

19 February 2016 STATEMENT FROM THE OFFICE OF CARDINAL GEORGE PELL IN ROME

LEAKED ALLEGATIONS SPURIOUS AND FALSE – CARDINAL GEORGE PELL

Cardinal Pell is due to give evidence to the Royal Commission in just over one week.

The timing of these leaks is clearly designed to do maximum damage to the Cardinal and the Catholic Church and undermines the work of the Royal Commission.

The allegations are without foundation and utterly false.

It is outrageous that these allegations have been brought to the Cardinal's attention through a media leak. These undetailed allegations have not been raised with the Cardinal by the police and the false claims investigated by Justice Southwell have been ignored by the police for over 15 years, despite the very transparent way they were dealt with by the Cardinal and the Catholic Church.

The Cardinal has called for a public inquiry into the leaking of these spurious claims by elements in the Victorian Police in a manner clearly designed to embarrass the Cardinal, in a case study where the historical failures of the Victorian Police have been the subject of substantial evidence. These types of unfair attacks diminish the work of those good officers of the police who are diligently working to bring justice to victims.

The Phillip Island allegations have been on the public record for nearly 15 years. The Southwell Report which exonerated Cardinal Pell has been in the public domain since 2002.

The Victorian police have taken no steps in all of that time to pursue the false allegations made, however the Cardinal certainly has no objection to them reviewing the materials that led Justice Southwell to exonerate him. The Cardinal is certain that the police will quickly reach the conclusion that the allegations are false.

The Victorian Police have never sought to interview him in relation to any allegations of child sexual abuse and apart from the false allegations investigated by Justice Southwell, the Cardinal knows of no claims or incidents which relate to him.

He strongly denies any wrongdoing. If the police wish to question him he will co-operate, as he has with each and every public inquiry.

In the meantime, the Cardinal understands that several media outlets have received confidential information leaked by someone within the Victorian Police. For elements of the police to publicly attack a witness in the same case study that has exposed serious police inaction and wrongdoing is outrageous and should be seen for what it is.

Given the serious nature of this conduct, the Cardinal has called for a public inquiry to be conducted in relation to the actions of those elements of the Victorian Police who are undermining the Royal Commission's work. .

The Cardinal calls on the Premier and the Police Minister to immediately investigate the leaking of these baseless allegations.

ENDS