

Domestic Violence Response Progress Report

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

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

Key Points

- At its session in 2018, the Synod adopted the *Sydney Anglican Policy on Responding to Domestic Abuse*. Following that session, the Standing Committee appointed a monitoring committee to oversee the implementation of the requests of Synod resolutions, and direction from the Standing Committee, regarding the Diocese's response to Domestic Abuse.
- The "Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines" has been made available online. Funds saved by not printing and posting the guidelines were used for translation of display material for distribution to churches.
- A PSU training module is anticipated to be launched at this ordinary session of Synod.
- Diocesan organisations (including schools) have been asked to consider having short to medium term bursaries available to assist the families of clergy and lay stipendiary workers where separation has occurred due to domestic abuse.

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide a progress report to the Synod regarding the Diocese's response to domestic abuse.

Recommendation

2. Synod receive this report.

Background

3. At its ordinary session in 2018, the Synod passed resolution 23/18 in the following terms –

'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.’
4. At its meeting on 12 November 2018 the Standing Committee noted policies and resolutions passed at the 2018 session of the Synod related to the area of domestic abuse, including 23/18, and appointed a monitoring committee comprising Canon Sandy Grant and Archdeacon Kara Hartley to –
- (a) exercise a watching brief on progress responding to and implementing the requests of these resolutions,
 - (b) provide oversight and guidance implementing the decisions of Standing Committee expressed in the following resolutions relating to domestic violence, and
 - (c) provide a brief report regarding progress in these matters to the Standing Committee meeting in June 2019.

Discussion

5. The monitoring committee members have kept a close watch on matters expressing the Diocesan response to domestic abuse, in particular to do with the implementation of the Policy and the associated resolutions of Synod and Standing Committee. We have met and corresponded with each other and various stakeholders in preparation of this progress report.

The “Responding to Domestic Abuse” Policy

Progress report

6. Canon Grant and the Diocesan Secretary conferred regarding the request in paragraph (a) of resolution 23/18. They agreed that there was no need to spend money on professional layout, nor on printing and postage of the whole document with its policy, guidelines and resources.
7. Rather, the final form approved by Synod has been published in electronic form, and is available both at the ‘Policies and Guidelines’ tab of the SDS website, and also at the diocesan ‘Safe Ministry’ website, under the ‘Domestic and Family Abuse’ tab from the drop down menu for the ‘Info & Resources’ section.
8. This approach ensured limited funds were retained for the translation and visual display material referred to below.
9. The Diocesan Secretary further reports regarding the request in paragraph (b) that parishes were encouraged to consider adopting the policy through the Circular sent to all rectors, wardens and Synod reps following Synod. Under the heading “Actions for parishes and Synod members” was the action –
- ‘Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines – Synod passed the Sydney Anglican Policy on Responding to Domestic Abuse as a policy of the Synod, and encouraged all parishes to consider adopting the suggested parish policy statement (within the resource section) as their own parish policy on domestic abuse, or to revise their existing policy. (See also the description of the policy on p.7 of this circular, and resolution 23/18.)’
10. Regarding the request in paragraph (b), we are unaware how many parishes may have adopted or further revised a policy on domestic abuse in light of the diocesan Policy agreed at the last session of Synod.
11. The monitoring committee expects to recommend in 2020 that Standing Committee request the Diocesan Secretary to organise another short online survey of Rectors, but this time also including

Assistant Ministers and Lay Ministers. This survey would help to determine how much culture on the parish 'frontline' has been developing. It would canvass their awareness of the Diocesan Policy, whether there has been adoption of a parish policy, and whether it has been drawn to parishioners' attention, along with other matters (similar to those canvassed in a previous online survey), regarding the number of cases of domestic abuse that have come to the attention of ministry staff, the display of key contacts and/or flowchart, and the conduct of parish education on domestic abuse by sermon, seminar or other method within the last two years.

