

Domestic Violence Response Monitoring Committee: Progress Report

23/18 Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines

13/22 National Anglican Family Violence Research project

(A report from the Domestic Violence Response Monitoring Committee.)

Purpose

1. To provide a progress report to the Synod from the Domestic Violence Response Monitoring Committee, on behalf of the Standing Committee.
2. To recommend revisions to the Anglican Diocese of Sydney's policy document: *Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines*.

Recommendations

3. Synod notes this report.
4. Synod, noting the report 'Domestic Violence Response Monitoring Committee Progress Report, adopt the updated *Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines* as a policy of the Synod.

Background

5. When the diocesan Policy and Guidelines were adopted in 2018, Synod authorised the Standing Committee to make amendments to the Policy provided any amendment made by the Standing Committee is made in consultation with the Professional Standards Unit and the Anglicare Domestic Violence Advisor (unless such proposal to amend is referred to Synod by any 3 members of the Standing Committee).
6. At that time, the Synod (by Resolution 23/18) asked Standing Committee to review the Domestic Abuse Policy and Good Practice Guidelines after four years' operation and provide a report on the outcome of the review to the first ordinary session of the 53rd Synod in 2023.
7. In June 2021 Standing Committee also asked the Monitoring Committee to review the Policy in light of the initial *National Anglican Family Violence Project Research Reports* and to report on any gaps in current policy and practice and to make recommendations.
8. Later that year, the full and final National Anglican Family Violence Project (**NAFVP**) research was released. It comprised 4 reports. All can easily be accessed on the General Synod website.
9. Our Monitoring Committee report to Synod in 2022 interacted at some length with this research and its conclusions, indicating both some limitations and also some further areas of consideration in light of it.
10. In 2021 we also commenced our policy review, utilising the assistance of the Diocesan Researcher at the time. Specifically, our approach was to:
 - Invite a panel of relevant stakeholders to assist in the review,
 - Request written feedback on our Policy and Guidelines document from a panel of relevant stakeholders, in light of the NAFVP research and "Ten Commitments", and
 - Review feedback themes via a roundtable discussion with stakeholders.

11. The review stakeholders included the following persons:
 - Anglicare’s Family and Domestic Violence Advisor,
 - The PSU’s Chaplain,
 - A person representing victims and survivors (located via the PSU Chaplain),
 - A parish clergyperson,
 - A ministry wife,
 - A Christian of another Bible-believing denomination with relevant experience,
 - A Christian medical practitioner with relevant experience,
 - The CEO of ADM (whose Project Officer also joined us),
 - The Principal of Youthworks College,
 - A representative of SDS Legal,
 - (Moore College was unable to nominate a representative at the time).
12. Extensive written feedback on the existing Policy and Guidelines was received from all stakeholders and was collated by the Diocesan Researcher. We then reviewed feedback and discussed key themes emerging via roundtable video conference in November 2021, with most stakeholders in attendance.
13. The impact of COVID and a new appointment for one of the members of the Monitoring Committee delayed work on the updating policy in light of the review feedback.
14. Nevertheless, at Synod in 2022, we reported, without pre-empting final recommendations, that a number of wider key themes were identified, though not all would fit neatly into a policy document.
15. Resolutions passed at Synod in September 2022 also:
 - Welcomed the "Before it Starts" program produced jointly by Youthworks and Anglicare with its goal of preventing domestic abuse and promoting safe and respectful relationships in our churches, as a free, four-week, biblically-engaged, primary prevention program for youth groups (9/22),
 - Noted limited uptake of the *Know Domestic Abuse* online training course, prepared by Anglicare and offered by what is now called the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry and urged all Rectors to encourage all pastoral staff and lay leaders in their churches to complete the course if they have not already done so (10/22), and
 - Again noted the reports of the National Anglican Family Violence Research Project and the Ten Commitments for Prevention and Response to Domestic and Family Violence, and asked the Monitoring Committee to respond to these documents, as part of the wider review of our Synod’s existing policy in time for Synod in 2023 (13/22).

