



Shining A Light

A collaborative project working to build capacity for a whole-of-Church response to domestic and family violence.

PILOT PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT | OCTOBER 2023



Catholic Social Services
Victoria

...building a more just and compassionate society

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If violence has its source in the human heart, then it is fundamental that nonviolence be practised before all else within families... From within families, the joy of love spills out into the world and radiates to the whole of society. An ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence between individuals and among peoples cannot be based on the logic of fear, violence and closed-mindedness, but on responsibility, respect and sincere dialogue. ...I plead with equal urgency for an end to domestic violence and to the abuse of women and children.

*Pope Francis, Message for
50th World Day of Peace 2017, #5*

Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSV)

CSSV is the peak body for Catholic social and community service organisations across the state. Grounded by Catholic Social Teaching and the experiences of our 40+ member organisations, we work to fulfil the Gospel imperatives to stand with and serve the poor, disadvantaged and marginalised, and for a just, equitable and compassionate society for all.

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1. Background and Context

Very early on in the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, in April and May 2020, Monash University surveyed family violence practitioners across Victoria. Almost 60% of respondents said the COVID-19 pandemic had increased the frequency of violence against women. The severity of violence had increased by 50% and 42% of respondents noted an increase in first-time family violence reporting¹. These statistics corroborated with what anecdotally members of Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSV)'s Domestic Violence Working Group had been reporting from their various agencies' experiences.

Another survey by the Queensland University of Technology's Centre for Justice, which was conducted in mid 2020, assessed the impact of the pandemic on the domestic violence workforce and their clients. Findings were based on a survey of 362 participants from the 'Domestic and Family Violence' (DFV) sector, including 1,507 qualitative responses. This piece of work confirmed the concerns raised by earlier reports — a huge proportion, 86% of respondents, reported an increase in the complexity of their client needs, 62% reported increases in the number of clients accessing their services during the COVID-19 pandemic, while 67% of DFV workers reported new clients seeking their help for the first time during the COVID-19 crisis².

It is well known by social services that *"Violence against women produces a profound and long-term toll on victims' and survivors' health and wellbeing, on families and communities, and on our broader society"*³. But this is not always understood in the broader community. In spite of these disturbing realities being recorded and reported, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited (ANROWS) noted in an analysis of data from 2021 using their 'Attitudes towards Violence against Women Scale (AVAWS)' that *"Australians mostly hold attitudes that reject violence against women and this rejection has significantly improved since 2013. However, there was no significant improvement in overall attitudes towards violence against women between 2017 and 2021, largely reflecting a plateauing of attitudinal rejection of domestic violence despite an improvement in attitudinal rejection of sexual violence since 2017"*⁴. The dissonance between that broader understanding and rejection of violence by the population being improved over time, even if slowed in more recent years, with what has been reported by services responding to the use of violence – increases in complexity and sheer numbers seeking help for their situation, is concerning.

When the National Anglican Family Violence Project (NAFVP) released their report in 2021, being the first known national research into DFV within faith communities, its results showed that the prevalence of intimate partner violence/abuse among Anglicans was approximately the same as in the wider Australian community⁵. The prevalence of intimate family partner violence was found to be the same or



higher among Church-attending Anglicans than among other Anglicans. This courageous piece of work by the Anglican Church is sobering for faith communities more generally. This more recent research, coupled with other reports and anecdotal evidence from CSSV's member organisations and recommendations and findings of the Royal Commission into Family Violence in 2016⁶ has led CSSV to believe that similar findings could be expected to be found amongst other faith cohorts, including the Catholic community.

Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSV), as the peak body for Catholic social and community services in Victoria, has sought to grapple with how the Catholic community can play its part in standing in solidarity with victim/survivors, and simultaneously work to address the causes and impacts of domestic violence in our communities. This latest piece of work is an extension of ongoing work by the Church in Victoria to respond to and prevent domestic violence and abuse⁷.

A number of Catholic organisations (and members of CSSV) hold particular expertise and are working in this space across Victoria, for example, The Good Samaritan Inn, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, ACRATH, Jesuit Social Services, VincentCare Victoria, McAuley Community Services for Women and CatholicCare Victoria, amongst others. To contribute to addressing the causes of DFV and taking preventative action, CSSV developed this pilot program 'Shining A Light' in partnership with the Catholic Diocese of Sale with the generous support of Sr Nicole Rotaru RSM and the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC).



1.1. Program Development

1.1.1. Aim

This pilot program took the best evidence and approaches to prevention of DFV, linked this information with dynamic experience of the member organisations of CSSV, and enabled it to be thought through and considered by people who held some level of local responsibility within the Catholic community across the Diocese of Sale in light of their faith, work, and community contexts.

