

# The Australian

## Abuse advisers look into priests children

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Pope Francis' committee of advisers on protecting children from sexually abusive priests is expanding its workload to include the needs and rights of children fathered by Roman Catholic priests.

Committee members have told The Associated Press that a working group is looking into developing guidelines that can be used by dioceses around the world to ensure that children born to priests are adequately cared for.

"It's a horrendous problem in many cultures, and it's not something that is readily talked about," commission member Dr Krysten Winter-Green said.

The church has tried to keep such children secret for centuries, because of the scandal of priests breaking their vows of celibacy. But it has gained visibility after Irish bishops published guidelines earlier this year that focused on ensuring the wellbeing of the child and the mother, who often suffer psychological problems from the stigma and silence imposed on them by the church.

The Irish guidelines were believed to represent the first comprehensive public policy by a national bishops' conference on the issue.

The number of children known to be fathered by Catholic priests isn't known, but there are about 450,000 Catholic priests in the world and the Catholic Church forbids artificial contraception and abortion.