

TRANSCRIPT

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations

Melbourne — 26 March 2013

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Ms C. Wilding

The CHAIR — Good morning, everyone. In accordance with the guidelines for the hearings, I remind members of the public gallery that they cannot participate in any way in the committee's proceedings. Only officers of the Family and Community Development Committee secretariat are to approach committee members. Members of the media are also requested to observe the media guidelines. I ask that you all have your mobile phones switched off while we commence proceedings.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome Ms Chris Wilding. Thank you for your willingness to appear before this hearing. All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Any comments made outside the precincts of the hearings are not protected by parliamentary privilege. If your evidence contains adverse comments or allegations about any individuals, I request that you do not refer to the name or names of those individuals. If you do make an adverse reflection about a person and name them, I will suppress that evidence.

This hearing today is being recorded, and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript. Following your presentation committee members will ask questions in relation to the evidence that you provide to us and in relation to the inquiry. Welcome, and thank you very much for being here. Please commence.

Ms WILDING — I would like to make a brief statement first of all for the survivors. Some fear the truth about sexual abuse of children in the church because it will bring scandal and shame. Others fear the truth because they will be exposed and brought to justice. Those who sit in the pews of the church fear the truth because it may change the way they feel about their church and lose faith, and authorities often fear the truth about sexual abuse of children because they may be pressured to act, and in particular against a church that is the richest and most powerful institution in the world.

It is scandalous that I am before yet another parliamentary inquiry 19 years later to talk about the problem of child sexual abuse in the churches, and in particular the Roman Catholic Church. In those intervening years it could not have escaped the attention of any politician or others with powers to act that this is a problem on a worldwide scale, that each passing day and year more suffering and sometimes suicide of victims and survivors was being exposed through our media, yet no effective action was forthcoming by those who had the power to act and make changes.

If it were not for the courage, tenacity and persistence of survivors, this inquiry would not be happening. To both state and federal governments past I say this: you share the company of other governments around the world who have also failed their children, and therein lies the greatest shame.

The first thing I would like to talk about is sex, power and money with generous side serves of blackmail and bribery in an all-enveloping mist of secrecy. Firstly, the sex. There is no such thing as celibacy in the priesthood of the Catholic Church, and by 'celibacy' I am referring to the chaste state. It is a myth and a big lie. Helen Last, in a former role as a pastoral support advocate for the archdiocese of Melbourne, explained the clerical sentiment regarding celibacy at a 1995 parish forum for clergy abuse in the following way:

The expectations of the laity with regard to celibacy are not the same as the expectations of the hierarchy.

She also confirmed that the corruption went even higher than the person she worked for and spoke of the widespread ecclesiastical tolerance of priests and nuns in sexual relationships.

Richard Sipe, a former priest and psychotherapist, also refers to a culture that is sexually corruptible, and of the elements that support that corruption, secrecy is primary. Two main reasons have been put forward for the culture of hierarchical deceit about sexual predators within the clerical ranks. Some of the bishops themselves have been involved in sexual crime or sexually predatory behaviour. And secondly, bishops are part of a network which operate for institutional and personal advancement.

Sipe explained sexual activity between an older priest and an adult seminarian or a younger priest sets up a pattern of institutional secrecy. When one of the parties rises to a position of power, his friends are also in line for recommendations and advancement. This dynamic, he says, is not limited to homosexual liaisons. Priests and bishops who know about each other's sexual affairs with women are bound together by links of sacred silence. A system of blackmail reaches into the highest corridors of the hierarchy in the Vatican and thrives because of this network of sexual knowledge and relationships.

It is this system of blackmail that is central to the response of bishops, archbishops and cardinals, locally and around the world, relocating paedophile and pederast priests. The bishop's primary objective is to avoid scandal to mother church and to contain and silence victims, but if the bishop is compromised because he is known to be sexually active, the predatory cleric resorts to blackmail. As Father Searson, formerly a priest at a Doveton parish school in south-east Melbourne, brazenly disclosed to an editor of a Catholic magazine who challenged him about his predatory behaviour with children, 'I am not worried about what the bishops might do to me because of what I know about the bishops'.

