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To: fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au
Date: 10/09/2012 12:23 PM
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations

Mrs Suzanne James

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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In response to submission guide -

1. The processes by which religious and other non-government organisations respond to the criminal abuse of children by personnel within their organisations are irrelevant. The children of our country are entitled to protection from criminal abuse, and the most vital aspect for enforcing that protection is having the full force of the law brought against any perpetrator of that abuse. Penalties need to be far more severe than they have been to date. The Sentencing Advisory Council's 2012 report revealed that the public attitude to criminal (especially sexual) abuse against young children was seen as a most serious and abhorrent crime.

The on going ramifications of criminal child abuse and especially that of a sexual nature are far-reaching. The damage inflicted on an innocent young life so often turns a human being of full potential into someone suffering such mental torment that their ability to relate to others, develop emotionally and learn is retarded. Such a child can become a social misfit (sometimes a violent social misfit), a drug dependent, a paedophile, and in some instances a suicide victim.

May I add here, in view of the Catholic Church's history of child abuse and cover up of that abuse, that the church has denied suicide victim's the right to burial in sacred ground.

No organisation should be permitted to be above the law. Most especially religious organisation, for not matter how wide-spread or fervently adhered to a religion is, it is a faith and not a fact. On a personal level religion can be a wonderful thing, but let it remain personal. Not some organisation with special rights.

If further incentive is required to address the need for rigorous laws and punishment for criminal child abuse, I would suggest that the resulting cost to the state and therefore the public be considered. If a reliable survey were to be completed that investigated how many of those found guilty of crimes, had been abused as children then an actual 'cost to the state' figure could be derived.

That from time to time we hear of large number of internet child porn viewers is astounding. Were these people victims of abuse themselves, as children? If not, then I am unable to comprehend the attraction of seeing small children tortured.

2. That any religious or other organisation exists in a society where it can assume authority over and above the laws of that society and can therefore preclude and protect it's members from the states legal ramifications is insupportable. That it has been allowed to happen to date an anathema. We cannot permit it to go on.

3. As my response to date has shown, I am fervently in favour of changes to law or to practices, policies and protocols in any and all organisations to help to prevent criminal child abuse. We do not have a charter of human rights in Australia, but as a democratic society we have assumed rights as human beings. If that is not enough to challenge the so-called rights of any of our organisations, religious or otherwise, then bring in a charter of human rights for Australia to enforce whatever changes are required to protect our children.

Suzanne James

