

**This is the wording of the apology that was offered by the Rt Rev Ian Coutts in St Boniface Cathedral Hall on 31 August 2023:**

**Apology**



I acknowledge the Noongar Elders of the past, present and emerging, and I thank you for this opportunity to speak to you all in this part of the diocese.

At the request of the Elders who we met here in June we have also invited representatives from other Christian denominations in the area to be present. Deputy Mayor Tresslyn Smith.

As the Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Bunbury and on behalf of the people of the Diocese, I want to acknowledge the pain and suffering of Noongar and other First Nations children and the heartbreak of their parents who were survivors of forced separation over many years. This separation has led to grievous loss of connection with family and the land, with culture and with language. Even to mention this is triggering to people in this room who were themselves members of the Stolen Generation and I am grateful to the

South West Aboriginal Medical Service for being present here today.

We also acknowledge that the Anglican Church in this Diocese failed to challenge the unjust government policies put into action by the Native Welfare Department as it was known then. We further acknowledge that shameful betrayals and massacres took place a number of times and at a number of places which fall within the present Diocese, and in which it is quite likely Anglicans took part. Some known recorded places are Pinjarra and Minninup, but there are also other places not recorded and perhaps known only in the stories of the Elders.

These acts are not consistent with the message of Jesus Christ, who taught love, justice and peace. Nor are they consistent with the second of Jesus's summaries of the two Great Commandments, that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. (The story of the Aboriginal man who wrote to the King).

We are humbled by the generosity and magnanimity that First Nations peoples have demonstrated despite the extraordinary difficulties you have faced.

On behalf of this Diocese, we offer a heartfelt apology to the Noongar and other First Nations people of the Bunbury Diocese for the pain, violence, suffering and deep sadness of the past to which Anglicans may have contributed.

In the spirit of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, we wish to join with you and journey together to work for truth, justice and healing; to oppose racism; and to live in keeping with the two great Commandments, especially to love our Indigenous neighbours as ourselves. That includes walking with you, sharing and learning with you, respecting and listening to you. We express our sorrow to you for all the times where this has not occurred and our sincere desire for this to change.