

# Professional Standards Newsletter



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## The Most Wonderful Invention

Recently a congregation member expressed the view that Professional Standards was a means by which we are being told how to live our lives in accordance with protocols, legislation, regulation, being monitored and controlled, a kind of 'Big Brother'. The implication being that things were much better in the good old days.

The most inspirational person in my life was my grandmother. She was wise and kind, patient and a simple loving Christian. God was a part of her going out and her coming in, in every turn of the spoon as she made shortbread, in the clicking of her knitting needles, in her gardening hands as she tended her tomatoes and in the shoes she polished on Saturday ready for church on Sunday.

Sarah Connor was born in 1892 in the poor little mining village of Glenboig on the outskirts of Glasgow. Her story is probably not uncommon for the times. Her parents were 18 when she was born, her father was killed in the mine when she was 8, her mother remarried to a widower when she was 9 so she became known as Sarah Connor McLeod. She started work as a kitchen maid at 12. After enduring the deaths of 5 children in 8 years, the McLeod family migrated to Australia in 1911 first to Maryborough, then to Toowoomba before finally settling in Sydney.

## Workshops - 2013

Mackay  
Mount Isa  
Milton  
Caloundra  
Milton  
Beenleigh  
Rockhampton  
Middle Park  
Noosaville

## Planned

Toowoomba  
Rosewood  
Corinda (Refresher Course)  
Southport  
Highfields

Sarah's mother died at just 40 in 1914 and Sarah married Walter Fulton in 1916 to become Sarah Fulton but to me she was simply Grandma.

Not long before her death in 1980 I asked Grandma what had been the most wonderful invention in her lifetime perhaps thinking of cars and planes and space travel. She replied quick as a flash "Electricity, when I was a girl so many women and children were burnt when their skirts caught on the fire or the lamp tipped over, hardly a week went by that a house wasn't burnt down – Electricity"



I pondered what has been the most wonderful invention of my life and quick as a flash I thought – safety.

Safe food. Food free from contamination. I was often sick as a child from improperly transported, stored and prepared foods.

Safe travel. My friend's brother Barry died when he was 10 after falling off his bike and hitting his head, 3 lads from the next street were killed when their sports car rolled, my college friend Sophie died at 17 when her head hit the windscreen.

Safe Work. When I married and moved to Wollongong, every week we read about or knew the family of, workers killed or maimed in the steelworks. Run over by trains, crushed by slabs of iron, burnt by molten metal, asphyxiated by gas and even drowned in ships in the harbour. Families enduring grief and loss and people whose lives were forever altered by the loss of limbs, damaged lungs, injured brains, broken spines, terrible scarring and wives who overnight became long term carers.

Over the last 30 years we've developed safe food handling procedures, put seatbelts and roll cages in cars, cyclists wear helmets and companies have used technology to reduce danger and now provide formal safety training and safety equipment for all their workers.



Thousands of families have been spared grief and loss, and as it never happened, we'll never know if it was our mother or brother, daughter, grandson or best friend kept safe from calamity.

These improvements have happened because we value and care for each other. Community attitudes have changed, there have been improvements in technology, our knowledge has grown and legislation has been enacted to reflect these changes in our community.

If we are to 'tend the flock of God' as Peter exhorts us to do, we must nourish and nurture, protect, assist and guide one another.

Professional Standards is merely the means by which we demonstrate this tender care. Yes there are procedures and at times we may think of them as a bit of a nuisance but if using a common procedure means we don't forget something which is really important, then we are nurturing and supporting our office bearers and demonstrating to all our members how much we value and care for them. We will be safe at church.



Grandma used to say ‘People talk about the good old days but now is my good old days. I have a comfortable home, food for the table and a few shillings (she never really liked decimal currency) in my purse. Yes these are my good old days’

Rather than ‘Big Brother’ I see Professional Standards as reminding us to nourish and nurture, protect , guide and assist one another as we walk together with God in our going out and our coming in, in our Sunday Schools and youth groups, our modern and traditional services and in our caring for the most vulnerable in our community. I would like to think that these are our good old days.

LIZ CRAWFORD

Professional Standards Director

*I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it – not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do*



*not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd appears, you will win the crown of glory that never fades away.*

*(1Peter 5:1-5) NRSV*

“..... ? ..... ? .....”

For the last three years we have been using our Church’s old “Safe Place” Training material. This material was slightly adapted to include important additions from the “ChurchSafe” material as developed by the National Council of Churches. Essential material, “Child Safe”, dealing with keeping our children safe was also included. We also refer to congregations’ responsibilities involved in Work, Health and Safety legislation.