In this way, the program aimed to gauge the practical ability and capacity for adopting a whole-of-Church response to the prevention of DFV against women and children and establish a solid starting platform for further work by the Catholic community locally and across Australia. In this way, the pilot aims to inform the Church as to how it might become a proactive partner in prevention of violence and enhance community participation in response to violence.

The program aimed to go some way to address Recommendation 165 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria Report released in 2016:

Faith leaders and communities establish processes for examining the ways in which they currently respond to family violence in their communities and whether any of their practices operate as deterrents to the prevention or reporting of, or recovery from, family violence or are used by perpetrators to excuse or condone abusive behaviour.

1.1.2. Why this program?

The work of prevention of DFV is tied in with the intellectual work of understanding and accepting what evidence and analysis tells us that the drivers of violence are, and then finding ways of practically addressing those drivers. The time, space and motivation outside of a professional environment for community members to engage in this way is not always easy.

Ordinary people who meet and interact in a regular way, being in community together as members of the community, are properly in a position to create a cultural environment and dynamic that is able to prevent DFV. Social service organisations, staff training, refuges, police responses and court system reform are able to improve and respond to the impacts and fall out of DFV, but prevention requires people to change at an individual, community and societal level simultaneously⁸.

The Catholic Church in Victoria is made up of an incredibly diverse array of people, from many different cultures and backgrounds – and together make up on average about 20% of the Victorian population⁹. There are a dynamic and comprehensive set of Catholic social teachings developed over hundreds of years from which violence is often denounced — and simultaneously ideas such as solidarity and the common good are articulated as principles necessary for a society where all might flourish. There is a long-standing intellectual tradition which has developed an understanding of anthropology and philosophy which takes seriously notions

of universal human cultural norms and 'good' but also holds space for different expectations and practises that are tied in with cultural particularity.

Many in professional settings – across Catholic social service agencies, hospitals and schools work to address DFV in a systemic way. At a community level, outside of a professional or learning environment, the realisation of the prevalence of violence and abuse is core to working out how the drivers of violence may be addressed. Reviewing the evidence of what prevention looks like in practical terms, and contemplating our place in prevention action as persons and communities often can only make sense when explored in light of lived reality and faith – which in the Catholic tradition calls for transformation.

This program was created to provide that space – to begin to build an awareness of what research and evidence tells us about what a good response to DFV looks like, and explore what might need to change for us and in us as individual persons, and as a community, in light of faith, tradition and shared values — if we are to be part of a society that allows all to flourish. The program is placed to both engage and deepen Catholic communities' effective involvement in the prevention of DFV in a way that makes sense within Catholic social thought and teachings.

1.1.3. Location

There were a few aligning factors which contributed to the process of discernment that the Dioceses of Sale was the right place for a pilot program. CSSV has paid special attention to the needs of regional and rural areas in research and advocacy focus over the past years¹⁰, as they have less density of resource and service delivery than urban areas, and this makes the Church, which has reach and connection into all areas regardless of population density, a unique foundation for this work that others may not have.

Pre-pandemic, some one-off workshops had been run by CSSV in collaboration with individual parishes contained within the Diocese of Sale. This work began to build awareness and capacity to respond to the recommendations of the Royal Commission with these communities. There was good will and desire for further work. The Diocese of Sale also has the least number of parishes of any Dioceses in Victoria (n=27), and this made a holistic program that could include all parishes feel achievable with the limited resources available. The Bishop of Sale's nominee on the CSSV Council, Deacon Mark Kelly, has had serious commitment to DFV issues over time and was willing to continue to champion this new iteration of work. The then newly appointed Bishop of Sale, Most Rev Greg Bennet was also supportive of further work in the area, understanding the issue and its impacts on the community more broadly – and contributed his own and his office staff's time to the program.

The Diocese of Sale is reasonably typical in terms of census data¹¹ in comparison to other Catholic Dioceses. It includes some south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne through to north-eastern Victorian/NSW border and all of Gippsland in between. From its total population of 680,681 there is a Catholic population of 123,748 - making up 18.2%, slightly under the national 20% average. The median age of Catholics is 43 years old, and there are a total of 50,401 Catholic families. It holds a diverse population within its bounds, with 35,392 Catholics born overseas and 2,155 Catholics reporting they do not speak English well. From 2016 data, the typical weekend attendance at mass was 11,960 across the Diocese.

