

CHURCH@THEPEAK POLICY ON RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE

1. PREAMBLE

This policy was prepared the Steering Group of Church@thepeak (2017) using the *Anglican Diocese of Sydney Responding to Domestic Abuse: Provisional Policy and Good Practice Guidelines* and adopting it for Church@thepeak. It has subsequently been reviewed and updated by Parish Council

2. WE ACKNOWLEDGE DOMESTIC ABUSE EXISTS, IS WRONG, AND MUST STOP

- 2.1. All forms of domestic abuse are wrong and must stop
- 2.2. Domestic abuse includes but is not limited to emotional, verbal, social, economic, psychological, spiritual, physical and sexual abuse. Such behaviour often seeks to control, humiliate, dominate or instil fear in the victim
- 2.3. The primary focus of this Policy is abusive or intimidating behaviour inflicted by an adult against a current or former spouse or partner. Abuse involving children should follow child protection procedures

3. WE ARE COMMITTED TO SAFE PLACES

Church@thepeak is committed to promoting and supporting safer environments that:

- 3.1. Recognise equality amongst people
- 3.2. Promote a culture of healthy relationships of mutual responsibility in marriages, families and congregations
- 3.3. Ensure that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse
- 3.4. Strive to follow good practice in protecting those experiencing domestic abuse
- 3.5. Refuse to condone any form of abuse
- 3.6. Enable concerns to be raised and responded to clearly and consistently

4. WE UPHOLD FAITHFULNESS IN SERVICE

We uphold *Faithfulness in Service* as our diocesan code of conduct for clergy and church workers, specifically its affirmations in section 6:

- 4.1. Abuse of power is at the heart of many relationship problems in the Church and in the community. In essence, abuse is one person's misuse of power over another. Sometimes abuse will be a one-off event and at other times it will be a pattern of behaviour (6.2)
- 4.2. It is important for clergy and church workers to be good citizens and to obey the laws of the community, except where those laws conflict with Christian convictions (6.4)
- 4.3. You are not to abuse your spouse, children or other members of your family (6.6)

5. DOMESTIC ABUSE REQUIRES A SERIOUS AND REALISTIC RESPONSE

- 5.1. All forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the victim and are wrong
- 5.2. Domestic abuse can occur in all communities, including churches
- 5.3. Domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of child abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour
- 5.4. Working in partnership with vulnerable adults and children, statutory authorities and specialist agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse
- 5.5. Clergy and lay ministers need to obtain advice from those with professional expertise when faced with situations of domestic abuse.
- 5.6. Where mistakes in caring for people in difficult situations are made, an apology should be offered

6. WE RESPECT PEOPLE WHO COME TO US FOR HELP

We shall respond to domestic abuse by valuing, listening to and respecting both victims and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse, while appreciating the need to ensure a distance is kept between the two and refusing to condone the perpetration or continuation of any form of abuse.

7. WE UPHOLD SCRIPTURE AND ITS ABHORRENCE OF ABUSE IN OUR WORDS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS

In our words, and public statements, we will:

- 7.1. Clearly teach that domestic abuse is wrong and that the Bible should never be used to justify or excuse any form of abuse
- 7.2. Clearly teach that the Bible does not condone abuse and should not be used to demand a spouse tolerate or submit to domestic abuse
- 7.3. Raise awareness of domestic violence agencies, support services, resources and expertise

8. WE ENSURE SAFETY FIRST

- 8.1. **Safety First** – Ensure that those who have experienced domestic abuse can find safety and informed help as a first priority
- 8.2. **Take it Seriously** – Ensure that any disclosures of abuse are taken seriously and not dismissed
- 8.3. **Get help from outside** – Work with the appropriate statutory authorities during an investigation into domestic violence, including when allegations are made against a member of the church community
- 8.4. **Keep it confidential** – Respect the need for confidentiality within the bounds of good Safe Ministry practice
- 8.5. **Challenge with Care** – Carefully challenge inappropriate behaviour, but only in a way that does not place any individual, especially a victim, at increased risk

9. WE OFFER SUPPORT TO THOSE IN OUR CARE

- 9.1. **Offer informed care** – Ensure that informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any adult, child or young person who has suffered domestic abuse
- 9.2. **Go at the victim's pace** – We will never pressure any victim of domestic abuse to forgive, submit to, or restore a relationship with an offender
- 9.3. **Reconciliation comes with conditions** – Understand that any reconciliation between victim and offender is dependent principally upon genuine repentance and reformation of the offender, and also upon the willing grace of the victim
- 9.4. Coordinate **the care** – Identify the appropriate relationships of those with pastoral care responsibilities for both victims and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse

- 9.5. **Equal access to care** – we will work to ensure that clergy, clergy spouses, lay ministers and their spouses all have the same access to support and resources as others who experience domestic abuse

10. THINKING THEOLOGICALLY – 10 STATEMENTS ABOUT DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 10.1. 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).
- 10.2. 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 modelled 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).
- 10.3. 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).
- 10.4. 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; cf. 1984 Doctrine Commission Report, *21/82 The Remarriage of Divorced Persons* (1984), para. 4.12, Appendix 11).
- 10.5. 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).
- 10.6. 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).

