

Melbourne Future Committee Speech

Tuesday, 23 June 2020

Good evening and thank you for providing me with the opportunity to again address the committee on such an important issue.

I speak to you tonight in my capacity as CEO of In Good Faith Foundation (IGFF) on behalf of our clients and board in relation to Agenda Item – *7.3 Children and Places of Worship*.

Firstly, I would like to commend Melbourne City Council for their ongoing commitment to protecting children within the City of Melbourne and the efforts of the Future Melbourne Committee.

IGFF welcomes the motion's intent to invite the Principal Commissioner for Children and Young People, Commissioner Buchanan, to provide a report to the Committee outlining specific and proactive steps that the City of Melbourne can take to facilitate the safety of children, in places of worship in the municipality.

I would like to also take this opportunity to acknowledge the important work Commissioner Buchanan's office undertake on behalf of our community.

IGFF is currently in the process of writing to the CEO of each Victorian Local Government to enquire what measures their municipalities are implementing to ensure the protection of children engaging with Institutions and Place of Worship that practices within their city.

We ask that if this motion is successful, Commissioner Buchanan share her report with both IGFF and every Council in Victoria.

We make this request, to best provide a consistent statewide approach, proactively ensuring that the mandatory reporting of suspected or confirmed child abuse is being followed in each municipality.

Many survivors of institutional abuse and whistle-blowers are feeling a distinct sense of dismay with high profile places of worship that have yet to make a clear commitment to the basic principles of mandatory reporting.

Worse still are those places of worship, publicly stating that they will not comply with Victorian Law, designed to protect children in their care, from sexual abuse.

Not only is this approach likely unlawful, in the minds of survivors and organisations such as ours, it erodes trust in the progress that survivors and advocates thought had been gained.

Any breach of law in relation to the safety of children, is an outcome that no elected official should abide. All available resources must be brought to bear to ensure that any breach is met with the full force of the law.

Survivors on the whole, consider compliance with mandatory reporting laws to be a very easy rule to follow and it would provide a significant gesture of goodwill, to a community that has already suffered so much.

Furthermore, it would be an acknowledgement of the specific role that the confessional has played in prolonging the trauma and facilitating the secrecy, which allowed abuse to continue, almost entirely unchallenged for decades in places of worship.

On behalf of IGFF, our clients, our board and survivors:

I commend this motion and ask that it receive unanimous committee support.

With the committee's permission, I seek to have this speech tabled.

Thank you.

Clare Leaney
CEO
In Good Faith Foundation

In Good Faith Foundation is national charity and support service providing advocacy services to individuals, families and communities impacted by institutional abuse for over twenty years.