

Policy for Recognising and Responding to Domestic Abuse

This Policy involves descriptions and discussion of the experiences and impacts of domestic abuse. Some victims might find its content unsettling.

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1. INTENT OF DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

Domestic abuse occurs regularly in all parts of our society, including in church communities such as St Matthews. Though it is often hard to see, is a violation of Scripture, of human rights and can be a crime. All forms are wrong and must stop.

There are various terms used to describe abusive relationships, and overlapping definitions. To avoid excluding those in need of our empathy, support and services, this Policy responds broadly to abusive behaviours

- that might include one of psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial, emotional or spiritual, or social abuse or occur in combination;
- between people over 16 years who are or were intimate partners or spouses;
- which can involve children witnessing or hearing the abuse thereby seriously indirectly impacting them. Our Child Protection Policy deals with instances of the direct abuse of children; and
- **that by themselves or as a pattern have at their heart or goal the assertion of power over and control of another.**

This Policy seeks to help the parishioners and staff of St Matthews Manly *recognise and respond* appropriately to domestic abuse in two broad situations:

- where abuse is directly experienced by themselves or where someone else who is directly experiencing it has disclosed the abuse to them
- where, as bystanders, parishioners or staff, there is a reasonable basis for concern that domestic abuse is probably happening to someone in our community.

The *safety and empowerment* of the victim, and any children involved, is paramount in either case.

Most reported victims of domestic abuse are women, although significant numbers of men are also subjected to domestic abuse. It is important to recognise however that different dynamics are at play that mean that domestic abuse is not gender neutral. Significant differences can include¹:

- most men experience abuse at the hands of other men rather than in domestic relationships from female partners;
- women's physical violence towards intimate male partners is largely in self-defense, in the context of his abuse of her. It is largely reactive, and self-protective;
- women are far more likely than men to be subjected to frequent, prolonged, and extreme violence, to sustain injuries, to fear for their lives, and to be sexually assaulted;
- violence by women against men is not as prolonged and nor is it as extreme, men are far less likely to be injured, and they are less likely to fear for their own safety; and
- men subjected to domestic abuse by women rarely experience post-separation violence and have more financial and social independence.

Because of these dynamics, the way we respond may differ though our intent does not. All victims need to be believed whether male or female, and need skilled support to restore safety and heal. Perpetrators need professional support to change.

This Policy is supplemented by the appended response flowcharts and resource lists to guide safe and appropriate responses. Materials published by other champions in this area (notably Common Grace's SAFER; Restored Relationships; the Anglican churches, the Baptists churches and other churches) have been gratefully received, drawn from and are here acknowledged, particularly the policy recommended by Synod.

2. ST MATTHEWS COMMITMENT

St Matthews pastoral staff and leadership is committed to fostering a safe community for all that:

- Recognises equality amongst people and defends the vulnerable
- Promotes a culture of healthy relationships of mutual love, service, respect and responsibility in marriage, families and congregations
- Strives to ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse. More specifically, **everyone has the right to feel safe all the time**
- Strives to follow best practice in responding to and helping protect those experiencing domestic abuse
- Refuses to condone any form of violence, abuse or neglect
- Enables concerns to be raised and responded to clearly and consistently
- Empowers all people to raise difficult issues and be confident that they can come and speak about these matters confidentially

¹ Flood, Michael (2006) The Debate Over Men's Versus Women's Family Violence. AIJA (Australian Institute of Judicial Administration) Family Violence Conference, Adelaide, 23-24 February and references cited therein

- Enquires when safe and appropriate as to whether domestic abuse is involved in relationships
- Has a staff team which is well trained to recognise and respond appropriately to domestic abuse and refer victims to expert services.

