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[Linda Mottram](#) presents AM on ABC Local Radio, Monday to Friday from 8am. Join Hamish Robertson at 8am for the Saturday edition.

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David Ridsdale responds to Archbishop Pell

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Reporter: Ben Knight

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LINDA MOTTRAM: But we go straight to David Ridsdale this morning and Sydney Roman Catholic Archbishop George Pell two days ago denied claims that he tried to bribe Mr Ridsdale into keeping quiet over a case of sexual abuse.

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Well today Mr Ridsdale says he will release a written rebuttal of Dr Pell's version of events. Speaking from his home in the UK, David Ridsdale says he's been following the case on the internet and he says he can't allow himself to be discredited without making a further statement.

It's now a case of David Ridsdale's word against George Pell's.

Ben Knight compiled this report.

GEORGE PELL: David's claims are inconsistent, discredited and wrong.

DAVID RIDSDALE: He's chosen to ignore the true facts and use the ones that suit him.

BEN KNIGHT: David Ridsdale has lived and worked in England for several years. He returned briefly to Australia to speak with Sixty Minutes and says he wasn't paid to do it. He saw Dr Pell's statement on the internet yesterday and rejects his version of when calls were made, what was said and what the Archbishop knew.

These are some of his responses.

GEORGE PELL: The first point. He accuses me of saying what will it take to keep you quiet. I deny emphatically using any such words or any words to that effect.

DAVID RIDSDALE: Well you know I can only stick by the statement and it is clear in my head as a bell, is that after the initial conversation I got so confused with his comments about, you know, my family's needs for future purchases, my house and car and this and I said George what are you saying and that was when he said the simple line "what will it take to keep you quiet?"

GEORGE PELL: Secondly, people rarely swear at bishops and priests.

DAVID RIDSDALE: My attitude is simply, you know, priests are no more than men and my vulgarity was more an expression of my anger and disgust, it had nothing at all to do with George's station, it's not relevant to the issue.

GEORGE PELL: Now most importantly, David said he phoned me in January 1993 and then went to the police. I took the call at Mentone. Until late January 1993 I was on holiday at Torquay as was my practice for nearly 30 years.

DAVID RIDSDALE: I never actually used that date. I've been told that Richard Carlton erroneously said that I called in January; I called February the 3rd 1993, it's the date that I've always said, it's the date on top of the police statement and is the reason I can be so clear about it because I made that police statement the same day I spoke to him.

BEN KNIGHT: If we're faced with a choice, why should anyone accept your story over Archbishop Pell's?

DAVID RIDSDALE: Well you know I guess it's not so much of a choice is that all I've been asked to do is repeat a story that I've consistently maintained for ten years. I'm receiving no benefit out of this, of course it doesn't help me, it's the opposite.

I have had to dredge up a lot of painful memories, I'm receiving no financial benefit out of this, in fact I'm putting myself at risk and my family at risk more with the media attention.

This isn't a pleasant experience and I do this for a firm belief that this is a broader social problem, it's a cycle that must stop.

BEN KNIGHT: Why did you do the interview in the first place?

DAVID RIDSDALE: Well you know I've been approached and I understood from ten years ago that it's not a pleasant experience but I'd been told from Sixty Minutes that this was in reaction to the current Catholic crisis in the USA and I've been following that story and it was actually the Pope's response to that that made up my mind.

The Pope turned around and said the reason the Vatican had never responded to the American crisis was that it was a purely American problem.

Now as I've publicly spoken on this on a number of occasions over the last ten years, to be honest I was offended and it was like nothing had changed, they thought they could get away with it by pretending it had never happened before and it's not going to change unless people keep speaking up.

LINDA MOTTRAM: David Ridsdale speaking from his home in the UK to Ben Knight in Melbourne.

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