



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION HONIARA

FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S DESK

Date: 7/12/18

16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women and Girls

From 25 November to 10 December, the Australian High Commission is taking part in the *16 Days of Activism*. Every year during the 16-day global campaign, we focus on raising awareness about gender-based violence and the horrific impacts it has on women and girls across the world.

This year's theme for the *16 Days of Activism* "Herem Vois Blo Mi" shines a light on the voices of the many woman who are hurting, or have died as a result of violence. It also shines a light on children who cannot be heard and those communities that are suffering at the hands of domestic and family violence.

The statistics of violence against women and girls are shocking. A study in 2009 found that 64 per cent of Solomon Islands women aged 15 to 49 who have ever been in a relationship experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner. That is six out of every ten women and girls – six out of ten too many.

Last week I had a conversation on the radio with Prime Minister Hon. Rick Houenipwela and Minister for Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs, Hon. Lanelle Tanangada, about this issue. We spoke about the impact violence has on both our countries and how together we are committed to ending violence against women and girls.

During our talk, Prime Minister Hou said "it is up to everyone to stop violence", and that people should "not use Kastom to legitimise violence." I strongly support both these statements. I also agreed when the Prime Minister said "violence affects more than women and girls. It affects the whole country. It slows down achievement of the SDG and it slows down development."

During the radio program, I spoke about my experience and responsibility as a father to teach my son how to be a good and kind man as he grows up. That all women and girls deserve respect and that violence is not the answer. Equality and safety is good for the whole community and for the whole country.

For those who were listening in to the SIBC program last Friday, I also hope you also heard the Minister of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs remind you that "violence against women is illegal, you will be fined and you will go to jail."

If you missed the program, I encourage you to listen tonight when the interview is repeated at 5:30 pm on SIBC.



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This is my second year in Solomon Islands, and I am pleased to say I have seen changes here, in Australia, and internationally, in our conversations about preventing violence against women and girls. But we can all do more and we must do more.

Too many women and girls still suffer from violence every day. Violence not only hurts women, it kills women.

People often ask me what we can do to stop this pervasive presence of violence against women and girls. The answer is simple. We need to not kill women or girls. **We need to hear your voice say “I will not condone, I will not stand by, and I will not be violent.”**

In 2019 I commit to you that I will continue to use my voice and say no to violence against women. What will you do?

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