



# Diocese of Armidale

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## MEDIA RELEASE

A memorial to victims of child abuse will be erected in the grounds of Saints Mary & Joseph Catholic Cathedral Armidale at 11.00 am on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2016. The memorial will incorporate the ribbons that are currently tied to the Cathedral fence as a public display of support for victims of abuse.

In a brief and prayerful ceremony in the Cathedral forecourt, those gathered will move the ribbons from their current location. Some of these ribbons will be incorporated into the memorial on the outside northern wall of the Cathedral and some will be tied at the Dangar Street Cathedral gate that leads directly to the memorial. Some of the ribbons will be preserved and added to the Diocesan archives which will be available for display from time to time when the Diocese establishes a historical display room. Those who have tied ribbons to the Cathedral fence are invited to attend the service and move their ribbon to the new location.

The memorial will include a statue of Mary the mother of Jesus to whom Christians have a long tradition of approaching for comfort and help. It will also include a bench with a plaque inviting people to pray for victims of child abuse. Bishop Michael Kennedy will tie a ribbon at the new memorial and bless the bench and ribbons as part of the ceremony.

The decision to erect a memorial comes at the same time as the Armidale Regional Council are discussing moving the Loud Fence ribbons from the Armidale Folk Museum and establishing a memorial within the city. The Catholic Diocese of Armidale will be supportive of this initiative and does not intend its own memorial to replace such an initiative.

The Catholic Diocese of Armidale is supportive of the Loud Fence movement and throughout 2016 ribbons have been tied to the Cathedral fence as a visible sign to assist in breaking down the silence surrounding abuse and supporting survivors on their path of healing. The establishment of the memorial in the Cathedral grounds is a continuation of this solidarity and support and the beginning of a transition in which temporary ribbons are replaced by a solid structure.

Bishop Michael Kennedy says that the survivors he has met and spoken with have highlighted the need for the Church to respond sensitively to the needs of all survivors.

“I have been struck that while some victims and survivors want a reminder that is very public others find a public display to be very difficult and would prefer something more discreet. In recent weeks, I have heard from survivors who have expressed that they find the ribbons somewhat confronting as they are reminded of their own abuse. I am hopeful that our plans for the memorial will be acceptable to all. The memorial is an indication that we will not tolerate silence on this tragedy nor will victims and survivors be forgotten for generations to come.”

Bishop Kennedy says “I and the Catholic Diocese of Armidale will never forget the horror victims have experienced and the lasting impact on their lives. I hope that all people, not just survivors, will take time to sit for a few moments to think of and pray for those whose lives have been irrevocably changed by abuse.”

The Diocese of Armidale is grateful for the advice given by members of the Loud Fence movement in the planning of the memorial and prayer service.

By providing a memorial that is both discreet and open to all in the Cathedral grounds the Diocese is listening to all survivors, their individual needs and sharing with them their journey of healing.

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Bishop Kennedy will be available for interviews from 9.00 am until 12.00 noon Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2016

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