

20/07/2020

Parliament House
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To whom it may concern,

My name is Daniel Tang, a Catholic from Mater Christi Parish in Yangebup, studying a Certificate IV in Catholic Youth Ministry at Acts 2 COME in Osbourne Park. I am writing today on behalf of friends and family with concerns relating to the Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2019 on the free practice of religion, and the safety of the victims of abuse here in Western Australia.

As you may already know, the Sacrament of Confession allows participants to confess their sins, or wrongdoings, and have an opportunity to be encouraged and change their actions afterwards. Receivers of Confession are not meant to be complacent, but rather propelled to alter their ways, striving to become better.

It is protected under the Seal of Confession, a universal Catholic law indicating priests may not share the contents of anything that was shared under the repercussions of excommunication, which is being removed from the Church. This law is not something Australian Bishops can remove, but only through the Pope's authority. As stated in the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Book 1, p 77, Recommendation 16.26*, the removal of the Seal of Confession required further clarification from the Vatican. I feel that this has not been adequately done yet, and amendments to the law should only occur after this has been explored.

Similar to psychologists' confidentiality law, the Seal of Confession allows a safe place for victims of abuse to experience healing. Many people, even non-Catholics, come to Confession since this is one of the few, easily-accessible areas where people are assured they are aided in their trauma. This link (<https://bit.ly/38LqE8X>) provides videos of testimonies on the power of Confession, and the healing brought from it, showing how the confessional helped victims of abuse be restored back into daily living. Mandatory reporting will discourage people away, especially if they fear their abuse coming to the public, limiting the chance for healing and support in their trauma.

Also, it is a place where perpetrators of abuse can come to be reconciled. Confession demands that previous crimes be brought to justice, and enables the individual to do so. People are unlikely to come to Confession unless they desire truly to repair the damage they have caused. To be forgiven, one must also undertake necessary action to seek the proper authorities. It provides priests an occasion to encourage abusers to do so, and speak to them afterwards if needed.

I, and many members of the Catholic Church desire to protect and safeguard children in order they may grow in a nourishing and sustainable environment for Western Australia. The Archdiocese of Perth, and many other Catholic dioceses, have introduced Safeguarding measures across metropolitan and rural regions to do so. The Church in Australia has applied 79 of the 80 recommendations in the Commission's Final report, demonstrating our commitment to protect the lives of adolescents. Hence, we would love to continue collaboratively with the government instead, and not by limiting the freedom of practicing our religion by introducing this Amendment.

May God's blessing be upon your decision-making, and for the great future of Australia.

Thank you for your time and service to child protection here in Western Australia.

Sincerely,

Daniel Tang

**Petition Against the Children and Community Services 2019 – Bill
No 157**

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