

Old habits die hard

THE Catholic Church's submission to the parliamentary committee reveals its authors' deeply ingrained habits of secrecy, deceit and, above all, self-protection.

As your editorial says (*The Age*, 25/9), the bishops and their officials have repeatedly claimed ignorance of a priest's paedophile history when he is transferred across dioceses, on the basis that dioceses are autonomous units that report only one way: up the line to Rome.

Yet now a joint submission, embracing all four Victorian dioceses — plus many religious orders — is (presumably) researched, compiled and

approved. Are these hitherto isolated units suddenly talking to each other? If so, why only now? Has Rome agreed to this structural revolution?

If the bishops expect their claims of improved "understanding", recently discovered "honesty" and full "co-operation" to be believed, they should immediately post their submission on their dedicated website for all to read.

Indeed, the committee should release all submissions for public scrutiny immediately, and not wait until its report is tabled. Only those aspects raising personal privacy or ongoing criminal investigation issues should be withheld. The committee merely compounds its inherent failings by its additional, and unnecessary, secrecy.

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