



## **POLICY ON RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE**

### **1. PREAMBLE**

This policy was endorsed by the Parish Council of the Parish of Crosslight Anglican Church using the *Anglican Diocese of Sydney Responding to Domestic Abuse: Provisional Policy and Good Practice Guidelines (September 23)* adopting it for Crosslight Anglican Church.

### **WE ACKNOWLEDGE DOMESTIC ABUSE EXISTS, IS WRONG, AND MUST STOP**

- 1.1. We acknowledge, with grief, that domestic abuse is a significant problem, not only within the community but also inside the Church.
- 1.2. All forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the victim and are wrong. Perpetrators must stop
- 1.3. Domestic abuse involves a pattern of behaviour that seeks to coerce, control, intimidate, hurt or frighten a person in an intimate or family relationship. Domestic abuse may include, but is not limited to emotional, verbal, financial, psychological, spiritual, cultural, physical and sexual abuse. Such behaviour often seeks to control, humiliate, dominate or instil fear in the victim. It can also include social isolation, stalking, image-based or technology-facilitated abuse, and threats to harm other people including children, property or pets.
- 1.4. The primary focus of this Policy is abusive or intimidating behaviour inflicted by an adult against a current or former spouse or partner. However, domestic abuse can occur between siblings, towards older people, and between other people sharing a home.
- 1.5. Domestic abuse has many negative impacts on any children in the family – whether or not a child sees or hears the abuse. Such impacts may include physical and emotional harm, ongoing trauma, educational and social disruption, and compromised relationships with both parents. As such it should be seen as a parenting choice by the perpetrator. Responding to any abuse involving children should follow child protection procedures.
- 1.6. Sometimes both spouses can be victims of abuse and perpetrate abuse. Typically, one spouse is the primary perpetrator of a pattern of abusive behaviour, and it is likely that abuse perpetrated by the other spouse is violent resistance in order to protect oneself or others.

### **2. WE ARE COMMITTED TO SAFE PLACES**

Crosslight Anglican Church is committed to promoting and supporting safer environments that:

- 2.1. Recognise equality amongst people, including husbands and wives.
- 2.2. Promote a culture of healthy relationships of mutual responsibility in marriages, families and congregations
- 2.3. Ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected, and safe from abuse
- 2.4. Strive to follow good practice in protecting those experiencing domestic abuse
- 2.5. Refuse to condone any form of abuse
- 2.6. Enable concerns to be raised and responded to appropriately and consistently

### **3. WE UPHOLD FAITHFULNESS IN SERVICE**

We uphold *Faithfulness in Service* as our diocesan code of conduct for clergy and church workers, specifically its affirmations in section 6:

- 3.1. Abuse of power is at the heart of many relationship problems in the Church and in the community. In essence, abuse is one person's misuse of power over another. Sometimes abuse will be a one-off event and at other times it will be a pattern of behaviour (6.2)
- 3.2. It is important for clergy and church workers to be good citizens and to obey the laws of the community, except where those laws conflict with Christian convictions (6.4)
- 3.3. You are not to abuse your spouse, children or other members of your family (6.6)

### **4. DOMESTIC ABUSE REQUIRES A SERIOUS AND REALISTIC RESPONSE**

- 4.1. Working in partnership with vulnerable adults and children, statutory authorities and specialist agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse
- 4.2. Clergy and lay ministers do not typically have professional expertise in the area of domestic abuse. They need to obtain advice from those with professional expertise when faced with situations of domestic abuse, as advised by *Faithfulness in Service* (4.12).
- 4.3. Clergy should ensure the provision of training about domestic abuse by appropriately qualified professionals or programs to those in leadership positions, safe ministry roles and other pastoral roles, with periodic 'refresher' training.

- 4.4. Our response should also include attention to 'primary prevention'. This may address a range of factors, such as rigid gender stereotypes, attitudes of male entitlement, general disrespect for women, and other social or cultural factors, that may allow individual misconduct to flourish.
- 4.5. Where mistakes in caring for people in difficult situations are made, an apology should be offered and advice sought on how to address any harm caused.

