself. She indicated to me that this would not be the case, that she would not divulge where he is.

She indicated that allegations of abuse were total fabrications. Such matters had been considered by the police ten years ago and the police had found there was no substance in these allegations. No charges had been pending.

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I indicated to Ms Graham that our conversation seemed to have reached a stalemate. She was refusing to give me any indication where Father Pickering was. At the same time, I insisted that the situation with his stipend being withheld would remain until we were able to make some contact with him directly.



Monsignor Christopher Prowse  
VICAR GENERAL

7<sup>th</sup> August 2002