

## 1. Introduction

EV Church (EV) is seeking to develop mature disciples of Christ in increasing numbers to the glory of God. It is a diverse community which includes many families. In obedience to God's heart for families, EV seeks to promote and strengthen marriages and family life. Regrettably, however, family dysfunction, including domestic abuse, occurs in churches. EV recognises the need to be well-equipped to respond appropriately to instances of domestic abuse that arise in its community. This policy communicates EV's intention to provide the best possible response in matters regarding domestic abuse affecting the church family.

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote the safety and well-being of all who participate in EV Church life.

This policy intends to set a standard of how EV will respond to allegations and incidents of domestic abuse with sensitivity, justice and love.

This policy aims to promote, for victims, an atmosphere of safety, and to encourage their freedom to speak out. It aims to be a clear statement of the church's refusal to tolerate abuse in any form and in any context, particularly in the home, and to provide a means of directing victims to avenues of help and support when faced with domestic abuse.

This policy also states its guidelines for dealing with the perpetrators (alleged or otherwise) of domestic abuse, calling these people to repent, seek help and find healing.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to all EV Staff, MTS trainees, volunteers, Youth leaders, EV Kids Leaders or anyone who acts on behalf of EV, and all those who identify EV as their church. It is to be read in conjunction with [05-000 PO Safe Ministry Policy](#)

## 4. Definitions

### What is domestic abuse?

According to NSW law,<sup>1</sup> domestic abuse is defined in the following ways:

Section 6A(1) states that domestic abuse means any of the following behaviours directed by one person (the first person) against another person (the second person) with whom they have a domestic relationship:

- (a) violent or threatening behaviour,
- (b) behaviour that coerces or controls the second person,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Schedule 2\* of the NSW Crimes Legislation Amendment (Coercive Control) Act 2022 No 65

<sup>2</sup> EV Church understands this to refer to controlling behaviour that goes beyond what would be regarded as an appropriate, loving parental relationship with a child.

(c) behaviour that causes the second person to fear for the person's safety or wellbeing or the safety and wellbeing of others.

Section 6A(2) sets out a non-exhaustive list of behaviours that may constitute domestic abuse, including behaviour that:

- (a) is physically abusive or violent,
- (b) is sexually abusive, coercive or violent,
- (c) is economically or financially abusive,
- (d) is verbally abusive,
- (e) shames, degrades or humiliates,
- (f) intimidates,
- (g) is stalking, or that directly or indirectly harasses a person, or monitors or tracks a person's activities, communications or movements, whether by physically following the person, using technology or in another way,
- (h) damages or destroys property,
- (i) causes death or injury to an animal, or otherwise makes use of an animal to threaten a person,
- (j) prevents the second person from doing any of the following or otherwise isolates the person—
  - making or keeping connections with the person's family, friends or culture,
  - participating in cultural or spiritual ceremonies or practice,
  - expressing the person's cultural identity,
  - deprives a person of liberty.
- (k) deprives the second person of liberty, restricts the second person's liberty or otherwise unreasonably controls or regulates a person's day-to-day activities.

Section 6A(3) states that domestic abuse includes behaviour by the first person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of behaviour mentioned in the above 6A(1).

Section 6A(4) states that domestic abuse can be constituted by either a single act, omission or circumstance; or it can be constituted by a combination of acts, omissions or circumstances over a period of time.

Section 6A(5) states that behaviour mentioned in the above 6A(1) and 6A(2) may constitute domestic abuse even if the behaviour does not constitute a criminal offence.

(\* This Schedule is an amendment to NSW Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 No 80.)

**Relevant Parties:**

**Victim:** anybody who feels at risk of, or has experienced, domestic abuse. This includes alleged or suspected victims.

**Victim Support Person:** a gender appropriate church member with capacity to meet regularly with the victim to support them, and, relate with the pastoral team as appropriate. This role is to be appointed by and function within existing pastoral structures.