12. Regarding the request in paragraph (d) to review the policy after four years, although the Standing Committee review and report on the operation of the "Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines" will take place after four years, the monitoring committee already noted feedback that suggests the Policy and Good Practice Guidelines document could be judiciously 'slimmed down'. For example, some of the statistics in Appendix 3, and Appendix 4, regarding the legal situation in Australia, could arguably be removed, along with Appendix 10, which outlines a timeline of public statements from diocesan leadership in the area, and is largely of historical interest only.

Development of content for churches

13. At its meeting on 12 November 2018, the Standing Committee –
 - (a) requested section 1 of the Policy (as revised by Synod), including the flowchart and table of contacts to be translated into Korean, Arabic and Chinese, in line with paragraph 22 of the 2018 Report regarding Domestic Abuse made to Synod, and
 - (b) requested that the Anglicare Domestic Violence Adviser and the Chaplain of the PSU collaborate in developing content suitable for visual display in churches, to be graphically designed, then published and distributed to each parish in the Diocese in line with paragraph 23 of the 2018 Report regarding Domestic Abuse made to Synod, and
 - (c) noting that these projects will utilise the residue of funds held on the Task Force's behalf by the PSU and the balance of costs will need to be paid by Synod Fund Contingencies in 2018 and 2019, requested the monitoring committee to advise the Standing Committee prior to proceeding if the amount required from Synod Fund contingencies is likely to exceed \$15,000, and
 - (d) authorised up to \$15,000 to be allocated from Synod fund contingencies to cover the balance of the expenses for these two projects, noting that approximately \$11,988 is anticipated to be available in 2018 contingencies, and therefore \$3,012 may be required from 2019 contingencies.

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14. Regarding translation work (1(a)), the Director of the Professional Standards Unit (**PSU**) has advised that the flowchart and table of contacts has been translated into Chinese and is being made available on the Safe Ministry website. Korean and Arabic will take a little longer but we aim for this to be done before Synod.
15. Regarding visual display materials for parishes (2(b), (c) & (d)), the Director of the PSU has advised that the PSU is looking at a few options with this. At this stage they are proposing a printed/laminated poster set for each parish to be delivered at Synod, together with USB stick with posters that can be printed by individual churches, and varying sizes for different situations. This will probably also include smaller, pocket-size cards as well. They will look at developing a pamphlet also, but probably after the online training module is completed. The cost depends on the numbers of printed material required initially for the first run.
16. The design work for the display material is being coordinated by the Anglicare Domestic Violence Adviser and the Chaplain of the PSU and is advancing with care.
17. The monitoring committee notes that the translation work has only been applied to the flowchart and table of contacts, and not to the actual policy text of section 1 of the Policy.
18. At its meeting on 17 June 2019, the Standing Committee reaffirmed its desire that the policy text of Section 1 be translated as previously requested, and directed the monitoring committee to discuss the mechanics of this with the PSU.

PSU Report re. training module

19. At its meeting on 12 November 2018, the Standing Committee requested the PSU to provide a progress or completion report by June 2019 regarding its production of the training module requested previously, under supervision of the Safe Ministry Board, in liaison with Anglicare, in line with paragraphs 24-26 of the 2018 Report regarding Domestic Abuse made to Synod.