1.1.4. Theoretical framework of change

The pilot program workshops utilised inputs from a range of evidence-based materials and were grounded in a theory of change that believed in:

- taking a whole-of-Church approach to the issues of DFV, that is, initially involving a large cross-section of key people across the region in the workshops to consider how structures and cultures, as well as personal engagement or involvement in issues, contribute to shaping values, beliefs and actions will build lasting positive change.
- developing participants' awareness and understanding that power and control drives domestic and family violence situations along with other key gendered drivers of domestic and family violence (identified in the 2016 Royal Commission¹²) will result in positive behavioural and structural change.
- fostering attitudinal change and recognition that children are impacted adversely by living within a domestic and family abuse/violence environment in participants has the potential to positively affect societal-level change in attitudes towards women.
- building participants' capacity and confidence to respond to issues of violence will contribute to their capacity and confidence to challenge existing structures in the community and attitudes that condone abuse will improve both prevention and response to issues of violence.
- exploring the harm caused to those who use violence will be conducive to careful thinking about how the drivers of violence might be present in structures and practises within faith settings and how these might be navigated in light of Catholic tradition and teachings.

Prevention of DFV is contingent on strong local communities. A number of well-regarded, evidence-based resources were used in the delivery of the program. Then space was given so that these approaches to prevention were discussed and interrogated within each workshop group to allow for local context – the specific needs, strengths and demographics each of the six different regions parishes are grouped in across the Dioceses of Sale.

The combination of both expert contributions and input (CSSV Domestic Violence Working Group – see Appendix 3 for membership) alongside the local organising and support from a Diocese-based reference group (Shining the Light Committee) were key design features to ensure that the program would meet the needs of the communities, ensured local oversight, contribution and ownership of the program and provided the base to set up ongoing structures to enable continuing development of the work beyond the pilot project.

1.1.5. Program resourcing

The pilot program and workshops were partially supported financially by a grant (\$10,000) made available via the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC), alongside communications, staffing and logistics support from CSSV and the Catholic Diocese of Sale offices, alongside significant pro bono time by the workshop facilitator Sr Nicole Rotaru, and ongoing advice and support from both the ‘Shining A Light’ Diocese of Sale Reference Group and the CSSV Domestic Violence Working Group (CSSV DV Working Group). For the evaluation, the quantitative statistical tests and analysis was provided pro bono by Dr Sanne Oostermeijer, who works as a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne’s School of Population Health, and social researcher and consultant Dr Ruth Webber assisted with guidance of the evaluation pre and post questionnaire (Appendix 4). It is only through the collaborative work and significant investment of voluntary time from so many across the sector that has enabled this pilot program to happen.

1.2. Program Delivery

1.2.1. Approach

The program was developed and rolled out with the input, contribution and support of a number of sector specialists, Catholic leadership and a continuous improvement program approach – responding to the sought formal feedback of local communities and participants after each workshop. The CSSV DV Working Group were a key source of ongoing advice and input into the formation of the program, as well as during the program as it was rolled out (Appendix 2).

The program’s continuous improvement – an iterative model of program adaptation to participant feedback, observations and their evaluation responses, means that the workshops themselves were adapted in an ongoing way (changing elements after each of the workshop as the pilot progressed in response to feedback). Although this places a limitation on evaluation of the program in some ways as the experience of each of the workshop cohorts across the seven different sites is slightly different, it was felt that as a primary focus of this program was to be as useful as it could be to the participants and their communities, that this iterative improvement approach was justified and made best use of limited resources, and would not invalidate broader lessons based on evaluation of the program.

The Catholic Diocese of Sale covers a large area of Victoria, which includes regional, rural and peri urban areas. Naturally there were differences in social and economic factors in the six regions where the workshop was facilitated. CSSV understands the efficacy of place-based approaches to issues, where work done is able to be particular to the specific circumstances of a place and engages local people as active participants in development and implementation, requiring external bodies to share decision-making. So, while the content for the ‘Shining A Light’ workshops was drawn from best-practice principles and evidence-based research regarding the prevalence, forms and drivers of domestic and family violence, and it was appropriate that this content remained consistent when delivered in the diversity of regions where the program was offered, the format and organising of the workshops allowed for more tailored responses and discussions in each particular location.

A local volunteer organiser for each of the six regions within the Diocese of Sale put out the invitation to their community and took responsibility for the logistical organising of the workshops. The design and implementation of the workshops allowed for participants to share responses and collectively identify concerns allowing the facilitator to tailor elements and examples when delivering content, respond in some form to local contexts, while still utilising an evidence-grounded frame for approaching the discussion.



