

Blog



Instinct to hide is toxic for the future of our church

Francis Sullivan 12 December 2017

It's just days before the Royal Commission delivers its final report and the sense of expectation is intense.

These past five years have been torrid.

Over 8,000 victims have told their stories. Others have silently stood in solidarity. Families and supporters of those damaged as children have been vindicated as the truth has been revealed.

Institutions, like my own, have fessed up and come clean about the decades of concealment, rationalisation and minimisation of the abuse scandal.

Whether the Commission has seen and heard enough to properly bear witness to the victimisation and sexual abuse of children in institutions will be borne out in its final report.

Regardless, institutions now have no other option than to step up and implement best practice in safeguarding and prevention of the abuse of children.

In the Catholic Church in particular, now is the time for action.

It is far too thin an argument to insist that the scandal should be relegated to the history books. It is essential that the Church leaders continue to hold themselves to the account of independent experts who advise on best practice and compliance.

It almost beggars belief that after these five years of revelations that some within the advisory ranks of the Church believe that progress can only occur with the Church withdrawing from public scrutiny. This smacks of the same self-protective culture that for so long kept hidden the extent of the abuse scandal in order to protect the image of the Church.

A retreat to that instinct is toxic for the future of our Church. I know the majority of church leaders are committed to change and I am confident they will provide the necessary leadership at this historic time for the Church.

This week I called on the Prime Minister to instigate a COAG working party to oversee the implementation of the Commission's recommendations.

In that same vein, so too should the Church leaders announce a similar structure for the Catholic Church.

Put bluntly, this is not a time for business as usual. It is a time to get on with the business!