

## STATUTORY DECLARATION

**I, THE MOST REVEREND GEORGE PELL D.D.** of Polding House, 276 Pitt Street, Sydney, New South Wales, solemnly and sincerely declare:

1. That I am the Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney.
2. In 1992 and 1993, I was an Auxiliary Bishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.
3. The Catholic Church in Victoria is divided into a number of geographic regions, called Dioceses.
4. The Ballarat Diocese is separate and distinct from the Melbourne Archdiocese. An Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Melbourne has no authority or responsibility in relation to the Ballarat Diocese.
5. Gerald Ridsdale, who is a former priest of the Ballarat Diocese, was charged with and convicted of a large number of criminal offences involving the sexual abuse of children. Ridsdale is presently serving a lengthy term of imprisonment.
6. I recall receiving a telephone call from David Ridsdale. David is the nephew of Gerald Ridsdale, and I had known the family for a number of years. David's father Barry is a carpenter who had done a considerable amount of work over the years at Aquinas Campus at the Institute of Catholic Education in Ballarat. I had seen the family regularly at Mass in Ballarat prior to my move from Ballarat in 1984.
7. Although I do not recall the precise date of the telephone call, I recall that it was while I was an Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne and that it was around the time of police action against Gerald Ridsdale. To the best of my recollection the call took place early in 1993.
8. When I received the phone call, I was aware that allegations of criminal conduct were being made against Ridsdale, that they involved offences against a number of children and that the allegations included offences against members of Ridsdale's family. I had no reason to believe that Ridsdale was innocent of the allegations.
9. Indeed, when Ridsdale pleaded guilty in the Magistrates' Court in mid-1993, I had been asked by his lawyers to give evidence on his behalf. I indicated that while I would have been prepared to give evidence, and that while I was aware of some good works that Ridsdale had performed as a priest, my sympathies lay with his victims. I considered Ridsdale's crime to be reprehensible. I said that I would say that I believed Ridsdale to have done great damage to his victims, to the Church as well as to himself. Having heard what evidence I would have given his lawyers said that they would not call me to give evidence. They asked me to accompany Ridsdale to the courthouse, which I did, with considerable reluctance.
10. I recall that when David Ridsdale rang me, he told me that he had been abused by his uncle. He also told me of financial difficulties that he, his wife and children were experiencing. I felt sorry for David and would have been keen to help him if I could. However, there was no basis upon which I could have provided him with any significant financial assistance.
11. I did not provide, or offer to provide, David or his family with any financial assistance.
12. In my telephone conversation with David, there was no mention made of David going to the police. I did not consider his call or the conversation to be threatening in any way. David did not make any threats and did not swear at me. Indeed, until I viewed footage shown to me by 60 Minutes on 25 May 2002, I was unaware of David ever having spoken a cross word about me, let alone to me.
13. I recall that I also had a telephone discussion with David's wife slightly later. It was a friendly conversation, but did not involve any offer by me to provide any help whatsoever.
14. In the course of my interview with 60 Minutes it was alleged that I said to David words to the effect "What will it take to keep you quiet?" I emphatically deny having said these words or any words to that effect.
15. I emphatically and totally deny the allegation that I made any attempt to buy David's silence.

16. It was also alleged that I offered to buy David a house or a car. I emphatically and totally deny having made such an offer.
17. The allegations that I made any such attempts or offers are not only unfounded, but also implausible. First, at the time that I received the call from David, allegations of misconduct against Gerald Ridsdale, including complaints from the victims other than David, were already in the public domain and were already, to my knowledge, the subject of police action.
18. Secondly, David has had various opportunities over the years to make these allegations to me had he wished to, but he has not done so. Shortly after I became Archbishop of Melbourne in 1996, I attended a public meeting with over 200 people including victims of sexual abuse, their families and friends. I recall that either David or his brother was at that meeting and, towards the end of the meeting, spoke publicly in support of the initiatives that I had announced to respond to sexual abuse within the Archdiocese, and urged those present to give "George's" procedures a "fair go".
19. In addition, as an Auxiliary Bishop of the Melbourne Archdiocese, I had no authority or capacity to purchase an item such as a house or car for any other person. Further, I made no requests to either the then Archbishop of Melbourne or Bishop of Ballarat for the provision of any financial assistance for David.
20. When I was appointed as Archbishop of Melbourne in 1996, one of my first priorities was to address the paedophilia scandal in the Catholic Church. I became Archbishop on 16 August 1996 and on 28 October 1996 I announced a package of initiatives, including the appointment of an Independent Commissioner to investigate allegations of abuse, an exgratia Compensation Panel and a counselling and support service. This was the first such package instituted within the Australian Catholic Church and was pioneering in the international context.
20. The allegation that I attempted to silence a victim or cover up allegations is unfounded and untrue and is an anathema to me.

I acknowledge that this declaration is true and correct and I make it in the belief that a person making a false declaration is liable to the penalties of perjury.

DECLARED at )  
 in the State of New South Wales )  
 this day of )

+ George Pell.

Before me:

John Davoren JD  
JOHN DAVOREN (Print name)  
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DR V MAMOYVIC (Print address)  
JP (Print title)

30/05/2002