

# CREATING A *safe* CHURCH FROM WITHIN

## SUMMARY REPORT

TWO DAYS WITH FR HANS ZOLLNER SJ

31 AUGUST & 1 SEPTEMBER 2018  
CAMPBELLTOWN CATHOLIC CLUB



DIOCESE *of* PARRAMATTA



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF  
WOLLONGONG



# CREATING A *safe* CHURCH FROM WITHIN

## Background

Over Friday 31 August and Saturday 1 September 2018, approximately 600 people from the Dioceses of Parramatta and Wollongong, together with many members of religious congregations and several other dioceses, attended one of two forums regarding *Creating a safe Church from within*.

The forums, with Fr Hans Zollner SJ as key note speaker, aimed to foster discussion and engagement amongst participants about the response of the Catholic Church to child sexual abuse, and more broadly to consider issues relating to the operation of power within the Catholic Church. The discussions particularly focused on responses to survivors and measures that could be taken to ensure child safety.

The forums were facilitated by Ms Susan Pascoe AM.



## Participants

On Friday 31 August, participants included representatives from organisations, institutions and departments who have care or responsibility for children and vulnerable adults in Catholic settings, including:

- parish and religious communities
- schools
- out-of-home care
- disability services.

Participants included those with responsibilities for governance and leadership; professional standards and safeguarding; risk; investigation; wellbeing and pastoral care; education; and residential and client services.

On Saturday 1 September, participants included victims and survivors of harmful behaviour in the Catholic Church together with their family and friends; faithful lay members of parish and religious communities; and priests and religious.

## Presenters

On each day, students from John Terry Catholic High School gave a moving Welcome to Country which incorporated didgeridoo playing and dance.

The Bishop of Wollongong, Brian Mascord, and the Bishop of Parramatta, Vincent Long OFM Conv formally welcomed participants.

Each day commenced with a reflection. On Friday 31 August, Mr Tony Kane, a survivor of child sexual abuse and teacher from Edmund Rice College led the reflection; on Saturday 1 September, Mr John Crowley, Principal of St Patricks School in Ballarat led the reflection.

The key note speaker, Fr Hans Zollner SJ. Fr Zollner is widely regarded as one of the leading ecclesiastical experts in the field of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and on issues related to sexual abuse both in the Roman Catholic Church and beyond. He has been a member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors since 2014 and head of the Centre for Child Protection at the Gregorian University, headquartered in Rome. Fr Zollner is a German theologian and psychologist. Since 2003 he has taught at the Institute of Psychology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He has been the academic vice rector of the Gregorian since 2010. He has been a member of the Society of Jesus since 1990.



## Participation

On each day, participants sat at round tables. On Friday 31 August, participants were randomly allocated to tables, to ensure that there was dialogue across and between agencies. On Saturday 1 September, participants chose their tables.

Participants engaged in the forums through question and answer sessions following the key note presentations, through table discussion, and through presenting the results of table discussion to the whole forum.

Participants were also able to provide further comments on feedback forms.

## This report

This report summarises the key presentations made on each day, and provides an outline of what participants identified as the key theoretical and practical changes necessary to make Catholic organisations child-safe.

As well as drawing on the key note presentations, this report draws on the question and answer sessions following each presentation, the presentation of the results of table discussions, the posters created by each table and the feedback forms.

## Prayer

The following prayer was offered on Friday 31 August by Mr Kane:

Loving God

We pray for our brothers and sisters who have been abused within our Church. We recognise and acknowledge the unending strength of victims and survivors; their boldness has been an immense gift, and we pray they find justice and peace.

We pray for our community; that we accept and nurture each other during this time.

Empower us to be a positive and supportive force within society. Help us to witness the love of God for all.

Help us to acknowledge and make amends for past wrongs. Give us the strength to be true advocates for the wronged and vulnerable.

May the grace of God guide us during this time.

We offer this prayer through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen



## BISHOPS' WELCOME

### **Bishop Brian Mascord**

Bishop Mascord welcomed the participants on each day. He noted that the forums provided a significant opportunity to reflect on how 'we as Church can develop safe environments for our children and vulnerable people'.

Bishop Mascord thanked participants for setting aside time to come and listen, examine, hope and participate in 'what we hope will be part of a process of growth and change for us as Church'.

### **Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv**

Bishop Long observed that 'the Catholic Church in this country is in uncharted territory'. He noted that the Royal Commission had shone a spotlight, not just on criminal behaviour of some of the clergy and religious, but also on the dysfunctional and corrosive culture of the Church.

The Bishop said that it is indisputable that there is a need for deep institutional change, change that will restore confidence and trust in the Church and the wider community. He said what was needed was: 'Nothing less than roots to branch reform that will align minds and hearts to the Gospel.'

He said that it is time for the Church, especially leaders, to listen with great humility and to embark on that journey of reform. He said: 'I firmly believe that we must seize this time of crisis as a catalyst for change, and not just as a temporary aberration.'

The Bishop said that: 'We must have courage to do whatever is needed to bring about a Church that is worthy of Christ.'



The Bishop also said that ‘we are in a unique situation because of the Royal Commission’ and that there was a heightened level of public consciousness, not only of the child sexual abuse crisis but also of the Church’s appalling failure.

The Bishop reminded the forum that Francis Sullivan has remarked that the child sexual abuse crisis has broken the heart of the Church in Australia. The Bishop said that there is an urgency on our part to mend that broken heart and return confidence in the Church.

He said: ‘We owe to the victims, their families, their loved ones, to the People of God, to the wider society of which we are a vehicle, a sacrament of God’s light and presence.’

The Bishop noted that in ‘addressing this biggest challenge of our time we are building a safer, healthier church for generations to come’. He said that ‘it is a daunting task and we are committed to that task’.

The Bishop also observed that during Pope Francis’ inauguration ceremony, some people carried banners saying: ‘Repair my Church.’ He said that this was a reference St Francis of Assisi, who in a dream was told to repair the Church that was falling into ruins. Francis took this up, initially by repairing a physical church. But he later understood that the Church God wanted him to repair was the Church of people and relationships. Bishop Long said that this is a fitting message for Pope Francis in view of the current crisis.

Bishop Long said that the Church has to live up to the call of being a vehicle of Christ’s love and presence. He said that the Church is always in need of reform so that it can be in ‘sync’ with the movement of the Holy Spirit. He concluded by saying that it is not time to continue with business as usual but time for a radical commitment to move the Church forward.



## REFLECTIONS

### Mr Tony Kane

Mr Tony Kane is a teacher from Edmund Rice College in Wollongong. Mr Kane told the forum that he grew up in Canberra and went to St Edmund's College along with his four younger brothers. He completed his schooling in 1972.

Mr Kane said that while he was in Year 8 he was assaulted by a teacher, Mr Patrick O'Flaherty. In 1970, Mr Kane's late father and three other fathers took the matter to court. However ultimately the perpetrator was found not guilty. Mr O'Flaherty continued to commit further offences. Mr Kane noted that Mr O'Flaherty had been a child migrant and had been in two Western Australian orphanages. He said that with distance he has some empathy and understanding but that this 'does not excuse the dastardly acts that someone like him committed on young kids who were vulnerable.'

Mr Kane noted that his father and the other fathers showed courage to pursue the matter to the end, and that through this the young boys found some form of justice.

Mr Kane told the forum that he feels that teaching is a vocation, to help kids gain a true foothold for their future and as an opportunity to live out a Christian life. He noted that: 'When we see the opposite happen, we are confounded and we get angry.'

