

11 December 2015

STATEMENT FROM THE OFFICE OF CARDINAL GEORGE PELL IN ROME

Cardinal George Pell reluctantly, and only on medical advice, applied to give evidence as scheduled to the Royal Commission via video link next week.

The Cardinal had booked his travel back to Melbourne and until the middle of this week was determined to return to give evidence in person.

The Cardinal has suffered from a heart condition for some time but his symptoms have recently worsened, with a specialist cardiologist in Rome advising only a few days ago that it is not safe for him to undertake long haul flights in his current condition.

Cardinal Pell strongly supports the work of the Royal Commission and wanted to keep his commitment to give evidence from 16 December.

The Royal Commission was provided with evidence of the Cardinal's medical condition in support of his application to give evidence via video link.

Cardinal Pell realises there may be some who will question the decision to remain in Rome; however it would be unwise for him not to heed medical advice.

The Cardinal has consistently expressed his intention to do everything possible to assist the work of the Royal Commission.

The application for the Cardinal to appear via video link was refused.

Commission Chair, Mr Justice Peter McClellan highlighted the complexity of the two case studies currently before the Commission, the volume of documents and potential technical difficulties with a video link. For these reasons he said he would prefer Cardinal Pell to appear in person.

Without wanting to exacerbate Cardinal Pell's health concerns Justice McClellan indicated he will ask the Cardinal to appear in Ballarat next February. If his health has not recovered sufficiently, the Commission will consider the position then.

Cardinal Pell's health will continue to be monitored by his specialists in Rome.

ENDS

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