

Dear Committee,

**RE: Inquiry into the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019**

With reference to Recommendation 7.3, I support reporting to Child Protection Authorities on factual evidence.

With reference to Recommendation 7.4, I do not support mandatory reporting on what is disclosed in the 'Sacrament of Reconciliation'.

I am a Catholic young mother and wife with two small children and do not support Recommendation 7.4 as it is discriminatory to the Catholic religion. Reconciliation is a Sacrament and as such is between Christ and the individual through the ministry of the priest. The priest therefore has no right to reveal anything he hears to anyone as we believe any information is not shared with him but rather with the Lord whom he represents. This is Church teaching and law and cannot be changed or altered in any way by anyone apart from the Pope.

From a practical point of view it would not be feasible for a priest to gain enough specific knowledge in the course of hearing a Confession to be certain of the precise details of a particular person's sins, including the identity of the person making the Confession and perhaps that of other people involved.

Wouldn't it be better to leave Confession as is and in the unlikely event that a paedophile did confess, the priest would be able to advise absolution would only be received if they handed themselves in. Also too if a young person who was a victim spoke to the priest, he would be able to suggest help outside the Confessional, supporting them and encouraging them to report the matter to authorities when they were ready to do so.

In relation to the safety and well-being of children, the Catholic Church in Australia and here in Perth is very different from the Church of thirty, forty or fifty years ago, when shamefully the horror of sexual abuse of the young was prevalent in so many of the Church's institutions. Those crimes and sins of abuse must be condemned and the care of those who have suffered so much because of their abuse must be, and must ever remain, a fundamental aspect of the Church's mission and responsibility. To make sure this abuse never happens again, the Catholic Church in this State has been instrumental in leading the way towards the protection of all children and young people who are part of their communities with the establishment of a Safeguarding Office, educating the Catholic community on child protection and protective behaviours, and all parishes have their own safeguarding officers working towards this goal.

Looking at the Royal Commission's mandatory reporting recommendations it appears that only one of the five recommendations has been singled out, that being people in religious ministry, and the Government has made that to be regarding the Seal of Confession. This is clearly anti-Catholic and discriminative. The other four areas listed by the Royal Commission being out-of-home care workers; youth justice workers; early childhood workers; registered psychologists and school councillors, who all

have consistently and considerably more day to day contact with children. Once again this is clearly anti-Catholic and highly discriminatory.

From a personal viewpoint my concern if this Recommendation is passed, is my children in the future will be deterred from going to Reconciliation or Confession and thus be denied the support, encouragement and comfort of the Sacrament.

The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia clearly states a separation of Church and State and this is such an important principle in any secular democracy.

I pray and trust the Committee will agree that Recommendation 7.4 is an infringement of Catholics right to exercise their religious practice.

Yours faithfully,

Nicole Sintrikos.