

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

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MEDIA RELEASE BY TERRY O’GORMAN **PRESIDENT, AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES**

Calls for Cardinal George Pell to be treated fairly before the Royal Commission following weekend reports of a Victorian Police investigation into allegations of child sexual abuse by Pell have been supported by the Australian Council for Civil Liberties.

Australian Council for Civil Liberties President, Terry O’Gorman, took the matter a step further today by calling for uniform laws throughout Australia to make it a criminal offence to publish the fact that a person is under investigation for a sexual offence allegation, especially a child sexual offence allegation.

“Most States and Territories have had laws for over 30 years prohibiting the media from naming a person as facing sexual charges from the time a person is charged until when a person is committed for trial from the Magistrates Court”, Mr O’Gorman said.

Mr O’Gorman said that the purpose of such laws was to prevent wrecking a person’s reputation if a case was thrown out of the Magistrates Court.

“Sexual offence allegations, but especially child sexual offence allegations, carry such a visceral public reaction that protecting a person’s reputation before being committed for trial is paramount and critical”, Mr O’Gorman said.

“Indeed there is a case for maintaining a prohibition on naming a person until a person charged with a sexual offence is actually found guilty by a jury”, Mr O’Gorman said.

“The law preventing a person from being named has for years been undermined by a number of media outlets who push every allegation forcefully in the media while a person is under investigation and before he is charged”, Mr O’Gorman said.

“This has had the result of making the ‘no-naming’ laws after a person is charged and before that person is committed for trial pretty useless”, Mr O’Gorman said.

“As well as calling for a uniform Australian law to prevent a person being named while under investigation, the ACCL supports calls for an investigation into who leaked the reports that Victorian Police are investigating Cardinal Pell”, Mr O’Gorman said.

**Mr O’Gorman can be contacted during business hours on 07 3034 0000
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