

Renewing the Catholic Church in Australia

Some indexed 'background resources' prepared by Catholics for Renewal in consultation with the Yarra Deanery to assist Individuals, small groups, parishes, schools, and deaneries input their ideas to the
Australian Plenary Council 2020/2021

The resources, together with others from Plenary Council 2020, are designed to support us, the People of God of all ages, as we listen, speak, discern and deliberate under the guidance of the Holy Spirit on our journey together in contemporary times. They invite us to renew and re-energise our Church so that it may be an effective instrument of God's mission and a credible sign pointing to and making present God's Kingdom on earth.

September 2018

Canon 212 from: THE OBLIGATIONS AND RIGHTS OF ALL THE CHRISTIAN FAITHFUL

Can. 212 §1. Conscious of their own responsibility, the Christian faithful are bound to follow with Christian obedience those things which the sacred pastors, inasmuch as they represent Christ, declare as teachers of the faith or establish as rulers of the Church.

§2. The Christian faithful are free to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires.

§3. According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.

INDEX OF RESOURCES

Preface (P.3)

- Who are these resources for? **(P.3)**
- Objective (P.3)
- **How to use** these resources **(P.3)**

Some key Terminology (P.4)

- Synod or Council **(P.4)**
- Plenary Council (and who attends and who votes) **(P.4)**
- Sensus fidei fidelium (and development of Christian doctrine and practice) **(P.5)**
- Governance **(P.5)**
- Synodality **(P.5)**
- Co-responsibility **(p.6)**
- Subsidiarity **(p.6)**
- Clericalism **(p.6)**
- Particular church (diocese/eparchy/ordinariate/vicariate) **(p.7)**
- Parish **(p.7)**
- Holy See or Apostolic See **(p.7)**
- Promulgation **(p.8)**

The 5th Australian Plenary Council 2020/2021 (p.9)

Resources for Reading and Reflection (p.11)

- Sacred Scripture **(p.11)**
- Selected statements of Pope Francis **(p.13)**
- Statements of the Australian Bishops and others **(p.18)**
- Recommendations to the Catholic Church by the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse **(p.23)**
- Final Report of the Royal Commission and Recommendations to all Institutions addressed **(p.25)**
- Lessons from the Royal Commission by former Commissioner Robert Fitzgerald AM **(p. 26)**
- Government response to the RC Recommendations (13 June 2018) **(p.48)**
- Open Letter to the Bishops of Australia from 4,000 Catholics **(p.50)**
- Communiqué from the Australian Coalition for Catholic Church Reform, Canberra **(p.52)**
- Communiqué from Youth Gathering in Rome, May 2018, as input to the Youth Synod **(p.53)**
- Research on Australian teenagers views on religion and spirituality **(p.55)**
- Response of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia to the RC Recommendations, 31 August 2018 **(p.56)**
- Truth Justice and Healing Council Report to the ACBC and CRA **(p.57)**

The need and time for listening, reflecting, discerning and responding (p.58)

Additional Resources

- Discussion document: The Rights and Responsibilities of all Catholics **(p.61)**
- Draft Charter for 'local churches' **(p.62)**
 - Diocesan and Parish Pastoral Councils. Deaneries

“It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it.”

Joseph Joubert, Aphorisms

Preface

The primary resources explaining the 2020/2021 Australian Plenary Council and its preparatory processes are published on the [Plenary Council 2020 website](#). Other material of significant relevance to this Council is available in the public domain. The resources in this document augment and complement those others.

Who are these resources for?

These resources are intended for Catholics of all ages and genders, whether active, occasional or lapsed, wherever they may be, and who wish to contribute to the renewal and re-energizing of the Catholic Church in Australia. They may also be of interest to others.

Objective

The last Australian Plenary Council was eighty years ago, in 1937. Since then very much has changed in our society and Church. The objective of these resources is to assist Catholics of all ages and backgrounds to make their own personal or collective input to the Plenary Council and so help set its agenda. Such inputs can contribute towards renewing and re-energizing the Catholic Church in Australia for this time. A renewed Catholic Church can be a better instrument of God’s mission and a credible sign of the Kingdom of God which Jesus called us to make present in our society and our world.

These resources are intended to help Catholics to respond individually and collectively to these three questions:

- A. What does our Church look like now? (Listening to each other)
- B. What is Christ calling us to make our Church today? (Listening to the Holy Spirit)
- C. What do we, as Church, need to do to move from A to B? (Action Plan)

How to use these resources

The resources ***do not need to be read from beginning to end*** or all at once. ***It is quicker to choose topics from the Index and read selectively.*** They can be used to understand particular issues that are of interest, and assist with discussion of them with others in an open, respectful and non-judgemental way.

They provide a healthy cross-section of reports, news and diverse opinions from responsible sources, and guided by the Holy Spirit should help lead to a personal discernment.

Some key Terminology

Synod or Council: the term ‘synod’ (Greek, *syn* ‘together’ and *hodos* ‘road’ or ‘way’) signifies a ‘coming together’, an ‘assembly’, or a ‘meeting’. It is synonymous with ‘council’ (Latin *concilium*) and in a generic sense the terms are interchangeable. Throughout the Church’s history synods and councils have been the traditional forum for discussion, debate and decision-making. They play a key role in how Catholics understand their faith, live it, and confront the issues of their time in the light of the Gospel.

There have been many different types of ecclesial synods or councils, but those that have endured to the present are four: ‘diocesan’, for single local or particular churches; ‘provincial’, for all the particular churches of an ecclesiastical province; ‘plenary’, for all the particular churches of a nation; and ‘ecumenical’, for all the churches of the known world (*oecumene*). All can make laws for the particular churches which come under their jurisdiction. Following the 2nd Vatican Council another type of synod was established, the Synod of Bishops, an advisory body for the Pope.

Plenary Council: a Plenary Council is the highest form of communion between the various local or particular churches (dioceses) of a nation. It gathers together all the elements of the hierarchically constituted Catholic Church - bishops, priests, deacons, religious and laity – and, with its power of governance and to make laws for all the particular churches, it seeks to address the pastoral needs of the people of God in all the particular churches within its territory. It decides what will foster the growth of faith, what will preserve the good order and moral health of the community, and better coordinate common pastoral action. It can fix what is broken and improve healthy churches to make them more alive and mission. But it must not prejudice the universal law of the Church.

<https://timeofthechurch.com/tag/synodality/>

Not everyone can attend a Plenary Council. Canon Law (c. 443) sets out who must attend and who can be invited, and what sort of vote the different members have. Table 1 illustrates the different groups of church members who will make up the Council membership. Only bishops will have a ‘deliberative’ vote; all other members have a ‘consultative’ vote.

Table 1: Participants and guests at a plenary council

Those who <u>must</u> be called	Voting Rights	Those who <u>can</u> be called	Voting Rights
Diocesan bishops ¹	Deliberative	Titular bishops retired or living in territory	Deliberative
Coadjutor & auxiliary bishops	Deliberative	Priests ⁴	Consultative
Titular bishops with a special function ²	Deliberative	Other members of the Christian Faithful ⁶	Consultative
Vicars general of all particular churches	Consultative		
Episcopal vicars of all particular churches	Consultative		
Major superiors of religious institutes ³	Consultative		
Rectors of Catholic universities ⁴	Consultative		
Deans of theology & canon law faculties	Consultative		
Rectors of major seminaries in territory ⁵	Consultative	Others (as guests, but not participants)	Nil

Notes: 1. Administrators of vacant dioceses are legally equivalent to diocesan bishops. 2. The special function, given by the Apostolic See or Episcopal conference, must be exercised within the territory of the conference. 3. Includes societies of apostolic life of both men and women. The number to be called will be determined by the Episcopal conference and elected by all the major superiors with a presence in the territory. 4. Also includes ecclesiastical universities with a seat in the territory. 5. The number will be determined by the Episcopal conference and elected by all the rectors. There is no mention of other clerics, such as deacons. 6. These may include non-ordained religious and other lay men and women.

Based on present numbers for bishops and the other groups listed, there may be somewhere between 260 and 300 members of the 2020/2021 Plenary Council. Guests can be invited, but will not be able to address the Council or to vote.

Sensus fidei fidelium: a Latin phrase meaning ‘the sense of faith of the faithful’. According to the International Theological Commission, the lay faithful can sense ‘new ways for the journey’ of faith for the whole pilgrim people. Hence, bishops and priests must be close to their people on the journey, and walk with them. Together they will recognise the ‘new ways’ sensed by the people under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The *sensus fidei fidelium* also helps the Church respond to contemporary problems and challenges. It provides an intuition as to the right way forward amid the uncertainties and ambiguities of history. It offers a capacity to listen discerningly to what human culture and the progress of the sciences are saying.

Governance: a term describing how an organization is directed, controlled and held to account. It encompasses leadership, authority, accountability, culture and control of an organisation. Good organisations have good governance with high levels of accountability, transparency and inclusiveness of their members, regardless of gender or other diversity.

Synodality: Pope Francis wants a ‘synodal’ church, where at every level everyone listens to one another, learns from one another and takes responsibility for proclaiming the Gospel. He writes: "The journey of synodality is the journey that God wants from his church in the third millennium" (October 2017). Cf: <http://www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2015/pope-calls-for-synodal-church-where-all-listen-learn-share-mission.cfm> Daniel Ang, Member of the Plenary Council Committee writes: “[W]ith the cultural reform of the Australian Catholic Church on the table, a key task will be to identify those systemic or gravitational forces that move the tides if you will, that lift up or otherwise upend the boats in our exercise of Catholic life and mission. If a culture is constituted by behaviours and relationships, unspoken assumptions, a universe of ideas, a material reality and language, then it will be important to name the underlying issues raised or highlighted by particular concerns (for example, talk of renewing or eschewing parish pastoral councils invites us to confront the current limitations of lay-clergy relationships and of priestly formation for practical leadership). The process of dialogue with all of God’s people will be essential to discerning these fundamental themes and I have great hope that this coming year will present a first and significant step toward the task.” Cf: (October 2017).

A primer for Plenary Council 2020, Daniel Ang, 11 January 2018
<https://timeofthechurch.com/tag/synodality/>

Co-responsibility: a key concept emphasised by the 2nd Vatican Council: “Through Baptism, every Christian receives incomparable dignity and a noble mission: bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world. Because Baptism makes us part of Christ’s body, which is the Church, we never respond to him alone. Just as we form one body in Christ, so our response to God’s call is always lived out in harmony with the other parts of the body of Christ.” It derives from St Paul: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . . and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12.12-13).”

“Co-responsibility concerns the mission of the Church in the world and is not primarily a role a person plays. We are called to take seriously the teachings of the Second Vatican Council on the significance of the laity in the Church and in the world. Co-responsibility demands a change in mindset especially concerning the role of lay people in the Church. They should not be regarded as ‘collaborators’ of the clergy, but rather as people who are really ‘co-responsible’ for the Church’s being and acting” (Pope Benedict XVI addressing Synod of Rome, 2009). Cf

http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/CCCB_Co-responsibility_EN-web.pdf

Subsidiarity: the principle of subsidiarity is an important social teaching of the Catholic Church, formulated by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. It states: “Just as it is wrong to withdraw from the individual and commit to the community at large what private enterprise and endeavour can accomplish, so it is likewise unjust and a gravely harmful disturbance of right order to turn over to a greater society of higher rank functions and services which can be performed by lesser bodies on a lower plane. For a social undertaking of any sort, by its very nature, ought to aid the members of the body social, but never to destroy and absorb them.”

Accordingly, all persons have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. The principle of subsidiarity requires that decisions be made by the people closest and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community. As an example, Caritas Australia works with local communities to support, promote and develop their capacity in decision-making so they can better respond to their own needs. Cf:

<https://www.caritas.org.au/learn/catholic-social-teaching/subsidiarity-and-participation>

Clericalism: Clericalism emanates from an organisational differentiation of priests and religious from lay people, whereby priests have special access to power and powers not available to others, and a special body of knowledge and competencies judged to be of great significance, all of which confers on them status and privileges not accorded to others. Over centuries, clericalism developed defences to protect the sacral image of the church, the benefits of priesthood, and the *bella figura* of the corporate priesthood at all costs .

Pope Francis says of clericalism: “it leads to a homogenization of the laity; treating the laity as an 'emissary' limits the various initiatives and efforts and, I dare say, the boldness necessary to be able to bring the Good News of the Gospel to all areas of social and above all political activity. Clericalism, far from inspiring various contributions and proposals, gradually extinguishes the prophetic flame of which the entire Church is called to bear

witness in the heart of her peoples" (Address to Pontifical Commission for Latin America, 26 April 2016).

Particular church: a particular church, which is usually a diocese or eparchy, is "a portion of the people of God, entrusted to a bishop", as for example the diocese of Melbourne. A particular church is a "community of the Christian faithful in communion of faith and sacraments with their bishop ordained in apostolic succession. In every particular church, Christ is present, through whose power and influence the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church is constituted" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 26). It is in the 'particular churches', and out of them that the one and only Catholic Church exists,

In Australia, there are thirty-five particular churches: 28 territorial dioceses, 5 Eastern Church eparchies and dioceses (Melkite, Chaldean, Maronite, Ukrainian, Syro-Malabar), and 2 ordinariates (Military and Anglican). All are in union with the Bishop of Rome. The territorial dioceses have a defined territory, while the other particular churches serve their members across the nation. The territorial dioceses in Australia are organized into 5 ecclesiastical provinces, generally corresponding to the 5 states of the Commonwealth. Cf: <https://www.catholic.org.au/about-us/the-catholic-church-in-australia>

Parish: the basic unit of church structure which emerged after the collapse of the Roman Empire. A Greek word (*paroikia*) meaning 'sojourning' or 'temporary residence', the parish originally meant the entire body of Christians in a single city under the care of a bishop. In the 4th century, when Christianity in Europe spread from the cities to the countryside, the Christians in important outlying villages were organized into 'parishes' with their own priest, under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the nearest city. Today, in Canon Law, a parish (Latin, *parochus*) refers to a "stable community of the faithful within a particular church, whose pastoral care has been entrusted to a parish priest or pastor under the authority of a diocesan bishop" (C. 515). Parishes usually have territorial boundaries, but personal parishes can be established to cater for Catholics of a particular rite, language or ethnicity (C. 518).

Holy See or Apostolic See: The Holy or Apostolic See refers to the Bishop of Rome as well as to the Secretariat of State, the Council of the Public Affairs of the Church, and the various congregations, tribunals and other institutes which make up the Roman Curia, which functions in the name of the Bishop of Rome and by his authority for the good and service of all the particular churches (c. 360-361).

The Bishop of Rome, usually called 'pope' (meaning 'father') is the head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ, and the pastor of the universal Church on earth. He possesses supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power in the Church and can always exercise it freely (C. 331).