**Perpetrator:** a person accused of domestic abuse. This includes alleged or suspected perpetrators.

**Church member/ visitor:** anybody who is attending EV services and/or activities.

**Pastor:** the Senior Pastor and staff who are appointed as pastors at EV.

**Executive Pastor:** currently Andrew Mitchell.

**EV Executive Team:** the Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor and 3 other senior Pastors responsible for Executive management and High Level Pastoral care of EV Church.

**High Level Pastoral Care Team:** The team that is responsible to EV Exec to oversee the coordination of care for church members impacted by domestic abuse and other complex care situations.

**EV Care Team:** EV Church has a Care team within the Membership department. Some members of this team are trained to respond to Family and Domestic Abuse notifications.

**DA Consultant:** an EV staff member who is a contact point for information regarding "best-practice" care, local programs, agencies and resources.

**Care coordinator:** person appointed by HLPC to be responsible for coordinating the care of the abused person.

## 5. Principles (these principles underlie the policy development)

With regards to domestic abuse, EV acknowledges that:

- A. All people, including husbands, wives and children in any given family, have inherent and equal dignity and worth, and should be treated as such.
- B. A culture of healthy relationships of mutual responsibility and respect in marriages, families, dating relationships and churches, should be promoted and valued.
- C. All people should feel safe from abuse in the home and the church.
- D. Standards of behaviour with respect to people's convictions regarding marriage, gender roles, forgiveness and reconciliation, need to be tested against Jesus Christ's standards, and so prevent these things being distorted or used to justify domestic abuse.
- E. All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and should not be tolerated.
- F. Any concerns about domestic abuse should be responded to clearly, consistently and confidentially.
- G. Care of victims of domestic abuse should be the priority when considering the parties involved, while not neglecting appropriate pastoral engagement with the perpetrator.
- H. Victims of domestic abuse, and their family members, may sustain long-term harm to their physical, mental or emotional wellbeing, and should be cared for long-term if required.
- I. Children in affected families will carry the impacts of domestic abuse into adulthood in various ways, and should be cared for appropriately.
- J. Members of staff may be the subject of abuse allegations. We commit to treating these allegations with the same level of concern and diligence and our policy accounts for this.

## 6. Policy Statement

- A. EV will promote healthy marriages and families within its communal life, through such things as preaching, Bible studies, prayers and church publications, as well as in marriage preparation, youth groups and ministry training activities. (eg see Appendix A- Marriage Preparation: Recommended good practice; and Appendix B - The Use and Misuse of Scripture with regard to Domestic Abuse)

- B. EV will provide a healthy and safe environment for all those who engage in EV community life, declaring that every person who is part of EV has the right to expect to live in an environment that is free of domestic abuse.
- C. EV will uphold the standards of conduct required of disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, that domestic abuse is wrong and that the Bible should never be used to justify or excuse any form of abuse. EV will maintain the requirement that perpetrators of domestic abuse must cease and seek to change their patterns of behaviour through repentance, help and healing.
- D. EV will not tolerate, overlook, justify or conceal any instance of domestic abuse within the families who are part of the EV community; EV will maintain confidentiality for the sake of the victim, but with due regard to the law and reporting obligations.
- E. EV will support victims of domestic abuse to access official and legal avenues of care, whilst providing ongoing care and support from within the EV community.
- F. EV will seek, as far as possible, to provide appropriate engagement with the perpetrators of domestic abuse, towards repentance, health and healing, conscious of the fact that engagement with the perpetrators has the potential to increase risk of harm to victims and will be limited by the priority towards the victims.
- G. EV will implement its Domestic Abuse Response procedures (see following) when it becomes aware of domestic abuse within the church community.
- H. EV will publish this Domestic Abuse Protection Policy on its website along with details for obtaining professional assistance for domestic abuse.
- I. EV pastoral staff will be trained in recognising and responding to domestic abuse. Where appropriate, training will be offered to others in the church community.
- J. EV will seek to obtain input from individuals with relevant current professional knowledge to inform, develop and review practice.

