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22 February 2016

**STATEMENT FROM THE OFFICE OF
CARDINAL GEORGE PELL IN ROME**

Cardinal George Pell has today written to the Acting Minister for Police, Hon Robin Scott MP, formally requesting an inquiry into the maliciously-timed leaking of details of a police investigation into purported allegations against him, which was reported in the Herald-Sun and other media on Saturday.

Cardinal Pell said it is clear from the information the Herald-Sun put to him that it came from people with close knowledge of the details and contents of the police investigation, who were sufficiently senior for the paper to describe them as "official sources" and "legal sources".

"The article published by the Herald Sun leads to the conclusion that this information must have come from Victoria Police or another agency working with it".

"The purported allegations have never been put to me by police," Cardinal Pell said. "They are scandalous and utterly false. To learn of the existence of these false allegations through a journalist, following what must be a clear and deliberate leaking from official sources, is deeply troubling".

"The leak was clearly designed to cause damage to me as a witness ahead of my evidence in the Royal Commission next week. It undermines the work of the Royal Commission – particularly in a case study where the actions of Victoria Police are under scrutiny".

Cardinal Pell said that the deliberate leaking of confidential information regarding police investigations by any member of the police force or anyone associated with its investigations is unacceptable. "The leaking of details of police investigations undermines public confidence in the Victoria Police and Operation Sano. It also poses a substantial risk to the administration of justice".

"The use of police powers to cause scandal about a person in the media, particularly when that person is a witness in a Royal Commission case study focussed on church and police failures in dealing with allegations of sexual abuse, is completely improper and highly suspicious".

"This conduct must be investigated and those responsible exposed and held to account", Cardinal Pell said. "Failure to do so will substantially undermine the work that those good officers of the police are doing in bringing justice to victims".

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