Resisting the Welfare State: 
An examination of the response of the Australian Catholic Church to the national health schemes of the 1940s and 1970s

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology and Social Policy
The University of Sydney

December 2004
To

My parents Deb and Jack

My sisters Frances and Mary-Anne

My children Josephine, Michelle, Dominica, Brendan and Patrick

My husband Michael
I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

(Signed): ......................................

(Dated): ...........................................
ABSTRACT

This thesis extends and refines a growing body of literature that has highlighted the impact of Catholic social principles on the development of welfare state provision. It suggests that Catholic social teaching is intent on preserving the role of the traditional family, and keeping power out of the hands of the state. Much of this literature, however, is concerned with European experience (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Castles, 1993; van Kersbergen, 1995). More recently Smyth (2003) has augmented this research through an examination of the influence of Catholic social thought on Australian welfare policy. He concludes that the Australian Church, at least up to the 1970s, preferred a ‘welfare society’ over a ‘welfare state’, an outlook shared by the wider Australian community.

Following the lead of Smyth, this thesis extends the insights of the European research through an examination of Catholic Church resistance to ALP proposals to introduce national health schemes in the 1940s and the 1970s. These appeared to satisfy the Church’s commitment to the poorest and most marginalised groups in the community. Why, then, did the Australian Church resist the proposals? The thesis concludes that there are at least two possible ways of interpreting Catholic social teaching – a preconciliar interpretation that minimises the role of the state, and a postconciliar interpretation that allows for an active, albeit limited, state. The adoption of either is informed by socio-political factors. The thesis, then, concludes that the response of the Church in the 1940s and the 1970s was conditioned by socio-political and historical factors that inclined the Australian Catholic Church towards a conservative view of welfare.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Special thanks go to Fr. Richard Lennan, who read my chapter on Catholic social teaching, although I take responsibility for the comments contained therein. I am also indebted to Professor Richard Scotton who generously allowed me access to his personal papers, which helped me understand the paradox that prompted this research.

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One final acknowledgement – I am truly blessed in so many ways and for this I give thanks to my God to whom I offer this work.
**Abbreviations**

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>AACG</td>
<td>Archives of Archdiocese of Canberra/Goulburn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACHCA</td>
<td>Australian Catholic Health Care Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACHA</td>
<td>Australian Catholic Hospitals Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACLP</td>
<td>Anti-Communist Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMA</td>
<td>Australian Medical Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANSCA</td>
<td>Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARSC</td>
<td>Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMA</td>
<td>British Medical Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHA</td>
<td>Catholic Health Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHA (V)</td>
<td>Catholic Hospitals Association (Victoria)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLRI (NSW)</td>
<td>Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (NSW)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSM</td>
<td>Catholic Social Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSSM</td>
<td>Catholic Social Studies Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLP</td>
<td>Democratic Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECCA</td>
<td>Episcopal Committee for Catholic Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECCSSM</td>
<td>Episcopal Committee for Catholic Social Studies Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPSA</td>
<td>General Practitioners Society in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIC</td>
<td>Health Insurance Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>JPCSS</td>
<td>Joint Parliamentary Committee on Social Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCMA</td>
<td>Archives of the Little Company of Mary, Province of the Holy Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHSC</td>
<td>Medical and Hospital Survey Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPC</td>
<td>Medical Planning Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAA</td>
<td>National Archives of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCC</td>
<td>National Civic Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCCB</td>
<td>National Conference of Catholic Bishops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCMS</td>
<td>National Conference of Major Superiors</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHIP</td>
<td>National Health Insurance Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHMRC</td>
<td>National Health and Medical Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJHAC</td>
<td>National Joint Health Advisory Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSCPH</td>
<td>National Standing Committee of Private Hospitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBS</td>
<td>Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>Parliamentary Papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAA</td>
<td>Sydney Archdiocesan Archives</td>
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<tr>
<td>VHIAA</td>
<td>Voluntary Health Insurance Association of Australia</td>
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