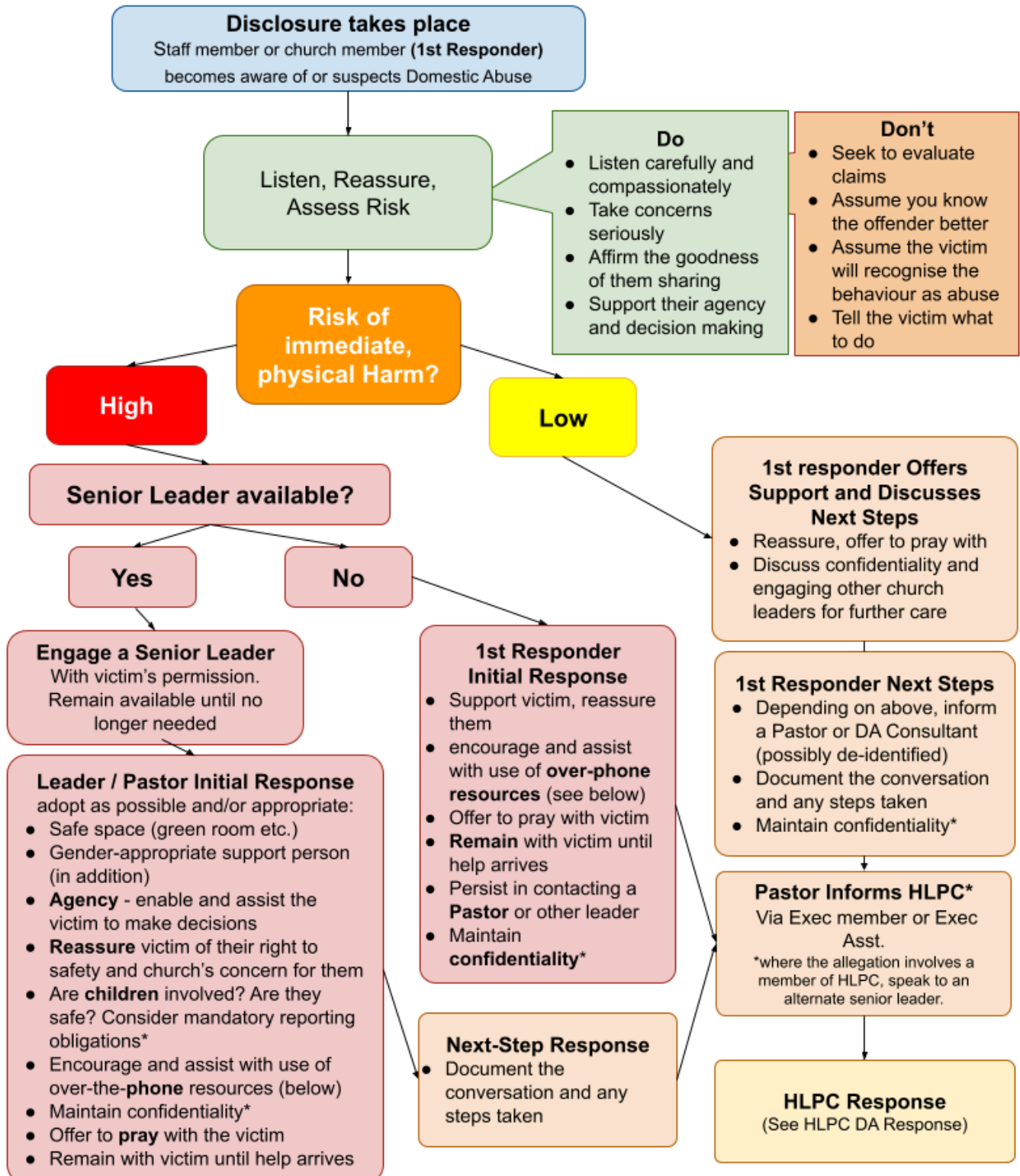
## **7. Procedures**

The following Domestic Abuse Response flowcharts outline the procedures to be followed when instances of domestic abuse come to the attention of members or leaders within the church family.

*Any explanatory notes to the procedures will be added if needed, as the flowcharts are tested.*

# Domestic Abuse Response Summary

updated: 3/4/25



**\*Mandatory Reporting**  
This relates to the welfare of children and legal obligations. Use the Mandatory Reporting Guide to evaluate risk level and need to report [www.reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg](http://www.reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg)

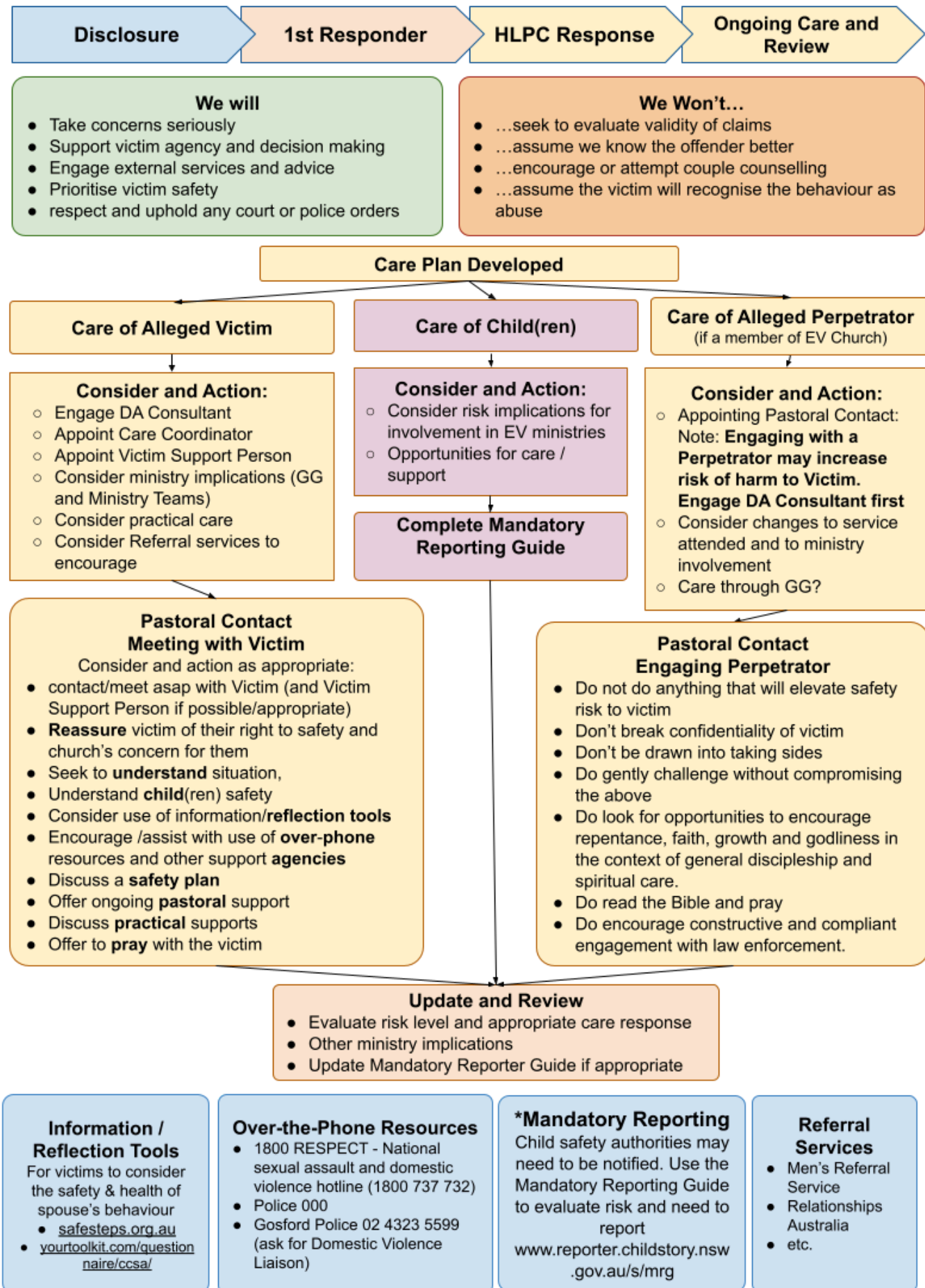
**Information / Reflection Tools**  
resources for a victim to reflect on the health of their relationship  
[safesteps.org.au](http://safesteps.org.au) - [yourtoolkit.com/questionnaire/ccsa/](http://yourtoolkit.com/questionnaire/ccsa/)

