

## 33/13 Domestic violence and educating clergy

(A progress report from the Domestic Violence Task Force.)

### Key Points

- The Task Force has undertaken consultation with a number of victims of domestic violence (DV) to better understand the experience of DV in the church context and how the church responds to victims
- The Task Force has undertaken a survey of rectors concerning the frequency and nature of DV in churches in which they have served and the effectiveness of the church's response
- The Task Force has written to each diocesan organisation and school enquiring about what programs and initiatives are in place to educate Anglicans about the nature of DV and what constitutes an appropriate response
- Following the Synod session in 2016, the Task Force intends prioritising and pursuing various areas in which it is required to make a response including a possible DV policy statement and pastoral guidelines

### Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Synod about progress in the work of the Domestic Violence Task Force.

### Recommendation

2. Synod receive this report.

### Background

3. The Synod passed resolution 33/13 Domestic violence and educating clergy in the following terms –

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

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

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

4. Moore College and Ministry Training & Development provided a progress report to the Synod at its session in 2015.

5. At its meeting on 25 May 2015, the Standing Committee appointed a Task Force to further develop a diocesan response to DV with the following membership and terms of reference –

‘Further to resolution 33/13 “Domestic Violence and Educating Clergy”, and noting the reports received from Moore Theological College and Ministry Training and Development in response, Standing Committee appoints a Task Force to further develop a diocesan response to domestic violence. The Task Force is to comprise Mrs Kate Bradford, Ms Michelle England, Canon Sandy Grant, Archdeacon Kara Hartley, the Rev Martin Kemp, Mrs Nicky Lock, the Rev David O'Mara, the Rev Rob Smith and Dr Jill Wheeler, subject to their consent. The Task Force must consult with domestic violence victims or their representatives and with the Diocesan Doctrine Commission, Moore Theological College and Ministry, Training and Development. The Task Force shall consider the following matters and report back to the Standing Committee with recommendations –

- (a) about developing, adopting and communicating a diocesan domestic violence policy statement, along with advice for good pastoral practice,

- (b) about facilitating education of lay membership of our churches on the issue (e.g., via preparation of suitable resources),
- (c) about educating our youth in regards to the recognition and prevention of domestic violence, and
- (d) about encouraging further developments in our education of clergy and church workers in this area (e.g., recognising warning signs in marriage preparation).'

6. The Rev Catherine Wynn Jones was subsequently appointed as an additional member of the Task Force. Ms Michelle England resigned as a member in July 2016.

7. The Task Force commenced meeting in November 2015 and, as at the date of this report, has met on 6 occasions.

8. The Task Force determined that its initial phase of work prior to the Synod session 2016 would comprises the following elements –

- Agreeing on a headline definition and expansive description of DV
- Consulting with victims of DV
- Surveying rectors concerning DV
- Seeking information from diocesan organisations concerning their response to DV
- Considering the recommendations of the Victorian Domestic Violence Report

9. Each of these areas of work is described further below.

#### **Headline definition and expansive description of domestic violence**

10. The Task Force adopted the following headline definition for DV –

“Domestic violence is abusive and/or intimidating behaviour inflicted by an adult against a current or former spouse or partner. It includes (but is not limited to) emotional, verbal, social, economic, psychological, spiritual, physical and sexual abuse. Such behaviour often seeks to control, humiliate, dominate and/or instil fear in the victim.”

11. The Task Force agreed to use the following expansive description of DV from *Domestic violence in Australia – an overview of the issues*, 22 November 2011 –

‘Domestic violence refers to acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship in domestic settings. These acts include physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse. Defining forms of violence, its perpetrators and their victims, is complicated by the many different kinds of intimate and family relationships and living arrangements present in Australian communities. Domestic violence is most commonly perpetrated by males against their female partners, but it also includes violence against men by their female partners and violence within same-sex relationships.