In the 1980s, Mr Kane was asked by Br Evans to work at Eddy's Place for about six months. He said that he came to realise that there was a paedophile network in Wollongong.

Mr Kane said that he had taught some of the victims of these paedophiles. He said that many of these victims still support Edmund Rice College and send their

children to the school. This, he said 'is testament to [the school's] strong leadership and vision plus the faith of these men.'

He said that many of these men are in their 40s and have survived to varying degrees. He also noted that a few are missing and some have taken their own lives.

Mr Kane said that he is firmly of opinion that ongoing genuine support and help is needed and that it is the Church community which needs to take the lead.

He said that: 'It is us here also, who need to put prayer into action and to reach out, to understand and truly empathise with any of these men and women that we do know.'

Mr Kane finished with the words of St Paul: 'In you hidden self, grow strong.'



## Mr John Crowley

Mr John Crowley has been the Headmaster of St Patrick's College, Ballarat, since 2015. He told the forum of the journey that his school community has taken over the past four years, as the Royal Commission considered the institutional responses to allegations about Christian Brothers from St Patrick's College in the 1970s and 1980s. He described this journey as one of unreserved acknowledgement of the hurt of the past. He said that this journey involved walking with victims and survivors in total solidarity and reconnected old boys with the College community. He said that his staff group now say that they have reclaimed their school as a place of goodness. Mr Crowley gave the following reflection:

It was my great hope at the time that the Royal Commission would reveal the full extent of the sexual abuse scandal within the Catholic Church, in all its horridness. From there, a path forward for the Church could be found, no matter how faintly marked, enabling it to be part of the journey towards the hope of healing. It was incredibly confronting to listen to accounts of abuse from exceptionally brave victims and survivors, but in those moments, I held on to the belief that things could be different for the Church – that things *must* be different.

Four years on, and the truth is that our Church, without stronger leadership and a conversion of the heart, is in danger of losing our living witness to the Gospel. Whether this happens rests fully on the shoulders of bishops, clergy, religious, faith leaders and laity brave enough to bear the load of what is so desperately required from us: to find our voice and speak out.

And there are many things we need to say.

But in my mind, the most important of all is to openly, honestly and fully acknowledge the sexual abuse

perpetrated against innocent children within the Church, without hesitation or qualification. This acknowledgement must, above all else, avoid the use of the word 'but', seek to nit-pick over irrelevant details, draw attention to the actions of others as a means of diverting the focus off our own Church or peddle hurtful untruths. Why? Because a genuine acknowledgement of the abuse perpetrated and the immeasurable hurt it has caused opens and prepares our hearts to truly hear the voices of those victims and survivors deeply wounded by our Church. Most profoundly, without it there can be no trust. Without trust, how can hope exist? It sounds so simple and yet we consistently fall short.

Now that all members of the Church know of the appalling betrayal of so many children and their families, how can we, as people of the Gospel, respond in any other way other than to stand in complete solidarity with victims and survivors? To do everything we can to restore the dignity of those we have hurt?

This is why this opportunity to be here today, in this place and at this time, to acknowledge the hurt and deceit of the past – and to look towards the future together – needs to be grasped with every ounce of energy we have.

The most hope-filled and supportive people I have encountered over the past four years have been the victims and survivors themselves. Over this time our College has received many emails, letters and phone calls voicing disapproval with aspects of our handling of the Royal Commission – sadly, they are mostly from members of the institutional Church. We have received nothing but messages of support from victims and survivors.

This says much about the urgency of finding our voice.



# KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

FR HANS ZOLLNER SJ

CREATING A  
*safe*  
CHURCH  
FROM  
WITHIN

# Priorities and challenges currently facing the Catholic Church in combating harmful behaviour

Fr Zollner opened his presentation by noting that the Catholic Church in Australia has done a lot to ensure safety, especially of children and young people. However, he also noted that much remains to be done so that those who have been gravely harmed receive justice. He said that it is important that the voice of survivors is present and is heard.

Fr Zollner said that a few years ago, not many local (or national) churches would have talked about issues relating to child sexual abuse. It was viewed as a Western problem, an Anglo-Saxon problem, or a central-European problem. However, this is no longer the case. Child sexual abuse is now seen to be a world-wide issue, and the events of the last two months have contributed to this greatly.

He said that there is not active resistance to addressing the problem of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. However, he believes that there is a huge passive resistance to taking proactive action, to addressing the issue head on, to doing whatever can be done to receive survivors and to create safeguarding measures.

Fr Zollner observed that this is a very stressful and difficult moment in the life of the Catholic Church and for those that identify as Catholics. He said that sexual abuse in any context necessarily produces wounds and division. He noted that this issue has been neglected and denied for decades, maybe centuries.

Fr Zollner commented that Australia has grappled with this issue publicly over the last 30 years, and has guidelines, protocols, codes of conduct and ongoing formation. However, he noted that people in the Catholic Church in Australia say of Church leadership that 'They still don't get it.' Fr Zollner said that he believes that the Australian Church is among the top five in the world with regard to safeguarding.

## Moving from the 'head' to the 'heart'

Fr Zollner raised the question of why there has been such difficulty in addressing the issue of child sexual abuse head on. Specifically, he asked why responses to child sexual abuse do not move from the 'head' to the 'heart', from sheer compliance to concrete action.

Fr Zollner noted that the issue of child sexual abuse needs to get into the system, into our core, into our hearts. He said that this is communicated by an attitude, and by approachability. He explained that the heart must speak to those who have been harmed, including to those harmed in a secondary way, and to a community divided. He said that the biggest challenge is to communicate with the heart, with heart-felt energy, motivation and commitment to work for a better and safer Church.

## Safeguarding at the core

Fr Zollner observed that safeguarding has to be at the core of our attention, that 'it needs to get into the DNA of the Church'. He said that prioritising safeguarding should be natural and normal. It should be at the forefront of everything we do in parishes, schools, youth ministry, social justice ministry, care for the elderly, young and people with disability. Further, he said that safeguarding should be considered in how we allocate both financial and personnel resources.

Fr Zollner said that if safeguarding is perceived to be an 'add-on', then it weighs on us, can be switched off and not switched on again. He said that a safeguarding approach should always be present.

Fr Zollner further remarked that statistics show that formation works, education works and safeguarding works. He said that wherever guidelines and protocols are in place, the numbers of new allegations decrease enormously. He said that we need guidelines and law, but the change that we need will not come about unless there is also a change of heart.

## Theology

Fr Zollner expressed disappointment that systematic theology has not prominently addressed questions relating to child sexual abuse: both the reality of the abuse and the necessity to engage in safeguarding. Fr Zollner asked what is God's call for us now – with regard to how to listen to survivors. He asked what should be done to comply with Jesus' commandment: 'Let the little ones come to me and don't destroy their lives.'

Fr Zollner gave the example of the Catacomb Pact, made at the end of the Second Vatican Council, when 42 bishops promised to themselves and each other that they would lead a different life, not as princes of the Church, but as servants of the People of God. Fr Zollner said that a challenge for us is to make a new Catacomb Pact – involving not only bishops and provincials, but all of the faithful. He said:

*As a Church we need to move together. Many among the faithful say the priests and bishops messed it up, so sort it out. This will perpetuate the difficulties. If the People of God as a whole don't take up the challenge of dealing with this, we will continue with a split, with divisions, with pointing fingers at each other and we will not progress.*

## Trust

Fr Zollner observed that many people say that they have lost trust in the Church and in the bishops.

