



Sisters of Saint Joseph
of the Sacred Heart

TRUTH TELLING LETTER

7 August 2024

Dear Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People,

On 8 August 1999, the Sisters of Saint Joseph wrote a Letter of Apology to you. We expressed our deep sorrow that we failed to recognise and address many of the injustices caused by your dispossession of land and culture. We committed to stand in solidarity with you in your struggle for justice particularly in relation to land, and to work with you in relationships that aim to bring about attitudinal and structural changes.

It is twenty-five years since our Letter of Apology.

In this new time, after the Uluru Statement from the Heart, after the failed Referendum for Voice and Recognition, we hear the words of Elders as they came out of 'Sorry Time':

"Our truths have been silenced for too long."

We must respond afresh:

- **We pledge to promote truth-telling** about the impact of colonisation, which robbed your people of land, culture, and identity. We recognise the violence and abuse of power embedded in colonialism. We will endeavor to enlighten others to honour and celebrate your sacred living cultures, strengths, and inspirational achievements.
- **We pledge to maintain close relationships** with Elders and the community to understand more deeply the role of kinship in your culture. We value your deep respect for relationships with family, community, country, Earth as Mother, and all living beings. We know that these are foundational values for all humanity to survive.
- **We pledge to do whatever we can** to enable your children and young people to stay within family, community, culture and country. We will advocate for government to commit to cultural safety, healing and wellbeing supports, for your families and communities to prevent removal and incarceration of your children. We know family-based care is the best care for all humanity: child in family - family in community.
- **We pledge to do all we can to eradicate racism** and promote respect for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, denouncing any incidents where you are racially vilified, mocked, or abused.
- **We pledge to stand with you** in upholding the principles of self-determination, participation in decision making, respect for and protection of culture, equality and non-discrimination.
- **We pledge to examine our colonial biases** which come from positions of privilege and our failure to face this reality in our interactions with you. We intend to transform our institutions into authentically anti-racist and anti-oppressive communities of action.
- **We pledge to walk with you** to promote Voice, Treaty and Truth. We will work together to acknowledge the historical injustices, seek restitution and justice and heal divisions from our colonial past.

We celebrate and honour your ancient spirituality and culture embedded in the heart of country for over 65,000 years. We pledge to listen to your vision for your future and affirm your agency for the journey ahead. Our attitudes, systems, and structures will change when we, as a nation, prioritise deep listening, healing, and wellbeing for all people.

By walking together we can ignite the True Spirit of Australia and our future story will be one where we all flourish.

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Congregational Leader
Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart