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CHRISTIAN WOMEN LEADERS ADVOCATE FOR PACIFIC WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN HISTORIC VISIT TO AUSTRALIA'S CAPITAL

Canberra— 40 women leaders from Australia's leading church denominations and Christian organisations have joined together for an historic visit to Canberra today, addressing in part the shocking levels of violence toward women and children in the Pacific while asking elected leaders to reinforce partnership efforts with the Australian and Pacific church.

With every mainline denomination represented, the cohort is the largest delegation of female Christian leaders to travel to the Parliament. Their unified effort—coordinated through the efforts of [Micah Australia](#)—comes in part from the gravity of the Pacific situation where nearly 87 percent of children and 1 in 4 adolescent girls across eight countries experience physical violence regularly while 1 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 encouraging continual leadership around Australia's commitment to advocacy for a just world.

"If we're to heed the call to love and care for our neighbour, we must see the great need of our neighbours in the Pacific – particularly women and children – who are often living in very vulnerable situations," said Kate Harrison Brennan, CEO of Anglican Deaconess Ministries.

"With our unified voice, we hope our meetings encourage our representatives to continue exhibiting compassionate leadership – keeping women and children in the Pacific front of view when making decisions that will affect them."

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

"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," said Rev. Dr Seforosa Carroll, Theological Researcher and Church Partnerships (Pacific) at UnitingWorld (Uniting Church).

"It's essential for us 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."

As important as the Pacific Step Up is, the cohort of Christian women leaders also appealed to government leaders to make sure its commitment there 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, who will lead Micah's annual conference, Voices for Justice, again this year in December in Canberra, also sees this as a unique opportunity both to address cultural divisions and to unite Christian leaders who are influencing the country's ministries.

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

In addition to the advocacy work for justice issues, the women leaders brought a Christian perspective to the nation's leaders around a number of concerns for the vulnerable across Australia and committed to praying for the officials in their leadership roles.

"What an honour to be a part of this significant moment for our nation," said Harrison Brennan. "Every major church denomination is represented here today, showing our leaders that Christians are at our best when we are unified, when together we give voice to the vulnerable and advocate together for God's justice in the world."

ENDS

For interviews with spokesperson of the delegation, Kate Harrison Brennan, please contact Jo Kadlecek on jo@deaconessministries.org.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

Christian women leaders making the trip include:

- Donna Crouch, Community Engagement Pastor Hillsong Church
- Kate Harrison Brennan, CEO Anglican Deaconess Ministries
- Vikki Howorth, Social Justice Pastor Seaforth Baptist, Micah Board Member
- Darlene Zschech, Senior Pastor Hope Unlimited Church, Chair Hope Global
- Sue Irwin, Senior Pastor The Grainery Church
- Bernadette Black, CEO & Founding Director Brave Foundation
- Brooke Prentis, Aboriginal Christian Leader, Aboriginal spokesperson for Common Grace
- Melissa Lipsett, Chief Executive Officer (Acting), Bible Society Australia
- Lynette Edge, Secretary of Mission The Salvation Army
- Rev Dr Seforosa Carroll, Theologian and Church Partnerships UnitingWorld (Uniting Church)
- Andrea Dean, Director of Office for the Participation of Women, Catholic Church in Australia
- Christie Buckingham, Senior Minister Bayside Church
- Deb Van Bennekom, Senior Minister Springfield Christian Family
- Naomi Chong, Global Movement Director & CEO RICE Movement
- Philippa Tyndale, Author, Leader C3 Church Australia
- Dr Tania Watson, Executive Minister Churches of Christ WA
- Rev Dr Melinda Cousins, Director of Ministry Accreditation Baptist Churches SA
- Donna Hall, Senior Pastor Lifepoint Church Adelaide
- Bronwyn Bonnell, Senior Pastor NorthWest Church
- Ally Cawthorn, Senior Pastor Urban Church WA

- Donna Shepherd, Managing Director Creating Communities, Chair Board of Directors, World Vision International
- Jo Knight, Advocacy Coordinator TEAR Australia
- Lucy Konda, Generations Pastor, Life Unlimited Church
- Reverend Lorna Green, Rector, Anglican Parish of Carine-Duncraig WA
- Beryl Landers, Director, Adventist Women's Ministries Seventh-day Adventist Church - Greater Sydney Conference
- Sarah Meredith, Country Director Global Citizen
- Katie Blok, Program Manager ACC International
- Joy Marie Butler, President Australia Women's Christian Temperance Union
- Alison Preston, Senior Programs and Partnerships Manager, Anglican Overseas Aid
- Melinda Tankard Reist, Writer, speaker, Advocate for women and girls
- Belinda Groves, Senior Minister, Canberra Baptist
- Sr Anne McGuire RSM – Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, representing Mercy Works Ltd
- Lisa West-Newman, Young Adult Consultant (Queensland), Global Interaction
- Eliza Johnson, Advocacy Coordinator Baptist World Aid
- Libby Sanders, Program Manager (Mercy & Justice), Anglican Deaconess Ministries
- Natalie Hannemann, Chief Retail & Supporter Experience World Vision Australia

About Micah: Micah Australia is a coalition of Australia's largest Christian non-government organisations raising a powerful voice for justice and a world free from poverty.

www.micahaustralia.org

