



## Taking action to end family violence

April 2021

**Warning:** The following action includes information and an account of family, domestic and sexual violence.

*Working with women and men together for justice, You plant seeds of reconciliation and unity through Your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ; Through the ordinary, You offer transformation, receiving our acts of Love, redeeming us through Your compassion.*

Section of a prayer from the World Council of Churches, 'Prayers –16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence', 4 December 2020

We are all made equally in the image of God, and God desires hope-filled lives for all of us. Our faith reminds us that to love God is also to love others as well as ourselves. In our homes and through our most intimate relationships, we learn foundational characteristics of love, respect and trust. The effects of violence are far more profound than physical damage. Violence impacts us mentally, emotionally and spiritually – to our very sense of self. When it takes place in the home by people who are trusted, violence has an even deeper impact on those things that are foundational and life-giving in relationships; trust, respect, and a sense of being loved.

In March 2021, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs presented their 425-page report following their investigation into family, domestic and sexual violence. The Committee made 88 recommendations. The Committee concluded that the *National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children 2010 – 2022* had not achieved its objective of a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children. Over the life of the National Plan, the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments had spent \$3 billion in an attempt to reduce family, domestic and sexual violence. Yet, every eight days, on average, a woman is murdered by her partner or former partner.

The Committee concluded that governments cannot eliminate family, domestic and sexual violence alone. A whole of society response is needed.

The Committee grouped their recommendations into five key areas:

- The National Plan should involve a more uniform response across Australia with a consistent definition of family, domestic and sexual violence;
- The National Plan needs to have ongoing and timely, independent monitoring and evaluation to identify what works, what does not work and why;
- The need for increased efforts in raising awareness and understanding of the many forms of family, domestic and sexual violence;
- The National Plan should improve the access of victims and survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence to specialist services, housing, legal aid and financial assistance; and
- The National Plan should increase measures to deal with perpetrators of family, domestic and sexual violence. There should be increased penalties for domestic violence orders breaches and improved information sharing between authorities about perpetrators. There should also be research to understand better what motivates perpetrators and how to change their behaviour.

### **Survivor's story from the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria**

*I lived in a violent marriage for years. I was very naive at first and really didn't know people like him existed. He would kick me, slap me, push me, trip me over, throw things at me, stand on my feet, yell abuse, call me names like 'social cripple', the list goes on and on, but he never punched me.*

*In fact, he would say to people that he couldn't stand 'wife bashers'. He would tell me that he didn't want the children to play with so and so's children because they were a bad influence.*

*He tried to isolate us from all those who loved us, and new people we met would go through character assassinations by him.*



*Life was continuous hell, fear and horror, and he always blamed the children or me for his violence. Things got a lot worse towards the end. He would threaten to run us all off the road in the car and kill us. The violence became a daily occurrence, if not several episodes a day.*

### What You Can Do

Write polite and respectful letters to:

**Senator the Hon Marise Payne**  
Minister for Women  
PO Box 6100  
Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

**The Hon Scott Morrison MP**  
Prime Minister  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

**Senator the Hon Anne Ruston**  
Minister for Women's Safety  
PO Box 6100  
Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

Points to make in your letters:

- Welcome the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs report into family, domestic and sexual violence.
- Seek assurance that the Commonwealth Government implement the recommendations of the report.
- Specifically, ask that the Commonwealth Government work with state and territory governments to adopt a uniform and broad definition of family, domestic and sexual violence.
- Also, ask that the Commonwealth Government act on the recommendation to fund the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to collect national data on the number of people unable to access specialist family, domestic and sexual violence services.
- Request that the Commonwealth Government follow through on the recommendation to establish an independent National Commissioner for the prevention of family, domestic and sexual violence.
- Act on the recommendation to fund the eSafety Commissioner to hold technology corporations to account and ensure they provide products that create a safer online environment for women and girls.

### Resources for congregations

Resources on family violence can be found at the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria website: <https://www.dvrcv.org.au/knowledge-centre/our-publications>

Uniting Church National Assembly resources on family violence and Uniting services dealing with family violence can be found at: <https://assembly.uca.org.au/resources/domestic-and-family-violence>

Contact details for Uniting Vic.Tas family violence services can be found at: <https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/services/family-services/family-violence-services/>