MEDIA RELEASE

Lutheran Education Australia welcomes the Federal Government’s apology: now the hard work

Driven by our core values of compassion, honesty and justice Lutheran Education Australia strongly welcomed and supported this week’s bipartisan apology to members of the Stolen Generation and their descendants.

We believe that parliament’s action has been significant in starting a healing process, and that the apology, together with the inclusion of a traditional indigenous welcome to country ceremony at the opening of the new parliament, is an important symbol of a new beginning. We hope that it will lead to new and productive partnerships.

As the Prime Minister pointed out, “It is not sentiment that makes history; it is our actions that make history”, and it is, therefore, important that we, as Lutheran schools and educators, are actively and significantly involved in supporting the emerging initiatives and opportunities that will improve the experiences of Indigenous Australians. We welcome the prioritisation of the provision of early childhood education and want to explore how we can be involved in this initiative.

The Lutheran Church of Australia has both an historic and an ongoing record of working with Indigenous Australians. Noel Pearson in his article in *The Australian* this week refers to Lutheran missionary George Heinrich Schwarz who, he says, “cannot help but be a hero to me and my people. We owe an unrepayable debt to...the people who supported my grandparents and others to rebuild their lives after they arrived at the mission (at Cape Bedford in Cape York Peninsula) as young children in 1910...we are not a bootlace on the courage and achievement of such people”. Lutheran schools like Yirara in Alice Springs, Crossways in Ceduna and Peace in Cairns are continuing to work with Indigenous people because LEA strongly believes that access to quality education is an essential vehicle to enable them to move forward.

The government’s apology is a good time to reflect on what we really understand about our history and Indigenous issues. We will also reflect on what we can offer Indigenous Australians and to commit time, energy and resources to act on the values we espouse. The hard work now begins.

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