We uphold Scripture and its abhorrence of abuse in our words and public statements by²:

- Clearly promoting an awareness of what domestic abuse is and teaching that:
 - it is unequivocally wrong
 - it significantly directly harms the victims, as well as harming children who witness or hear the abuse; and that
 - there is never any justification for abuse in Scripture or otherwise. The Bible cannot be used to demand a spouse or person to tolerate or submit to domestic abuse. Doctrines of headship and submission do not give a man authority or power over a woman in any sense that infringes her right to live without fear or coercion as a free and equal person, endowed with gifts and worthy of safety and respect.
- Upholding *Faithfulness in Service* as our National Code of Conduct for clergy and church workers, specifically its affirmations that abuse of power is at the heart of many relationship problems in the Church and in the community.
- Raising awareness of our Domestic Abuse Policy within our community
- Raising awareness within our community of domestic abuse/violence agencies, support services, resources and expertise and other support St Matthew's Pastoral Staff can provide or facilitate.
- Promoting awareness within our community of what healthy and unhealthy relationships might look like, for example when preaching on related topics, in St Matthew's marriage preparation of couples, and by promoting other relevant resources.

3. RECOGNISING DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse occurs within a spectrum of behaviours and can be difficult to recognise. Conflict between two adults in an equal relationship is normal and not necessarily abusive. **There is a difference between a bad marriage / relationship that needs a couple to seek counselling for and a marriage / relationship that is marked by abuse.** From time to time, we all have arguments and disagreements with our spouses or partners and family members, or do hurtful things that we regret but are not inherently abusive. An isolated "abusive" event can harm such relationships and can warrant a range of interventions from support to repair the relationship and to ensure it is not repeated, to calling for immediate emergency services. This policy can respond to one off instances, as well as patterns of behaviour as described above which have **at their heart or as a goal the assertion of power over and control of another**. It has been said that whilst the tactics may vary, the **creation and use of fear and intimidation by words and conduct are the key elements** within this dynamic. It inherently and inevitably *disempowers* another and is the opposite of love.

² See also Appendix 3 - 10 Biblical Thoughts on Domestic Abuse.

What domestic abuse might look or feel like³:

- **Controlling behaviour** designed to make a partner subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour. Controls how the other spends their money including withholding money and/or giving them an unreasonable allowance, or one that cannot be spent on anything for the victim. Controls their access to medicine and medical assistance. Says things like "if I can't have you, no one can" or "no one else would want you".
- **Coercive & Physical behaviour** includes assault on the person or body, hitting, kicking, biting, pushing, shoving etc., use of weapons (including objects), assault of children, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. Locking the victim out of the house, sleep and food deprivation. Sadly, this abuse is overwhelmingly male against female and is not gender neutral.
- **Destructive criticism and verbal abuse:** shouting; mocking; accusing; name calling; verbally threatening, violent outbursts, blaming the victim repeatedly. Humiliates the other or insults them in front of others.
- **Male power abuse:** He thinks he is entitled to more: decisions, money and rights. He acts like the master of the house and treats other family members like servants. He makes all the big decisions and demands she complies.
- **Pressure tactics:** sulking; threatening to withhold money, disconnecting the phone and internet, taking away or destroying their partner's mobile, tablet or laptop, taking the car away, taking the children away; threatening to report the partner to the police, social services or the mental health team unless their demands are complied with; threatening or attempting self-harm and suicide; withholding or pressuring the partner to use drugs or other substances; lying to their partner's friends and family about their partner; telling their partner that they have no choice in any decisions including financial or spiritual. Threatens to harm themselves when upset with the other.
- **Sexual abuse:** any form of pressured/unwanted sex or sexual degradation, causing pain during sex, coercive sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease, making the victim perform sexual acts unwillingly and criticising or using degrading insults. Withholds affection and gives silent treatment as a way of getting what they want, or to cause fear.
- **Disrespect:** persistently putting their partner down in front of other people and humiliating them; not listening or responding when the partner is talking; interrupting their telephone calls; taking money from the partner's purse or wallet without asking. Constantly tells the other that they are crazy or mentally unwell. Dismisses the other's feelings, opinions and reality by convincing them that they imagined it.
- **Breaking trust:** lying or withholding information from their partner; being jealous; having other relationships; breaking promises and shared agreements.
- **Isolation:** monitoring or blocking their partner's phone calls, e-mails and social media accounts, telling their partner where they can and cannot go; preventing them from seeing friends and relatives; shutting them in the house.

³ Restored's <http://www.restoredrelationships.org> and Restored's Ending Domestic Abuse: A Pack for Churches at https://restored.contentfiles.net/media/resources/files/Pack_for_Churches_2016_CwIOjRQ.pdf and Common Grace's SAFER resources at <https://www.saferresource.org.au>.

