



Friday 21 August 2020

Dear All,

As you may likely be aware, the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle facilitated a survivor-led event called Lina's Project in September 2017. The aims of Lina's Project were:

1. To publicly acknowledge the devastation caused to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse by clergy and other church personnel, as well as the damage done to their families, friends, and the whole community.
2. To admit, with shame, the church's cover ups and failures to report allegations of child sexual abuse.
3. To beg forgiveness and try to bring some healing to the whole community.

I believe that to bring healing to the whole community we must continue to publicly acknowledge the history of our Diocese and reach out to those so irreparably damaged by these crimes. As such, I decided the date of the launch of Lina's Project, 15 September, will be recognised as a Perpetual Day of Remembrance in the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. Such a day holds before us our Church's history of child sexual abuse and the reality of its continual unfolding in the lives of those directly and indirectly affected.

The intention is that this day be marked in a variety of ways. One such response is a liturgical response through our schools and churches so that we as members of our church do not forget our history and commit ourselves to a better future. I consider this day so important that I have decreed that *Perpetual Day of Remembrance Sunday* will be a feast day inscribed on the Diocesan Liturgical Calendar on the Sunday of or immediately prior to 15 September.

The other response is survivor-led events that may grow and develop from year to year. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, we have not been able to facilitate a survivor led event this year. However, we did not want to let this important day pass without acknowledging it in some way. As always, we want to listen to your views and ideas about ways to acknowledge this day in the future. As I see it, it is a time to stop and reflect on the ongoing pain experienced by those abused as well as the effects on their family and friends. It is also a time to remember those who are no longer with us – those who could no longer bear the pain. In normal circumstances it is a time to come together in some way to help and support each other. You will have your own way of acknowledging the day, if you choose to do so, but I would like to share the following:

1. For those who would wish to remember or be reminded of this terrible part of our history I share the link to the Lina's Project video <http://www.linasproject.com.au/> Please be mindful that for those of you who have not previously seen the video it can be confronting as it displays the images of perpetrators from this Diocese.
2. For those who wish to stop and reflect on the meaning of the day, you may choose to visit or sit quietly at a significant place, you might listen to or play some particular piece of music or read something of special meaning to you. However, you choose to reflect I hope it brings some sense of peace to you at that moment
3. I would also like to share with you information about the Bishop's Healing Fund. This is an annual allocation of funds (up to \$25,000) to assist in promoting healing of those affected by child sexual abuse in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. This is an opportunity for you as survivors, family and friends to create and suggest events or workshops or other concepts and ideas that you feel will be of benefit to you – not just for the Perpetual Day of Remembrance but at other times throughout the year. I encourage you to find out more here [officeofsafeguarding.org.au/bishops-healing-fund/](http://officeofsafeguarding.org.au/bishops-healing-fund/)
4. During the 2017 launch of Lina's Project, as well as initiating the Perpetual Day of Remembrance I also committed the Diocese to consulting with survivors and the community to plan a permanent memorial in the grounds of Sacred Heart Cathedral. The Diocese is in the process of engaging an appropriately skilled and understanding independent firm to consult and engage with the survivor community about your ideas for a memorial. We will also be asking you for your ideas about how to acknowledge the Perpetual Day of Remembrance in future years. In the coming months I encourage you to participate so your ideas can influence, inform and shape these plans.

Yours sincerely



Most Reverend William Wright  
**Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle**

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