

*Mindful Simple Growing Marist & Missionary Trusting for Our Time & Place*

Dear members of the Marist College community,

There have been a number of recent headlines and stories in the Canberra media that have been disturbing to us and, we presume, to many of you. It was our intention to put out a message earlier but this was not appropriate before the sentencing of Br Kostka. This delay has left a gap in our communication with yourselves and the purpose of this message is to fill that gap.

In the criminal proceedings against him, Br Kostka admitted his guilt and gave a public apology. As Marist Brothers, we repeat our sincere regrets and apology to all who have suffered harm as a consequence of his actions. We apologise also to the Catholic Church community of Canberra for the scandal and embarrassment we have caused.

We are determined to listen to each and every victim of criminal abuse at Marist College and ensure that each one receives justice and whatever healing is possible. This is a public commitment that we have repeatedly made.

We hope that all such cases be referred to mediation and that just and fair outcomes are achieved for all victims at the earliest possible time.

We recommend victims to use the Towards Healing process. Over the years many complaints have been brought to closure through this process. It provides far greater opportunities for true human reconciliation, including financial reparation and access to counselling, than normal court processes.

As reported in the media, a number of civil actions have been filed on behalf of former students in the Supreme Court. We understand that victims may want their experience of abuse and its impact on their lives acknowledged as well as formally and legally dealt with. Harm did occur and clearly in these situations any victim has the right to instigate court action. In such cases, however, in a formal court context, the lapse of time and assessing the extent of the harm caused can be problematic in such difficult and sensitive matters.

There is no question in my mind that the Brothers and our co-workers have a clear responsibility for the safety and care of young men within our schools. What is at issue in the current actions in the ACT Supreme Court is whether it is appropriate to sue the particular legal entity named in the suit, given earlier Court decisions involving other Church bodies.

In all of this, we also have a responsibility for the reputations of the former leaders of the College and the Province who were men of integrity. Whether their actions at that time are to be judged negligent is for the Courts to determine.

We will always accept our responsibilities. We have requested that these civil cases be referred to mediation at an early time for speedy and just resolution.

Once again, we want to assure you that the protection of young people entrusted to our care is our priority. Learning from the past, we are confident that Marist College has all reasonable protective systems and practices in place. Further, the highest standards of pastoral care are being offered so as to provide the optimal environment for each young person to grow and learn.

We appreciate your faith and support. Our faith urges us to seek justice and reconciliation for victims. It also urges us to remain honest and hopeful even in the most difficult times and to believe that acting in a brotherly fashion to all, including our detractors, is the best way to create a better future.



Br Jeff Crowe Provincial

23 June 2008