- **Harassment:** following or checking up on their partner; not allowing their partner any privacy (for example, opening their mail, going through their laptop, tablet or mobile), repeatedly checking to see who has phoned them; embarrassing their partner in public; accompanying them everywhere they go, repeated monitoring of their whereabouts including their online activities and phones. Accusing them repeatedly of unfaithful behaviour and other associated jealous behaviours.
- **Threats:** making angry gestures; using physical size to intimidate; shouting their partner down; destroying the partner's possessions; breaking things; punching walls; wielding a knife or a gun; threatening to kill or harm their partner and/or the children; threatening to kill or harm family pets; threats of suicide. Blames the other for their own behaviours (e.g. their violent outbursts).

In and of themselves - one of these may not necessarily constitute abuse but rather very poor relating. Yet some, even if committed just once, are abusive (i.e. physical violence). What categorises abusive relationships is that they are marked by patterns of behaviour that are about exercising power and control over the other in a range of possible ways.

It is important to note that domestic abuse occurs in all parts of society. Perpetrators may appear to be pillars of the community and are often skilled at maintaining a very respectable external persona which disguises their controlling and abusive behaviours. However often there are some signs evident.

Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children - It is important to recognise that children who witness abuse between adult partners are likewise traumatised and can, like adult victims, suffer long term psychological, physical, emotional and relational problems. Allowing a child to witness or hear abusive behaviour between adults is a form of child abuse by the perpetrator and can be a crime.

As SAFER acknowledges, research shows that witnessing family violence is as harmful as experiencing it directly. Whilst parents may believe that they have shielded their children from spousal violence, research shows that children see or hear some 40% to 80% of it. For a more detailed account of how severely witnessing family violence impacts children, please see https://www.saferresource.org.au/children_who_witness_domestic_violence.

Domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of child abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour.

4. RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse requires a serious, safe and practical response. St Matthew's Pastoral Staff will support victims and supporters of victims alike. More specifically, we recommend the following response to domestic abuse:

(a) when a victim has directly shared a concern of abuse

If someone comes for help (either directly or through a supporter),

- **Believe them**⁴
- **Be compassionate** - recognise the likelihood of feelings of fear and shame

⁴ See also Appendix 4—Additional Commentary on the Importance of Believing a Victim.

- **Prioritise their safety**
 - if they are in immediate danger or you witness violence, call 000 immediately
- **Seek advice from the St Matthews pastoral staff** (on a no names basis if permission to discuss has not been provided). The team are trained to support you and other community members on how to provide appropriate support in these sensitive situations.
- **Listen with care and confidentiality**
 - If you cannot gain permission to escalate or support further, you cannot take any further action as confidentiality must be respected (subject to specific instances relating to mandatory reporting and emergencies).
- **Support the victim regarding their safety**
 - find out what they are already doing to keep safe
 - assess the current risk for them and any children. Then help them get support to develop a plan to keep safe if the situation escalates
 - be aware that any intervention may put the victim, their family, you or your colleagues in danger
 - refer https://www.saferresource.org.au/safety_first
- **Empower the victim** by allowing them to lead and direct the response at their own pace unless required by law to escalate or report to external agencies.
 - Just because the victim may have confided in you, this does not mean they are yet ready for the next step
 - Be guided by what the victim wants, not by what you think they need or what you think is right.
- **Offer informed support and care**
 - in the ways provided in this Policy and the flowcharts appended
 - empower the victim – this can be in many ways, by knowing they can stay in contact, by you not taking over (and further dis-empowering)
 - support the victims to get help, by consultation or referral, from those with appropriate specialist expertise
 - coordinate their care – to ensure appropriate pastoral care as well as relevant (and separate) referrals to experts relevant for both victims and alleged or known perpetrator
- **Consider practical ways you can further support them**
 - Talk with the Pastoral Staff about how those affected by abuse can access appropriately trained pastoral and practical support, potentially including financial, accommodation and clothing support
 - St Matthews understands this may well be a long journey and has avenues to be able to confidentially provide support over the longer term including some financial assistance through the GRACE GROUP.⁵
- **Not act as judge or a mediator** between couples nor suggest couples counselling
- **Never pressure any victim** to forgive, submit to, or restore a relationship with a perpetrator
 - We understand that any reconciliation comes with conditions, principally upon genuine repentance and reformation of the offender demonstrated over time, and also upon the willing grace of the victim

⁵ The GRACE GROUP has been set up to provide financial resources to church members in need on an anonymous basis for short term relief. Contact the Senior Minister or Pastoral Care Minister for details.

