

22 July 2016

STATEMENT FROM THE OFFICE OF CARDINAL GEORGE PELL TO THE ABC 7.30 REPORT

Cardinal Pell will not be giving an interview to the ABC 7.30 Report. He emphatically and unequivocally rejects any allegations of sexual abuse against him.

The Cardinal's conduct has been repeatedly scrutinised over many years, including before the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations and according to leaked reports, by Victorian Police's SANO Taskforce.

One of the claims dates back to the early 60s which was the subject of an exhaustive inquiry in 2002 by a former Supreme Court Judge Alec Southwell, who found the allegations were not substantiated.

The Cardinal does not wish to cause any distress to any victim of abuse. However, claims that he has sexually abused anyone, in any place, at any time in his life are totally untrue and completely wrong.

He denies the allegations absolutely, and says that they, and any acceptance of them by the ABC, are nothing more than a scandalous smear campaign which appears to be championed by the ABC. If there was any credibility in any of these claims, they would have been pursued by the Royal Commission by now.

In February this year media outlets carried stories of purported allegations against the Cardinal which were being investigated by the SANO Taskforce.

However, no request has been made to interview Cardinal Pell nor has he received any details of these claims from the police or anyone. In late May the Cardinal was advised by the SANO Taskforce that there had been no change in the status of the investigation since the leaks were first reported.

When Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton was asked in June this year if there were any plans to speak with Cardinal Pell in Rome he

replied ".....it had not been put as necessary to me at this point in time".

As the ABC is aware, Cardinal Pell was the first Catholic Bishop to confront the evil of clerical child sexual abuse and implement the first program to assist victims when he introduced the *Melbourne Response* in 1996. He has apologised to victims of abuse on behalf of the Church many times and has met with many victims personally.

He expresses regret that the sensationalist attention given to these unfounded and untrue claims might cause distress to genuine victims and he encourages anyone with any legitimate complaint to pursue it through the correct channels.

Cardinal Pell provides this response at the request of the 7.30 Report and, as such, he expects it to be published in its entirety during any broadcast which includes these false allegations. He also expects it to be published in its entirety on any of the ABC web pages which may also reference these false allegations.

ENDS

From the office of Cardinal George Pell

Rome. 22 July 2016