

Former Ballarat bishop Ronald Mulkearns breaks silence on sex abuse

July 29, 2015

[Read later](#)

Alicia Thomas

[Email article](#) [Print](#)

Former Ballarat Bishop Ronald Mulkearns outside court in Geelong on Wednesday. Photo: Alicia Thomas

Former Ballarat bishop Ronald Mulkearns has finally broken his silence about clergy sex abuse within the Catholic Church, telling a court he remembers a priest "misbehaving" in a sexual way.

Bishop Mulkearns was forced to give evidence against former priest Robert Claffey who has pleaded not guilty to a string of sexual assault charges.

Appearing in Geelong Magistrates Court on Wednesday, Bishop Mulkearns, now retired, underwent a compulsory examination revealing evidence about child sexual abuse for the first time in almost two decades.

"I remember he (Claffey) had been misbehaving ... in a sexual way", Bishop Mulkearns told the court.

"But I only would have recalled Wendouree in connection with that. I don't remember details".

Claffey is charged with one count of buggery, 14 counts of indecent assault and one count of committing an indecent act on a child under the age of 16.

The charge of buggery relates to an alleged incident occurring in Ecklin South in May 1970, while other charges relating to alleged indecent assault in Warnambool and Apollo Bay occurred in 1974, 1976 and 1977.

Further indecent assault charges relate to alleged incidents in Ballarat between 1980 and 1984 and again in 1988, while the most recent charge relates to an alleged indecent act on a child under the age of 16 in Portland between 1991 and 1992.

The court heard the father of an alleged victim approached Bishop Mulkearns about Claffey's behaviour in 1989. While Bishop Mulkearns told the court he had "no recollection" of the meeting, he said "it must have happened because action was taken" according to an undated letter written by the bishop that was tendered to the court.

When asked by Crown prosecutor Peter Rose QC whether he remembered Claffey admitting there had been inappropriate behaviour, Bishop Mulkearns said "no". The bishop responded to multiple questions from Mr Rose with "I don't recall", including when asked about receiving complaints from parishioners.

The bishop has so far avoided giving evidence at a Royal Commission and a Parliamentary inquiry into child sexual abuse because of ill health.

At the end of the committal hearing magistrate John Lesser committed Claffey to stand trial.

Claffey will appear in the County Court for a directions hearing on August 25.

[The Courier](#)

Recommended



Maddy Middleton, 8, found dead in dumpster near Santa...

World



Boyfriend heard girlfriend's screams on phone during...

Victoria



Will I face tax hit if I hand shares to grandson?

Money



Does letting your kids see you naked increase body...

Essential Kids



How to give your kitchen a healthy makeover

Essential Kids

Promoted Stories



This New App is Replacing Human Financial Advisors

PC Magazine



Never Forget The Horrible Crime These Celebs Committed

BuzzLamp



14 Freakiest Coincidences Of History

BrainJet



Burglar-Proof Your House With These 4 Tips

Liberty Mutual



Tragedy: 14 Celebs Whose Parents Were Murdered

Buzz Control

Recommended by

[Email article](#) [Print](#)