

## **Measuring the response of the Australian church to the sexual abuse scandal**

The following document attempts to set out the range of meaningful steps that the Catholic Church in Australia needs to take in the near and immediate future (2 and 5 years thresholds). Such a plan would be a joint clergy and laity endeavour, however the Australian Bishops must exercise authentic leadership in the implementation of the plan, which of necessity, requires profound cultural change in the Australian Catholic church. The plan proceeds from a position where the Australian Catholic people have communicated to the bishops their clear expectations for major cultural, organisational and operational change. The plan therefore becomes an accountability document by which the catholic community is able to ensure its expectations are fulfilled and the bishops held responsible.

### **Section 1      Episcopal Integrity**

It is essential that Attitudes, Statements and Actions of Australian bishops are congruent with:

- Deal honestly and generously with victims of sexual abuse and their families;
- Seriously, honestly and courageously address issues arising from the sexual abuse scandal and the church's responses;
- Actively address and reform those aspects of the church's structures, rules and culture that have contributed to the scandal and its response, including clericalism, celibacy, power and institutional might;
- Move beyond existing rules and frameworks to create a non-clericalist church, treating males and females equally in all terms and facilitating the building of a model of church in which the People of God in Australia, (Australian Catholics) can fully express their many and diverse callings;
- Openly seek and create solutions that are workable in the Australian context and church, involving where necessary courageously change and solutions and as necessary, effectively and resolutely advocating to authorities in Rome, whether the Pope, the Curia or other church authorities;
- Consistent with the urging of Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter, *Evangelii Gaudium*, let the principle that 'the periphery must inform the centre', guide and inform considerations and decision making in all matters; and
- Honestly recognise and redress the parlous position of the church's reputation in the Australian community as a moral force for good.

**Draft**

**Section 2      Specific Areas for Response**

<i>Focus Area</i>	<i>National &amp; Diocese</i>	<i>2 Years</i>	<i>5 Years</i>
<b>Response to individual victims and their families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National policy standards</li> <li>• Individual Diocese infrastructure/mechanisms</li> </ul>	<i>(these measures should be identifiable in conjunction with the Truth Justice and Healing Council)</i>	<i>(these measures should be identifiable in conjunction with the Truth Justice and Healing Council)</i>
<b>Cultural Reform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major cultural review of Australian Church</li> <li>• Focus to be on how to create and sustain a faith inspired people led Australian church</li> <li>• All bishops to be engaged</li> <li>• A group of bishops to be key advocates with authority to confront resistance and opposition</li> <li>• Each bishop to champion the programs in their diocese and ensure appropriate follow up</li> <li>• Showcase the Australian initiatives to the Pope and others in Rome as indicative of ‘the periphery informing the centre’ and our determination to learn the lessons from the sexual abuse scandal and refashion the church to more authentically express gospel values.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With major laity input, identify key principles of change and prepare cultural change program (within 6 months)</li> <li>• Working with all inputs devise vision of a reformed church/culture and incorporate within culture change program. (6 months)</li> <li>• Commence roll out of these culture change programs within 1 year, for on-going and repeated application across all church entities.</li> <li>• Identify and respond to key areas of resistance and disagreement, engaging the people to reinforce the need for change. (It must be recognise that conflict will occur in implementing this program. It is only when centres of resistance are engaged and managed that real progress is made.</li> <li>• Push ahead with these initiatives, even in the face of resistance from Rome, confirmed in the belief that they are essential for the Australian church of the</li> </ul>	<p>Widespread recognition in the Australian church that the old model of church is being replaced with a more humble, gospel centred model in which the institution is less important and seen as a flexible resource, rather than a constricting framework.</p> <p>There is clear openness to a new form of church, and more engagement with building an authentic Australian model of church</p> <p>The church is recognised as having taken major steps to change its culture. In short there is an obvious intent on behalf of the church to create a future in which not only is sexual abuse clearly unacceptable, but so too are other power dominant and institution protecting behaviours.</p>

**Draft**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review progress and reaffirm/revise objectives every 2 years</li> </ul>	<p>future. Engage with any resistance on our terms, not theirs.</p>	
<b>Ridding the church of clericalism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In conjunction with cultural reform initiatives, empower a group of lay Catholics to identify the attitudes, dispositions, structures, behaviours and judgements that characterise and ingrain clericalism in the Australian church. Devise a comprehensive response to these attributes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review all offices and procedures in dioceses to identify immediate changes that can be made to remove clericalism. This could include all manner of initiatives, such as appointing female religious and lay people to positions of full authority in parishes and church agencies.</li> </ul>	
<b>Redefining ministry in the Australian church</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change the conventional thinking of a shortage of vocations to one where we must be creative to facilitate the many vocations that exist in the Australian catholic community, but which are stifled by silly rules.</li> <li>• Develop an agenda of reforms, such as short term priesthood, ordained lay leaders who provide sacramental leadership.</li> <li>• Encourage and facilitate female ordination by initiatives within Australia and in pursuing this agenda with Rome – insisting it must be</li> </ul>		

**Draft**

	discussed and considered in all fora.		
<b>Reforming priestly formation to respond to the existential lives of the Australian people</b>	Initiate a reform agenda, with particular focus on those elements that promote and purvey a clerical training and attributes that are clericalist and place priests on a pedestal eg Opus Dei. Be categoric in stating that such formation and emphases are no longer acceptable in a non-clericalist church sensitive to the learnings of the sexual abuse scandal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a major re-education program for many clergy (often younger priests) to help them establish a truly incarnational theology and pastoral practice to their priesthood.</li> </ul>	
<b>Democratising diocesan and parish structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the functioning of the Australian Bishops Conference to include a fully integrated laity representation, with full sharing in decision making.</li> <li>Agree that all dioceses implement freely elected and representative synods and structures for diocese governance.</li> </ul>		