- **Don't overpromise** – you are not an expert and cannot “rescue” the victim. Domestic abuse is a complex issue owned by the community. St Matthews pastoral staff can help you rally specialist community resources to provide support including professional counsellors to contact.
- **Take notes of conversations** and keep them confidential. The victim may need these at a later date.
- Refer www.saferresource.org.au/dealing_with_disclosures_of_abuse

The flowchart attached as Appendix 1 summarises the action we recommend be taken by anyone becoming aware of a domestic abuse situation.

(b) when concerned there is abuse occurring (*often as abusive behaviours or patterns of behaviour in others are identified*)

- **Seek advice from the St Matthews pastoral staff on a no names basis** where no direct disclosure has been made, but there are reasonable grounds to suspect or be concerned that domestic abuse is occurring. The team are trained to support you and other community members on how to provide appropriate support in these sensitive situations.
- **Stay in touch** with the individual so they are supported and may choose to raise any issues with you
- **Ask after them** – Most victims want you to ask how they are doing. Your offer of help could be the first step in enabling them to seek help. For example:
 - ‘How are things at home?’
 - ‘I noticed (*e.g. your partner speaking disrespectfully to you before*), how are things going at home?’
 - ‘I noticed (*e.g. your partner was short tempered with you and the kids the other day*), would you like to talk about it?’
 - if it becomes appropriate, “Is anyone hurting you?” or “Do you ever feel afraid?”.
- **Take time to listen** - Take plenty of time to listen and believe what they say and don't judge. If they sense disbelief they may be discouraged from speaking again.
- **Choose the place wisely** - If it is at all possible, speak with the victim in a safe, private place where you will not be interrupted, or arrange to talk again, keeping in mind that someone in distress may start talking anywhere.

(c) more detailed response considerations

- When you haven't personally experienced abuse, it is easy to listen with an attitude of assessing whether what is being reported is really abuse. *‘Would I find that abusive? Doesn't everyone argue sometimes?’* However, **when a person has repeatedly been victimised and feels powerless, our response always needs to be to offer support, to listen, not judge, and give the victim the respect of being believed.**
- **Those faced with the news or suspicions of domestic abuse often feel ill-equipped.** Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between other types of marital dysfunction and domestic abuse, or it may be that concerns about abuse only emerge gradually. Church members and pastoral staff should acknowledge their professional limitations and should consult experienced domestic violence services for advice. St Matthews pastoral

staff has a strong network of support resources to which victims can be referred, depending on their needs.

- **The safety of victims and children is paramount. All actions should carefully consider the risk to their safety (and your own).** Making telephone calls, possessing information about support services for domestic abuse, the use of texts and emails, and accessing relevant websites all create potential risks for those experiencing abuse. Consider how you provide the victim with information and support, so risks of abuse are not increased.
- **Don't rush.** Unless the victim (or children) is in immediate danger, it is not necessary to act hastily. As mentioned above, St Matthews pastoral staff have a strong network of expert support resources to which victims can be referred, so a measured safe response can be developed with appropriate support for as long as is needed.
- **Risk of significant escalation of abuse.** Be aware that any intervention may put the victim, their family, you or your colleagues in danger, as this may escalate the level of abuse. Therefore, it is important to seek the help of an experienced professional if the victim is considering an intervention, exit or public exposure, unless there is risk of immediate danger, in which case ring the Police on 000. The professional is likely to support and empower the victim and is likely to also help them develop a Safety Plan which is a list of actions that can be taken by the victim, or trusted supporters to help secure the victim's safety. Refer <http://www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/get-help/staying-safe>
- **The limits of confidentiality** – make it clear that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, depending on the nature of what is disclosed. It is important to confirm that confidentiality is essential. As a general principle, permission must be granted by the victim before any information is shared UNLESS there is significant risk of harm and / or victim is child or unless mandatory reporting or otherwise required by law.
 - Further, **if the abuse involves ministry staff, the issue must be escalated to the Wardens and reported to the Professional Standards Unit.** The matter cannot be managed in-house.
 - We recommend you seek a victim's consent in writing if possible prior to any sharing of information, referrals, etc. unless there is a serious risk of imminent harm. This protects both them and you, and may provide evidence which may be required later as to when abuse was occurring.

