

**BAPTIST CARE  
AUSTRALIA**



**Domestic  
Violence  
More than  
Skin Deep.**

**Our Pastoral Response**

# Domestic Violence More than Skin Deep.

RECOGNISE. RESPOND. REFER.

MORETHANSKINDEEP.  
ORG.AU

## Introduction



“We desire that our churches are places where people can find safety and support. For some families, church will be the first place to seek support to deal with domestic violence. Yet we often lack the understanding and resources needed to respond effectively.” Keith Jobberns, National Director of Ministries

As we seek to raise awareness of domestic violence and bring these issues to light in our churches, it is likely that incidents of domestic violence will be reported or become apparent. When this happens it is vitally important that our Pastors, leaders and volunteers are well equipped to know how to respond.

Churches are indeed well positioned to play a role in responding to domestic violence, but we must know how to do that most effectively and appropriately, and to understand what types of responses may be unhelpful, despite our best intentions.

Recognise. Respond. Refer. Outlines an appropriate process for detection and response to domestic violence.

We encourage you to familiarise yourself with this resource. We also encourage you to take your leadership team and key volunteers through it, highlighting any reporting requirements they might have and seeking to ensure you give the best possible support to victims of domestic violence.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Jobberns".

Keith Jobberns  
National Ministries Director, Australian Baptist Ministries



**61%** of women who have experienced violence from an ex-partner had children in their care when the violence occurred, and **48%** stated the children had seen and heard the violence.

For **62%** of the women who had experienced physical assault by a male perpetrator, the most recent incident was in their home.

## Domestic Violence In The Church

When we scratch below the surface, sadly we see domestic violence often bruises beyond the skin, and although we may not be aware, it does live around us in our churches.

People experiencing domestic violence can seem okay on the outside, but the pain may be raging on the inside. You don't need to be sporting a black eye or a cut lip to be experiencing domestic violence.

We all need to know more about how to see the signs of the pain that's usually hidden under the surface.

### Is it only women who experience domestic violence?

Violence against anyone is wrong, but the statistics presented here show that violence against women is one of the most pervasive and shameful human rights violations. As Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, said, "It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace."

Overwhelmingly, records from across the country tell us that women have been the victims of domestic violence at the hands of a partner three times more often than men.

There are many myths and misconceptions surrounding this issue, including why women stay, the role of alcohol, stress, or mental illness, and how far-reaching this issue is. We'd encourage you to investigate further by visiting [www.morethanskindeep.org.au](http://www.morethanskindeep.org.au).

## The Seven Types Of Domestic Violence

There are actually seven types of domestic violence, with some not so apparent to our fellow churchgoers. People may present themselves as okay, but they're not: the symptoms are not always what you'd expect.

Let's all try to learn more about this serious matter, keep a lookout for signs of domestic violence, and together, let's not turn a blind eye. We really need to take a deeper look at this issue.

These seven archetypes have been created to give us all a greater understanding of the types of domestic violence. Often there are no physical signs that someone is the victim of domestic violence.

Of women who had experienced violence from an ex-partner, **24% had never sought advice or support.**

Statistics taken from Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and definitions from White Ribbon Australia.



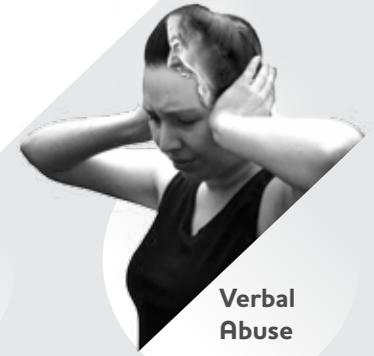
**Sexual Abuse**

Any form of forced sex or sexual degradation, such as sexual activity without consent, causing pain during sex, coercive sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease, making the victim perform sexual acts unwillingly, criticising, or using sexually degrading insults.