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20. The Director of the PSU has advised that the training module is currently on track to be launched at Synod 2019.
21. To date no specific consideration has been given to training in relation to supporting children as indirect victims of domestic abuse (as the PSU were unaware of this suggestion), but the PSU undertakes to give this some thought and work out whether this can be easily incorporated into the existing training proposal.
22. As background, the monitoring committee notes that it submitted the following suggestions to the PSU and the Anglicare DV Adviser, about matters that should be considered for training, whether in the basic training module requested above, or in other contexts. These suggestions arose from feedback received from thoughtful Anglicans involved in ministry within our diocese by members of the Monitoring Committee in the course of our involvement in this area –
- What does it mean to “listen with acceptance” and why do we say, “don’t ask for proof” and “debrief with a professional within 48 hours of a disclosure” (see our flowchart)? How does this fit with any obligations that might exist if some level of church discipline might be required, when there are then some procedural fairness issues?
 - How can we keep helping clergy and church workers understand that domestic abuse is not just the actual physical assault? Rather it can be emotional and spiritual, verbal and psychological, coercive and/or controlling behaviours, including unwanted sexual demands etc.?
 - How can we ensure that experienced clergy and church workers keep being trained in this area, and not just rely on an occasional session every second or third compulsory triennial FIS training?
 - How can we proactively educate young men about what is acceptable behaviour and expectations within marriage?
 - And how do we help men (especially) and women to recognise and address bad habits (e.g. shouting, swearing, ‘aggro’) or controlling tendencies in their intimate relationships, that might be called pre-abusive at the initial level, but which, if left unaddressed, might develop into abuse?
 - Also what does it mean for assessing “risk of serious harm to children” and mandatory reporting, when children are indirect victims of domestic abuse between partners, e.g. they are in a family where it is happened, but are not necessarily present or witnessing it, and/or it’s not necessarily physical, but emotional etc., or just a general controlling kind of environment. We suppose the basic answer is that our people need to realise to “get advice” from the professionals, and consider reporting using MRG or the hotline, although not every example will end up being judged as a “risk of serious harm”.

Progress Updates (a) Anglicare and Schools, (b) New Minister Advice Mechanism

23. At its meeting on 12 November 2018, the Standing Committee –
- (a) requested the Diocesan Secretary to write to Anglicare and the Anglican Schools Corporation, seeking a progress update in how each organisation has responded to relevant recommendations made to them in Synod’s resolution 32/17, namely –
 - (i) 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
 - (ii) that Anglicare give priority for emergency assistance to the families of clergy and lay stipendiary workers where separation has occurred due to domestic abuse, and

- (b) requested the Diocesan Secretary and Registrar to consider a mechanism whereby newly appointed Ministers, Assistant Ministers and Lay Ministers in the Diocese may be made aware of the existence, role and contact details for the Anglicare Domestic Violence Adviser (such notification could also extend to advising the existence of the Policy, Guidelines and Resources and other relevant material and points of contact and advice).

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- 24. At its meeting in December 2018, Standing Committee extended the request referred to in paragraph (a)(i) to other Anglican Schools in the Diocese. The Diocesan Secretary has written to the relevant organisations to convey this request. Anglicare, and the schools that have responded, indicate serious engagement with the issues raised with them and related matters. Some other schools may still be in the process of considering the matter, although they no doubt already have policies in place for families in various kinds of distress.
- 25. In regards to the mechanism in (b) for advising those appointed to new roles as ministers or assistants, a suitable reference to the DV Advisor, and to the policies of Synod, will be circulated to all office holders following parish AGMs each year, as part of their welcome / (re)appointment letter.
- 26. The Diocesan Secretary also advises that the intention is to provide this information on the letter sent from SDS to new rectors introducing services available. SDS is considering sending a similar annual letter to all clergy, in which the information about the DV coordinator could be included. Further work needs to be done identifying an approach to ensuring the information about Anglicare's DV coordinator is helpfully and suitably conveyed.

Screening processes

- 27. At its meeting on 12 November 2018, the Standing Committee –
 - (a) recommended that the Archbishop and the Director of Ministry Training and Development consider –
 - (i) ensuring any spouse of an applicant for candidacy for ordination be interviewed separately, with the interview to include some screening for domestic abuse,
 - (ii) extending the screening process described by the Director for candidates for ordination as a Deacon to apply to all applicants for stipendiary lay ministry positions in the Diocese (including, where relevant, a separate interview of a candidate's spouse), and
 - (b) invited Moore College and other diocesan education and training institutions to consider the merits of applying similar domestic abuse screening processes to applicants for study at their institutions.