### **5. WE RESPECT PEOPLE WHO COME TO US FOR HELP**

Our churches are to be places of safety. We shall respond to domestic abuse by:

- 5.1 Valuing, listening to, and respecting victims of domestic abuse.
- 5.2 Valuing, respecting, and listening to alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- 5.3 Appreciating the need to ensure a distance is kept between the two
- 5.4 Refusing to condone the perpetration or continuation of any form of abuse.

### **6. WE UPHOLD SCRIPTURE AND ITS ABHORRENCE OF ABUSE IN OUR WORDS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

In our words and public statements, we ought to:

- 6.1. Clearly teach that domestic abuse is wrong, and that the Bible should never be interpreted to justify or excuse any form of abuse. Rather a relationship between a husband and wife is to be characterised by love, care, and kindness.
- 6.2. Clearly teach that the Bible does not condone abuse and should not be interpreted to demand a spouse tolerate or submit to domestic abuse.
- 6.3. Clearly teach that the Bible encourages victims to seek safety, that separation for such reason is an appropriate step to take, and that divorce may properly be a way of protecting victims in such tragic circumstances.
- 6.4. Oppose false teaching about these matters.
- 6.5. Raise awareness of domestic violence agencies, support services, resources and expertise.

### **7. WE ENSURE SAFETY FIRST**

- 7.1. **Safety First** – Ensure that those who have experienced domestic abuse can find safety and informed help as a first priority and can continue to stay safe.

- 7.2. **Take it Seriously** – Ensure that any disclosures of abuse are taken seriously and not dismissed; also noting that a perpetrator may deliberately undermine a victim by making their own allegation first.
- 7.3. **Get help from outside authorities** – Work with the appropriate statutory authorities during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community.
- 7.4. **Keep it confidential** – Respect the need for confidentiality within the bounds of good Safe Ministry practice, noting that reporting requirements exist where there is an immediate danger, where a child is at risk of serious harm, or where the matter involves a clergy person or church worker as an alleged offender; where a report is required, this should first be discussed with the victim wherever possible.
- 7.5. **Challenge with Care** – Carefully challenge inappropriate behaviour, but only after receiving professional advice and only in a way that does not place any individual, especially a victim, at increased risk.

## 8. WE OFFER SUPPORT TO THOSE IN OUR CARE

- 8.1. **Offer informed care** – Ensure that informed and appropriate pastoral care and professional help is offered to any adult, child, or young person who has suffered domestic abuse.
- 8.2. **Be guided by the victim** – it is never appropriate to pressure any victim of domestic abuse to forgive, submit to, or restore a relationship with an offender. Allow victims to set the pace.
- 8.3. **Reconciliation comes with conditions** – Understand that any possibility of reconciliation between victim and offender is dependent principally upon genuine repentance and reformation of the offender. A victim may choose not to reconcile where they do not feel safe.
- 8.4. **Coordinate the care** – Be familiar with appropriate pastoral care relationships for both victims and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse; identify the need for any specialist support and help coordinate its provision; any children involved should be offered separate and independent support.
- 8.5. **Recognising cultural differences** – Respond in a culturally sensitive way and understand how cultural norms and values may affect victims or can contribute to abuse being perpetuated.
- 8.6. **Equal access to care** – we will work to ensure that clergy, clergy spouses, lay ministers and their spouses all have the same access to support and resources as others who experience domestic abuse.

