

# Respect:

## Confronting Violence and Abuse



SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2022-23



Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

# Foreword

In recent years we have witnessed a new wave of campaigns to confront violence and abuse. We have heard new calls for respect in relationships. Many have spoken out to highlight the extent of abuse throughout society – in the home, in the workplace, and in various groups in the community, including the Church. Those who suffer such abuse are most frequently women and children while the perpetrators are most frequently men. But no matter who suffers such violence, and who perpetrates it, the damage to the lives of the victims and survivors of such abuse is real, destructive, and long-lasting.

The virtue of solidarity challenges us to support those who are seeking justice in the face of such widespread violence. The teaching of Christ urges us to promote relationships marked by respect and freedom rather than coercion and control. The message of the Gospel is not a message of domination of one person over another but a message of mutual esteem and kindness.

In this statement, we draw on data gathered by researchers and reflections on that data, particularly the reflections of women. We draw on the words and example of Christ, who showed such respect for each person, and in a particular way to the women he encountered. We draw on the experience of community groups, including Catholic social service agencies, who are supporting those who suffer violence and abuse and seeking to promote change in attitudes and behaviour. We hope our message will help our whole community confront violence and abuse wherever they occur and become a community that fosters justice and respect for all.



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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this publication may contain images or names of people who have since passed away. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference acknowledges the Traditional Custodians, past, present and emerging of the lands on which we live and work.



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## Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference is the permanent assembly of the bishops of our nation and the body through which they act together in carrying out the Church's mission at a national level. The ACBC website at [www.catholic.org.au](http://www.catholic.org.au) gives a full list of Bishops Conference commissions as well as statements and other items of news and interest.



# Listening to Women and Children

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that “family, domestic and sexual violence is a major national health and welfare issue that can have lifelong impacts for victims and perpetrators. It affects people of all ages and from all backgrounds, but predominantly affects women and children”.<sup>1</sup> The statistics concerning violence against women and children in Australia are shocking. One woman is killed every nine days by a current or former partner<sup>2</sup> while one in six girls and one in nine boys were physically or sexually abused before age of 15.<sup>3</sup>

Some groups are more vulnerable than others. Apart from physical violence, women and girls with disabilities experience all forms of violence at higher rates than men with disabilities, or people without disabilities. A staggering 65% of women with disabilities report experiencing at least one incident of violence since the age of 15 and women with disabilities are twice as likely as women without disabilities to have experienced sexual violence.<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics figures reveal that young women aged 18-34 were 2.7 times as likely as those aged 35 and over to have experienced intimate partner violence in the 12 months before the 2016 Personal Safety Survey.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile more than 10,900 calls were made to elder abuse helplines across Australia in 2017-18. Women outnumbered men among these callers in each state and emotional and financial abuse were the most common types of elder abuse reported.<sup>6</sup> People who identify as LGBTQI+, people living outside major cities, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are also more vulnerable to violence than other groups.

Family and domestic violence is a painful and complex reality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It occurs within the context of a history of the violence of colonisation and ongoing

racism. These have impacted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls in particular ways. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, family and domestic violence can be a hard topic to talk about. Shirleen Campbell is a strong woman who wants to be heard:

*“Please don’t look away. Listen to us and stand with us. We are 45 times more likely to be a victim or to have experienced family domestic violence and sexual assault. And we’re not just numbers. We’re living breathing human beings. We’re mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunties, great-great grandmothers. We want Australia to see the good work we are doing. Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory are the most victimised women in the world. Tangentyere Women’s Family Safety Group is a group of strong town-camp women and behind those women are a lot more strong women as well. Having to be that voice for many women who don’t have their voices is to share our stories, our experiences. Family and domestic violence and sexual assault is daunting. We say enough is enough. We want to be out there. We want to be heard. We want you to stand with us and to support us. It’s a hard topic to talk about it, but the whole of Australia needs to hear because this is our future. This is our home, our community, and our country.” - Shirleen Campbell, 2020 Northern Territory Local Hero.<sup>7</sup>*

2015 Australian of the Year, Rosie Batty, continues to speak out about her experience and to raise awareness of family and domestic violence:

*“People are genuinely surprised and horrified by how prevalent family violence is... [and] ... the vast majority of people **still don’t understand that family violence is a gendered issue.** People want to be able to blame drug and alcohol abuse,*



or a childhood upbringing affected by family violence, or even the victim herself. However, it is clear that most family violence is perpetrated by a man against the woman and that the gender inequities that exist in our society are a key driver of violence against women...

