



Anglican Church of Australia
General Synod

Challenges and opportunities for transforming the Anglican Church arising out of the Royal Commission

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Case Study 52: Institutional review of Anglican Church authorities

Comments by the Royal Commission to the Panel:

Panel 1.1 – Governance and Structure of the Church

- “You can assume that the six Commissioners are of one mind: there should not be inconsistency of approach to (child protection matters) in one part of Australia different to another. That's as much in the Anglican Church as it is in any other church ” (Commissioner McClellan)

Panel 2.1 - Training and Screening – Clergy and Church workers

- “... surely it is in your self-interest as a group of leaders to actually force through collaboration, because if you don't do that, the weakest link in the chain will, in fact, affect the whole chain, won't it?” (Commissioner Murray)



Overview – Findings about religious institutions

Findings in Volume 1 (Preface and executive summary) of the Final Report:

Common contributing factors across religious institutions

- “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 and to inadequate institutional responses.”

Overview – Findings about religious institutions

Findings in Volume 16 (Religious institutions) of the Final Report:

Multiple and often interacting combination of cultural, governance and theological factors contributed to the occurrence of child sexual abuse and to inadequate institutional responses

- **The status of people in religious ministry**

“The power and authority exercised by people in religious ministry, as well as the trust they were shown, gave them access to children and created opportunities for abuse. ... The elevated status of the person in religious ministry made it extremely difficult for victims to disclose abuse.”



Overview – Findings about religious institutions

- **Inadequate selection, screening and training**

“The occurrence of child sexual abuse within religious institutions may in part be attributed to the poor selection and screening of candidates for religious ministry and the lack of appropriate initial training or formation.”

- **Structure and governance of religious institutions**

- **Autonomy and decision-making**

“Independent, autonomous or decentralised governance structures have often served to protect leaders of religious institutions from being scrutinised or held accountable for their actions, or lack of action, in responding to child sexual abuse.”



Overview – Findings about religious institutions

- **Conflicts of interest**

“In some instances religious leaders showed a lack of understanding of or disregard for perceived or actual conflicts of interest in circumstances where there were inadequate checks and balances to regulate their personal power.”

- **Patriarchal structures and the limited role of women**

“In some religious organisations, the absence or insufficient involvement of women in leadership positions and in governance structures negatively affected decision-making and accountability, and may have contributed to the inadequate institutional responses to child sexual abuse.”



Overview – Findings about religious institutions

- **Child sexual abuse as a ‘moral failing’**

“We also heard that child sexual abuse was seen as involving a ‘moral failure’ rather than a crime on the part of the perpetrator. Across religious institutions in Australia, allegations and admissions of child sexual abuse were often approached through the lens of forgiveness and repentance.”

- **Application of religious laws or principles**

“It is clear that for some religious organisations internal laws, or specific scriptural, doctrinal or theological principles present an ongoing obstacle to the reforms needed to ensure that children are safe from sexual abuse in religious institutions.”

Overview – Findings about religious institutions

- **Protecting the reputation of religious institutions**

“In responding to child sexual abuse, many leaders of religious institutions demonstrated a preoccupation with protecting the institution’s ‘good name’ and reputation. Actions were often taken with the aim of avoiding, preventing or repairing public ‘scandal’, and concealing information that could tarnish the image of the institution and its personnel, or negatively impact on its standing in the community.”



Overview – Findings about the Anglican Church

Findings in Volume 1 (Preface and executive summary) of the Final Report:

The response of the Anglican Church

- leaders often dismissed, did not believe, or minimised allegations
- complaints of child sexual abuse were rarely reported to police
- alleged perpetrators were allowed to remain in ministry
- total payments to survivors of \$34.03 million, at an average of approximately \$72,000 per payment, arising out of 472 complaints of child sexual abuse to dioceses, were received between 1 January 1980 and 31 December 2015

Overview – Findings about the Anglican Church

Findings in Volume 1 (Preface and executive summary) of the Final Report:

Contributing factors in the Anglican Church

- lack of a consistent national approach has led to inconsistent outcomes for survivors
- barriers include dispersed and decentralised authority, diocesan autonomy, theological and cultural differences between dioceses
- failure of leadership by diocesan bishops
- conflicts of interest arose for diocesan bishops and senior diocesan officeholders
- culture of forgiveness

Overview – Recommendations about redress

Recommendations in Redress and Civil Litigation Report:

- establishment of a single national redress scheme
- appropriate redress for survivors should include three elements:
 - direct personal response
 - counselling and psychological care
 - monetary payments up to a maximum payment of \$200,000
- key advantages of a single national redress scheme:
 - equal access and equal treatment for survivors regardless of the location, operator, type, continued existence or assets of the responsible institution
 - decisions made by a body that would be independent of the institutions