(d) support of the perpetrator

Keeping victims safe in churches means holding perpetrators accountable. It also means not ignoring their abuse, excusing it, minimising it, covering it up or enabling the behaviour to continue. Therefore, perpetrators need our support too, and often professional help. Assuming it is agreed to, St Matthews pastoral staff will ensure there is a different person (and tertiary services) supporting the perpetrator, than those supporting the victim. This is essential to ensure the perpetrator does not feel "ganged up on", has someone's ear, is exercised grace, and has the right to the presumption of innocence.

- Remember there are often deeper causes behind the abuse, and so it is important not to merely refer a perpetrator to (say) anger management support as though that will suddenly “solve” everything. Only those with professional training should discuss such issues and provide support in this area
- In some circumstances, and subject to the safety of the victim, St Matthews pastoral staff may ask a perpetrator to attend another service / church. In the case of a male perpetrator, specific men’s behaviour programs accredited by the Attorney General’s Department may also be recommended. (Female programs are not yet available)
- Regardless of the level of remorse, do NOT pursue couples’ counselling with them and their partner if you are aware of abuse in their relationship.
- Do not meet with them alone and in private. Meet in a public place and with several others around.
- Refer www.saferresource.org.au/how_churches_can_support_perpetrators

5. ST MATTHEWS DOMESTIC ABUSE ACTION FRAMEWORK

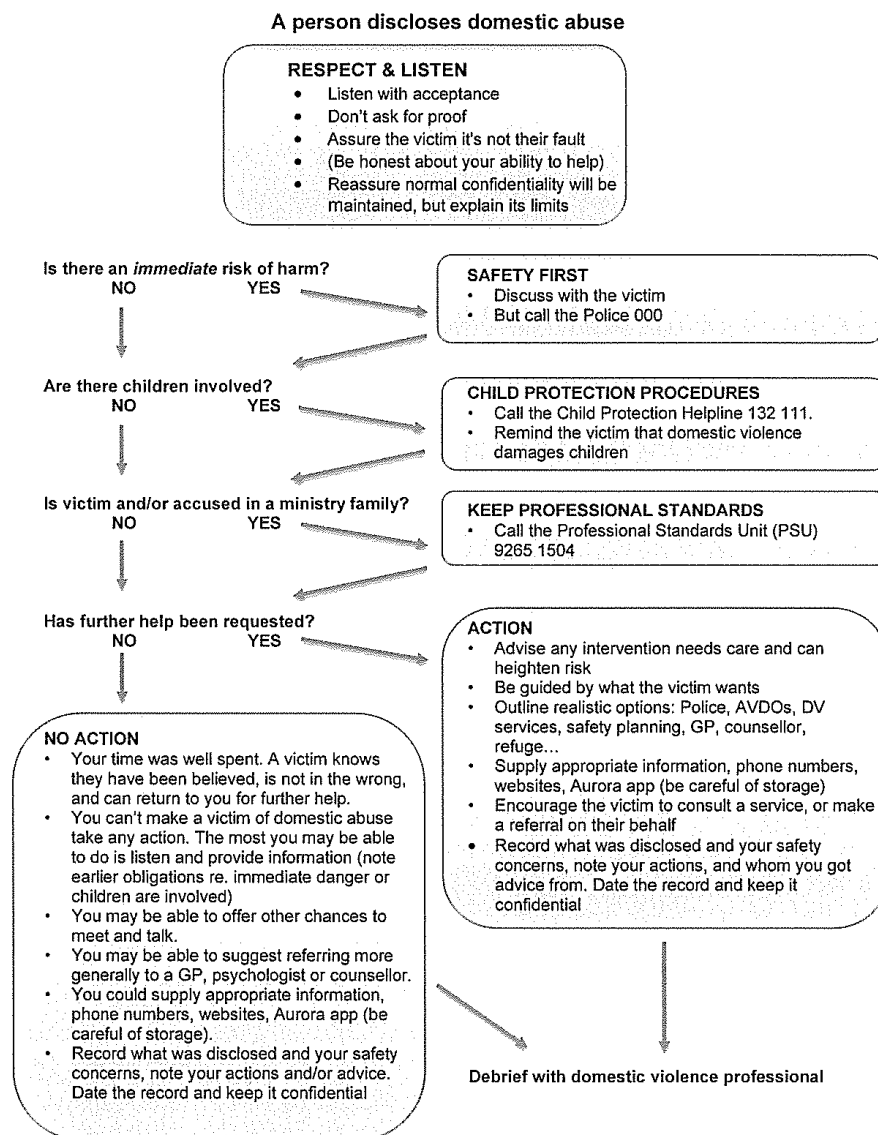
- St MatthewsSt MatthewsSt Matthews is committed to a culture of:
 - safety
 - empowerment
 - awareness and taking responsibility (i.e. not turning a “blind eye”)
 - healthy relationships
 and so will walk with people, and care for people – and this can be long term.
- The Parish Council will appoint a trained female member of the Parish Council to be the Domestic Abuse Representative for the church who, on behalf of Parish Council, ensures that the Domestic Abuse Policy is current and adhered to by all staff and leaders.
 - Importantly, any abuse or alleged abuse involving the ministry team will be escalated to the Wardens and the Domestic Abuse Representative so that it can be appropriately referred to the Professional Standards Unit (PSU).
 - An external confidential hotline is available to report any abuse by members of the ministry team on 1800 774 945
- The St Matthews pastoral staff team are trained regularly in Domestic Abuse, however they are not experts or professional Domestic Abuse counsellors, but rather are often the “first responder”. They will often refer the victim to appropriate tertiary services, some of which are listed in Appendix 2.