Sipe says that even bishops innocent of sexual violations themselves, by their silence, concealment of facts and resistance to effective solutions, choose to be part of a genealogy of abuse and reinforce a culture of deceit. In the documentary *Mea Maxima Culpa — Silence in the House of God* Sipe sums up the problem very succinctly. He says it is an old, old problem and if you follow this problem to its foundation it will lead you to the Vatican. This system of the Catholic clergy selects, cultivates, protects, defends and produces sexual abusers.

Blackmail more often than not comes into play when a high-ranking cleric is in a gay relationship, or has sexually abused lower ranking clerics. More than a couple of scalps have been claimed in recent times, which you would have seen: most notably, Cardinal Keith O'Brien in the UK, who has been accused of sexual abuse of seminarians; former Archbishop Weakland from the US is another high profile prelate who was subjected to blackmail by his former gay lover and was forced to resign. There are many others too numerous to mention.

Nevertheless Cardinal Levada still continues to trot out the Catholic Church's mantra: by nature homosexuality is not a predatory activity; it is a sexual activity that the Catholic Church does not condone. There are those who rightly charge that the church is being hypocritical — that is, tolerating and even rewarding personal sexual hypocrisy at the highest levels, providing outward fealty is displayed to central control. As long as the Catholic Church denies, lies about and practises this continuing deceit and hypocrisy, the more likely those who are part of the gay clerical culture will be subjected to blackmail.

This brings me to a culture of deceit and denial. Bishops, in collusion with their archbishops and in obedience to the Vatican, knowingly traffic paedophile and pederast priests interstate and around the globe. They absolve themselves from responsibility and obligation to obey state laws and to report their knowledge of crime within their ranks to local authorities. Instead they obey canon law and the Vatican ruling that requires them to report any sexual abuse that involves a minor to the congregation for the doctrine of faith. Scandal to the church must be avoided at all costs and the darkest secrets of their criminal brethren buried. Certainly we know there has been plenty of organised crime; plenty of organisation and crime aplenty.

We have in this country, and in this state, prelates who believe in absolutely nothing. They are imposters and pretenders who fail to display any Christian virtue, let alone Catholic. In their haste to climb the ecclesiastical ladder anything that gets in their way simply becomes collateral damage. We have seen comments in the media from these wily prelates who minimised the criminality of child sex crimes as 'wrongdoings' and 'misdeeds', who shirk from their own culpability and responsibility, and who seek to deflect the blame to other areas of society, such as the media, the whistleblowers and, sometimes, the victims themselves.

We have heard George Pell proclaim through rubbery lips the latest spin in defence of the church, 'We did not understand the harm this would do to children'. The word 'crime' once again fails to materialise or threaten his conscience. In a fit of protest when the royal commission was announced he said, 'We object to being described as the only cab on the rank'. George, you are right; there are plenty of other bishops, archbishops and cardinals around the world who also share that shame; and clerical sex abuse survivors who have been reminded quite frequently, in one form or another, not to dwell crankily on old wounds, or descend into idle gossip.

Then there are people who I would refer to as willing dupes and useful idiots. These distractions or diversions are trotted out from time to time by the hierarchy, usually when a brighter than normal spotlight is splashed in the church's direction to provide some fortification or barricade between the bishops and an angry and questioning public and media. Some of them have been employed to be prolific apologist letter writers or columnists to newspapers or spokespeople on radio and TV. Some are nuns, to suggest there exists a softer, more feminine, caring and sharing, motherly side to the church. Some are installed as fixers, not without reasonable legal qualifications for the job, who may enjoy a bit of extra cash for their retirement. Whatever way you look at it, they are fighting to cover up. Their energy is expended to secrete and not to reveal. The so-called

transparency and accountability proclaimed by the bishops are simply words. And let us name them for what they are: outright lies. It is part of the culture of deceit.