- 10.7. 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 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).
- 10.8. Any attempts made at reconciliation should only proceed slowly and cautiously, after consultation with experienced domestic violence 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.
- 10.9. 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.
- 10.10. 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 1984 Doctrine Commission report extract, para. 4:13, Appendix 11.

11. WHAT WE NEED TO DO IN OUR CHURCH

When a case of domestic abuse is reported in the body of Church@thepeak, Church@thepeak will act in accordance with the following priorities:

- Safety first** – for the victim(s)
- Accountability** – for the abuser
- Healing** – for the victim(s)
- Repentance and reformation** – by the abuser
- Define and clarify** the state of the relationship

- 11.1. A victim's physical and emotional safety must be our first concern. This must be attended to before other matters (such as a desire for reconciliation) can be addressed. Other matters may be considered according to the priorities suggested above, although inevitably some stages may overlap or need to be revisited
- 11.2. Further advice is available in the **Good Practice Guidelines**, along with the extensive information in the series of attached **Appendices** from the Anglican Diocese of Sydney Responding to Domestic Abuse: Provisional Policy and Good Practice Guidelines. All clergy and church workers should familiarise themselves with these guidelines
- 11.3. A **Domestic Abuse Response Flow Chart** has been prepared with the appropriate processes to follow when you become aware of an incident of domestic abuse. On the page following the flow chart we also list a number of key telephone numbers and websites, along with an app for smart phones and tablets

12. KEY STEPS FOR PREVENTION AND CARE

- 12.1. Clergy and church workers should cooperate with statutory authorities such as the Police, child protection services and domestic violence services
- 12.2. Parish Council should adopt and publish this domestic abuse policy for use by Church@thepeak
- 12.3. Parish Council will display this church's domestic abuse policy statement on the church website alongside information about how to access advice and support from the Police, domestic violence helplines and diocesan services
- 12.4. Clergy and church workers should follow the procedures for responding to concerns about domestic abuse (see this Policy and Flowchart), and if there is any doubt as to what action to take, refer to the Professional Standards Unit or the Anglicare Domestic Violence Adviser (see 1.13)
- 12.5. Clergy should ensure the training of those in leadership positions, safe ministry roles and other pastoral roles about domestic abuse
- 12.6. Clergy should ensure domestic abuse is addressed in appropriate contexts such as preaching, Bible studies, prayers and church publications, as well as in marriage preparation, youth groups and ministry training activities

13. POLICY REVIEW

The policy will be reviewed and revised by Parish Council each year, with a thorough review every three years.

Parish Council must approve all reviews, amendments and changes to this policy.

