

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Case Study 50

15 February 2017

The eighth day of the Royal Commission's Catholic "wrap up" hearing was held today in Sydney. Today's hearing featured two panels, the first on ongoing formation of clergy, and the second on

Background to witnesses on ongoing formation of clergy

The first panel dealt with ongoing formation of clergy, and the relevant aspects of the witnesses is outlined below.

Dr Michelle Mulvihill is a former Sister of Mercy, trained psychologist and consultant to various Catholic and Protestant Church bodies on professional standards and ethics.

Father Michael Whelan SM is Parish Priest of St Patrick's, Church Hill and is developing a professional enhancement program for clergy, which will be trialled in the Diocese of Parramatta next month.

Father Gregory Bourke is a lecturer in Pastoral Studies at Catholic Theological College and the National Director for Clergy Life and Ministry for the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

Sister Evelyn Crotty RSM holds a masters in Clinical Pastoral Counselling, majoring in supervision in pastoral ministry. She is an accredited supervisors and trains others through Transforming Supervisors, an association of pastoral supervisors.

Father Thomas McDonough CP is the Provincial Superior of the Passionists, and the Dean of Studies for those in formation. He is also the Vice President of Catholic Religious Australia.

Dr David Leary is a lecturer at Yarra Theological Union, Victoria.

The development of ongoing formation

Father Bourke told the Commission that ongoing formation of clergy really began to emerge from the mid 1970s. Prior to this, he said, the number of clergy meant that Priests were often in 'apprentice' mode as assistant Priest for 16-18 years, and so had a fair amount of at least informal formation. He spoke of a centre for formation and renewal which operated during the 1980s, a more systematic program of psychological assessment and accompaniment which followed that, and then the introduction of the Clergy Life and Ministry program.

Following these initiatives commencing, the apostolic exhortation from Pope John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* was released, devoting a chapter to the need for ongoing formation of clergy. He also said that the Code of Canon Law describes the receipt of ongoing formation as a "right-duty" of the Priest and imparting it as a "right-duty" of the Church. He also said that recent documents from Rome talk about the right of the faithful to feel the effects of the good formation of their Priests.

Specific formation tools were discussed, including the development of a 'professional enhancement' program for clergy, which will be trialled in the Diocese of Parramatta but which he hopes will be translatable to other dioceses. He said it would promote wellbeing, focusing on relationships, self-awareness, and group discussions. Father Bourke spoke about a clergy self-assessment tool, whereby a 360-degree review is undertaken using questionnaires filled out by parishioners, those

involved in parish ministry, parish staff, school staff and others with whom the Priest comes into contact, and then an analysis is done to identify strengths and weaknesses of the Priest, with short-, medium- and long-term goals set as a result.

Sister Crotty spoke about 'pastoral supervision,' which she described as a "regulated, planned, intentional and bounded space" in which a trained supervisor looks at the practice of their supervisee on an individual basis or in a peer group.

Should ongoing formation be mandatory?

There was an acknowledgment that the ongoing formation tools currently available have a low take-up rate, and reasons for this were discussed. Sister Crotty suggested that it was important they were seen as educational aids to improve ministry rather than a form of therapy, and Father Bourke said the high activity level of Priests was also a factor in this. All panellists agreed that some form of ongoing formation there should be mandatory, but that it would need to be introduced over time.

Father Bourke and Father McDonough both considered that the newly-formed body, Catholic Professional Standards Limited would have a role in setting and monitoring 'best practice' standards for formation. Father McDonough said that he expected issues of ongoing formation and pastoral supervision would be taken out of the hands of Bishops and religious orders and mandated by Catholic Professional Standards, with non-compliance with education and formation standards penalised.

Background of witnesses and organisations represented on community services panel

Marist180

Ariana Kenny is a clinical and case work specialist for Marist 180 (Marist Youth Care), a registered psychologist. She told the Commission that MaristCare provides a range of services relating to children, including foster care, out of home care, family preservation services and support services for refugees and asylum seekers.

She spoke about the reporting obligations of MaristCare based on contractual obligations with the federal and state governments as a condition of the provision of funding of various programs, and other legal and regulatory requirements. She said that because reporting obligations differed from state to state, Marist180 has chosen to comply with the strictest reporting laws in the country.

Ms Kenny also spoke of the child safeguarding training given to all employees, and the frequent refreshing of standards and practices.

She also said that despite being a Marist service, the organisation's risk, quality, child protection and therapy frameworks are not required to comply with the ethos or culture of the Marist order.

CatholicCare Wollongong

Michael Austin is the Director of CatholicCare, Wollongong. The child-related services provided by CatholicCare include out of home care, foster care, assistance with supervised contact and supervised changeovers pursuant to Family Court obligations, and a school student counselling program, which he described as its biggest connection with young people. CatholicCare is also

involved in family counselling, programs for young people whose parents are separating, and social support for the siblings of children with disabilities.

He said that the policies and procedures followed by CatholicCare come from the professional regulatory bodies under which its services fall, as well as government standards. He also gave details of compulsory staff training and supervision, and mandatory reporting obligations.

The structure of CatholicCare is such that the Bishop of Wollongong sits at the top, but with delegated responsibility to the director. Both are advised by an Advisory Council, with Mr Austin saying that he has never known Bishop Peter Ingham to not take his advice or that of the council. He said that the only policies which need the Bishop's approval are the strategic plan and the budget.

Centacare Catholic Family Services, Adelaide

Dale West began as the Director of Centacare Catholic Family Services, Adelaide in 1989 when it had 16 staff members. It now has 540.

Centacare offers respite care, foster care, family reunification, early intervention programs, domestic violence and homelessness services. It is mostly funded by the government and, like previous witnesses, said that the government funding came with conditions including licensing and financial accountability. He said that the organisation had chosen to follow the Quality Improvement Council health and community services standards, and are fully accredited with that group.

MacKillop Family Services

Nick Halfpenny is the Director of Policy and Research at MacKillop Family Services. It is a combined initiative of the Christian Brothers, the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of St Joseph. It is involved in out of home care, residential care, foster and kinship care, family support and referral services, disability services and education and training services for students disengaging from mainstream schooling.

He detailed MacKillop Family Services' child safeguarding principles, which were adapted from the "10 child safe elements" published by the Royal Commission, including screening methods, approaches to investigating and reporting abuse, and ensuring the voice of children is heard.

The hearings continue tomorrow.