



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE NATIONAL OFFICE FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN



MEDIA RELEASE

February 27, 2018

International Women's Day shines the spotlight on rural women

Catholics across Australia are being invited to join with people around the world in considering the particular challenges women face when they live outside metropolitan areas.

International Women's Day, which is celebrated each year on March 8, this year has the challenging theme "Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives".

Drawing on the theme of the upcoming 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the day will help give voice and support to the work, the rights and the activism of women living in rural areas across the globe. They make up more than one quarter of the world's population.

International Women's Day this year comes on the heels of an international movement for women's rights, equality and justice. The harassment of women and violence and discrimination against women has received significant media attention and prompted rising determination for change.

"Women in rural areas are keeping their family hopes high in the face of adversity," said Bishop Michael McCarthy, Bishop Delegate to the Council for Australian Catholic Women (CACW).

"The theme of this year's International Women's Day invites all Australians to salute women and acknowledge the rich support that they provide to family, community and Church. Our Catholic tradition honours the many ways that women minister and provide pastoral care."

The CACW is urging Catholics to educate themselves about the specific disadvantages that affect rural women and to act for justice ahead of International Women's Day.

CACW chair Lorraine Barker said women who live in rural areas are experiencing a number of disadvantages, faring worse than men in rural areas and women who live in urban areas.

"The inequality that exists across a whole range of areas is unacceptable and while it shouldn't take International Women's Day to put the spotlight on this issue, March 8 must be a day for us all to consider how we help correct this injustice," she said.

John Ferguson from the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council said: "In Australia, the impact of disadvantage can be exacerbated for women in rural and remote locations, where employment opportunities are scarce, welfare and health services are limited, and where family and social support networks can be stretched due to the tyranny of distance, population decline because younger generations are moving to metropolitan areas and the loss of social infrastructure."

Churches and other faith-based groups around the world will be using International Women's Day to underline their shared commitment to empowering women.

The CACW provides advice to the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry about the inclusion of women and their participation in the Catholic Church in Australia.

Its mission is to increase the number of women in decision-making, leadership and ministry roles in the Church. The Council coordinates mentoring and leadership development programs, especially for young women.

For further information, contact Andrea Dean on 0487 388 873.