

# THE TRUSTEES OF EDMUND RICE EDUCATION AUSTRALIA

## Renewing our Apology to Victims & Survivors of Sexual Abuse

UPDATED MARCH 2023

In June 2017 at the National Arboretum in Canberra, EREA issued a public apology for the sexual abuse of students in our schools. December 2022 marked five years since the conclusion of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The safety of children, young people and adults enrolled in our schools is central to our educational mission. As we embark upon significant organisational change to deepen and further that mission, we reflect again upon what we learned through the Royal Commission and the experiences and stories shared with us by former students.

Accordingly, we renew this apology and commit to learning from past failings so that they will not happen again.

We, the leaders of Edmund Rice Education Australia, on behalf of our communities renew the following apology. We publicly acknowledge the sexual abuse of students in our schools; some dead, some alive, some unknown.

We directly acknowledge the scarring harm of sexual abuse as abhorrent, sinful, shameful and disgraceful; we also acknowledge that whatever was done can never be undone. **For this we apologise.**

We directly acknowledge the helplessness, powerlessness, fear, guilt, and shame that has been, and remains part of a victim's life when, as a child, they recall feeling no control over their lives and even blamed themselves for what had been done to them. **For this we apologise.**

We directly acknowledge the fact that young people in our schools were betrayed in their adolescence when they had every expectation of, and needed, nurturing and protection. **For this we apologise.**

We directly acknowledge the anger which our students have felt, have shown and may still harbour against their abusers and others who they feel failed to protect them. **For this we apologise.**

We directly acknowledge the sadness, grief and sense of loss felt by victims, especially when the perpetrator was loved and trusted by our young people and their families. **For this we apologise.**

We directly acknowledge the alarming statistics of serial sexual abuse, assault, and molestation of young people in our schools by Christian Brothers, Clergy, and lay staff. **For this we apologise.**

We directly acknowledge that the pain inflicted and suffered continues to have ongoing devastation on victims in their adulthood as partners, parents, extended family and leaders in their careers and communities – and that there is no hiding this pain. **For this we apologise.**

We directly acknowledge the unimaginable pain endured by families, friends and loved ones who have been broken by the ingrained lasting trauma, often hidden, of each and every unspeakable criminal indignity and personal violation. **For this we apologise.**

Most significantly, we directly acknowledge the history of denial, secrecy, suppression, and diminution in relation to sexual abuse crimes. Barriers have been placed which have hindered redress. Victims have not had a real voice. Rightful acknowledgment has not been given to those crying for justice. We have not spoken or acted as Edmund Rice and the Gospels would have demanded. **For this we apologise.**

**We are sorry. We commit to a liberated future.**

*Aware that for some the offering of an apology may not be welcome and possibly add to their pain, we do so sincerely in the hope that it is seen as a significant and necessary step towards healing, reconciliation, and ongoing redress. In the true spirit of Pentecost, we pray that Edmund Rice Education Australia has found a new voice in laying stronger foundations for support, re-connection, inclusion, and ongoing care for all who have suffered in this way.*



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