

# Victorian Heads of Churches

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Chair: The Most Revd Dr Philip Freier Secretary: Mr Theo Mackaay



## Joint statement - White Ribbon Day, November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2010

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Heads of Churches in Victoria are joining together on White Ribbon Day to voice our support for women affected by violence and to denounce such violence unequivocally.

Violence against women is a sad reality in the Victorian and Australian community, lurking in the shadows and having the greatest impact on those who are most vulnerable.

We are saddened by the facts of domestic violence in our community: that one in three Australian women has experienced physical violence, and one in five has experienced sexual violence; that 16 percent of women have experienced violence by a current or previous partner; and a staggering 36 percent of these women were pregnant at the time of violence.

The physical, emotional and psychological impact of this violence is crippling. In our prayers are the women, children and families who are affected – acknowledging in particular that there is an equally devastating impact on children who witness such abuse in their homes.

Violence against women cannot be tolerated. Such violence is emboldened by fear and silence. We will not remain silent.

We stand together to reaffirm that:

- Violence in all its many forms is unacceptable.
- Those affected by violence do not need to remain silent or feel fearful and alone.
- We will stand up for and defend the rights of those affected by violence.
- Our faith communities will embrace and protect those affected by violence.
- Violence is and will continue to be denounced in our Christian practices and teachings.
- We will act collectively to prevent violence against women and other vulnerable community members.
- All members of the Victorian community – women, children, and men alike – are entitled to dignity and respect.

The protection of the vulnerable is a fundamental principle in all our Christian traditions. The church communities we represent do not and will not accept violence in any form or in any setting.

It is for this reason that we take White Ribbon Day as an opportunity to categorically condemn all forms of violence and voice our shared support for victims.

*Adopted by the following church leaders at their meeting on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010*

The Most Revd Dr Philip Freier, Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne

Ms Isabel Thomas Dobson, Moderator Uniting Church Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Mr Craig Wright, President, Baptist Union of Victoria

The Rt Revd Andrew Bray, Moderator, Presbyterian Church of Victoria

The Very Revd Denis G Stanley, Episcopal Vicar for Ecumenism and Inter-Faith Relations, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

Pastor Gordon Wegener, Lutheran Church of Australia, Victorian District

Mr Paul Cameron, Executive Officer, Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania

Ps Shane Baxter, President, Australian Christian Churches in Victoria

Dale Hess, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Fr Geoff Harvey, Antiochian Orthodox Church

Mr Theo Mackaay, General Secretary, Victorian Council of Churches.