

Domestic Violence Forums in the deaneries.

In the last few weeks, members of the Archdiocesan Commission for Women have been busy and travelling.

Following the successful ecumenically planned and executed Domestic Violence Forum in Canberra in June, plans were put in place for the regions. Unfortunately, it seemed as if many people in the west had much going on in the second half of the year, and those contacted opted to have a Forum in 2017.

Three Forums, also ecumenically organised, were held in late November, one in each of Tuross Head, Goulburn and Cooma, at neutral venues (a sports club, the soldiers' club and the youth and community hub), as the Commission hoped to entice a wide range of attendees in the local communities.

The days at Tuross and Goulburn largely followed the Canberra format: an outline of "What is Domestic/Family Violence?", presentations from a panel of local community professionals who assist at various stages of such violence, hearing stories from those who had been involved in violence (sometimes via a booklet created and produced by the Uniting Church, called "For Such a Time as This"), and a closing prayer. Cooma began with breakfast, and featured two panels of local professionals.

Members of these panels included the police, members of crisis centres, refuges (where they exist), the Aboriginal and multicultural communities, legal aid and lawyers, emergency housing organisations, CatholicCare and other Church care groups, a doctor, Centrelink, court support groups... Such people are not only competent and compassionate, but very generous in their time and efforts to assist those experiencing Family Violence.

The Commission also spent time creating a DVD, so that those who could not attend could also benefit from the information and ideas presented. It is 30 minutes long, broken into five short sections, to allow for discussion and conversation. It will be delivered to schools (parish copies need to be collected from your local school) from 13 December. It would be beneficial for school boards, P&Fs, staffs, and perhaps students from Year 10 upwards, as well as for parish teams, pastoral councils, and parishioners generally. Apart from our Archdiocese, the Commission received donations from Australian Catholic University, the Catholic Development Fund, Catholic Superannuation and Retirement Fund, the Anglican diocese, CatholicCare and the Uniting Church, in order to fund this Domestic Violence Project, and the Commission is very grateful to them all.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse has seen the DVD and has sent along a letter of endorsement to parish priests and school principals.

We pray that in this season, when we prepare our hearts for the coming of the Prince of Peace, this DVD is a timely gift to parishes and schools from the Commission.