The traditional associations of domestic violence are with acts of physical violence within relationships occurring in the home but this understanding fails to grasp the complexity of the phenomenon. The National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and Children (NCRVWC) found that –

... a central element of domestic violence is that of an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling one’s partner through fear (for example, by using violent or threatening behaviour) ... the violent behaviour is part of a range of tactics used by the perpetrator to exercise power and control ... and can be both criminal and non-criminal in nature.

Domestic violence includes –

emotional abuse – blaming the victim for all problems in the relationship, undermining the victim’s self-esteem and self-worth through comparisons with others, withdrawing interest and engagement and emotional blackmail

verbal abuse – swearing and humiliation in private and public, focusing on intelligence, sexuality, body image or the victim’s capacity as a parent or spouse

social abuse—systematic isolation from family and friends, instigating and controlling relocations to a place where the victim has no social circle or employment opportunities and preventing the victim from going out to meet people

economic abuse – controlling all money, forbidding access to bank accounts, providing an inadequate ‘allowance’, preventing the victim seeking or holding employment and taking wages earned by the victim

psychological abuse – making threats regarding custody of children, asserting the justice system will not believe or support the victim, destroying property, abusing pets and driving dangerously

spiritual abuse – denial and/or misuse of religious beliefs or practices to force victims into subordinate roles and misusing religious or spiritual traditions to justify physical violence or other abuse

physical abuse – direct assaults on the body, use of weapons (including objects), assault of children, locking the victim out of the house, sleep and food deprivation, and

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.

Family violence is a broader term referring to violence between family members as well as violence between intimate partners. This term also covers a complexity of behaviours beyond that of direct physical violence. The Australian and New South Wales Law Reform Commission’s review of family violence law in Australia recommended that state and territory legislation “should provide that family violence is violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour, that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful”.

### **Consultation with Victims of Domestic Violence in Church Contexts**

12. As part of understanding the particular issues of those experiencing DV within church contexts and how the church responds to victims, either helpfully or not, the Task Force agreed that consultation with victims was essential to gain a proper understanding of the experience of DV within church contexts.

13. The purpose of the consultation is to hear from, and speak with, those living within the Anglican Diocese of Sydney that have had either direct or indirect experience of DV in church settings, and how the church has responded to them. This information, suitably de-identified, would be used to inform the work of the Task Force in meeting the above objectives.

14. A detailed protocol for conducting the consultation, including a list of questions to guide the interviews, was developed in order to ensure the safety and well being of those who agreed to participate in the consultation. Twelve persons would be invited for interview with two members of the Task Force.

15. The process of consultation and management of records and use of data gathered was reviewed by Professor Michael Martin, Chair, ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

16. As at 22 July 2016 there have been four interviews conducted with 4 female victims.

### **Domestic Violence survey of rectors**

17. Between 5 April and 12 May 2016 an anonymous survey of all Sydney diocesan rectors was conducted by the Task Force in relation to DV.

18. 148 rectors responded. A summary of the results can be found in the Attachment.

### **Responses received from diocesan organisations**

19. In January 2016, the Task Force wrote to each diocesan organisation to enquire about what programs and initiatives were in place to educate Anglicans about the nature of DV and what constitutes an appropriate response.

20. As of the 6 May 2016, 35 responses had been received. This number includes –  
23 diocesan schools;  
4 Anglican schools not reporting to the diocesan synod;  
4 ministry training bodies; and  
4 other diocesan organisations.

21. Not every diocesan school responded to our request for information.

*Diocesan Schools*

22. From the outset it should be noted that in 2015 the NSW Board of Studies amended the Personal Development, Health and Physical education (PDHPE) syllabus for school years 7-10 to include units specifically addressing DV. The expectation from the Board of Studies is that the amended course will be taught from 2016 onwards.

23. While sympathetic to the issue of DV, schools only enrolling students year 6 and younger noted a difficulty in speaking directly about the issue to a young audience. Nonetheless, every school indicated a serious commitment to teaching principles of mutual respect and self-worth to students of all ages. In addition, many schools reported that they teach about the dangers of pornography to those students of a suitable age.