The Holy See serves as the central point of reference for the Catholic Church throughout the world, and the focal point of communion due to its position as the pre-eminent episcopal see of the universal church. Cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_See

Promulgation: under the Church's (canon) law universal ecclesiastical laws take effect three months after they have been promulgated by publication in the official commentary of the Holy See, the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*. Laws of particular churches take effect one month after they have been promulgated in whatever way the legislator sees fit (c. 8).

The Fifth Australian Plenary Council 2020/2021

The Plenary Council to be held in 2020/2021 will be the seventh particular council held in Australia. Previous particular councils were held in 1844 and 1869 (1st and 2nd Australian Provincial Councils when there was only one province for the whole of Australia), 1885, 1895, 1905 and 1937 (see Table 2). The plenary councils of 1885 and 1937 included the particular churches in New Zealand.

Table 2: Particular Councils held in Australia: 1844 - 1937

Particular Synod/Council	Year	Place Held	Bishops attending	Clerics attending	Decrees enacted
1 st Australian Provincial Council, (Follow-up meeting) ¹	1844, (1862)	Sydney, (Melbourne)	3 (Australian only) (4)	33	48 (Supplement)
2 nd Australian Provincial Council	1869	Melbourne	8 (Australian only)	30	38
1 st Australasian Plenary Council	1885	Sydney	18 (Australian & NZ)	52	272
2 nd Australian Plenary Council	1895	Sydney	23 (Australian only)	49	344
3 rd Australian Plenary Council	1905	Sydney	21 (Australian only)	49	371
1 st Melbourne Provincial Synod	1907	Melbourne	4 (Victorian only)	18	112
4 th Australasian Plenary Council	1937	Sydney	33 (Australian & NZ)	59	685

Note: 1. A 2nd Provincial Council was planned for 1862, but in the absence of the bishops of Adelaide and Perth, the meeting of the bishops of Hobart, Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney was not considered a canonical provincial synod. The decrees and regulations adopted at the meeting and approved by the Holy See were published only as a Supplement to the decrees of the 1st Provincial Council of 1844.

Prior to the 2nd Vatican Council (1962-65) only male clerics were able to participate in particular councils. Since 1983, religious and non-religious lay men and women can be members of a particular council. It is anticipated that around 20 per cent of the members of the 2020/2021 Plenary Council will be non-religious lay men and women.

“We are blessed with great diversity in our Catholic Church in Australia – many perspectives, experiences and encounters of faith, walks of life and vision for Church. We are called to explore what it is that we are called to, how we are called to be the presence of Jesus in Australia for today, and for generations to come. United by faith, we shall.”

For a plenary council there are three stages: preparatory, celebration, and implementation. Since 2016, when the Council was announced, and until October 2020 the Council is in the preparatory stage. In the 3-year timeline set out on the Plenary Council website, the several phases of the preparatory stage are:

1. May-November 2018 = “Consultation, Data Collection & Analysis, Survey, Listening Sessions”;
2. January-March 2019 = “Consultation, Survey, Listening Sessions”;
3. April-May 2019 = “Consolidate + Review”;

4. June-November 2019 = “Discernment, Face-to-Face Encounters, Immersion, Retreats”;
5. January-April 2020 = “Drafting Council Program + Documents”
6. June – September 2020 = “Feedback & Sharing: This is what has been heard, this is the next steps”

The principal exercises of the preparatory stage are consultation, data collection, data analysis, a survey, and listening sessions.

<http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/ThreeYearTimeline.pdf>

This stage was launched on 20 May 2018..

The celebration stage of the Plenary Council will commence with the FIRST SESSSION of the Council to be held in Adelaide from 11-17 October 2020. A SECOND SESSION of the Council will be held in the first half of 2021 at a venue still to be determined, but a major city on the east coast.

Resources for reading and reflecting:

Sacred Scripture: first and foremost we are called to listen to the Holy Spirit as individuals and as community. Sacred Scripture contains the essence of Christ's teachings and the example of his life, which prioritize Love, Justice, Compassion and Mercy. Christ's teachings are not simply black and white rules, but invitations to personal discovery through prayer, reading, reflection, sharing and discerning. They include the following:

- The Holy Spirit is love
- Faith expresses itself through love and listening to the Spirit
- Loving, listening to and caring for each other is loving the Spirit
- We are called to love and support the disadvantaged, needy, aged or lonely
- We are called specifically to protect all children and innocents
- Those who believe in and choose to follow the Spirit are People of God
- The Church collectively comprises all 'People of God'
- All people and genders are equal in the eyes of God
- Where people are gathered in faith the Holy Spirit guides
- We are called to share what we have, and our talents, with each other
- We are called to respect life
- We are called to care for nature, the environment and living creatures
- We are called to respect faith choices made in conscience
- We are called not to judge others
- We are called to express our shared faith through example to others

Archbishop Peter Comensoli "What it means to proclaim Jesus Christ"

At his Installation as the 9th Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Melbourne on 1 August 2018 Archbishop Peter Comensoli said:

"The Church we belong to is a 'she', not an 'it'. a living person not a lifeless thing. We are the Pilgrim People of God, called to be missionary disciples. We are the Body of Christ, where the weakest and most vulnerable have the places of honour. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit, the stewards of God's Grace. Our common task then, is a missionary one. Having been anointed and sent, all of us, our task is to go with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Into our families, our local neighbourhoods, and into the wider society. How do we do this? Well a good start might be to get the soil of our culture under our finger nails, as we plant seeds of grace and peace. Pray for one another, be friends with each other, stand with the wounded and innocents, sit with the broken and humble, forgive, and think forgiveness. Be married for the Gospel Joy, not just your footy team. Make Mercy our calling card, and healing our gift. Be open, warm, and honest in the way we attend to others. Beloved of Melbourne nurture the Faith that trusts, foster the hurt that encourages, and offer the love that is tender. This is what it means to proclaim Jesus Christ."

David Haas has expressed well the essence of Christ's message in his hymn,

"We are Called"

Come! live in the light!
Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom,
to live in the freedom of the city of God!

We are called to act with justice.
We are called to love tenderly.
We are called to serve one another, to walk humbly with God.

Come! Open your heart!
Show your mercy to all those in fear!
We are called to be hope for the hopeless,
so all hatred and blindness will be no more!

Selected statements of Pope Francis

“The Church must go out into the streets”

“I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: “Give them something to eat” (Mk 6:37).” (49)

Evangelii Gaudium – “The Joy of the Gospel” November 2013, n. 49)

The Church must expand role of women, but “the reservation of the priesthood to males...is not a question open to discussion”

“The Church acknowledges the indispensable contribution which women make to society through the sensitivity, intuition and other distinctive skill sets which they, more than men, tend to possess. I think, for example, of the special concern which women show to others, which finds a particular, even if not exclusive, expression in motherhood. I readily acknowledge that many women share pastoral responsibilities with priests, helping to guide people, families and groups and offering new contributions to theological reflection. But we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church. Because “the feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society, the presence of women must also be guaranteed in the workplace” and in the various other settings where important decisions are made, both in the Church and in social structures. Demands that the legitimate rights of women be respected, based on the firm conviction that men and women are equal in dignity, present the Church with profound and challenging questions which cannot be lightly evaded. The reservation of the priesthood to males, as a sign of Christ the Spouse who gives himself in the Eucharist, is not a question open to discussion, but it can prove especially divisive if sacramental power is too closely identified with power in general. It must be remembered that when we speak of sacramental power “we are in the realm of function, not that of dignity or holiness”. The ministerial priesthood is one means employed by Jesus for the service of his people, yet our great dignity derives from baptism, which is accessible to all.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 103-104)

Humble priests

“Do not feel different from your peers,” or that you are better than other people, he said. “If tomorrow you will be priests who live in the midst of the holy people of God, begin today to be young people who know how to be with everyone, who can learn something from every person you meet, with humility and intelligence.”

(Catholic News Agency, Vatican City, Dec 13, 2016 (CNA/EWTN News))

Letter to The People of God, responding to Child Sexual Abuse, 20 August 2018

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it” (1 Cor 12:26). These words of Saint Paul forcefully echo in my heart as I acknowledge once more the suffering endured by many minors due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons. Crimes that inflict deep wounds of pain and powerlessness, primarily among the victims, but also in their family members and in the larger community of believers and nonbelievers alike. Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated. The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults.

1. ... If one member suffers...

In recent days, a report was made public which detailed the experiences of at least a thousand survivors, victims of sexual abuse, the abuse of power and of conscience at the hands of priests over a period of approximately seventy years. Even though it can be said that most of these cases belong to the past, nonetheless as time goes on we have come to know the pain of many of the victims. We have realized that these wounds never disappear and that they require us forcefully to condemn these atrocities and join forces in uprooting this culture of death; these wounds never go away. The heart-wrenching pain of these victims, which cries out to heaven, was long ignored, kept quiet or silenced. But their outcry was more powerful than all the measures meant to silence it, or sought even to resolve it by decisions that increased its gravity by falling into complicity. The Lord heard that cry and once again showed us on which side he stands. Mary’s song is not mistaken and continues quietly to echo throughout history. For the Lord remembers the promise he made to our fathers: “he has scattered the proud in their conceit; he has cast down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty” (Lk 1:51-53). We feel shame when we realize that our style of life has denied, and continues to deny, the words we recite.

With shame and repentance, we acknowledge as an ecclesial community that we were not where we should have been, that we did not act in a timely manner, realizing the magnitude and the gravity of the damage done to so many lives. We showed no care for the little ones; we abandoned them. I make my own the words of the then Cardinal Ratzinger when, during the Way of the Cross composed for Good Friday 2005, he identified with the cry of pain of so many victims and exclaimed: “How much filth there is in the Church, and even among those who, in the priesthood, ought to belong entirely to [Christ]! How much pride, how much self-complacency! Christ’s betrayal by his disciples, their unworthy reception of his body and blood, is certainly the greatest suffering endured by the Redeemer; it pierces his

heart. We can only call to him from the depths of our hearts: Kyrie eleison – Lord, save us! (cf. Mt 8:25)” (Ninth Station).

2. ... all suffer together with it

The extent and the gravity of all that has happened requires coming to grips with this reality in a comprehensive and communal way. While it is important and necessary on every journey of conversion to acknowledge the truth of what has happened, in itself this is not enough. Today we are challenged as the People of God to take on the pain of our brothers and sisters wounded in their flesh and in their spirit. If, in the past, the response was one of omission, today we want solidarity, in the deepest and most challenging sense, to become our way of forging present and future history. And this in an environment where conflicts, tensions and above all the victims of every type of abuse can encounter an outstretched hand to protect them and rescue them from their pain (cf. *Evangeli Gaudium*, 228). Such solidarity demands that we in turn condemn whatever endangers the integrity of any person. A solidarity that summons us to fight all forms of corruption, especially spiritual corruption. The latter is “a comfortable and self-satisfied form of blindness. Everything then appears acceptable: deception, slander, egotism and other subtle forms of self-centeredness, for ‘even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light’ (2 Cor 11:14)” (*Gaudete et Exultate*, 165). Saint Paul’s exhortation to suffer with those who suffer is the best antidote against all our attempts to repeat the words of Cain: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen 4:9).

I am conscious of the effort and work being carried out in various parts of the world to come up with the necessary means to ensure the safety and protection of the integrity of children and of vulnerable adults, as well as implementing zero tolerance and ways of making all those who perpetrate or cover up these crimes accountable. We have delayed in applying these actions and sanctions that are so necessary, yet I am confident that they will help to guarantee a greater culture of care in the present and future.

Together with those efforts, every one of the baptized should feel involved in the ecclesial and social change that we so greatly need. This change calls for a personal and communal conversion that makes us see things as the Lord does. For as Saint John Paul II liked to say: “If we have truly started out anew from the contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the faces of those with whom he wished to be identified” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 49). To see things as the Lord does, to be where the Lord wants us to be, to experience a conversion of heart in his presence. To do so, prayer and penance will help. I invite the entire holy faithful People of God to a penitential exercise of prayer and fasting, following the Lord’s command.[1] This can awaken our conscience and arouse our solidarity and commitment to a culture of care that says “never again” to every form of abuse.

It is impossible to think of a conversion of our activity as a Church that does not include the active participation of all the members of God’s People. Indeed, whenever we have tried to

replace, or silence, or ignore, or reduce the People of God to small elites, we end up creating communities, projects, theological approaches, spiritualities and structures without roots, without memory, without faces, without bodies and ultimately, without lives.[2] This is clearly seen in a peculiar way of understanding the Church's authority, one common in many communities where sexual abuse and the abuse of power and conscience have occurred. Such is the case with clericalism, an approach that "not only nullifies the character of Christians, but also tends to diminish and undervalue the baptismal grace that the Holy Spirit has placed in the heart of our people".[3] Clericalism, whether fostered by priests themselves or by lay persons, leads to an excision in the ecclesial body that supports and helps to perpetuate many of the evils that we are condemning today. To say "no" to abuse is to say an emphatic "no" to all forms of clericalism.

It is always helpful to remember that "in salvation history, the Lord saved one people. We are never completely ourselves unless we belong to a people. That is why no one is saved alone, as an isolated individual. Rather, God draws us to himself, taking into account the complex fabric of interpersonal relationships present in the human community. God wanted to enter into the life and history of a people" (Gaudete et Exsultate, 6). Consequently, the only way that we have to respond to this evil that has darkened so many lives is to experience it as a task regarding all of us as the People of God. This awareness of being part of a people and a shared history will enable us to acknowledge our past sins and mistakes with a penitential openness that can allow us to be renewed from within. Without the active participation of all the Church's members, everything being done to uproot the culture of abuse in our communities will not be successful in generating the necessary dynamics for sound and realistic change. The penitential dimension of fasting and prayer will help us as God's People to come before the Lord and our wounded brothers and sisters as sinners imploring forgiveness and the grace of shame and conversion. In this way, we will come up with actions that can generate resources attuned to the Gospel. For "whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world" (Evangelii Gaudium, 11).

It is essential that we, as a Church, be able to acknowledge and condemn, with sorrow and shame, the atrocities perpetrated by consecrated persons, clerics, and all those entrusted with the mission of watching over and caring for those most vulnerable. Let us beg forgiveness for our own sins and the sins of others. An awareness of sin helps us to acknowledge the errors, the crimes and the wounds caused in the past and allows us, in the present, to be more open and committed along a journey of renewed conversion.

Likewise, penance and prayer will help us to open our eyes and our hearts to other people's sufferings and to overcome the thirst for power and possessions that are so often the root of those evils. May fasting and prayer open our ears to the hushed pain felt by children, young people and the disabled. A fasting that can make us hunger and thirst for justice and

impel us to walk in the truth, supporting all the judicial measures that may be necessary. A fasting that shakes us up and leads us to be committed in truth and charity with all men and women of good will, and with society in general, to combatting all forms of the abuse of power, sexual abuse and the abuse of conscience.

