



MARIST BROTHERS
Province of Australia

Towards the Bicentenary of the Institute | 2015 Montagne | 2016 Fourvière | 2017 La Valla

30 August 2016

To the Communities of Newcastle, Maitland and the Hunter Region

With the Royal Commission Case Study into the Catholic Church's Response to Sexual Abuse due to begin in Newcastle this week, I believe it appropriate for me, as the current leader of the Marist Brothers, to communicate directly with the Hunter community.

No-one today can be unaware of the suffering and trauma caused by child sexual abuse in your region. Individual survivors have told their stories, and more will have the opportunity during the hearings to give personal testimony to the devastating effect the crimes of Priests and Brothers have had on their lives.

We acknowledge that the public hearings will be difficult for victims and their families; victims will revisit the suffering they have endured and the pain they continue to live with. This is a time for us to acknowledge those who have been so grievously betrayed. Hopefully they will gain some redress and healing from having their experiences brought into the light.

I acknowledge the courage of those who will give evidence. They not only speak for themselves but also on behalf of those who cannot speak. They will represent the many other victims of child sexual abuse by Priests and Brothers and others.

Their stories need to be told. These crimes have left an indelible scar on the survivors and their families, the Church and the wider local community. We need to hear these stories, for the people recounting them are living witnesses of a tragic period. They act as poignant reminders that we can never be complacent about the safety of children, and that we must listen to children and young people and respect their voices.

In particular, we in the Church need to listen and learn. This is what we will do in the days ahead.

The Marist Brothers have been part of the Hunter community since 1898. We went there to educate and nurture young people. I am ashamed that some of our own, men who were publicly committed to the wellbeing of young people, have so grievously offended against them.

There are no words or actions that can take away what has happened. We should have done much more to protect children and to respond decisively and compassionately when complaints were made.

Our apology is unreserved, complete and enduring.

During this Hearing, we will listen attentively and respectfully. We must fully understand the terrible failures of the past and learn from them so that children now and in the future are protected.

Yours sincerely,

Brother Peter Carroll
Marist Brothers Province of Australia