24. The responses from diocesan schools enrolling students in year 7 and above (21 respondents) were divided into four categories –

**Category 1:** schools teaching principles of respect and self-worth, but did not report any specific syllabus content relating to DV.

**Category 2:** schools complying with the amended PDHPE syllabus from the Board of Studies, but did not report a deliberate attempt to teach any specific Christian or Biblical content focused on DV.

**Category 3:** schools complying with the amended PDHPE syllabus from the Board of Studies, and reporting that they were making some specific attempt to address DV from Christian or Biblical standpoint.

**Category 4:** schools complying with the amended PDHPE syllabus from the Board of Studies, and reporting that they were making some specific attempt to address DV from Christian or Biblical standpoint, with particular respect to the Bible's teaching on male and female relationships.

25. Please note that as this was a self-reporting survey, the data may reflect the amount of time and care contributed by the respondents.

26. The summary of results is as follows –

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
2 schools (9.5% of respondents)	14 schools (67% of respondents)	3 schools (14% of respondents)	2 schools (9.5% of respondents)

27. While the bulk of schools (over 90%) have responded to the new requirements from the Board of Studies, at least two have failed to report implementing this change to the syllabus. Again, this may be a product of poor self-reporting.

28. On the other end of the spectrum, five schools are not only implementing the new syllabus but are attempting to discuss this issue from a Christian point of view. Special mention can be made of Broughton Anglican College and the Sydney Church of England Grammar School ('Shore') who reported that they are proactively tackling the issue in conversation with the Bible's specific teaching on male and female relationships. Nonetheless, it would appear that more work could be done to encourage and equip our schools to reflect on this issue from a Biblical point of view.

*Diocesan Training Institutions*

29. Four ministry training institutions responded to the survey: Mary Andrews College, Ministry Training and Development, Moore Theological College and Youthworks College. All are aware of the seriousness of the issue, but the reported responses vary. In some cases it was unclear as to whether training in matters concerning DV was mandatory for all students or simply part of an elective. In one case training was mandatory, but it was unclear as to whether this training involved Biblical content or whether it was restricted to more practical matters. Ministry Training and Development (MTD) was able to clearly identify that their mandatory training involved both practical considerations as well as engagement with the Biblical text. Further clarification from the other institutions will need to be sought before the final report.

*Other Diocesan Organisations*

30. The Social Issues Committee and the Diocesan Doctrine Commission reported that they have not addressed this issue in their deliberations.

31. Anglicare indicated a willingness to contribute their expertise to help parishes and other diocesan bodies respond appropriately to DV. They indicated that in response they would benefit from "a more clearly articulated theological position in relation to DV".

32. In answering our correspondence, the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) supplied a report outlining the shape of their response when complaints are made involving DV. The report also identifies various weaknesses in our current diocesan structures and resources. In particular, the PSU have suggested reviewing the *Faithfulness in Service* code of conduct, the *Discipline Ordinance 2006*, the *Safe Ministry Journey Policy* documents and the *Safe Ministry Training* materials to better address issues of DV. The lack of engagement of *Faithfulness in Service* with DV has been drawn to the attention of the Professional Standards Commission.

### **Summary of recommendations of the Victorian Domestic Violence Report**

33. As part of its research, the Task Force considered the Report and Recommendations of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence. The Task Force noted that Volume 5, Chapter 29 concerns 'Faith Communities'.

34. The Report notes that there was anecdotal evidence that family violence is causing increasing concern amongst faith communities and their leaders. The Report acknowledges the importance of faith communities in interacting with people affected by family violence, to educate, influence, respond, support and make referrals. Faith communities are described as 'vital settings' for dealing with family violence for a number of reasons.

35. The Report also outlines some issues faced by leaders and members of faith communities, including –

- spiritual abuse;
- the use of faith to support or condone violence;
- inadequate training for leaders, in recognising and responding to family violence; and
- beliefs that erect barriers to women seeking help within their faith community, and force women to choose between their safety and their faith.

