



National Anglican Family Violence Project

NAFVP Experience Study Report

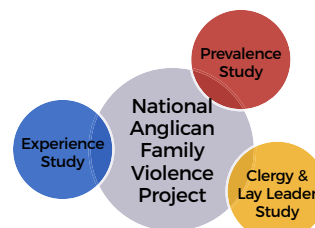
April 2021

NCLS Research

*One of three study reports from the National Anglican
Family Violence Project (NAFVP)*



Commissioned by the
Anglican Church of
Australia



NAFVP Experience Study Report: The nature of experiences of family violence for those with a connection with Anglican churches

Commissioned by the Anglican Church of Australia

Warning: This report addresses intimate partner violence (domestic violence or abuse) and contains examples of the types of violence that people have experienced.

The authors of this report offer our thanks to

- The Anglican Church of Australia General Synod's Family Violence Working Group, chaired by Reverend Tracy Lauersen, and the Project Steering Group
- The 300+ people who took part in the Experience Study Scoping Survey
- The 20 people that we interviewed in-depth
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1 Preface: This could have been us

“This could have been us.” This thought came to each of the researchers commissioned to work on this research project as we listened to our study participants, who have experienced intimate partner violence. This project has had a deep and lasting impact. Before we present our research findings with the discipline and rigour they require, we offer this personal note.

Two of us (Ruth Powell and Miriam Pepper) have been working on the three studies which comprise the National Anglican Family Violence Project for over two years. Tracy McEwan assisted with literature review work and with the analysis and writing for the Experience Study, which focussed on the nature and experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) for those with a connection with Anglican churches.

We are social researchers and Christian women. When we submitted our proposal to do this research, it was our conviction that these attributes position us to provide a rigorous disciplined approach with a familiarity of the church context. We believe it was critical to strive for a professional excellence and to bring our training, skills and experience to bear on this important research. We have applied appropriate social science disciplinary practices and used sophisticated quantitative and qualitative mixed methods for data collection and analysis. Across the studies in this project, we listened to multiple groups of stakeholders and sought advice and peer review from Australian and international experts in the field. The Human Research Ethics Committee of Charles Sturt University worked with us over many months in a thorough and helpful way to ensure a strong ethical framework for conducting our work. We trained in trauma-informed research practices and sought to utilise them to conduct our work as professionally as possible.

At the same time, we have been deeply and personally confronted and moved. The stories are raw and devastating. We have wept as we have listened to the recordings of the interviews and read and reread the transcripts. We are humbled by the courage of the participants who have chosen to trust us with their stories. We are in awe of those who have drawn on deep resources of strength to offer their experience, wisdom and insight for the sake of others. We uphold the participants and their families in prayer. Many shared how their faith sustained them in abuse. Our faith has supported us in the listening and the telling.

We write this study report in March 2021 against a national backdrop which has highlighted, in particular, the ongoing reality of violence against women. Politicians have been the subject of a string of allegations of sexual assault and harassment over recent months, including the alleged rape of former Liberal staffer Brittany Higgins at Parliament House in March 2019 and an historical rape allegation directed at Attorney-General Christian Porter. The online petition launched by Chanel Contos calling for holistic sexual consent education has attracted thousands of testimonies about sexual assault among school students. There have been marches, led by women, calling ‘enough is enough’. National action plans are being demanded in response to major reports on workplace sexual

harassment and family, domestic and sexual violence. Potential new legislation around coercive control is under debate. This latest wave of focus comes on the back of the #MeToo movement. Religious institutions have been brought into the spotlight through the #Churchtoo movement, as well as the Royal Commission into the institutional abuse of children and ongoing discussions around safeguarding vulnerable people.

While our research project has not been restricted to violence against women, the evidence is undeniable that this is a gendered issue. That is, over and over again, the narrative has been about men being violent towards women. Our focus is on the violence which is located in the context of an intimate partnership. It is violence which largely occurs in private, in homes, which should provide safe haven.

