



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
OF MELBOURNE

media release

20 February 2016

Cardinal Pell

It is very disturbing and concerning to read reports based on leaks to the media that Victoria Police has been investigating allegations of abuse against Cardinal George Pell for the past year and that his first knowledge of these allegations has come from those media reports.

The allegations do not reflect the man I have known for more than 50 years. Cardinal Pell has unequivocally rejected the allegations as without foundation and utterly false and strongly denied any wrongdoing.

The leaked allegations coming at the end of a week in which Cardinal Pell was publicly denigrated and a week before he appears at the Royal Commission appear designed to do maximum damage to Cardinal Pell and undermine the work of the Royal Commission. In this environment it is the responsibility of the Royal Commission to provide a fair and balanced forum for all who appear before it.

The leaking of the allegations undermines the criminal justice system. The administration of the criminal justice system in Australia is based on fundamental principles including the responsibility of the police to investigate allegations of criminal behaviour without fear or favour, that allegations be put to the accused, the presumption of innocence and a fair trial before Courts independent of the police and government. Whenever any of these basic principles are not observed for one individual regardless of their position in society, all suffer.

Cardinal Pell like all Australian citizens is entitled to have these principles apply to him.

I support calls for an independent investigation into the source of the leaks.

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