



## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

### Church supports International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Media Release

October 10, 2019

Catholic communities are called to participate in 16 days of activities against gender-based-violence to mark their support for next month's International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The Council for Australian Catholic Women is urging all people of good will to support the campaign, from November 25 to December 10, to work towards lasting cultural change to address injustice, inequality, sexism and exploitation of women.

Dr Trish Madigan, chair of the Council for Australian Catholic Women, said: "We understand that women and girls everywhere experience extensive abuse and their stories need to be brought to light. Violence against women is a serious and widespread problem in Australia, with enormous individual and community impact and terrible social costs."

"The Church has a special role in providing pastoral care, friendship, advocacy and practical support where people are impacted by domestic violence," Bishop Morrissey, Delegate to the Council for Australian Catholic Women said.

"In Sunday homilies, priests must also raise up theological foundations that support the equality of women and men. Women and men are created in God's image. Each person is infinitely loved by God and deserves respect, mutuality and dignity."

Pope Francis says that, "If violence has its source in the human heart, then it is fundamental that nonviolence be practised before all else within families ... I plead with equal urgency for an end to domestic violence and to the abuse of women and children."

The Australian Human Rights Commission defines violence against women as: "any act of gender based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life. Violence against women is not only or always physical. It includes psychological, economic, emotional and sexual violence and abuse, and a wide range of controlling, coercive and intimidating behaviours."

*Our Watch* reports that Australian women are nearly three times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner and are almost four times more likely than men to be hospitalised after being assaulted by their spouse or partner.

Young women (18 – 24 years) experience significantly higher rates of physical and sexual violence than women in older age groups and there is growing evidence that women with disabilities are more likely to experience violence. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women report experiencing violence in the previous 12 months at more than three times the rate of non-Indigenous women.

Investing in services to respond to violence against women – safe housing options, crisis services, perpetrator programs and justice responses is a feature of the Australian Government’s National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

The [16 days of action campaign](#) has ideas of action particularly related to created safe workplaces and a Catholic Response to Domestic Violence a kit to support parishes is available [here](#).