

Media Release & Invitation



For immediate release

6 November 2019

Reconciliation Plan Launch

Today, CatholicCare Wollongong celebrates the launch of the latest Reconciliation Action Plan 2019-2021 in Wollongong, joined by Hon Sharon Bird MP, Federal Member for Cunningham, and representatives from the local Aboriginal community.

The event marks a decade of engagement with the Aboriginal community and the official launch of a holistic plan to create meaningful projects which are delivered in collaboration with our local community. The plan is endorsed by *Reconciliation Australia*, documenting a new vision and a plan for the future, turning good intentions into real action and rising to the challenge of reconciliation.

"Reconciliation is a journey of positive actions and consistency, motivated by authentic relationships built on respect and trust", said Director Michael Austin. "CatholicCare predominantly self-funds the Reconciliation Action Plan and our Indigenous programs because we genuinely want to invest our resources, time and energy into collaborating with the Aboriginal community," he said.

"As an organisation, and as individuals, we understand the importance of walking together with the Aboriginal community to foster genuine relationships and share knowledge," said Director Michael Austin. "We are also learning important protocols of engagement on this journey".

These authentic and genuine relationships have helped create programs like *Deadly SIBS* (Siblings with a disability), which supports Aboriginal children who have a sibling with a chronic illness or disability. This new program was initiated with the support of Aunty Beverley Armer and Rod Broad, who worked with our staff to get the project started. This program will be launched shortly, delivering services to many Aboriginal families throughout the area.

This year, CatholicCare began hosting a local Elders Group at this site, to provide a safe place for connecting, sharing and empowering. Aunty Rhonda Cruise and Rod Broad guided our staff establishing the group and set regular times to gather. The

CatholicCare is the Social Services Agency of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Wollongong, supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

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meetings provide an opportunity for the sharing of cultural traditions and customs. The group have a number of community issues they aim to address over the coming months, working to improve the lives of local Aboriginal people.

CatholicCare have also implemented protocols for respecting the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work, both through verbal acknowledgement and through visual maps and an official agency statement of commitment.

"We are committed to creating a just and inclusive community where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience a strong sense of belonging and an agency that is culturally sensitive and appropriate," said Director Michael Austin.

EVENT LOCATION:

Catholic Care

25-27 Auburn Street Wollongong

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