He noted that those who have created the mistrust by misbehaviour and cover up, cannot just say: 'You can trust me again.' He said that trust is a by-product of consistent action. He further said that trust in the Catholic Church has been built over generations, and was destroyed in a few years: 'The trust that we need to build again will take many years.'

## Taking action

Fr Zollner noted that each of us should consider what we can do, look for allies, and then 'do what we can do'. He said that if people do this and create cohesion, then the Church will move. He noted that historically Church reform has come from bottom up and gave the examples of Francis of Assisi and Teresa of Avila.

Fr Zollner said that we can share competence and power and knowledge. He also said that we need to be willing to take on conflict and tension.

## Personal consequences

Fr Zollner noted that through the Catacomb pact, the bishops committed themselves to a simple lifestyle and refused to accept personal advantages because of their role and position. He said that this is expected of Church leaders now – that they do whatever they can to be with normal people.

Fr Zollner noted that prior to the Second Vatican Council, Catholicism involved many ascetical practices, which after the Council were no longer observed. However, he suggested that little had taken the place of this asceticism. He asked the following questions: 'How, as Catholics, do we show that we follow someone who has given his life for us? What can we do to remind ourselves that a Christian life is a committed life, not a self-centred life?'

He suggested that while our lives as Catholics have many 'gains', there are also 'costs' to pay. He argued that we need to spend time listening, that we should try to understand, and then engage in dialogue. This would show that we are looking out for something new that is not yet there. It is necessary that we commit to simplicity and to something that can be seen as a sign that: 'I am willing to give away my power.'

## Structural consequences

Fr Zollner noted that sometimes the Church is a self-absorbed and self-convinced organisation: 'As if we have everything in-house, and do not need counsel or advice.' He said that this has to stop and that the fortress that the Church used to be 'cannot exist anymore'.

He noted that there is a need to give up power and control and bring in new advice, counsel and expertise. He said that in the areas of finance, governance, planning, decision making, the Church needs to open up to co-responsibility. He said: 'This should include women and lay men who can help to understand what we should do and how we should do it. This will lead to more open discussion.'

He said 'Let us talk seriously about how I perceive you and you perceive me. ... Let us invest more in conflict management.' He noted that this presupposes that we have identified what each person is responsible for.

Fr Zollner said that the Church needs open and structured approaches to conflict management and clear definitions of responsibilities and accountability.



## Substantial change

Fr Zollner said that the credibility of apologies is measured with how much they correspond to real action, to permanent changes and to constant transparency. He suggested that:

- Leaders ask for help in joint decision making from mixed groups, and listen to that feedback.
- All should 'do the do-able', taking into account the actual freedom that they have.

Fr Zollner said that administration is necessary, but it needs to serve rather than to self-impose. He noted that there is more freedom in the guidance of a diocese than one expects. He gave the example of the Archdiocese of Munich, which has eight major organisational and administrative areas, four of which are led by women. He said that much is possible if we think creatively.

Fr Zollner observed that administration is necessary, and that power is necessary. He asked whether it is possible to introduce to Church administration some of the features of companies and government structures including checks and balances, quality management, and openness to society.

He noted that 'at the bottom of all of this' is the question of what is the Church today, what do we want to be and who should we be? Do we want to be in a segregated place or do we want to be present among those who need some support?

## Sustainable and systematic action

Fr Zollner noted that sustainable and systematic action is successful if it is structured and that it is important to identify topics for mid- and long-term changes.

He said that child sexual abuse is one symptom of a disease that is deeper, whose roots are deeper than only sexuality. The disease includes power issues, governance issues and spiritual issues.

## What shall we do?

Fr Zollner concluded by asking the following questions:

- How much attention is given to victims?
- Are we willing to be transparent and open?
- Do we invest in prevention and education and formation?
- Can we be proactive and not defensive?
- Can we be focussed and not divisive?

# The impact of child sexual abuse on spirituality and theology

The key question Fr Zollner asked in this session was why the Catholic Church ‘misses its core business’ when it comes to the sexual abuse of minors and how we deal with this issue: specifically, in relation to issues of faith, theology and spirituality.

He said that within the Church the issue of child sexual abuse has been handed to psychologists, psychiatrists and psychotherapists on one hand and to civil and canon lawyers on the other.

He argued that what is missing is a sound theology of safeguarding and a sound theology relating to how we deal with the impact that the child sexual abuse crisis has had on all of us.

Fr Zollner told the forum that very few experts have written substantially on the theology of safeguarding: ‘What is lacking is a sound theology and a spirituality that really captures the core topics of our faith.’

Fr Zollner noted the variety of responses that there are when ‘scandals blow up’. He noted that there is disbelief, outcry, rage, depression; and that some people say that it is made up, or a ‘media thing’. He noted that there is sense of betrayal and hopelessness in most of us. For some people there is a sense that there is no hope, no way out, no possibility to move on.

Fr Zollner argued that the depth and the magnitude of the spiritual trauma that many clergy abuse victims experience has been neglected by the Church response. He gave the example of a biological father abusing his child, noting that while trust is broken, there is still somebody behind the biological father – ‘God, if the person believes in God’.

However, he noted in the case where a priest abuses a minor who believes in God, those who have been abused can experience that as shattering all hope, as ‘the very foundation of trust, trust in God, has been taken away’.

He argued that this type of experience is neglected in our response to child sexual abuse, including in dioceses and parishes, and said: ‘Consequently, some people will say that they believe in Jesus and the Gospel, but that they bid farewell to the Church.’

Fr Zollner observed that there is a polarisation in approaches to leadership. He said that some people attack leadership, as they have lost trust in it. However, at the same time they desperately long for some word from leadership. He said that in a society where real, credible, and authentic leadership is so lacking, figures like the Pope or a bishop are ‘searched for’. He suggested that there is something deeper in human beings that long for some kind of fatherly or motherly support.

## Impact on pillars of faith

Fr Zollner noted that the Catholic Creed states belief in the ‘One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church’. He summarised:

- Oneness: there are challenges in being ‘One’ Church if different local churches do not talk to each other or learn from one another.
- Holiness: the Holiness of the Church is called into question by the crimes and the grievous sins that have been committed by its very representatives.
- Catholic: in the Greek sense of the word, means the ‘whole world’. How much does the whole world own this issue, the whole Catholic world?
- Apostolic: we are supposed to be a body of those who proclaim the Gospel. What we did destroyed the message of the Gospel for many people.

Fr Zollner asked how we can understand all of this in our present situation?

He reflected on the idea that God is loving and all powerful. He asked how it is possible to say to a survivor

that God is all powerful where the survivor may feel that 'He has not rescued me or protected me?'. Fr Zollner asked 'If a father or a priest has abused you, how do you address God?'

Fr Zollner also explored the question of living and understanding sexuality. He suggested that both Catholics and non-Catholics do not understand the language of the Church with regard to moral sexual teaching. He observed that most Catholics do not follow the ideal of Catholic teaching about sexuality.

Fr Zollner reported that in his experience, almost all victims of abuse committed by religious, clergy or lay Church personnel were very close to the Church. Most of them were in boarding schools, orphanages, parishes, or youth ministry. Many of their parents were friends of the priest or religious abuser.

