

Statement By Queensland Churches

Domestic and Family Violence is a sad reality on our society.

It is a problem that needs to be openly addressed, for domestic violence harms and kills people. If we are silent, victims of violence continue to suffer.

As part of the community, the Christian Churches accept responsibility for their failure to act more decisively in this matter. We recognise that many victims feel that they have not been heard or helped by ministers and members of the Churches. We acknowledge that domestic violence occurs also in Christian homes and Christian communities.

Moved by the love of God shown to all people in Jesus Christ, Christians accept Christ's call to be agents of love and healing, peace and justice in the world.

We therefore commit ourselves to do what we can, both to prevent domestic violence and to provide help and counselling for both its victims and its perpetrators.

Churches: Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Uniting, Baptist, Churches of Christ, Salvation Army, Religious Society of Friends.



How Can You Help?

Recognise that DFV happens in all communities. It has increased in severity and prevalence during COVID-19.

Respond appropriately by saying, "I believe you." Many victims will have been told or feel that no-one will believe them and that no-one will be either willing or equipped to help them. Always be cognisant of their safety.

Refer the victim to local and/or national DFV Services. If the victim's life is in immediate danger, call the police and stay with her whilst they interview her.

Record and encourage victim to save evidence: written, electronic or photographs (e.g. bruising or property damage). If you are keeping records, ensure you have victim's permission and consult with the victim about how records are used.

Local & National DFV Services:

DV Connect	1800 811 811
Kid's Helpline	1800 55 1800
1800RESPECT	1800 737 732
Anglicare	1300 610 610
Centacare	1300 236 822
Lifeline	13 11 14
Mens' Line	1300 78 99 78
NO TO VIOLENCE Men's Referral Line	1300 766 491

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Queensland
Churches Together

Domestic and Family Violence



The Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Project is a commission of the Queensland Churches Together.

What is Domestic and Family Violence (DFV)?

Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) occurs when a person in an intimate personal, family or unpaid carer relationship uses abuse and/or violence to secure and maintain power and control. DFV in its many faces controls and damages intimate partners and/or family members. Some examples of abuse and/or violence are as follows (but are not necessarily limited to):

Emotional and Psychological Abuse: Includes behaviours or comments that undermine a person's sense of self, leaving them with a sense of worthlessness and helplessness, often leading to mental health disorders.

Financial Abuse: Includes deprivation of finances, misuse of finances or denying access to finances for family and personal needs.

Physically: Includes visible and non-visible injuries which may be subtle or concealed, like sleep and food deprivation, attempted strangulation and attempted suffocation.

Spiritually: includes refusing to allow a partner to practise or participate in their religion; defiling religious images; or using scriptures to justify control, violent behaviour or aggression.

- DFV is more than relationship conflicts or family arguments. It involves fear, intimidation, control, a sense of entitlement and harm – one or more persons live in fear or suffer physical or emotional harm.
- DFV is most often a recurring event. The victim feels like they are walking on eggshells. The violence and abuse often becomes more frequent and severe, sometimes leading to permanent injury and death.
- In abusive and violent homes, children suffer directly and indirectly whether or not they witness abuse. They often exhibit antisocial behaviours, poor school attendance and poor academic performance.

"I came that they might have life in all its abundance" John 10:10

Does DFV Occur in Christian Families?

Yes it does. The Anglican Church commissioned research to investigate experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) within Anglican church communities.

- It found that the prevalence of intimate partner violence among Anglicans was the same or higher than in the wider Australian community.
- The Anglican Church states that it acknowledges and laments the violence which has been suffered by some of its members and repents of the part it has played in allowing an environment where violence went unaddressed.
- The Church recognises that sin and gender inequality lie at the heart of domestic and family violence. Violent behaviour grows from attitudes and other behaviours which abuse a person's power and exercise control over another.
- The Anglican Church states that it commits to work at a number of levels to prevent and address violence by addressing underlying causes in the church and seeking to prevent violence before it occurs by changing attitudes, behaviours and culture and building knowledge and skills.

Other Churches have acknowledged that DFV is a part of their communities and have taken steps to address that. Clergy are being trained in DFV awareness.

"if one part of the body suffers, all other parts of the body suffer with it; if one part is praised, all other parts share its happiness." 1 Cor. 12:26

The Christian Response to DFV

Domestic and Family Violence is contrary to real love and justice, and is never God's will for anyone. Scripture should never be used to justify abuse.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus exhorts us to love one another (John 13:34), and Christ came to set free the oppressed (Luke 4:18).

Our Churches and Faith Communities have pastoral responsibilities for victims, survivors and perpetrators of abuse and/or violence. We believe that all people have a fundamental right to safety. We also believe that all people have intrinsic value: for themselves and for the gifts they have to offer.

The Christian response to DFV cannot be taken lightly. It involves thinking and working through our beliefs about:

Marriage: How can we help people realise that the sanctity of marriage vows are broken by DFV and it is a crime?

Forgiveness: How can there be forgiveness for perpetrators of DFV without true repentance, not only in words but also in behaviours and attitudes? How can we help victims and survivors to forgive the perpetrators and also forgive themselves?

Authority: How can we be more Christlike? How can we empower the victims of DFV to speak out?

Parenting: How can we ensure that children are seen, heard, loved and respected for themselves? How can we prevent passing on patterns of abusive behaviours to the next generation?

Responsibility: How can we help those who abuse their power in relationships to learn to recognise that what they are doing is wrong and take responsibility for their behaviours and actions?

"Come all you who are weary and heavy laden. I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28