Overview – Responses to provide redress

- National Redress Scheme commenced on 1 July 2018 and will continue for 10 years
- redress for applicants has one or more of three elements:
 - redress payment of up to \$150,000
 - access to counselling and psychological services
 - a direct personal response
- a participating institution or a participating group can join Scheme
- where there is a participating group and an offer of redress is accepted, all members of the participating group and their officials other than the abuser are released from civil liability

Overview – Recommendations to religious institutions

Recommendations in Volume 16 (Religious Institutions) of the Final Report:

- Anglican Church – 5 recommendations*
 - Catholic Church – 21 recommendations*
 - Jehovah's Witness organisation – 3 recommendations
 - Jewish institutions – 1 recommendation
 - All religious institutions in Australia – 28 recommendations
- * some recommendations overlap with the recommendations to all religious institutions in Australia

Overview – Recommendations to religious institutions

Recommendations in other Volumes of the Final Report:

- Volume 6 (Making Institutions Child Safe) - 3 recommendations
 - Volume 7 (Improving Institutional Responding and Reporting) - 3 recommendations
 - Volume 8 (Record Keeping and Information Sharing) - 2 recommendations
 - Volume 13 (Schools) - 1 recommendation
 - Volume 17 (Beyond the Royal Commission) - 1 recommendation
- 2 recommendations in the Criminal Justice Report

Overview - Recommendations to religious institutions

Subject matter of recommendations applicable to all religious institutions in Australia:

- Child Safe Standards - 4 recommendations*
- Screening and Related Training - 4 recommendations
- Training and Professional Development - 4 recommendations
- Advice and Accountability - 11 recommendations
- Regulatory Engagement - 3 recommendations
- Handling Complaints - 6 recommendations
- Discipline - 4 recommendations

* excluding repeated recommendations



Summary of the 10 Child Safe Standards

1. Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved.
4. Equity is promoted and diversity respected.
5. People working with children are suitable and supported.
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focussed.



Summary of the 10 Child Safe Standards

7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.
9. Implementation of child safe standards is continuously reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

Overview - Recommendations to the Anglican Church

Recommendations in Volume 16 (Religious Institutions) of the Final Report:

- uniform episcopal standards framework
- policy to manage actual or perceived conflicts of interest
- *Being together* should refer to the importance of child safety
- national approach to the selection, screening and training of candidates for ordination
- mandatory national standards to ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry (bishops, clergy, and lay personnel):
 - undertake mandatory, regular professional development
 - undertake mandatory professional/pastoral supervision
 - undergo regular performance appraisals



Overview - Responses by the Anglican Church

Redress

- Redress for Survivors of Abuse Canon 2017 passed by General Synod
- Anglican Representative (National Redress Scheme) Limited being established to be representative of Anglican participating group (dioceses, schools and agencies) in National Redress Scheme



Overview - Responses by the Anglican Church

Safe ministry to children

- Safe Ministry to Children Canon 2017 passed by General Synod which prescribes:
 - code of conduct for safe ministry to children
 - minimum standards for safe ministry to children in relation to screening, training and safe ministry with persons of concern
 - audits of safe ministry compliance by General Synod and dioceses

Overview - Responses by the Anglican Church

Episcopal standards

- Episcopal Standards (Child Protection) Canon 2017 and complimentary Canons passed by General Synod which provide for determination fitness to hold office and discipline:
 - current and former diocesan bishops and bishops who are or were an assistant to the Primate
 - arising out of child abuse or the failure without reasonable excuse to comply with mandatory reporting laws



Challenges for the Anglican Church

The present – some observations

- The ramifications of the Royal Commission extend to other forms of abuse of children (physical, emotional and spiritual) and all forms of abuse of vulnerable adults
- The failures uncovered by the Royal Commission has had a significant negative impact on the public perception of churches including the Anglican Church

“From child sexual abuse to church leaders involved in scandals, church abuse is the number one negative influence (73% say massive or significant) on Australian perceptions of Christians and Christianity. ”

Faith and Belief in Australia, 2017, page 32.



Challenges for the Anglican Church

The present – some questions

- do clergy have professional supervision?
- do clergy undertake annual performance appraisals?
- are there best practice policies and training for the prevention of abuse of children and vulnerable adults?
- does the culture of the Anglican Church foster clericalism in the formation of candidates for ordination?



Challenges for the Anglican Church

The future – some observations

- the recovery of the reputation of the Anglican Church is likely to depend on the extent to which it is seen as a place of safety for children and vulnerable adults
- there will be a need for an ongoing analysis to better understand what aspects of the life of the Anglican Church (theology, governance, culture) contributed to the occurrence and inadequate responses to child sexual abuse



Challenges for the Anglican Church

The future – some questions

- will clergy and lay leaders promote a culture of safety for children and vulnerable adults in their parish?
- will clergy and lay leaders effect a change in the culture of their parish so that the 10 Child Safe Standards are implemented?
- will clergy and other paid staff in a parish willingly embrace professional supervision and annual performance appraisals?