**Over-the-Phone Resources**

- 1800 RESPECT - National sexual assault and domestic violence hotline (1800 737 732)
- Police 000
- Gosford Police 02 4323 5599 (ask for Domestic Violence Liaison)

# HLPC Domestic Abuse Response

updated: 3/4/25



## 8. Responsibilities

- The Executive Pastor is responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- The Executive Pastor is responsible for ensuring this policy is publicised throughout EV.
- The Executive Pastor is responsible for ensuring the pastoral staff, and others where appropriate, are trained in domestic abuse responses.
- The Executive Pastor is responsible for ensuring that this policy is reviewed every 3 years and then approved by the Church Council.
- This policy's implementation will particularly impact
  - the Membership department in the care teams and marriage preparation team
  - the Maturity department as complex pastoral concerns are escalated from growth groups through CLs and network leaders.

## 9. Associated Documents, References and Acknowledgments

Family Violence - A National Legal Response (ALRC 114 Summary) Australian Government  
Australian Law Reform Commission 2010

<https://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/family-violence-national-legal-response-alrc-114-summary>

Family Law Legislation Amendment (Family Violence And Other Measures) Act 2011 (No. 189, 2011) - Schedule 1

[http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/num\\_act/fllavaoma2011613/sch1.html](http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/num_act/fllavaoma2011613/sch1.html)

Australian Law Reform Commission 2010: Family Violence: Improving Legal Frameworks

<https://www.alrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/pdfs/publications/Collated%20summary%20paper.pdf>

Church Cares: Becoming a Church that cares well for the abused.

<https://churchcares.com/>

Anglican Diocese of Sydney: Responding to Domestic Abuse: Policy and Good Practice Guidelines

<https://safeministry.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Responding-to-Domestic-Abuse-Policy-Guidelines-and-Resources.pdf>

NSW Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 No 80

<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/pdf/asmade/act-2007-80>

NSW Crimes Legislation Amendment (Coercive Control) Act 2022 No 65

<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/pdf/asmade/act-2022-65>

## 10. Appendices

### Appendix A Marriage Preparation: Recommended Good Practice

Marriage preparation offers an opportunity to challenge inappropriate behaviour and assumptions about domination, control or abuse, while making it clear that some degree of conflict within an intimate relationship is natural and healthy, if dealt with appropriately.

The principles of understanding humanity (female and male) as made in God's image and of equal worth; of equality amongst people and within relationships; and of not condoning any form of abuse, should underpin any marriage preparation offered by the Church.

Care must be taken if the biblical themes of a wife's submission or a husband's role as 'head' are to be expressed in the marriage vows or other parts of the marriage service, or in marriage preparation more generally. Please spell out what such ideas do not and must not involve to avoid any misunderstanding or twisting of Scripture.

For example, any wife's submission must only ever be voluntary. It ought not to involve submitting to disobedience to God or to illegal activity. No wife is spiritually obligated to submit to domestic abuse from her husband.

Likewise husbands are never told to assert authority over their wife. In particular, they are never told to make their wife submit. Any manipulation or hint of coercion of her towards such ends is sin.

Given the high incidence of domestic abuse within marriage, we recommend that clergy and lay people who offer marriage and wedding preparation should have engaged in some training from suitably qualified professionals or programs on issues of domestic abuse. It is important that there is a clear understanding amongst those who offer marriage preparation that domestic abuse is always unacceptable and that domestic abuse breaks the sanctity of marriage.

The subjects regularly dealt with when preparing couples for marriage, e.g. communication, conflict and in particular "How do you deal with your anger?" offer an opportunity for couples to discuss together how their parents dealt with anger, rows and conflict, or how the couple might have dealt with these in previous relationships. Sometimes those who have experienced domestic abuse as children have a very idealised view of marriage.

It is possible that those working with couples hoping to marry may become aware or suspect that abuse is taking place or may take place between the partners. This is always a difficult area to deal with and illustrates the need for training for people involved in this work, but one or more of the following ideas might help in such a situation.

