

**STATEMENT FROM SPOKESPERSON
FOR CARDINAL GEORGE PELL
31 May 2015 8.10pm (AEST)
Rome**

Cardinal Pell has not seen the material that 60 Minutes is planning to broadcast this evening.

The Cardinal has not met and has not been approached by Mr Saunders.

Cardinal Pell knows of the important work Mr Saunders has done as a survivor of abuse to assist victims, including the establishment of a victims survivors group in the United Kingdom and more recently serving as member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors established by the Holy Father to develop policy to achieve this.

While members are of course entitled to their views and opinions, the recently approved Statutes of the Commission make it clear that the Commission's role does not include commenting on individual cases, nor does the Commission have the capacity to investigate individual cases.

From the promotional material issued by 60 Minutes it seems clear Mr Saunders is not well informed about the claims made against Cardinal Pell in the Ballarat hearings of the Royal Commission and the fact that no new material emerged during recent hearings. Many of the issues were addressed in the final report of the 2013 Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry where there are no adverse findings against Cardinal Pell. These old and repeated allegations have been addressed many times by the Cardinal since 2002.

As was pointed out in a recent statement by the Cardinal, he has never condoned or protected offenders, has never condoned or participated in moving known offenders and did not at any time attempt to bribe David Ridsdale, whose story has varied many times over the years.

It is not clear whether Mr Saunders is aware of the Cardinal's statements or has reviewed the extensive material available from previous Inquiries and appearances at the Royal Commission.

It is also not clear if Mr Saunders is aware Cardinal Pell established within 100 days of being appointed as an Archbishop, an independent scheme to support victims. While there was and is always room for improvement, the Melbourne Response had the explicit support of the Victorian Police and other civil authorities and was at the time warmly welcomed by victim support groups.

The Cardinal has repeated many times his deepest sympathy for the victims of abuse and their families. He has made it clear on several occasions he supports the work of the Royal Commission, where he has already appeared twice, and remains willing to assist in its work.

ENDS