Consequently, he said, the first wound, one of spiritual trauma, is that: 'I have lost my home, I have lost my trust, I have no-one to confide in anymore.' He further said that after 20, 30, or 40 years, when a survivor comes to the point that he or she can speak out and report the abuse, many have experienced that the door is slammed in their face. He suggested that this amounts to a second traumatisation: 'A member of the Church who has been deeply wounded by the Church and wants reconciliation and justice is again wounded by the Church.'

Fr Zollner suggested that there is an understandable accumulation of disappointment, of disillusionment, of rage.

He said that one thing that all of us can do is to listen. He noted that there is a difference between hearing somebody say something, and listening. He said to listen is profound, and involves trying to understand the other person from within. To feel with the person and try to understand what is going on deep inside them. He said that when you listen in that way, to any person who has been harmed, this may be the starting point of some journey of reconciliation.

Fr Zollner said that he has heard many survivors say that when they finally encounter a person who not only heard what they had to say, or read what they had to say, but listened to them, and there was empathy for their suffering; then they felt that they could come home both to themselves and 'possibly within the bigger community'.

Fr Zollner noted that a question that has not been solved is what to do with perpetrators in relation to the level of care they need or receive. He noted that there is a question as to what kind of supervision is possible when priests are dismissed from the clerical state and they are no longer bound by any canonical obligations.

He said that until now, the general understanding has been that a priest who has abused a minor is dismissed from the clerical state. He noted that there are other measures, such as restricting faculties for ministry, but these are not acceptable to the public in relation to child sexual offenders. He said that most perpetrators are at risk of reoffending if they are not attended to regularly. He asked what the community and parishes can do so that priests are strictly supervised and mentored in order that they do not offend again.

## Pastoral challenges

Fr Zollner argued that we need a change of attitude and culture, which is not easy. He noted that this change is difficult in relation to large communities such as parishes, dioceses or a national Church.

He suggested that the resistance against 'heart change' is due in part to those people responsible for working on a change of culture experiencing difficulty in working on their own issues with regard to questions of sexuality, relationships, and identity.

He said that it can be fear that prevents 'heart change'. He said that 'heart change' involves not only complying with the rules, but making the issue 'heart-felt' so that 'things come naturally and spontaneously', because you feel it.

Fr Zollner said that he believes that all of us need to learn something new about giving up one's life, because 'that is what Jesus did for us and what he calls us to do'. He said that is what all Church ministry is meant to be, 'giving up my life for the sake of another person and for the community'.

## Theological and pastoral principles

Fr Zollner noted that the central message of Jesus Christ in the Gospel is to 'love God, your neighbour and yourself'. He said that: 'Jesus was there with his life, his prayer and his assistance for those who were needy, the marginalised, the sick.'

Fr Zollner observed that pastoral plans include consideration of ministry to the sick, the elderly, migrants, whoever is in need. He asked why victims of abuse are not among the groups to which there is 'special attendance'. He said that he was not aware of models of ministry where survivors are fully integrated. He also said that the Church has not yet thought about how to ensure that survivors are in the midst of all of our ministries, how to give voice to their concerns, and to ensure that they are heard, listened to and consulted.

He gave the example of a woman who was raped by priest when she was nine years old, and came back to the Church after 50 years of suffering. She wanted to

contribute to the well-being of the Church and those who minister in the Church, however she was not able to find a space and a place in her diocese. He suggested that many survivors would like to contribute through for example, prayer services, counselling, or giving advice from their professional life.

Fr Zollner argued that we need to develop new ministries. He suggested that the Church might consider creating 'Ministers of reconciliation' or 'Ministers of healing' for people who have been traumatised.

Fr Zollner noted that the Church was founded by Jesus Christ and that the Church will continue. However, he also said that we need to remind ourselves we have to do something in this space. He said that all of us have creativity and energy. He said that individually, in groups and in institutions, we should try to develop new ideas and about how to attend to survivors. We need to consider networking so that we learn from other parishes, dioceses and countries. He observed that changing culture is a slow process. He suggested that slowness can be a sign of resistance, but also of steady growth.

## Theological lessons

Fr Zollner asked why there has been so little theological reflection on the major questions that should be asked about abuse. He asked 'Where is God when innocent people are sexually abused?'. He said that God was with them and that God was a victim of evil and wrongdoing. He noted that God, in the form of Jesus Christ, was a victim of physical torture and of an execution. He argued that it should be remembered that there are people within the Church who have been tortured and that this should be remembered in prayer.

Fr Zollner noted that the core belief of Christianity is that Jesus Christ has saved us by his cross and death and resurrection. He noted, following a reflection of Joseph Ratzinger, that in the Latin tradition when we conceive of salvation or redemption, normally we focus on 'redemption *from* sin'. He said what is missing is the idea that not only did Jesus save us from sin, but He saved us to do something *for* others.

He suggested that Jesus represents us to the Father, that He transforms us and that through Him we receive hope and life. He said: 'As we struggle with our sins and shortcomings we can take up the idea that this life is not for us but it is for somebody else, for another person.'

Fr Zollner noted the influence of the Irish tradition of Catholicism where the priest was all powerful. He referred to the influence of Jansenism and the focus on guilt and sin, especially in relation to sexuality.

## Spiritual lessons

Fr Zollner said that he is astonished and disappointed that over the years we have not found a way to minister appropriately to survivors of abuse. He said that he had read a letter written by a survivor of abuse who described the process he went through in trying to find reconciliation and spiritual accompaniment. The survivor said that he would like to contribute in a wider context, with his wounds and his journey of healing, however he had not found a space in which to do so.

Fr Zollner argued that what is required is to be open and vulnerable, to stand in for those who have been offended and to accompany those who have been abused. He said that it can be very challenging to meet and work with survivors of abuse. He said he had found it necessary to reassure survivors that he was still with them and that this required a lot of energy. He said that this is the way that we should act. He said that we need to find a space for survivors in our midst and to work on those resistances that are present in all of us.

In relation to the institutional response to child sexual abuse, Fr Zollner noted that there is a perception that the Church defends herself. He said that it should be different for us. He said that: 'We have no value in ourselves, expect that we are created and loved in the image of God.' He also said that 'we believe that the greatest gift in our lives is that God loves us'.

Fr Zollner asked how we can live out that message that is at the core of our identity? He noted the words of our Lord: 'repent and believe in the Gospel.' He said that our main references should be: 'if anyone causes one of the little ones to stumble, it would be better for them if a large mill-stone were hung around their neck and they were thrown in the sea' and 'Let the children come to me, for theirs is the kingdom of God.'

Fr Zollner concluded by noting that John 8:32 states 'The truth will set us free.'



# DISCUSSION

*Fr Zollner received questions from the audience at both forums*

## Seminary formation

**Fr Zollner was asked about the practical formation of seminarians and Church personnel and whether seminarians should be placed in parishes where they can come into the contact with the real world.**

Fr Zollner noted that human formation is particularly important for future priests and religious. He noted that the current model of seminary training was introduced in the 1550s, and agreed that in current circumstances it is no longer helpful and may in fact have been harmful for those people and their ministry. However, Fr Zollner expressed some reservations about seminarians being placed in parishes, particularly about whether there would be sufficient resources and expertise for appropriate training. He concluded by observing that there is a significant lack of attention to human formation in the formation system. He said that many perpetrators never learned during their formation how to discern if they were suited to a celibate life, and were not trained in issues related to 'healthy sexuality'.

