AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

BISHOPS COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, MISSION AND SERVICE

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Improve access to family and domestic violence prevention services

November 25 marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the start of 16 days of action.

This year's theme is, "Unite to end violence against women and girls: Ensure justice, protect survivors, end impunity".

Bishop Tim Harris, chair of the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service, said the scourge of family and domestic violence impacted Australians every day.

"Tragically, 60 women have been killed in Australia in 2026 so far," Bishop Harris said, citing the figure from Australian Femicide Watch.

"In NSW alone, frontline police are averaging more than 500 callouts each day.

"Yet family and domestic violence is one of the most underreported crimes."

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures show 45 per cent of women who had experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a current partner did not seek advice or support about the violence

"Ensuring justice and protecting survivors means raising awareness, improving access to services and supporting women to exercise their agency," Bishop Harris said.

"It also means having the courage to question how power is exercised in our communities, digital spaces, workplaces, institutions, and public and private lives.

"It means speaking out and taking action where there is injustice and suffering.

"It is incumbent on each of us to raise awareness and respond."

The National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women survey showed many Australians do not know where to get help, with two in five respondents indicating that they would not know how to access domestic violence services.

The survey also indicated that, while nearly all Australians agree that violence against women is a problem in Australia, only around half agree that it is a problem in their own suburb or town.

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“We must not be blind to this scourge; we must see the many women who desperately need support, the mum with children who has no place to go and, when she decides to approach a specialist homelessness service, is among the 350 people that are turned away each day,” Bishop Harris said.

Pope Leo XIV has spoken of the pain he feels for relationships marked by exclusion, mistreatment and violence and for women often unable to defend their rights and has prayed for peace within our homes and families wounded by this violence and pain.

“We are reminded of the centrality of women in the life of Christ as they walked alongside him throughout his ministry, with strength and courage. And we are reminded every day of the valued contributions women make in public, private and community life.” Bishop Harris said.

“In working towards eliminating violence against women, let us all be pillars of support for women in our communities.

“Let us unite in our call to all governments to increase access to family and domestic violence prevention, support and homelessness services.”

Ends

See also: Pastoral letter on International Women's Day - ACBC MediaBlog

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