"I make sure I explain the complexities of the issue; that leaving is when you could be at the highest risk for your life, you may fall into homelessness, you may fall into poverty. I ask, why is it that we have put the onus of responsibility for safety on the victim's shoulders? Why are we constantly talking about victims rather than the perpetrator, and not questioning his behaviour? *Why is it she has to hide or move or uproot herself or her family and he is able to have a beer with his mates and no one is challenging his behaviour?*

"...in my view, we have a culture of women not being believed. We expect them to be lying, and require them to prove they are telling the truth. It is dangerous for a woman to show her emotions. As soon as she is seen to be emotional, depressed, or anxious, it works against her and she is seen to be neurotic and untrustworthy.

"...it can be difficult to realise that you are in fact in a violent relationship. I often use the analogy of the frog in the pot – if you put a frog in cold water

and slowly turn up the heat, the frog won't notice the water is boiling until it's too late. Women often don't realise that what they are experiencing within their relationship is violence. *Their self-esteem and confidence is hugely eroded and they often find it difficult to speak out about what's happening to them...*

*"When you're in a violent relationship, your self-esteem is so eroded that you believe it's your fault. You're depleted in every way; worrying about where you are going to live, the effects on the children, how you can afford legal representation. In many cases and for many reasons, the woman is not confident to speak about the violent relationship. As a result, she wears the blame and remains silent. To hear other people are going through the same issues can have the effect of helping the woman to realise that it is not her fault and that she is not alone."* - Rosie Batty<sup>8</sup>

Ellen and her sister Frances are adult survivors of abusive relationships in their Christian family during their childhood. They share their experience through their research and writing:

*"Domestic abuse is not restricted to Christian culture, but it is important that we realise the power of religious manipulation to keep people in abusive relationships. Abusers and survivors can use various religious lenses to justify their reasons. The Church must begin to recognise and condemn the use of Biblical references to justify abuse. Male-headship in the home does not give a man the right to abuse his wife. Yet to both the abuser and abused Biblical interpretation plays a crucial role in how the relationship is perceived. Many Christian women who experience intimate partner abuse feel it is their duty as a Christian wife to sacrifice and forgive their spouse. The children in these relationships often feel... that they must respect the father and not say anything about what is truly going on in the home... when it comes to sharing our story with our Christian friends, we both feel incredible resistance from people listening to and accepting our family narrative. They think we are lying."* - Ellen and Frances, "Is God Like My Father?"<sup>9</sup>



# Drivers and Enablers of Violence and Abuse

## Major Drivers

The Bishops of Victoria explained in their 2016 statement addressing domestic violence that in addition to physical violence, “domestic violence can also be emotional, financial, or spiritual” and that “the roots are abuse of power and the control of one person over another”.<sup>9</sup> The Perth Archdiocese’s *Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence* also included sexual violence and abuse, social violence, controlling behaviour, isolation, minimisation and denial, victim-blaming, recasting the behaviour as nonviolent or acceptable, the use of male privilege, and post-separation abuse among its concerns.<sup>11</sup> It explains that:

“Domestic violence is learned behaviour. Men who abuse learn to abuse through observation, experience and reinforcement. They believe that they have a right to use violence and are also rewarded; that is, their behaviour gives them power and control over their partner.”<sup>12</sup>

Most people can control their anger at work with colleagues or supervisors, at church, in public or around others, or with friends – but for some there is no control at home. Being able to control

anger in some settings but not others shows that something more than anger and impulse management issues are at play.<sup>13</sup>

