



Media Release

**CATHOLIC CHURCH AUSTRALIA TAKES ACTION
BY SUPPORTING BRAVEHEARTS 'WHITE BALLOON DAY'
AS AN AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGN
'TO HELP EDUCATE, EMPOWER & PROTECT OUR KIDS'**

**THE CHURCH WILL DISPLAY WHITE BALLOONS
ON CHILD PROTECTION SUNDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER**

2 September 2010: Signalling significant positive action in child protection, the Catholic Church Australia today announced its national support for **Bravehearts' White Balloon Day** campaign which is held during **Child Protection Week** (5th – 12th September.)

Bravehearts is Australia's leading child protection advocacy group and the nation's only charity specifically dedicated to combating child sexual assault in Australia.

The 1342 Catholic parishes and 1688 Catholic schools around the country have been invited to display white balloons on Tuesday 7th and Sunday 12th September, to show their support for the protection of young people through White Balloon Day.

Bravehearts' founder Hetty Johnston says "We are very proud to be working with the Catholic Church of Australia in a national demonstration of the need to protect our children as a national priority.

"The Catholic Church's lead involvement in White Balloon Day marks publicly their active involvement in being part of changing the culture of silence around child sexual assault. We applaud the Catholic Church of Australia for their bold stance and look forward to a long and effective working relationship in providing world class protection for children no matter in what environment or culture", Hetty said.

The Catholic Church will be joined by thousands of other schools and church groups right across the nation, Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Independent and other schools and churches, who will likewise be celebrating White Balloon Day. In addition, thousands of events are planned right across the length and breadth of the nation involving, among others, police, government departments, community groups, business groups, child care centres, churches, and individuals.

This is an historic day for child protection in Australia, and a very positive step forward for community healing and community awareness. The Catholic Church in Australia has taken the lead in the churches of Australia in changing the culture of silence and secrecy that has historically accompanied child sexual assault.

I am delighted to finally realise what has been a long term goal for the Bravehearts organisation, and hope this signals a new way forward for all churches globally.”

Sr. Angela Ryan of the Catholic Church National Committee for Professional Standards said “Prevention of abuse of children has always been and will continue to be the focus of Child Protection Sunday. Our theme this year is ‘Working together to stop child abuse wherever it occurs.’ This year, our Church and Catholic School communities stand in solidarity with the wider Australian community, including child protection agencies, other churches and State and Federal Police in raising awareness of and fighting against child abuse. We are happy to accept the invitation from Bravehearts to participate in this national campaign by flying white balloons outside our Churches and Schools during Child Protection Week. ”

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