### 9. THINKING THEOLOGICALLY - 10 STATEMENTS ABOUT DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 9.1. All human beings, both male and female, are created equal in the image of God, and are precious to him. As such their value and dignity rightly commands our respect and protection and should be upheld by all (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 82:3-4; Matthew 22:37-40).
- 9.2. Marriage is given by God as a good part of his creation for human wellbeing and should be honoured by all. It is intended as a lifelong union of a man and a woman. Healthy Christian relationships are characterised by servanthood and sacrifice, supremely modelled by Jesus Christ. Within a marriage relationship, both husband and wife are to respond to one another by building each other up, which includes mutual love, nurture and respect. Accordingly, any attempt to distort the biblical concepts of headship and submission to justify abusive behaviour is intolerable (Mark 10:42-45; Ephesians 5:21-33; Hebrews 13:4).
- 9.3. The Bible rejects all abuse, whether physical, verbal, or otherwise expressed from one person towards another and always condemns the misuse of power to control or exploit others. Therefore, domestic abuse is sin. Such sin is deceptive in its power and damaging in its effects (Psalm 7; Galatians 5:19-26; 2 Timothy 3:2-3).
- 9.4. When domestic abuse in marriage is reported, then separation of the spouses for the sake of the safety of a victim and any children is always an appropriate step to be taken and should never be discouraged (Proverbs 27:12; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11; cf. 1984 Doctrine Commission Report, 21/82 *The Remarriage of Divorced Persons* (1984), para. 4.12, Appendix 11).
- 9.5. Victims of domestic abuse should be encouraged to seek help from the Police, from child protection authorities and other relevant domestic violence services. Church leaders who become aware of situations of domestic abuse should always ensure they meet their mandatory reporting obligations and obtain professional advice (Romans 13:1-5).
- 9.6. When a wife or husband separates for the sake of their safety (or that of their children), such action should not mean the person is deemed to have deserted the marriage or have abandoned their responsibilities as a parent even though they may have physically left the common home. Church leaders should welcome and offer ongoing support to those who have separated for such reasons (Psalm 82:3-4).
- 9.7. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ flows from both justice and love. It calls for repentance and offers forgiveness. When domestic abuse has been indicated as a factor in separation, the perpetrator must be called upon to repent and take full responsibility for their actions. Genuine repentance is demonstrated over time and includes the person gaining an understanding

of what led them to behave in an abusive manner, what was wrong with their behaviour, and how it has impacted the victim. (Luke 3:8-14; Romans 12:9; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11). True reformation in such cases takes considerable effort on the part of the perpetrator, may take many years, and, for some, may never be achieved.

- 9.8. Forgiveness is often an important part of a victim's healing journey. However, any attempts made at reconciliation should only proceed slowly and cautiously, and after consultation with experienced domestic violence services. Care should be taken to manage the risks of further traumatising the victim. The caution of a victim in regard to being reconciled to an offender is appropriate and should not be mistaken for 'unwillingness' to forgive or be reconciled.
- 9.9. The grace of the gospel extends to all sinners. Church leaders have an obligation to provide support, pastoral accountability and supervision to any person who remains within their church communities known to have been a perpetrator of domestic abuse. However, such support should only be given in a manner that does not compromise the safety or pastoral care of victims of domestic abuse.
- 9.10. Christians with a genuine desire to be faithful to Scripture will hold different views on the question of when divorce is appropriate or remarriage may be possible. However, such differences should not impact on a Christian's support for a victim of domestic abuse separating from their spouse for the sake of safety. For a discussion of when divorce and remarriage, might be appropriate actions in the circumstances of domestic abuse please see Appendix 10, which references the 2019 Doctrine Commission report entitled, "The Implications of Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines Abuse for Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage 18/18 The nature of marriage" and a "Letter to Members of Synod Regarding Domestic Abuse and Remarriage" from the Archbishop at the time, the Most Reverend Glenn Davies.

## 10. WHAT WE NEED TO DO IN OUR CHURCH

When a case of domestic abuse is reported at Crosslight Anglican, we will act in accordance with the following priorities:

**Safety first** – for the victim(s)

**Support and empowerment** – for the victim(s)

**Healing** – for the victim(s)

**Accountability** – for the abuser

**Repentance, reformation, and healing** – by the abuser

**Define and clarify** the state of the relationship

- 10.1. A victim's physical and emotional safety is our primary and ongoing concern. Other matters may be considered according to the priorities suggested above, although inevitably some stages may overlap or need to be revisited.
- 10.2. Further advice is available in the ***Good Practice Guidelines***, along with the extensive information in the series of attached **Appendices** from the Anglican Diocese of Sydney Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines. All clergy and church workers should be familiar with these guidelines.
- 10.3. A **Domestic Abuse Response Flow Chart** has been prepared with the appropriate processes to follow when you become aware of an incident of domestic abuse. On the page following the flow chart we also list a number of key telephone numbers and websites, along with an app for smartphones and tablets.

