

Submission to the Legislation Committee  
Inquiry into the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019  
Parliament House  
4 Harvest Terrace  
PERTH WA 6005

**Royal Commission into Institutional responses into Child sexual Abuse**  
**Re: Recommendation 7.3 and Recommendation 7.4**

I am greatly troubled by amendment 7.4 in mandating Catholic priests to disclose information received in the confessional. The Catholic Church in Western Australia and my Church has many safe guards in place including a Catholic Professional Standards Office, a Safe Guarding Office and an army of safe guarding officers in our Parishes. Mandatory "Working with Children cards" is required for anyone working or involved in volunteer activities in the Catholic Church.

The Sacrament of Confession is an impact aspect of Catholic Church where many find comfort, forgiveness, healing and peace given freely through this Sacrament of Reconciliation. Information divulge in the confessional does not belong to the priest, rather it is shared with the Lord whom he represents. This Sacrament seals the confession and does not belong to the priest who abides by the seal. The benefits can be difficult for those who do not understand the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Forcing the priest to disclose information would not achieve the intent of the amendment section 124BA of the Bill but undermine victims of abuse who would otherwise come to one person who they believe will respect their confidence, and support them as they confront the terrible experience of abuse in their own lives.

To destroy this right is to undermine people's confidence in the sacrament to such an extent that many people, afraid of being betrayed by the priest, may avoid seeking forgiveness from those sins. The end result will be that abuse which might have been stopped will instead continue.

Yours faithfully

Serina Wong