This continuous improvement approach was taken to the delivery of the workshops with feedback and reflection from each session used to develop the workshop further so as to ensure the pilot program was improved in accessibility and benefit for participants. These adaptations did not alter the core content of the program but did alter the format of particular components. An example of this includes the development of a role play within the workshop – this occurred spontaneously in one workshop and worked well, and it was then incorporated as a regular component in the following sessions.

1.2.2. Content

The 'Shining A Light' workshop has been delivered as a three-hour workshop. Each of these workshops were facilitated by Sr Nicole Rotaru (see Appendix 2). The workshop involved a variety of elements and evidence-based resources including:

- Acknowledgement of Country
- Creating a safe space
- Group activities and debriefing
- Evidence-based input including video clips – 'Let's Change the Story'¹³ and 'The Man Box'¹⁴
- Cases studies
- Role playing how to engage in a conversation about domestic and family in a safe way
- An overview of local DFV resources and services
- Time and space for reflection
- Sharing and attending to self-care.

1.2.3. Learning outcomes

The 'Shining A Light' workshop focused on prevention of violence by raising awareness of the prevalence of the issue, the associated drivers of violence, and what a good response may entail. The anticipated learning outcomes for the workshop participants were:

1. To recognise signs of DFV and the impacts on women and children.
2. To be more confident in starting a 'careful conversation'.
3. To know where to seek DFV resources and information in the local community and beyond.

1.2.4. Participants

Seven workshops were held across the Catholic Diocese of Sale in 2022 with those in attendance including Church clergy, parish staff, and members of Religious congregations, Diocese safeguarding staff and other organisation volunteers and staff, including those from across local social service agencies, schools and healthcare. A total of 127 people participated in the pilot program across the 7 workshops (89 women and 38 men). See Appendix 3 for a summary of participant demographic data.



2. Evaluation Methodology

Participants were asked to complete an evaluation form and survey before and after participating in the workshops, with the aim of assessing their level of knowledge and attitudes towards the issue of DFV in their community prior and any change that the workshop might make in their understanding and approach. Comprehensive notes were taken by an observer during the workshop, and the post evaluation forms contained space for unconstrained written comment. The pre and post evaluation forms also looked to gauge consideration of participants' general understanding of the particular role of faith and faith communities in responding to and preventing violence as well as questions to measure the increase (or decrease) in understanding of content that the workshop specifically covered (Appendix 4).

We thank social researcher and consultant Dr Ruth Webber, formerly a member of the CSSV Policy, Advocacy and Research Committee, for her advice and input into the design of the pre and post evaluation questions.

2.1. Quantitative Analyses

Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to compare pre- and post-workshop results of participants across six domains:

- 1) the general knowledge of the workshop participants on the causes and prevalence of DFV in Australia,
- 2) the perceived importance of DFV as issue for their local community,
- 3) how confident participants feel in recognising the signs that someone is experiencing DFV,
- 4) how confident participants feel to speak with, and provide some support to, someone who was experiencing DFV, pre- and post-workshop,
- 5) To what extent participants considered that their role as faith leader is to actively work to prevent DFV among the Catholic community, and
- 6) To what extent participants considered that their role as faith leader is to actively work to prevent DFV among the wider community.

Higher scores indicate participants felt more knowledgeable (Questions 1 – 4) or felt the statement more frequently (Questions 5 and 6) (see Appendix 4).

Effect sizes were calculated with the Cohen's d statistic using the pooled S.D., with d=0.2 considered a 'small' effect size, 0.5 represents a 'medium' effect size and 0.8 a 'large' effect size¹⁵.

Using this mode of analysis, the results revealed that taking the workshop significantly improved participants' general knowledge of the causes and prevalence of DFV, as well as their confidence in recognising signs of DFV and supporting those experiencing it (Table 1).

The answers also highlighted that there was generally a strong sense that the issue was important in their local communities (that increased after the workshop with a small-medium effect). There was less of a baseline sense that participants considered they had a role in preventing domestic violence both within their faith groups as well as within the wider community – after the workshop there was an overall small increase in this dimension. In ANROWS far reaching analysis and surveying from its 2021 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey, they found that a majority of Australians' do **not** think violence against women occurs in all communities — importantly, including their own¹⁶. From our evaluation results, participants in these workshops from the Catholic community recognised the importance of addressing this issue in their own community prior to the workshop, so there was a good grounding from which to deepen awareness and knowledge of how best to respond, and think through the drivers of violence.

