

Breaking the Seal of Confession – Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019

Does anyone really believe that paedophiles/child sex offenders go to confession? Most paedophiles/child sex offenders think they are doing nothing wrong and do not understand why society deems what they do as wrong?

(Psychology of a Paedophile, Xanthe Mallett, University of New England 2016)

I could not put it more succinctly than Whaled Aly did in 2012. When he wrote his column before the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It looked at the Sacrament of penance among its many points of inquiry. The Royal Commission did many positive things for the Catholic Church in Australia. We are a better Church because of its arduous work. However the Royal Commission seemed not to grasp the nature of the Sacrament of penance when it handed down its final report.

Whaled Aly wrote:

“Here’s the problem: the whole issue of the confessional seal is a monstrous red herring ... Demanding laws that require priests to break the confessional seal *sounds* good. It sounds tough, uncompromising, common-sense. But it’s also the kind of thing you do when you don’t *understand* the problem you are trying to solve. That’s what we are witnessing here: irreligious people trying to address a religious problem with brute secular force. That might make perfect intuitive sense to the staunchly secular mind, but we need more than intuition and declarations of secular supremacy here. What matters is what works. And taking an axe to the confessional box won’t work. It might even make things worse”

Aly wrote this column before the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse looking at the Sacrament of penance among its many points of inquiry.

I would add:

- The Sanctity of the Seal of the Confessional can be and has been tremendously important to victims of abuse.
- The Seal of Confession can and does begin the start of a healing journey for both victims and survivors of sexual abuse and this Act will surely put those basic freedoms under threat.

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