

Royal Commission Case Study 28

Ballarat Diocese

TJHC update



Friday 11 December 2015 – Day 14

Day 14 of the Royal Commission's public hearing into allegations of child sex abuse by clergy and religious in Victoria's Ballarat Diocese commenced today with Bishop Brian Finnigan giving evidence about his time in Ballarat as Bishop Mulkearn's secretary and member of his Consultors Committee from 1979 to 1997.

Bishop Finnigan was asked about decisions made in consultors meetings to move Gerald Ridsdale, Paul David Ryan and Father BPB. He was asked about his knowledge of their inappropriate behaviour with children and child sexual abuse.

He gave evidence about a call he received from the mother of a boy who told him they were worried about the safety of their son. She told Bishop Finnigan she wanted to meet with the Bishop.

He told the Commission that he might not have passed the request or information onto the Bishop and understood 'they would follow it up with the Bishop'.

He was also asked about a meeting with three or four people who came to him to raise concerns with Ridsdale having 'all these lads around to his place to play pool...and they felt he was over friendly with him'.

He said that he didn't understand at the time the concerns being raised but that he told Ridsdale the Bishop wanted him to call him. Bishop Finnigan said Ridsdale responded that he thought he was doing well.

Bishop Finnigan also gave evidence about Paul David Ryan, the reasons for Ryan's move to the US and what was known about his behavior with children prior to the move.

Towards the end of the day Counsel for Cardinal Pell made an application to the Commission that the Cardinal be given permission to give evidence to the Commission via video link from Rome.

The Commission heard that due to health issues the Cardinal would not be able to attend the hearing next week in Melbourne in person and requested he be able to give evidence by video link from Rome.

Counsel for Cardinal Pell, Allan Myers, QC told the Commission the Cardinal 'deeply regrets' not being able to travel to Australia to appear before the Commission and that he 'has been preparing himself for this journey for some time...'

The Commission heard Cardinal Pell was booked on an airplane to arrive in Australia on Sunday morning.

Justice McClellan said that given the complexity of the issues involved 'and the fact that there are two case studies presently before the Commission covering an extensive period of time, coupled with the technical difficulties in Rome of the previous video evidence when the Cardinal was in Rome, it is preferable that his evidence be given in person in Australia'.

The Commission has determined to delay the Cardinal's evidence until it returns to Ballarat in February next year for the third part of this public hearing in the hope the Cardinal will be well enough to travel to Australia.

The hearing continues on Monday.