



PASTORAL LETTER

Mental Health Week 2018

**By The Most Rev Bishop Donald Sproston VG
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

1 October 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

National Mental Health Week runs from Sunday 7 October to 14 October and coincides with World Mental Health Day on 10 October.

The theme for this year's Mental Health Week is 'Share the Journey', a theme which speaks strongly I believe of whom we are called to be as 'Church'- a living vibrant Christian community of people supporting and walking with each other on our earthly journey together.

Almost one in five Australians surveyed have experienced symptoms of a mental health issue during the last twelve months, with Anxiety being the most common. Homelessness is another major source of mental illness and stigma. People living with a mental illness are often isolated, have difficulty accessing employment and have disrupted family, social and peer networks as highlighted in the recently launched Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement for 2018/19, "A place to call Home".

Despite the progress we have made in the past decade, the stigma associated with mental illness still exists in our community. The way we talk about mental illness and the things we express publicly through media, social media, in our parishes, homes and in our workplaces can make a difference. Improving our communication around mental ill-health and suicide is vital as stigmatising language can prevent people from seeking help. Mental health and wellbeing crosses language and cultural divides. By supporting individuals and families holistically and in partnership, we build stronger communities that flourish as a whole. Optimal mental health and wellbeing requires an approach that addresses the whole person, acknowledging their mental, physical and spiritual health equally.

The best way we can spread the word about positive mental wellbeing and seeking support if we need it, is by attending or holding a local event or awareness activity in our parish community, workplace or school during Mental Health Week.



Bishop Donald Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth

As a suggestion, parishes could make efforts to welcome people with mental health issues at Mass followed by morning tea, or encourage people to share their stories of mental health issues or those in their family at a Parish or school event.

Many parishes have, through Emmanuel Centre Scholarships, recognised that having a person in a parish who has done some initial training in Mental Health First Aid can assist parishioners and their families to find suitable resources to assist in time of need for people with mental health issues. If you are interested contact our Archdiocesan agency, the Emmanuel Centre for more information.

I ask that your parish community take the opportunity on the weekend of 6 to 7 October to prayerfully consider the issues around mental health that our brothers and sisters experience in our midst.

Yours sincerely in Christ

+ Donald G Sproxton VG
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth