



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF DARWIN

18 November 2021

MEDIA RELEASE

APOLOGY TO STOLEN GENERATIONS AT GARDEN POINT MISSION

The Bishop of Darwin, Charles Gauci, today apologised unreservedly to members of the Stolen Generation who were abused at the Garden Point Catholic Mission on the Tiwi more than 50 years ago.

Several hundred children were taken to Garden Point, on Melville Island, to the north of Darwin. While there, they were wards of the Australian Government and cared for by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, overseen by the Bishop of Darwin.

“I feel strongly that these children should not have been stolen from their parents in the first place,” Bishop Gauci said. “Those children should have been safe in the care of the Church.”

“Sadly, some of these children were then further abused by some of the very people who were supposed to be looking after them.

“I find this distressing and I am profoundly sad at the hurt done to those children.

“While I can’t undo the wrongs of the past, I pray for ongoing healing and remain available to provide loving pastoral care to the survivors,” Bishop Gauci said.

Bishop Gauci said the Church was contacted on 9 December 2019 by lawyers acting for 42 former residents of the Mission. The Diocese acted immediately to reach a formal settlement. Bishop Gauci’s predecessor, Bishop Eugene Hurley, was unaware of the claims.

A mediation process concluded in Darwin in June, when the Bishop apologised in a public statement to dozens of Garden Point claimants.

“Over the past few years, the Catholic Church across Australia and in the Northern Territory has tightened measures to improve its professional standards,” Bishop Gauci said.

“It is my strong belief and practice that any claim of abuse should be properly investigated,” he said.

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Bishop Gauci will today attend a formal apology and smoking ceremony in Darwin, along with the Australian Government representatives; Father John Kelliher from the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC), Sister Mary Stevens from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (OLSH) and Father Daniel Benedetti (MGL) from St Martin de Porres Catholic Aboriginal Community.

The terms of the agreement between the Church and former Garden Point residents are confidential.

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