



Health, Communities, Disability Services and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Committee

SUBMISSION

**Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment
Bill 2016**

Queensland Churches Together

**Anglican Church Southern Queensland
Social Responsibilities Committee**

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Submission

Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016

As members of churches involved in the prevention of domestic and family violence in Queensland we support the objectives of the amended Bill. We offer our support for the concerted effort of the State Government in tackling this serious problem in our society.

The prevention of domestic and family violence has been acknowledged by Christian churches as a serious problem in Australian society for many years. As communities of faith, churches carry pastoral responsibilities for women and children who have suffered domestic and family violence in its various forms. All people have the fundamental right to safety as well as the right to be valued for themselves and their gifts.

Since 1991 the Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Project has been a tangible response by churches of different denominations to respond to the needs and concerns of victims of domestic violence in the Church community. It was recognised that in many instances those needs were inadequately or inappropriately addressed by the Church. Since 2007 the Project has been a Commission of Queensland Churches Together, the peak ecumenical body with a membership of sixteen churches.

We support the proposed *Domestic and Family Violence and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016* that is currently before State Parliament. The objectives of the Bill are in accord with the direction of prevention that churches throughout Queensland have been working toward over many years.

Victims of domestic and family violence are entitled to earlier and more tailored protection. Being able to access protection when violence first begins allows victims an opportunity to remove themselves and their children from the situation before further violence is perpetrated. Tailoring protection to suit the particular needs of victims and their families allows them to be accommodated safely without having to split up the family due to the lack of appropriate accommodation or resources. It also responds to the cultural and religious diversity of the community by offering protection that does not conflict with their beliefs and traditions.

Safety is essential for victims to be able to rebuild their lives without living in fear of reprisals from perpetrators. For this to happen effectively the need to keep victim safety at the forefront of any response to domestic and family violence is essential.

Police are often the first responders to situations of domestic and family violence. The objective of requiring police to consider how immediate and effective protection can be provided to a victim prior to a court's consideration of the domestic violence order (DVO) needs to be strengthened with adequate training of police officers so they can respond to a particular situation effectively. Without this training and knowledge any assistance may not be helpful or could lead to an escalation of a victim's situation that may inflict further harm or inflame volatility.

Often victims move interstate to re-establish themselves and their family as a way of distancing themselves from perpetrated violence. They may wish to begin a totally new life or benefit from the support and care of family in the new location. The objective that DVOs from other Australian jurisdictions be automatically recognised in Queensland will greatly assist victims as they settle in a new location. This recognition will also improve the ability of victims to feel and actually be safe as they rebuild their lives. We believe that all Australian jurisdictions should participate in the National Domestic Violence Order Scheme (NDVOS).

As part of their pastoral care churches have been working with perpetrators of domestic and family violence as well as victims and their families. We believe that perpetrators should be held to account

for their behaviour and actions. Churches currently provide programmes and resources that assist perpetrators to recognise their behaviour, be accountable and take steps to change their attitude and actions in order to break the cycle of using violence as a means of power and control.

Domestic and family violence is very complex and can be expressed in many ways to control and hurt family members. If it happens once, it will probably happen again, and become more frequent and severe. This can lead to permanent injury and even death to victims.

We look forward to working in partnership with the Queensland Government on this and other social issues, for the benefit of all Queenslanders.



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