Recommendations for Policy Revisions

16. The Monitoring Committee has now considered both the detailed feedback of suggestions for amending of the existing policy documents and the wider themes identified by the policy review.
17. Our approach has been wherever possible to accept suggestions for amendment to the Policy and Guidelines from the review panel members, either in full, or by appropriate modification suitable to our context.
18. We have also interacted with the NAFVP research and the “Ten Commitments” and found many useful suggestions arising from this review, which have shaped further changes we recommend to the Policy. For example, this has led to –
 - an increased emphasis on primary prevention (Commitment 1.3), on training being repeated and renewed (Commitment 8.3), along with stronger recommendations to parishes for local action (e.g., Commitments 6.2 & 6.3),

- additional specific materials that reflect on the impact of trauma, on power and control dynamics (Commitments 4.2 & 4.3), and on ways domestic abuse can impact groups such as the culturally and linguistically diverse (Commitment 2.3), and people with disabilities.
19. However due to the extensive policy and resourcing work already done, our view continues to be that there is no need for our Synod to adopt the “Ten Commitments” as an additional policy or position statement. Although the “Ten Commitments” were not insensitive to the varied theological approaches that exist in the Anglican Church of Australia, their expression, at some points, does not necessarily comprise an easy fit with the evangelical theological and ministry approach generally prevailing within our Diocese.
20. Prompted in part by the Ten Commitments (e.g. commitment 5.2), the Monitoring Committee has also benefitted from consultation, with members of the Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples’ Ministry Committee (**SAIPMC**). There was further useful consultation with two female ministry leaders from local Indigenous communities.
21. Key draft changes have also been further checked with Lynda Dunstan, Anglicare’s Family and Domestic Violence Advisor and with Belinda Burn, the Chaplain of the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry. Their assistance has been invaluable in ensuring our Policy, Guidelines and Resources are more up to date on the latest research and are also even more sensitive to victims and survivors and any children they have.
22. The key changes are as follows:
- An updated preface from our new Archbishop.
 - Clarification as to why we have chosen to retain the term “victim” as our most common way of referring to those who have experienced domestic abuse, although sometimes we will refer to “survivor”.
 - An updated definition of domestic abuse, emphasising aspects of control and fear, and including a wider variety of categories of such abuse.
 - Emphasis on the need to ensure provision of training for ministry workers and others in the areas both of prevention and response by appropriately qualified professionals or programs, and with appropriate ongoing ‘refresher’ training.
 - Clergy and parish councils are asked to take further steps both in primary prevention of and response to those affected by domestic abuse, including the possibility of contact with local agencies and services.
 - Our flow chart has been tweaked and given even greater, hence earlier, prominence in our policy documents.
 - Guidelines include several helpful informed opinions from Anglicare’s Domestic Violence Advisor.
 - Guidelines recognise better the very non-linear, “long road out”, not only for victims, where patience to go at the victim’s pace is even more emphasised, but also often for carers who walk with them. In small ways this reflects greater awareness of the impact of trauma.
 - Guidelines are more careful about the impact of domestic abuse on children, and also clarify that referral in such cases does not mean automatic removal.
 - Guidelines are more explicit about complicating factors for those with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and for people living with disability, mental illness or other health issues.
 - Guidelines are more careful about managing information around and care of victims and alleged perpetrators, especially where they remain in the same parish community (including awareness of online connections).
 - Guidelines encourage more vigilance in terms of responding to alleged perpetrators including attention to possible grooming behaviour.
 - Guidelines provide updated information about the Bishop Protocol and the Ministry Spouse Support Fund for ministry families affected by domestic abuse.
 - The need to seek advice from the ODSM or the Anglicare Domestic Violence Advisor or other professionals is underlined even more often.
 - The number of appendices has been reduced, by removing the appendices including “A Letter that Made me Think”, “Public Statements by diocesan leaders on the topic of Domestic Abuse,

which is now becoming out of date, and a digest of Synod resolutions related to Domestic Abuse. Nonetheless, an updated digest of such resolutions is attached as Attachment 1 to this report, so that it remains clearly in our historical record.

