



Media Release – November 16, 2009

Statement from the Catholic Church on the National Apology to people who suffered in institutional care

The Australian Catholic Bishops and Leaders of Religious Institutes welcome today's national apology to people who suffered while in institutional care, and take the opportunity to restate their sincere apology for any mistreatment which occurred in Catholic-run institutions.

We pray that this apology, delivered by the Prime Minister in the national parliament, will play an important role in healing many of the wounds which were laid bare with great courage before the Senate Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care.

When the report from that inquiry was tabled in 2004, we formally renewed our apology to those whose abuse was perpetrated by Catholic Church personnel. An apology was first made to all people who suffered abuse by Church personnel in the 1996 document, "Towards Healing". We sincerely renew this apology again today.

As stated in 2004, the revelations contained in the Senate Inquiry Report are the very opposite of all that we would wish to stand for.

We are also deeply regretful for the hurt caused whenever the Church's response has denied or minimised the pain that victims have experienced. And we regret the hurt and distress caused to the many good people who have worked in this area.

In moving forward from this important day, we again assure all Australians that the Catholic Church is committed to ensuring that the Towards Healing protocol continues to listen and respond in the best possible way to the many different needs of people affected by their experience in institutions in ways that, in the words of Pope Benedict when he was in Sydney, "bring about healing, reconciliation and ever greater fidelity to the moral demands of the Gospel".

The Church continues to work to improve the ways in which it provides information, and or care, to former residents of institutions and looks forward to an ongoing dialogue with care leavers to assist in this process.

Archbishop Philip Wilson, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

Sr Clare Condon SGS, President of Catholic Religious Australia

Mr Frank Quinlan, Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Australia

For more information about Towards Healing and for the contact number in each state, please go to www.catholic.org.au and click on "Professional Standards".

For media enquiries, contact Beth Doherty at the ACBC on 02 6201 9859 or 0407 081 256.