## Celibacy

**Fr Zollner was asked about the contribution of celibacy to the child sexual abuse crisis.**

Fr Zollner said that there was no causal link between celibacy and abuse, but that celibacy had become a problem for priests who had not been helped to live out a healthy sexual identity. In this circumstance celibacy becomes a major risk factor. He suggested that celibacy becomes a problem when it is not lived well, particularly in the context of increasing parish sizes, fewer people in parish work and fewer people coming to mass. In this context frustration can grow, and individuals might try to mitigate their loneliness and dissatisfaction through gambling, internet relationships, relationships with adults or the abuse of minors. Fr Zollner concluded by saying that he did not think that diocesan priests needed to be celibate. He noted that historically, priests have married and that in Eastern traditions some priests are married.

## Leveraging change

**Fr Zollner was asked about how this opportunity can be used as a leverage for change.**

Fr Zollner replied that the Australian Church is a laboratory for the whole Church. He said that individuals need to be creative, starting from what they can do in their roles. He said that all people need to find out what God wants them to do in their life today. They need to be free in front of God. He said that: 'If the freedom of the spirit accompanies us and we allow it to enter into our consultation and planning and processes we are sure that the Holy Spirit will guide us.'

**Fr Zollner was asked how the power structures of the Church could be changed.**

Fr Zollner noted that the power structure of the Church sidelines both women and survivors of child sexual abuse. He suggested that people in leadership positions including bishops, parish priests and principals should share power and 'give away' their power. He noted that Pope Francis has tried to do this through diverting power to local churches, following the principle of subsidiarity.

Fr Zollner also noted that it is dysfunctional that all bishops report directly only to the Pope and suggested that we need intermediate competent bodies to supervise bishops.

## Learning from survivors

**A participant observed that we have often been told that survivors are our first teachers, and asked how we can access the experience of survivors.**

Fr Zollner told the story of a survivor of abuse who he has invited a number of times to address different audiences. He said that she speaks of her experience of seeking help. She was an alcoholic, never had a family, never had a longstanding work commitment, had no intimate relationships, had psychosomatic diseases for decades, moved away from Catholic faith, and entered another faith community where she was abused in her conscience and spirituality. She tried to take her life twice. She came

back with the help of psychologists and priests who have accompanied her. She now wants to speak about her experience in faith terms and share that with the wider community. When people listen to her they say that they understand in a deep sense what it means that Jesus went through passion death and resurrection. He observed that theologians should listen to this type of voice and that a theology related to the abuse crisis should be developed.

## Perpetrators

**Fr Zollner was asked if we are near a moment where we can publicly reach out to perpetrators with forgiveness.**

Fr Zollner said that personally he thought that we are not at that stage either as a Church or as a community. He said that we need to own the harm that perpetrators have inflicted and acknowledge the impact that it has had on both secondary victims and all of us. He said that there needs to be more discussion about pastoral and psychological care for perpetrators, both while they are in the priesthood and once they have been dismissed. He noted that once a priest has been dismissed monitoring is impossible unless the priest consents. He observed again that we need a new formation program for future priests and Church personnel in general.

**Fr Zollner was asked whether perpetrators target the Church as a way of acting out paedophilic desire.**

Fr Zollner observed that while there are some paedophilic priests, most child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church has been ephebophilia, or the abuse of boys in their adolescence. He noted that the average age of first time abuse for clergy was 39 years and asked why these men would have first engaged in child sexual abuse 15 years post-ordination. He suggested that celibacy can become an issue over time, particularly as priests reach middle age, with increased responsibilities, when frustration, loneliness and a lack of vision creeps in. He argued that priests are not adequately assisted to live a committed life and particularly need assistance in the area of human formation.

## Confession

**Fr Zollner was asked whether the Church needs to renew the paradigm of confession.**

Fr Zollner observed that we need to develop new approaches to the theology of confession and to the theology of sin. He noted that the traditional concept of sin was quantitative and guilt-ridden, rather than working towards more holiness, more consistency and less falling apart.

## Pontifical secret

**Fr Zollner was asked whether he believed that the Pontifical Secret had contributed to a reluctance to report child sexual abuse to civil authorities.**

Fr Zollner said that he did not believe that the Pontifical Secret operated in this way because there are bishops who report. He said there needs to be clarification of the way the Pontifical Secret is meant to operate and that it is designed to protect the right to privacy. He said that there should be definition of the rights of accusers, alleged perpetrators and superiors in canonical processes. He noted from the point an allegation is provided to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith until the point that there is a sentence, often none of the parties know where the matter is up to and that this is a scandal.

## Resources for responses at the parish level

**Fr Zollner was asked what kind of resources are needed at the parish level to provide support for survivors and to meet their needs.**

Fr Zollner noted that in every parish in England there is a contact person for anyone who wants to report abuse.

He suggested that there should be a ministry for survivors and victims in parishes or dioceses. He said that the parish community should give space and time to survivors who want to come forward and share and work for a better, safer Church and to discuss their own spiritual experience.

# Key theoretical and practical changes to make Catholic organisations child-safe

Participants of the forums made a number of suggestions about the key theoretical and practical changes they believe are required to ensure that Catholic organisations are child-safe. These suggestions were made during table discussion and on feedback forms. Provided below is a brief summary of the themes that emerged from the forums.

A number of participants and table groups suggested that the outcomes of these forums should be provided to the Plenary 2020 working group.

## Cultural change

A central theme of the forums was the need for cultural change in the Catholic Church. Many participants noted that while it was critical to develop measures to respond to the issue of child sexual abuse, that the Church needs to change more broadly. One participant said: 'This is more than just the issue of a response to child sexual abuse. It is about a change in the Church from within.'

Participants noted that the response to child sexual abuse must be embedded in the culture of the Church:

We now have a great policy in place but it needs to become part of the culture. Shared leadership is vital. [We are] building capacity in all to build a healthy Church.

Another said that the task ahead involved: 'Creating a culture of honesty that moves away from merely avoiding scandal.' A further said that: 'We need to be 'People of God', rather than identify as 'People of the Institution'.'

One table eloquently described their vision of a child-safe diocese as:

A space where in the spirit of the Gospel:

- trust has been regained
- transparency is evident

- accountability and responsibility is part of the air we breathe
- collaborative action is entrenched
- relationships are healthy
- deeds back up words
- all levels of leadership embrace integrity, humility and compassion
- individuals are empowered to report suspicions of misconduct or boundary violations
- there are 'Ministers of reconciliation' in place
- reporting and investigative processes respect the person being accused
- culture of fear has diminished.

Another table observed that 'cultural change is slow, but commitment to change needs to be in place'.

Some participants noted that cultural change is a shared responsibility. For example, one participant asked: 'How do we make a simple, human, non-clericalised Church? We are all responsible to make a safe Church.' One table reported that a child-safe diocese would be one where 'all people in the Church take responsibility for child-safety, to build an alert culture'.

## Moving from the head to the heart

Some participants described the cultural change that they saw as being necessary using Fr Zollner's language of moving from the 'head to the heart'. For example, one participant said that: 'There must be a significant movement in attitude from head to heart.' Another said that the 'biggest insight is that [we need to create] a safe space – physical, spiritual, emotional – [and] that safe space should be the heart, the beginning of all we do'.

One participant described the change that is needed, concluding that the movement required was from the head to the heart:

The responsibility of all the People of God is to safeguard all. It is the obligation of all the Church to make a safe and welcoming place of healing for survivors. We as a Church need to strategically plan and resource whatever response we discern as the way forward. We fundamentally need to do things differently. We need to genuinely move our thinking, processes and responses from 'head to heart' and thus an articulation of a theology of safeguarding needs to be developed and disseminated.