Overall, the workshops functioned well as an effective step towards building participants' knowledge and confidence in recognising and dealing with DFV situations. But while there was a positive and statistically significant increase in understanding an individual's role in prevention, it was to a small effect.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, Cohen's d and confidence intervals

	Pre-workshop		Post-workshop		Δ	Effect sizes	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		Cohen's d	95% CI
Q1. General knowledge (n=112)	4.6	2.2	7.5	1.5	2.9*	1.5	1.2 – 1.8
Q2. Importance (n=112)	7.8	1.8	8.4	1.0	0.6*	0.4	0.2 – 0.7
Q3. Recognising signs (n=112)	4.2	2.2	6.9	1.4	2.8*	1.5	1.2 – 1.8
Q4. Providing support (n=111)	4.6	2.6	7.1	1.7	2.5*	1.2	0.9 – 1.4
Q5. Role in preventing DV among the Catholic community (n=112)	2.6	0.7	2.8	0.6	0.2*	0.3	0.0 – 0.5
Q6. Role in preventing DV among the wider community (n=112)	2.6	0.7	2.8	0.5	0.2*	0.3	0.1 – 0.6

Note. * Indicates significant reductions with $p < 0.001$

This testing leaves a positive indication of the overall efficacy for the workshops, but further workshops or modified work on the current program will need to be done if we desire to see a more profound change in participants' understanding of their positive role in preventing the use of violence amongst their faith and the wider community.

2.2. Qualitative Analyses

2.2.1. Emerging themes from the workshops

Over the course of the workshops, there was a significant amount of personal disclosure of violence – either due to the experience of an individual themselves, or close recounting of occasions of abuse suffered by their families or by people known to them.

One participant shared:

“My daughter had become like this doll – she had become featureless and had lost a sense of who she was. She had become like a non-person.”

Debriefing was made available to participants and comments were captured by an observer taking notes during the workshops, and these notes were then carefully looked through to look for consistent themes across the 7 workshops.



The Jesuit Social Services video ‘The Man Box¹⁷’ proved a jumping off point for discussion about the impact of societal expectations on boys and men and negative forms of masculinity. An attendee shared:

“In the 1960’s I was a teenager, and that was me. When I was struggling, I didn’t talk to anyone. I felt I had to be tough to impress my peers and the girls. I’ve now been educated and have been able to change. Education is the key. Not just in schools, but in how gender roles and relationships are modelled.”

A number of reoccurring/consistent themes were noted during the course of the workshops from the observer and notes in evaluation materials:

- Women who divorce as a result of DFV feel shame and stigma and isolated from the Church. They wish to experience a belonging.
- There is a theological understanding of God by some clergy and laity as the ‘judge’. God as a ‘judge’ overshadows God as love.
- Participants were unsure how to talk about how ‘God is there’ in the midst of domestic violence.
- There was some reticence to accept that DFV is a gendered issue.
- There are cultural differences in understandings regarding gender, roles, and how decision making should be done.
- There was recognition by participants that we all have unconscious bias.
- There was recognition by participants that aspects of the four drivers of DFV identified in the 2016 report of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence is present in Church structures, procedures and thinking.
- There was shock expressed at the continued pressure on young men to conform to societal attitudes and values that constitute what ‘being a real man’ involves.
- There was recognition that we carry the effects of trauma.
- The workshop was a confronting experience for some participants due to the topic area as well as the prevalence of DFV and the lived experience of some participants or the experiences of close friends or family members. Support and debriefing opportunities were offered to these individuals.
- There was some relief and understanding of the value of speaking openly and uncovering issues related to DFV.

These emergent themes demonstrate that there is a need for ongoing reflection and consideration of the kind of people, Church and society we want to be a part of going forward. Prevention of violence is acted as a constructive base for broader conversations and discussion.

2.2.2. Case study

Peggy's Experience

Peggy is the Pastoral Associate at a local parish. At the conclusion of the workshop, she said she'd found the statistics particularly eye-opening. *"I knew they weren't good, but I didn't realise how bad they are"*, she said. *"And I always believed that listening was important but today really emphasised the importance of that skill."*

"I think it's amazing that the diocese is engaging in this pilot. Domestic and family violence is obviously prevalent, and I think in many ways, silent. During the sharing I was wondering about what's happening here in our local parish – what don't we know about or who haven't we picked up on?" Peggy has decided to make cards with the phone numbers for RESPECT and SAFESTEPS on them, which can be kept at the parish office, or easily handed out.

2.3. Participant Feedback

Some written and verbal feedback from participants included:

"...the workshops are about understanding the issues and the role that we play in responding to domestic and family violence. The three main things are to be 'informed, equipped and courageous!'"

'eye-opening', 'enlightening' and 'empowering'.

"This was hidden for so long. It is refreshing to have the door opened and that there are now services available to assist."

