



POOR RING OF PELL

From one of Sydney's most luxurious homes comes the voice of Cardinal George Pell ("Gallagher, Pell row over plans to buy Calvary", October 29, p2).

He thinks there are people in the ACT Government who are not supportive of the Catholic Church raking in the riches from Calvary public and private hospitals, John James Private Hospital, Lidia Perin Private Hospital, countless private schools, the majority of gambling clubs in Canberra and who now have their eyes on the palliative care centre and who knows what else. And to top this off, \$70 million-plus profit from Calvary.

How could Pell think that?

Based on this partial list of Catholic profit centres, and this is just Canberra, secularity does seem to be the answer requiring a great deal of "ideological and anti-Christian elements" to avoid a total control by Rome. The insidious church has now penetrated every avenue of human life to their continuing disgrace – but great benefit.

R. Williams,
Ainslie

The objection by George Pell to the sale of Calvary almost certainly means Rome won't approve it. If I were Jon Stanhope (or Katy Gallagher), I'd quickly take the initiative and announce before Rome makes its decision that, following public consultation which revealed widespread opposition to the deal, the Government has decided not to proceed.

That way, Stanhope might claw back some of the considerable number of votes he would have lost at the next election if the deal goes ahead.

R. S. Gilbert,
Braddon

I suspect I am like most people who view the Calvary situation as an obscure dispute between two groups, each with the community's interests at heart.

However, the "Gallagher-Pell row", introduces a dangerous element. Your report says "the proposal can only go ahead with the Vatican's approval". Later Gallagher says that "ultimately the

Vatican does decide on the future of Canberra's own public hospital".

There are two possibilities here. First, both statements are wrong and should be corrected. Second, both are right and give substance to the mantra of people like Ian Paisley in a different context that Home Rule is Rome Rule.

Frank O'Shea,
Fadden

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John Coochey's letter (October 30) suggests confusion over the rights and value of the unexpired portion of the lease granted to the LCM.

When the Federal Government granted the crown lease to the LCM in 1971 it transferred all the responsibilities and benefits, including the land value.

The LCM became the registered proprietors and among other things received the guarantees under the Land Titles Act. Let there be no mistake the LCM is the owner and is therefore entitled to the value of the unexpired portion (60 years) of its lease.

John Malouf,
Hawker

John Malouf (Letters, October 29) is doubtless a worthy gentleman but it is public knowledge he was on Jon Stanhope's staff.

Calvary board chairman Tom Brennan was a Labor staffer, as were a number of his board members, including a former

South Australian Labor minister.

Is it possible that the reason why the Calvary board has failed to participate in the consultation process is that there was some confusion as to whom it was accountable or as to what it was doing?

Was the board there to help the nuns run a Catholic public hospital or help the Labor Government take it over?

It is not easy to serve two masters and, unless the board explains itself, questions will naturally be raised about how perceived conflicts of duty and loyalty were dealt with. If Katy Gallagher does not like outside input she may understand how we feel with the LCM board mostly made up of outsiders.

Paul Monagle,
Friends of Calvary Hospital convenor

What an unhelpful contribution from George Pell. His assertions about the Government's intentions may have some truth, but offer more heat than light.

The motivations of the Government seem to have a logic to them; less obvious is the decision of LCM to pull out of public health care in the ACT.

The Government has made its position open to some scrutiny through public consultation. At the public meeting I attended the majority of the questions should have been directed to LCM. Why did it agree to the sale? Why take \$77 million from the public purse to put into private health facilities? What happens to the charisma of Calvary Hospital?

I don't pretend to be across the economic, political and historical complexities of providing health care in the ACT, but I don't think the community is convinced this sale is the most cost-effective or efficient option for future health care.

I think there is a firmly held belief the Government has withheld funding from Calvary over some years.

But I also think Pell should be directing serious questions to LCM, asking it to help Catholics in the ACT understand its decision to withdraw from the provision of public health care here.

Anne Ryan,
Floreys