A study by Jesuit Social Services examined the effects of social attitudes or ‘rules’ that say men need “to be tough; not to show any emotions; to be the breadwinner, to always be in control, use violence to solve problems; and to have many sexual partners”.<sup>14</sup> Keeping these ‘rules’ is described as being in the ‘man box’. This understanding of manhood can rightly be described as toxic. Thankfully, the majority of the 1,000 men aged between 18-30 who participated in the study did not agree with these ‘rules’. However, those who strongly agreed with them reported increased levels of mental ill-health (including much higher levels of suicide ideation), participating in risky drinking, higher rates of car accidents, much higher incidence of committing acts of violence, online bullying and sexual harassment. ‘Toxic masculinity’ is toxic for men as well as women and children.<sup>15</sup>

Federal and state governments have created an independent organisation called Our Watch to undertake research and help to eliminate violence



against women and children as part of their *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children* (2010-2022).

**Inequality between women and men is central to the drivers and enablers of family and domestic violence.** Our Watch says that it is present where **“women and men do not have equal social status,** power, resources or opportunities, and their voices, ideas and work are not valued equally by society.”<sup>16</sup> Based on a review of the research, Our Watch identifies four major drivers of family and domestic violence<sup>17</sup>:

- Condoning of violence against women;
- Men’s control of decision making and limits to women’s independence;
- Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity;
- Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance, and control.

Factors that contribute to violence against women and children include:

- Condoning of violence in general;
- Experience of, and exposure to, violence;
- Factors that can weaken prosocial behaviour, (e.g. stress, environmental factors, natural disasters and crises, male-dominated settings, and heavy alcohol consumption) and therefore reduce empathy, respect and concern for women;
- Backlash and resistance to prevention and to the equality of women and men.<sup>18</sup>

A study by Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety found that economic stress brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has been a factor that influenced the beginning or escalation of violence between partners.<sup>19</sup> This is an example of how these contributing factors can influence the incidence of family and domestic violence.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities the drivers of family and domestic violence are related to the history of colonisation. Sherry Balcombe, an Olkola / Djabaguy woman from far north Queensland, who leads the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Victoria explains:

*“Aboriginal people have experienced powerlessness since colonisation, both men and women. This has created a powder keg of emotions and feelings of uselessness particularly for our men. This is evident by the many strong women who are leaders in our communities Australia wide. In traditional times it was up to the men in our communities to protect and provide for the women and children, but due to their treatment and powerlessness our men have experienced self-doubt. The degradation they feel is passed to the people that they love the most. The ones that will forgive them, the ones who will continue to look to them for protection, acceptance and love.*

*“These actions are very much accepted but not acknowledged and as such they continue and have created the next generation of abusers who see it as normal, and something that everyone does. Abuse becomes accepted behaviour. So, **victims are stuck on the treadmill of having nowhere to go, no one to support or love them. So where could they possibly go even if they are believed?***

*“There is shame for reporting. We have had Aboriginal women, particularly in remote communities, standing up against domestic violence only to be ignored or the behaviour justified not only by their families but by their communities.*

*“Sadly, we have very much a ‘cone of silence’ around these kinds of behaviour. We have been conditioned not to ‘tell’ or not to inform authorities as nothing will be done. If it is, it is very little, and then the abused must confront the abuser as they have no support and nowhere else to go. They are often shunned and cast out by their communities for speaking up and/or ostracised for letting the ‘secret’ out.*

*“This is very much the same with child abuse within our communities. Nobody wants to be the dobber, or the person who ‘tells’ so the*



# Violence and Abuse



*behaviour continues in the shadows, the same as domestic violence.*

*"So, we need to stand up and teach that this is unacceptable, it is not part of our culture to abuse our families or children.*

*"We need to teach our young ones to respect each person, to place pride in themselves and their own behaviour and we need to shine a light on the darkest corners in our communities to protect our most vulnerable.*

*"This starts with recognising the behaviour and re-education in schools, in homes, and in churches. Programs like Red Dust Healing<sup>20</sup> are a prime example of re-education looking at why it is happening and the effects it has not only on the abuser but on the abused. Only then will we have a new way of being. Only then will respect, love and compassion be our new narrative.*

*"Red Dust Healing has been so successful because it looks at the person as a whole like a tree. Their roots are their experiences their learned behaviour! And if it is to grow big and strong the tree must have strong foundations on which to flourish." - Sherry Balcombe<sup>21</sup>*

