



Bishops of Oceania visit local Townsville Imam

During the executive meeting of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania the bishops took time to visit the local Imam and pay their respects and deliver a statement of support for the communities of Townsville and Christchurch.

FCBCO President, Archbishop Peter Loy Chong from Suva delivered the message saying “The recent massacre at the mosques in Christchurch has brought deep grief to all of us. As church leaders of Oceania, we condemn this evil attack and are shocked and horrified that such an atrocity should take place against innocent people. We are equally horrified that it should be perpetrated in a place of prayer and worship, when freedom to worship is cherished in our countries.”

The attack on mosques in Christchurch was particularly close to the Bishops of Oceania as one of the executive members is Bishop Paul Martin from Christchurch, who due to the events was unable to attend the meeting in Townsville.

During the visit Imam Abdul Salik spoke passionately of the communion that all religions have. “I Feel honored that you are here, we feel that we are not alone after this event in Christchurch” he said.

“I have no words to describe what has happened, I know in the teachings of Islam and every religion of the world that even the animals shouldn’t be treated like this.”

In the statement from the FCBCO Executive they said, “in times like this we should take the time to reflect on the way we treat one another as children of God.”

Imam Salik responded by saying that he was touched by this final comment. “There are a lot of similarities and beliefs that are the same as the Islamic religion, there is no difference that we all believe we must respect, care, love, honour and give and respect the rights of all humans.”

After the Bishop had an opportunity to pray with the Imam, he invited them to stay and enjoy a cup of tea with him in the mosque.