36. The Royal Commission made the following recommendations relevant to faith communities –

#### *Recommendation 163*

'The Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship Multifaith Advisory Group and the Victorian Multicultural Commission, in partnership with expert family violence practitioners, develop training packages on family violence and sexual assault for faith leaders and communities [within three years]. These packages should build on existing work, reflect leading practice in responding to family violence, and include information about referral pathways for victims and perpetrators. The training should be suitable for inclusion as part of the pre-service learning in various faith training institutes, as well as the ongoing professional development of faith leaders.'

#### *Recommendation 164*

'The Department of Health and Human Services consult with the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship Multifaith Advisory Group, the Victorian Multicultural Commission and women from faith communities as part of its review of standards for specialist family violence service providers (including men's behaviour change programs), to ensure that these standards and the associated services take account of the needs of people in faith communities who experience family violence [within two years].'

#### *Recommendation 165*

'Faith leaders and communities establish processes for examining the ways in which they currently respond to family violence in their communities and whether any of their practices operate as deterrents to the prevention or reporting of, or recovery from, family violence or are used by perpetrators to excuse or condone abusive behaviour.'

### **Next steps**

37. Following the Synod session in 2016, the Task Force intends to prioritise and pursue the following areas in which it is required to make recommendations –

- Possible DV policy statement
- Possible pastoral guidelines
- Education of lay persons
- Education of youth
- Furthering professional development in the area of DV

38. Other areas which might also be pursued include –

- Professional Standards response to DV allegations against clergy and church workers
- Developing a list of resources on DV
- Developing a webpage to allow for the sharing of resources on DV
- Producing a brochure version of the content of the webpage for distribution at churches.

For and on behalf of the Task Force

CANON SANDY GRANT  
*Chair*

24 August 2016

### Domestic Violence survey of rectors

*Executive Summary of the Survey*

1. Within the parishes where you have served in the last five years

(a) How many cases of DV have come to your attention?

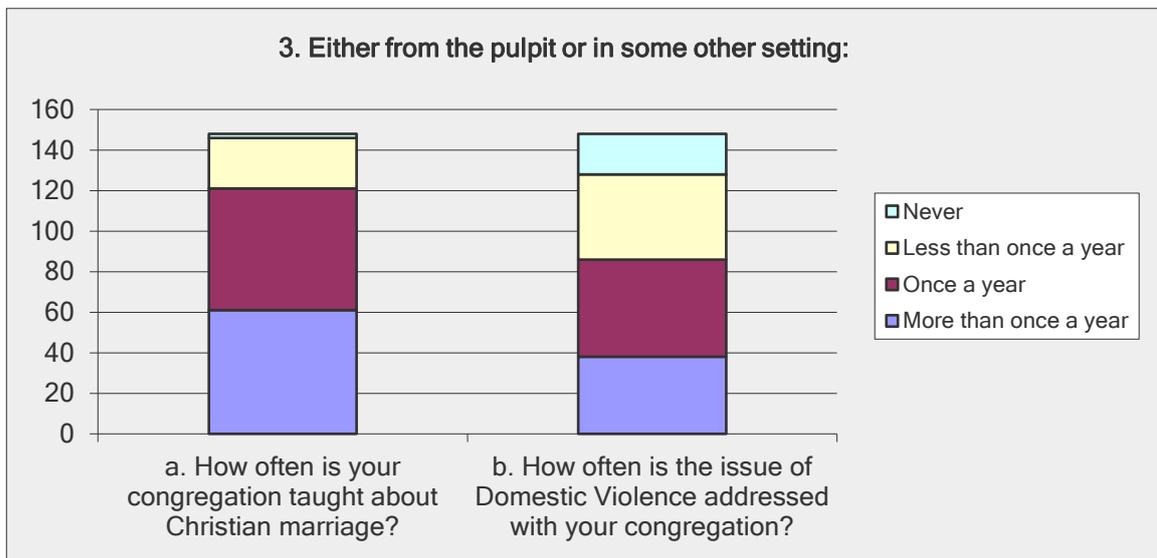
333 responses in total. Average of 2.25 per rector.

(b) How many have involved a pastoral response from you?

223 responses in total. Average of 1.5 per rector.

