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ARCHBISHOP OFFERS \$2.1 MILLION PAYMENT FOR FORMER ST ANN'S STUDENTS

Adelaide's Catholic Archbishop Philip Wilson today announced his decision to pay \$2.1 million in response to the needs of former St Ann's Special School students.

Archbishop Wilson said that offers of \$100,000, \$75,000 and \$50,000 have been made to a significant number of former students based on the best assessment of the extent to which those students were affected.

"I have been personally shocked and angered at the abuse of these children who are among the most vulnerable in our society," said Archbishop Wilson.

"Once again I ask forgiveness from the students and parents involved and I make this offer in the hope that former students receive a tangible form of assistance to help with the terrible burden they have to bear.

"I know that money alone can't overcome the pain and suffering they've had to endure but I hope this gesture will at least help in some way.

"I'm not asking for any confidentiality clauses to be signed. I am not asking the former students to forgo any civil legal action they may wish to take against the Church.

"I hope the families of the former students will not view the payment with suspicion but as a genuine offer of support."

Archbishop Wilson added that he did not expect any offer of money "to wash away the deep anger and cynicism felt towards the church by many families."

"But I hope that the families concerned will see my offer as genuine and that I want to offer some appropriate and substantial care for the formers students."

Archbishop Wilson said that, in fairness, the Church's payment would be offset against any damages awarded in any future successful civil action. "This seems both fair and reasonable to request but I wish to restate that what I am offering to former students does not preclude any legal action against the Church. It is their right under law."

Archbishop Wilson said the \$2.1 million would be found from realizing investments.

"I can assure the Catholic population that it will not be taken from the weekly contributions of Catholic families in their parishes. That money is needed to support each parish as well as for the care of priests."

Archbishop Wilson said that assistance for families of those former students wishing to access this offer or requiring more information was available through a Help Line established by the church. Representatives of the church will be on hand to answer questions and clarify any details of the offer.

Further information, Joan Atkinson 8210 8117 or 0438 727677.