- We specifically recommend that professional advice and counsel be sought about any Domestic Abuse issue from the Anglicare Domestic Violence worker who can be contacted in business hours on 0434 836 556. This role who has been specifically created to advise ministers, staff and leaders in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney in managing and supporting Domestic Abuse matters in a church related setting.
- Accreditation on the Domestic Abuse policy is an essential part of the “onboarding” of new staff team members and is included in the Staff Manual, with initial comprehensive Domestic Abuse training and then regular Domestic Abuse Awareness refresher training budgeted for and provided to at least the following groups:
 - Staff;
 - Parish Council;
 - Children’s Ministry team (18+ years); and
 - Safe Ministry attendees (Refresher Training)

Domestic abuse awareness training will also be offered to small group leaders training as they would often be first observers, and their participation actively encouraged.

- The St Matthews staff team are committed to educating our community on these matters as well as how to promote healthy relationships by:
 - Raising awareness of Domestic Abuse Policy through parishioner communications
 - Incorporating issue into preaching series as applicable.
 - Running Marriage Enrichment Courses which incorporates policy and aspects of healthy v unhealthy relationships.
 - Referencing Domestic Abuse issues in discussions regarding healthy v unhealthy relationships occurring during Marriage Preparation support provided by Ministers for engaged couples
- Principles supporting St Matthews Domestic Abuse Action Framework
 - Support must be tailored to the individual – it is not possible to codify a response that fits all victims;
 - Support will ensure the victim is “walked alongside” and knows they are believed
 - Confidentiality is paramount (except if danger is present, or children are at risk)
 - Tertiary support services referred to must be specialist Domestic Abuse services, and should not involve a counsellor who attends St Matthews;
 - Separate support is provided for the perpetrator to the victim;
 - Provide equal support to a victim who has spoken out, as to a potential victim or query about a “hypothetical” situation
 - The victim should ideally provide written approval to discuss the situation with others (i.e. such as email, letter or text message that can be stored as a record.
 - Any staff or parishioners supporting a victim or perpetrator through a Domestic Abuse issue will be able to access counselling support to debrief after providing assistance.

