

I am writing this submission concerning the proposed *Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019* and in particular in relation to its change in the law requiring that ministers of religion reveal information revealed to them in religious confession. My submission is in relation to sacramental confession in the Catholic Church because the Catholic Church is the only religion to my knowledge that requires confession of serious sins in order for the sinner to be forgiven them. Without the forgiveness of serious sins, a Catholic cannot go to Heaven which is the purpose of the Catholic religion.

The following is a simple explanation of the practice of the sacrament of confession or Penance in the Catholic Church taken from the Baltimore Catechism (<https://archive.org/stream/baltimorecatechi14551gut/14551.txt>) used to teach Catholic Children about the sacrament of Penance:

191. Q. What must we do to receive the Sacrament of Penance worthily?
- A. To receive the Sacrament of Penance worthily we must do five things:
1. We must examine our conscience.
 2. We must have sorrow for our sins.
 3. We must make a firm resolution never more to offend God.
 4. We must confess our sins to the priest.
 5. We must accept the penance which the priest gives us.

As can be seen from the above, the purpose of the Sacrament of Penance is to encourage and help Catholics to avoid sin, but if they sin, to acknowledge their sin and make an effort to amend their ways. The Church helps overcome the shame of confessing sins by making the process anonymous, and of utmost importance, guaranteeing that the sins revealed in confession are not revealed to anyone. This guarantee is so important in the Catholic Church that no priest would ever break this Seal of Confession.

Furthermore, when a Catholic confesses his sins, he simply lists the sins he commits and the number of times committed without going into any detail. If a priest were ever to comply with this proposed law and break the seal of confession by revealing what he has heard to the police, his evidence would be useless as it would lack the critical information, namely, the perpetrator of the crime, the victim, the time and the place of the crime.

In summary, this amendment to the law does nothing to protect children from being abused and attacks the Catholic religion at its very root. It undermines the sacrament of confession which is a powerful aid to Catholics to avoid sins and is therefore a powerful aid to the State to reduce crime. If more Australians made use of the sacrament of Confession, there would be fewer serious crimes including sexual abuse.