



## The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council

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The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council embrace and applaud the Federal Government's Apology to the Stolen Generations of Australia. Importantly, the Council also accepts the mutual responsibility that the apology necessitates. As we turn this page in Australia's history, we should never forget what the past holds and learn from the mistakes undertaken.

A great deal of humility and maturity has been shown by the Australian people. The most important facet of the apology is the support from the wider community. Many thousands gathered in support in venues across Australia. An apology without genuine support is like a promise without intent – empty. The support shown has revived the spirit of reconciliation and shown that this country has arrived at a junction of history.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Culture places strong emphasis on reciprocity – being fair, even and returning the good you receive. With this in mind we look towards the future where Indigenous Australians can share the beautiful gifts of our art, culture, tradition, beliefs and genuine goodwill.

We should not fall into complacency, thinking that words have completed the healing, and that Reconciliation is now absolute. Whilst a step forward in history, we shall now turn our gaze to Poverty, life expectancy, health and education discrepancies in Australia.

As Pope John Paul II said to Aboriginals in 1986 "the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others." This no doubt is echoed in Australia in our quest to become the country we hope it can be.

Practical measures must now follow words. Australians must work together with reconciliation in their hearts to build on the momentum that has now been created. The Federal Government has spoken - it is now time for them to listen.