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Australia High Court will hear Card. Pell's appeal request

Two judges on Australia's highest court announce that Cardinal Pell's request for appeal will be decided by full court.

Two justices of the Australian High Court announced on Wednesday that they are referring Cardinal George Pell's request for appeal to the seven members of the High Court. At that hearing, the members of the High Court will decide whether to accept or deny Cardinal Pell's request to appeal an earlier conviction for the sexual assault of two under-aged boys, which allegedly took place in the sacristy of Melbourne's Cathedral in 1996, when he was the local Archbishop.

Cardinal Pell was convicted in February on historical charges of sexual abuse of minors. He has always maintained his innocence. 

The first trial ended in a hung jury; a second jury unanimously entered a guilty verdict.

On presenting the appeal to the High Court in September, Cardinal Pell's lawyers rested their case to overturn the conviction on the dissenting opinion of Justice Mark Weinberg, one of three judges of the Supreme Court of the Australian State of Victoria.

A date for this final appeal hearing to Australia's High Court has not yet been set. Some say it may take place early in 2020. However, this will be Cardinal Pell's last opportunity to appeal the conviction.

Statement of Australian Bishops' Conference

In a statement, the President of the Australian Bishops Conference, Archbishop Mark Coleridge said that "all Australians have the right to appeal a conviction to the High Court. Cardinal George Pell has exercised that right, and the High Court has determined that his conviction warrants its consideration."

The Archbishop added that, "this will prolong what has been a lengthy and difficult process, but we can only hope that the appeal will be heard as soon as reasonably possible and that the High Court's judgement will bring clarity and a resolution for all."

Statement of the Holy See Press Office

In Rome, just before 12 noon on Wednesday, the Holy See Press Office released a statement saying the Holy See acknowledges the decision and reiterates "its trust in the Australian justice system." It also states that "the Holy See reaffirms once again its closeness to those who have suffered because of sexual abuse on the part of members of the clergy."

Last update made at 1:15 Rome time

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