In this way, we can show clearly our calling to be “a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race” (Lumen Gentium, 1).

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it”, said Saint Paul. By an attitude of prayer and penance, we will become attuned as individuals and as a community to this exhortation, so that we may grow in the gift of compassion, in justice, prevention and reparation. Mary chose to stand at the foot of her Son’s cross. She did so unhesitatingly, standing firmly by Jesus’ side. In this way, she reveals the way she lived her entire life. When we experience the desolation caused by these ecclesial wounds, we will do well, with Mary, “to insist more upon prayer”, seeking to grow all the more in love and fidelity to the Church (SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *Spiritual Exercises*, 319). She, the first of the disciples, teaches all of us as disciples how we are to halt before the sufferings of the innocent, without excuses or cowardice. To look to Mary is to discover the model of a true follower of Christ.

May the Holy Spirit grant us the grace of conversion and the interior anointing needed to express before these crimes of abuse our compunction and our resolve courageously to combat them.

Vatican City, 20 August 2018

(http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20180820_lettera-popolo-didio.html)

Being Gay

"If someone is gay and searches for the Lord and has good will who am I to judge?" (28 July 2013, Press Conference, World Youth Day, Brazil)

Statements and comments from Australian Bishops and others

The ACBC (13 June 2018), individual Bishops and other leaders in the Vhurch community

Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Archbishop of Brisbane, President ACBC

“The sexual abuse of the young in Catholic institutions and its handling by Church leaders has been a colossal failure; and I can only express an acute sense of shame and apologise profoundly to all who have suffered. What has happened has done incalculable damage to those who were abused. It’s also shaken the Catholic Church in this country to the core. Everything possible must be done to heal the wound, to right the wrong and to ensure that the future is very different from the past. Now that the Royal Commission is over, it can’t just be back to business as usual.” (15 December 2017)

Francis O’ Sullivan, CEO of the ACBC’s Truth Justice and Healing Council:

"For my mind the clearest message is this. If people of good will, the good priests, the willing religious, the enlightened leaders, but more importantly people like you – the engaged and informed Catholics – don’t continue to push for change then, as sure as night follows day, the reactionaries will overcome and nothing will change.

If we do not continue to push – and push hard – the impetus for change will fade, inertia will set in, reformists will be shunned, and the victims of what has been the greatest betrayal in the Catholic Church in Australia will remain mired in hopelessness, despair and anger. This is a very dangerous time for the Catholic Church in Australia. If the Church in Australia doesn’t see continuous, concerted change from our leaders driven and backed by an active and demanding Catholic Community, then our Church as a religion will become a marginalized rump, stripped of credibility and relevance, left to preach to an ever aging congregation with eyes on an ever dimming here after.”

Francis O’Sullivan:

“This Royal Commission confirms previous reports that cite the lack of accountability and transparency within the church’s culture, the propensity for clericalism to create a self-protective caste where power and privilege are the operating principles for addressing conflict and personal promotion, and, finally, where the image of the institution meant more than the welfare of children.

In a sense there is nothing new here.

The current challenge is the struggle to resist the “business as usual” mindset that pervades the attitudes of those who seek to relegate this scandal to history. They take comfort in the church’s statistics that currently indicate that the incidence of clerical abuse of children has all but diminished from its peak in the 1960s to only a few recorded cases in the 2000s.” ((29 December 2017)

Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen, Bishop of Parramatta, NSW:

"I see the clericalism as a by-product of a certain model of Church informed or underpinned or sustained by a certain theology. I mean, it's no secret that we have been operating, at least under the two previous pontificates, from what I'd describe as a perfect society model where there is a neat, almost divinely inspired, pecking order, and that pecking order is heavily tilted towards the ordained. So you have the pope, the cardinals, the bishops, religious, consecrated men and women, and the laity right at the bottom of the pyramid. I think we need to dismantle that model of Church.

If I could use the biblical image of wineskins, it's old wineskins that are no longer relevant, no longer able to contain the new wine, if you like. I think we really need to examine seriously that kind of model of Church where it promotes the superiority of the ordained and it facilitates that power imbalance between the ordained and the non-ordained, which in turn facilitates that attitude of clericalism, if you like. I come from a very high power distance index culture. By that, I mean a culture where the lower-ranked individuals not only accept but expect that power is distributed unequally among its citizens. Even to this day, to this very day, a parish priest can unilaterally excommunicate his parishioners, even though he mightn't have the canonical power to do so. In practice, that's what is happening. I shudder to think of the risk that children and vulnerable adults, vulnerable individuals, are exposed to in that kind of environment. It's still the experience in those countries. I think there's a link between compulsory or mandatory celibacy and clericalism in that compulsory celibacy is an act of setting apart the ordained. It's creating that power distance between the ordained and the non-ordained. Insofar as it is an instrument of subjugation or subservience, if you like, of the laity, it is wrong and it has to be reviewed. It has to be looked at, I think, very seriously.

Again, in my culture, my home culture, the parishioners, the faithful, address the priest as "father", as they do across the world, except that the form of address on the part of the non-ordained is a bit more drastic, in that if you, who are a non-ordained person, address me as a priest, you have to use a certain personal form of address that identifies you as subservient, as a lower-ranking person, like a daughter. So I would say that in order to dismantle clericalism, we need to look at also the issue of examination and maybe abolition of those honorific titles, privileges and institutional dynamics, if you like, that breed clerical superiority and elitism.

People still address me, especially the faithful Catholics, as "Your Lordship", and I sort of cringe at that. Or when they come to see me, or they come to meet me, they kiss my ring. I'm not very comfortable with those sorts of practices because they encourage a certain infantilisation of the laity and that creation of the power distance between the ordained and the non-ordained, and I think we have to look at these things seriously. People still address me, especially the faithful Catholics, as "Your Lordship", and I sort of cringe at that. Or when they come to see me, or they come to meet me, they kiss my ring. I'm not very comfortable with those sorts of practices because they encourage a certain infantilisation of the laity and that creation of the power distance between the ordained and the non-ordained, and I think we have to look at these things seriously. For my part, I know - or I feel that, especially as a bishop, I need to lead the way in promoting the Church as a *communio*, as a discipleship of

equals, that emphasises relationships rather than power. I feel that's where we should be headed to." (Testimony to the Royal Commission, 21 February 2017)

Andrew Hamilton SJ, Editor of Eureka Street:

"The most thought provoking testimony given was that by Vincent Long, Bishop of Parramatta. It was notable for its directness, honesty and the awareness it displayed of the importance of church culture. Bishop Long grew up in the Vietnamese Catholic Church and was afterwards chosen to lead the Australian Church. In his responses he focused particularly on clericalism and its role in giving license and cover to clerical abuse.

He worked out of a fairly simple distinction between two images of the church. One sees the church as a kingdom in which the subordination of the people to the king and to the hierarchical grades of officials is fixed and sacralised. The other is of the church as community with an ordered network of relationships that enable the nourishing of people by the spreading of the Gospel." (Eureka Street, 7 January 2018)

Sr Monica Cavanagh, President of Catholic Religious Australia:

"How does Pope Francis seek the wisdom of women? Well it's a promise I think. I know that he has a desire to appoint women to some key areas of responsibility. He has certainly appointed women to the pontifical commission for the protection of minors and I'm hoping he will continue to do so as time goes on. He certainly has made some positive statements around his desire for the role of women to increase in leadership." (XT3.com, 10 June 2014)

Margaret O'Connor

It was women in their delegations as Prime Minister and Governor General who formally established the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in early 2013. And during the hearings themselves, Gail Furness, Senior Counsel Assisting the Royal Commission extracted evidence from and cross-examined senior clergy. Individuals such as Leonie Sheedy from Care Leavers' Australasia Network (CLAN) provided a direct connection to people on the ground who survived sexual abuse in care organisations and encouraged them to tell their stories to the Commissioners. More broadly but still on the theme of Catholic Church institutional reform, Kathleen McCormack recently served on the Vatican Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors and testified to the difficulties created by the commission's underfunding, infrequent meetings and cultural barriers." (Pearls and Irritations, 26 April 2018)

Fr. Noel Connolly SSC , member of the Plenary Council Facilitation Team:

During the last Synod of Bishops in Rome, Pope Francis gave an extraordinary speech to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the first Synod of Bishops [17th October 2016] in which he explained his vision for a synodal church, "A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening 'is more than simply hearing'," "It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of truth' (*Jn 14:17*), in order to know what he 'says to the Churches' (*Rev 2:7*)".

“The Synod of Bishops is the point of convergence of this listening process conducted at every level of the Church’s life,” the pope continued. But the hierarchy’s authority is best interpreted within this Synodality of “journeying together”. Pope Francis often compares the church to an inverted pyramid where the top is located beneath the base and listens to, learns from and serves the base.

We are not used to that kind of authority nor to that level of responsibility. It will demand a much more adult approach to our faith and courage and wisdom to discuss and decide the important issues which up till now Rome has decided for us. Even till now many Episcopal Conferences have not taken up the freedom that the present Pope seems to be challenging them to. Our Plenary Council will be one of the first national “synods” in the modern Church.

We will need structures to be able to consult widely. Right now, they do not exist. Many parishes still do not have Parish Councils and most dioceses have not had Diocesan Synods. Without clear and enabling structures, consultations will be shallow and superficial. They will be dominated by the “right people”, the compulsively articulate or the angry and the voices of the minorities and the people on the peripheries will not be heard. The real questions and true wisdom may not emerge.

We will also have to develop the techniques and spirituality for discernment. Discernment is a skill which takes time and practice to develop. It is not something learnt from a book. People also need the experience of speaking up and being heard to grow in the confidence and ability to contribute and learn constructively.

All this amounts to a difficult but exciting challenge. No longer can one group be set apart and take all the responsibility. That is the clear lesson of the Royal Commission. We are going to need more lay and female involvement in the governance of the church in Australia on a national, diocesan and parish level. Women and lay people have insights, sensitivities, imagination and skills that are powerful, complementary and cannot be done without. It is the future and it is not only theologically desirable, psychologically necessary and administratively indispensable it is also enjoyable and life-giving for all of us. .” (‘Preparing to be a Synodal Church in Australia’, 18 July 2017)

Kristina Keneally, Senator in the Australian Parliament and former Premier of NSW: 17
 “I know the church hierarchy is made up of human beings, and human beings are not perfect. But these particular human beings make special claims to holiness and grace, and yet they spawn and support an institution that grotesquely violates children.

Jesus said that children are special, that they are holy. The royal commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse says that there have been nearly 4,500 reported cases of alleged abuse of children in Catholic institutions over the past 35 years. No doubt many more remain unreported.

I know I am not alone among Australian Catholics in finding it near impossible to reconcile these despicable statistics with the church’s claim to be a special mediator of God’s grace

and a place that I should attend in order to understand more deeply God's love. ." (*The Guardian*, 12 April 2017)

Fr Frank Brennan SJ, Human Rights lawyer and academic:

"We Catholics know that we need to step tentatively and a little more humbly in the public square in light of the revelations at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. We still do not have credible compelling explanations for the disproportionate level of complaints leveled at our Church. The Royal Commission has received 16,361 allegations in relation to 3,566 institutions. Of the 11,988 allegations covered by the terms of reference, 7,049 allegations relate to faith based institutions while only 3,612 relate to government institutions. Of those 11,988 allegations, 4,418 of them relate to Catholic Church institutions, while only 871 relate to Anglican institutions, and 411 to Uniting Church institutions. These are days of shame for the Catholic Church in Australia. But yes, we do have a spring in our step and we are fortified by a pope who is so at home in his own skin and so at ease in the public square calling all persons to constitute a better world.

Despite having a fine pope, things are not easy. They are not easy for me as a Catholic priest in the public square. They are not easy for those of you living your Christian vocation in the world and turning up to Church each week, praying in the pews. They remain wretched for many victims who doubt that the Church can again be trusted. I thank you for your perseverance and pray that together we can make a better fist of holding out to the world the hands of Christ. Our task is to be the face of Christ in the world today."

"I am more and more convinced that Francis is not afraid to throw open the windows of the Church. He has the humility to accept that he does not hold a candle to Benedict as a theologian, nor to John Paul. But he knows the game is up with Roman authorities spouting dogma without being attentive to the lived experience of people and to the pastoral experience of those priests who carry with them 'the smell of the sheep'. He is committed to collegiality. He is not going to take a synod where it does not want to go; and he is not going to represent the findings of a synod as being anything other than the diversity of viewpoints expressed and hopefully the emerging consensus under the action of the Spirit." ." ('Why Pope Francis is not an anti capitalist greenie', Eureka Street, 22 October 2015)

Recommendation to the Catholic Church by the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse

Recommendation 16.6 The bishop of each Catholic Church diocese in Australia should ensure that parish priests are not the employers of principals and teachers in Catholic schools.

Recommendation 16.7 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should conduct a national review of the governance and management structures of dioceses and parishes, including in relation to issues of transparency, accountability, consultation and the participation of lay men and women. This review should draw from the approaches to governance of Catholic health, community services and education agencies.

Recommendation 16.8 In the interests of child safety and improved institutional responses to child sexual abuse, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should request the Holy See to: a. publish criteria for the selection of bishops, including relating to the promotion of child safety b. establish a transparent process for appointing bishops which includes the direct participation of lay people.

Recommendation 16.9 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should request the Holy See to amend the 1983 Code of Canon Law to create a new canon or series of canons specifically relating to child sexual abuse, as follows: a. All delicts relating to child sexual abuse should be articulated as canonical crimes against the child, not as moral failings or as breaches of the 'special obligation' of clerics and religious to observe celibacy. b. All delicts relating to child sexual abuse should apply to any person holding a 'dignity, office or responsibility in the Church' regardless of whether they are ordained or not ordained. c. In relation to the acquisition, possession, or distribution of pornographic images, the delict (currently contained in Article 6 §2 1° of the revised 2010 norms attached to the motu proprio *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*) should be amended to refer to minors under the age of 18, not minors under the age of 14.

Recommendation 16.10 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should request the Holy See to amend canon law so that the pontifical secret does not apply to any aspect of allegations or canonical disciplinary processes relating to child sexual abuse.

Recommendation 16.11 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should request the Holy See to amend canon law to ensure that the 'pastoral approach' is not an essential precondition to the commencement of canonical action relating to child sexual abuse.

Recommendation 16.12 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should request the Holy See to amend canon law to remove the time limit (prescription) for commencement of canonical actions relating to child sexual abuse. This amendment should apply retrospectively.

Recommendation 16.13 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should request the Holy See to amend the ‘imputability’ test in canon law so that a diagnosis of paedophilia is not relevant to the prosecution of or penalty for a canonical offence relating to child sexual abuse.

Recommendation 16.14 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should request the Holy See to amend canon law to give effect to Recommendations 16.55 and 16.56.

