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Commission into Sexual Abuse  
Peter O'Callaghan Q.C

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22 November 2001

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**Private and Confidential**

Monsignor Christopher Prowse  
Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne  
James Gould House  
228 Victoria Parade  
East Melbourne 3002

Fax No. 9926 5698

Dear Monsignor,

Re: **Fr Pickering**  
Re: **REDACTED**

The position with respect to the abovenamed priest is that apparently after he became aware that a complaint had been made by a victim to the police, he fled the country. I noted that I was satisfied that no one in authority had known of his activities, or indeed of his intention to depart.

My recollection based upon my perusal of the files in respect of him, (now returned to the Cathedral,) was that he sought some position in a diocese in England, and the Bishop thereof communicated with Archbishop Little who apprised the Bishop of the position with respect to Fr Pickering, and there no doubt the matter appeared to rest.

I have been advised by **REDACTED** that it is believed that Fr Pickering resides in Lincolnshire, England. She handed to me an extract from the Internet identifying four R. Pickering's in Lincolnshire. I enclose herewith a copy of the U.K. directory enquiry service and I recommend that you could write to the Bishop of the diocese in which Lincolnshire lies, and ascertain from him whether he knows of Fr Pickering, and if so in what respect.

If of course he is simply residing there without any official post, then that is all that can be done, apart from perhaps warning the Bishop appropriately.



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Could I suggest that you glance at the files of Fr Pickering to see the correspondence I have referred to above which may also be of some assistance.

Unfortunately there have been a number of victims of Pickering including the son of REDACTED who is in the process of obtaining compensation.

You can also advise REDACTED that the victim who reported the matter to the police was told by the police that because he had fled overseas, no further action would be taken. It is only in a limited category of cases that extradition proceedings would be sought based upon complaints of sexual abuse.

I trust that the above will equip you sufficiently to advise Mrs REDACTED appropriately.

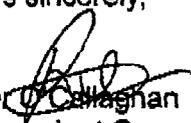
REDACTED suspects that her son REDACTED who died of a heroin overdose some seven years ago was abused by Fr Pickering, but there is no evidence which would permit me to make such a finding. I have explained to REDACTED that even were I to be satisfied that her son was a victim this would not entitle her to compensation because it is only to primary victims that compensation is payable.

However I have told her that in the circumstances I have recommended that Carelink continue to provide her with assistance for her treatment. Undoubtedly her suspicions are well founded in the sense that REDACTED was a altar boy who saw a great deal of Fr Pickering, and there was the most obvious opportunities for abuse to have occurred.

Should there be any queries arising out of the above do not hesitate to contact me.

I have forwarded a copy of this letter to Richard Leder.

Yours sincerely,

  
Peter O. Callaghan  
Independent Commissioner



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