

SUBMISSION TO ENQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY SERVICES AMENDMENT BILL 2019.

My Submission addresses the amendments to the Children and Community Services Act 2004 – specifically:

Section 124BA. Provisions for ministers of religion.

As a practicing Catholic who is close to a number of ordained priests, and my father is himself a deacon, I am deeply concerned that mandatory reporting impacts most on the practice of the Confessional Seal in Catholic and Orthodox Churches.

As a penitent/person is revealing their innermost conscience in the confessional, the priest is an intermediary between the penitent and Jesus/God. Such a matter of conscience is sacrosanct. Hence, not even the pope can change the law of the SEAL OF CONFESSION. It is a matter of conscience, of our innermost being. The priest is bound to seal his lips forever under pain of loss of ministry and total excommunication from the church and grace. His salvation is at stake.

It therefore goes without saying that, particularly for Catholics, and me personally, Confession is not a game. It is an honest attempt to face the truth about myself and do something about it.

I would expect any priest who takes the confessional seriously – and he shouldn't be a priest if he doesn't – he would withhold forgiving the person and therefore bestow the very forgiveness of God himself (as we believe, whether those considering this legislation do or not) until the person makes a firm determination not only to abstain from committing the sin again, but put in place measures to ensure he doesn't do it again.

His/her soul is at stake. Those measures to ensure the person does not commit that sin again would naturally include handing oneself over to the police to let justice take its course, which could even be part of the restorative process for that person's soul, in helping them atone for their sins through suffering in prison, being separated from those they love.

Kind regards