



**Media Release
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Catholic Bishops express concern for and solidarity with the people of Zimbabwe

The Catholic Bishops of Australia today concluded their Plenary Meeting by expressing their deep concern for the people of Zimbabwe who are suffering oppression and deep hardship.

The Bishops had an opportunity during their meeting to hear directly from Archbishop Pius Ncube of Bulawayo, who was in Australia at the invitation of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Archbishop Philip Wilson expressed support for Archbishop Ncube's visit and spoke of the solidarity between the Bishops' Conferences of Australia and Zimbabwe.

"We know the many challenges facing the people of Zimbabwe," Archbishop Wilson said. "Australians are becoming aware, through the courageous stance of community and Church leaders like Archbishop Ncube, of the oppressive social and economic conditions and the violations of human rights in Zimbabwe.

"That innocent families and communities, already afflicted by poverty and hardship, have been tormented under mass evictions and political persecutions can no longer be tolerated by the world community. In light of this, we support recent calls for the Australian Cricket Team to withdraw from its upcoming tour of Zimbabwe and believe that this would be a significant symbolic stance against the oppressive regime in that country."

Archbishop Wilson said the Bishops stand in solidarity with the Catholic Bishops of Zimbabwe as they oppose the cruel treatment of vulnerable people.

"We pray for those who are suffering oppression and for the Church and community leaders who have shown such courage in defence of human rights and in meeting the basic needs of their people," he said.

Contact Debra Vermeer on 0414 880 475