

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday 19 October 2018

DIOCESE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE NATIONAL APOLOGY TO VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ON 22 OCTOBER 2018

Parishes, schools and Catholic agencies in the Diocese of Wollongong will acknowledge the importance of the Prime Minister's *National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse* on Monday 22 October 2018.

Bishop Brian Mascord said, "I acknowledge and unequivocally support the Prime Minister's apology on behalf of the nation to victims and survivors of abuse. I am conscious of the hurt and pain that has been caused to young and vulnerable people by members of our Church community, and I give thanks to those who found the courage and strength to speak out."

A pastoral statement by Bishop Mascord with an accompanying prayer has been distributed to all parents and carers in our Catholic schools and will be read at Masses over the weekend. Bishop Mascord said, "At a recent diocesan conference on *Creating a Safe Church from Within*, Mr John Crowley—headmaster of St Patrick's College in Ballarat—spoke about the importance of openly and honestly acknowledging the abuse that has occurred and the hurt it has caused. John said, 'A genuine acknowledgement opens and prepares our hearts to truly hear the voices of those victims and survivors deeply wounded by our Church. Without it there can be no trust. Without trust, how can hope exist?' The National Apology is an important acknowledgment that those voices have been heard and will continue to be heard. It also provides further impetus for us to focus our efforts to protect current and future generations of children and vulnerable people."

On Monday 22 October, the Diocese—including Catholic schools, ministries, agencies, staff, clergy and volunteers—will also recognise the National Apology. For many of our schools and agencies, reflections will be read, followed by prayer and a time of silence to remember the children and vulnerable people who were hurt, and to give thanks to those who found the courage and strength to speak out.

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