Regarding deceit at the Vatican level, former Pope Benedict, in his previous life as a cardinal and Vatican official, spent 10 years as the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. For 10 years every child sexual abuse report from around the globe came to his desk. Yet in 2010 while visiting Scotland, when asked for his response to the child sex abuse problem, he replied:

'These revelations were for me a shock and a great sadness. It is difficult to understand how this perversion of the priestly ministry was possible,' he told reporters ... 'How a man who has done this and said this can fall into this perversion is difficult to understand.'

He added, 'It is also a great sadness that the authorities of the church were not sufficiently vigilant and insufficiently quick and decisive in taking the necessary measures.'

Benedict not only claims to be powerless but also claims ignorance of his own church's history. After all, clerical sexual abuse in his church has been going on for more than 1700 years. The truth about this problem dates back to 306 AD, when the first church document was issued evidencing widespread sexual abuse by clergy — a document issued in the Council of Elvira that stated that priests who had sexual relations with boys were to be deprived of communion, even on their deathbeds. The clerical abuse problem also played a key role in the Reformation 500 years ago.

Yet in those few utterances Benedict has divorced himself not only from responsibility but from reality. His disingenuousness about the shock and sadness is reflective of a very deep pathology that resides in the heart of the church hierarchy. Benedict talks about the sexual abuse inferno surrounding him as though he is on the outside looking in merely as an observer. Who are the authorities of the church if Benedict, then the reigning Pope, is not one of them? Whether he was pushed or jumped, it is little wonder that a helicopter ride to a waiting palace proved more appealing.

His predecessor, Pope John Paul II, was no better. His response to sexual corruption was, and I quote, 'Keep quiet, deny, apologise if necessary and, when in doubt, attack the messenger'. It seems our local prelates had a good teacher, none less than an infallible pope.

In a closer look at the murky and shadowy world that is the Vatican, one treacherous and poisonous prelate, Cardinal Sodano, stands out as the unmistakable link to the scandals that have dogged the past two papacies. Attempts to investigate two high-profile cases — involving Austrian cardinal Hans Groër, who abused his students and monks, and Marcial Maciel, a prolific abuser over six decades of seminarians, women and children, including his own — were blocked by Sodano, who holds the title of Dean of the College of Cardinals and previously was the Secretary of State under Pope John Paul II. Cover-ups at the Vatican level had Sodano's dirty fingerprints all over them.

In Sodano's homily delivered at the recent conclave that elected Pope Francis, it is astonishing that he did not choke on his own pious words. I quote:

At the same time today, we implore the Lord that, through the pastoral solicitude of the cardinal fathers, he may soon grant another good shepherd to his holy church. In this hour, faith in the promise of Christ sustains us in the indefectible character of the church. Indeed Jesus said to Peter: 'You are Peter and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.'

Holy? Indefectible? I can tell you that the gates of hell have already prevailed in the corruption of the leadership of the Catholic Church, and the circus of electing a new puppet, albeit a momentary distraction for the world, will not solve their problems.

So let us get back to the lies. We have bishops who lie to popes to protect themselves and popes who lie to the world to protect the church. And why not? With the lies and the corruption exposed, there is nothing left to sell and the river of money will dry up. And that is what it is all about; it is all about the money.

There is possibly no better example that demonstrates the importance of money to the Catholic Church than the story of the Legion of Christ and Marcial Maciel. Millions of dollars poured into the Vatican from the order while they completely ignored the ever-increasing number of sexual abuse cases against Maciel bubbling to the surface. It is a story spanning six decades. They called him the devil in disguise. Maciel founded the order in

1941 and, through fundraising drives, raised millions of dollars, which enabled the order to open universities and seminaries all over the world. He controlled an annual operating budget of \$650 million and counted as friends the rich and famous, including politicians.

