

# Royal Commission

## Case Study 28, Ballarat

## Case Study 35, Melbourne



Thursday 3 March, 2016 – Day 25

During today's hearing, the fourth consecutive day of evidence from Cardinal Pell via video link from Rome, Cardinal Pell was questioned by lawyers representing abuse victims in Ballarat and Melbourne.

Cardinal Pell gave evidence about a telephone conversation in 1993 with David Ridsdale who had been abused by his uncle, Gerald Ridsdale, in the 1980s. Cardinal Pell said he had no reason not to believe David's claims against Ridsdale.

He said he only became aware that David had claimed the Cardinal had asked him 'what would it take to keep you quiet about this?' in 2002 when interviewed by 60 Minutes. Cardinal Pell told the Commission that he did not say this to David.

He said it was implausible that he had done so because the police were already investigating Ridsdale, he had never tried to stop anyone going to the police, he was an Auxiliary Bishop in Melbourne at the time with no access to resources available for expenditure in Ballarat and he would not engage in the criminal offence of attempted bribery.

He said that he did say to David that he would do whatever he could to help.

He told the Commission it was a mistake to accompany Gerald Ridsdale to Court. His motivation for doing so was the Christian principle of showing kindness to prisoners.

Asked if he felt he had any moral responsibility for the abuse by Christian Brothers at St Alipius School, he said he had nothing to do with the school. 'I regret that the situation was there and I didn't have the information to help. All those things at that stage were hidden to nearly everyone in the parish'.

Cardinal Pell flatly disputed the allegation that he and another priest had discussed Ridsdale's sexual abuse activities before a funeral mass in Ballarat. Cardinal Pell said most aspects of this allegation were not corroborated or were inconsistent with other evidence given to the Commission.

Cardinal Pell told the Commission that he had no contact with another boy, BWF, who said he told the then Fr Pell in 1974 at the Cathedral Presbytery in Ballarat that Br Dowlan had beaten and molested his brother. He said he never lived at and hardly ever visited the Cathedral Presbytery. He completely rejected the allegations of BWF.

During Cardinal Pell's evidence he told the Commission that sometime after 2002 a former St Patrick's College student, who he considered 'a good and honest lad', had reminded him about a conversation the two had had in 1974 or 1975 in which the student had told the then Fr Pell words to the effect that Dowlan had been 'misbehaving with boys'.

Asked by the Commissioner what he had done at the time of hearing about the allegation from the student Cardinal Pell said 'I didn't do anything about it'. He went on to say that he 'eventually inquired of the school chaplain'.

When asked by the Commissioner if he should have done more Cardinal Pell said: 'With the experience of 40 years later, certainly I would agree that I should have - should have done more'.

Cardinal Pell also gave evidence dealing with several other survivor witnesses who have already been the subject of extensive examination during the Ballarat and Melbourne hearings.

The Melbourne hearing concluded with the completion of Cardinal Pell's evidence from Rome today. The Ballarat hearing will hear evidence from Bishop Mulkearns at a date to be determined.

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