

I wanted to share my story with the committee about my experience of the Catholic confessional survivor of child sexual abuse.

I'm from a strong Catholic family. I'm 18-years-old and began having flashbacks a few years ago about my childhood sexual abuse at school.

I started facing this trauma when I was 16. This made me feel more vulnerable than ever. At least it began to help me make sense why I'd always felt so much pain and so empty inside since being a kid.

Talking with adults about anything personal at 16 is hard enough. I wasn't ready to talk to my family. But I didn't know where to start or who to turn to. One of the safest people and places I knew I could turn to was my local priest under the seal of the confessional.

I knew he'd listen to me and that he wouldn't judge me. I knew from experience that he wasn't allowed to tell anybody anything that I share with him. I also knew that he'd help me to find my own way forward in my own good time. If I'd thought the priest would ever tell anyone what I shared with him, then I'd never have gone to him in the first place. I don't think politicians really get this.

The priest was really kind to me. He always is. I was encouraged to go to the police, so I did. They took a statement from me, and then put it into a filing cabinet somewhere. They've never been in touch with me again and I've been offered no help. It's been two years since I went to the police station.

I've seen a few psychologists but none of my appointments have made much difference. In fact, I think I feel worse because of them.

And my parents pay for me to see a psychiatrist. He's happy to write scripts for me, but he doesn't really do anything else. The government offers no support to someone like me.

I still go to confession pretty often and talk to the priest. He's a great listener. He's like a lifeline and always points me to Jesus, who I'm slowly realising understands my pain firsthand.

My pain's slowly been reducing but now I'm getting really stressed about this new law.

I want the government to back off from trying to police the confessional. This is my safe place to talk about my abuse. I know it's the same for many other people too.

It feels as though the government is now attacking me personally when I am the one who was wronged and hurt as a kid. And they, don't seem to want to understand survivors' pain...

I just wish the government would provide some decent support for survivors so that we can get well enough to testify and get abusers caught. That would be a better use of taxpayers money and politicians time. Instead, it feels like the government is messing with wounded lives – and threatening all the good priests who give their time and wisdom for free to help survivors get well.

I'd prefer to see politicians policed and made to take responsibility for past decisions as way more kids were abused under state care than were ever abused by all religious institutions put together. I've looked at the Royal Commission and it shows this to be true.

I'm not the only teenage survivor in pain here in WA. There's loads of us. I'm writing to your committee to tell the government to stop this stupid law to interfere with the confessional.

If politicians start listening in to survivors talking about abuse in the confessional, then what'll it be like in the future? The government could end up passing laws to police anyone for anything anywhere.

And no decent Australian wants that to happen.

Please stop the Seal of Confession being attacked.

I think that's what best for survivors, for society and for Western Australia.