Maciel was also a particular favourite of Pope John Paul II, who exalted him as a holy man and a visionary. The Pope also favoured him because the money was flowing into the Vatican. Maciel was as connected as you could get in Rome, and he got that way by giving money to people, including a \$90 000 bribe to Cardinal Martínez Somalo, who was at the time the head of the congregation that should have investigated his crimes.

Behind closed doors, Maciel lived a secret life. He abused dozens of his legionaries and would visit the monasteries and insist on being masturbated by or having sex with one of the boys. He had at least two secret mistresses and four children, and he abused some of them too. Even when reports started to surface in the press about Maciel, John Paul II did not investigate him; he celebrated him, and the money kept pouring in. Cardinal Angelo Sodano — aforementioned ruthless Vatican faction leader and one who is as morally, politically and financially corrupt as anyone could possibly be — protected Maciel and was handsomely rewarded. Sodano also ensured that any investigations into Maciel's crimes were stopped. John Paul II knew about the crimes but sat on his hands; after all, Maciel was his favourite son, and it is all about the money. The rivers of cash continue to flow into the Vatican every week and the rivers of tears flow from survivors, their families, friends and communities around the world. Their tears would fill oceans.

Here are some more unholy alliances. We have always considered separation of church and state important in this country. One only need look at the adverse effects on countries where clericalism of one creed or another rules. During the Howard era of politics then Archbishop of Sydney George Pell enjoyed considerable political sway and outspokenness, and there was no secret about the mutual admiration between he and John Howard. Another high-profile cleric, former Anglican Archbishop Peter Hollingworth, was sworn in as Governor-General, albeit it for a brief period due to mishandling of sex abuse in his own church.

In an article in the *Age* last year, written by Jane Cadzow and entitled 'Our man in Rome', opposition leader Tony Abbott claims, 'Pell is one of the greatest churchmen that Australia has seen' and that he has sought Pell's counsel on important matters on more than one occasion. Pell was equally proud to point out his connectedness with those in positions of power and influence and revealed that Abbott was not the only politician who sought his advice.

Just briefly on issues concerning money, Pell also boasted that renovations to his new digs in Rome cost \$30 million, which he considers an investment — although one could regard it as a drop in the ocean when *BRW* reported in 2006 that the Catholic Church's revenue for the previous year was \$16.2 billion, all tax exempt.

According to Cadzow, Pell's tilt at the top job of Pope has been hampered by a lingering whiff of a scandal, one that has never been tried in a court of law but in a church-appointed inquiry in 2002, and we all know that you do not hold an inquiry unless you already know the outcome. No sooner had Pell stood aside than Prime Minister Howard publicly defended Pell and expressed confidence in his character. Without waiting for the judge's decision his friend Tony Abbott also rushed to Pell's defence declaring that:

It should not surprise any Christian that there would be people who want to make unfair, wrong, mischievous, malevolent accusations against the strongest and most public Christian of the time ... I am more than ready to accept Pell's testimony —

he trumpeted. When the inquiry was completed Pell claimed to any listening ear to be exonerated. To the contrary: independent commissioner Alex Southwell, QC, found both witnesses' testimony equally credible.

A few years earlier, in 1997, Tony Abbott insisted on providing a character testimonial for another Catholic cleric who was subsequently struck off by the Vatican. He described Father X, who was found guilty of indecent assault of a 15-year-old altar boy by a Wollongong magistrate, although he later successfully appealed against the conviction, as 'a beacon of humanity'. He also described Father X as:

An extremely upright and virtuous man ... I liked ... his maturity — intellectual, social and emotional.

The fact that the Vatican laicised Father X with haste, at least by Vatican standards, when they have been slow or reluctant to do this in thousands of other cases around the world even when the priest has been charged with more serious crimes or been sent to jail, raises some serious questions. Was X's laicisation performed because

of Vatican knowledge about other sexual abuse claims against him? Or was the hasty move to get X out of the church and out of the country to America to silence him in order to protect one or more other identities, given that there have been a significant number of clerical abuse allegations and prosecutions in the Wollongong district? The church knows it all; they have all the paperwork. The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith knows it all.

