



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
OF MELBOURNE

media release

Date: 1 June 2015

Statement of Archbishop Denis Hart Cardinal Pell

I wish to respond to the most recent criticism of Cardinal George Pell and the coverage which that criticism is receiving.

I assure the community that both Cardinal Pell and myself are deeply saddened by the abuse that has been suffered and the failures of many in our church to respond appropriately.

As a community we have all endured two weeks of harrowing evidence in Ballarat at the Royal Commission and admire the courage of those victims/survivors who appeared and told their stories.

Together with those who appeared, the Royal Commission is also touching the lives of many other victims, their families and the communities in which they live and work.

I am a long-time friend and brother priest of Cardinal Pell. We were seminarians together at Corpus Christi Seminary in Melbourne in the 1960s. I know Cardinal Pell to be a good man, an honest man, a man of the Church who loves Australia and was recognised in 2005 by being made a Companion of the Order of Australia.

With his appointment as Archbishop of Melbourne in 1996, he took the lead in conceiving and then establishing the Melbourne Response which I understand to be one of the first redress processes established by the church. Having appointed me as his Vicar General, I worked very closely with him and admired the strong leadership he displayed in having the Melbourne Response commence within three months of his appointment.

It was clear to me then as it is clear to me now that Cardinal Pell has always been determined to address the evil of clergy sexual abuse in the Church, to deal with the perpetrators and to provide healing for victims/survivors.

Cardinal Pell has acknowledged that he has made mistakes. My experience of Cardinal Pell however is that he has been willing to admit to and apologise for those mistakes.

The most recent criticisms made of Cardinal Pell on 60 Minutes yesterday date back to 2002. Following the 60 Minutes program in 2002, Cardinal Pell made a sworn statement refuting the claims and stating his position.

The claims were again raised in 2013 at the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry at which Cardinal Pell appeared and answered questions in public for almost four hours. He has since twice appeared at the Royal Commission and last week made clear his willingness to return to Australia and appear again to answer questions about his time as a priest in the Diocese of Ballarat.

I hope all Australians who believe in a fair go will give Cardinal Pell the opportunity to answer the criticisms that have been raised in both the Royal Commission and the media before drawing any final conclusions.

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