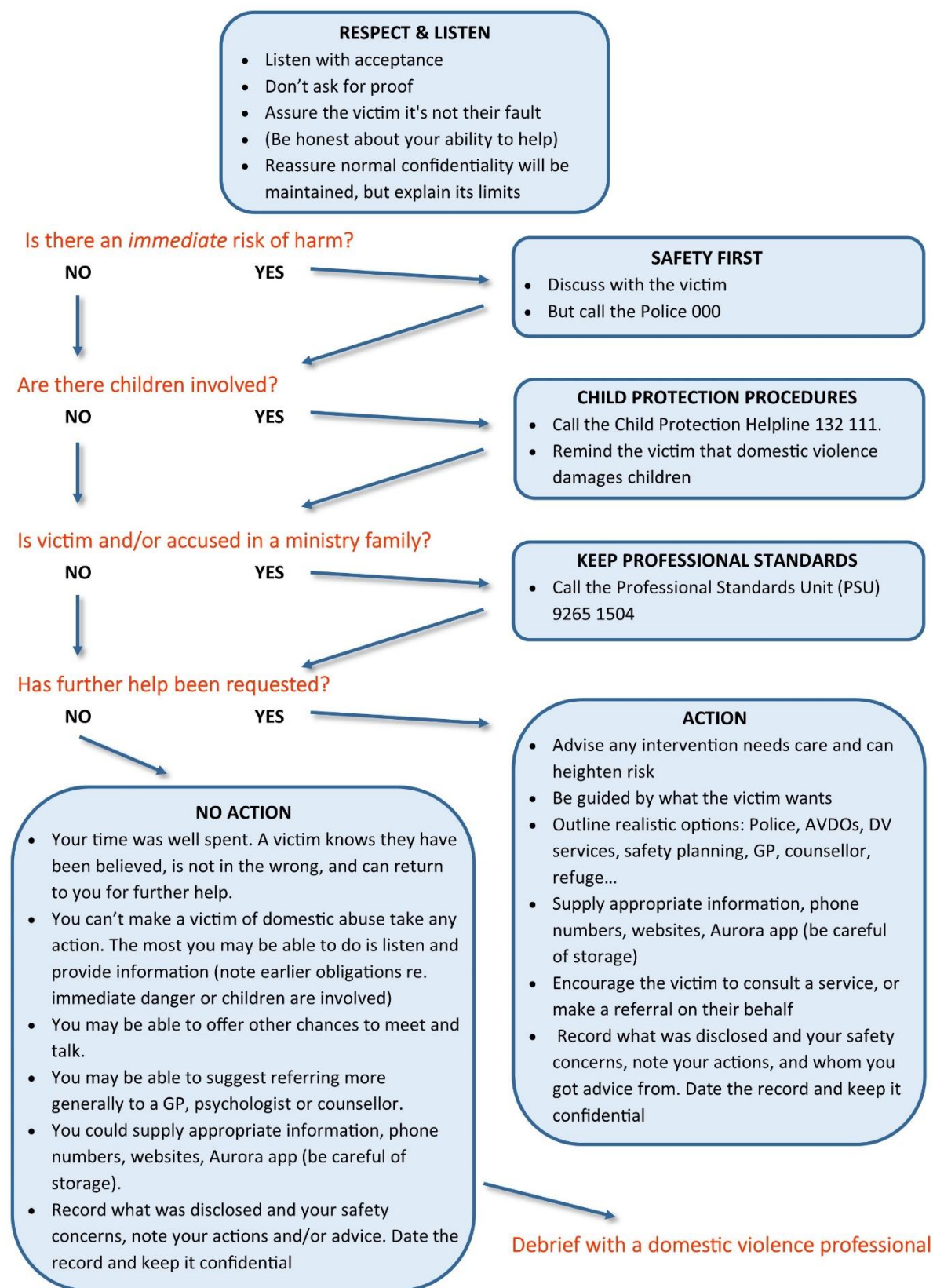
Approved by resolution of the Steering Committee 18th December 2017.

Reviewed with amendments by Parish Council, 24th July 2019.

Reviewed without amendments by Parish Council, 18th May 2020.

14. DOMESTIC ABUSE FLOWCHART

A person discloses domestic abuse -



15. DOMESTIC ABUSE – KEY RESOURCES FOR HELP

Agency	Contact Details
<p><u>1800 Respect national helpline:</u> 24/7 national number for sexual assault, family & domestic violence counselling and advice</p>	<p>1800 737 732 1800 www.respect.org.au</p>
<p><u>Anglicare Domestic Violence Adviser</u> Advice to clergy and lay ministers in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney especially for domestic abuse in a church-related setting</p>	<p>0438 826 556 (business hours)</p>
<p><u>Aurora App</u> The Aurora domestic and family violence app is for people experiencing domestic abuse or for those worried about their relationship. The app contains useful information including emergency contacts, behaviours considered to be domestic abuse, links to support services available in NSW. Importantly, the app allows the user to message their trusted friends and family members or call emergency services immediately. The Aurora app has been built with numerous safety features allowing people to use it discreetly and seek assistance without risk of “tipping off” a perpetrator and endangering themselves.</p>	<p>Free to download from iPhone App Store & Android Google Play</p>
<p><u>Child Protection Helpline</u> Contact this helpline if you think a child or young person is at risk of harm from abuse</p>	<p>132 111 reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/mrg</p>
<p><u>Daisy App</u> Connects women to support services</p>	<p>Free download</p>
<p><u>Hurstville Police Station</u> Local Domestic Violence Liaison Officer Service</p>	<p>9375 8599</p>
<p><u>Lifeline</u> 24-hour telephone crisis line</p>	<p>131 114 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>1800 65 64 63 domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/get-help</p>
<p><u>NSW Rape Crisis Centre</u> counselling service for anyone in NSW – men and women – who has experienced or is at risk of sexual assault</p>	<p>1800 424 017 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>130 766 491 www.ntvmrs.org.au</p>

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<u>Sydney Anglican Diocese</u> Resources for Domestic Violence	https://safeministry.org.au/for-parishes/domestic-violence-resources/
<u>Professional Standards Unit</u> Advice about abuse involving clergy or church workers in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney	9265 1604 www.safeministry.org.au
<u>Riverwood Police Station</u>	9584 1899
The location of refuges is not published for safety reasons.	