Sister of the Nativity Faustina Ede said the workshop opened her eyes to certain things that she *'didn't know'*, or *'had not taken seriously'*.

"During the sharing I was wondering about what's happening here in our local parish – what don't we know about or who haven't we picked up on?"

Feedback was overall generally favourable, but some expressed dissatisfaction in a number of both practical elements of the workshops and also content focus. It was clear that in some cases prevention and the gendered drivers of violence remained somewhat abstract to people, and further opportunities seem to be required to enable participants to continue to think through and grapple with how these drivers relate to adverse outcomes. However, an overall appreciation for the scope of the problem, and good will and desire to support people in community was clearly and consistently expressed in written responses within the evaluation.



2.4. Future Possible Approaches to Prevention Work

The work of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne through their Preventing Violence Against Women Program has been well evaluated and has informed CSSV's own work in this space. Their program has dedicated and ongoing staff resource, and the program demonstrates the good work that can be achieved through collaboration and dedicated financial resources. The CSSV DV Working Group has learned from their work, which was allowed through the program's generous sharing of their program logic and other developed resources, including their formal evaluation¹⁸, while adapting elements to suit the limited resources and particular context of this pilot program. The activities of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne's Program reflect a whole-of-Church approach

to preventing violence against women (see Appendix 1). This includes a comprehensive and ongoing process that:

- Provides training and mentoring for Church leaders,
- Develops resources and tools for Church communities,
- Develops best practice policy and governance procedures, and
- Connects Churches with specialist and local service providers.

Such a program is a great example of collaborative work that could be possible should further resources be made available¹⁹.





3. Conclusion and Recommendations

The overarching aims of undertaking an evaluation were to:

1. Assess the effectiveness of the 'Shining A Light' workshops in building capacity for better response to DFV and changes that would lead to addressing the drivers of violence.
2. Identify barriers and opportunities and gauge the appropriateness and effectiveness of such a program for broader take up across other Dioceses and like settings.
3. Make recommendations on how further work of prevention of DFV might occur and consider how might such a program be scaled in delivery across other Dioceses.

The 'Shining A Light' pilot program was successful in its mode of organising, garnering good take up and support at multiple levels, and gathered broad ranging support from Church Clergy and leadership as well as sector experts and local organisers.

The program was effective in achieving its goals of increasing awareness of the issues of DFV, the gravity of the issues and the confidence and capacity of attendees to be involved in response and support within their community context as appropriate. 'Shining A Light' also had a small but positive impact on participants understanding of their role in prevention of violence in their contexts. This aspect could be further enhanced in follow-up work.

The following recommendations are based on our analysis of data collected, the efficacy of our theory of change principles, and the synthesis of insights from participants, observers and key stakeholders including the Diocese of Sale Reference Group and CSSV DV Working Group members:

Recommendation 1:

Provide follow-up support for workshop/program participants.

It is clear that violence is close and present in our communities – the disclosures and stories shared by participants who were in leadership positions showed that many have had direct experience of either supporting or accompanying the ramifications of DFV. The Catholic community is well placed to provide trusted community leadership particularly in regional and rural areas that are less service resourced than metro/urban areas and support positive change to prevent violence. Follow-up/debriefing opportunities and pathways to professional support should be made available for participants when workshops are run on these topics so they can, in turn, provide support for someone who is experiencing DFV.

Recommendation 2:

Secure resources for further work.

Although the Church and associated social agencies are well placed to support prevention and social change, there are significant resource barriers that will prevent ongoing overt discussions and work. This requires creativity and leadership from the bishops, clergy and parishioners in order to overcome these barriers, but also there is clearly a need for external expertise and collaboration, which takes considerable resources. This may require an openness from Government to make financial resources available for new collaborations, and a willingness from faith communities to apply for funding and be involved in collaboration with professional service organisations such as government and philanthropic funding providers so that this work can be resourced in a systemic way.

Recommendation 3:

Build community awareness of DFV and its drivers, linked with practical changes that can be made at a community, grassroots level.

Follow-up workshops specifically making clear what constitutes effective approaches to violence prevention should be rolled out across every Diocese in Australia with the intent to open space for conversation and build general knowledge about drivers and prevalence of DFV in Australia, and increase confidence in recognising the signs of someone experiencing domestic violence and direct them to sources that could provide appropriate help.





Recommendation 4:

Continue local organising approach with external expertise support.

Implementation through locally-based organisers and reference group formation is key to ensuring community take-up, local ownership and opportunities for the work to continue beyond the initial pilot. This works well if it's coupled with expert knowledge of a working group who understands the DFV area well.