Recommendation 16.15 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia, in consultation with the Holy See, should consider establishing an Australian tribunal for trying canonical disciplinary cases against clergy, whose decisions could be appealed to the Apostolic Signatura in the usual way.

Recommendation 16.16 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should request the Holy See to introduce measures to ensure that Vatican Congregations and canonical appeal courts always publish decisions in disciplinary matters relating to child sexual abuse, and provide written reasons for their decisions. Publication should occur in a timely manner. In some cases it may be appropriate to suppress information that might lead to the identification of a victim.

Recommendation 16.17 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should request the Holy See to amend canon law to remove the requirement to destroy documents relating to canonical criminal cases in matters of morals, where the accused cleric has died or ten years have elapsed from the condemnatory sentence. In order to allow for delayed disclosure of abuse by victims and to take account of the limitation periods for civil actions for child sexual abuse, the minimum requirement for retention of records in the secret archives should be at least 45 years.

Recommendation 16.18 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should request the Holy See to consider introducing voluntary celibacy for diocesan clergy.

Recommendation 16.19 All Catholic religious institutes in Australia, in consultation with their international leadership and the Holy See as required, should implement measures to address the risks of harm to children and the potential psychological and sexual dysfunction associated with a celibate rule of religious life. This should include consideration of whether and how existing models of religious life could be modified to facilitate alternative forms of association, shorter terms of celibate commitment, and/or voluntary celibacy (where that is consistent with the form of association that has been chosen).

Recommendation 16.20 In order to promote healthy lives for those who choose to be celibate, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and all Catholic religious institutes in Australia should further develop, regularly evaluate and continually improve, their processes for selecting, screening and training of candidates for the clergy and religious life, and their processes of ongoing formation, support and supervision of clergy and religious.

Recommendation 16.21 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia should establish a national protocol for screening candidates before and during seminary or religious formation, as well as before ordination or the profession of religious vows.

Recommendation 16.22 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia should establish a mechanism to ensure that diocesan bishops and religious superiors draw upon broad-ranging professional advice in their decision-making, including from staff from seminaries or houses of formation, psychologists, senior clergy and religious, and lay people, in relation to the admission of individuals to: a. seminaries and houses of religious formation b. ordination and/or profession of vows.

Recommendation 16.23 In relation to guideline documents for the formation of priests and religious: a. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should review and revise the *Ratio nationalis institutionis sacerdotalis: Programme for priestly formation* (current version December 2015), and all other guideline documents relating to the formation of priests, permanent deacons, and those in pastoral ministry, to explicitly address the issue of child sexual abuse by clergy and best practice in relation to its prevention.

b. All Catholic religious institutes in Australia should review and revise their particular norms and guideline documents relating to the formation of priests, religious brothers, and religious sisters, to explicitly address the issue of child sexual abuse and best practice in relation to its prevention.

Recommendation 16.24 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia should conduct a national review of current models of initial formation to ensure that they promote pastoral effectiveness, (including in relation to child safety and pastoral responses to victims and survivors) and protect against the development of clericalist attitudes.

Recommendation 16.25 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia should develop and each diocese and religious institute should implement mandatory national standards to ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry (bishops, provincials, clergy, religious, and lay personnel): a. undertake mandatory, regular professional development, compulsory components being professional responsibility and boundaries, ethics in ministry, and child safety b. undertake mandatory professional/pastoral supervision c. undergo regular performance appraisals.

Recommendation 16.26 The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference should consult with the Holy See, and make public any advice received, in order to clarify whether: a. information received from a child during the sacrament of reconciliation that they have been sexually abused is covered by the seal of confession b. if a person confesses during the sacrament of reconciliation to perpetrating child sexual abuse, absolution can and should be withheld until they report themselves to civil authorities. [FULL RC REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS](#)

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Lessons and learnings for the People of God

Robert Fitzgerald AM, Commissioner of the Royal Commission into the Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse:

“When the Royal Commission commenced its work more than five years ago it had three tasks: to bear witness to what had happened, to provide just responses to those abused and to recommend ways to create child safe institutions.

Fundamental to our work was to hear from those directly affected – the victims and survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Nearly 17,000 came forward. We gave voice to their stories through private sessions, case studies, written accounts, forums and community engagement initiatives. We published 4,000 de-identified narratives. And a commemorative book in the National Library contains over a thousand messages from survivors to the Australian community. They have been heard.

For you, as both leaders and members of faith based communities your response to what has been heard depends on whose voice you will listen to. As people of God, whose voices will resonate in both your head and your heart?

Will you listen to the voices of those that have spoken through the Commission and their calls for acknowledgement, redress, reform and healing? Or will you listen to the strident voices, within some parts of church and society, who seek to minimise the extent of the abuse claiming it was only a few rotten apples rather than the culture and practices of the church? They cast it as an historical problem which has passed, shift blame to the societal contexts rather than institutional failings and seek to restore the good order of the past, unreformed and unrepentant. They deny the truth of what has been exposed and the imperatives for reform.

Your response rests as much in the Gospel as it does in the recommendations of the Royal Commission. For in the Gospel it was the voice of the oppressed and marginalised that Christ used to declare a new order. It was through his engagement with the poor Christ proclaimed the truth and the light. He admonished those who sought to maintain the status quo and those who sought to maintain the privileges of power, abuse and influence.

Whose voice will you listen to in responding to the challenges of what has been revealed?

Fact from Fiction

The Commission’s work has covered so much territory, so many institutions and so many issues that this paper can only touch on a few issues. But importantly the Commission has debunked some long held and often claimed myths or inaccuracies in relation to the Church and abuse in Australia. It has sought to put the record straight to the extent possible. For me, some of those keys areas worth mentioning up front are:

- Child sexual abuse has been present within the Catholic Church for much of its history and is not a phenomenon only of the last century or more specifically the more permissive 1970s and 80s. Despite many positive changes in the church's understandings, policies and practices it remains a contemporary issue and significant present day risks exist.
- Child sexual abuse in religious institutions and the Catholic Church was more extensive than admitted or expected with some specific institutions having very high levels of reported allegations of abuse.
- Abuse was not just an issue of bad conduct by a few 'rotten apples', rather there were systemic issues that enabled abuse to occur and hindered effective, just and compassionate responses especially prior to the mid-1990s.
- Many contributing factors collectively gave rise to personal and institutional failures including unhealthy clericalism, mandatory celibacy and inadequate selection, training and formation of religious and clergy. The absence of professional development and ongoing pastoral supervision exacerbated such weaknesses. And homosexuality was not generally a contributing factor to the sexual abuse of children.
- Poor governance, inadequate leadership, and an unhealthy culture that preferenced secrecy and the Church's own interests contributed to the collective failure of the Catholic Church. The interests of children, and then later adult survivors, were not paramount or even adequately addressed until at least the mid 1990's.
- Many of the improvements in good governance and child safe practices in the Church's human service ministries appear not to have been adequately adopted in the operation of parishes and dioceses, at least until more recently.
- The Catholic Church in Australia did eventually take decisive action to address the complaints and needs of survivors especially with the adoption of Towards Healing (and many claims were satisfactorily dealt with), but inconsistent practices and implementation, and aggressive defences to civil claims lead to much criticism, injustice and unnecessary pain to many.

The story of Religious Institutions through the lens of the Royal Commission

More than 4,500 survivors told the Royal Commission in private sessions that they were sexually abused as children in religious institutions. The abuse occurred in religious schools, orphanages and missions, churches, presbyteries and rectories, confessionals, and various other settings. In private sessions we heard about child sexual abuse occurring in nearly 1,700 different religious institutions.

The sexual abuse took many forms, including rape. It was often accompanied by physical or emotional abuse. Most victims were aged between 10 and 14 years when the abuse first started. We heard about perpetrators including priests, religious brothers and sisters, ministers, church elders, teachers in religious schools, workers in residential institutions, youth group leaders and others.

We conducted 30 case studies on religious institutions. They revealed that many religious leaders knew of allegations of child sexual abuse yet failed to take effective action. Some ignored allegations and did not respond at all. Some treated alleged perpetrators leniently

and failed to address the obvious risks they posed to children. Some concealed abuse and shielded perpetrators from accountability. Institutional reputations and individual perpetrators were prioritised over the needs of victims and their families.

Religious leaders and institutions across Australia have acknowledged that children suffered sexual abuse while in their care. Many have also accepted that their responses to this abuse were inadequate. These failures are not confined to religious institutions. However, the failures of religious institutions are particularly troubling because these institutions have played, and continue to play, an integral and unique role in the lives of many children.

They have also been key providers of education, health and social welfare services to children in Australia for many years. They have been among the most respected institutions in our society. The perpetrators of child sexual abuse in religious institutions were, in many cases, people that children and parents trusted the most and suspected the least.

Many people who experience child sexual abuse have the course of their lives altered forever.

Many of the survivors we heard from continue to experience the ongoing impacts. For some, these impacts have been profound. They include a devastating loss of religious faith and loss of trust in the religious organisation that was once a fundamental part of their life. The impacts have rippled out to affect their parents, siblings, partners, children and, in some cases, entire communities. Some victims have not survived the abuse, having since taken their own lives.

It would be a mistake to regard this child sexual abuse as historical; as something we no longer need to be concerned about. While much of the abuse we heard about in religious institutions occurred before 1990, long delays in victims disclosing abuse mean that an accurate contemporary understanding of the problem is not possible. Some of the abuse we heard about was recent. More than 200 survivors told us they had experienced child sexual abuse in a religious institution since 1990. We have no way of knowing how many others may have had similar experiences. It is and will be an issue today and into the future,

However, it would also be wrong to say that nothing has changed. In some religious institutions there has been progress during the past two decades. Some of the religious institutions examined told us about their child protection reforms. Others remained reluctant to accept the need for significant internal changes.

Some important numbers

As of May 2017, 15,249 people had contacted us about child sexual abuse that fell within our Terms of Reference. Of these, 7,382 people told us about child sexual abuse in religious institutions. Many went on to attend a private session. As of May 2017, we had heard from 6,875 survivors in private sessions, of whom 4,029 (58.6 per cent) told us about child sexual abuse in religious institutions. We heard more allegations of child sexual abuse in relation to the Catholic Church than any other religious organisation, followed by the Anglican Church, The Salvation Army and others.

Whilst there are no historic prevalence studies as to what percentage of children have been sexually abused in an institutional setting, nor in which institutional types, the numbers prepared to share their stories are alarming and cannot be minimised.

For instance by the end of the Commission's work, 32% of all those who came forward identified an institution run by a government, yet nearly 37% identified an institution run by the Catholic Church. Whilst the church ran many schools and other institutions, they were far less than those run by governments.

In relation to schools more than 76% of those who reported abuse in schools, identified a non-government school- 74% catholic, 26% independent.

Furthermore notwithstanding large numbers of complaints received by institutions to date and participation in redress schemes by many, only 34% of all private session attendees indicated that they have advised the relevant institution of their abuse.

The occurrence of child sexual abuse in religious institutions – which we heard was most common in religious schools and residential institutions – should be considered against the backdrop of the roles that religious organisations have played in Australian society. In particular, religious organisations have provided educational and social welfare services to a large number of children, and have received considerable amounts of government funding for this service provision.

The majority of survivors who told us in private sessions about child sexual abuse in religious institutions were male. The average age of victims at the time of first abuse was 10.3 years. Most survivors told us about multiple incidents of abuse and many told us about abuse that continued for more than a year.

We heard about children experiencing sexual abuse in religious institutions in Australia from the late 1920s until well after the establishment of this Royal Commission. Because of delayed disclosure, information gathered from private sessions is likely to under-represent the number of survivors of more recent abuse. The survivors we heard from in private sessions took, on average, 23.9 years to disclose that they had been sexually abused.

The Catholic Church claims data showed that the average age of claimants at the time of the first alleged incident of child sexual abuse was 11.4 years for all claimants, 11.6 years for male claimants and 10.5 years for female claimants. Of those who made a claim, 78 per cent were male and 22 per cent were female. The largest proportion of first alleged incidents of child sexual abuse occurred in the 1970s. The average duration of abuse was 2.4 years. There was an average delay of 33 years between the date of the first alleged incident of abuse and the date the claim was made.

The most common religious contexts in which we heard about child sexual abuse occurring were religious schools, residential institutions, and places of worship or religious activities. As of May 2017 of the 4,029 survivors who told us in private sessions about child sexual abuse in religious institutions:

- 39.0 per cent told us about abuse in religious schools
- 35.2 per cent told us about abuse in residential institutions managed by religious organisations before 1990, such as orphanages, children's homes and missions
- 24.8 per cent told us about abuse in places of worship or during religious activities
- 1.6 per cent told us about abuse during recreational activities affiliated with religious organisations, such as church-run camps.

Characteristics of child sexual abuse specific to religious institutions

We heard about some aspects of institutional child sexual abuse which were specific to religious institutions.

We heard that such abuse generally occurred in the context of a religious community. Survivors told us about characteristics of their religious communities that may have contributed to the risk of abuse, acted as a barrier to disclosure, or affected institutional responses.

We heard about some religious communities that could be described as 'closed', where children had limited interaction with the broader community. We also heard from survivors about growing up in religious communities with little or no education about sex, and about how this left them vulnerable to sexual abuse.

In devout religious families, parents often had such high regard for people in religious ministry that they naturally trusted them to supervise their children. People in religious ministry were considered to be representatives of God. Many parents were unable to believe they could be capable of sexually abusing a child. In this environment, perpetrators who were people in religious ministry often had unfettered access to children.

Children were often sexually abused by people in religious ministry after the perpetrator had groomed the child's family members by becoming closely involved in their family life. We commonly heard about perpetrators who ingratiated themselves into the family and became regular visitors to the home. Sometimes perpetrators stepped into the role of 'father figure' or exploited particularly vulnerable families such as those experiencing marriage breakdown or mourning a death.

Survivors also told us that as children they were threatened or blamed for the sexual abuse they experienced, often in ways that manipulated their religious beliefs – such as the threat of being sent to hell if they resisted sexual abuse or disclosed it. The use of threats and blame in the name of God had a powerful effect on children.

We heard that some children experienced sexual abuse that involved the use of religious rituals, symbols or language and in confession. Some survivors described such experiences as amounting to a type of 'spiritual abuse', which profoundly damaged their religious beliefs and trust in their religious organisation.

Impacts of child sexual abuse in religious institutions

The impacts of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts can be devastating. There can be distinctive impacts where the abuse is inflicted in a religious context.

Some survivors told us they felt a sense of spiritual confusion or spiritual harm after being sexually abused as a child by a person in religious ministry. Many survivors said they lost their religious faith. We heard that children were raised to have the utmost respect for the religious organisation their family was a part of, and were often taught that people in religious ministry, such as priests, were God's representatives on earth. Some perpetrators used this status to facilitate child sexual abuse. When a religious child was sexually abused by such a person, the impacts were often profound. Some children felt that they had been abused by God or that God must have willed the abuse to happen.