- We have updated the Appendix giving more expansive description of domestic abuse in light of our updated definition.
- We have reordered the Appendices to give greater prominence to the Doctrine Commission's report on "The Use and Misuse of Scripture with Regard to Domestic Abuse".
- We have added a Cycle of Abuse diagram as a second visual aid for understanding the patterns of domestic abuse.
- We have updated our Appendix 4 on Domestic Abuse Facts, in ways that have simplified some material, but expanded on how abuse may impact minority groups such as culturally or religiously diverse communities, Indigenous communities and men as victims. It also supplies information on social factors that contribute, the way perpetrators may invite collusion (sometimes called grooming) and on the impact of trauma.
- We have updated the Appendix on Divorce and Remarriage, referring to the Doctrine Commission's more recent report, as well as the statement about how such matters are handled by the Archbishop when that report was handed down. This is still current today.
- With the assistance of SDS Legal we have updated the Appendix touching on legal situations regarding domestic violence in NSW.
- Changes to *Faithfulness in Service* have been noted.
- The model parish policy has been updated to reflect the new policy wording being recommended at the front of the document.
- Changes have been made throughout to update the terminology from 'Professional Standards Unit / PSU' to 'Office of the Director of Safe Ministry / ODSM'.

Other Matters

23. The Monitoring Committee is also able to report the following about engagement with diocesan resources, from the time each has been available, as at May 2023:
 - Payments from the Ministry Spouse Support Fund, since its inception, total \$131,460.97.
 - 147 people have completed our online training Know Domestic Abuse, with another 70 in progress. It should be noted there has been no publicity for the course for some time, except via a Synod resolution, and it is also overdue for an update.
 - The services of Anglicare's Family and Domestic Violence Advisor been accessed for advice approximately 200 times by parish ministers or other persons.
 - The Family and Domestic Violence Advisor has run training seminars regarding domestic violence for over 30 churches and ministry teams, as well as Moore College, Youthworks College and Anglican Deaconess Ministries.
24. The Monitoring Committee is especially mindful of monitoring closely the 'take-up' level of these voluntary training opportunities, and prays for further progress in this area.
25. A separate motion will be moved encouraging parish councils to adopt the revised model parish domestic abuse policy and utilise available resources.

ARCHDEACON KARA HARTLEY

DEAN SANDY GRANT

14 August 2023

Synod Resolutions related to Domestic Abuse

For the historical record, please note the following relevant resolutions of the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, current to the end of 2022.

Any resolutions of Synod, although not carrying the force of denominational law, express our peak representative 'position statements' on particular issues at particular points of time.

37/07 Biblical pattern of marriage

Synod –

- (a) affirms that the relationship of loving, sacrificial leadership of a husband and the intelligent, voluntary submission of a wife is the Biblical pattern of marriage, and
- (b) totally rejects the use of this Biblical pattern to justify any form of domestic abuse, and
- (c) totally rejects all forms of domestic abuse, and
- (d) expresses its concern for those children, women and men, who are victims of domestic abuse, and
- (e) calls on Christian husbands and wives to use their God-given responsibilities for the good of their families, and
- (f) calls on ministers to teach congregations the Biblical model for marriage and also to teach against domestic abuse.

(Mrs Lesley Ramsay 25/09/07)

33/13 Domestic violence and educating clergy

Synod requests Moore College and Ministry Training and Development, in consultation with the Safe Ministry Board and appropriate experts as required, having reviewed the input they already provide, to investigate and, if needed, develop an effective approach to educating ordinands and clergy in regards to domestic violence and how to respond when it comes up as an issue in marriage (and other relationships).