With all these different names and topics, it can be a little difficult to understand what our training is all about. We developed a long list of possibilities but would like to share with you that the front runner is “Safe at Church”. But we’d love to hear from you if you believe you have a better title, or have a comment about this name.

The PSU offers workshops and works with congregations so that everyone might be

**“SAFE at CHURCH”**

# The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse



We've all read about the Royal Commission which was established in January of this year.

The Royal Commission has a dual purpose, firstly to enquire into the responses of institutions, and this includes churches, into allegations of the sexual abuse of children and then to make recommendations for changes to legislation, regulations and practices to ensure that children are protected from abuse and to ensure that when allegations are made, children are listened to, the matter is investigated in a transparent manner and appropriate actions are taken.

The Royal Commission is giving an Interim Report to Parliament in June 2014 and it is widely expected that it could take up to 5 years for the Royal Commission to complete its work. The Lutheran Church and all the other churches have expressed their total commitment to the work of the Royal Commission.

The Royal Commission has announced that it will call for submissions on various Issues Papers on a regular basis. The first Issues Paper relates to the standardisation of Working with Children Checks across all the States and Territories and we will be making a submission as a standardised Working with Children Check would be of great value since we are a national church.

The second Issues Paper is seeking submissions on the operation and effectiveness of Towards Healing, which is the program developed by the Catholic Church to deal with allegations of child sexual abuse within the church.

If you are interested in further information about the Royal Commission you will find it at : [www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au](http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au)



# What keeps us Safe at Church?

Recently someone suggested that the best way of keeping people safe in a congregation was to make sure that people are truly Christians. "When you know people are faithful children of God you know that they aren't going to hurt you!" In lots of ways this makes perfect sense. But there are a couple of problems with this thinking.

Firstly, how do you know who is a faithful child of God? It's the old wolves in sheep clothing difficulty. Secondly, faithful children of God while they are saints because of all that Christ has done, they also remain sinners totally dependant on God's grace and forgiveness each and every moment of their lives. Faith has not, and never will create perfection in human beings. Most Christians are truly wonderfully caring people who can be trusted, but it's foolish to base your confidence in people because they present a satisfactory image. The horrible fact is that most of those who have abused in the church presented an image that few doubted.

So what do we have that's able to offer us a little more confidence? My answer to that question may surprise you, because it surprised me when the truth dawned. The only earthly confidence that we have lies in the organizational

administrative arm of our Church - things like Church policies, procedures, constitution and by-laws, rules, codes of conduct, job descriptions, the supervision regime, and so on. These things clearly spell out how we want and expect people in the church to behave. They enable complaints and therefore investigations to be made early on. They call for records to be kept so that patterns of behaviour are not missed. They require workers to be supervised and supported when times get tough. And let's not forget the wonderful



laws of this brilliant country of ours either. They make it clear what behaviour is acceptable to society and what is not.

If you want me to express this in theological terms, it's not so much God working through the Kingdom on the Right that protects us, but his gift of work of the Kingdom on the Left.

Let me remind you that the Right Hand Kingdom is ruled by Christ. It's there that we hear his Gospel message; our sins are forgiven, people are declared to be saints. It's where

we go when we've fouled things up and need a brand new start. Here there are no judgments that cause us to dread; no horrible consequences to face; complete assurance of new life arriving with a splash of water and a sip of wine. The Kingdom of the Left is ruled by God the Father. He rules through some pretty powerful gifts; Good human governments - which includes the police, army, emergency workers, hospital staff and so on and on; loving parents - especially as they discipline and guide; people in authority who keep order at work or in our community; judges, doctors, and so on. There's no Gospel here. It's all human reason and laws. Criminals are arrested and made to pay the appropriate penalty for their crime; terrorists are hunted and killed before they do more harm; and motorists receive expensive colour photographs of their speeding cars. These two kingdoms are very separate but also locked together by their mutual need of each other. The Kingdom on the Right needs the protection and safety provided by the Left, and the Left needs the prayers, encouragement, loyalty, and reminders about treating people with love and compassion that those in the Kingdom on the Right are eager to provide.

Our Church is involved in both kingdoms. Pastors are called to work in the Right and use tools like, the absolution of sins, proclamation of the Gospel, and administration of the Sacraments. District Executive Officers, Church Office staff, the Professional Standards Unit, and policy developers are all part of God's Kingdom of the Left. They require forms to be filled out, records kept, permissions sought, and good rules and procedures to be developed and obeyed. Like all good governing authorities the number one concern of those working in the Kingdom of the Left is the protection of those in their care. When parents discipline, train, and do all they can to protect their children, they are expressing God's care through his Left hand Kingdom.

