

2015 CCVT AGM Resolution in response to Domestic Violence

Resolution: Domestic Violence

Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc., at its Annual General Meeting on May 16, 2015, affirmed the following:

Violence against women is the leading cause of death, disability and illness in Australian Women aged 15-44. It is a broad societal problem that is never acceptable and cannot be justified on any grounds. One aspect of this problem is domestic and family violence, which predominantly affects women and children; between 1999 and 2010 almost 95% of perpetrators of family violence against women were male.

As people committed constitutionally to the Shared Value of Justice, we value the dignity, equality and inherent worth of all persons regardless of gender, race, economic standing or belief system (Genesis 1.27). Therefore, in announcing the Kingdom and expectant of its arrival, we work for social justice, equal opportunity for all persons, and the responsible care and management of the environment. (From the CCVT Inc. Statement of Purpose)

Acknowledging the measures the Federal, State and Local Governments have taken to respond to domestic violence so far, we urge them to go further in their provision of funding and resources to address the causes and outcomes.

We commit ourselves as Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania to be churches that advocate for and live out Christ's message that men and women are created equal in God's image (Genesis 1.27; Galatians 3:28), and will consequently work to change attitudes that contribute to the demeaning of and violence against women.

Moved: Sally Tonkin (CEO, St Kilda Gatehouse, member at Fitzroy North)

Seconded: Graeme Cann (Berwick)

Introduction from Sally Tonkin, Mover of the Motion

"Domestic violence is a major human rights issue across the world and one of the most serious social issues facing women and children in Victoria.

Last year Victoria Police responded to 65,000 incidences of domestic violence.

It is a pervasive, life-threatening crime that impacts on thousands of women and children with serious physical, psychological and economic effects. In my role at St Kilda Gatehouse we work alongside women involved in street based sex work and with young girls and young women who are being commercially sexually exploited. When we trace a woman's story back, how did she get there, in most cases it started with a household affected by domestic violence.

Domestic violence can occur within any intimate relationship, age and ethnicity. It is more likely to be perpetrated by men against women and children.

As Rosie Batty famously said: family violence happens to everybody. No matter how nice your house is, how intelligent you are. It can happen to anyone, and everyone.

This issue is at crisis point. How do we respond as individuals, as families, as a Church community?

We must go upstream. What are the common factors? What is it in our culture and society that breeds such violence.

Is it mental health? Is it drugs and alcohol? Is it stress?

These factors may be present, but only in some cases. Certainly not all.

The research tells us the three common factors found in men who choose to use violence against women and children are:

- Gender inequality – the fact that women and men do not have equal power or resources and that their voices, ideas and work are not valued in the same way
- Holding to traditional and rigid gender stereotypes
- Attitudes, norms, behaviours and practices that support violence

When I realised the common factors weren't poverty, or mental health, or drugs – but rather attitudes I was incredibly encouraged. Because I believe change in these areas are do-able. And a change in this area so closely aligns with our Christian faith. We are men and women created equal in God's image. In believing this we are given a mandate to be part of the change.

It will take time, but if we commit to it as a community, as a denomination, and as individuals – we can be part of that change.

A journalist at the one-year anniversary of the murder of Tracy Connelly said:

“Change is made up of lots and lots of tiny little steps. Change has never happened quickly or easily or because of just one person. It happens slowly, in bits and pieces, and it grows over time as more and more people understand what is needed and what can be done.

Every time we refuse to walk past a standard we won't accept, every time we help another person understand what those standards are, we become a tiny step toward change. When all of us do it together we become part of the overall change that makes our community that much safer.”

Note: The statistics in the motion come from VicHealth study in 2004 and Government of South Australia, Office for Women.”

Introduction from Graeme Cann, Seconder of the Motion

“I am pleased to second this motion and in doing so I want to comment very briefly on the amendment that refers to our commitment to work to change attitudes that contribute to the demeaning of and violence against women. We still have a long way to go in the battle against domestic violence. In my own city of Casey, the special domestic violence unit of the local police make 40 arrests per week relating to violence in families. However, there is hope. One example of that is in our city where the Pastors Network and the Casey City Council and Southern Health received funding to develop a programme specifically to raise awareness of domestic violence in local Churches.

Sixteen churches of various denominations became involved in this programme which saw their pastors and key leaders participate in special training prior to embarking on a four week awareness programme in each of their congregations.

This programme involved four weeks of small group studies, special lesson material for children and youth and a series of four sermons built around the topic of Healthy Relationships. One of the outcomes of this programme was that 80 regular church going women came forward during that four weeks to disclose that they were currently victims of domestic violence and over 40 men disclosed that according to the common definition of violence, they had crossed the line, and recognised that they needed help to change their attitudes and behaviours.

I have seen the value in these churches of starting and continuing the conversation around domestic violence and urge all the delegates not just to vote for the motion and the amendment but to avail

yourselves of the available resources and seriously engage in some of the actions that have been suggested.

It is therefore with very deep conviction and great hope for meaningful conversation and change that I second this motion and the amendment.”

This can be lived out locally by Churches and Mission Agencies affiliated with CCVT by:

- Actively creating awareness about family violence, violence against women and primary prevention in your neighbourhood.
- Regularly facilitating discussions about family violence in our churches and agencies.
- Taking every opportunity to engage with, encourage participation in, and affiliate with, community initiatives like the White Ribbon Campaign, see <http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/>
- Taking intentional action to promote respect and equality; this can be supported by making use of resources like:

Promoting Equal and Respectful Relationships in Faith Communities Manual and Toolkit

www.melbourneanglican.org.au/ServingCommunity/src/Prevention%20of%20Violence%20Against%20Women/Promoting-equal-and-respectful-relationships-manual-and-tool-kit-Feb-2012.pdf

Preventing Violence against Women: what works and what doesn't (in Anglican communities) March 2013

<https://www.melbourneanglican.org.au/ServingCommunity/src/Prevention%20of%20Violence%20Against%20Women/PVAW-what-works-and-what-doesnt-Mar-2013.pdf>

Promoting Peace in Families Model Package developed by the City of Casey

<http://www.casey.vic.gov.au/files/a4ae8bdb-bca3-46f4-95b5-a20e011dc50f/Promoting-Peace-in-Families-Package.pdf>