### **Theology and spirituality**

Participants from both forums picked up on Fr Zollner's discussion of the importance of developing a theology and spirituality founded in the experiences of survivors of child sexual abuse. For example, one participant made the following reflection on the need to base theological approaches in the experience of survivors:

Theology is missing here. We need to start with people's lived experience and centre of pastoral planning and liturgy. There is a need for a theology that gives privilege to experience rather than doctrine. We need to listen to the lived experience of people and use that to guide our practice.

Another participant said that there was a 'need for the development of theology in the light of this experience of abuse, pain and inappropriate personal and institutional response. A theology of safeguarding / of Healing / of Reconciliation.'

Participants used various language to describe what they understood to be a theological response to the child sexual abuse crisis, including:

- a theology and understanding of community healing and the process of mutual healing
- a developed theology regarding children and vulnerable people
- a theology of the child
- a theology that represents new life
- a theology of safe guarding.

Some participants said that the response to child sexual abuse must incorporate a spiritual dimension. For example, one table suggested that there might be various forms of 'memorialisation, for example rituals, Mass and acknowledgment'. Other tables suggested that there might be 'an atonement event in each diocese' or a 'perpetual day of remembrance'.

### **Survivors**

A very large number of participants took up the theme of the importance of the Church meeting the needs of survivors. For example, one table reported that they

wanted to see: 'Structures in place that will allow for survivors to re-engage with the Church in meaningful ways. A genuine sense of welcome must be created.' Another suggested the development of: 'Ways of reaching out to those who have left the Church hurt by their experiences.'

Comments on this theme fell into two primary categories, first, the need to truly listen to survivors and second, the need to develop authentic forms of ministry to survivors.

### **Listening to survivors**

A central theme of the forums was the need to listen to survivors. One participant said that 'We need to create a place to listen deeply to survivors.' Another said 'We need to truly listen to victims.' One table said that we need to 'listen and learn from victims on their terms'.

The connection between listening and care was reflected in the comment that: 'Sitting with, suffering with the victims/survivors of sexual abuse is the only way to care for them. No excuses. No 'buts'. Just love and acceptance.' Other participants recognised the importance of 'acknowledging the suffering and damage done by child sexual abuse' and 'acknowledging the need for healing'.

Participants noted that all parishes should be places of welcome. One noted that parishes, schools and other ministries should develop processes for listening to secondary as well as primary victims of abuse, for example restorative justice models and listening forums (listening circles).

Participants also noted the central role of language. One participant noted that there should be 'freedom of language', that 'free and open conversations should be had around all issues, including gender, sexuality, risk, and the experiences of survivors'. Another noted the importance of providing a 'safe space for language, real language'.

### **Ministry to survivors**

Many participants reflected on the possibility of the establishment of various forms of ministry to survivors.

There was a significant focus on inviting survivors who have been alienated from the Church to reconnect. One participant observed that 'people who have been hurt by the Church should be invited to reconnect with the Church', while other participants articulated the hope that each of the 'dioceses is known as an encourager of those who are abused to be free to come forward without fear'. One participant suggested that there should be a 'welcoming group in each parish for victims/survivors'. Participants also noted the 'need to ensure survivors of

sexual abuse are supported and provided with a place within the community of the Church’.

Some participants focussed on providing a means for survivors or victims to provide support to each other. One participant said that ‘the Church should facilitate victims providing support to each other’, while another suggested that ‘support groups should be established for survivors and their families’.

Many participants suggested that there should be a safe physical space for survivors to access if they wished. For example, one participant suggested that ‘a place for healing and education could be created, where survivors could come and share their stories, their learnings and expertise in this area’, while another suggested the ‘provision of a healing space for survivors’. A further participant suggested that ‘each diocese has a physical space whereby people who have been sexually abused by the Church or society can meet and talk together’. One table suggested ‘an open, safe and welcoming space for survivors/victims’.

Many participants described the ministry to survivors as a ‘ministry of healing’, suggesting that this could be developed at the parish level. One participant suggested a ‘ministry of support’ for survivors. Participants described the individuals who might be involved in this ministry as ‘Ministers of reconciliation’ or ‘Ministers of healing’. For example, one participant suggested the creation of a ‘forum in parish or at diocesan level for ministers of reconciliation and opportunity for people who are wounded and hurt to be heard and listened to’.

One table suggested that there should be ‘a parish-based pastoral counsellor to help survivors return to the Church and be supported and to give to the community’. Another table expressed the hope that ‘ministry to victims is normalised and support is part of our existence’.

Many participants commented that those working with survivors must have appropriate expertise and training. For example, one table reported that any ministry of support for victims should be staff by a ‘highly trained’ minister while another said that survivors should be supported in a way that is ‘trauma informed’.

Finally, one table suggested that established survivor organisations should be supported in their work. They suggested that dioceses should ‘give established survivors’ organisations adequate funding to work holistically for survivors at all levels to experience justice and recovery’.

## Safeguarding

In both forums, participants commented in some detail on the importance of developing and promoting structured approaches to safeguarding in their dioceses and parishes. Participants argued that proper resourcing should be provided for safeguarding, and that people with appropriate expertise should be employed in this area.

One participant requested that ‘safeguarding children’ be made ‘an action item in every activity or meeting’. Another noted that ‘safeguarding measures should be embedded into strategic plans’, while another said that ‘there should be consistency across Catholic organisations in the implementation of child-safe policies and procedures’.

### Child-centred approaches

Participants noted the importance of adopting child-centred approaches. One participant said that ‘we need to listen to children and make sure that they have a central place in families, parishes and dioceses’. One table reported that what is required is the development of a ‘child-centred culture of safe practices that are explicit and integral’. Another table said that ‘we need a culture of truly listening to (and hearing) children’.

Some participants noted the importance of people in leadership positions in the Church making a commitment to a child-centred approach to safeguarding. One table recommended that anyone who is a position of authority should make a ‘commitment to the child-safe principles’. Another said that creating a ‘child-safe parish’ should be put on the agenda of parish councils.

Many participants emphasised the connection between listening to children and creating a child-safe organisation. For example, one participant said ‘child-safe organisations give children voice, listen to them and use that input in making decisions’. One table reported that they would like to see ‘significant strategies devised and implemented’ to give ‘authentic voice to young people in the decisions and discussions about creating a safe life for them in the Church’. Another table suggested that in a child-safe diocese, ‘youth in the Church would have a greater voice, for example on the parish council to give their perspective’.

## **Policies and procedures**

Many participants focussed on the need for a child-safe diocese to have appropriate policies and procedures and for them to be effectively implemented. One table specifically noted that these processes should 'prioritise the victim and ensure their protection'.

Some participants discussed the need for consistent policies and procedures. For example, one participant said that 'dioceses need consistency in policy and practice' and another said that 'across the diocese' they would like to see 'implementation of policies and procedures ... especially regarding prevention and where to raise concerns'.

Some participants emphasised the importance of policies and procedures being accessible to children – specifically that they should be cast in child-friendly language.

Several people said that they would like to see codes of conduct developed. One table suggested the development of a 'very clear code of conduct' in simple, succinct and child friendly language. Another table argued for an 'embedded code of conduct (such as exists in schools) which is included in training, formation and annual in-services'.