## Spiritual Violence and Abuse

More research is needed to understand spiritual violence and abuse. Denigrating a person's religious beliefs, spiritual practices, or culture, preventing them from practising their faith or culture, forcing them to participate in religious or cultural activities, or **"manipulating religious teachings or cultural traditions to excuse violence"** or to exert control over them, are all examples of spiritual violence and abuse.<sup>22</sup>

Existing research suggests that the incidence of domestic violence and abuse within Christian congregations is similar to the rate within the general population in which they are located.<sup>23</sup>

However it is alarming to learn that "abused Christian women are more likely to remain in or return to unsafe relationships, citing religious beliefs to support such decisions. Christian women who suffer domestic violence display a tendency to use Christian symbolism and religious language to explain or tolerate abuse, and to remain in or return to marriages that contain domestic violence."<sup>24</sup> This has been described as an added vulnerability. These women cite "the undesirability of divorce, the need to love and honour husbands, and the power of forgiveness and prayer to generate change in the abuser."<sup>25</sup>

We know that some men in the Catholic community are perpetrators of domestic violence, including spiritual violence and abuse, and we feel especially responsible to make clear that this behaviour is sinful. The Bible cannot be legitimately interpreted to justify male power and control over women and children. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* does not support the idea that men are superior to women and entitled to dominate them. Canon law does not encourage, much less require, women to remain in violent or abusive marriages. Church teaching on the family affirms that in cases of violence and abuse separation can be "morally necessary" for the safety of victims.<sup>26</sup>

Perpetrators are responsible for their behaviour and are "ultimately the only ones who have the capacity to change their situation".<sup>27</sup> They "can be good at hiding the violence, publicly presenting as kind, loving, charming and likeable, but behave in cruel, violent, undermining and manipulative ways in private".<sup>28</sup>

Perpetrators are not beyond the reach of God's transforming love. They can change. And all of us must take responsibility for changing the cultural factors in our Church and society that have allowed violence against women and children to flourish.



# Respect, Dignity and Justice, Transformation and Hope

## Jesus Rejects Violence

Jesus' way of relating to women could not be more different from the toxic masculinity of the 'man box rules'. Consider the story of the woman threatened with stoning (John 8:1-11). A woman – but somehow not the man – caught committing adultery is dragged in front of Jesus in the temple by the Scribes and Pharisees in order to set a trap for Jesus. Her life hangs in the balance, but she is not allowed to speak. She is treated as a non-person, disposable, just a tool in a power game.

Jesus uses his status as a male teacher to turn the situation around. He rejects the Scribes' and Pharisees' understanding of sin and God's response to it, which appears to justify violence against women. He actively intervenes to prevent it. Jesus' response shows that an authentic understanding of the righteousness of God concerning relations between women and men is transformative and saves all concerned from such violence.<sup>29</sup>

In this story Jesus rejects the use of religious traditions to justify violence.

## Structures of Sin

Family and domestic violence is more than a matter of some men behaving badly. It involves direct violence, where the instigator of an act of violence can be traced to a person or persons, but it also involves structural and cultural dimensions in which we all may be implicated, sometimes unconsciously or involuntarily.

Structural violence is built into systems and institutions and their policies and practices. It can show up as the unequal distribution of power and privilege, unequal access to resources and life chances.<sup>30</sup> Cultural violence involves social norms that make direct and structural violence seem natural or right or at least acceptable.<sup>31</sup>

Structural and cultural violence enable direct violence, then events of direct violence reinforce







structural and cultural violence. Direct violence is like the tip of the iceberg. That is why in addition to addressing the personal sin of perpetrators of family and domestic violence, we must also name and confront structural and cultural violence as structures of sin.

Confronting structures of sin requires both personal and collective effort. Our systems, structures, laws and policies, culture and attitudes are a collective enterprise yet action for change requires personal commitment too. We can remain willfully ignorant of the damaging ways in which structures and culture can function as drivers or enablers of family and domestic violence or simply passively acquiesce in them. We may unconsciously internalise attitudes and narratives that are not consistent with the Good News of Jesus. On the other hand, we can instead choose to take responsibility, and to reflect critically on the drivers and enablers of family and domestic violence in Church communities and in Australian society.

Many things are needed, but here we want to reflect specifically on how Christian faith can be misused to justify, legitimise, or normalise violence against women and children.

In her research on violence in Christian families, University of Notre Dame Australia researcher Leonie Westenberg identifies three areas in which religious language can perpetuate domestic violence; “the first concerns women’s submission and male leadership; the second centres on the sanctity of marriage; and the third connects the value of suffering to the virtue of forgiveness.”<sup>32</sup>

## Submission and Leadership

Some Christian men appeal to the household codes in Colossians 3-4, Ephesians 5-6 and 1 Peter 2-3 to justify their sense of entitlement to be ‘head’ of the household and to control women and children. **These codes of behaviour, “inspired by Hellenistic moral philosophies and by the ancient literature on household management” reflect “mentalities common in ancient Greco-Roman societies regarding the hierarchic order of the household and the submission of women and slaves.”<sup>33</sup>** These codes demand that those who were considered socially inferior – women, children, and slaves – submit to the authority of husbands, fathers, and masters. These codes do not reflect a context in which the equal dignity of every human being created in the image and likeness of God is acknowledged, or in which marriage is based on a relationship of love, mutuality, and partnership.

Today the Church does not ask women to be subservient to their husbands any more than it endorses slavery. Rather, the relationship between spouses should reflect their equality in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Furthermore, the respect due to each member of a family, household or community should reflect the respect and care shown for others by Christ.

In the language we use in homilies, hymns, and all manner of Church communications, we can take care to change “language that can seem to encourage dominance, power, and submission”



to language that demonstrates “the love of Christ, whose power is at the service of the weak and vulnerable, and stands in judgement on all abuse and violence.”<sup>34</sup>

## The Lives of Women are Sacred

Whenever a woman or child is subjected to violence, abuse or coercive control, the image of God and the freedom of the children of God is violated.

When we talk about marriage, we should consider how our words will be heard by and impact upon women and children living in situations of domestic violence. They are present in our parishes, schools, and communities. They need to hear that their lives are sacred, that they are worthy of respect, and that they should be afforded justice.

Men need to understand that they do not have a biblical warrant to dominate and control women and children. They can play a positive role by having tough conversations about this with friends and relatives.

Marriage exists for the good of people; the people in the marriage, not just the institution itself, are worthy of respect. Perpetrators of violence and abuse in families are the ones who are undermining the sanctity of marriage, not those who leave marriages seeking safety, dignity and wellbeing for themselves and their children.

In *Amoris Laetitia* Pope Francis names “sexual manipulation, submission, and violence as fundamental distortions that contradict the very nature of marriage”.<sup>35</sup> We need to demonstrate that we have heard and believe women when they speak of these realities.

Help is available both for victim-survivors and for perpetrators who want to change their behaviour. Many faith-based agencies and other social service organisations are involved in this work, and we should make sure that we speak about it and that our communities know about it.

## Suffering, Forgiveness and Justice

In cases of violence and abuse, discussion of forgiveness should not be separated from consideration of the cardinal virtue of justice. We cannot preach forgiveness without justice to the victims of violence without tacitly colluding with perpetrators. We should support forgiveness which does not accept the injustice of domestic violence but rather calls for its repudiation.<sup>36</sup> Forgiveness must be linked with justice and dignity. In situations of violence and abuse it is the virtue of justice that must be emphasised.

Our faith provides hope for transformation for both victim-survivors and perpetrators. It calls us to believe and support women and children experiencing violence and to ensure their safety and well-being. It calls us to challenge perpetrators to take responsibility for their behaviour and to assist them to change.



# Building Community Capacity for Respectful Relationships

Ensuring the safety and respecting the dignity of those who experience violence and abuse is an urgent priority which must also be accompanied by preventative action.

