



Anglican Diocese of Adelaide

Submission to the South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence for the

Anglican Diocese of Adelaide's Domestic and Family Violence Working Group

“Not one more” was the call of South Australian women and men gathered on the steps of South Australia’s Parliament House in November 2023, following the deaths of four women within just one week in South Australia. These deaths were believed to be domestic violence homicides, and the group gathered to call for an end to men’s violence against women; violence that is preventable, not inevitable. Joining this call to action were members of the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide’s Domestic and Family Violence Working Group (D&FVWG), a group that has been working on initiatives to better prevent and respond to domestic and family violence for the Diocese since 2019. This submission to the South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (Royal Commission) by the D&FVWG is being made as we seek to strengthen our work as advocates alongside the broader domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) sector to maximise the potential of this Diocese to further contribute to prevention and response efforts.

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence in 2015, successive National Plans to End Violence against Women and Children and the Our Watch primary prevention framework Change the Story, all identify faith communities as priority settings for primary prevention of men’s violence against women. Leaders in faith communities have a powerful influence and role in building and promoting respectful relationships, influencing gender equality and providing support to those who are experiencing DFSV. The role that faith organisations play in better responding to and preventing domestic violence is highlighted in this recent [media article](#), in which Dr Tessa Boyd-Caine from ANROWS states “religion ... is not immune and needs to be a part of the work to tackle domestic violence, like all of us.” This recently released [report](#) from the Australian Institute of Family Studies explains the dual role that religion plays in domestic and family violence. Religious communities and faith beliefs offer coping resources and support for victim-survivors seeking to heal from the effects of DFSV. However, religion can also be manipulated and used by perpetrators to justify their abusive behaviours through the misuse of religious teachings and scripture, in an additional form of domestic abuse, known as spiritual abuse.

The influence that churches and other faith communities have in our society is significant. The latest [census](#) found that more than half of all Australians (52.2%) indicate an affiliation with Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism. If just 10% of those with a religious affiliation attend services weekly, this would equate to 1.4 million Australians engaging in those faith community-based settings across the country each week. There are few remaining settings like these which are as diverse, multigenerational and multicultural, bringing together grandparents, parents, children and youth, First Nations' peoples, refugee and migrant groups. Our faith settings could be better utilised to engage with men to inspire them to champion cultural change. Our faith communities could create initiatives to address DFSV by reinforcing and modelling respectful relationships. If we fail to harness and nurture the potential of faith settings to better prevent and respond to DFSV, they can unfortunately and powerfully sustain and reinforce the gendered drivers of DFSV.

The Anglican Church of Australia is committed to being active agents in contributing to efforts to better prevent and respond to domestic & family violence, at both a national and state level. The [National Anglican Family Violence Project](#) conducted research into the nature and prevalence of domestic and family violence affecting Australian Anglicans, and more information about this research and its findings are available via this [website](#). The Anglican Church of Australia has developed [Ten Commitments for Preventing and Responding to Domestic and Family Violence](#), and has established the Families and Culture Commission to lead this work. The Ten Commitments focus on cultural and systemic change, education, training, and support. Further information about domestic and family violence prevention and response efforts by the Anglican Church of Australia can be found via this link to the [Ten Commitments](#) website.

The Anglican Diocese of Adelaide comprises 72 worship centres across 59 parishes and ten Anglican Schools, with AnglicareSA providing support services to the community. The Diocese includes St Barnabas College, providing tertiary theological education as well as community based non-accredited learning. Our Diocese spans nearly 23,000 square kilometres, including the metropolitan area of Adelaide, the Barossa Valley, and Kangaroo Island. A further 31 parishes in the Dioceses of The Murray and The Willochra are represented through membership with the Domestic & Family Violence Working Group.

Our vision is Adelaide Anglicans flourishing and united in God's love as we:

- **Grow** in discipleship
- **Connect** and engage with communities
- **Advocate** and work together for social justice, and
- **Care** for creation and each other.

The Domestic and Family Violence Working Group (D&FVWG) was formed by the Diocese in March 2019 following the first National Conference on Responding to Family Violence in the Anglican Church in Australia.

The work of preventing and responding to domestic and family violence relates to all areas of the Adelaide Anglicans Vision Plan 2023 - 2025:

Grow in Discipleship: The work of the D&FVWG contributes to the freedom of all people, especially women and children, to pursue their baptismal vocation in the church without fear of any form of violence and oppression.