Many participants discussed the importance of safeguarding procedures being widely known and understood. One participant noted that: 'As each parish implements procedures for child protection, we should talk about it up front, make it clear that this is the practice our community, it should be printed on our website.' Another said that the mark of a child-safe diocese was 'clear safety processes, well-publicised and frequently referred to'. Yet another argued that 'there should be clear processes for when a complaint is made and clear guidance on how to make a complaint'. One table described their vision for the operation of policies and procedures:

Clear understanding of what the policies and procedures mean on the ground. All policies and procedures are used consistently and transparently across all areas and agencies of the diocese equally. All diocesan agency staff and parish priests are trained and understand policies and procedures.

Many participants suggested that there should be specific personnel in parishes to receive complaints (some participants suggested that there should be two or more such people per diocese). For example, one table suggested that every parish have 'a trained person (paid or volunteer) to support victims/survivors, including handling initial complaints disclosures' and to support individuals who might want to report to police.

Finally, participants argued for some monitoring and evaluation of child-safe policies and procedures. For example, one table suggested that there should be 'transparent and inclusive procedures in place that ensured the safety of children and if not followed by anybody then appropriate consequences follow'. Another table suggested that there should be 'constant review, learning and revisiting of practice'. A further table suggested that there should be regular auditing of the operation of child protection procedures.

## **Education and training**

A significant number of participants commented on the need for education and training in relation to safeguarding measures. Notably, comments on education and training often suggested that there should be training for all people in the Church. The comment of one participant that 'there should be ongoing education and training about safeguarding for all members of the Church' was frequently echoed.

Some participants focussed on the need for training for those specifically engaged in working with children. For example, one table said that child protection training should be mandated and that there should be follow-up if people do not attend. Other participants focussed on the need for specific types of training, including for example, in 'trauma and processes that will enable survivors to disclose child sexual abuse'.

Many participants discussed the need for the 'empowerment and education' of both 'children and parents to recognise inappropriate behaviour and to know what to do next'. Some participants focussed on educating adults, for example that 'parents and teachers should be educated about how to report allegations'. Others focussed on the need to educate children. For example, one table said that 'children need ongoing education about rights/responsibilities and ways of reporting and contact people in their own community, parish or school'. Another table suggested that organisations 'educate and equip kids and vulnerable adults to know what to do and who to tell'.

## **Architecture**

A number of participants commented on the physical dimension of safeguarding. A frequently repeated comment was that 'every Church building should be safe and welcoming for children and victims'. Others focused on the physical safety of Church properties, for example one participant commented that 'we need to develop safe or protective architecture and consider this in the way we design churches and parish offices'.

## People in ministry

Participants at both forums frequently commented on issues related to people in ministry, particularly priests. The key issues that featured in feedback forms and in table posters related to formation; ongoing training; support and supervision; the role of people in ministry and celibacy.

### Formation

A very large number of participants raised issues relating to the formation of priests and religious, particularly around 'human formation'. The aim of human formation is to help those undergoing formation, or training for the priesthood or religious life, to become aware of themselves, of their evolving sense of identity and how they can relate in a healthy way with others.<sup>1</sup>

A large number of participants made comments in relation to the need for human formation, including for example:

- Seminary formation should greatly strengthen formation in the human dimension.
- Priests/clergy need more formation in regard to human sexuality and celibacy.
- Far more needs to be done around human formation for clergy.
- We need better, central, more integrated human formation in our seminaries.
- We need a change in the way formation of seminarians is undertaken to encourage well-rounded humanity and healthy sexuality.
- Human formation should be a focus of formation programs for priests and religious.
- There should be more human formation and less law and theology.

One participant commented that there should be 'quality screening of candidates for the priesthood' and that formation of priests and Church personnel should be 'updated in the present age'. Other participants noted that seminary formation should be conducted over a longer period of time and involve more connection with the community. One participant said that 'seminarians should engage in community service and have a degree from a civil university before commencing their formation' while another said that seminaries should be removed 'from 'cloistered' locations to university campuses and real life living'. Yet another said that: 'There should be longer periods of formation. There should be a greater connection with secular society rather than a closed monastic approach to formation.'

Some participants suggested that there be an in-depth evaluation or review of clergy formation and others suggested that survivors should be invited to talk at seminaries.

### Ongoing training

As well as commenting on the initial formation of people in ministry, many participants commented on their need for effective ongoing training. For example, one participant noted that 'priests need to do ongoing study and development' and that 'they should be accredited and registered'. One table described this as a need for 'lifelong formation', while another participant suggested 'ongoing professional formation (life-long) for all clergy, but also others in ministry'. Some participants noted that all who work in ministry need ongoing training, suggesting that there was a need to 'continue with and expand professional development for parish priests and other teachers in the Church'.

Some participants specifically suggested that 'ongoing training and counselling' was needed in order for clergy to adequately assist victims and survivors.

### Support and supervision

Many participants commented on the need for adequate support and supervision of people in ministry, particularly priests.

Some articulated a need for general 'support for our priests'. One person said that there should be a 'support network for priests' and that there needed to be 'identification of where delegation can occur to laity and some time off'. One table suggested that priests should live 'in a model of community where there is support for the "human dimension" and that this would "reduce isolation and provide support"'.<sup>1</sup>

Some focussed on the needs of people in ministry for 'downtime'. One table suggested that 'parish priests need downtime, boundaries and support to ensure their emotional and psychological health', while another participant suggested that there 'should be greater boundaries to allow priests space and leisure'.

Many participants said that there was a need for 'professional' or 'clinical' supervision of people in religious ministry. For example, one participant said that 'more processes should put in place for clinical supervision of people in religious ministry, particularly in rural or isolated dioceses', while another said that 'people in ministry should attend a minimum number of professional supervision sessions each year'.

Some participants linked the need for professional supervision to a need for 'spiritual direction' and argued

<sup>1</sup> Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Religious institutions*, Volume 16: Book 2, p 788, quoting Exhibit 50-0004, Truth Justice and Healing Council, Submission in connection with Case Study 50, SUBM.2463.001.0001\_R at 0052\_R-0053\_R.

that this should be mandatory. One table suggested 'much improved spiritual support for the parish priest so that they remain energised and committed in their second and third decade of ministry'. Another participant suggested that:

People in ministry should be provided with adequate support and supervision. This supervision should support their spiritual formation, and should support people in the day to day work that they do with people in their parishes.

Participants said that all people in ministry (clergy, religious and lay) should be supervised, for example one person said that there should be 'clinical (or otherwise) supervision of clergy, deacons and other ministries as required', while others suggested 'professional supervision of lay leaders and religious and clergy on a regular basis' and 'strong systems of supervision for all in Catholic ministry'. Some participants said that ongoing supervision should be mandatory for those in leadership positions.

Participants also linked the need for professional supervision with appraisal, suggesting that there should be some form of professional appraisal, performance appraisal or accreditation for people in ministry.

Some participants specifically recommended the 'resurrection' of the deanery structure, to provide a framework for the supervision of priests. They said that this would 'make the bishop's life easier and make priests more accountable to one another'.

### **The role of people in ministry**

Participants were very conscious of the significant demands on people in religious ministry and Church leaders, and many suggested that they should be able to 'delegate some of their responsibilities, especially administrative tasks'.

One participant said that 'clergy should be enabled to take up pastoral ministry rather than administration', while another suggested that 'the administrative work' be given to the 'laity and let priests do their shepherding'. A further participant suggested:

Revisiting the role of the priesthood. How can the increasing administrative burden be more balanced to enable their ability to re-engage the people.