The facilitator might include a statement at the beginning of the 'course' or conversation and again before dealing with a subject such as 'marital conflict' or anger. The following, which may need amending depending on the circumstances, is an example of a form of words that might be appropriate:

*"When we think about relationships in general and our own in particular, there is always a chance that issues may be raised that touch us in a way that leaves us feeling disturbed, uncomfortable or anxious. If this happens you may wish to speak to one of us today more privately or to seek help from a counsellor or other helping organisation."*

If a domestic abuse issue is raised directly or indirectly by one of the couple, the facilitator should not pursue it in the presence of the other: this could be highly dangerous. They may need to find a way to give the person a chance to say more in private, with the object of encouraging them to get one-to-one help from a competent person or organisation.



## Appendix B

### The Use and Misuse of Scripture with regard to Domestic Abuse

(Adapted from a Sydney Anglican Doctrine Commission Report, 2018<sup>3</sup>)

The Bible is God's good, life-giving word. It condemns the misuse of power and rejects all abuse, whether physical, verbal, or otherwise (Psalm 7; Galatians 5:19-26; 2 Timothy 3:2-3). Yet scripture also warns that people will distort God's word for their own advantage (2 Peter 3:16). The following passages are examples of ways that God's word may be misused to enable or perpetuate abuse.

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 an appropriate step to be taken and should never be discouraged (Proverbs 27:12; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

#### Wife as Helper - Genesis 2:18,

*The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone.  
I will make a helper who is suitable for him."*

##### **Distorted meaning: woman serves man**

A "helper" is a servant. God made the woman to be the servant of the man. The woman has less importance and dignity than the man.

##### **Correct meaning: man and women are equal**

The woman is not of less value or dignity than the man. The word "helper" is often used in the Bible to describe God. He is Israel's "Helper" when he comes to the rescue (e.g. Deuteronomy 33:26; Psalm 22:19; Psalm 121:1-2). The word "suitable" means that the man and woman are created with differences that complement one another. They both need each other. In Genesis 1:26-28 they are both given the status of God's image bearers.

#### Submitting - Ephesians 5:22-23

*Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.  
23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church,  
his body, of which he is the Savior.*

##### **Distorted Meaning**

A wife must do whatever her husband says, even if what he asks her to do is wrong, or if what he is doing is wrong. She must not object or seek help from outside her marriage. Man is head over the woman just as Christ is head over his church therefore she must submit to him as though he were God. He is free to do what he wants as Christ is.

##### **Correct Meaning:**

A wife submits of her own free will. The Bible never calls husbands to force their wives to submit. A man should neither force submission or punish his wife for not submitting. A wife is to obey Jesus ahead of her husband. Therefore, if her husband calls her to sin or go against her conscience, she is to obey Jesus rather than her husband. A husband is not free to do whatever he likes. He is to submit to Jesus.

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<sup>3</sup> *The Use and Misuse of Scripture with Regard to Domestic Violence*  
[https://www.sds.asn.au/sites/default/files/DocComm.DomesticAbuse.Misuse%20of%20Scripture.September2018.pdf?doc\\_id=NTcwODc=](https://www.sds.asn.au/sites/default/files/DocComm.DomesticAbuse.Misuse%20of%20Scripture.September2018.pdf?doc_id=NTcwODc=)

His leadership is to be modelled on Christ's. Christ came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life for others (Mark 10:45), he gave himself up for his bride, the church (Ephesians 5:25).

## Enduring Abuse - 1 Peter 2-3

*2:18 Slaves, in reverent fear of God, submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. 19 For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God...*

*3:1 Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, ... 5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, 6 like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.*

### Distorted Meaning

A woman should endure a husband's abuse, just like slaves were called to endure mistreatment. This way, she may win over her husband to faith in Christ. A wife should be like Jesus who suffered quietly (2 Peter 2:21) and so quietly endure abuse and suffering.

### Correct Meaning

1 Peter 3 continues the argument of 1 Peter 2:17 "Show proper respect to everyone". Out of respect, slaves should submit to their masters (2:18). Out of respect, wives should submit to their husbands (3:1). Out of respect, husbands should be considerate of their wives (3:7). "In the same way" refers to "proper respect", but what is "proper" in each case is different depending on the relationship.