But on an even more serious note regarding this case, we have a federal MP, Tony Abbott, who has told the court what a good bloke Father X was, and Abbott was prepared to provide this character reference in spite of having no connection to Nestor since their seminary days. This is the man who wants to be our next Prime Minister.

Equally disturbing, the District Court, which heard the appeal and quashed the conviction, bears a name that raised for me significant questions about his judicial independence. The magistrate in the original trial described the abuse as ‘a gross breach of trust’ and imposed a sentence of 16 months jail.

Further north, in the Newcastle and Maitland district, Detective Chief Inspector Fox found it untenable to remain quiet about cover-ups by others in positions of power when dealing with child sexual abuse by clergy. He disclosed to Tony Jones on *Lateline* that the evil of paedophilia in the Catholic Church was the worst he had heard. In this one district alone, he told Jones, the scale of the problem — 400 victims, 14 clergy charged, 6 Catholic teachers convicted, 3 priests currently on trial — —

The CHAIR — Chris, can I interrupt you for a moment. I know you have quite a bit more to say to us, but I am keen for committee members to ask questions of you. Can you make some concluding remarks, because I can see you have some additional information — —

Ms WILDING — There are only another couple of pages to go.

The CHAIR — Keep going. We might only get a couple of questions in, but if that is your preference, please continue.

Ms WILDING — Fox also revealed the existence of a well-organised ring of paedophile clerics from adjoining parishes who use parish money for their defence costs, as well as destroying and removing evidence.

I can testify from my own experience that the church covers up, silences victims, hinders police investigations, alerts offenders, destroys evidence and moves priests to protect the good name of the church. There is so much power and organisation behind the scenes that the police do not have the powers to be able to go in and seize documents or have them disclose things to us. Why don't the police have the powers to seize? Who or what is stopping them?

Fox also claimed that the cover-up went to the highest levels of the Catholic Church and that an archbishop and two other clerics were implicated. We can draw some conclusions from these statements by Fox and the example of the Father X case; that the tentacles of the bishops, archbishops and cardinals reach into every agency of power — the police force; the judiciary, with whom the church retains very close links; governments and politicians; the media and other spheres of power and influence. Throughout the decades the crimes of clerical abuse could not have been smothered and the spot fires extinguished without the interference and willing cooperation of persons in other agencies of power.

Ray Mouton, the lawyer hired by the church to represent Gauthé, the first US Catholic priest to be indicted on child sex abuse charges, elucidates in his fictional account *In God's House* how the power structure works between the church and other agencies of power. It is a novel about truth not facts, where bishops, cardinals and popes, like criminal priests, act out of a deep, dark, dangerous pathology that presents a great danger to society. They are men who purport to be men of God but who abandon morality for legality.

The church's political powerbroker said, ‘It does not matter who that family has as a lawyer, we can control the district attorney and the press. We just need a lawyer to go to some meetings with the DA on behalf of the priest. A few meetings with the DA and it will all be over with. We elected Sean Robinette as DA and re-elected him three times. He owes us, and Robinette is not about to indict a Catholic priest and embarrass Bishop Reynolds’.

When asked how the media was going to be kept out, he said, ‘Son, even the *New York Times* won’t piss on the Pope. It has been a damn secret for over a year, and it can continue to be a secret until hell freezes over. The church keeps all our secrets, son, and we can damn well keep theirs’.

On maintaining the silence of victims when more victims of the same priest emerged, ‘No priest in the United States has ever been prosecuted in an open court before a jury for sex crimes against children. No bishop or diocese has ever been dragged into court because of the sex crimes of a priest. And none of that is going to happen here. Not on my watch. We bought the first six claims, sealed the settlements. We buried the cases in the vault of the courthouse. And we will buy and bury these 11 claims too’.