One table noted that there needed to be 'more realistic support for parishes', with the appointment of 'competent administrators, paid full time positions, [and] centralised administration'.

### **Celibacy**

Some participants suggested that the requirement that priests be celibate should be reviewed. Some simply noted that there should be married priests. Another suggested 'voluntary marriage for priests'. A further participant suggested that the Church 'take a hard look at celibacy and whether it should be optional'.

### **Structure and governance**

A remarkable number of participants, both in feedback forms and in the summaries of table discussions, commented on issues to do with the structure and governance of the Catholic Church. In many cases participants did not articulate explicitly what they saw to be the connection between these issues of structure and governance and child safety. However, it is apparent that a very large number of participants felt that these issues are critical to the development of a child-safe Church.

### **Leadership**

A large number of participants commented on issues relating to leadership. Most of these comments related to notions of 'shared leadership', generally articulated as giving lay people a greater role in the leadership of parishes and dioceses.

Participants argued that there should be a move away from clerical leadership. One participant suggested that there should be 'a re-examination of the role of clerical leadership' while another suggested that there should be sharing of power rather than 'hanging on to the old forms of priestly power'. One table suggested that 'male priesthood should not be a requirement for Church offices/positions except Bishop'. Another table said that there should be a 'change in management structure to include more women and married couples'.

Some participants articulated the models of leadership that they felt should be developed. For example, one table suggested that the Church should adopt 'different leadership models such as servant-leadership models; or circle leadership; rather than pyramid leadership'.

Many participants used the language of democracy to describe the transformation that they wished to see. For example, one person argued for 'democracy in leadership' and said that lay people should be 'co-responsible at all levels'. Another suggested that 'we need collaborative and co-responsible leadership, including lay and religious, male and female'. One participant described that what is needed is 'co-responsibility of parishes', specifically that parish priests as pastoral leaders and lay people as administrators of the parish should work together.

Some participants used the language of dialogue, saying that there should be ‘dialogue between laity and clergy’ or the development of ‘two-way relationships between laity and bishop, priests and bishop, laity and parish priest’.

### **Governance**

Many participants, as well as commenting on democratic approaches to leadership, made explicit comments about governance or decision making. Participants argued for ‘real power sharing and sharing in decision making’ and for ‘a mixture of lay people and clergy in shared practice and decision making, monitoring and governance’. One table articulated there being a need to open ‘key governance to tangible, real engagement of lay and ordained’. Another table said that they would like to see that ‘democratic principles are utilised in parish and diocesan decision making’.

Participants also used the language of ‘power’ in their description of the changes that they would like to see to governance of parishes and dioceses. Another table argued for ‘an inclusive diocesan management model which is reflective of a change in the balance of power where laity play a greater role in the day to day functions of the diocese or parish’. A further table said that they would like there to be ‘no imbalance of power between clergy and laity’.

Some participants explicitly noted the responsibility of clergy for initiating change, saying for example, that priests should allow ‘more parishioners to have a voice’ or that they should share with laity ‘responsibilities and oversight’ of parishes. One participant argued that clergy should have a ‘preparedness to share power and trust those invited to share leadership’.

Other participants emphasised the responsibility of the laity to drive change, saying that there is a ‘need for laity to accept more responsibility in ‘speaking up’, not expecting the clergy and Church management to initiate change’. Some people simply argued for ‘greater involvement of all laity in the administration and organisation of the Church’.

Participants noted that individuals with professional skills and experience should have a role in parish and diocesan decision-making. For example, one participant argued for ‘the revamping of the structures and including more professional personnel into the structures’. One table said that there should be ‘greater involvement of advisors from outside the Church in relation to matters of governance’, while another suggested the utilisation of external professional experts ‘not contained within the Church’.

A number of people made the specific suggestion that lay people as well as bishops should have voting rights at the Plenary 2020.

### **Role of women**

A very large number of participants commented on the role of women within the Church.

For example, one participant said:

There should be more women in positions of responsibility in the Church, which would create a more balanced organisation. It has been proven that the governance of organisations is improved when there are more women in leadership positions.

Participants argued for a greater representation of women in leadership roles. For example, one person said that ‘there should be gender balance in decision making and in leadership positions’, while others argued for ‘gender parity in leadership roles’, that leadership in the Church should be ‘gender inclusive’ and that there should be ‘gender balance in positions of authority in the Catholic Church’. One table argued that there should be ‘gender balance on decision making bodies and also in appointments to leadership positions’. Another simply said that there should be more ‘women in leadership positions’.

Some participants explicitly connected issues of gender inequality to the institutional responses to child sexual abuse. One participant said that: ‘So much of this would not have been if women were treated equally and alongside with men in all areas of the Catholic Church.’

A small number of participants argued for the ordination of women. For example, one participant said that they wanted to see ‘a more inclusive Church’, that included ‘women priests’, because ‘at present only one gender has authority/power’.

### **Accountability and transparency**

Participants made a variety of comments about the need for accountability and transparency in the way Church institutions are governed. For example, one table described their vision of a Church where ‘accountability, responsibility and transparency are practised by all Church members across all areas of life and ministry’. Another table said that they wanted to see ‘transparency in processes and procedures, acknowledgement of the expertise of the laity and inclusion of their expertise at parish level’. A further participant noted that there is a ‘need to develop and ensure transparency and accountability to all levels of Church leadership’.

Some participants said that they felt that transparency is key to moving forward and to building trust.

Participants drew a link between good governance and accountability, with one table noting that the governing body in parishes should be ‘accountable not so much to the priest alone but to the community and the local ordinary’.

Other participants suggested that accountability would be enhanced through regular appraisals of parishes and people in religious ministry. One table suggested that there should be ‘regular parish appraisal’ through a survey of parishioners and staff. Others suggested an ‘annual review for priests with input from parishioners’, and ‘formal feedback between parishioners and priests’. One participant asked the question:

Could priests learn from regular parish appraisals, maybe through surveys of parishioners about safety, the successfulness of their parish mission and its staff? How can we better evaluate and support parishes, agencies and ministries?

### **Collaboration**

Many participants argued that there should be collaboration across and within dioceses and that information about approaches to child safety should be shared between organisations.

For example, one participant said that ‘we need to link up with other groups and agencies to help victims’. Another argued for ‘the sharing of resources across the Catholic Church’, noting that ‘it was obvious to me at my table that different organisations are operating at different levels’. One table noted that there should be ‘collaboration across all of the diocese – a greater sharing of resources within schools, diocese, parishes and CatholicCare’.

Many participants adopt Fr Zollner’s language of ‘doing the do-able’, saying for example that individuals or organisations should ‘do what we can in our space, and reach out for allies’.

### **Election of leaders**

Finally, a number of participants commented on the need for ‘community democracy’ in ‘the election of our leaders’, specifically that the ‘selection of bishops needs to be more participatory of the whole Church’.

## **Conclusion**

The Dioceses of Parramatta and Wollongong would like to thank all those who participated in the forums and shared their vision of a child-safe Church. Each of the Dioceses of Parramatta and Wollongong will make this report publicly available on their website and will provide a copy to participants of the forums.

This report will also be provided to the Implementation Advisory Group which has been established to monitor the response to the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse; and to Catholic Professional Standards Limited.

Our hope is that the vision of those who participated in these forums will inform the broader agenda of change in the Catholic Church in Australia both in its responses to survivors and its efforts to ensure that all Church organisations are safe places for children.



DIOCESE *of* PARRAMATTA



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF  
WOLLONGONG