In such training, consideration ought to be given to ensuring that upholding the Bible's good teaching on submission and sacrificial love – both in preaching and teaching, and in marriage education and counselling – is not easily twisted as a cover for abuse.

Synod requests that Moore College and Ministry Training and Development report back with a progress report by the next session of Synod.

(Canon Sandy Grant 16/10/2013)

24/16 Domestic Violence

Synod –

- (a) acknowledges that domestic abuse continues to be a significant social problem both inside and outside the church;
- (b) gives thanks for the work of the Domestic Violence Response Task Force and calls on them to continue their work – in particular that of developing policy and pastoral guidelines to recommend to Standing Committee and make recommendations about education – as expeditiously as possible;
- (c) calls on Standing Committee to consider providing funding for the Task Force sufficient to expedite its work and particularly the work of interviewing and caring for victims;
- (d) calls upon all clergy, church workers and parish councils to read the Task Force's 2016 progress report to Synod and to familiarise themselves with the headline definition and expansive description of domestic violence adopted by the Task Force;
- (e) notes that clergy and church workers who are domestic abusers are in breach of standards expressed in Faithfulness in Service;
- (f) encourages victims of domestic abuse by clergy or church workers to speak to the Professional Standards Unit;

- (g) asks the Task Force, and the Discipline Ordinance 2006 Review Committee, to consider changes to the necessary ordinances which would allow victims of domestic abuse, who have brought the abuse to the attention of church-workers who have their pastoral oversight and who feel that they have received negligent, callous or otherwise improper advice or treatment by those with pastoral oversight, to have complaints referred to the Professional Standards Unit;
- (h) looks forward to the inclusion of education in the area of domestic violence in 2017 via the PSU's compulsory Faithfulness in Service training sessions for clergy and paid church workers, and while the Task Force's pastoral guidelines are being developed encourages ministers, whenever they receive an allegation of domestic abuse, to consider contacting the PSU for advice on the best practices for pastoral care;
- (i) encourages clergy and church workers to preach and speak against domestic violence, again rejecting the twisting of Scripture to justify abuse of any kind, and to make pastoral enquiries when meeting with married people;
- (j) requests the Task Force to report again, no later than next Synod; and
- (k) expects that the diocesan response to domestic violence will go beyond the ambit and life of the Task Force,

and prays for the protection, healing and support of victims and survivors of domestic violence within our churches; for wisdom and insight, courage and compassion for clergy and church workers in providing pastoral responses to people in such situations; and for the continued work of the Task Force.

(Canon Sandy Grant 12/10/2016)

17/17 Grief and apology in regards to domestic abuse

That this Synod grieves with victims and survivors of domestic abuse, and prays for their healing and recovery. We give thanks to God for those women and men, clergy and lay people, who have faithfully supported, cared for and protected such victims in our churches and communities.

We grieve that God's good gift of marriage can be distorted and dishonoured through the sin of perpetrators. We pray for their repentance and restoration to faithful living under Christ.

We also deeply regret that domestic abuse has occurred among those who attend our churches, and even among some in leadership. We apologise for those times our teaching and pastoral care have failed adequately to support victims and call perpetrators to account.

(Canon Sandy Grant 10/10/2017)

32/17 Assistance for spouses and families of clergy and lay stipendiary workers where separation has occurred due to domestic violence

In light of its wholehearted acceptance of the Provisional Sydney Anglican Policy on Responding to Domestic Abuse, and its deeply sincere expression on 10 October 2017 of grief, regret and sorrow to victims and survivors of domestic abuse, Synod –