Peter does not tell wives to suffer beatings. Wives are not slaves. Even the laws of the Romans did not permit wives to be beaten. The hardship the wife must endure in 1 Peter 3 is the hardship of being married to an unbelieving husband, not to an abusive husband. The passage does not teach wives to submit to domestic abuse.

## Sexual Obligation - 1 Corinthians 7:3-5

*3 The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. 5 Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

### Distorted Meaning

A wife must have sex with her husband whenever he wants. It is wrong for her to say no to sex. Her body belongs to him, not to her. If she does not meet his needs, he will be drawn into sin and she will be responsible.

### Correct Meaning

Sex is a good gift which a husband and wife should share with one another. But both are given authority over the other's body. Therefore, the husband's body does not belong to him so that he can do whatever he wants to his wife's body. His body belongs to her. She has a say in what he does with his body. This verse guards against selfish demands about sex. It calls for mutual concern. Therefore it is wrong for one spouse to pressure, demand or force the other to have sex.

## Forgiveness - Matthew 6:15

*15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

### **Distorted Meaning**

A wife should forgive her husband whenever he sins, even if he is abusive. If she doesn't do this, she won't be forgiven by God. Forgiveness means a fresh start every time sin happens.

### **Correct Meaning**

This passage does not say everything that the Bible teaches about forgiveness. Christians are called to forgive as we have been forgiven. God forgives us when we genuinely repent and turn from sin. Therefore, when an abuser genuinely repents and pursues growth and change, we should forgive them. However, domestic abuse often occurs in a pattern or cycle. In this cycle, abuse will occur, the partner will often then apologise, he may even show kindness, but then soon continue to be abusive again. This is not repentance. To forgive and continue without genuine repentance makes light of sin and is dangerous for the spouse. Repentance and forgiveness in the case of abuse will often be slow and gradual and the safety of the abused person is to be prioritised.

## Multiple Witnesses Required - Deuteronomy 19:15

*A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.*

### **Distorted Meaning:**

Unless multiple people have seen the abuse, an accusation shouldn't be taken seriously. The victim shouldn't be believed.

### **Correct Meaning**

This is the normal standard for crimes being punished under the Law of Moses. Yet Moses also instructed punishments for some crimes where he expected there were no witnesses. In Deuteronomy 22:25-27, a sexual crime with no witnesses occurs and the death penalty is to be applied for the man who commits it. It is normal for domestic abuse to be hidden. Therefore we would not expect there to be witnesses. An abused person can be believed without other witnesses.

## God Hates Divorce - Malachi 2:16<sup>4</sup>

*"The man who hates and divorces his wife," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "does violence to the one he should protect," says the LORD Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful.*

Note: it is only older style translations that include the phrase "I hate divorce". Eg. NASB

*16 "For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with violence," says the Lord of armies. "So be careful about your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously." (NASB)*

### **Incorrect Meaning:**

Because God hates divorce, a husband or wife must not leave a marriage under any circumstances. A woman must never leave an abusive relationship.

### **Correct Meaning**

In its context, this passage addresses Israelite men who were leaving their wives. God stood opposed to this behaviour as it constituted mistreatment of women and represented unfaithfulness to him. This is not all the Bible has to say about divorce though. While God's vision for marriage is of a permanent, lifelong

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<sup>4</sup> This passage is not addressed in the 2018 Sydney Anglican Doctrinal Commission Report

union, the Bible acknowledges that divorce will, at times, be a necessary and appropriate course of action (Matthew 19:8-9, 1 Corinthians 7:15, Exodus 21:10-11). Older translations of Malachi 2:16 include the phrase "I hate divorce", yet they also identify "violence" and "treachery" as behaviour that God hates. The modern translations (which are more accurate) also indicate that a husband has a duty to protect his wife from harm. Christian interpreters have disagreed on whether abuse is grounds for someone to leave a marriage. But to separate for a time, for the sake of safety, is widely regarded as a good and necessary course of action to avoid harm to victims and to not enable sinful behaviour.