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Archdiocese of Sydney

I am asked to comment on the following question: To what extent has the selection, screening, formation and ongoing formation of candidates for the priesthood and religious life contributed to the occurrence of child sexual abuse in Catholic institutions or affected the institutional response to this abuse?

I acknowledge with great sadness that it is in all likelihood the case that failures in the formation process contributed to the occurrence of child sexual abuse in Catholic institutions. The Royal Commission's statistics show this was particularly a problem in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, and the priests who committed those terrible offences were formed in those or the preceding decades. I am just not capable of commenting authoritatively on the failures of formation in those decades.

My involvement in the selection, screening and formation of candidates for the priesthood commenced in 2003 when I became Founding Director of Canali House in Brisbane, which is a programme for men who are considering entering the seminary.

Canali House is a house of discernment, meaning that the residents are not yet part of the priestly formation program (or even a pre-formation program). Rather, the residents continue to work or study while receiving guidance and direction from the resident Vocations Director.

The house is designed to engage residents in the human pillar of formation, whilst exposing them to introductory theology studies and ministry commitments in a parish. They receive regular direction from the Vocation Director, as well as being paired with a priest-mentor. The twelve month program is designed to help men decide whether they will (or won't) continue on the seminary.

In 2009, I was appointed Vocations Director for the Archdiocese of Brisbane, and the Rector of the Holy Spirit Seminary. In that role, I inherited from the previous rector of the Seminary, Bishop Michael McCarthy, a very strong program of formation that I continued to develop. The Holy Spirit Seminary requires 8 separate courses of study over 4 years covering a range of issues including celibacy, psychology, the human body, psychosexual development, personal relationships and the professional aspects of being a priest and a man. There is also a constant and ongoing program of monitoring seminarians' relationships with all types of people including their families, friends, seminarians, priests, parishioners, children and the public, with a view to ensuring that seminarians have healthy relationships and are fully formed adults. My answer to the postulated question is that I would very strongly hope that the programs that have been put in place have contributed

by significantly reducing the prospects that any person who is likely to be a risk to children is ever accepted into the seminary, but if they are, is identified and does not continue to the priesthood.

Formation is a continuous process that becomes a personal responsibility for priests, to follow a path of continuous improvement, self-development, learning and spirituality. Like any profession, the priesthood requires a constant renewal of knowledge and skills, including personal development. The continuous formation of priests is essential to them remaining healthy and well-adjusted ministers of God.

On Thursday 12 January 2017, I responded to the request [REDACTED] from the Office of the Solicitor Assisting the Royal Commission to participate in a teleconference interview.

During the interview I responded to questions regarding the following areas:

- The background for the development of Pope John Paul II's 1992 document *Pastores dabo vobis* (PDV) and the model for formation for the Ordained Ministry in the Catholic Church;
- The four fundamental pillars of formation that are articulated in PDV, namely Human, Spiritual, Intellectual, and Pastoral;
- The discernment process used by the Archdiocese of Brisbane;
- The establishment of the house of discernment in Brisbane known as Canali House;
- The place of psychological assessment as part of the entry procedure for the Seminary;
- Ongoing work in formation will reveal a more thorough affective person with reference to his psychological, corporeal, intellectual and spiritual development;
- The need for ongoing formation, post-ordination. Reference was made to PDV #70, "There is no profession, job or work which does not require constant updating if it is to remain current and effective";
- The importance of the mature development of the human person was underlined, especially with regards to allowing the individual to have access to professional and specialised people both inside and outside of the seminary.
- PDV underlines as a firm principal that "Every life is a constant path towards maturity".