



26th February 2019

STATEMENT

Many within the Church and beyond will be understandably shocked by the news of George Pell's conviction.

However, in some legal and Church circles something of this outcome has been known of since the trial and retrial late last year. Yet, because of the Court's suppression order, the charges laid, their precise details and the evidence given have not until now been publicly available.

I confirm the statement of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, of which I am a member, that 'everyone should be equal under the law, and we respect the Australian legal system. The same legal system that delivered the verdict will consider the appeal that the Cardinal's legal team has lodged. Our hope, at all times, is that through this process, justice will be served.'

I am unable to offer more at this time, except to re-state that that any sexual abuse is a most serious invasive attack on the personhood of another. When done by someone in a position of power or public respect it is an even greater abuse:- an exploitation and a betrayal.

The Church has put in place, locally and nationally, procedures to protect people from such abuse and to assist the survivors and victims.

In my own time as bishop, the protection of vulnerable people has been given high priority in the pastoral, educational and welfare services offered by the Diocese of Cairns.

Ends.

+ James Foley
BISHOP OF CAIRNS