Appendix 1: Flow Chart of Domestic Abuse Response Options

1.12 Domestic Abuse Flowchart



Appendix 2: External Specialist Support Services - Contact Details

AGENCY	CONTACT DETAILS
<p><u>1800 RESPECT national helpline</u> 24/7 for sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling and advice</p>	<p>Dial 1800 737 732 (free call) or www.1800respect.org.au</p>
<p><u>Child Protection Helpline</u> Department of Family and Community Services (FACS)</p>	<p>Dial 132 111 or www.reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg</p>
<p><u>LifeLine:</u> 24/7 telephone crisis line</p>	<p>Dial 131 114 or www.lifeline.org.au/get-help</p>
<p><u>NSW Domestic Violence Line</u> 24/7 for comprehensive information and referrals to nearby support services, for all categories of domestic violence</p>	<p>Dial 1800 65 64 63 (free call) or www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/get-help</p>
<p><u>NSW Rape Crisis Centre</u> Counselling service for ANYONE (male or female) in NSW who has experienced or is at risk of sexual assault</p>	<p>Dial 1800 424 017 (free call) or www.nswrapecrisis.com.au</p>
<p><u>No to Violence: Men’s Referral Service</u> Telephone Counselling, information and referral service for men using violence in families, male victims, and for their friends or relatives</p>	<p>Dial 1300 766 491 or www.ntvmrs.org.au</p>
<p><u>MensLine Australia</u> 24/7 telephone and online support and information service for Australian men</p>	<p>Dial 1300 789 978 or www.mensline.org.au</p>
<p><u>Aurora App (NSW only)</u> <u>Daisy App (Australia wide)</u> These domestic and family abuse apps are for people experiencing domestic abuse(DA) or for those worried about their relationship. The app contains useful information including emergency contacts, the kinds of behaviour considered to be DA, vital links to support services. Importantly, the app allows the user to message trusted friends and family or call emergency services immediately. The Aurora app has safety features that allow it to be used discreetly and seek assistance without “tipping off” a</p>	<p>Free to download from iPhone App Store or Android Google Play</p>

<p>perpetrator and endangering themselves. It was developed in consultation with NSW police and experts from DA sector</p>	
<p>Support for Perpetrators / Behavioural Change (NSW Accredited)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Men’s Behaviour Change Network ○ BaptistCare Changing Men’s Behaviour program; ○ CatholicCare Choosing Change Program ○ No to Violence: Men’s Referral Service ○ Safer Website resources 	<p>www.mbcn-nsw.net</p> <p>1300 275 227 or https://baptistcare.org.au/our-services/community-services/domestic-and-family-violence/changing-mens-behaviour</p> <p>13 18 19</p> <p>Dial 1300 766 491 or www.ntvmrs.org.au http://www.saferresource.org.au/perpetrators <i>There is currently no female equivalent to accredited Men’s Change Programs so refer to specific DA service</i></p>
<p><u>Victims Access Line</u></p> <p>Is a first point of call for 24/7 access to all services. Provides confidential support, referral and information, including referral to specific support such as sexual assault, domestic violence and crimes against children services</p>	<p>Dial 1800 633 063 (free call) or https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about_us/victims-of-crime</p>
<p><u>LifeLine</u></p> <p>24/7 crisis support services</p>	<p>Dial 131 114 or www.lifeline.org.au</p>
<p><u>Translating & Interpreting Service</u></p> <p>24/7 Immediate phone service</p>	<p>Dial 131 450 or www.tisnational.gov.au</p>
<p><u>Anglicare Domestic Violence Adviser</u></p> <p>Advice to clergy and lay ministers in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney especially for Domestic abuse in a church related setting</p>	<p>Dial 0438 836 556 (business hours)</p>
<p><u>Professional Standards Unit (PSU)</u></p> <p>Advice about abuse involving Anglican clergy or church workers</p>	<p>Dial 9265 1604 or www.safeministry.org.au</p>

