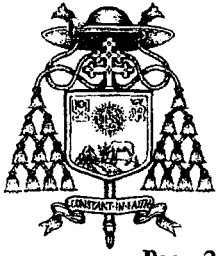


St. Patrick's Cathedral
Melbourne Vic 3002

STATEMENT TO PARISHIONERS ST JAMES' PARISH, GARDENVALE.

1. On 12th January, 1978, Father Ronald Pickering was appointed parish priest of St James' Parish, Gardenvale. In May, 1993, Father Pickering sought to retire as parish priest and to move to Tasmania. His request was granted and he ceased to be parish priest, but on condition that he was to be the administrator of the parish until 30th June, 1993. In late May, 1993, without warning or notice, Father Pickering left the parish for England. Consequently, his appointment as administrator of the parish was revoked and Father James Briglia appointed in his place.
2. In late December, 1993, the Archdiocese received a letter from solicitors acting for a person who alleged he had been sexually abused by Father Pickering. This was the first occasion upon which the Archdiocese became aware of allegations of sexual abuse against Father Pickering.
3. In early January, 1994, the Archbishop wrote to Father Pickering removing his faculties to act as a priest.
4. The Archdiocese received a request from a Bishop in England for information concerning the status of Father Pickering, who was offering to act as a priest. This Bishop was provided with a copy of the Archbishop's January, 1994, letter to Father Pickering and the Archbishop indicated that the letter could also be provided to any other Bishop in the U.K. seeking information as to the status of Father Pickering.
5. Following the appointment on 30th October, 1996, of Mr. Peter O'Callaghan, Q.C., as the Independent Commissioner appointed by the Archbishop to investigate allegations of sexual abuse within the Melbourne Archdiocese, the Commissioner has received complaints from three victims who allege that they were abused by Ronald Pickering.
6. The Commissioner was satisfied that abuse had occurred in each case. Two of the victims have received ex gratia compensation and each of those victims had reported their complaints in detail to the police. The third victim made an application to the Compensation Panel earlier this month and an offer of compensation is being made.

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7. The Archdiocese would encourage any person with knowledge concerning misconduct by Father Pickering to contact the Independent Commissioner.
8. As Archbishop I acknowledge the hurt and distress of all victims of clergy abuse. I remain 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 victims. These include the appointment of the 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 continuation of this work to address allegations of sexual abuse by church personnel.

+ *Denis J. Cahill*

ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE.

25th March, 2002.