

Vox Populi (The Voice of the People)

04 August 2022

This week the Australian bishops released their annual Social Justice Statement. It is called *Respect: Confronting Violence and Abuse*.

Sadly, domestic and family violence is still a scourge on our communities and although it affects people of all ages and backgrounds the Statement data clearly identifies women and children as those who are particularly vulnerable.

We also know domestic violence and abuse often results in homelessness. A person is homeless when they don't have a fixed, regular or adequate night time residence. They don't have the security, stability, privacy and safety of their own space. Perceptions of the homeless and poor are often inaccurate and don't reflect reality.

Two out of every five people experiencing homelessness are under 25, and there has been an increase in people aged 55 and over who have no regular place to sleep. We might not see many people sleeping rough in our Diocese – only 7% sleep on the streets, but people are couch surfing, sleeping in shelters, or in cars, especially women and children. Housing is a basic and fundamental human need, the lack of which can have cascading social and health complications. And if the vulnerable and disadvantaged are doing it tough now, basic cost of living increases must be fuelling their financial stress.

This week across Australia is Homelessness Week. In our Diocese, CatholicCare Broken Bay has launched a new annual initiative focusing on homelessness services. You will hear more about this initiative in your parishes and we encourage your support where possible.

This campaign will culminate next Monday 8 August, the feast day of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop who devoted her life to the poor, established schools and places of refuge for the working class and disadvantaged.

Perhaps we can remember this weekend some words of Australia's first saint: "Be a gift of love and compassion for one another."