

ARCHDIOCESAN PRESS SECRETARY

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# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
MONDAY 16th MARCH, 1992.**

## **CATHOLIC CHURCH RESPONDS TO ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN BY RELIGIOUS AND CLERGY.**

"The Uniting Church Report on the sexual abuse of women and children by religious and clergy, as viewed on the ABC Compass Program on the 15.3.92, is based on an American study with conclusions drawn about Australia that are not consistent with the Australian experience in the Catholic Church", said Fr. John Usher, Director of Centacare, Catholic Community Services, Sydney. "Australia's experience in Centacare would indicate that instances of abuse are much less frequent than suggested in the Compass Program", Fr. Usher said.

Fr. Usher said the Catholic Church throughout Australia views that the sexual assault of women and children by religious and clergy is an extremely serious matter and any church person suspected of criminal behaviour in this regard is automatically stood down and the matter is put in the hands of civil authorities.

Centacare's throughout Australia see their most important role as assisting women and especially children who have been assaulted in any way by religious or clergy or, in fact, by any person in the employment of the Catholic Church. The Church's main concern is to give every assistance possible to any person who is a victim of sexual assault, Fr. Usher said.

Any person seeking help should contact the Director of Centacare in their area.

For further information contact;  
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