



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Media Release

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Church marks International Day of People with Disability

The Catholic Church in Australia is committed to upholding and protecting the dignity and wellbeing of all people with disabilities.

Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service chair, Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv, said the International Day of People with Disability – **to be marked on Tuesday, December 3** - is an important time of the year.

“In the wake of the Royal Commission on Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, Australia’s Catholic bishops wish to acknowledge the significance of the International Day of People with Disability,” Bishop Long said.

“We need to increase community awareness, understanding and inclusion of people with disabilities.

“These goals are consistent with Catholic social teaching which upholds the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of the vulnerable.”

Pope Francis states that “no disability - temporary, acquired or permanent - can change the fact that we are all children of the one Father and enjoy the same dignity”.

Australians are asked to pray for, and work towards, a just society that offers the most vulnerable in the community equal opportunities, compassion, and inclusion.

“The key to this renewed effort will be listening to people with lived experiences,” Bishop Long said.

“We stand in solidarity with the disabled and vulnerable because every human life is equal and sacred.”

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference affirms its strongest commitment to protect all disabled people from violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect.

Resources for parishes to help mark the day will be available at the [website](#)

Background

- The Catholic Church in Australia is renewing efforts to promote the wellbeing and inclusion of people with disability.
- To facilitate this effort the Disability Projects Office (DPO) has established the Catholic Accessibility Forum (CAF). Through the Forum, key stakeholders can share and advise the Office on critical issues.
- A 'Listening Day' pilot project is being developed for early 2025 through the Forum. This consultative model aims to provide people with lived experience the opportunity to be properly heard and fully acknowledged by the Office and Forum.
- Catholic programs in the disability sector range from education to general assistance, counselling, First Nations, health, prisons, transportation, accommodation, specialist services, safeguarding and liturgical innovations.