Who does the buying? Patrick Wall, previously known as the fixer and sent all over the US to extinguish any scandal surrounding sex abuse by priests by settling with victims and extracting secrecy agreements, explains in detail the operations he undertook on behalf of the church. ‘The sexually abusive priest has to be removed, his stuff has to be completely removed, and then there is another guy placed in there ... to make sure the normal life of the parish continues. I thought I was going there to uncover the crime, to heal the wounds. I thought it was pastoral care. Comforting the afflicted is what we were ordained for. But the people sending me in obviously had ulterior motives. They would give you authorisation up to \$250 000 just to settle a case if you could get a confidentiality order. In 1995 we had a budget of \$7 million just to handle various problems of childhood sexual abuse. In the Catholic mindset you do not sue the church’.

When asked if part of his brief was to report these things to local authorities, Wall replied, ‘Never. That is the worldwide policy, to snuff out the scandal’. That is precisely the job description of Melbourne’s Mr Fix-it, Peter O’Callaghan, QC — to snuff out the scandal, pay out the victims, shut them up, deter them from reporting to police and, at the same time, gather information for the church. O’Callaghan was employed by the archdiocese of Melbourne as part of the Melbourne Response setup by Pell as a purportedly independent commissioner and a vehicle for victim compensation. In reality, O’Callaghan was an employee of the Melbourne archdiocese and was effectively wearing two hats, and possibly three: firstly, taking evidence from the victims to determine compensation; secondly, hearing evidence or confession from the alleged offender, if still alive; and thirdly, passing on information to the church about offenders who, in his legal experience, would certainly face a jail term. This would then enable the church to move the priest to another country to avoid prosecution. This setup was seriously flawed from the start, consistent with the church’s primary objective to control and contain the criminal information about their predatory clerics.

Finally, a quote from Father Gerald Fitzgerald the founder of the Servants of the Paraclete.

We are amazed to find how often a man, who would be behind bars if he were not a priest, is entrusted with the care of souls.

The CHAIR — Chris thank you very much your presentation and views. What do you think survivors of abuse are looking for? What is the justice or accountability that they perhaps want?

Ms WILDING — Certainly compensation and — —

The CHAIR — What does that look like?

Ms WILDING — The legislation would have to be changed.

The CHAIR — What does the compensation look like?

Ms WILDING — They would have to be able to sue the church. They would have to be able to legally go in and sue the church. Secondly, I think most victims would want the hierarchy, the prelature, to be prosecuted for protecting them — for shielding them, for moving them on and for being accessories to a crime. I think it is essential that that is recognised by our state laws.

Mrs COOTE — Chris, thank you very much indeed. You have given a very thorough overview of what a lot of people have said to us during these hearings. Thank you for that very in-depth summary.

I just want to take you up on one point: you said you would not start an inquiry unless you knew what the outcome was. I would like to take umbrage with that, because I do not believe that is how we are operating. However, I would have to suggest — —

Ms WILDING — I would like to think that too, and I watch and wait.

Mrs COOTE — I would like to talk to you about your great knowledge in a worldwide sense. We live in a functioning democracy here in Australia and the separation between the church and the state is a very important one for how we base the fundamentals of how we operate in a democracy. How do you believe we should be working as a functional democracy in a relationship with the church here in Victoria, given some of the other examples you have quoted — for example, Scotland, and perhaps other countries?

Ms WILDING — I do not think that there should be any sort of cosy relationship between church and state at all. I found it extraordinary that two parliamentarians chose to speak out publicly in defence of a man, where a process in one case had not even started and in the second case where it had not even concluded. It seemed extremely inappropriate that that should have occurred. It does not matter which side of politics, I do not care, although it seems there is more God on one side of politics. I would suggest that none of the other side of politics go to church. I have never heard a word from them — and Julia is an avowed atheist, so she certainly has not been going down that path. But I think that set a very dangerous precedent.

Mrs COOTE — In a regulatory way, how do you see there would be a function for the church and state going forward? Given your answer about suing the church et cetera, how do you believe that would relate to what the obligation of the state is and the church?