- (i) acknowledges the responsibility of the Anglican Church of Australia to examine its ordination candidates to ensure that they are fit to enter Holy Orders,
- (ii) acknowledges the responsibility of the Anglican Church of Australia to ensure that its clergy are fit to remain in Holy Orders,
- (iii) acknowledges the responsibility of the Anglican Church of Australia to ensure that its lay stipendiary workers are fit to be licenced to work in churches and to remain in this work,
- (iv) accepts the theological statements in the Provisional Sydney Anglican Policy on Responding to Domestic Abuse that speak of the circumstances when it is right for the victims of domestic abuse to separate from their spouses and not be reconciled,
- (v) acknowledges that a key reason why domestic abuse victims might find it difficult to separate from their spouses is because of potential financial hardship (especially where children are involved),
- (vi) acknowledges that the family of clergy and lay stipendiary workers live in locations where the relevant ministry worker is licenced to minister, rather than around their natural support networks (e.g. family and close friends), and that this can make it even more difficult for victims of domestic abuse to separate from their spouses,

and therefore requests –

- (a) that Standing Committee, as a matter of urgency and in consultation with the Professional Standards Unit, create a generously provisioned long-term operating fund which has the purpose of assisting spouses of clergy and lay stipendiary workers who have been or will be left in financial hardship as a result of their need to separate from their spouse due to domestic abuse,
- (b) that the policy which is created to administer the fund proposed in paragraph (a) provide a way for funds to be distributed quickly to those who are in need,
- (c) that Anglican Schools Corporation schools have short to medium term bursaries available to assist the families of clergy and lay stipendiary workers where separation has occurred due to domestic abuse, and
- (d) that Anglicare give priority for emergency assistance to the families of clergy and lay stipendiary workers where separation has occurred due to domestic abuse.

(The Rev Mark Tough 16/10/2017)

6/18 Appreciation for the Anglicare Family and Domestic Violence Advisor

Synod acknowledges the work being done by Ms Lynda Dunstan, the Anglicare Family and Domestic Violence Advisor, and –

- (a) gives thanks to God for –
 - (i) the 13 training programs that Ms Dunstan has delivered to churches,
 - (ii) the support that Ms Dunstan has provided, in conjunction with the Rev Cath Wynn Jones of the PSU, to ministry wives who have been victims of domestic abuse,
 - (iii) Ms Dunstan's exploration of the possibility of establishing a support group for ministry wives addressing areas specifically associated with spiritual abuse,
 - (iv) the training Ms Dunstan has provided for those involved in ESL ministry, and
- (b) encourages churches to make contact with Ms Dunstan as part of their ongoing training and development in understanding of Domestic Abuse and implementation of the Domestic Abuse policy in their churches.

(The Rev Mark Tough 15/10/2018)

18/18 The nature of marriage

Synod, noting that it has been sadly aware for some years of the misuse by some husbands of the biblical teaching on marriage to justify abuse of their wives, requests the Diocesan Doctrine Commission –

- (a) to acknowledge the extreme urgency of addressing prevention of domestic abuse of women within our Diocesan churches; and therefore
- (b) to bring to Synod in 2019, and no later, its conclusions on the referral to it, by Standing Committee, concerning how “the Biblical material on..... the nature of marriage, including the relevance of submission and headship, intersects with domestic abuse, its prevention, and the care of victims in our minds”.

(Mrs Susan Hooke 17/10/2018)

23/18 Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines

Synod, having passed the Sydney Anglican Policy on Responding to Domestic Abuse as a policy of the Synod –

- (a) requests Standing Committee to ensure that the “Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines” be professionally laid out and prepared for publication and distribution to all ministers and parish councils for their attention, along with assistant ministers and lay ministers, with a request that parishioners be made aware of the policy,
- (b) requests that all parishes be encouraged to consider adopting the suggested parish policy statement (from the Resource section) as their own parish policy on domestic abuse, or to revise their existing policy in light of revisions to the Synod’s “Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines”,

- (c) authorises the Standing Committee to make amendments to the Policy unless before such amendment is made, any 3 members of the Standing Committee request in writing that the amendment be referred to the Synod and provided any amendment made by the Standing Committee is –
 - (i) made in consultation with the Professional Standards Unit and the Anglicare Domestic Violence Adviser, and
 - (ii) reported to the next ordinary session of the Synod, and
- (d) requests the Standing Committee to review the “Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines” after four years’ operation following the passing of the Policy by the Synod and provide a report on the outcome of the review to the 1st ordinary session of the 53rd Synod in 2023.

