

STATEMENT REGARDING RONALD PICKERING

- Ronald Pickering sought permission to retire as the parish priest of Gardenvale in May 1993 in order to move to Tasmania. His request was granted and he ceased to be parish priest, on condition that he was to be administrator of the parish until 30 June 1993.
- In late May 1993, without warning or notice, he left the parish for England. Consequently, his appointment as administrator of the parish was revoked and another priest was appointed in his place.
- In late December 1993 the Archdiocese received a letter from solicitors acting for a person who alleged that he had been sexually abused by Pickering. This was the first occasion upon which the Archdiocese became aware of allegations of sexual abuse against Pickering. In early January 1994 the then Archbishop wrote to Pickering removing his faculties to act as parish priest.
- The Archdiocese received a request from a Bishop in England for information concerning Pickering's status. This Bishop was provided with a copy of the Archbishop's letter to Pickering and at that time the Archbishop indicated that the letter would also be provided to any other Bishop in the UK seeking such information.
- The Independent Commissioner appointed by the Archbishop to investigate allegations of sexual abuse within the Melbourne Archdiocese has received complaints from three victims who allege that they were abused by Ronald Pickering. The Commissioner was satisfied that abuse had occurred in each case. Each of those two victims had reported their complaints to the police. Two of the victims have received ex gratia compensation. The third victim made an application to the Compensation Panel earlier this month, and an offer of compensation has been made.
- Whether Pickering should be extradited is a matter for the police. The Archdiocese will fully co-operate with whatever decision is made in that regard.
- The Archdiocese rejects the allegation made by the Sunday Age as to the existence of any "network of clergy involved in abuse".
- The Archdiocese would urge any person with knowledge concerning Pickering to contact the police, or the Independent Commissioner.
- Archbishop Hart acknowledges the hurt and distress of all victims of clergy abuse. The Archbishop remains committed to the measures that have been in place in the Melbourne Archdiocese since October 1996 to investigate allegations of abuse and to provide assistance to assist victims. These include the appointment of Mr Peter O'Callaghan QC as Independent Commissioner, access to the Compensation Panel and to the provision of counselling and assistance for victims through Carelink.
- The Archdiocese is totally committed to the continuation of this work to address allegations of sexual abuse by Church personnel.

Rev. Monsignor Christopher Prowse
VICAR GENERAL
Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

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