

# Royal Commission Case Study 28

## Ballarat Diocese

### TJHC update



Monday 29 February, 2016 – Day 22

The fifth day of stage three of the Ballarat case study today heard evidence from Cardinal George Pell via video link from Rome.

Cardinal Pell was ordained a priest in the Diocese of Ballarat in 1966 where for part of the time he was a priest in Ballarat and one of the consultors to Bishop Mulkearns.

In 1987, Cardinal Pell was appointed an Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese of Melbourne where Archbishop Little was the Archbishop. In 1996, Cardinal Pell became Archbishop of Melbourne.

Cardinal Pell told the Commission the Church has made enormous mistakes in dealing with clerical and other child sexual abuse and is working to remedy them. "The church in many places, certainly in Australia, has mucked things up, has let people down. I'm not here to defend the indefensible," Cardinal Pell said.

He told the Commission there are very few places in the world that have advanced as far as the church in Australia in dealing with survivors of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. He said he supported the Commission's proposal for the introduction of a national system of redress for abuse survivors.

He said during the time there were reasonable complaints that were not dealt with very well and there was an instinct to protect 'the institution, the community of the church, from shame'. 'I'm not sure at that stage there was too much concern about protecting assets', he said.

Cardinal Pell also agreed that there was a belief within some parts of the Church that some sexual offenders could be treated. He said, however, that he was not aware of Bishop Mulkearns sending anyone off for treatment for sexual offending while Cardinal Pell was in Ballarat.

Cardinal Pell was asked extensively about his knowledge of Monsignor Day and his abuse of children in Mildura both before and after he was an assistant priest in Swan Hill. Cardinal Pell told the Commission he had no recollection of hearing about any concerns about Day by the police, parents and others while Day was in Mildura and he was in Swan Hill.

He was asked about his time as assistant priest in Ballarat East in the 1970s and 1980s and his knowledge of Christian Brothers who taught at St Alipius School and have been convicted of offences against children. He told the Commission no one came to him during this time with specific accusations against these brothers.

He was also asked about his knowledge of Brother Dowlan and allegations against him as a teacher at St Patrick's College. Cardinal Pell told the Commission that some boys from the school had approached him with concerns about Dowlan. He said he was unaware at the time if the allegations were 'indiscretions or crimes'.

Cardinal Pell was also asked about allegations made in several documents that indicated knowledge about the offending of a number of brothers at St Alipius, St Patrick's and St Paul's Technical School. He agreed that some students, one or more teachers, the principal of St Paul's Technical School and St Patrick's College, a number of parents and Bishop Mulkearns were aware of the offending.

Cardinal Pell was asked about Gerald Ridsdale and the time they shared the St Alipius presbytery in East Ballarat for nine to ten months in 1973 as assistant priests.

He told the Commission that there were many children who suffered at the hands of Ridsdale and that he 'deeply regrets' this.

The hearing will resume tomorrow.

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