The impacts of child sexual abuse extend beyond victims. Their parents, siblings, partners, carers and children can be significantly affected, as can other children and staff in institutions where abuse occurs. The impacts can be intergenerational and can affect entire communities.

We heard that some religious families were torn apart when children disclosed that they had been sexually abused by people in religious ministry, because parents were unable to believe that people in religious ministry could be capable of perpetrating such abuse. Some survivors told us that negative reactions from family members when they disclosed abuse led to alienation between them and their family members for years, in some cases a lifetime.

We also heard that some survivors were not believed, or were ostracised by their religious community, after disclosing experiences of child sexual abuse. Many survivors told us they had experienced suicidal thoughts or had attempted to end their life after being sexually abused in a religious institution as a child. Some survivors described 'clusters' of suicides in affected communities. In some cases we heard about children who took their own lives.

While many survivors told us they lost their religious faith as a result of being sexually abused, others told us their spirituality or religious faith helped them to cope.

Common institutional responses to child sexual abuse across religious institutions

Despite many differences between religious faiths,, there were remarkable similarities in the institutional responses to child sexual abuse across religious institutions. Common failures were very evident especially prior to the mid-1990s when many institutions started to more fully address these issues.

Our case studies demonstrated that it was a common practice of religious institutions to adopt 'in-house' responses when dealing with allegations of child sexual abuse. Sometimes there was no response at all. Often, alleged perpetrators were treated with considerable leniency. 'In house' responses ensured that allegations remained secret, and shielded religious institutions from public scrutiny or accountability.

Leaders of religious institutions often showed insufficient consideration for victims at the time they disclosed child sexual abuse. They frequently responded with disbelief or denial, or attempted to blame or discredit the victim. We also heard of instances where children who disclosed sexual abuse in religious institutions were punished or suffered further abuse. Leaders of religious institutions often minimised the sexual conduct that was reported to them and wrongly concluded that there was no criminality in the alleged actions. In other cases religious leaders knew that actions were or may have been criminal. However, leaders of religious institutions typically did not report allegations to police.

Leaders of religious institutions were often reluctant to remove alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse from positions in ministry or employment after suspicions of child sexual abuse were raised or allegations were received. In some cases perpetrators made admissions of behaviour amounting to child sexual abuse, yet religious leaders were still reluctant to take decisive action or report them to police.

Some leaders of religious institutions made serious errors of judgement in the face of compelling evidence of child sexual abuse, by giving alleged perpetrators a 'second chance' with continued or successive appointments.

This included moving alleged perpetrators to new positions in different locations where they were offered a 'fresh start', untarnished by their history of sexual offending or previous allegations.. The communities that perpetrators were moved into were in some cases not made aware of the risks these individuals posed.

Leaders of religious institutions also commonly allowed alleged perpetrators to continue in ministry or employment with little or no risk management or monitoring of their interactions with children.

Across religious institutions, the inadequacy of internal disciplinary systems and the limited use of disciplinary measures meant that some perpetrators of child sexual abuse were not disciplined at all; some were disciplined, but in a minimal way; and others were disciplined, but only many years after allegations were raised or they were convicted. This often meant that perpetrators who were in religious ministry retained their religious titles, and lay perpetrators remained attached to religious institutions in circumstances where it was plainly inappropriate for them to do so.

Instead of reporting allegations to police or engaging with formal disciplinary processes for the dismissal of perpetrators of child sexual abuse from religious ministry, people who responded to allegations of child sexual abuse in religious institutions sometimes encouraged perpetrators to retire or resign as a way of dealing with these matters 'quietly'. This included, for example, allowing perpetrators to retire or resign on false grounds, such as for health reasons.

Common contributing factors across religious institutions

Multiple and often interacting factors have contributed to the occurrence of child sexual abuse in religious institutions and to inadequate institutional responses to such abuse. Our work suggests these include a combination of cultural, governance and theological factors.

In several of the religious institutions we examined, the central factor, underpinning and linked to all other factors, was the status of people in religious ministry. We repeatedly heard that the status of people in religious ministry, described in some contexts as 'clericalism', contributed to the occurrence of child sexual abuse in religious institutions, as well as to inadequate institutional responses.

The power and authority exercised by people in religious ministry gave them access to children and created opportunities for abuse. Children and adults within religious communities frequently saw people in religious ministry as figures who could not be challenged and, equally, as individuals in whom they could place their trust.

Within religious institutions there was often an inability to conceive that a person in religious ministry was capable of sexually abusing a child. This resulted in a failure by adults to listen to children who tried to disclose sexual abuse, a reluctance of religious leaders to take action when faced with allegations against people in religious ministry, and a willingness of religious leaders to accept denials from alleged perpetrators.

In some cases, it is clear that leaders of religious institutions knew that allegations of child sexual abuse involved actions that were or may have been criminal, or perpetrators made admissions. However, there was a tendency to view child sexual abuse as a forgivable sin or a moral failing rather than a crime.

Others inappropriately saw an allegation of child sexual abuse as an 'aberration' or a 'one-off incident' and not as part of a pattern of behaviour.

Consequently, rather than being treated as criminal offences, allegations and admissions of child sexual abuse were often approached through the lens of forgiveness and repentance. This is reflected in the forgiveness of perpetrators through the practice of religious confession, as well as encouraging victims to forgive those who abused them.

Many leaders of religious institutions demonstrated a preoccupation with protecting the institution's 'good name' and reputation.

In some cases, the structure and governance of religious institutions may have inhibited effective institutional responses to child sexual abuse.

Catholic Church

I acknowledge that particularly since the mid-1990s the Catholic Church has been active in seeking to respond to child sexual abuse within its institutions. This included redress arrangements, counselling and support services, appointment of safeguarding officers and changes to professional standards arrangements. The appointment of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council was a very significant initiative. Yet the history of the Church's response over time has been found to be inadequate and deeply flawed especially in past times, lacking in justice and compassion in many instances.

Fifteen of our case studies examined responses to child sexual abuse in Catholic institutions, including schools, residential institutions, and places of worship and during religious activities.

As of May 2017, of the 4,029 survivors who told us during private sessions about child sexual abuse in religious institutions, 2,489 survivors (61.8 per cent) told us about abuse in Catholic institutions. The majority (73.9 per cent) were male and 25.9 per cent were female. A small number of survivors identified as gender-diverse or did not indicate their gender. The average age of victims at the time of first abuse was 10.4 years. Of the 1,489 survivors who told us about the age of the person who sexually abused them, 1,334 survivors (89.6 per cent) told us about abuse by an adult and 199 survivors (13.4 per cent) told us about abuse by a child. A small number of survivors told us about abuse by an adult and by a child. Of the 1,334 survivors who told us about sexual abuse by an adult, 96.2 per cent said they were abused by a male adult.

Of the 2,413 survivors who told us about the position held by a perpetrator, 74.7 per cent told us about perpetrators who were people in religious ministry and 27.6 per cent told us about perpetrators who were teachers. Some survivors told us about more than one perpetrator.

We also commissioned a survey to gather data from Catholic Church authorities in Australia regarding claims of child sexual abuse they received between 1 January 1980 and 31 December 2015. This data showed:

- 4,444 claimants alleged incidents of child sexual abuse in 4,756 reported claims
- 78 per cent of claimants were male and 22 per cent were female, and the average age of the claimant at the time of the first alleged incident of child sexual abuse was approximately 11.4 years
- 90 per cent of alleged perpetrators were male
- of all known alleged perpetrators:
 - 37 per cent were non-ordained religious (32 per cent were religious brothers and 5 per cent were religious sisters);
 - 30 per cent were priests;
 - 29 per cent were lay people;
- 3,057 claims of child sexual abuse resulted in a payment being made following a claim for redress, with a total of \$268.0 million paid (of which \$250.7 million was paid in monetary compensation in relation to 2,845 claims, at an average of approximately \$88,000 per claim).

We also sought information from 75 Catholic archdioceses/dioceses and religious institutes about the number of their members who ministered in Australia from 1 January 1950 to 31 December 2010, and how long each of them ministered. We then calculated the proportion of members of these Catholic Church authorities who ministered in the period 1950 to 2010 who were alleged perpetrators, taking into account the duration of ministry (a weighted average methodology).

Of all Catholic priests included in the survey who ministered between 1950 and 2010, taking into account the duration of ministry, 7 per cent were alleged perpetrators.

The weighted proportion of alleged perpetrators in specific Catholic Church authorities with the highest rates, included: the St John of God Brothers; the Christian Brothers; the Benedictine Community of New Norcia; the Salesians of Don Bosco ; the Marist Brothers ; the De La Salle Brothers.

There were however great variations between dioceses and orders raising the question as to why. The differences indicate systemic issues played a part in creating in some institutions an environment in which abuse could take place and remain unreported.

Awareness of allegations of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church

Our inquiry revealed that sexual abuse has been a long standing issue for the Catholic Church going back to the first millennium. In Australia there are numerous examples of child sexual abuse matters being known of as early as the 1870s. We identified numerous more recent cases where senior officials of Catholic Church authorities knew about allegations of child sexual abuse in Catholic institutions but failed to take effective action.

It is also evident that other priests, religious and lay members of the Catholic community were aware either of specific complaints of child sexual abuse or of rumours or gossip about certain priests or religious. While the knowledge and understanding of child sexual abuse may have developed and deepened in the last two decades of the 20th century, it is clear that Catholic Church leaders were aware of the problem well before that time.

Institutional responses to child sexual abuse before the development of national procedures

We concluded that there were catastrophic failures of leadership of Catholic Church authorities over many decades, particularly before the 1990s.

Those failures led to the suffering of a great number of children, their families and wider communities. For many, the harm was irreparable. In numerous cases, that harm could have been avoided had Catholic Church authorities acted in the interests of children rather than in their own interests.

Few survivors of child sexual abuse that occurred before the 1990s described receiving any formal response from the relevant Catholic Church authority when they reported the abuse. Instead, they were often disbelieved, ignored or punished, and in some cases were further abused.

The responses of various Catholic Church authorities to complaints and concerns about their priests and religious were remarkably and disturbingly similar. It is apparent that the avoidance of public scandal, the maintenance of the reputation of the Catholic Church and loyalty to priests and religious largely determined the responses of Catholic Church authorities when allegations of child sexual abuse arose.

Complaints of child sexual abuse were not reported to police or other civil authorities, contributing to the Catholic Church being able to keep such matters 'in-house' and out of the public gaze. Had Catholic Church authorities reported all complaints to police, they could have prevented further sexual abuse of children.

In some cases, leaders of Catholic Church authorities were reluctant to remove alleged perpetrators from positions that involved contact with children. Some alleged perpetrators were allowed to remain in religious ministry in the same positions and locations for extended periods of time after allegations of child sexual abuse were raised; in some cases there were further allegations of the sexual abuse of children. If appropriate protective steps had been taken, subsequent abuse may have been avoided.

The removal of priests and religious from locations where allegations of child sexual abuse arose, and their subsequent transfer to new locations, was one of the most common responses adopted across Catholic Church authorities in Australia before the development of national procedures in the early 1990s. Some priests and religious brothers who were accused of child sexual abuse were moved on multiple occasions.

When the priest or religious left, sometimes hurriedly, untrue or misleading reasons were sometimes given for their departure. On occasions, the move was timed to avoid raising suspicion. In some cases, no warning, or no effective warning, was given to the new parish or school of the risk posed by the incoming priest or religious.

Until at least the early 1990s, alleged perpetrators often were sent away for a period of 'treatment' or 'reflection' before being transferred to a new appointment or being allowed to continue in an existing one. Some leaders of Catholic Church authorities believed that psychological or other forms of counselling could assist or 'cure' alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

Throughout this period, there was a system under canon law for disciplining priests and religious accused of child sexual abuse, under which the most severe penalty was dismissal from the priesthood or religious life and return to the lay state. However, the Catholic Church authorities we examined did not engage with these canonical processes for priests or religious accused of child sexual abuse in the decades before the development of national procedures in the early 1990s. Instead, bishops and religious superiors adopted a range of informal responses aimed at limiting the capacity of alleged perpetrators to engage in ministry or, at most, permanently removing alleged perpetrators from particular dioceses or religious congregations.

The clearest indication of the inappropriateness and ineffectiveness of institutional responses by Catholic Church authorities to alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse in this period is that often they did not prevent the further sexual abuse of children. Some perpetrators continued to offend even after there had been multiple responses following initial and successive allegations of child sexual abuse.

Development of national procedures

In the late 1980s, Catholic Church leaders began to discuss the issue of child sexual abuse more formally at the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC). In 1988 the ACBC established a dedicated committee to consider issues related to child sexual abuse, and the adoption of a series of national protocols from 1990 was an important step towards formulating a nationally consistent response. However, these protocols retained a focus on responding to the alleged perpetrators of sexual abuse rather than on the needs of victims, and their implementation by Catholic Church authorities was sporadic.

By the mid-1990s there had been a shift in understanding about the appropriateness of keeping alleged perpetrators in ministry where they would be in regular contact with children. At about the same time, members of the newly constituted Bishops' Committee for Professional Standards recognised that a new protocol focusing on the needs of victims was required. The formulation and adoption of *Towards Healing* and the Melbourne Response in 1996 were considerable achievements in this regard.

Institutional responses to alleged perpetrators during and after the development of national procedures

From the mid-1990s, there were some improvements in the responses of Catholic Church authorities to allegations of child sexual abuse. Alleged perpetrators began to be placed on administrative leave while complaints were investigated, and steps were generally taken to remove perpetrators from ministry if complaints against them were substantiated. However, these processes were not always followed, and some measures masked the reasons for the action taken. Further, processes to dismiss priests and religious appear to have been rarely used during the 1990s and early 2000s.

While the early protocols contained some provisions relating to alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse, they did not comprehensively set out the obligations of bishops and religious superiors in responding to alleged perpetrators and convicted offenders. Furthermore, it appears that leaders of Catholic Church authorities were not always aware of or did not consistently follow these protocols.

The early protocols did not require leaders of Catholic Church authorities to report allegations to the police. *Towards Healing* did not mandate this until 2010. From the mid-1990s, leaders of Catholic Church authorities continued not to report alleged perpetrators to police, leaving this to victims and survivors. This had the effect of keeping many complaints from the public gaze and in some cases meant that children continued to be at risk.

The early protocols saw the introduction of the approach that alleged perpetrators should be required to take leave from active duties while allegations were investigated. However, Catholic Church leaders in some cases did not take this action and alleged perpetrators continued in the same positions for extended periods of time after allegations had been raised. In some cases, leaders of Catholic Church authorities took steps to remove perpetrators from religious ministry when complaints of child sexual abuse were

substantiated or if they were convicted. In other cases action was taken due to a concern about the level of risk posed by an alleged perpetrator. In the case of priests, removal from ministry was generally achieved through the ‘withdrawal of faculties’.

