

## HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC CHURCH MADDINGTON

### Submission to Western Australian Parliament on the Inquiry into the Children and Community Services Bill Amendment 2019

We are a group of XX people who are strongly of the belief that the Bill (specifically Clauses 51 to 53 which implement Recommendations 7.3 and 7.4 of the Final Report of the Royal Commission) are unfair, unjust and unable to be upheld by our Religious Ministers (Bishops and Parish Priests). Our contact details we wish to keep confidential in accordance with the Privacy Act, but our names are freely given below.

1. The Sacrament of Confession is a place and opportunity for Catholics to not only confess their sins but to also receive guidance. This is not just a discussion between a Priest and a Confessor but as a Sacrament God is involved too. Catholics have the understanding that anything brought before God is confidential and the Seal of Confession is their sign of safety and security which enables them to freely confess their sins, seek guidance and forgiveness.
2. The proposed recommendations are unable to be upheld as they break the seal of the Confessional and only the Pope and the Holy See can authorise any changes to Sacraments and how our Bishops and Priests conduct them here in Western Australia and in the greater Australian Catholic Church.
3. By compelling the Bishops and therefore their Priests to reveal any child abuse revealed to them during the Sacrament of Confession you are forcing them to violate the Universal Church law, which would mean automatic dismissal from their office. This would infringe on the free practice of religion in our State.
4. We already have existing measures here in the Catholic Archdiocese of Perth, which help to safeguard children and our Safeguarding Programme because of its effectiveness and comprehensiveness has been adopted by other Catholic Dioceses in Australia.
5. Mandatory Reporting as detailed in the Amendment Bill, only impacts one of the 5 groups recommended by the Royal Commission and though singled out



Ministers of Religion have NOT ALL been contacted in the consultation process. There has not been enough consideration of all the recommendations of the Royal Commission including that the Australian Catholic Church seek clarification from the Holy See on "whether information received from a child during the sacrament of reconciliation that they had been sexually abused would be covered by the seal of confession"; and "whether absolution could and should be withheld if a person confessed to perpetrating child sexual abuse, until they report themselves to civil authorities".

*Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse,  
Final Report: Volume 16, Religious institutions Book 1, p 77*

We believe that there has not been enough consultation with all affected groups and that the singling out of Ministers of Religion for mandatory reporting as detailed above will directly impact our integral rights as Catholics here in Western Australia to practice our religion.

Names in alphabetical order:-

GORDON STARLING

LINDA STARLING

RONALD CLIFTON

JOSEPHINE CLIFTON.