(Canon Sandy Grant 17/10/2018)

50/18 Remarriage of divorced persons

Synod, noting that it is the prerogative of the Archbishop or a Regional Bishop, in accordance with the laws of this Church, whether or not to approve the remarriage of a divorced person, requests the Archbishop and Regional Bishops to consider approving the remarriage of a divorced person, where that person has been abused physically or emotionally by their former spouse.

(Ms Lyn Bannerman 23/10/2018)

35/19 Archbishop's Letter regarding Domestic Abuse and Remarriage

This Synod notes and gives thanks to the Archbishop for his letter regarding Domestic Abuse and Remarriage, dated 29 July 2019, which is his response to Resolution 50/18 on this matter.

(Ms Lyn Bannerman 16/10/2019)

3/21 Domestic Abuse Leave for Clergy

Synod, noting the report “Domestic abuse leave for clergy” –

- (a) agrees in principle that provision be made by parishes to provide leave to members of clergy who are unable to perform their duties because they are experiencing domestic abuse or dealing with the impact of experiencing domestic abuse; and
- (b) requests the Standing Committee to amend its annual Guidelines for the Remuneration of Parish Ministry Staff to provide for domestic abuse leave for clergy on this basis, with the changes effective 1 July 2021.

(Archdeacon Kara Hartley 3/05/2021)

9/22 Addressing domestic violence “Before it Starts”

Synod welcomes the “Before it Starts” program with its goal of preventing domestic abuse and promoting safe and respectful relationships in our churches. Synod thanks Anglicare and Youthworks for their partnership in developing this free, four-week, biblically-engaged, primary prevention program for youth groups. Synod commends it to parishes and encourages ministers and synod representatives to draw it to the attention of their youth leaders so they might consider using in their youth group programming. Synod also notes the willingness of Anglicare and Youthworks to receive feedback, which could help shape future amendments to the program.

(Dean Sandy Grant 12/09/2022)

10/22 Know Domestic Abuse online training

Synod, noting the provision to parishes of the *Know Domestic Abuse* online training course, and further noting that there had only been 161 enrolments in the course during the reporting period covered by the Safe Ministry Board’s report to this session of Synod –

acknowledges the need for all church leaders to understand and regularly reconsider –

- (i) the needs of domestic abuse victims in our churches,

- (ii) the responsibilities leaders have to pastor them (and their abusers), and
- (iii) the resources available to help,

commends the *Know Domestic Abuse* course to the parishes of the Diocese, and urges all Rectors to encourage all pastoral staff and lay leaders in their churches to complete the course if they have not already done so.

(Archdeacon Simon Flinders 12/09/2022)

13/22 National Anglican Family Violence Research project

Synod, noting the reports of the National Anglican Family Violence Research Project (**NAFVP**) tabled at the recent General Synod –

- (i) National Anglican Family Violence Research Report,
 - (ii) NAFVP Prevalence Study Report,
 - (iii) NAFVP Clergy and Lay Leaders Study Report, and
 - (iv) NAFVP Experience Study Report,
- (a) notes the 28 findings of the Research Project,
 - (b) continues to lament the violence which has been suffered by some of our members and continues to repent of the part we have played in allowing an environment where violence went unaddressed,
 - (c) notes the adoption the Ten Commitments for Prevention and Response to Domestic and Family Violence, and the creation of the Families and Cultures Commission by the General Synod as a means to help drive change in the national church, and

refers the material to the Domestic Violence Monitoring Committee, and requests that the Committee bring a report to the first session of the 53rd Synod responding to the matters raised in the Reports and recommendations on strategies proposed by the Ten Commitments, as part of the wider review of our Synod's existing "Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines".

(Dr Karin Sowada 12/09/2022)