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- 28. The Diocesan Secretary has written to the relevant organisations to convey this request.
- 29. The Director of Ministry Training and Development (**MT&D**) has made the following recommendations in response.
 - (a) MT&D recommends the addition of a separate interview of the spouse of an applicant for candidacy for ordination. This is because the 'selection' of Anglican ministers is one of the objects of MT&D and the serious matters associated with domestic abuse must be considered as part of the discernment process for candidates to such an important office.
 - (b) MT&D notes that extending the screening process currently used for candidates for ordination as a Deacon to all applicants for stipendiary lay ministry positions requires the interview process to be centralised. This is a significant philosophical change. This 'move to the centre' would change the nature of the relationship at the parish level for the employment of stipendiary lay ministers. Therefore we do not recommended that MT&D mimic the Deacon's screening process for Stipendiary Lay Ministers.
- 30. The PSU, in consultation with the Archbishop, is responsible for the confidential lifestyle questionnaire that applicants for Lay Authorisation are to complete. Accordingly, at its meeting on 17 June 2019 the Standing Committee –

- (a) Requested the PSU to review the confidential lifestyle questionnaire to consider if there are any additional questions which could be asked to capture any information about issues related to domestic abuse that may be relevant, and
 - (b) Advised MT&D and Moore College's Centre for Ministry Development to familiarise themselves with the PSU's safe ministry modules being developed for ministry staff regarding domestic abuse, and seek to incorporate awareness of that training into any HR modules they offer on selecting and managing staff.
31. In regards to the recommendation in paragraph (b) of the resolution (in paragraph 27), **Moore Theological College** provided information about the use of their policy, and **Youthworks college** continue to reflect on their practices and processes. Both colleges deal with issues related to domestic abuse at a number of places in their programmes, and both indicated a readiness to respond if issues related to domestic abuse are disclosed.

Ongoing Monitoring

32. At its meeting on 12 November 2018, the Standing Committee –
- (a) dissolved the Domestic Violence Response Task Force with effect from 31 December 2018,
 - (b) requested the Diocesan Secretary to notify the Safe Ministry Board of each resolution made at this meeting, as well as providing the accompanying Synod resolutions and the report provided to the recent session of Synod, and
 - (c) asked the Safe Ministry Board to note that following the conclusion of the work of the Domestic Violence Response Task Force, the Standing Committee considers that responsibility for monitoring matters related to the Domestic Abuse Policy in our churches rightly belongs to the Safe Ministry Board in liaison with the PSU and the Anglicare Domestic Violence Adviser.

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33. The Diocesan Secretary has written to the Safe Ministry Board (**SMB**) to convey this request.
34. The Chair of the SMB has confirmed that the Safe Ministry Board has actively noted the view of Standing Committee that the SMB has a monitoring and oversight role with regard to the Responding to Domestic Abuse Policy (**RDA Policy**) in liaison with the PSU and the Anglicare Domestic Violence Advisor.
35. While the SMB recognises that the core work is being undertaken by PSU staff and the Anglicare Domestic Violence Advisor, the SMB is receiving regular updates on progress at their Board meetings. The expectation of the SMB is that PSU staff will continue to provide updates regarding these matters so that the SMB can fulfil the intent of the Standing Committee resolutions passed last year pertaining to the dissolution of the Domestic Violence Response Task Force.

Other Matters

Work of the General Synod Family Violence Working Group

36. Following various resolutions of the 2017 session of General Synod, the General Synod Standing Committee has established a Family Violence Working Group (**FVWG**) to –
- (a) investigate a professionally designed, independent research study into the nature and prevalence of family violence within the Australian Anglican Church population,
 - (b) establish the nature and extent of current Family Violence policies, pastoral care frameworks and training modules across Dioceses,
 - (c) develop a “best practice” model policy and pastoral care framework for responding well to situations involving family violence within our parishes and organisations, and
 - (d) recommend curriculum content and/or guidelines to address unhealthy views about power or the marginalisation of women and other survivors of family violence.

