

EREA Apology to Victims and Survivors of Sexual Abuse

JUNE 1 2017 NATIONAL ABORETUM CANBERRA

In this time of Pentecost – a time when the spirit provides us with the courage to find a new voice - we, the leaders of Edmund Rice Education Australia, on behalf of our communities offer the following apology. Today we begin a journey of major change by publicly acknowledging the sexual abuse of students in our schools; some dead, some alive, some unknown.

Today we directly acknowledge the scarring harm of sexual abuse as abhorrent, sinful, shameful and disgraceful; we also acknowledge that whatever was done can never be undone.

For this we apologise.

Today we directly acknowledge the helplessness, powerlessness, fear, guilt and shame that has been, and remains part of a victim's life when, as a child, they recall feeling no control over their lives and even blamed themselves for what had been done to them.

For this we apologise.

Today we directly acknowledge the fact that young people in our schools were betrayed in their adolescence where they had every expectation of, and needed nurturing and protection.

For this we apologise.

Today we directly acknowledge the anger which our young students have felt, have shown and may still harbour against their abusers and others who they feel failed to protect them.

For this we apologise.

Today we directly acknowledge the sadness, grief and sense of loss felt by victims, especially when the perpetrator was loved and trusted by our young people and their families.

For this we apologise.

Today we directly acknowledge the alarming statistics of serial sexual abuse, assault and molestation of young people in our schools by Christian Brothers, Clergy and lay staff.

For this we apologise.

Today we directly acknowledge that the pain inflicted and suffered continues to have ongoing devastation on victims in their adulthood as partners, parents, extended family and leaders in their careers and communities – and that there is no hiding this pain.

For this we apologise.

Today we directly acknowledge the unimaginable pain endured by families, friends and loved ones who have been broken by the ingrained lasting trauma, often hidden, of each and every unspeakable criminal indignity and personal violation.

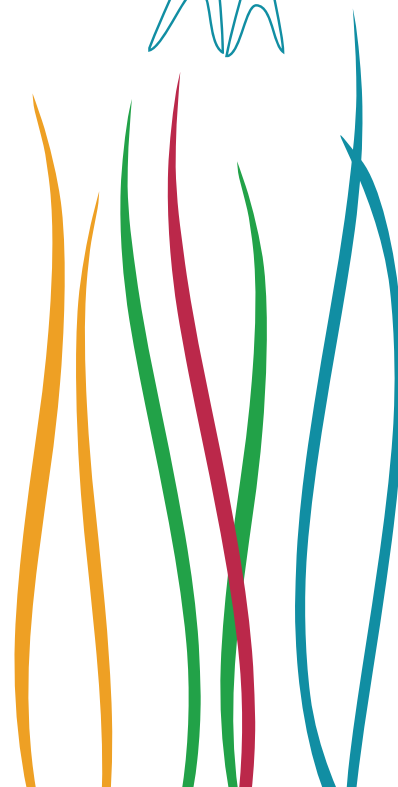
For this we apologise.

Most significantly, today is the day we directly acknowledge the history of denial, secrecy, suppression and diminution in relation to sexual abuse crimes. Barriers have been placed which have hindered redress. Victims have not had a real voice. Rightful acknowledgment has not been given to those crying for justice. We have not spoken or acted as Edmund Rice and the Gospels would have demanded.

For this we apologise.

In the knowledge that, to many, the offering of an apology at this time may seem unhelpful, even possibly adding to the pain in some cases, we offer it sincerely in the hope that it is seen as a significant and necessary step towards healing, reconciliation and ongoing redress. In the true spirit of Pentecost, we pray that Edmund Rice Education Australia has found a new voice in laying stronger foundations for support, re-connection, inclusion and ongoing care for all who have suffered in this way.

I am sorry. We are sorry. We commit to a liberated future.



*Blest are the eyes seeking light in the darkness. Blest are the ears who respond to their cry.
Blest are the prophets who question God's presence. Blest are the answers which generate life.
Blest are the minds which inspire us to justice. Blest are the arms giving comforting grace.
Blest are the hearts fighting structures that silence. Blest are our voices resounding in space:
Open our eyes, Lord, and help us to see. Unbind our hearts so your people are free. Called by the Spirit you faithfully send:
Goodness will flourish! Injustice will end! We are the voice crying 'Never Again!' Wake us and heal us, Creator and Friend!*



**EDMUND RICE EDUCATION
AUSTRALIA**