Laws and policies play an important role, but these will not succeed without community action and cultural change too. Faith communities can play a powerful role in reducing domestic violence. As Catholic Health Australia says, “parish priests and other community leaders are in an ideal position to educate the community, inform and support victims of violence and assist on the ground addressing systemic issues in line with our faith.”<sup>37</sup>

Many people and programs are working tirelessly to support those experiencing domestic violence and to reduce the violence in our society. They have a variety of approaches from nationwide advocacy and research, survivor-led advocacy groups, attitudinal change and awareness-raising programs, to local grass-root supports for people

experiencing domestic violence and their children, and programs working directly with perpetrators of domestic violence. It is important to work at all these levels, and for the community, especially those who are experiencing violence and abuse, to know about these efforts.

Several dioceses, including the Archdiocese of Perth, the Diocese of Broken Bay, and the Diocese of Parramatta, have implemented responses to domestic violence. These include policies, procedures, and training for priests and ministers in the parish setting – and even an app for women to be able to journal their experiences and access Bible passages at the same time. Their published resources provide useful information for individuals and communities on how to respond to violence and abuse.<sup>38</sup>

Catholic Health Australia, Caritas Australia and Catholic Social Services Australia are among those working to support women and children





experiencing domestic violence with healthcare, accommodation, counselling, support, and care.

CatholicCare Broken Bay's Safe Homes is an example of a program that provides casework, support, counselling, and recovery for people experiencing domestic violence. It has specific programs to support the development of children and their healing from trauma, and provides group sessions for various groups, including sessions to help perpetrators to understand the impact of their behaviour on their family and to transform their choices.

Choosing Change is a program of CatholicCare in the Archdiocese of Sydney. It is specifically for men who perpetrate domestic violence. As Dr Lauren Kadwell from CatholicCare Sydney says:

*"Men may choose to change if they believe that their violence-supporting beliefs go against other values they hold important – such as that they want their families to feel cared for, loved and respected by them. When this occurs, men can decide to take responsibility for their thoughts and actions that disrespect, blame and hurt their (ex)partners and children, and instead choose to practise empathy, accountability, safety and care in their relationships."*<sup>39</sup>

The program focuses on the individual's responsibility to change and seeks the community's support to uphold that decision for transformation.

There are also grass-roots programs that work with specific communities such as asylum-seekers which can respond to the layered and intersecting trauma which they may be experiencing while also recognising their resilience. For example, the House of Welcome in western Sydney provides housing and all-round support for women and children seeking asylum, who are often not eligible for housing from government systems due to their visa status. A dedicated caseworker works with these women to provide the sensitive care required. The House of Welcome also recognises the resilience of these women who protect their families each day and show incredible resourcefulness. For example, they have created a social enterprise catering program to provide training and employment.

Red Dust Healing is a group program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women that examines the intergenerational effects of colonisation on the mental, physical, and spiritual wellbeing of families and encourages individuals to confront and deal with the problems, hurt and anger in their lives. It facilitates the understanding of rejection, grief and loss being the foundation of all hurt. It encourages participants "to examine their own personal hurt and allows them to heal from within, addressing family and personal relationships and what may have been lifelong patterns of violence, abuse and neglect".<sup>40</sup>



## Conclusion

The roots of violence lie in the abuse of power to control and dominate others. This stands in stark contrast to the relationships to which God calls us – relationships marked by equality and reciprocity rather than domination and violence, respect and freedom rather than coercion and control.

While perpetrators bear primary responsibility for direct violence, we are mindful of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse's finding that cultural factors have enabled such abuse in the Church. We believe that cultural factors in the Church and in society also play an important role in the violence and abuse women suffer in families, households, communities, and workplaces.

Listening to women and reflecting on available research, we have come to understand that some of the ways in which Church people speak about leadership and submission, the sanctity of marriage, suffering and forgiveness, may contribute to a culture in which the domination and control of women by men is justified and normalised.

**We can take greater care in the language that we use.** We can speak more clearly about the sinfulness of domestic violence. We can debunk the misuse of faith sources to justify violent or abusive

behaviour or to coerce women in marriages marked by these behaviours to stay in unsafe situations. We can ensure that our responses are evidence-based and trauma-informed.

