

UPDATE 87

Royal Commission Case Study 35 Archdiocese of Melbourne



Friday 4 December 2015 – Day 9

Day 9 of the Melbourne hearing began with retired Bishop Hilton Deakin continuing his evidence to the Commission about the way in which he worked as vicar-general with Archbishop Little. He said much of the businesses between himself and the Archbishop was conducted in secret.

He gave further evidence about Searson and how he was dealt with by church leaders including what was discussed about Searson in Curia meetings.

He gave evidence about Bishop Pell meeting with Doveton school staff and others in 1989 about Searson's behaviour. He gave evidence that he could not recall if Bishop Pell passed on any information about the meeting to him.

He said that he received much of his information about happenings within the Archdiocese from parish priests rather than from bishops.

He gave evidence about receiving complaints against Searson killing a bird, hitting a boy, frequenting boy's toilets, observing boys in the showers and financial issues.

He also gave evidence about what and when information about Fr Fasciale became available and how it was dealt with. He agreed that the approach taken by the church was part of a cover up of Fasciale's abusive crimes against young children.

He gave evidence that one of the reasons Archbishop Little did so little about pedophilia and cover-up was his desire to protect the Church and also his own legacy. He said that Archbishop Little also feared the reach of Roman Canon law knowing that if a priest was found guilty he could have appealed to Rome who would 'find in favour of the priest and against the bishop'.

He told the Commission that a number of issues needed to be considered to improve the protection of children including improving mandatory reporting regimes, the influence of Canon law on clerical sexual abuse issues, the training of priests around sexual development and a need for the investigation of child sexual abuse to go beyond just investigating institutions.

He also commented on celibacy and the need to review its place within the life of a priest.

The Melbourne Archdiocese hearing concluded with Bishop Deakin's evidence. On Monday Case Study 28, which is examining events in Ballarat, will recommence and is scheduled for two weeks.

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