It seems to me that the main cause of the mishandling of abuse in the church was Christian people forgetting all about God's Left Hand Kingdom. My guess is that pastorally minded Church leaders lovingly cared for the souls of their erring brother priests; they called them to repentance; they rebuked them for their sin and asked for a commitment never to behave in that way again; I'm sure that like any caring Pastor they would have then gone on to proclaim to their now appropriately remorseful brother Priests the comforting message of the Gospel, assuring them of God's amazing forgiveness, and perhaps even offering to assist them as they resumed their important work.

They performed the work of the Right Hand Kingdom well, but they did not go on to also report criminal behaviour to the authorities of Left Hand Kingdom. Some even helped hide their crimes from the Police. They did not ask appropriate people in their organisation to investigate whether any church

policies or rules had been broken and if so, what consequences needed to follow. They did not ask for old policies to be revisited, or new policies and rules to be developed so that it was clear that abusive behaviour would not be tolerated. They did not call for all Priests to be retrained in acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. They did not carefully record even the smallest issue concerning abusive behaviour so that inappropriate patterns of behaviour might be recognized early and action taken immediately. They did not report the abuse to anyone in the administration arm of the Church and ask them to evaluate the risk and take all appropriate action to make sure that all children and vulnerable people in the Church were protected.

I believe it's critical that we rediscover the important protective role of God's Left Hand Kingdom. This is where abusers are held accountable; this is where their abusive actions can be dealt with; this is where vulnerable people can be protected by rules and regulations.

Let's thank God for the protective administration arm of our Church.<sup>1</sup>

Keith Stiller



<sup>1</sup> Never in a million years would I have thought I could be capable of writing this sentence!

For more reading on Luther's teaching about the Two Kingdoms go to

<https://www.lutheransonline.com/lo/424/FSLO-1330611424-111424.pdf>

## Good news for SMO Coordinators

There is great news for SMO Coordinators. In the recent past it has not been possible for the local Coordinator to add new people to the system. Changes have been made so that this is now possible.



Another great function has been recently added to the site. Every page now has a little camera icon in the top right hand part of the page near the help button. This icon links you to a short video that explains the features of each page. I am confident that you will find this extremely helpful.

Could I also remind you that all congregations are encouraged to use this Risk Management System for all activities of the congregation. Let's not limit our efforts to run safe programs for our children only. We want everyone in the congregation to be "Safe at Church".

Our latest advice is that all ChildSafe records concerning Risk Management including Accident and Incidents Reports should be securely stored for at least 50 years. This is yet another reason for congregations to take advantage of this very helpful resource available to congregations at no cost.

Please contact [Keith Stiller](#) if your congregation wishes to become involved.

### POLICIES

The following policies are at present in the process of being adopted by the LCAQD.

- Child Protection
- Prevention of Risk of Harm from a Known Sex Offender
- Conflict of Interest
- Privacy
- Prevention of Fraud
- Gift Acceptance
- Prevention of Abuse and Harassment
- Volunteers
- Training and Learning

Once the extensive review process is completed and the policies are adopted they will be able to be included in our training workshops. We have been waiting for their adoption so that they can be included in our new four hour refresher training. This workshop will be available for all who have completed the initial six hour workshop. We will be testing this workshop in September, and then hope to make it widely available to all congregations in 2014.

## A Reminder for Pastors

In the months, and probably years ahead while the Royal Commission does its important work, you will most probably find good reason to mention what arises from their investigations in your sermons. You will probably also feel moved to preach about the church's past failings in this area, and even condemn such horrible abuse. In fact, I believe it's important all Pastors speak often of such things. Unless you show yourself to be understanding and compassionate to the pain and special needs of victims, it is unlikely any survivors of abuse will take the risk to share their experiences with you.

But even if you choose not to preach about these things, remember that it is likely that the time ahead will be extremely stressful for many survivors of abuse. Please be alert to any signs of distress and consider advertising lists of supportive services such as the following:

- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Mensline 1300 789 978
- National Suicide Callback Service 1300 659 467
- Adults Surviving Child Abuse 1300 657 380
- Victims Counselling and Support Service 1300 139 703 ( this is a QLD service)

## Planning a Workshop

If your congregation is interested in hosting a workshop in 2013 please contact [Keith Stiller](#) or check out the LCAQD website.

### Response

We'd love to hear from you.

Please tell us what changes have occurred in your congregation since you have attended the Professional Standards Workshop.

Send us a quick [email](#) sharing those things that have worked well and those that still need more work.

Have we made a difference?

## Professional Standards Unit

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Our aim is to produce two short newsletters a year for those who attend our Queensland Workshops. If you don't wish to receive this newsletter please email [keith.stiller@qld.lca.org.au](mailto:keith.stiller@qld.lca.org.au)

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