



**OPINION**

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 George Pell at the Melbourne County Court today. Picture: Tony Gough

ANDREW BOLT

## Andrew Bolt: Why Pell has been falsely convicted

Andrew Bolt, Herald Sun

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Cardinal George Pell has been falsely convicted of sexually abusing two boys in their early teens. That's my opinion, based on the overwhelming evidence.

And my opinion is also based in part on how many times Pell has been accused of crimes and sins he clearly did not do.

But at last, the truckload of mud thrown at him has stuck. It adds up to this: Pell, Australia's most senior Catholic, has been made to pay for his sins and a media campaign of vilification.

He is a scapegoat, not a child abuser. In my opinion.

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**MORE: PELL GUILTY OF SEX OFFENCES**

## WILL PELL GO TO PRISON?

## TEN THINGS PELL HOPED WOULD PROVE HIS INNOCENCE

Declaration: I have met Pell perhaps five times in my life and like him. I am not a Catholic or even a Christian.

But here is why I cannot believe this verdict, which clearly shocked reporters when first announced (but suppressed) last year, and which Pell is appealing as unsound.



 The suppression order was lifted in court today. Media and police surround Cardinal George Pell outside court today. Picture: AP Photo/Andy Brownbill

You are meant to believe that Pell in the mid-1990s found the two choir boys in St Patrick's cathedral's sacristy drinking altar wine just after a Mass at which Pell had officiated.

You are meant to believe that Pell forced the boy to give him oral sex and to masturbate to it, and also molesting them both.

Here is why I don't believe this gothic story — or not enough to think this conviction reasonable.

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One of the boys, now dead, denied he'd been abused.

The other, whose identity and testimony remain secret, didn't speak of it for many years.

The attack is meant to have happened straight after Mass, when Pell is known to have traditionally spoken to worshippers leaving Mass.

It allegedly happened in the sacristy, normally a very busy room, where Pell would have known people were almost certain to walk in.

The boys had allegedly slipped away from the procession after Mass to break into the sacristy, but none of the other choristers who gave evidence said they'd noticed them doing so, or noticed them rejoining the choir later.

Pell was normally followed everywhere during and after Mass by the master of ceremonies, Monsignor Charles Portelli, who testified that he escorted the then Archbishop from the moment he arrived at the cathedral, until the moment he left. He declared the assault impossible.

Not a single witness from what was a busy cathedral at the time of the alleged abuse noticed a thing during the estimated 10 minutes of this alleged attack.

There is no history or pattern of similar abuse by Pell, unlike with real church paedophiles such as Gerard Ridsdale who raped or assaulted at least 65 children. Pell was 55 years old at the time of alleged abuse.





📷 George Pell at the Vatican in 2012. Picture: Franco Origlia/Getty Images

No wonder that a first jury failed to convict Pell. I am unable to tell you just how very close it came to acquitting him before it was discharged as deadlocked.

On top of that, the man I know seems not just incapable of such abuse, but so intelligent and cautious that he would never risk his brilliant career and good name on such a mad assault in such a public place.

There will be many people who'd angrily respond that we should always believe the victims, or at least believe this one. Why would anyone make a false allegation?

But Pell has been accused very often of serious offences by people who were plainly wrong. Maybe they misremembered. Maybe they had the wrong guy.

Or maybe they were looking for someone to pay for some past trauma, and chose the man that the media has vilified ever since he emerged as the Church's most articulate — and conservative — advocate in this country.

Those false or plainly flimsy allegations include:

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all allegations dropped during the commission after being shown to be wrong or too weak to even put to any jury. For instance, he was accused

of abusing someone at a Ballarat screening of Close Encounters of the Third Kind in 1978 — six months before the film actually came to the city.



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Allegations that Pell fondled boys in a swimming pool in the 1970s when tossing children off his shoulders. Prosecutors today dropped their case — run separately to the one that’s had Pell found guilty — as hopeless.

A claim by a witness to the royal commission on child sex abuse that he’d knocked at the door of Pell’s Ballarat presbytery four decades ago to warn him of a paedophile priest. Pell actually lived miles away, and almost invariably worked in his college office at that time of day.

Another claim by a witness that he’d told Pell in Ballarat of an abusive priest. Pell’s passport showed he was living and studying in Europe that year.

A claim by David Ridsdale, later an abuser himself, that Pell tried to bribe him to stop him telling police he’d been abused by his uncle, notorious paedophile priest Gerald Ridsdale. The ABC promoted this claim, but the royal commission’s counsel assisting said the evidence does not support it.

Pell has survived so many fake allegations. Now he has fallen for one of the most unlikely of all.

In my opinion, this is our own OJ Simpson case, but in reverse. A man was found guilty not on the facts but on prejudice.

Originally published as [Bolt: Why Pell has been falsely convicted](#)