Connect and engage with communities: Church communities are healthier when they are released from the expectation of silence concerning domestic and family violence among their members. Permission is given for the church to talk about respectful relationships and behaviour as the work of cultural change belongs rightfully in the wider community, as well as within our own.

Advocate and work together for social justice: The D&FVWG will continue to seek and support training initiatives within the Diocese and seeks to extend this reach throughout the Anglican Province of South Australia. The D&FVWG is engaged in research that will benefit congregations through providing preaching, teaching and worship resources.

Care for creation and each other: Training on bystander approaches to preventing and responding to DFSV is provided by the Diocese, aimed at laity and clergy alike. It is anticipated that as our work progresses, and the Ten Commitments become more well known, every Anglican community will have clergy and lay people equipped to recognise domestic abuse, respond effectively to disclosures, and be able to refer people to wider agencies and specialised support services if they have been subjected to or are perpetrating DFSV.

Examples of past initiatives of the D&FVWG, following the framework of interest from the Royal Commission's Issues Paper (prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing) and aligned to the Anglican Church of Australia's Ten Commitments, include:

- Training on recognising and responding to domestic and family violence for Diocesan clergy in February 2020 presented by Women's Safety Services SA and a lived experience advocate.
- A Motion presented to the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide's Synod in October 2021 affirmed the findings and recommendations of the *National Anglican Family Violence Research Report (June 2021)* and supported the adoption of the "Ten Commitments" to guide the cultural change required to mitigate the issue of DFSV in the Church.
- An [Evensong Service](#) was held on December 5, 2021, at St Peter's Cathedral, within the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, as a Service of Lament for the victim-survivors of DFSV and to further commit the Church

community to working for the protection and empowerment of women and children.

- Posters and other resources promoting the Ten Commitments have been made available for parishes to share and display.
- A Faith Based Train the Trainer MATE (Motivating Action Through Empowerment) Bystander Training program was provided in September 2022 for clergy and church workers to equip them to offer MATE Bystander training across the Diocese.
- MATE Bystander Training workshops were conducted at the 2023 Willochra Clergy Conference, the 2023 Adelaide Clergy Conference, for Safe Ministry Coordinators, and now workshops for Parish Councils are being conducted in 2024.
- To raise awareness about gender-based violence and highlight the positive role that everyone can play in preventing violence and building safer communities during the 16 Days of Activism campaign in 2022 the D&FVWG collated information to provide clergy with liturgical resources and prayer points to enable awareness and recognition of gender-based violence to become an integral part of Parish activities and services and to promote the Domestic and Family Violence page on the Adelaide Anglicans [website](#).
- In 2023 the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide commissioned a study into the experiences of clergy and church workers in the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide when responding to the abuse of children, sexual assault of adults, and domestic and family violence. The research was conducted by Professor Sarah Wendt and Dr Josephine Clarke, from Flinders University SWIRLS (Social Work Innovation Research Living Space). The D&FVWG members participated in a trial survey and provided feedback to researchers on the recommendations. This research is soon to be published and will be made publicly available.
- In 2023 the Diocese created banners for parishes to display in support of the 16 Days of Activism campaign. The banners displayed a QR code that was linked to the [Be There](#) app, a domestic and family violence bystander support resource. Banners were displayed across 18 parishes within the SA metropolitan area.
- A gathering was held in November 2023 at St Peter's Cathedral in North Adelaide to mark the start of the Diocese's 16 Days campaign. Cathedral bells were rung for an hour and a small prayer service was held with an opportunity to light candles. This [article](#) was featured in the Adelaide Guardian about the 16 Days of Activism campaign.
- For International Women's Day in March 2024 the D&FVWG highlighted and celebrated contributions from pioneering women from the Adelaide Diocese by hosting a morning tea and producing an [article](#) for the Adelaide Guardian.

The D&FVWG is a dedicated group within the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide, and we believe meaningful change can occur, guided by the framework of the Ten Commitments and informed by broader national and state efforts to better prevent and respond to DFSV.

We commend the work of the Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence in South Australia and seek to further opportunities for collaboration to contribute to the solutions needed to end men's violence against women. The Anglican Diocese of Adelaide is committed to strengthening our partnerships across the DFSV sector in South Australia to continue to work towards the realisation of our Diocese's vision, and the broader goal of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children to eliminate DFSV in one generation.