

19 October, 2018

STATEMENT BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF BRISBANE, THE MOST REVEREND DR PHILLIP ASPINALL

Next Monday, 22 October, the Prime Minister Scott Morrison will deliver a national apology to victims and survivors of institutional child sexual abuse at Parliament House in Canberra.

I welcome the Prime Minister's apology to all who suffered child sexual abuse in institutions, and join with him in apologising to those abused in Anglican institutions. Many survivors bravely shared their stories through the Royal Commission. Anglican Church leaders, including myself, have apologised to hundreds of survivors around Australia, and have met with them personally when they requested us to do so. This is part of the Church's repentance for its past failings that have inflicted pain and suffering.

The Brisbane Diocese has operated its own Interim Redress Scheme through which many who suffered child sexual abuse have received monetary payments and funding for counselling and psychological support. We continue to seek to deal fairly with personal injuries legal proceedings and have provided an alternative pathway to litigation. To date we have settled, or are in the process of dealing with, claims from around 270 people abused while in our care at our schools, parishes and children's homes.

While some people who had good and positive experiences in our schools, parishes and homes may have trouble accepting that abuse occurred, there are numerous convictions in the courts and survivors' testimony to the Royal Commission which lay bare the shameful extent of the abuse.

The Anglican Church Southern Queensland will join the Commonwealth Government's National Redress Scheme next month which will provide consistent redress to survivors, determined independently of the Church.

Across the Diocese this year we have marked the work of the Royal Commission in various ways, with memorial services acknowledging both the lives lost as a result of sexual abuse and the ongoing anguish of survivors. We have also developed liturgical resources to assist the members of the Church to reflect, understand and repent.

Many lessons have been learnt and many steps taken to ensure that all of our institutions will be safer for everyone, especially children. In addition we must never forget the pain and suffering caused by our past failings and be ever mindful of improving safety for all in the Church and those who access its schools, parishes and other agencies.

This Sunday, we are encouraging our parishes to mark the Prime Minister's apology with appropriate prayers during their local services. Next Monday, the day of the Prime Minister's apology, St John's Cathedral will set aside a chapel for private prayer and reflection.

We have travelled a long way in our journey of reconciliation and healing – but we still have some way to go.