Ms WILDING — The obligation of the state clearly is to get the legislation into place that would in some ways — —

It is very difficult. I have wrestled with this for so long. It is so difficult because the powers are not here in Australia. We are talking about an international power, where their power base is in another country, in another state. Therein lies one of the problems. You can only do what needs to be done — what you can do in terms of setting the legislation that can be enforced in this state and perhaps in a federal way, I would suggest.

Mrs COOTE — So given the suggestions you just made to the Chair about compensation and looking at time allocations et cetera, do you believe there should be one set of rules for the Catholic Church here in Victoria in its relationship with the state vis-a-vis other laws that function in a functional democracy here in Victoria?

Ms WILDING — No. The Catholic Church needs to be brought into line with our laws.

Mrs COOTE — In Victoria?

Ms WILDING — Here in Victoria, absolutely.

Mrs COOTE — Therefore the ramifications of that for the international scene, given you have just said that it is all operated out of the Vatican et cetera, how do they relate to what we can do here in Victoria?

Ms WILDING — Just run that past me again. That is very long.

Mrs COOTE — You said before in your presentation that all power rests in Rome at the Vatican.

Ms WILDING — Yes.

Mrs COOTE — And then you said that here in Victoria we should be making laws that are protective of the people here in Victoria versus the church.

Ms WILDING — Yes.

Mrs COOTE — But you said in your presentation that really the church has its own rules and therefore how are they going to be relate to each other? How is that going to work here in Victoria, do you believe?

Ms WILDING — You have got a very difficult problem in front of you; it is extremely difficult. Obviously you can mandate them, but whether that will work or not is another thing. There are plenty of other countries around the world that have mandated the clergy, and that simply does not have any impact on them at all,

because they are getting a totally different directive. The only way that I can see that you can get around that is to lock the bastards up — to make the legislation to lock them up.

Mrs COOTE — And do you believe that the people you represent would understand the dilemma of the interface between the Catholic Church and a functioning democracy here in Victoria?

Ms WILDING — I am sure they understand it very well.

Mrs COOTE — So you are saying to go back retrospectively and lock up everybody regardless; is that it?

Ms WILDING — I think everyone from the bishop up, who has knowingly moved a criminal to another parish, interstate or overseas, should be locked up.

Mrs COOTE — Retrospectively?

Ms WILDING — Retrospectively.

Ms HALFPENNY — When you are talking about people of the church being mandated and about mandatory reporting, can you explain it a bit further? You said there are other countries where there is mandatory reporting and it is not working, do you have some examples, because it is good for us to know that?

Ms WILDING — I think Ireland went down that path, where the church was mandated to report incidents, and they have found it does not seem to register; they do not recognise state laws, it is as simple as that.

Ms HALFPENNY — So they just do not report, because of the secrecy?

Ms WILDING — Their law is the only law that counts. The church's law is the only law that counts. They are not answerable to you. What they are saying effectively to you, as a state power, as a government, is that their allegiance is not to you; their allegiance is to Rome. They are basically saying, 'We don't care what the law is here. We've got higher laws. We've got laws that belong to God'. They don't belong to the state.

Ms HALFPENNY — Okay, we have heard that from many people, and I guess we are just trying to work through what it is that can be done to protect children into the future and look at various ways that that can be done. That is why I was interested to ask you why the mandatory reporting has not worked. When you look at, say, Victoria or Melbourne or I suppose the Australian situation, do you think there are any moves at all by the church to change, that they are capable of some sort of change? And if that is the case, how does the change happen?

Ms WILDING — Did you listen to what I just said.

Ms HALFPENNY — I did, yes, but I think we are trying to do something positive, I guess.

Ms WILDING — The church are great at distractions. They are great at political distraction. As soon as something comes up, as soon as they are challenged, they will put out another whitewash, 'Oh, yes, we're changing', and they will put up a new set of processes or a new set of words that will reassure people momentarily, and everybody breathes a sigh of relief. And then we know we are back to square one. I think we have had enough of that over the last 20 years.

Ms HALFPENNY — Do you think abuse is happening now?

