



Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

Name	Colvin FORD
Address	Known to the Royal Commission
Occupation	Retired clergyperson
Date	26 July 2016

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. In preparing this statement, I have been shown documents relating to my involvement in the discovery of pornography belonging to Father Peter Rushton. Where I refer to a document in this statement, I have used the document reference number, which appears in the top or bottom right hand corner of the document to which I refer. I have not independently reviewed the records from which these documents have been drawn.
3. Where direct speech is referred to in this statement, it is provided in words or words to the effect of those which were used, to the best of my recollection.
4. This statement has been prepared on the basis that the Commission will issue a Notice to Produce under *Royal Commissions Act 1923* (NSW) section 8 for the production of a signed copy.

Father Peter Rushton

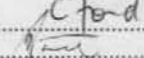

5. My name is Colvin Ford and I am 69 years old. I studied at St John's College, Morpeth and moved to Singleton Parish at the end of 1971 as a Deacon. I was ordained a priest

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in 1972. I was a country priest throughout my career until my last posting to Belmont in 2005. I was appointed Archdeacon of the Upper Hunter in 1992.

6. I do not recall exactly when I met Father Peter Rushton but I had known him by reputation for a few years before meeting him. His rudeness, sharp tongue and gayness were well known in the Diocese of Newcastle. I had heard he held parties and had lots of young men or teenagers hanging around his home.
7. I had to work with Rushton as part of the senior staff of the Diocese when I was Archdeacon of the Upper Hunter from 1992 to 1999 and Rushton was Archdeacon of Maitland.
8. I tried to avoid him as much as I could. He was often rude and would make rude comments and frequently use double entendres when he spoke. He had a quick tongue and would silence anyone that tried to argue or remonstrate with him with a sharp retort. He would also undermine people and would try and order people around. As a consequence, no-one ever seemed to pull him up about his behaviour. He was well protected by a group I called the "gang of three" – Dean Graeme Lawrence, Archdeacon Bruce Hoare and Peter Mitchell, the Diocesan Registrar – who were a dominant group within the senior staff group.
9. On the evening of Wednesday 25 November 1998, I received a phone call from Jim Jackson, the HR Manager at Farragher Removals. He was clearly distressed. His pre-packers had attended the Rectory at Maitland to pack up Rushton's belongings preparatory to Rushton moving to the Rectory in Hamilton. The removalists had found homosexual pornographic magazines, a bag of videos, posters and a book of what they described as child pornography. Jim said to me: *'Our men are no angels but they were shocked by the material.'* The men had also been upset by Rushton insisting they pack this material while he watched. Rushton had not appeared at all concerned about their reluctance to do so.
10. Jim was concerned as he did not want the men to go to their local pub and gossip about what they had found. He was also concerned about the implications of paedophilia in a community leader like Rushton and what repercussions there might be for Farragher Removals. Jim also said that Rushton had come in while the men were packing up the material and "leered" at them.
11. Early on 26 November 1998, I rang Bishop Herft to tell him about Jim Jackson's phone call. I informed Bishop Herft that the men had been instructed to pack material which

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they found offensive and obscene which included material they believed to be child pornography.

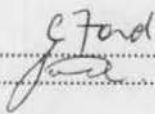
12. On Friday 27 November 1998, Bishop Herft, after consulting with Robert Caddies, advised me to put the matter before him in writing which I did (ANG.0050.001.1984). Bishop Herft asked me to meet with him at 12 noon that day to go through the complaint from Farragher Removals and then we would both meet with Rushton at 2pm.
13. When I arrived at the Bishop's Registry for the meeting, Rushton was already present and waiting in one of the anterooms. I could see that Rushton was absolutely furious with me. He asked me why I had told the Bishop about the pornography being found by the removalists and why I hadn't just let it go. I told Rushton that there was a complaint and that other people knew about what had been found in the rectory and were talking about it. I couldn't just ignore it and that the Bishop needed to be told. Bishop Herft then came out of his office. Bishop Beale, a retired Bishop residing in the Newcastle Diocese was also present.
14. I reaffirmed in front of Bishop Herft and Rushton the nature of the complaint from Farragher Removals. Bishop Herft asked me to contact Jim Jackson to ask him to obtain statements from the men involved as to what they saw and for them to describe the material. Bishop Herft, Bishop Beale and Rushton then went into the Bishop's office and I left. I felt as if I had daggers in my back after my conversation with Rushton.
15. Later that evening I phoned Jim Jackson and he agreed to ask the men on the following Monday if they would make written statements about the incident. Jim then told me that he had spoken with the men concerned that afternoon and they had said there was no child pornography but a *'fair quantity of male to male sexual material'* and they were disgusted by what they saw and didn't want to go back to finish the job. There had been a fair amount of talk at the workshop and some of the men stated they would not attend Church again. Jim said that Farragher Removals were not interested in taking the matter any further but were concerned that there may be a 'paedophile' in the Church. I documented this conversation in a letter to the Bishop (ANG. 0050.001.1890).
16. On Tuesday 1 December 1998, I spoke with Jim Jackson again. He had spoken with the three men involved in the removal of Rushton's possessions and they had given Jim written statements about the material they had seen. They had found six to eight

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videos in a bag in the laundry with covers indicating explicit gay sexual activities and a large number of catalogues offering gay videos. They also found lubricants and condoms. I documented this conversation in a further letter to the Bishop (ANG. 0050.001.1606). I never saw the offending material and I had no further involvement in the matter.

17. Father David Simpson, who was the priest at Islington/Carrington parish at that time, told me that Bishop Herft asked Bishop Beale to provide Rushton with some spiritual guidance. My understanding is that Rushton was sent on a retreat to receive some counselling but that he only stayed one night and then returned. I believe Rushton had no intention of staying at the retreat.
18. Father Simpson also told me about six to 12 months later, that he had been asked by Rushton to go to the Hamilton Rectory to collect the video tapes and dispose of them. David told me that there were hundreds of videos and that he burnt them in the backyard of the rectory at Islington. He needed to use a 44 gallon drum in order to get rid of them. He also told me that the covers of some of the videos depicted men and boys which I took to mean primary school age children. Islington
19. I do not know why Father Simpson agreed to destroy the videos for Rushton but Rushton was used to ordering people around. He was very pompous and people would just do as he asked. Also, Father Simpson had been asked to work together with Rushton by the Bishop to try and establish a joint inner city parish with their parishes of Islington/Carrington and Hamilton. Father Simpson and Rushton were also in the same year at St John's College. Father Simpson is now deceased.
20. Peter Rushton had a very domineering personality and was a dynamic and powerful preacher. His congregation seemed to love him. I was aware when I was a priest at Singleton, that some families from the area sent their boys to board with Rushton at the Rectory at Maitland and also possibly when Rushton was at Weston Parish.
21. After Rushton retired in 2001, he moved to Georgetown and worshipped at the Cathedral with his cronies, Graeme Lawrence and Bruce Hoare. After Rushton's death I heard stories of Rushton misbehaving while he was at Weston, that he held lots of parties and had many young people around.

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Statement of Colvin FORD (continued)

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22. I believe on reflection that Bishop Herft should have defrocked Rushton after the pornography was found at the end of 1998. I was very unhappy when I heard that Rushton's ashes had been interred under the floor at St Luke's Wallsend. I am glad that they have now been removed. I wish I had known earlier what Rushton was doing.

Signed: C FordDate: 26/7/2016Witness: [Signature]Date: 26/7/2016Signature: C Ford
Witness: [Signature]