37. Dr Karin Sowada and Canon Sandy Grant from this Diocese were among those appointed to the FVWG. Its overall membership represents something of the diversity of views in the Anglican Church of Australia.
38. The main achievements of the FVWG have been –
- (a) The commissioning of the Anglican Family Safety Study (**AFSS**), with funding from the General Synod, to be conducted by the NCLS organisation (after comparison to proposals from other university-based research bodies). The AFSS will conduct research, using mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative, into the following questions –
 - The nature of experiences of family violence for those with a connection with Anglican churches
 - The nature of attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and practices regarding family violence among Anglican Clergy and church leaders
 - Prevalence of instances of family violence among Australians who identify as Anglican.
 - (b) Encouraging each diocese to appoint a Contact Person in relation to matters to do with family and domestic violence, and collecting (and beginning to collate) policies and other statements and resources from each diocese relevant to the topic.
 - (c) Organising a National Working Conference: Strengthening The Churches Response to Family Safety, in Sydney in March 2019. This was attended by about 40 representatives from across Australia with a majority of dioceses represented, including our own PSU Chaplain and Anglicare Domestic Violence Adviser, alongside Karin Sowada and Sandy Grant. Alongside group work aimed at developing policy and training recommendations, this conference featured papers from –
 - Dr Kristin Aune (Coventry University, UK, on her research: “Church Responses to Domestic Abuse – A case study of Cumbria”)
 - Dr Ruth Powell (NCLS, on the AFSS)
 - Rev Scott Holmes (Our Watch on preventing violence against women).

Domestic Violence Leave

39. At its meeting in May 2019, Standing Committee received a report from the Stipends and Allowances Committee regarding its preparation of Remuneration Guidelines. Among other matters, this report noted that the Stipends and Allowances Committee had agreed to recommend to Standing Committee that it “consider passing an ordinance to establish a model policy for family and domestic violence leave for ordained ministry staff (perhaps along the lines of the *Parental Leave Ordinance 2016*) which either matches or exceeds the minimum standards now applicable to employees.”¹
40. The monitoring committee notes that Lay Ministers and other staff who are employees under the National Employment Standards in the Fair Work Act 2009 are now entitled to 5 days unpaid family and domestic violence leave each year.
41. At its meeting on 17 June 2019, the Standing Committee agreed to appoint a small committee, including some familiar with the work that resulted in the *Parental Leave Ordinance 2016*, to consider the matter of Domestic Violence Leave for clergy in time for Standing Committee to make a recommendation to the first ordinary session of Synod in 2020.

Ministry Spouse Support Fund

42. At its meeting in February 2019, the Standing Committee approved the procedure for allocations from the Ministry Spouse Support Fund (**MSSF**; for spouses who are or have been married to ministry workers and are victims of domestic abuse) to be distributed and requested that the Diocesan Secretary consult with the Archbishop, the Archdeacon for Women’s Ministry and the Director of the PSU regarding an appropriate mechanism for reporting to the Standing Committee annually on the operation of the MSSF.

¹ Although our Policy generally uses the phrase ‘domestic abuse’, when we refer to external organisations or standards, we use their preferred terminology (hence the occasional use of the term “domestic violence”, rather than “domestic abuse”).

43. Having consulted, the Diocesan Secretary noted that any report to Standing Committee needed to preserve the confidentiality of these matters. We also noted that the MSSF funding is per calendar year, which is in line with most of our financial and reporting practices.
44. Accordingly, at its meeting on 15 April 2019, the Standing Committee asked that –
- (a) a report be provided regarding the MSSF to the Standing Committee by June each year (commencing in 2020) detailing the total amount distributed from the MSSF and the number of 'cases' involved in the previous calendar year; along with an indication of the ongoing suitability of the level of funding and any additional commentary felt useful, and
 - (b) a preliminary report be provided to the Standing Committee in July 2019 indicating the initial use of the MSSF in its first six months (for promotion to the Synod).

On behalf of the Standing Committee.

DANIEL GLYNN
Diocesan Secretary

29 August 2019