

# Royal Commission Case Study 44

## John Joseph Farrell TJHC update



Monday September 19 2016 – Day 5

The Royal Commission's hearing (Case Study 44) into the response of Catholic Church authorities to allegations of child sexual abuse by John Joseph Farrell continued in Sydney today.

Day 5 commenced with Fr Brian Lucas telling the Commission about his Church roles within the Archdiocese of Sydney as media spokesperson and his role in the Church's Special Issues Resource Group (SIRG) in the early- to mid-1990s.

Fr Lucas was the General Secretary of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) from 2003 to 2016 and a Director of Catholic Church Insurances (CCI) from 2003 to 2015. He is now National Director of Catholic Mission.

Fr Lucas told the Commission that in April 1988 he first presented, in a formal sense, to the ACBC about the issues of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church.

Fr Lucas was initially taken through the general legal and media approach to allegations and legal processes against priests in the mid-1980s. He told the Commission that in the late 1980s issues of privacy and prejudice were considerations in the media approach, not necessarily the reputation of the Church, which he said was already in question.

He said that there was a move towards the better recognition of victims rather than legal approaches at the end of the 1980s.

Fr Lucas gave evidence that an allegation against a priest would usually not be reported the police if the victim didn't want to go to the police, where a legal process had already taken place, where the offender was dead or where an admission was provided in confidence.

Fr Lucas was asked about a SIRG meeting with Farrell he attended with fellow SIRG member Fr John Usher, and Fr Wayne Peters of the Armidale Diocese in September 1992 in which Fr Lucas said he recalled Farrell had made no specific admissions.

He was subsequently asked about information provided to a 2012 ABC 4 Corners program investigating Farrell. Fr Lucas agreed that following continued questioning from 4 Corners and before the program went to air there were four different accounts of the meeting provided to the program from various church people.

Fr Lucas was questioned about a letter from Fr Peters to Bishop Manning dated 11 September 1992, which reported Farrell admitting that he had abused five boys between 1982 and 1984 in Moree, that he had had an affair with a woman and that he had sexually assaulted other boys.

Fr Lucas told the Commission that 'on his oath' this was not his recollection of the meeting and that if these admissions had been made then he would have made completely different recommendations about how Farrell should have been dealt with at the time.

The hearing will continue tomorrow.

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