



# CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF DARWIN

**TO: ALL PARISH PRIESTS  
ALL PRINCIPALS OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, DARWIN**

## **SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

The Northern Territory Government has the responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the wellbeing of children under the Care and Protection of Children Act (2007).

Our own policy direction comes from two documents:

1. The Catholic Diocese of Darwin Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure (2015). This policy refers to:
  - Providing safe and nurturing environments for children and young people
  - Implementing protective systems and practices
  - Working in partnership with families promoting the wellbeing of children and young people
2. The Catholic Diocese of Darwin Code of Conduct 2016):
  - This Code of Conduct refers to meeting professional and ethical standards according to the mission and values of the Diocese, and as required by the public and Catholic community at all times.

The Sacraments are an important means through which children and young people enter more fully into the life of the faith community. The fundamental concern in the Sacrament of Reconciliation in schools is always for the spiritual development of children and young people.

Overwhelmingly, the current practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in schools takes place in a communal setting in the Church in full view of all participants.

Canon Law states that the proper place to hear sacramental confessions is a church or oratory. In addition, while Canon law requires the provision of confessionals with a fixed grate between the penitent and the confessor, it also allows for confessions to be heard outside a confessional under special circumstances.

Therefore, in light of the circumstances arising from the implementation of the Care and Protection of Children Act (2007), it is necessary for us to look at formally endorsing and promoting the practice of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in schools, consistent with principles contained in this document and our own principles of openness and visibility.

I am asking that you ensure that the Sacrament of Reconciliation in schools is celebrated in a Church in an open setting in the full view of all participants, who are supervised by staff.

The Parish Priest and the school staff responsible for school students should ensure that there is direct line of sight to the individual penitent.

Children and young people should be appropriately prepared to engage in a process of self-reflection as part of their spiritual formal in the lead up and during the Sacrament of Reconciliation. By participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, young people are guided to engage in reflective practice, taking increasing responsibility for their actions and recommit their lives to the Gospel.

I thank you for your support in the implementation of this directive for the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation in schools.

Yours sincerely in Christ



**Bishop Eugene Hurley**  
Bishop of Darwin

27 January 2017

