

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## CARDINAL REJECTS SMEAR

Fairfax media today carried a story, repeated by other media outlets, alleging that Cardinal George Pell is “tainted by sex abuse scandals” and “long dogged” by allegations of sexual abuse against him.

These statements are utterly false and seriously defamatory. They have no basis in fact and deliberately misrepresent the outcome of a 2002 inquiry by a retired Victorian Supreme Court judge which completely exonerated Cardinal Pell of allegations made against him.

At all times, including in sworn evidence before the Southwell Inquiry, Cardinal Pell denied the allegations.

In the conclusion to his report after an exhaustive investigation, former Victorian Judge the Honourable A.J. Southwell QC wrote: “I find I am not ‘satisfied that the complaint has been established’, to quote the words of the principal term of reference”.

As Judge Southwell explained in his report, he could not be satisfied that the complaint was established “unless I were satisfied that the version of the complainant is truthful and substantially accurate”. Judge Southwell did not accept the complainant’s version of events. Cardinal Pell is innocent of the allegations.

Indeed Mr Zwartz correctly reported in an article published by the Age on 14 June 2010 that “*Cardinal Pell stood down as Archbishop of Sydney in 2002 after he was accused of abusing a teenager at a church camp in the 1960s, but an independent investigation by a retired non-Catholic judge cleared him.*” Inexplicably, this has been omitted from Mr Zwartz’s latest article.

As Archbishop in two cities Cardinal Pell has worked hard to eradicate the evil of sexual abuse from the Church and to show his deep compassion for victims and survivors of sexual abuse not just by words but also by actions. Instead of

presenting these facts and the outcome of the Southwell Inquiry fairly as it should, the Fairfax press has opted to publish a smear of the most vindictive kind.

Fairfax and other media which are repeating this story are being contacted by Cardinal Pell's lawyers.

ENDS



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