Good day,

From my personal experience as a practising Catholic since birth, the Sacrament of Confession has helped me in my healing from anxiety, depression and past hurt. I regularly go, every week if I can, to seek spiritual support and guidance from the priests with confidence that everything I disclose would remain strictly confidential.

Through the wisdom of priests, they encouraged me to seek professional help with counselling and to do therapy, which is expensive. I would not have started my healing journey without the care and the safe place that the Sacrament of Confession offered without cost. I would not be able to disclose all of my troubles, pains and worries if I didn't feel safe and secure. Without the Seal of Confession, I doubt I will have a safe place where I can get the help that I need to continue with my healing journey.

I would also argue that it is unfair and unjust that only one of the recommended five groups by the Royal Commission is being made mandatory. Furthermore, the faith community was not adequately consulted with this decision, only involving several Aboriginal organisation and 37 submissions. As a member of the rest of the Western Australia population, I feel deeply offended that my opinions and way of life are not respected, this is an injustice to the rest of the people of Western Australia.

Furthermore, the absolution from Sacrament of Confession only works if the confessor is genuinely repenting. If a person guilty of sexual offence does not feel guilty, he/she would not be likely to go to a priest for a confession. "Anecdotally, it seems that most priests have rarely if ever, had the sin and crime of sexual abuse confessed to them. … They are unlikely to confess something about which they do not feel guilty." - Pastoral Letter by Archbishop Timothy Costelloe of Perth, 18 May 2020. Thus, it is unnecessary and illogical to make priests mandatory reporters.

Let me be clear that the Catholic Church does not condone any form of abuse of anyone by anyone. The fact is, the Catholic Church has accepted 98% of the recommendations of the Royal Commissions report on child sexual abuse. The Catholic Archdiocese of Perth has implemented exemplary measures in the safeguarding of children. The success in our safeguarding program has been adopted as a model across Catholic Diocese across Australia and other organisations.

The Church is against child sex abuse and is doing all we can in helping to eradicate this crime. However, the Seal of Confession is a universal church law that the Australian Church does not have the authority to alter. Instead of focusing on things we cannot change, we should work hand in hand and as one community to come together and protect those who are vulnerable in our society. The Government should consult and work collaboratively with the Church to implement and improve practicces that are within the Church's power to implement.

From a very concerned Australian