**Spiritual Abuse**

Denying access to ceremonies, land, or family, preventing religious observance, forcing victims to do things against their beliefs, denigration of cultural background, or using religious teachings or cultural tradition as a reason for violence.



**Verbal Abuse**

Continual 'put-downs' and humiliation, either privately or publicly, with attacks following clear themes that focus on intelligence, sexuality, body image, and capacity as a parent and spouse.



**Economic Abuse**

Having complete control of all monies, granting no access to bank accounts, providing only an inadequate 'allowance', using any wages earned by the victim for household expenses.



**Emotional Abuse**

Blaming the victim for all problems in the relationship, constantly comparing the victim with others to undermine self-esteem and self-worth, sporadic sulking, withdrawing all interest and engagement (e.g. weeks or days of silence).



**Social Abuse**

Systematic isolation from family and friends through techniques such as ongoing rudeness to family and friends, moving to locations where the victim knows nobody, and forbidding or physically preventing the victim from going out and meeting people — in effect, imprisonment.



**Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse includes directly assaulting the body, using weapons, driving dangerously, destructing property, abusing pets in front of family members, assaulting children, locking the victim out of the house, and depriving sleep.

## How Can We Help?

### Recognise

Our attitude to each other and the way we interact with our peers is really at the heart of how and when we will recognise that something isn't quite right.

When you connect with people at church, through trusting and respectful relationships, you're more likely to be aware of changes to behaviour, which might indicate someone is experiencing domestic and family violence.

Behind someone's 'church-face', you might notice signs such as:

- Unexplained injuries or numerous injuries
- Depression or withdrawal, or uncharacteristic outbursts and anger
- Confusion and poor concentration
- Increased lack of confidence and self-esteem
- Changes to physical appearance (e.g. stops wearing makeup)
- The need to seek unreasonable approval and permission from a partner before making a decision
- Often mentions her partner is 'jealous' or has a 'bad temper'
- Criticised and/or humiliated by her partner in public

Sadly we all need to keep an eye out for the hidden side of domestic violence and the inner pain that those who are affected try to keep behind their church-face.

### Detection And Pastoral Response To Domestic Violence

Training regarding effective responses to incidences of domestic violence is now included as part of each Association's Safe Spaces Training.

Timely and appropriate direct responses to domestic violence are critical to:

- Ensure the safety of the person experiencing domestic violence
- Prevent further violence
- Provide appropriate support and assistance to those affected by domestic violence over the longer term
- Enforce the accountability of perpetrators

The goal of a pastor or church member is to create a safe environment where people experiencing domestic violence are able to trust you to deal appropriately with their issues. There may be significant feelings of fear and shame associated with the situation.

A person who is experiencing domestic violence may present you with a direct revelation of violence, but it is likely those affected will also present to you in an indirect manner. If you suspect there is domestic violence, do not be afraid to ask direct questions in a caring manner such as "How does he behave when he is angry?", "Do you become frightened?", "Are you worried about your safety or that of the children?", "Does this happen often?" (SA guidebook for churches)

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## Detection And Pastoral Response To Domestic Violence

- 1) Believe them! Assure her that abuse cannot be accepted in any circumstances. Do not blame her, or ask her what she has done to contribute to the violence. The violence is not her fault. To believe her is to begin a process of empowering her
- 2) Listen to them! Be patient. Allow her to express her pain and show compassion. Ask questions of clarification that will allow her to express the reality of the situation and give you a clearer perspective
- 3) Increase safety as a first priority! Find out what she is already doing to keep safe. Assess the current risk for her and her children, then help her develop a plan for safety. Explore the options with her. For support in safety planning, use the DVSAT to assess risk: <https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/CrisisAndEmergency/FDV/Documents/2015/PracticeTool4Personalsafetyplantemplate.pdf>
- 4) Empower them! Do not make decisions for her. Ask how she wants you to help but respect her right to make decisions. Affirm that she is the person best placed to map a path forward
- 5) Decrease isolation! Assure her that she is not alone. Provide referrals to support services and encourage her to access them (see back page). Support her even if she decides to return to the home and the abusive situation. Let her know she has your continuing support

