

To,

Legislation Committee, reviewing the '**Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019**'

I am writing in support of the Seal of Confession and would request the committee to withdraw the '**Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019**'.

Confession has always been a source of counselling and healing for all Catholics. I believe that we all seek forgiveness for our human weaknesses and frailties. Forgiveness is vitally important for the mental health and it propels people forward rather than keeping them emotionally engaged in guilt or trauma. Forgiveness has shown to elevate mood and enhance optimism, guard against anger, stress, anxiety, and depression. Discussing these with the priest, whom we trust, during confession gives us that opportunity to get a different view of the situation we are in. It helps us take responsibility for mistakes and better ourselves, to reflect on why the event occurred and identify how to avoid a similar offense in future. It is easily accessible and without cost.

I also strongly believe that the confessional remains the only safe place for victims of social injustice and child abuse victims, that which can be easily accessible without cost, to seek healing and support about their trauma. This bill takes away the assurance of privacy of confession, that has been practised for ages and discourage them from availing this option and thus deprive them of an opportunity to start their healing process.

The Amendment Bill requires the bishops and priests to violate the law of the Universal Church, causing them to be automatically dismissed from their office according to church law. This places an unacceptably high cost on all bishops and priests in Western Australia, and in turn infringes on the free practice of religion in our State.

Instead of forcing the Church to implement mandatory reporting, which is beyond its power to do, the Government should instead consult and work collaboratively with the Church to implement and improve practices that are within the Church's power to implement.

kind regards