Some bishops permitted priests to resign or retire following allegations of child sexual abuse, in circumstances where it was not made publicly known that allegations had been made against them. Other priests were bestowed with honorific titles, such as Pastor Emeritus, at the time of their resignation, despite being the subject of allegations or having made admissions of child sexual abuse.

The delayed or limited use of canon law processes to dismiss those found to have committed child sexual abuse meant that some perpetrators remained in the priesthood or in religious orders for many years after their guilt had been admitted or established. In addition, the Vatican was very slow to respond to petitions for dismissal from Catholic Church authorities in Australia, and it is clear that the Vatican’s approach to child sexual abuse by clergy was protective of the offender. One bishop told us that in a number of cases his requests to have offender priests dismissed from the clerical state were refused and he was instead directed to ensure that the priests live a life of prayer and penance.

Institutional responses to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse after the development of national procedures

In several case studies we considered the experiences of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse who engaged with Towards Healing and the Melbourne Response. For some, participating in these processes was a positive experience which contributed to their healing. However, others told us that their experiences were difficult, frightening or confusing, and led to further harm and re-traumatisation.

We recognised that many people who have engaged with the Towards Healing process since 1997 may have received greatly needed compassion and support and derived important benefits from their participation. However, some survivors have been disappointed by the process and critical of it. We heard from a number of survivors that the principles and procedures set out in Towards Healing were not followed by Catholic Church authorities.

Significantly, a number of survivors told us they perceived that the personnel they engaged with were insufficiently independent of the Catholic Church. Some told us they experienced a power imbalance between themselves and the Catholic Church representatives involved.

We heard from a number of survivors who pursued civil litigation that Catholic Church authorities took advantage of the legal defences available to them and conducted litigation in a manner that did not adequately take account of the pastoral and other needs of survivors of child sexual abuse. The role of legal advice given and accepted without regard to values and mission of the church was deeply concerning.

We also heard that in some cases, Catholic Church authorities avoided or resisted meeting with communities affected by child sexual abuse and failed or refused to provide pastoral support to communities who both needed and requested it. We heard of instances where

Catholic Church authorities withheld information from affected communities, which meant that people were not alerted to possible cases of child sexual abuse or were left with unanswered questions.

Contributing factors in the Catholic Church

We considered a range of factors that may have contributed to the occurrence of child sexual abuse in Catholic institutions or affected institutional responses to such abuse.

Child sexual abuse by Catholic clergy and religious may be explained by a combination of psycho-sexual and other related factors on the part of the individual perpetrator, and a range of institutional factors, including theological, governance and cultural factors. The same theological, governance and cultural factors that contributed to the occurrence of abuse also contributed to the inadequate responses of Catholic institutions to that abuse.

Individual factors

Individual pathology on its own is insufficient to explain child sexual abuse perpetrated by Catholic clergy and religious. Rather, a heightened risk of child sexual abuse arises when specific factors in relation to an individual's psycho-sexual immaturity or psycho-sexual dysfunction combine with a range of situational and institutional factors.

Compared with perpetrators of child sexual abuse in the wider community, research suggests that Catholic clergy perpetrators are an atypical group. They tend to begin offending later in life and to be better educated, less antisocial and more likely to have male than female victims.

Factors that may influence whether a priest or religious is susceptible to sexually abusing a child may include confusion about sexual identity, childish interests and behaviour, lack of peer relationships, and a history of having been sexually abused as a child. Further, some clergy and religious perpetrators appear to have been vulnerable to mental health issues, substance abuse and psycho-sexual immaturity. We heard that personality factors that may be associated with clergy and religious perpetrators include narcissism, dependency, cognitive rigidity and fear of intimacy.

Although most of the perpetrators of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church that we heard about were male adults, and most victims were boys or adolescents, it is a misconception that all perpetrators who sexually abuse children of the same gender as them are same sex attracted. Research suggests that child sexual abuse is not related to sexual orientation: perpetrators can be straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual. Research has indicated that men who identify as heterosexual are just as likely as men who identify as homosexual to perpetrate child sexual abuse. Vatican documents that link homosexuality to child sexual abuse are not in keeping with current psychological evidence or understanding about healthy human sexuality.

Clericalism

Clericalism is at the centre of a tightly interconnected cluster of contributing factors. Clericalism is the idealisation of the priesthood, and by extension, the idealisation of the Catholic Church.

Clericalism is linked to a sense of entitlement, superiority and exclusion, and abuse of power. Clericalism nurtured ideas that the Catholic Church was autonomous and self-sufficient, and promoted the idea that child sexual abuse by clergy and religious was a matter to be dealt with internally and in secret.

The theological notion that the priest undergoes an 'ontological change' at ordination, so that he is different to ordinary human beings and permanently a priest, is a dangerous component of the culture of clericalism. The notion that the priest is a sacred person contributed to exaggerated levels of unregulated power and trust which perpetrators of child sexual abuse were able to exploit.

Clericalism caused some bishops and religious superiors to identify with perpetrators of child sexual abuse rather than victims and their families, and in some cases led to denial that clergy and religious were capable of child sexual abuse. It was the culture of clericalism that led bishops and religious superiors to attempt to avoid public scandal to protect the reputation of the Catholic Church and the status of the priesthood.

We heard that the culture of clericalism continues in the Catholic Church and is on the rise in some seminaries in Australia and worldwide.

Organisational structure and governance

The governance of the Catholic Church is hierarchical. We heard that the decentralisation and autonomy of Catholic dioceses and religious institutes contributed to ineffective responses of Catholic Church authorities to child sexual abuse, as did the personalised nature of power in the Catholic Church and the limited accountability of bishops.

The powers of governance held by individual diocesan bishops and provincials are not subject to adequate checks and balances. There is no separation of powers, and the executive, legislative and judicial aspects of governance are combined in the person of the pope and in diocesan bishops.

Diocesan bishops have not been sufficiently accountable to any other body for decision-making in their handling of allegations of child sexual abuse or alleged perpetrators. There has been no requirement for their decisions to be made transparent or subject to due process. The tragic consequences of this lack of accountability have been seen in the failures of those in authority in the Catholic Church to respond adequately to allegations and occurrences of child sexual abuse.

The hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church created a culture of deferential obedience in which poor responses to child sexual abuse went unchallenged. Where senior clergy and

religious with advisory roles to diocesan bishops or provincials of religious institutes were aware of allegations of child sexual abuse, often they did not challenge or attempt to remedy the inadequate responses of their bishop or provincial, or believed that they could not do so.

The exclusion of lay people and women from leadership positions in the Catholic Church may have contributed to inadequate responses to child sexual abuse. Despite considerable changes to the conduct of many of its human services and the adoption of sound governance arrangements, including through incorporation, there remains much confusion as to what constitutes good governance especially in the diocesan structures.

In accordance with contemporary standards of good governance, we encouraged the Catholic Church in Australia to explore and develop ways in which its structures and practices of governance may be made more accountable, more transparent, more meaningfully consultative and more participatory, including at the diocesan and parish level. We recommend that the ACBC conduct a national review of the governance and management structures of dioceses and parishes, including in relation to issues of transparency, accountability, consultation and participation of lay men and women.

We noted that diocesan bishops and provincials of religious institutes are increasingly making use of professional expertise in the management of their various institutions, including in the administration of their responses to child sexual abuse. We also accepted that the Catholic education and Catholic community services sectors have increasing lay involvement in their governance, operate professionally and are subject to significant government oversight.

Leadership

In its responses to child sexual abuse, the leadership of the Catholic Church has failed the people of the Catholic Church in Australia (especially prior to 2000), in particular its children. The results of that failure have been catastrophic.

It appears that some candidates for leadership positions have been selected on the basis of their adherence to specific aspects of church doctrine and their commitment to the defence and promotion of the institutional Catholic Church, rather than on their capacity for leadership.

This meant that some bishops were ill equipped and unprepared for the challenges of dealing with child sexual abuse and responding to emerging claims. Catholic Church leaders in Australia have prioritised protecting the reputation of the church at the expense of the welfare of individuals when responding to child sexual abuse.

Meaningful and direct consultation with, and participation of, lay people in the appointment of bishops, as well as greater transparency in that process, would make bishops more accountable and responsive to the lay people of the Catholic Church, including in responding to child sexual abuse. We recommended that the ACBC request that the Holy See amend the appointment process for bishops.

We also recommended that each religious institution in Australia ensure that its religious leaders are provided with leadership training, both before and after their appointment, including in the promotion of child safety.

Canon law

The disciplinary system imposed by canon law for dealing with clergy and religious who sexually abuse children contributed to the failure of the Catholic Church to provide an effective and timely response to alleged perpetrators and perpetrators. We heard that canon law as it applied to child sexual abuse was cumbersome, complex and confusing. We recommend that the ACBC request that the Holy See amend a number of provisions in canon law.

A number of the issues we identified have impeded the permanent removal from ministry of priests or religious against whom complaints of child sexual abuse have been substantiated, or the dismissal of priests or religious convicted of offences related to child sexual abuse. We recommended that if a complaint of child sexual abuse against a person in religious ministry is substantiated, the person be permanently removed from ministry. Canon law should be amended to this effect. We also recommended that canon law be amended to ensure that priests and religious who are convicted of a child sexual abuse-related offence in a civil court are dismissed from the priesthood and/or religious life.

Celibacy

While not a direct cause of child sexual abuse, we were satisfied that compulsory celibacy (for clergy) and vowed chastity (for members of religious institutes) have contributed to the occurrence of child sexual abuse, especially when combined with other risk factors. We acknowledged that only a minority of Catholic clergy and religious have sexually abused children.

However, based on research we concluded that there is an elevated risk of child sexual abuse where compulsorily celibate male clergy or religious have privileged access to children in certain types of Catholic institutions, including schools, residential institutions and parishes.

For many Catholic clergy and religious, celibacy is implicated in emotional isolation, loneliness, depression and mental illness. Compulsory celibacy may also have contributed to various forms of psycho-sexual dysfunction, including psycho-sexual immaturity, which pose an ongoing risk to the safety of children. For many clergy and religious, celibacy is an unattainable ideal that leads to clergy and religious living double lives, and contributes to a culture of secrecy and hypocrisy.

This culture appears to have contributed to some clergy and religious overlooking violations of celibacy and minimising child sexual abuse as forgivable moral lapses committed by colleagues who were struggling to live up to an ideal that for many proved impossible.

We recommended that the ACBC request that the Holy See consider introducing voluntary celibacy for diocesan clergy. We also recommend that Catholic religious institutes implement measures to address the risks of harm to children and the potential psychological and sexual dysfunction associated with celibacy.

Further, we recommended that, to promote healthy lives for those who choose to be celibate, Catholic Church authorities improve their processes of selection, screening and training of candidates for the clergy and religious life, and their processes of ongoing formation, support and supervision of clergy and religious.

Selection, screening and initial formation

It is apparent that initial formation practices were inadequate in the past, particularly before the 1970s, in relation to the screening of candidates for admission, preparing seminarians and novices to lead a celibate life, and preparing them for the realities of a life in religious or pastoral ministry. The initial training of priests and religious occurred in segregated, regimented, monastic and clericalist environments, and was based on obedience and conformity. These arrangements are likely to have been detrimental to psycho-sexual maturity, and to have produced clergy and religious who were cognitively rigid. This increased the risk of child sexual abuse.

Although from the 1970s there have been improvements in the selection, screening and formation of candidates for the priesthood and religious life, it appears that these have largely been implemented in an ad hoc and inconsistent manner. In particular, there is still a lack of consistency between seminaries and houses of religious formation in relation to the selection and screening of candidates.

We recommended that the Catholic Church adopt a national protocol for screening candidates and that bishops and religious superiors draw on wide-ranging professional advice in their decision-making in relation to the admission of individuals to ordination or the profession of vows.

We also recommended that guideline policy documents relating to the formation of clergy and religious be revised to explicitly address child sexual abuse and its prevention.

We also heard that certain models of formation may be instrumental in inculcating a culture of clericalism. We recommended that the ACBC and Catholic Religious Australia conduct a national review of current models of initial formation.

Oversight, support and ongoing training of people in ministry

It is apparent that Catholic clergy and religious have not received adequate training in relation to professional responsibility, the maintenance of healthy boundaries, and ministerial and professional ethics. It is clear that inadequate preparation for ministry, loneliness, social isolation, and personal distress related to the difficulties of celibacy, have contributed to the sexual abuse of children.

Processes for the management and oversight of clergy and religious in their working ministry have been poor. Bishops and religious superiors have limited capacity to personally oversee the activities of clergy or religious, and, especially within dioceses, 'middle management' structures have been inadequate. We heard that there has been a view, particularly on the part of some Catholic clergy, that following ordination they do not need ongoing training. We heard that the Catholic Church in Australia has developed a code of conduct for clergy and religious that includes standards in relation to professional development, professional supervision and appraisal. And we heard of the establishment of a new national professional standards body.

However, we also heard that most clergy do not fully comply with ongoing formation activities. Improved and updated policies and practices in relation to the oversight, support and ongoing training of all people in religious and pastoral ministry in the Catholic Church are essential to reducing the risk of child sexual abuse and ensuring better institutional responses to abuse.

We recommended the development and implementation of mandatory national standards to ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry in the Catholic Church in Australia undertake regular professional development, undertake professional/pastoral supervision and undergo regular performance appraisals.

We also heard that specialised programs for the screening, induction, and professional support and supervision of priests and religious recruited from overseas are inadequate. We recommended the creation of targeted programs for these purposes. I believe this is an urgent priority.

Sacrament of reconciliation (confession)

We were satisfied that the practice of the sacrament of reconciliation (confession) contributed to both the occurrence of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and to inadequate institutional responses to abuse. We heard in case studies and private sessions that disclosures of child sexual abuse by perpetrators or victims during confession were not reported to civil authorities or otherwise acted on. We heard that the sacrament is based in a theology of sin and forgiveness, and that some Catholic Church leaders have viewed child sexual abuse as a sin to be dealt with through private absolution and penance rather than as a crime to be reported to police. The sacrament of reconciliation enabled perpetrators to resolve their sense of guilt without fear of being reported. In some cases we heard that children experienced sexual abuse perpetrated by Catholic priests in confessionals.

We recommended that any religious institution with a rite of religious confession implement a policy that confession for children be conducted in an open space and in a clear line of sight of another adult.

Whilst the Church has a profound commitment to maintaining the confessional seal in the Commission's view we believe that the protection of children must be paramount. There is a clear conflict that confronts the Church that cannot be resolved by the mantra that the seal of confession is sacrosanct – end of discussion. The protection of children is an equally

sacred obligation of the Church as demonstrated by Christ in the Gospels. Because of the high risk of recidivism, even by those who confess, we recommended that there should be no exemption to obligations to report under mandatory reporting laws or the proposed 'failure to report' offence in circumstances where knowledge or suspicions of child sexual abuse are formed on the basis of information received in or in connection with a religious confession.

