

# Addressing domestic and family violence



Churches of Christ in Queensland is committed to achieving a future where all people are safe, respected and free from violence and abuse.

As an organisation we recognise that domestic and family violence is not just a private or personal issue. The effects of violence have a significant impact on individuals, families and on the broader community.

We are committed to implementing practices that support our people to access safety and security both in and out of the workplace.

By doing this we embody our values in advancing the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of everyone we encounter, demonstrating integrity through our actions.

Domestic and family violence is widespread in our community and has serious, far-reaching impacts on the lives of victims and survivors. In Australia approximately one woman is killed by her current or former partner every week, often after a history of domestic and family violence<sup>1</sup>.

This figure is considerably higher within Indigenous communities, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women being five times more likely to be victims of domestic homicide than other Australians<sup>2</sup>.

## Impacts of domestic and family violence in our communities

Churches of Christ in Queensland operates a range of services to assist families, the elderly and people in need. We see the impacts of domestic and family violence through our services:

- Approximately 80 percent of families referred to our early intervention services are experiencing domestic and family violence
- A large number of young people in our care have witnessed domestic violence, are recovering from this trauma and may re-enact or experience violence in their own relationships
- Domestic and family violence is the major cause of homelessness in Australia.<sup>3</sup> 14 percent of social housing tenants coming to our services in 2016 – 17 were escaping violence
- Elder abuse can occur between family members, but looks different to intimate partner violence. This abuse is more likely to involve financial abuse and other controlling behaviours.
- The third most common issue being discussed with our housing chaplains is relationships with family members – this may not always include domestic and family violence but is a key entry point for understanding its impact on people's lives.
- Our chaplains are also being approached by staff who are affected by domestic and family violence
- Our Mission Action Partners are coming across domestic and family violence regularly, either directly or through their work supporting churches and responding to community need

<sup>1</sup> Our Watch. (2017). *Facts and figures*. Available at: <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/Understanding-Violence/Facts-and-figures>

<sup>2</sup> Our Watch. (2014). *Reporting on Family Violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*. Available at: <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/MediaLibraries/OurWatch/Images>

[/ourwatch\\_reporting\\_on\\_a-ts\\_family\\_violence\\_aa\\_v1.pdf](#)

<sup>3</sup> Department Social Services. (2008). *Women, Domestic and Family Violence and Homelessness: Synthesis Report*. Available at: <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/publications-articles/reducing-violence/women-domestic-and-family-violence-and-homelessness-a-synthesis-report?HTML>

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- The *Not Now, Not Ever* report highlighted that some faith leaders are not willing to assist victims or condemn perpetrators of domestic violence<sup>4</sup> - a common theme among clients of our psychology and counselling service.

## Impacts of domestic and family violence in our workplace

When a member of our staff is affected by domestic and family violence, there are often negative impacts that flow into our workplaces.

Our workforce is over 80 percent female, and modelling suggests that nearly a third of our staff have been affected by domestic and family violence in their lifetime.

Domestic and family violence has a direct cost on our workplace, including:

- Decreased staff performance and productivity
- Increased staff turnover and absenteeism
- Greater number of work related injuries and illness. Studies show that for women aged 15 to 44 years, domestic and family violence is responsible for more of women's experience of disease than smoking or obesity<sup>5</sup>

We also know that:

- 95 percent of victims who experienced stalking, a high risk factor for domestic violence-related homicide, experienced harassment at work.<sup>6</sup>
- Between 25 and 50 percent of women subjected to domestic violence report having lost a job as a result.<sup>7</sup>
- Many victims disclose their experience of domestic violence to their workmates.<sup>8</sup>

## Addressing domestic and family violence

Being true to our values requires us to apply the same level of care and commitment to our staff as we would to those in the community.

Addressing domestic and family violence in our communities and workplaces requires a coordinated, strategic response that understands and addresses the social and cultural context of violence and gender inequality.

To create an organisation that is a safe place for people to come forward about violence, we must first tackle a range of issues, myths and biases. Churches of Christ in Queensland is committed to doing this by:

- Providing appropriate information and training for staff and ministering persons to recognise and respond to domestic and family violence
- Having structures and processes that support people who are affected by violence
- Having structures and processes that ensure the safety of our employees
- Speaking out about violence in our community and what we as an organisation can do to address it

<sup>4</sup> Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland. (2015). *Not Now, Not Ever*. Queensland Government: Brisbane. Available at: <https://www.qld.gov.au/community/documents/getting-support-health-social-issue/dfv-report-vol-one.pdf> p104.

<sup>5</sup> National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, *The Cost of Violence against Women and their Children* (2009). Available at:

[https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05\\_2012/vawc\\_economic\\_report.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/vawc_economic_report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland. (2015). p181.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*