Recommendation 5:

Build response capacity within faith communities' clergy and leadership.

Clergy and faith leaders need to be provided with training and formation opportunities that allow them to understand and appropriately engage with the context of violence that is a very real part within too many families in Australia.

Recommendation 6:

Develop communities of practice and broad organisational training initiatives.

Catholic and other social service organisations should form collaborative partnerships/communities of practice with faith community leaders to enhance response and prevention to marry local knowledge with sector expertise in a structural and ongoing way. Catholic social services, parishes, health and education personnel should look at prevention of violence as a core part of their professional development training and approach to ensure safeguarding practises.

Implementation of these recommendations will help further the work of the Catholic community as a proactive prevention partner and support an effective whole-of-Church response to addressing DFV in Victoria and beyond.

Appendix 1

Follow-up actions and recommendations from the Diocese of Sale 'Shining A Light' Reference Group for ongoing work

The following recommendations from the Reference Group evolved from what was emerging in the workshops.

1. Sale Diocese to establish a 'Shining A Light' Committee
 - a. to ensure ongoing formation and education of a whole-of-Church response to awareness raising of Domestic Family Violence (DFV)
 - b. to convene a number of workshops already identified as a result of issues arising from the 'Shining A Light' on Domestic Violence workshops:
 - i. inclusivity in the scriptures,
 - ii. cultural influences regarding gender norms and stereotypes,
 - iii. 'listening for' experiences of DFV in ordinary conversation,
 - iv. develop further understanding of the 'Man Box' – JSS Men's Project,
 - v. Diverse images of God,
 - vi. 'Shining A Light' on the Church's position regarding divorce.
2. Sale Diocese establish two sub-committees to be accountable to the 'Shining A Light' Committee
 - a. 'Shining A Light' on the Church's position on Divorce Committee,
 - b. Domestic and Family Violence Resource Committee.
3. Sale Diocese 'Shining A Light' Committee, with CSSV, to explore with other agencies resource people who may be able to assist with initiatives taken by the 'Shining A Light' Committee.
4. That the Bishop and the Clergy accept and actively support the recommendations of the Report.



Appendix 2

Key sector experience involved in oversight, development and delivery of 'Shining A Light' pilot program

CSSV Domestic Violence Working Group – Members:

- Felicity Rorke, Chair (Executive Director, Good Samaritan Inn)
- Sherry Balcombe (Manager, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry)
- Cindy Bohan (Community Engagement Worker, ACRATH)
- Nick Collins (Group Director, Client Services, CatholicCare Victoria)
- Narelle Struth (Student Wellbeing Officer, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools)
- Deanna Davis (Manager Client Services, CatholicCare Victoria)
- Sue Dornom (Central Council President, St Vincent de Paul Society)
- Deacon Mark Kelly (Chaplain, Catholic Diocese of Sale)
- Joshua Lourensz (Executive Director, Catholic Social Services Victoria)
- Fr Peter Matheson (Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne)
- Phoebe Nagorcka-Smith (Head of Social Policy, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand)
- Sr Nicole Rotaru RSM
- Sharon Sherwood (Chief Operating Officer, Cabrini Outreach)
- Dalal Smiley (Chief Executive Officer, Wellsprings for Women)
- Matt Tyler (Executive Director, The Men's Project, Jesuit Social Services)

Workshop key personnel:

Sr Nicole Rotaru RSM - Facilitator

Nicole Rotaru is a member of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea. She holds a number of qualifications including a Diploma of Education (ACU), Bachelor of Social Work (University of Melbourne), Masters of Arts in Experiential and Creative Arts and a Graduate Diploma in Profession Supervision (University of Divinity). Nicole has over 45 years of experience working in a range of settings including in: education, palliative care, health, counselling/play therapy, domestic and family violence, refugee camps, development, safe-guarding and private practice. From 2014-2017 she was involved with the Women's Creative Arts Project at McAuley Community Services which facilitated women and children in giving voice to their experiences of family violence. Nicole has facilitated a number of workshops addressing prevention and response to domestic and family violence since 2020.

Kate Stilwell – Workshop Assistant

Kate Stilwell is the Office Manager at CSSV. She has an academic background in international development and is an accredited family dispute resolution mediator. She has worked across a broad range of roles in welfare and community organisations, including in programs addressing homelessness, community development and education, and family support.