Ms WILDING — We are dealing with people who are not trustworthy. That is what we are dealing with. It does not matter what they tell you. We know it is another shot at more spin, more lies and more deception. I cannot say any stronger words. I wish there were new words I could invent to describe the corruption.

Mr O'BRIEN — Chris, it may help us, because we have only a very short one page from you, to put your submission in context if at some stage you could provide us with some formal background as to your involvement with Broken Rites as a founder, maybe briefly now at the end of my question or subsequently. It has proved to be a very valuable organisation for many people to find out about priests, find out about claims and for other victims to come forward and provide that network. Going forward into the future, I am particularly interested in the need to document what has happened in a more thorough way, particularly having regard to the

records that may be available in the Vatican and the church. That may not be a quick process, but do you believe it is something worthwhile doing? Do you see an ongoing role for victims or victims organisations, however it is structured, so that a detailed account could be recorded of what abuse and what responses took place in a sense in a blow-by-blow manner? Is respecting confidentiality and respecting due process where it needs to be respected something that your organisation would see as valuable and could offer a role both for this inquiry and perhaps for a royal commission or other institution?

Ms WILDING — I do not know if anybody has ever brought this to the committee, but one thing that I think might be valuable is commanding that the church's insurers produce all of their documentation and records.

Mr O'BRIEN — Assuming we can get all the records, I then want to go to the next step of analysing what happened, documenting it and making it available. In a sense you have done the best you can. I know you have focused often on convictions and court cases for very good reasons, so there is that element of proof and certainty, but could you just turn your mind specifically to how that could be worked forward for recommendations — that is, one, the need for it, if it is something that victims groups need, and two, how would you see it progressing?

Ms WILDING — That is a very long and convoluted question.

Mr O'BRIEN — Yes, it was.

Ms WILDING — I do not think I could answer that — —

Mr O'BRIEN — Have a think about it.

Ms WILDING — That is something I would have to consider.

Mr O'BRIEN — That is good.

Mr WAKELING — Chris, thank you for your participation not only today but more importantly throughout the journey on this very important issue. To pick up on Mrs Coote's question, clearly Australia has a democracy in place where we have a separation of the state and the church. I am interested to know, from an international perspective — and like Mr O'Brien's question you can take this on notice — are you aware of anyone who is doing something well that we should be looking at as part of our inquiry? You talked about other examples. You talked about problems in other countries, but more importantly are you aware, through your work, of other states or countries who are doing this well and dealing with these issues? Is that something you could bring to us that we could consider as part of our inquiry?

Ms WILDING — I do not think it is a matter of whether there is any attempt by governments or authoritative powers elsewhere not trying to do the best they can. What they are up against is the biggest problem. They are up against an extremely powerful institution that does not feel it owes you anything. It is above you, it is not answerable to you and it is going to go on its own merry way. It is not interested in resolving this issue. It is a very difficult thing to do. The only way I can see is the US, and to some degree the US has had some successes in some states, and obviously its state laws vary from state to state too, as do the levels of prosecutions, but some of the hierarchy has been jailed over there. I see that as a way to go. Obviously they had different laws right from the start, because many of the victims over there were able to sue the church — actually sue the body of the church — which the victims do not have here. And the church well knows it. It has been a great delight the way it has been able to corral the victims into the Melbourne Response, because the only way that victims are going to be able to get any compensation is if the church controls, one, the way they are going to be able to get the compensation, and two, put a cap on it and control the information so that they can deter the victims and stop information from getting out to state authorities and to the public.

The CHAIR — Was there any particular state in the United States you could identify, off the back of Mr Wakeling's question?

Ms WILDING — Not that stands out in my mind. They definitely have stronger laws over there, and certainly laws that can jail prelates for being accessories to a crime. That seems to me to be the legislation in this state, I would hope retrospectively, that should be enacted.

The CHAIR — Chris, on behalf of the committee I thank you very much for your appearance before us this morning. Your evidence has been most helpful.

Ms WILDING — Thank you.

Witness withdrew.