

## From the Head of College

### APOLOGY

I welcome everyone here this evening and I understand that for many of our guests, the decision to be present tonight was not an easy one to make.

Tonight I speak on behalf of St Stanislaus College – past, present and future members of this community. For all of us, our history is and always will be blemished.

Our College lives with the knowledge of sexual abuse that happened to young men in its care. This is part of our history which cannot be erased and will not be forgotten. In this the 150th year of St Stanislaus College, it is time to say sorry.

As Head of College, I acknowledge all victims present tonight and those unable to be here but who will be able to read this apology for themselves. I acknowledge too, that for some victims and your families, this Service cannot and will not bring the healing and peace you crave and deserve. For this, I apologise.

- To all men who suffered sexual abuse at St Stanislaus College

Your experiences at this College brought heartache instead of joy, fear instead of trust, pain instead of compassion, abuse instead of care and love, shame instead of pride, helplessness and despair instead of fullness of life and hope, loss of innocence instead of the joy of youth. I understand that an apology cannot undo the suffering that you experienced and that you carry these memories with you today and always.

With a deep feeling of regret for what took place at this College, I apologise to all victims for the abuse you experienced through the actions of some members of staff. These men deprived you of the joys of adolescence that should have been yours to experience in a safe and supportive environment. We are so sorry

- To the parents of men who suffered sexual abuse at St Stanislaus College

I acknowledge the pain, grief and anger you experienced on learning of your son's abuse. I acknowledge the suffering you have endured in the journey that you have walked with him since that time. I acknowledge the sense of betrayal by those men in whom you entrusted the care of your precious boy and who instead abused him and let him down.

With a deep feeling of regret for the abuse your son experienced at this College, I apologise. The abuse of your son whilst at Stannies denied you so many joys of parenthood that were yours to experience. We are so sorry.

- To the Family Members and Friends of Men who suffered abuse at this College

You have shared the knowledge of the horror of sexual abuse at this College. I acknowledge that the knowledge of this abuse continues to impact on victims as adults, as well as on their wives, partners, children, brothers and sisters, extended family and friends. I apologise for the pain and suffering this has caused you

With a deep feeling of regret for the shock and sadness suffered by family members, by relatives, by friends, we are so sorry.

I acknowledge that this College in which families have placed their trust and pride has a time in its past that is a disgrace. We do not and we will not hide from this. I assure all that this College has learned from its past and places the safety, care and well-being of its students front and centre.

As Head of this College in this Public Apology I express the enormous despair, horror, sadness and sorrow for the actions of some members of staff. These staff members denied young men the gift of a Catholic education imbued with all its hope and promise.

I sincerely hope that this Apology is one step towards healing. I hope it can begin to establish trust where trust was broken and hope where hope was diminished and destroyed.

This apology cannot undo what has been done.

This apology, however, comes with a commitment that we will continue to do all we can to make sure it never happens again.

Dr Anne Wenham,  
Head of College  
BA, DipEd, MEd, MTheo, PhD

FROM THE PROVINCIAL

The Apology

In January of this year, I reflected upon the 150 years of education and life at St Stanislaus College. During that reflection, I said that we have failed in recent times to live up to our Catholic and Vincentian heritage.

We have failed to live the Gospel of Christ and the vision of St. Vincent.

I am very aware of the failure to protect and nurture, in a safe environment, you, the victims of sexual abuse: young men placed in our care.

This abuse, carried out by Vincentians, has destroyed and impoverished your lives. We have failed you.....

So, tonight, I stand before you as the Provincial of the Vincentian community. I stand before you to apologise to you unreservedly, the victims of sexual abuse by members of our community. I am so sorry that this has happened to you. It should never happened, but it has.

I acknowledge that your lives have been so diminished, so affected, so destroyed. Those I talked with in the last eighteen months told me of your hopes for the future, your normal development before these attacks occurred. Your futures were so affected by these heinous, criminal acts carried out on you by our Vincentian members. I am so sorry.

You revealed to me the pain and destruction brought upon your families and your loved ones. I cannot imagine how extensive this is and continues to be.

You have described to me the way your relationships have been deeply affected because of the criminal acts carried out on you. I am deeply sorry for the impact that the memory of these awful actions have upon you, memories that haunt you, your families and partners. I am so deeply sorry.

At the time you were vulnerable boys who had the right of being educated in a safe and happy environment. We failed you in not providing this care, a care your parents and families asked of us, entrusted to us. And we failed you. I am so deeply sorry.

I have met a number of you since I became Provincial. You have told me what happened and what it has done to you. You were gracious enough to meet with me, though it was clear that your pain, hurt and anger was very present. And so it should be. I am so deeply sorry.

But it is not enough to say I am sorry. There has to be more.

There has to be a change. But it must be a change not in words but in actions. A change in direction in the way life is going to be lived. The school has responded positively and made changes at nearly all levels of the school to make St. Stanislaus College a child-safe environment. Such a change has been organised some years back by Mr. John Edwards and carried on by Dr. Anne Wenham.

But what about the Vincentians? Have we changed at all? Yes.

- The Vincentians have gathered several times to ask the question: How did this happen? We keep facing the reality of these actions and the impact on Victims. We have put in a lot of new structures and processes to establish child-safe environments. I monitor the individual Priests and communities and I am, in turn, monitored by a panel of lay persons who are well trained in the area of child protection. I would be happy to speak about these changes with you at the break.

So, where to from here?

I remain open to you. I am happy to talk to you, either together or individually about your lives and needs going forward. I do not believe that tonight is the end of this discussion. It could well be the beginning of something else. Come and Talk With Me.

Allow me to end as I began: my profound and sincere apology, to each one of you, for all you have gone through as a result of the abuse you suffered at the hands of members of the Vincentian Community.

Fr. Gregory Brett CM  
Provincial of Vincentians  
Province of Oceania

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