



DIOCESE *of* PARRAMATTA

Message from the Diocesan Administrator, Very Rev Peter G Williams

Regarding the sentencing of John Farrell

Monday 2 May 2016

A former priest of the Diocese of Armidale, John Farrell, was today sentenced to 29 years in jail for sexual offences committed against children in regional NSW within the Diocese of Armidale during the 1980s.

I welcome the finalisation of this court case and hope that it is a step forward to assist his victims and their families to find some degree of healing and peace.

Between 1989 and 1992, John Farrell was approved to engage in ministry as a priest in the Diocese of Parramatta. He was assistant priest in St Margaret Mary's Parish at Merrylands from January 1991 to June 1992 when the Bishop at the time removed him from ministry in this Diocese.

The Diocese of Parramatta has previously acknowledged that John Farrell should never have been granted approval to engage in ministry within this Diocese. In 2013, the Diocese of Parramatta and the Diocese of Armidale jointly commissioned an inquiry known as the Whitlam Inquiry to understand how this occurred.

The inquiry was undertaken by the Hon Antony Whitlam QC and examined allegations of abuse by John Farrell when he was a priest during the 1980s in the Diocese of Armidale, as well as looking at our own system inadequacies that allowed him to serve within this Diocese.

Following the release of the Whitlam Report, John Farrell was arrested by the NSW Police. This Diocese has assisted the police and the Director of Public Prosecutions with the relevant legal proceedings. The Whitlam Report is available on the diocesan website at: <http://parracatholic.org/report-by-hon-antony-whitlam-qc/>

I wish to acknowledge the tragic events caused by John Farrell's criminal conduct. At this time, I ask that we pray for the victims and their families, who have been harmed and have suffered so much as a result.

The abuse of a child by anyone, especially a Catholic priest, is to be condemned. I wish to assure you of my commitment to ensuring our parishes and schools are safe places for our children.

If anyone requires support please contact the Diocese of Parramatta's Healing and Support Team tel (02) 9933 0233 or visit www.safeguarding.org.au
If anyone has information about a suspected crime, please contact NSW Police on Crime Stoppers tel 1800 333 000.