

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 477

CARDINAL PELL , THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE AUSTRALIAN STATE

**State Aid to religion is contrary to Section 116 of the Australian
Constitution because it has always involved:**

- entanglement of religion with the state;
- endowment of religion by the state;
- grave problems for both religion and the state- the faithful leave a hypocritical church – and- democracy is undermined by ‘old boy networks’ in the legislative, legal and administrative arms of government.
- establishment of at least one powerful church – the Catholic Church is now the most powerful religious body in Australia and Pell is happy to point this out.

The DOGS court case (1981) proved the above points.

**Thirty years later, Australian citizens and taxpayers are provided with
Cardinal George Pell in triumphalist mode proving the same points in an
article by **Jane Cadzow** in *The Age* Good Weekend of June 16, entitled
Our Man in Rome, Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/lifestyle/our-man-in-rome-20120611-204wh.html#ixzz1y6DT3VJT>**



Rome, sweet Rome ... Cardinal George Pell in the chapel at Domus Australia – a \$30-million guest house and place of worship for Australian Catholics in Rome. PHOTO: SUSAN WRIGHT

Jane Cadzow tells us that *Pell, now 71, is the most powerful person in the Catholic Church in Australia. The archbishop of Sydney since 2001, archbishop of Melbourne before that, he is the only Australian in the Vatican's college of cardinals eligible to vote for the next Pope - and by some accounts has an outside chance of taking the prize himself. "Just because you've got a bit of form on a country track doesn't mean you can win the Melbourne Cup," he once said, giving himself long odds in the papal stakes. But the US website Business Insider recently listed him as one of the top 15 contenders to succeed his friend Benedict XVI, who turned 85 in April.*

But the DOGS are interested in the evidence Pell provides for, first of all

Entanglement of Religion with the State:

Pell relishes his ability to pull the political strings, and he and Prime Minister in Waiting, Tony Abbott are more than happy to acknowledge their close co-operation in the political power games: DOGS quote:

...To federal Coalition leader Tony Abbott, "Cardinal Pell is one of the greatest churchmen that Australia has seen". To John Buggy, spokesman for Australian

Reforming Catholics, "he is rather a nasty man with very few redeeming features". In the view of theologian and political commentator Marion Maddox, Pell is one of those rare individuals capable of reshaping an institution in his own image. "The flavour of Australian Catholicism has changed quite a bit since he became cardinal," Maddox says.



That's the spirit ... sharing a drink and a chat with now Opposition Leader Tony Abbott in 2004. PHOTO: FAIRFAXSYNDICATION.COM

...Tony Abbott was recently quoted as saying that Pell was "a person of significance and influence" in his life. "Occasionally, he will ring me with a thought," the politician continued. "Occasionally, I will ring him to ask if we could catch up. Once or twice I've sought his counsel on important matters where I thought he would have insight and wisdom

I didn't think others would likely have." Pell tells me he and Abbott have been friends for years. "I admire him as a very decent and competent fellow," the cardinal says. "I think he's probably emerged as the most formidable opposition leader in Australian history."

Abbott isn't alone in seeking his advice and spiritual guidance, Pell adds. "Quite a number of politicians do. Most of them do it quietly. Abbott was criticised once for coming to see me by another politician who, in fact, had been in to see me himself some weeks or months previously."

...Former Jesuit priest Peter Norden notes that if the polls are any indication, Pell will have an ally at the Lodge after the next election. "The cardinal would see this as a very important link," says Norden, an adjunct professor in the school of global studies, social sciences and planning at Melbourne's RMIT University. Another Pell-watcher, author Thomas Keneally, says, "I rather fear the alliance between him and Abbott, who is in a way the disciple."

And

...."He's very well educated and he's mixed in all sorts of circles." Federal Liberal frontbencher and prominent lay Catholic Kevin Andrews believes Pell is misunderstood. "He is a very warm and friendly person," Andrews says. "I think the gruff public exterior that some people perceive is not actually the real man."

Endowment of Religion by the State:

DOGS note the extraordinary largesse provided by Australian taxpayers to this one particular religious group in Australia, and the hubris exhibited by Pell when he refers to the State subsidised wealth of his multinational organisation.

...The truth is, Pell doesn't need the ear of a prime minister to put his stamp on Australian life. The Catholic Church is by far the biggest non-government organisation in the country, and since he bestrides it like a colossus, he already wields considerable clout. "Australia is 26 per cent Catholic," he pointed out in a speech he gave in Ireland last year. "We are now the largest denomination, having passed the Anglicans."

"We have a huge network of services: we educate 20 per cent of all Australians in our schools, operate 24 per cent of hospitals, we provide 55 per cent of palliative care ... There are also a couple of Catholic universities and an immense welfare system, mostly financed by the government."

An investigation by BRW magazine in 2006 put the Catholic Church's revenue in Australia for the previous year near \$16.2 billion, all tax-exempt. It is Australia's biggest private property owner and non-government employer, with more than 150,000 people on its payroll.

Pell does not have the multimillion-dollar salary that the chief executive of such a vast enterprise would command in the secular world. But there are compensations. "You do all right as a cardinal," says Chris McGillion. "Not in terms of what you're paid, but you fly off here and there, you've got a nice house to live in and people to cook your meals, and you drink the best wine."

Unfortunate Effect of Religious Pressure on the Media and the Legal System.

DOGS experienced the effect of the influence of the church organisations and in particular the Roman Catholic Church when attempting to have their State Aid case heard in the courts.

But the pressure placed upon a young man who accused Pell of sexual misconduct by the media, and his subsequent withdrawal of charges, is symptomatic of a larger problem of religious influence in the media and legal system.

The whiff of scandal against Pell has never quite disappeared, and DOGS note the following excerpt from Jane Cadzow's article:

Two years ago, Pell seemed set to land one of the biggest jobs at head office. "George without doubt was lined up to be the head of the Congregation of Bishops, which is the third most powerful committee in the Vatican," says Paul Collins. "It appoints all the world's bishops. But at the last moment there was a change and his name suddenly disappeared."

...Some believe Pell's chances of promotion are hampered by a lingering whiff of scandal. A decade ago, a Melbourne man claimed he was sexually molested as a 12-year-old at a Catholic youth camp by a student priest he knew as "big George" and later recognised as the Archbishop of Sydney. After a church-appointed inquiry, Pell said he was grateful to God to have been exonerated.

In fact, retired Victorian Supreme Court judge Alec Southwell had said that both Pell and his accuser gave the impression they were speaking the truth. Taking into

account questions about the accuser's credibility (he had a criminal record) and the fact that the alleged incidents occurred so long ago, Southwell found he was "not satisfied that the complaint had been established".

Tony Abbott hadn't waited for the judge's decision. "It should not surprise any Christian that there would be people who want to make unfair, wrong, mischievous, malevolent accusations against the strongest and most public Christian of the time," the politician said when the allegations were first aired. "I'm more than ready to accept Pell's testimony."

State Aid Bad for Religion as well as the State

DOGS note that the greater the power and State Aid enjoyed by Cardinal Pell and his religious organisation, the worse it is in fact for the spiritual strength of his belief system.

the number of young men in seminaries has plummeted in the past half century, from more than 1500 in the mid-1950s to fewer than 300 today. The number of Catholics attending weekly Mass has plunged, too - from 55 per cent in 1962 to 14 per cent at the last count in 2006....

STATE AID IS BAD FOR THE STATE AND WORSE FOR RELIGION.

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