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## Detection And Pastoral Response To Domestic Violence

It is important to recognise that the person experiencing domestic violence may choose not to leave. There are a variety of factors that may contribute to this:

- Safety - Leaving the relationship is not always the safest option. People affected by domestic violence are more likely to be killed in the 18 months post leaving
- Isolation – a feeling that she will lose the support of family, friends and perhaps even her faith community
- Financial security and the loss of the family home
- Hope that things will get better
- Children – they love the perpetrator. Fear of removing them from their father
- She may still deeply love the perpetrator
- Fear of being a single parent. Feelings of inadequacy as to whether she has the capacity to cope if she leaves

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## Respond

### Advice For Those Who Are Not Pastors

It's not possible for all of us to become experts in domestic violence, but there are little things you can do if you recognise someone is experiencing domestic violence in their home or their relationship.

- You can make yourself available, in a quiet and private location.
- Listen to your peer. Encourage them to talk about their concerns. It is better if meeting someone of the opposite sex to have someone else of that same sex present for the conversation.
- Resist the temptation to tell someone what they should do.
- Check their immediate safety at home.
- Assess if other people are assisting.
- Debrief with your pastor and follow through any mandatory reporting requirements.
- Refer your peer to support – see back page.
- Believe your peer's story and reassure her that it is not her fault.

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### Responding To Perpetrators

While we believe people can change, there is some reason to be cautious with programs aiming to assist men to take responsibility for their violence. Research has shown that 'anger management' programs can actually teach some perpetrators how to become more controlling in less obvious ways to others outside the family, therefore these are not recommended where there are power and control issues. Men's Behaviour Change Programs, on the other hand, address the core issues of domestic violence and increase safety for women and children.

Similarly, generalist couples counselling should not be recommended where there are issues of violence or control, rather couples should only be referred to someone with specific training in domestic violence issues; otherwise this can actually increase the risk of harm.

The Attorney General's Department accredits men's behaviour programs. They also provide a list of principles you should look for before recommending any program.

For approved programs in NSW see <https://www.mbcn-nsw.net>

## Reporting Responsibilities

If children under 16 years are being exposed to domestic violence then you have an obligation to complete the Mandatory Reporters Guide (MRG) which can be found at: <https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>

This will guide you as to whether a report is required to Community Services or not. The outcome of the MRG should be printed and kept.

If you believe an adult is at risk of harm, you should encourage them to make a statement at their local Police Station, ideally to a Domestic Violence Liaison Officer, however if one of these is not available, then the officer on duty. Advise the person to always get the Officer's name and rank, as well as an event number.

If you believe there is imminent risk of serious harm, you should call 000.

## Refer

It's important that you believe and validate your peer's experience. Be non-judgemental, and continue to be supportive, encouraging, open and honest.

You can be prepared with information about support services available, and encourage your peer to;

- Contact 1800 RESPECT via phone or online
- Visit the police or a doctor
- Make contact with a counselling service
- Download the "Daisy" app for an easy way to access a wide range of services. Visit [1800respect.or.au/daisy](https://1800respect.or.au/daisy) to learn more.

If you or someone close to you has experienced or is experiencing domestic violence, please know there is support available to you. Seek out a trusted friend or access the services on the following page.



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RESPOND.  
REFER.**

**WWW.MORETHAN  
SKINDEEP.ORG.AU**

### **1800 RESPECT**

#### **National DV Service**

If you or someone you know is affected by sexual assault, family, or domestic violence, there is support available to you right now.

 **1800 RESPECT  
(1800 737 732)**

 **1800RESPECT.org.au**

### **Men's Referral Service**

For men who want help to stop using violent and controlling behaviour.

 **1300 766 491**  
 **mrs.org.au**

### **LifeLine**

For support and information about suicide prevention.

 **Call 13 11 14**  
 **lifeline.org.au**