

MEDIA BIAS AGAINST CARDINAL PELL

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest media bias against Cardinal George Pell:

Cardinal George Pell is the highest ranking member of the Catholic clergy ever to be charged with sexual abuse. To date, this matter has not been adjudicated in the courts, and indeed no specific charges have been rendered against him. Yet the media in Australia, Europe, and North America have led the public to believe that he is a guilty man. The latest round of biased journalism occurred today.

There are several news stories in Australia and England on the death of Damian Dignan, one of Cardinal Pell's accusers. All of the stories feed the image of Pell as a guilty man.

Dignan, who died of cancer, alleged that in the 1970s Cardinal Pell inappropriately touched him while throwing him off his shoulders in a swimming pool. It took him until March 2016—nearly 40 years after the alleged offense—to report it, thus raising questions about its veracity. Dignan also had a record of violence and drunk driving.

The following news stories made no reference to the date of the alleged offense, the date it was reported, or the nature of the offense:

The Australian

Guardian (U.K.)

Gulf News (Australia)

Herald Sun (Australia)

Hobart Mercury (Australia)

The following mentioned the pool incident but not when it allegedly occurred:

The Courier (Australia)

Daily Mail (U.K.)

Express Digest (U.K.)

9 News (Australia)

The following news stories mentioned the date of the accusation but said nothing about when it allegedly occurred or the nature of the offense:

The Age (Australia)

BBC (U.K.)

There was not one accurate news story. This is not a mistake—it is a pattern (see the Catholic League website for previous examples).

Worse than not reporting all the facts are those stories which mention the date of the accusation in 2016, but not when the alleged offense occurred, making it seem that it was of recent vintage.

It is striking that a former chief Victorian magistrate and crown prosecutor, Nicholas Papas, told the *Guardian* that Dignan's death would negatively impact on the upcoming court case. Really? In other words, in order to convict Cardinal Pell, they needed the testimony of a person who alleges that horsing around with Pell in a pool back in the 1970s amounted to sexual abuse?

No wonder skeptics have turned cynical. Cardinal Pell has been unfairly treated from the beginning, both by the media and the courts, and this chapter only adds to the litany of injustices.

Those who are now belaboring the treatment of public notables in the U.S. who have been assumed guilty—without hard evidence—would do well to examine what has happened to many priests, beginning with Cardinal George Pell.