2. In parishes where rectors have served over the last 5 years the vast majority of alleged perpetrators are male: 80.3%.

3. How often is your congregation taught about domestic violence?



4. How is the nature of a husband’s headship explained?

The overwhelming majority of the responses may be summarised by the following statement: *“Sacrificial leading, loving and serving.”*

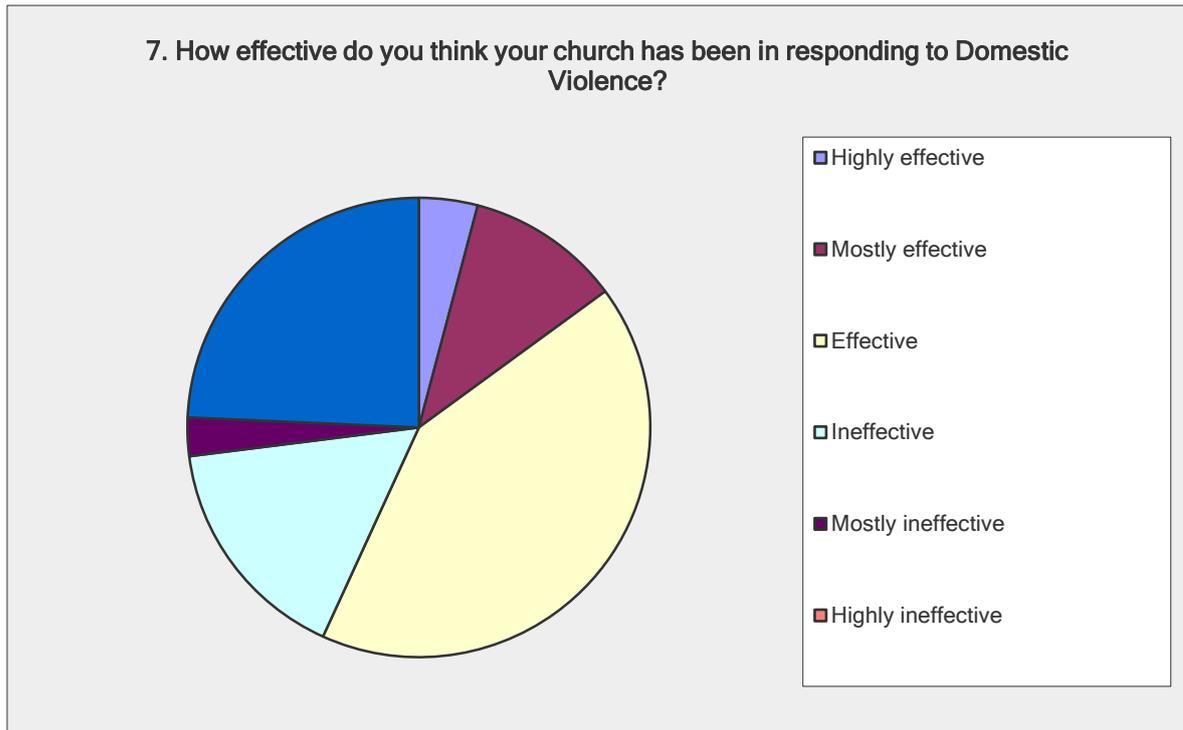
5. How is the nature of a wife’s submission explained?

The vast majority of responses may be summarised by the following statement: *“Willingly, joyfully submit to his loving, sacrificial leadership.”*

6. Do you believe that DV can ever be a legitimate grounds for

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
(a) Separation	147	0	1
(b) Divorce	124	11	13

7. How effective do you think your church has been in responding to Domestic Violence?



8. What help do you and your colleagues need to address the problem of Domestic Violence more effectively?

The broad answers can be categorised and prioritised as follows –

1. Greater awareness, training and education regarding DV
2. Resources – e.g., referring people to counselling and accessing legal support
3. A clear theological explanation of complementarian marriage from diocesan leadership
4. Other - including marriage preparation opportunities for clergy, raising the profile of DV and not sure.