Appendix 3

Pilot Program Participants and Reference Group

Table 2: Number of workshop participants in the 6 Sale Diocese Regions

Location		M	F	TOTAL
1 Western Region: Koo Wee Rup, Iona-Maryknoll, Pakenham, Berwick*, Narre Warren, Cranbourne, Clyde North	23 March	10	9	19
2 Heart Region: 5 areas but 3 parishes. Sale*, Maffra Heyfield, Yarram	27 May	7	10	17
3 Eastern Region: Bairnsdale*, Lakes Entrance, Orbost, Paynesville	28 May	6	17	23
4 Central Region: Warragul*, Drouin, Trafalgar	4 June	6	14	20
5 South Region: Wonthaggi*, Leongatha, Foster, Yarram, Cowes	25 June	4	5	9
6 Valley Region: Traralgon*, Morwell, Churchill, Moe-Newborough	9 July	4	20	24
7 Berwick* participants from various regions in Sale Diocese	19 July	1	14	15
TOTAL		38	89	127

Note: *Location where workshop was held

Table 3: Key roles of workshop participants

Role	M	F	TOTAL
Sale Diocese Clergy: Bishop, priests and deacons	21	0	21
Parish: parish council, RCIA, liturgy committee, Mass ushers, Lectors, special ministers, retirement village contact, pastoral assistants, parish secretaries, business manager, volunteer, prayer group, Catholic Women's League of Victoria and Wagga Wagga, Legion of Mary	6	60	66
Diocesan Safeguarding Officers	6	4	10
School: principals, Religious Education, coordinator, wellbeing program coordinator, chaplain, teacher	1	8	9
St Vincent de Paul Society: presidents and members	4	12	16
Other: Orange Door, Registered Nurse, Koorie Justice Commission	0	5	5
TOTAL	38	89	127

Table 4: 'Shining A Light' Diocese of Sale Reference Group Members

Name	Role
Siji Dominic	Pastoral Assistant
Katherine Jelavic	Theological Student – Minute Secretary
Deacon Mark Kelly	Bishop's representative on CSSV Council, Chaplain
Fr Jeff Kleynjans	Parish Priest, St Michael's Berwick
Sr Nicole Rotaru	Member of CSSV Domestic Violence Working Group, Member of CSSV Council
Fr Peter Slater	Vicar General for Sale Diocese

Appendix 4

Participant Pre and Post Workshop Evaluation Questions:

On a scale 1-10 (1=very little, 10=very knowledgeable)

1. How much general knowledge do you have about the causes and prevalence of Domestic and Family Violence in Australia?
2. How important do you think Domestic and Family Violence is as an issue for your community to address?
3. How confident do you feel to recognise the signs that someone is experiencing domestic violence?
4. How confident do you feel to speak with, and provide some support to, someone who was experiencing domestic or family violence?

Mark as ALWAYS (A), SOMETIMES (S), RARELY (R) or NEVER (N)

5. To what extent do you consider that your role as faith leader is to actively work to prevent domestic violence among the Catholic community (if you are not Catholic, your own faith community)?
6. To what extent do you consider that your role as faith leader is to actively work to prevent domestic violence among the wider community?



Endnotes

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- 3 Coumarelos, C., Weeks, N., Bernstein, S., Roberts, N., Honey, N., Minter, K., & Carlisle, E. (2023). Attitudes Matter: The 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS), Findings for Australia (Research report 02/2023). ANROWS. p.12 Retrieved from: <https://irp.cdn-website.com/f0688f0c/files/uploaded/NCAS%2021%20Summary%20Report%20ANROWS.2.pdf>
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- 5 Powell, R. & Pepper, M. (2021). *National Anglican Family Violence Research Report: Top Line Results*. NCLS Research Report, pg. 5. Retrieved from <https://anglican.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/NAFVP-Top-Line-Results-Report-NCLS-Research.pdf>.
- 6 Victorian Government (2016). *Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary and recommendations*. Report No 132. Retrieved from: <http://rcfv.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/MediaLibraries/RCFamilyViolence/Reports/Final/RCFV-Summary.pdf>
- 7 See: <https://css.org.au/advocacy-policy/prevention-of-family-violence/> for further examples of work over time
- 8 VicHealth, *VicHealth framework for preventing violence against women*. <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/vichealth-framework-for-preventing-violence-against-women>
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- 11 National Centre for Pastoral Research (2023). *Diocesan Profile based on the 2021 Census: Diocese of Sale*, Retrieved from: https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Sale_-2021-Diocesan-Social-Profile-1.pdf
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- 15 Cohen, J. (1995). The earth is round ($p < .05$): Rejoinder. *American Psychologist*, 50(12), 1103. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.50.12.1103>
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- 19 See: <https://melbourneanglican.org.au/pvaw/> for further information on process and approach.



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CATHOLIC DIOCESE
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