

UPDATE 76

Royal Commission – Ballarat



Thursday 28 May 2015 – Day 8

Convicted pedophile and former Catholic priest, Gerald Ridsdale continued giving evidence in Ballarat today about abuse in NSW including during his employment at the Catholic Inquiry Centre in Sydney between 1982 and 1985.

He said it was a reasonable assumption he was moved to Sydney because of complaints made about him to the Bishop and to other clergy.

The conditions of the move included that Ridsdale work at the Centre, that Ridsdale not be in contact with children and that he continue with counselling. Within a year Ridsdale had offended against a boy from a local prayer group.

Questions were asked of Ridsdale about procedures for working in other parishes and how it was that someone with his record could move so freely from parish to parish, including Bulli, Woy Woy and Forresterville.

Ridsdale returned to Ballarat diocese in 1986 and was made assistant priest at Horsham.

He maintained that he did not offend while he was there.

However, while he was there, Bishop Mulkearns received a complaint about earlier incidents where Ridsdale had abused a child. As a result Bishop Mulkearns withdrew him from Horsham in 1988 and withdrew his priestly faculties for 12 months.

He was sent to New Mexico to participate in a treatment program paid for by the diocese.

In May 1993 Ridsdale faced court where he pleaded guilty to indecently assaulting 8 children.

Following his conviction he was laicised.

In 1994 he pleaded guilty to further charges, including charges of abusing 20 boys. He was jailed for 18 years.

In 2006 he was sentenced to 13 years for abusing 10 boys. And in 2014 he was sentenced to eight years for abusing 11 boys and three girls.

In 2014 Ridsdale was sentenced before the County Court of Victoria for a range of assaults, including an 11- or 12- year-old girl in Ballarat who said another priest had witnessed the assault. Ridsdale said he did not know who the other priest was.

He will be eligible for parole in 2019 aged 84.

Ridsdale might be recalled by the Commission to answer questions later in the year.

The hearing was adjourned until 10.00am tomorrow morning when Bishop Paul Bird will give further evidence.

Full witness statements can be read at:

<http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au/royal-commission/case-study-28,-ballarat,-may-2015,/case-study-28-opening-and-witness-statements.aspx>

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