During our public hearings on the Catholic Church, it emerged that Catholic leaders were unclear about whether information received from a child during the sacrament of reconciliation that they had been sexually abused would be covered by the seal of confession.

Contemporary risks

There are many contemporary risks within all institutions including the Catholic and other churches. Some are directly related to the vulnerabilities of the child or the particular institutional setting. For religious institutions I believe they fall into three main areas.

- Complacency by many or more troubling wilful ignorance by a few, especially in influential roles, could derail efforts to 'put right that which was wrong' and to make the necessary reforms to create truly healthy and safe religious institutions. Resistance to change is always a given but the interests of children and responding to the truth of what has been uncovered compels decisive action at all levels of religious institutions.
- Second, children within very traditional or devout communities or ethnically based communities which have not yet been open to a conversation about sex and abuse, and believe such matters should be dealt with, within the community, may well be at some risk. This is despite every such community being committed to the safety of their children. I note that some ethnic communities and churches are moving forward tentatively on what is a difficult journey and this is to be encouraged. Closed institutional settings do present higher risk environments for children especially where they lack the protective factors outlined in the Commission's report.
- Third, with respect to religious personnel, contemporary risks include a failure to address the unhealthy use of ministerial status and power, including clericalism, the inadequate vetting, training and supervision of overseas personnel and a failure to improve governance, leadership and cultural issues.

Of course whilst child sexual abuse may have reduced in institutions, it does continue to occur and vigilance will always be necessary. All children are potentially at risk, some more than others.

What next for the Catholic Church in Australia?

My personal views and hopes are based on what I have heard. There is enormous pain in many parts of the Catholic Church. For clergy and religious the revelation that some of their colleagues abused children is almost overwhelming. For lay people the fact that trusted priests, religious and lay leaders, often friends and mentors, have offended against children

has been devastating. For many parents the failure of their fellow parishioners to believe them and their children is deeply wounding.

The hurt of such betrayals runs deep. For many it is like a grieving process. The church they once knew and loved has been exposed as being deeply flawed. Leaders who they had every right to trust failed them as well as those abused. Some clergy and religious feel their vocation is less valued and the important works of the past and the great good that they did has been diminished. Many are unsure as to how to interact with children and feel constrained in carrying out their ministries.

For the laity the well-recognised failings of the church, raised internally by many, have been publicly exposed. Many may feel powerless in the face of a governance model that appears to alienate them or even guilty that they failed to challenge poor governance and practices earlier.

However, as with all grief, whilst the journey is painful great good can follow. The Church needs to enter into a period of healing. This process is one that must engage survivors, clergy, members of religious communities and all the people of God. It must however be founded on the truth revealed.

Too many have been harmed directly or as secondary victims. Too many have suffered as their beliefs in a just and loving church have been damaged. For leaders of religious communities this task of healing may start within but must move outwards, beyond your own organisations. For parishes they must be actively involved in an honest, open and robust conversation that ultimately seeks to heal and reform. A conversation that never ends.

Many in church are well on that journey. Some are yet to be convinced.

You have the capacity to reshape our institutions and the Church at large:

- To create institutions that are genuinely safe for children and which act in the best interests of children.
- To create institutions that are genuinely responsive to the voices of those that have come forward.
- To create a church whose governance and leadership is competent, engaged and open to learning and improvement.
- To create an ongoing conversation with the people of God and to invite them into the governance and leadership of the Church.
- To create a church more truthful, transparent and accountable to the faithful and the community at large.
- To create a church in which the community's trust can be restored.
- To create a church authentically based on the Gospels and the revelations of Jesus Christ – one that seeks to heal not to hurt.
- To create a church that loves, that acts justly and that walks humbly in the presence of God and each other.

The Commission's recommendations are many. Many are directed at institutions generally such as mandatory child safe standards, changes to criminal and civil laws and reportable conduct regimes. Many of these if adopted by government will compel compliance by institutions.

Some recommendations are directed at institutional types such as schools, out of home care, sport and recreation clubs etc.

Yet some are targeted at religious institutions generally and then some specifically to particular churches including the Catholic Church.

Some can be adopted immediately, others will take time. Yet, they do provide a blueprint for going forward. They need your deep consideration. They call for your courage and commitment. They will demand a steadfastness in their implementation. They will require resourcing, good processes and openness to the possibility of real reform.

I acknowledge that some in the church have worked tirelessly for victims and survivors. Others have worked to bring about much needed reforms. I acknowledge important initiatives by the Church including the formation of Catholic Professional Standards Limited, the appointment of an Implementation Advisory Group to advise the Bishops on their response and intensive work within many religious orders and ministries. I wish these initiatives success notwithstanding the ever present opposition by some – but those initiatives will only succeed if the body of the church, the people of God, is engaged in an open, ongoing dialogue and engaged in the necessary reforms that must follow. I hope that Plenary 2020 is a constructive part of that process.

Most importantly we need a Church that opens its heart to those already abused. Whether they ever seek to connect with our Church is not the issue. The question is whether we are open to that encounter.

Now is the time for healing for those within and outside Church. Yet this healing must be one based on an acknowledgement of what has happened and what has been revealed, acceptance of responsibility, redress for those wronged and a steadfast commitment to reform in order to create a healthy, safe and loving Church." (Presentation to Catalyst For Renewal, 27 May 2018)
<http://catalystforrenewal.org.au/slider/royal-commission-into-institutional-responses-to-child-sexual-abuse-lessons-and-learnings-for-the-people-of-god/>

The Commonwealth Government response to the RC Recommendations

“The achievements of the Royal Commission and the commitments in this Australian Government Response are a tribute to the survivors and victims of institutional child sexual abuse, their families and supporters. Their courage has helped to create a culture of accountability and of trust in children’s voices that will help all of us to take responsibility for keeping children safe and well.

The Australian Government has listened to the Royal Commission and to survivors and victims of institutional child sexual abuse. The Australian Government acknowledges that much more needs to be done to prevent and protect children from sexual abuse in institutions.

Cultural change in our institutions and society more broadly, is fundamental to ensuring the safety of our children. Changing our institutional cultures and providing the legal and practical safeguards to support that change will take some time. Many of Australia’s governments and institutions have already acted to start that change, knowing that giving redress and comfort to survivors and protecting children into the future is urgent and cannot wait. In this response, the Australian Government has recognised and acknowledged that there must be change, but has also highlighted where genuine efforts at reform are being made.

On 15 December 2017, the Royal Commission submitted its Final Report to the Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd). The Final Report was tabled in the Australian Parliament the same day.

The Royal Commission recommended the Australian Government and all state and territory governments should issue a formal response to the Final Report within six months of it being tabled.

Of the 409 recommendations in the Final Report, 84 recommendations deal with redress, which the Australian Government is responding to through the creation of the National Redress Scheme for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse. Of the remaining 325 recommendations, 122 have been directed wholly or partially to the Australian Government. The Response accepts, or accepts in principle 104 of these 122 recommendations. The remaining 18 recommendations directed at the Australian Government are listed as being ‘for further consideration’ or are ‘noted’. The Australian Government has not rejected any of the recommendations.

vi The Australian Government has also ‘noted’ some recommendations that fall within the leadership and responsibility of state and territory governments or that the Royal Commission directed to religious or other non-government institutions. The Australian Government will continue to work closely with all governments and institutions, including religious institutions, to promote children’s safety and wellbeing. Our expectation is that

other governments and institutions will respond to each of the Royal Commission's recommendations, indicating what action they will take in response to them and will report on their implementation of relevant recommendations annually in December, along with the Australian, state and territory governments. Where other governments and institutions decide not to accept the Royal Commission's recommendations they should state so and why. The Australian Government thanks the Commissioners, Mr Bob Atkinson AO APM, Justice Jennifer Coate, Mr Robert Fitzgerald AM, Professor Helen Milroy, Mr Andrew Murray and the Chair of the Royal Commission, the Hon Justice Peter McClellan AM, for their leadership and compassion throughout the Royal Commission and for delivering such a significant report for our nation. The Australian Government is grateful to the staff, expert witnesses, researchers, stakeholder groups, and government and non-government representatives who came forward to share their knowledge and experience. The Australian Government also acknowledges the spirit of commitment demonstrated by all state and territory governments during the Royal Commission and in working to address its recommendations. Most importantly, the Australian Government thanks the survivors and victims of institutional child sexual abuse, together with their families and supporters, for their courage and determination in telling their stories and for raising the awareness needed to protect our children. ." (Australian Government Response Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Introduction to Final Report, **13 June 2018**)

(<https://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/Australian-Government-Response-to-the-Royal-Commission-into-Institutional-Responses-to-Child-Sexual-Abuse/Documents/australian-government-response-introduction.pdf>)

Catholics for Renewal. Open Letter to the Bishops of Australia: 'Please Listen and Act Now'

Dear Bishops

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has exposed grave governance failures in our Church, failures that undermine its very mission. We, the undersigned Catholics of Australia, write to you as Pilgrim People of God, accepting shared responsibility for our Church, expressing our sense of faith which Vatican II recognised as critical to the life of the Church, and asking you our bishops to listen and to act decisively, executing necessary reforms now.

Over several decades we have seen our Church declining steadily to its now shameful state. Countless Catholics have been alienated, particularly younger generations who are our Church's future. The Royal Commission has now exposed dysfunctional governance, an entrenched culture of clericalism, and a leadership not listening to the people. Too many bishops have denied the extent of clerical child sexual abuse and its systemic cover-up, and even protected paedophiles ahead of children.

The Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry also found that the Church's governance contributed to coverups and further abuse. Yet the failings go beyond the scandal of child sexual abuse. Archbishops have admitted to "a catastrophic failure of leadership", and some have spoken of 'criminal negligence'. Church credibility has been squandered. To rebuild trust, there must be reform of governance based on Gospel values, reflecting servant leadership and engagement with the faithful. There has to be accountability, transparency, and inclusion particularly of women.

Changing processes is not enough. We ask each and every bishop to **act now** on these reforms:

1. Eradicate the **corrosive culture of clericalism** – "an evil . . . in the Church" (Pope Francis).
2. Become truly **accountable with full involvement of the faithful**, including diocesan pastoral councils, and diocesan assemblies or synods; with pastoral plans and annual diocesan reports.
3. Appoint **women to more senior diocesan positions**, such as chancellor and delegate of bishops.
4. Hold **diocesan synods/assemblies** in 2018, with deanery and parish listening sessions, to develop the agenda for the national 2020 Plenary Council; and as part of normal diocesan governance.
5. Further remodel **priestly formation**, including ongoing development, assessment and registration.
6. **Reconcile publicly and fully** with all the persons abused, their families and communities, and commit to just redress.

7. Send an **urgent delegation, including laity, to Pope Francis:**

1. urging him to **purge child sexual abuse** from the Church: legislating civil reporting of abuse, and ensuring effective discipline, major canon law reform, and review of priestly celibacy;
2. advising him of the Royal Commission's **exposure of the Church's global dysfunctional governance**; particularly its clericalist culture and lack of accountability, transparency, and inclusiveness, especially the exclusion of women from top decision-making positions; and
3. requesting immediate **reform of bishop selection** processes, fully including the faithful in identifying the needs of dioceses and local selection criteria.

None of the above proposals requires deferral to the Holy See or awaiting the Royal Commission's report before acting. All these actions are within your own competence. We ask you to lead the reform of our Church now, acting promptly and decisively - anything less would be a betrayal of the Gospel.

We pray that the Spirit guide us all at this critical time.

Catholics of Australia

(This letter was signed by over 4,000 Australian Catholics)

Communique from a meeting in Canberra, 23 March 2018

Australian Coalition for Church Reform:

Nine Catholic groups advocating for systemic reform of the Church have met in Canberra today to assert the responsibility of all Catholic people to be heard and to lead in the Church.

The Catholic Church in Australia faces continuing decay unless bishops understand the necessity of the grassroots Catholics to have a central role in the direction and decision-making of the Church. There needs to be a restoration of trust in and by the bishops in the value of advice and wisdom from ordinary Catholics which for too long has been rejected or at best ignored.

The Coalition will seek a meeting between the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and ACCCR representatives to open the lines of communication to press for the bishops to give effect to the significant recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse and to respond to our call for greater involvement of the people of God through the coming Plenary Council 2020.

We also call on the bishops to accept the nomination of a woman as co-chair of the 2020 Plenary Council.

The catastrophe that the Church has experienced with the institutional sexual abuse underlines the need for effective and urgent reform. Yet the response of the bishops so far in its preparation for the 2020 plenary indicates a failure to learn a fundamental lesson of that catastrophe.

That is the need for decisive reforms to the governance structure that remains largely unchanged despite that experience.

The people are as much a part of the church as the bishops and we need to work towards their greater participation.

We propose a summit for all Catholics before the Plenary to cultivate open discussion to a

The program content so far for the Plenary Council indicates they have not understood the recommendations regarding transparency, inclusiveness and accountability.

The place of women in the Church must be given urgent priority so that at this time of crisis in the church, the wisdom and talents of women can fully contribute to the Church.

There will be no successful governance structure without the grassroots people, particularly women, in leadership and decision-making roles.

The 2020 Plenary is a positive step. It is imperative that the faithful be fully involved in preparation of this Plenary Council. But the plenary council must not be used as a delaying tactic in avoiding immediate issues.

The Royal Commission has identified grave deficiencies in the Church's governance. Those deficiencies resulted in the protection of pedophiles and the abuse of further children.

The horror of child sexual abuse terrible as it is but one example of the lack of accountability in the leadership of the church.

Church leaders have to learn to be accountable, transparent and inclusive of all, particularly women. That means listening to the faithful and engaging through structures such as pastoral councils.

There must be greater and continuing attention to the survivors of sexual abuse as well as marginalised people, indigenous Australians, refugees, and LGBTI people.

Without strong influence and input of the people of God laity, the plenary will be like a departing cruise ship, leaving 95 per cent behind at the dockside.

(The ACCCR comprises these renewal groups: Catholics Speak Out, Women and the Australian Church, Catholics for Renewal, Inclusive Catholics, The Friendship Group (Bunbury WA), Aggioramento, Perth Australian Reforming Catholics, Cyber Christian Community (WA), and Concerned Catholics of Canberra Goulburn)

Communique from Youth Gathering in Rome, May 2018

Extract:

11. The manner of the Church

Today's young people are longing for an authentic Church. We want to say, especially to the hierarchy of the Church, that they should be a transparent, welcoming, honest, inviting, communicative, accessible, joyful and interactive community.

A credible Church is one which is not afraid to allow itself be seen as vulnerable. The Church should be sincere in admitting its past and present wrongs, that it is a Church made up of persons who are capable of error and misunderstanding. The Church should condemn actions such as sexual abuse and the mismanagement of power and wealth. The Church should continue to enforce her no-tolerance stance on sexual abuse within her institutions and her humility will undoubtedly raise its credibility among the world's young people. If the

Church acts in this way, then it will differentiate itself from other institutions and authorities which young people, for the most part, already mistrust.

