

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse continued Case Study 28 today. Case Study 28 is looking at the Diocese of Ballarat, and began the first stage of its hearing in May 2015. A third sitting for Ballarat will occur in February 2016.

In today's hearing, the testimony of Father John McKinnon concluded, and the Commission also heard from Father John Walshe, Father Lawrence O'Toole, Father Dan Arundell and survivor BPD.

Continued testimony of Father John McKinnon

Father McKinnon was asked briefly about his knowledge of offending by Paul David Ryan and Father BPB. He told the Commission that he did not recall much, but said that he instinctively disliked Ryan because he had a superior attitude.

He also spoke about Bishop Ronald Mulkearns, and said that while his enormous respect for confidentiality and the protection of a person's reputation could also be a vice, because respect for privacy carries with it the potential for cover up.

Father McKinnon spoke about his recent contact with Bishop Mulkearns [who is currently in palliative care.] He told the Commission that Bishop Mulkearns struggles to sleep at night because the Commission is on his mind, and said that Bishop Mulkearns is profoundly sorry for what he had and had not done.

Testimony of Father John Walshe

Father John Walshe is a Priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, who provided the Commission with a statement regarding the accusations made by David Ridsdale against Cardinal George Pell. David Ridsdale alleged that in February 1993, he phoned then- Bishop Pell to tell him that he had been abused by his uncle, Gerald Ridsdale, and that Bishop Pell had responded: "I want to know what it will take to keep you quiet."

Father Walshe was living with then- Bishop Pell at the time, and said that following the conversation, Bishop Pell was "crestfallen." He said that by the Cardinal's appearance, he had not just had a phone call which had ended on a note which was angry or agitated (as Ridsdale alleged.) Father Walshe said he had mentioned this to Cardinal George Pell following the screening by *60 Minutes* of David Ridsdale's allegations in 2002, and the Cardinal had made a note of this conversation. When Ridsdale repeated the allegations during this round of Royal Commission hearings, Father Walshe was contacted and asked to make a statement.

In the statement and again in today's hearings, Father Walshe said that after living with Cardinal Pell, and working alongside him in creating some theological works, he was able to read his demeanour. Senior Counsel assisting the Royal Commission, Angus Stewart SC, challenged Father Walshe's evidence, saying that this reaction could be similarly applicable if the conversation had proceeded in the way alleged by David Ridsdale. Father Walshe rejected this.

Mr Stewart also asked a number of questions relating to Father Walshe's relationship with Cardinal Pell up to the present day, and his role as the Chairman of the Australian Catholic Confraternity of Catholic Clergy (ACCC). Mr Stewart suggested that the ACCC espoused "conservative theology" of the Priesthood and sexual morality, and Father Walshe responded that the group espouses the

belief of the Catholic Church as she teaches it. He said that if a group trying to be more and more faithful Priests, trying to study the Church's teachings and living Priesthood better is what made a group "conservative", then he accepted the label.

Justice McClellan asked what the reaction of the ACCC would be to some of the suggestions being made at the Royal Commission, including giving women increasing power/authority in the Church. Father Walshe responded that it depended on the role, noting that the Church could not change what had been passed on from Our Lord. Justice McClellan asked: "You mean, from the Bible?" to which Father Walshe replied, "No, from Our Lord," and explained the role of Scripture and Tradition within the Catholic Church.

Testimony of Father Lawrence O'Toole

Father O'Toole was asked about a complaint made to him in 1988 by a victim of Ridsdale. He said that he did not recall it being made as a complaint, but rather it was relayed to him by a person to whom he was visiting in hospital. Father O'Toole said the person expressed guilt and shame about the abuse, and that he had tried to comfort him by insisting that he had no guilt to bear. Father O'Toole said he treated the conversation as having the secrecy of confession, and so was surprised when he saw it reported in a newspaper. He could not give a reason as to why he did not report it to the Police or Bishop Mulkearns or the Police at the time.

He also conceded that he should have reported the situation of Paul Levey living with Ridsdale in his presbytery.

Testimony of Father Dan Arundell

Father Arundell was a member of the College of Consultors from 1982 to 1991. He was asked about his knowledge of offending Priests Fathers Day, Ridsdale, Ryan, and BPB. Father Arundell told the Commission that he only found out when the allegations became public. He said that as a consultor, his input and interest in the meetings was limited to the region of Victoria in which he resided.

Testimony of BPD

Survivor BPD read out a short statement at the end of today's Commission hearings. He told the Commission he was sexually assaulted by Paul David Ryan in 1985, and left the Church after that. He returned some time later, began attending daily Mass and considered a vocation to the Priesthood. He told the Commission that he went through the psychological examination and passed it, but after seeing Ryan in a presbytery and realising he was still in ministry and had access to young people, he decided against it. BPD said he told Bishop Mulkearns that this was the reason that he was not entering the Seminary, and that Bishop Mulkearns assured him he would deal with it, instructing him to not tell anyone else, including the Police.

The hearings will continue (and will likely conclude) tomorrow.