



Speaking the truth in love

Eph 4:15

29 June 2017

STATEMENT FROM ARCHBISHOP ANTHONY FISHER OP FOLLOWING CARDINAL GEORGE PELL CHARGES

Many people will be shocked, as I have been, by the news that Victoria Police have issued charges against Cardinal George Pell in relation to sexual abuse allegations.

Cardinal Pell has repeatedly and vehemently rejected these allegations and insisted that he is completely innocent. He will now have the opportunity to put his case in court and is determined to clear his name.

While Archbishop of Sydney and during his current role, Cardinal Pell has cooperated with parliamentary, Royal Commission and police investigations and has ensured that clergy and church workers have done the same.

He will return voluntarily to Australia to face these charges. While the Archdiocese will assist with the Cardinal's accommodation and support, as it would for any of its bishops or priests, it is not responsible for the Cardinal's legal bills arising from these matters.

In granting Cardinal Pell leave from his role as Prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy, Pope Francis has emphasised respect for the rule of law – which includes the right of every citizen to due process and the presumption of innocence.

Pope Francis also commented that during the three years that they have worked together he has always found Cardinal Pell an honest man. Having known him for the best part of three decades myself, I can only support that judgment: the George Pell I know is a man of integrity in his dealings with others, a man of faith and high ideals, a thoroughly decent man.

Where complaints of abuse are made, victims should be listened to with respect and compassion and their complaints investigated and dealt with according to law. No-one should be prejudged because of their high profile, religious convictions, or positions on social issues. The justice and compassion we all seek for victims of abuse includes getting to the truth of such allegations. We must now allow the impartial pursuit of justice. I would ask everyone to pray for truth and justice in this present case, pray for our Church at this difficult time, and to continue your prayers for all those affected by sexual abuse.

Most Rev Anthony Fisher OP
Catholic Archbishop of Sydney

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