### **11. KEY STEPS FOR PREVENTION AND CARE**

- 11.1. Clergy and church workers should cooperate with statutory authorities such as the Police, child protection services, and domestic violence services.
- 11.2. Parish Council will display this church's domestic abuse policy statement on the church website alongside information about how to access advice and support from the Police, domestic violence helplines, and diocesan services.
- 11.3. Clergy and Parish Councils should consider appointing specified domestic abuse contact person(s) within the local church, especially where the church only has male clergy or church workers.
- 11.4. Clergy and church workers should follow diocesan procedures for responding to concerns about domestic abuse (see Flowchart and Good Practice Guidelines. If there is any doubt as to what action to take, refer to the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry or the Anglicare Domestic Violence Adviser (see 'Domestic Abuse – key telephone numbers and websites for help').
- 11.5. Clergy should ensure the training, by appropriately qualified professionals or programs, of those in leadership positions, safe ministry roles, and other pastoral roles about domestic abuse; such training should address primary prevention as well as pastoral responses.

- 11.6. Clergy should ensure domestic abuse is addressed in appropriate contexts such as preaching, Bible studies, prayers, and church publications, as well as in marriage preparation, youth groups, and ministry training activities.
- 11.7. In such teaching, clergy should consider how to prevent convictions regarding biblical teachings, on matters like the marriage covenant, gender relationships, forgiveness, and sacrificial love being distorted or used to justify domestic abuse.

### **If you have any concerns or need to talk to anyone please contact...**

The Police: dial 000

- 24/7 in emergencies where safety is at risk.

1800 RESPECT national helpline: **1800 737 732** or [1800respect.org.au](https://1800respect.org.au)

- 24/7 for sexual assault and domestic violence counselling, and advice.

Child Protection Helpline: **132 111** or [reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg](https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg)

- If you think a child or young person is at risk of harm from abuse.

Lifeline: **131 114** or [www.lifeline.org.au/get-help](https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help)

- 24-hour telephone crisis line.

Office of the Director of Safe Ministry **9265 1604** or [safeministry.org.au](https://safeministry.org.au)

- Advice about abuse involving Anglican clergy or church workers

## **12. POLICY REVIEW**

The policy will be reviewed and revised by the Parish Council each year, with a thorough review every three years or in response to revisions to the Anglican Diocese of Sydney "Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines".

Parish Council must approve all reviews, amendments and changes to this policy.