Our faith communities and organisations are among those working in a broad range of ways to support those who experience violence and abuse, and to address the drivers and enablers of violence. We thank those who are campaigning for justice, those who are providing immediate assistance to people who have experienced violence and abuse, and those who are promoting change in attitudes and behaviour so that our whole community can become more respectful in all our relationships. We ask parishes, schools, and Church organisations to make this good work better known.

Greater attention to respect for the dignity of each person made in the image and likeness of God and the equality in Christ of all people, imitation of the Christ-like quality of respect and care for all people especially the poorest and most vulnerable, and the practice of the virtues of justice and solidarity can enable us to be more true to the Good News of Jesus.



## Notes

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## Please support the work of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Office for Justice, Ecology and Peace

The Office for Justice, Ecology and Peace is an agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. It supports and assists the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service.

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# Getting Help

**CatholicCare agencies in dioceses will be able to help you to find the assistance that you need. Find nearby Catholic Social Services Australia members here <https://cssa.org.au/our-members/>**

## National Contacts

### Emergencies and Immediate Danger

000 – Police Call this number for emergencies and in cases of immediate danger at any time of the day or night.

If you need someone to translate a phone call into a language other than English, call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 13 14 50.

If you find it difficult to hear or speak, contact the National Relay Service (NRS) via any of their phone numbers or access points, including 0423 677 767 (SMS relay), 1300 555 727 (voice relay) or 133 677 (TTY).

### Information, Counselling and Support

1800-RESPECT

T: 1800 737 732

W: [1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au)

Confidential 24/7 information, counselling and support services are available at this number to support people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

1800 Respect has a quick exit button.

### Counselling Online

W [counsellingonline.org.au](http://counsellingonline.org.au)

T (02) 6207 9977 Australian Capital Territory

T 1800 422 599 Regional New South Wales

T (02) 9361 8000 Metropolitan New South Wales

T 1800 131 350 Northern Territory

T 1800 177 833 Regional Queensland

T (07) 3837 5989 Metropolitan Queensland

T 1300 131 340 South Australia

T 1800 811 994 Tasmania

T 1800 888 236 (DirectLine) Victoria

T 1800 198 024 Regional Western Australia

T (08) 9442 5000 Metropolitan Western Australia

Counselling Online is a free and confidential national service to support people affected by alcohol and drug use. Available 24/7.

### Rape and Domestic Violence Services (RDVS)

T: 1800 943 539 Domestic Violence Impact Line available 24/7

T: 1800 497 212 LGBTIQ+ Violence Service available 24/7

T: 1800 211 028 Sexual Assault Counselling Australia

Online counselling available 24/7.

RDVS has a quick exit button.

### Children & Young People

T: 1800 55 1800 Kids Helpline Australia offers a free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.

W: [kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)

Kids Helpline does not have a quick exit button.

### Men Experiencing Domestic and Family Violence

Mensline: 1300 78 99 78 is specifically for men experiencing Domestic and Family Violence

[www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)

Mensline does not have a quick exit button.

1800-RESPECT: 1800 737 732 provides confidential 24/7 information, counselling and support service for men as well as women who are impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

[1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au)

1800 Respect has a quick exit button

### Men Concerned about their Own Behaviour

T: (03) 9428 2899 or 1300766491 - The Men's Referral Service is for men who are concerned about their own violent and/or abusive behaviour. Available 12-9pm weekdays.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

T: 1800 105 303 - Djirra provides counselling and support services for First Nation Peoples 9am-5pm weekdays.

T: 1800 435 799 - Dardi Munwurro is for Aboriginal men experiencing family violence issues or stressful relationships. Available 24/7.

### Migrant and Refugee Women

T: 1800 755 988 - InTouch provides confidential information, counselling and support services for migrant and refugee women. 9am-5pm, weekdays.

### LGBTIQ+ People

T: 1800 542 847 - WithRespect is for LGBTIQ+ people of all ages and their families, experiencing difficulty in their relationships, including family violence. 9am-5pm weekdays, Wednesdays 9am-11pm, 10am-10pm weekends.

### Understanding Risks

T: 1800 015 188 - Safesteps helps people in Victoria to understand their family violence risks, explore safety options, and make appropriate referrals to services. Available 24/7.