



# Diocese of Broken Bay

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## Office of the Bishop

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14 October 2014

### **Affirmation of our commitment to interfaith relations during tense times**

#### **To the Clergy and lay faithful of Broken Bay Diocese**

The Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay places great value on its relationships with members of other faith communities.

In recent times we have been particularly blessed by the opportunities and friendship offered to our Diocese by members of the Jewish community and the Muslim community in Sydney. These have resulted in shared experiences such as Iftar dinners, Torah study groups, public lectures, and other gatherings of an educational or social nature.

It is of great concern that in recent months Australia has witnessed a spike in anti-Semitic activity. This has included some especially abhorrent literature and incidents directed against Jewish residents in Sydney's eastern suburbs. We are aware, too, that there are Jewish families living in Sydney's northern suburbs who have experienced anti-Semitic verbal abuse and in some cases physical harassment.

No one should ever be made to feel unsafe walking our streets and living in our neighbourhoods for the mere fact of being Jewish.

Similarly, we are deeply concerned about a recent surge in negative and judgmental attitudes in Australian society directed towards Muslim communities. In specific hateful incidents, abuse has been hurled at Muslim women wearing the hijab, mosques have been vandalised, an Islamic school has come under threat, and there has been an escalation of threats on social media.

No Muslim should ever be subjected to hateful judgments and intimidation because of his or her cultural or religious identity.

Our concern intensifies, too, for our own Christian brothers and sisters who in some parts of Sydney have been subjected to verbal abuse and threats.

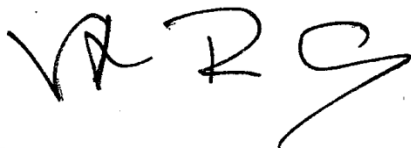
This current wave of unrest in Australian society rightly increases our need for vigilance and awareness as citizens but also, more importantly, calls for our wakefulness as Christians. Centred on Christ, we are a people called to witness to God's love for all humanity. The tragic political conflicts occurring in the world must never be an excuse for the venting of racial prejudice or religious bigotry. On the contrary, they should cause us to intensify our commitment to fostering interfaith friendships and intercultural harmony.

Most of us are not in a position to directly influence major events happening overseas, however we can all take responsibility and action within our own personal sphere of influence – our neighbourhoods, our parishes, our places of study and work, and our social circles.

With the clergy and other leaders in Broken Bay Diocese, I urge everyone in our Diocesan community to stand firm in our commitment to developing lifegiving relationships with people of other faiths. Let us do everything within our means to foster among our people a deep understanding and embodiment of the teachings of the Church on interreligious relations as expressed at Vatican II in *Nostra Aetate* and articulated in subsequent church documents. In this way we can be leaven for peace within Australian society.

Further information on these church teachings can be accessed at our Diocesan website: [www.dbb.org.au/ecumenism-interfaith](http://www.dbb.org.au/ecumenism-interfaith).

In the words of Pope Francis, reiterated by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue: "May the God of peace stir up in each one of us a genuine desire for dialogue and reconciliation."

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V R C', with a stylized flourish extending from the end of the 'C'.

Fr Vincent R. Casey  
Diocesan Administrator