Appendix 3: Thinking Biblically - 10 Statements about Domestic Abuse

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).
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 modeled 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).
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).
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 considered and should never be discouraged (Proverbs 27:12; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11).
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).
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 support those who have separated for such reasons (Psalm 82:3-4).
7. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ flows from both justice and love. It offers forgiveness and calls for repentance. When domestic abuse has been indicated as a factor in separation, attempts made at reconciliation should not be suggested until it is clear that the perpetrator has demonstrated over time a genuine repentance and taken full responsibility for their actions. Such repentance includes being able to demonstrate an understanding of what led the person to behave in an abusive manner, and an understanding of what was wrong with their behaviour (Luke 3:8-14; Romans 12:9; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11).
8. Any attempts made at reconciliation should only proceed slowly and cautiously, after consultation with experienced domestic abuse services. Domestic abuse research and statistics showing that true reformation in such cases takes time and considerable effort on the part of the perpetrator, and, for some, may never be achieved. Therefore, the caution of a victim in being reconciled to an offender should not be mistaken for 'unwillingness' to forgive or be reconciled.

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.

10. Christians with a genuine desire to be faithful to Scripture will hold different views on the question of when divorce is appropriate. However, such views 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 might be a sad but appropriate action in the circumstances of domestic abuse please see the Senior Minister.

Appendix 4: Additional Commentary on the Importance of Believing a Victim

Believing a victim, any victim, is vital to the credibility of the Policy, St Matthews leadership team and indeed us all as a body representing Jesus. The major public resources concerning responding to Domestic Abuse all adopt this stance.

Believing a victim is not about standing in judgement of or defaming a perpetrator. The stance of believing the victim is one of empathy, care, respect, and love.

The following is an excerpt from the Diocesan Policy passed at 2017 Sydney Anglican Synod...

2.1 How to respond to victims

When you haven't personally experienced abuse, it's easy to listen with an attitude of assessing whether what is being reported is really abuse. 'Would I find that abusive? Doesn't everyone argue sometimes?' However, when a person has repeatedly been victimised and feels powerless, our response always needs to be to offer support, to listen and give those people the respect of being believed.

-Clinical psychologist and clergy wife

2.2 Initial Disclosure

If a victim discloses or otherwise hints at abuse, the following factors are important:

2.2.1 Ask after them – Most victims want you to ask how they are doing. Your offer of help could be the first step in enabling them to seek help, e.g. 'How are things at home?' and if it becomes appropriate, 'Is anyone hurting you?' or 'Do you ever feel afraid?'

2.2.2 Take time to listen – Take plenty of time to listen and believe what they say. If they sense disbelief they may be discouraged from speaking again

2.2.3 Choose the place wisely – If it is at all possible, speak with the victim in a safe, private place where you will not be interrupted, or arrange to talk again, keeping in mind that someone in distress may start talking anywhere. As is the case in other ministry situations when speaking with a woman, male clergy should consider inviting her to bring a support person, or should conduct the discussion where there are others in the general vicinity.

2.2.4 The limits of confidentiality – Make it clear that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, depending on the nature of what is disclosed. For example, further disclosure may be needed when someone is being hurt or is in serious danger, a serious criminal offence has been committed, or when children are involved

To support a deeper awareness and acceptance of this important issue, references are:

- Handbooks published by other Australian churches (not to mention in other countries) responding to DA e.g. Wesley/Uniting, Melbourne Anglicans, Salvation Army
- DV Alert (Federally funded nationally accredited program of Lifeline - key initiative under the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children 2010-2022 (the National Plan));
- SAFER website

- Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) (an independent, not-for-profit company established as an initiative under the National Plan).
 - Including **“the whole thrust of reform in this area in our country and around the world pivots on the assumption that women are believed when they come forward. It follows that men are also believed”**
- Our Watch Framework: <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/c81eceab-c8a0-4f3a-a6fb-2202334b398b/Change-the-story-framework-prevent-violence-women-children-AA-new.pdf.aspx>

See also

- <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-21/the-verdict-on-domestic-violence-data-and-the-church-believe/8804790>
- https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/10_2016/third_action_plan_roundtables_summary_report_0.pdf

All the resources reflected that a major deterrent in people (especially women) coming forward is the fear that they won’t be believed. We did not come across any resource that opposes or minimises the importance of being believed.