**Approved by resolution by Parish Council on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024**

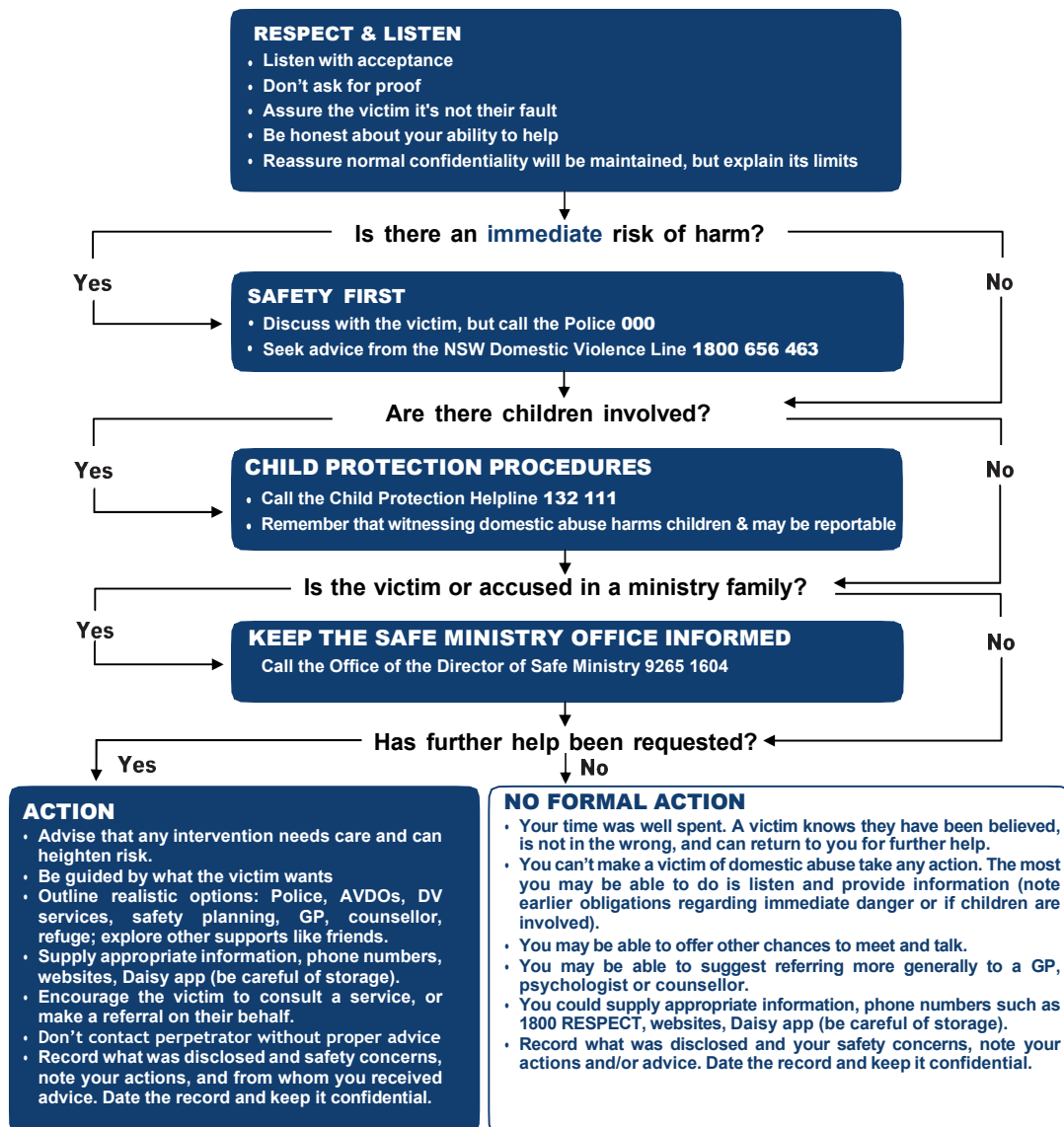


## 13. DOMESTIC ABUSE FLOWCHART

### Domestic Abuse Flowchart

At any time in this process you can seek advice from a domestic violence professional.  
Within 48 hours of a disclosure you should debrief with such a professional.

#### A person discloses domestic abuse:



## 14. DOMESTIC ABUSE - KEY RESOURCES FOR HELP

### Domestic Abuse – key telephone numbers and websites for help

AGENCY	CONTACT DETAILS
<b>1800 Respect national helpline</b> 24 hour national number for sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling and advice.	<b>1800 737 732</b> <b>1800respect.org.au</b>
<b>Anglicare Domestic Violence Adviser</b> Advice to clergy and lay ministers in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney especially for domestic abuse in a church-related setting.	<b>0438 826 556</b> (business hours)
<b>Daisy App</b> The Daisy App connects people who may experience violence or abuse to support services in their local area. It was developed by 1800RESPECT and is free to use and download. It includes some safety features to help protect the privacy of people using it.	<b>Free to download from iPhone App Store &amp; Android Google Play</b>
<b>Child Protection Helpline</b> Contact this helpline if you think a child or young person is at risk of harm from abuse.	<b>132 111</b> <b>reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg</b>
<b>Lifeline</b> 24 hour telephone crisis line.	<b>131 114</b> <b>www.lifeline.org.au/get-help</b>
<b>NSW Domestic Violence Line</b> 24 hour number for comprehensive information and referrals to nearby support services, for all categories of domestic violence.	<b>1800 65 64 63</b> <b>domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/get-help</b>
<b>NSW Rape Crisis Centre</b> Counselling service for anyone in NSW – men and women – who has experienced or is at risk of sexual assault.	<b>1800 424 017</b> <b>www.nswrapecrisis.com.au</b>
<b>Law Access NSW</b> Free government telephone service that provides legal information, referral and advice for people who have a legal problem in NSW.	<b>1300 888 529</b> <b>lawaccess.nsw.gov.au</b>
<b>Legal Aid NSW</b> Legal Aid's Domestic Violence Unit provides legal advice, referral and representation, as well as social support, to eligible persons,	<b>02 9219 5000</b> <b>legalaid.nsw.gov.au</b>
<b>No To Violence: Men's Referral Service</b> Telephone counselling, information and referral service for men using violence in families, male victims, and for their friends or relatives.	<b>1300 766 491</b> <b>ntv.org.au</b>
<b>Office of the Director of Safe Ministry (ODSM)</b> Advice about abuse involving clergy or church workers in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney.	<b>9265 1604</b> <b>safeministry.org.au</b>