



Cardinal George Pell's lawyer accuses father of alleged victim of 'inventing' allegation

Father says barrister's assertion is an 'insult' during Pell's committal hearing over historical sexual offence allegations

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The father of a man alleging historical sexual offence allegations against Cardinal George Pell has lashed out at Pell's barrister for saying one allegation was an "invention".

The committal hearing for Pell, who is Australia's most senior Catholic, was reopened to the public and media on Wednesday afternoon in Melbourne's magistrates' court after almost eight days of closed evidence from complainants.

On Thursday the cardinal's barrister, Robert Richter QC, told the court the father never mentioned Pell by name when he gave a statement to police in 2015 about what he knew about allegations his son had been sexually offended against. In his statement, the man mentioned only notorious paedophile Gerald Ridsdale and "priests", but never named Pell, Richter told the court.

The man replied this was because his son did not want to talk about the allegations involving Pell and could not bring himself to tell him about it. The son asked his older brother to tell their father about the allegations for him.

Richter put it to the man that an allegation involving Pell was “an invention of yours since July 2015 when you made your statement” to police. “You’ve just made that up after you’ve made your statement right?” Richter said. “Between July 2015 and today you made that up.”

The man responded: “That is an insult. No.”

Richter also put it to the man that he was not very close to his abused son, a statement magistrate Belinda Wallington said was “inappropriate”.

“We were a very close family ... that’s totally disrespectful to say that to a father,” the man said.

Pell, 76, has repeatedly and vehemently denied the offences he is charged with. He does not need to enter a formal plea unless committed by Wallington to stand trial. He has taken leave from his position as financial controller of the Vatican in Rome while the hearing takes place.

After a break for lunch Wallington returned to the court visibly upset and said the court had received some “devastating news” unrelated to the case. She adjourned the court until Monday. The hearing continues.

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