



Diocese of Armidale

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PROPOSED MEMORIAL TO VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE AT ARMIDALE CATHEDRAL NOT TO PROCEED

On the 14th August, 2016 I announced plans for the establishment of a memorial to child abuse victims in the grounds of Saints Mary and Joseph Cathedral which would incorporate the ribbons currently tied to the Cathedral fence as a public display of support for victims and survivors of abuse. The memorial was to be blessed on Sunday 4th December, 2016 and the ribbons moved at that same time. These plans will no longer proceed.

My desire had been to create a peaceful and prayerful space within the Cathedral grounds dedicated to victims and survivors of child abuse which would be open and inviting to all people. The memorial was intended to be a visible sign well beyond the Royal Commission to assist in breaking down the silence surrounding child abuse and supporting survivors on their path of healing.

In my desire to reach a timely solution the process of consultation before announcing a decision has been too rushed. Having now heard more of the concerns of abuse survivors, parishioners, and members of the Loud Fence movement it is clear to me that to proceed with my announced plans for a memorial and for moving the ribbons may cause further hurt rather than alleviating it.

To those survivors and parishioners who have indicated that you find the ribbons confronting I acknowledge your pain. I trust that you will be able to continue in your healing and that your faith will not keep you from the sacred and peaceful space of the cathedral.

Whatever anyone might think about the proposed memorial, one thing we all agree on is acknowledging the horror of child abuse, the dreadful impact it has upon peoples' lives, and the need for us to accompany victims and survivors as best we can to assist in the healing process. In my recent Pastoral Letter I outlined ten changes that have recently occurred in the Diocese of Armidale to improve the way we do this, and I acknowledge that we are still far from perfect.

As a community of faith one of the things we do for victims is to pray for them. Whilst prayer on its own is not enough its importance should not be underestimated. When our efforts are united with prayer God's grace works wonders and sometimes even miracles. So please join with me in continuing to pray for all victims of child abuse and their families.

Our prayers made in sincerity and faith are also a sign that not only I but our entire parish community recommit ourselves to ongoing listening, to supporting and accompanying victims, and to building a child safe parish community. I commit myself to listening to your thoughts and ideas on this most important matter.

Most Reverend Michael Kennedy
Bishop of Armidale