All the more, the Church draws the attention of young people by being rooted in Jesus Christ. Christ is the Truth which makes the Church different from any other worldly group with which we may identify. Therefore, we ask that the Church continue to proclaim the joy of the Gospel with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We desire that the Church spread this message through modern means of communication and expression. The young have many questions about the faith, but desire answers which are not watered-down, or which utilize pre-fabricated formulations. We, the young Church, ask that our leaders speak in practical terms about controversial subjects such as homosexuality and gender issues, about which young people are already freely discussing without taboo. Some perceive the Church to be “anti-science” so its dialogue with the scientific community is also important, as science can illuminate the beauty of creation. In this context, the Church should also care for environmental issues, especially pollution. We also desire to see a Church that is empathetic and reaches out to those struggling on the margins, the persecuted and the poor. An attractive Church is a relational.

DOCUMENT “YOUNG PEOPLE, THE FAITH AND VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT”. PRE-SYNODAL MEETING. Rome, 19-24 march 2018, SYNOD OF BISHOPS, XV ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY)

(<http://www.synod2018.va/content/synod2018/en/news/final-document-from-the-pre-synodal-meeting.pdf>)

Research on views of Australian teenagers on religion and spirituality

New research shows Australian teenagers have complex views on religion and spirituality

Extract from Andrew Singleton, Associate Professor of Sociology and Social Research, Deakin University; Anna Halafoff, Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Deakin University; Gary D Bouma, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, Monash University (and friend of The Conversation); Mary Lou Rasmussen, Professor, School of Sociology, Australian National University, The Conversation, September 18, 2018

It's perhaps not surprising that few Australian teens are engaged in formal religion and its practice. But, according to a new national study, many young people are nonetheless interested in spirituality, taking a complex and broad-minded approach to the issue. As researcher Andrew Singleton writes, the findings further challenge the idea that Australia is largely a Christian country, with teenagers at the forefront of overturning old ideas and constructing new ones. The researchers found that teenagers broadly fit into six groups on matters of spirituality, from those with strong convictions to those questioning and discovering. And what is also striking is that they are remarkably tolerant of others' views on the matter. As the researchers often heard: "it's all good". The 2016 Census suggested about a third of Australian teens had no religion. But ask a teenager themselves about religion, rather than the parent or guardian filling in the census form, and the picture is slightly different. According to our new national survey, at least half of teens say they are "religious nones" - those who do not identify with a religion or religious group. Digging deeper, we found a more complicated picture of faith and spirituality among young Australians. Most Gen Z teens have little to do with organised religion in their personal lives, while a significant proportion are interested in different ways of being spiritual. Migration, diversity, secularisation and a burgeoning spiritual marketplace challenge the notion that we are a "Christian" country. More than any other group, teenagers are at the forefront of this remaking of Australian religion. Their daily experience of secondary school and social media sees them bumping into all kinds of difference. Teens are forming their own strong views about existential matters. Our national study by scholars from ANU, Deakin and Monash – the AGZ Study – comprises 11 focus groups with students in Years 9 and 10 (ages 15-16) in three states, a nationally representative telephone survey of 1,200 people aged 13-18, and 30 in-depth, follow-up interviews. ...(more)

Response of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia to the Royal Commission Recommendations on Institutional Response to CSA

“Catholic leaders have today announced they accept 98 per cent of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and have vowed that the Church’s shameful history will never be repeated.

Josephite Sister Monica Cavanagh, the president of Catholic Religious Australia, and Australian Catholic Bishops Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge have today released a joint response, expressing their deep sorrow that vulnerable children were abused, weren’t believed and weren’t supported when seeking justice.

Sr Monica said the Royal Commission “was an important and necessary period for the Australian community” and expressed gratitude to the survivors “whose courage in coming forward and telling their stories will mean that the Church and society will be safer in the future”.

“The process is already under way to reform the Church’s practices to ensure that safeguarding is integral in all that we do as part of our ministry and outreach in the community,” Sr Monica said. “Making the Church a safer place for our children and vulnerable persons is at the heart of our commitment to mission.”

Archbishop Coleridge said many changes had been made since the horrific reality of child sexual abuse became known, but they were sometimes too slow and too timid.

“Too many priests, brothers, sisters and lay people in Australia failed in their duty to protect and honour the dignity of all, including, and especially, the most vulnerable – our children and our young people,” Archbishop Coleridge said.

“Many bishops failed to listen, failed to believe, and failed to act. Those failures allowed some abusers to offend again and again, with tragic and sometimes fatal consequences. The bishops and leaders of religious orders pledge today: Never again.

“There will be no cover-up. There will be no transferring of people accused of abuse. There will be no placing the reputation of the Church above the safety of children.”

Sr Monica said the Church has already begun to change a number of practices, including in the screening and formation of those training to be priests or religious sisters and brothers, and more is being done to ensure the ongoing formation of priests and religious men and women.

“Today is not about us saying ‘we will do the bare minimum’ in responding to the Royal Commission’s important recommendations,” she said. “Today is about telling parents and

telling the community that the Church has learned, it is changing and it will continue to change. Changing the culture of our Church to be answerable and open is part of the action that needs to occur.

” Archbishop Coleridge said the Catholic Church’s response to the Royal Commission’s recommendations is “a plan of action; it is our pledge to the Australian people; it is our promise of transparency and accountability”. (*The Catholic Church has learned, is changing and will keep changing’ ACBC Media Release 31 August 2018*)

Truth Justice and Healing Council Report to ACBC and CRA

The Truth, Justice and Healing Council provided a four volume report to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia. The advice helped shape the Church’s response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The Truth, Justice and Healing Council reports can be found at www.tjhcouncil.org.au

The need and time for listening, reflecting, discerning and responding.

What is on the table?

Archbishop Coleridge: “Everything is on the table”. “There can no longer be ‘business as usual’ in the way the bishops behaved in the past.”

There are many issues, illustrated by the few examples that follow:

- The continuing importation of priests and seminarians from other particular churches outside Australia
- Mandatory celibacy for diocesan priests
- Re-modelling of formation for the priesthood
- Ordination of married men to the priesthood
- Women priests
- Selection of bishops – involvement of all the faithful
- Church governance
- Religious Freedom and the Catholic Church
 - All pastoral challenges including the issue of imported 457 visa priests including alternative strategies for handling the ‘shortage of priests.’ The diocese of Trier in Germany has plans to amalgamate its current 173 parishes into 35 ‘maxi-parishes’ by 2020:

Delphine Nerbollier, “German diocese launches parishes of the future Currently Trier Diocese has 172 parishes but this number will be reduced to 35 by the end of 2020” *La Croix International* February 15, 2018. (Accessed 16/02/2018 https://international.la-croix.com/news/german-diocese-launches-parishes-of-the-future/6942?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=15-02-2018&utm_campaign=newsletter_crx_lci&PMID=47765922ca935ed104281ce03e24b04a)

Two other solutions to the priest shortage and the so-called ‘Eucharistic famine’ were proposed by missionary bishops several years ago:

Bishop Erwin Kräutler, bishop of an enormous territorial diocese in the Brazilian Amazon, has requested that he be authorized to ordain ‘viri probati,’ proven, trustworthy local married men. Pope Francis told him that if the Brazilian Episcopal Conference reached a positive consensus decision then they should present the recommendation to him.

David Gibson, "Are married priests next on Pope Francis' reform agenda?" *NCR* May 2, 2014 (Accessed 12/02/2018 <https://www.ncronline.org/news/theology/are-married-priests-next-pope-francis-reform-agenda>)

A similar though slightly different proposal has been suggested by another missionary bishop of German origin, Fritz Lobinger, retired bishop of Aliwal, South Africa. Christine Schenk, "Will next Synod address ordaining 'elders' – both women and men?" *NCR* Aug. 25, 2016 (Accessed 12/02/2018 <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/simply-spirit/will-next-synod-address-ordaining-elders-both-women-and-men/>)

- Charters of rights and responsibilities (written constitution) for the diocese, parish and ACBC that must include these essential features: genuine representation in ecclesial structures; gender balance; transparency and accountability in finance and governance; the development of the culture and practice of subsidiarity, dialogue; time limits for office bearers.
- A Truth Justice and Reconciliation forum to address and resolve injustices: the matter of + Bill Morris has not disappeared.
- Selection of bishops: "*He who has to preside over all must be elected by all.*" - Pope Leo (440-61)

This Transparency and accountability are not privileges but natural rights and normal expectations in a Community of equals founded in the Body of Christ. The authentic foundational relationship in this Community is the living bond between sisters and brothers not on that of a hierarchical pyramid. (Pope Francis)

- 1.1 Why were the standards of transparency and accountability not evident in the invitation/appointment of people to various preparatory/advisory bodies?
- 1.2 How much support from the other members of the ACBC does Archbishop Coleridge have when he promises that everything is 'on the table', or is this showmanship and bluff? Given that most Catholics are not out to contest the core beliefs of Christianity, which are very few and very specific, there is a great deal that can and must be on the table, matters that are not divinely revealed such as the priesthood, compulsory celibacy and the diocesan priesthood, the ordination of women to the priesthood, the appointment of lay people to the highest levels of Church governance; the restoration of a translation of the Missal which is pronouncable and proclaimable; the establishment of diocesan pastoral councils and parish councils/ leadership teams. The Synod might need

to request the Holy See to change Canon Law to make these compulsory for Australia but why appeal to law when it can happen voluntarily?

- 1.3 What kind of ecclesial model are the bishops presenting here? If one of the ultimate goals of the Plenary is to establish a new culture of Church life, relationship and communication between themselves and the rest of the Faithful, why are these not evident in the way bishops are acting right now.
- 1.4 If a major goal of the Plenary is to reignite an evangelical missionary spirit in the local Church, then, to whom will the message be addressed, the secular world, those Catholics who have drifted or both? These matters must be made clear because they may need to be examined very closely and in great detail: the long term viability of established sacramental ministries dependent on the traditional notions of ordained priesthood, and the prospect that dioceses, parishes, Catholic schools and other agencies bearing the name 'Catholic' will continue to be affected by 'the Drift', that is, the dramatic increase in Catholics disaffiliating themselves from participation.
- 1.5 Into what kind of Church are these people being invited to enter? What would be the evident qualities of institutional structure and community life that would attract them and hold them?

'The late Richard McBrien once said that *"When we study history, we realize that there is very, very little about the church that cannot change."*

- Edward P. Hahnenberg, "History and mystery: Two themes that guided the late Fr. Richard McBrien," *NCR*, Jan. 28, 2015 (Accessed 08/10/2017 <https://www.ncronline.org/news/people/history-and-mystery-two-themes-guided-late-fr-richard-mcbrien>)

Things to ponder and discuss about shared leadership and co-responsibility in the local parish community. It maybe time for parishes/dioceses to develop, consult, receive and proclaim A Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

Discussion Document: A Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

"For the first time in the Church's history, the 1983 Code of Canon Law contained a list of the rights and obligations of individual Catholics. (cc. 208-223). Even though a similar list of rights and obligations for parish communities was requested at the time, it was not forthcoming. Nevertheless, there are numerous canons that protect and regulate parishes, as well rights that arise from the theology of the local church and Catholic social teaching on subsidiarity." (Dr James Coriden JCD - http://arcc-catholic-rights.net/rights_of_parishes.htm)

Principles for a 'Charter of Fundamental Rights and Obligations' within the Catholic Church were spelt out at the 1971 World Synod of Bishops. The core of this Charter of Fundamental Rights and Obligations was preserved in the document "Justice in the World" that was the official statement issued at the end of the 1971 World Synod of Bishops. "Justice in the World" was affirmed and signed by Pope Paul VI at the end of the Synod. In a broader perspective, the statement embodies the core principles of the *Lex Ecclesiae Fundamentalis* ("Fundamental Law of the Church") commissioned by Pope Paul VI at the very end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. Work is continuing on this in the Vatican where it has recently attracted renewed attention.

A section of *Lex Ecclesiae Fundamentalis* "The Practice of Justice" remains of particular interest to the 'International Catholic Reform Network' (ICCR) which for the fourth time since 2013 in met in Bratislava in June 2018, attended by Australian representatives of the National Council of Priests and Catholics For Renewal.

From all of the above and following some subsequent informal local discussion in Australia the following Preliminary (discussion) Draft of A Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities has been developed for discussion:

Preliminary (discussion) Draft of A Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

1. Primacy of Conscience. Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to develop an informed conscience and to act in accord with it.
2. Community. Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to participate in a Eucharistic community and the right to responsible pastoral care.
3. Universal Ministry. Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to proclaim the Gospel and to respond to the community's call to serve in appropriate ministries.
4. Freedom of Expression. Every Catholic has the right to freedom of expression and the freedom to dissent but always within the context of the Christian obligation to protect the rights and human dignity of others.
5. Sacraments. Catholics, according to age and disposition, have the right and responsibility to participate in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.
6. Reputation. All Catholics have the right to a good name and to due process.
7. Governance. All Catholics and their communities have the right to a genuine participation in decision making, including the selection of leaders.
8. Participation. All Catholic have the right and responsibility to share in the discernment of the Gospel message and Church tradition. All Catholics have the right and responsibility to

enjoy and participate in regular Faith education particularly in the Scriptures and the various branches of theology.

9. Councils. Catholics have the right to convene and speak in assemblies where diverse voices can be heard.

10. Social Justice. Every Catholic has the right and the responsibility to promote social justice in the world at large as well as within the structures of the Church.

<http://concernedcatholicsmt.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/A-Catholic-Bill-of-Rights-Responsibilities.pdf>)

Charter for the local particular church

Mandatory Diocesan Pastoral Councils, Pastoral Plan, Annual reports. Deaneries

Catholics For Renewal believes that for a truly synodal church the local diocesan bishop in every diocese should immediately establish a gender-balanced diocesan pastoral council, mandate gender-balanced parish pastoral councils, develop a 5-year diocesan pastoral plan via a diocesan synod – the “instrument par excellence for assisting the bishop to order his diocese, and publish a comprehensive annual diocesan report.” (Cf. Directory for Bishops, n. 67)” (Directory for Bishops, n. 67 [[LINK](#)])

(http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cbishops/documents/rc_con_cbishops_doc_20040222_apostolorum-successores_en.html)

Diocesan Deaneries: Deaneries as already established in some, though not all particular churches in Australia. They encourage and strengthen parish engagement and mutual collaboration. They can further effectively lead to development of a larger pool of experienced resources for potentially supporting diocesan pastoral councils and parish pastoral councils.

At parish level pastoral Councils have a critical role in focussing on issues that strengthen and re-energise faith-community engagement in Church, forming an essential and key input to diocesan deliberations and decisions.

“It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it.” Joseph Joubert, Aphorisms