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Historic Women's Delegation Lobbies Parliament

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Forty women leaders representing all of Australia's church denominations and Christian organisations have met with federal politicians in Canberra to address the shocking levels of violence toward women and children in the Pacific and ask elected leaders to reinforce partnership efforts with the Australian and Pacific church.

The cohort is the largest delegation of female Christian leaders to travel to the Parliament.

The united effort was coordinated by Micah Australia. Organisers say that the event aims to address the gravity of the Pacific situation where nearly 87 percent of children and one in four adolescent girls across eight countries experience physical violence regularly while one in 10 experience sexual violence, according to a recent report from Australia's leading aid and development NGOs.

The leaders met with Senior Ministers and Members of Parliament from both major political parties, advocating for policies supporting and protecting vulnerable women and children in the Pacific, while also

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encouraging continual leadership around Australia’s commitment to advocacy for a just world.

The delegation includes representatives from the Uniting Church, Hillsong, Baptist Church, Anglican Church, Catholic Church, The Salvation Army, Churches of Christ, Bible Society, Anglican Deaconess Ministries, Seventh-day Adventist, and more.

UnitingWorld’s Rev. Dr Seforosa Carroll said that it was “essential...to ensure our government’s ‘Pacific Step Up’ policies reflect the voices and needs of the vulnerable and marginalised in the Pacific, and that women are given a seat and have a voice at the table.”

“Since over 90 percent of the Pacific are Christian, we’re compelled to speak up for justice as well as emphasise the importance of churches as critical and integral partners for empowering women,” Rev. Dr Carroll said.

The cohort of Christian women leaders appealed to government leaders to make sure its commitment to the Pacific does not come at the cost of ‘stepping down’ elsewhere in the world. And to encourage the government to increase the Australian aid budget – now at its lowest level in history.

Tim Costello, Executive Director of Micah said the event was a unique opportunity to address cultural divisions and to unite Christian leaders.

“Too often, the church in Australia is known for advocating for our own rights, rather than the rights of the marginalised,” Rev. Costello said.

“These women, many of them on the front lines of social justice issues in our nation, have come to Canberra to advocate solely for the needs of others. What a great example they are setting for the church and our leaders.”

Jonathan Foye is Insights’ Editor

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