This research has shaped our view of power. We have become increasingly sensitised to the way that power and influence is used and abused, within and across gendered dynamics. Most of our participants were women speaking about their experiences of violent male partners. But the power and dynamics that entrap women in abusive heterosexual relationships also entrap people who have been abused in same-sex relationships, non-binary people who have been abused, and men who have been abused by women.

This could have been us. While we have conducted this research we have been struck that we could have had our own story to tell. We each know friends and family members who carry their own stories of being abused. We are educated, professional women, from multi-generational Christian families, with good support networks and financial resources. More than once we have reflected on the fact that there is little to differentiate us from our participants. We acknowledge and thank our faithful partners, who are our allies.

This report is written as a formal research report, offering credible and authoritative research. At the same time, we have done our best to honour and value the contribution of the 300+ people who took part in our survey and the 20 people that we interviewed in-depth. We promised to amplify their voices to the Anglican Church.

We want to say to our participants, we will strive to protect your anonymity and your confidences. We see you and hear you.

Ruth Powell, Miriam Pepper and Tracy McEwan
April 2021

Photos

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2 Executive summary



The Experience Study is one of three studies that make up the National Anglican Family Violence Project (NAFVP), commissioned by the Anglican Church of Australia. (The other two studies are the Prevalence Study, and Clergy and Lay Leader Study). The aim of the project is to help the Anglican Church to understand the nature and prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) among those with a connection to the Anglican Church.

The Experience Study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of experiences of IPV for those with a connection with Anglican churches?
2. How has the Anglican Church featured in these experiences?
3. What are the attitudes to IPV amongst those with a connection to the Anglican Church?

2.1 Definition of intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is defined by the World Health Organisation as behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours (WHO 2010, p.10). IPV involves patterns of sustained intimidation or control as well as individual acts of violence. The terms “violence” and “abuse” are used interchangeably in this report.

2.2 Study method

The study used a mixed methods approach with two phases.

Phase 1: Online scoping and recruitment survey. The online scoping and recruitment survey aimed to probe the diversity of experiences of IPV across the Anglican Church and to assist with the recruitment of interview participants. The survey was open from September 2020 to January 2021.

Phase 2: Face-to-face interviews. Phase 2 involved individual in-depth qualitative interviews with 20 people across Australia (19 women and one man) who had experienced violence from an intimate partner. These participants were handpicked following their participation in the online scoping and recruitment study. Interviews took place, via Zoom, in person, and via phone, between November 2021 and February 2021.

Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and analysed by means of coding and interpreting the meaning and significance of the data at a deeper level. To understand the role of churches in participants’ experience of violence, we used a framework that drew together trajectories of abuse, church culture and relationships, and human needs.

2.3 Scoping and recruitment survey results

Some 305 respondents completed the survey, 81% of whom had some sort of personal experience with IPV, comprising:

- 58% who had experienced violence from an intimate partner (we call them “victim-survivors” for clarity)
- 47% who had supported a victim-survivor
- 5% who had been violent towards an intimate partner
- 9% who had supported someone who was violent towards an intimate partner
- 16% who indicated that they had another personal experience of IPV.

Most respondents were highly connected to the Anglican Church.

Large majorities agreed that domestic violence is common in Australia, that it is just as common in churches, and that the Anglican Church needs to do more to raise awareness of domestic violence. A minority felt that the Church was adequately equipped to respond to disclosure of domestic violence.

Around half of our survey respondents who had personal experience with IPV had sought help from the Anglican Church. Overwhelmingly, those participants who were victim-survivors and had sought help from an Anglican church approached clergy. Victim-survivors indicated that they had mainly received emotional support and prayer. Most either had a positive experience or felt supported on the most recent occasion when they approached a church for help. However, it is possible that those whose experiences were negative were less likely to participate in the survey, including because they might have moved on from their church and did not hear about the survey or did not wish to participate in it.

Twenty survey respondents took part in an interview. The remainder of this summary focuses on findings from the interviews.

2.4 About interview participants and features of violence

Anyone can experience domestic violence. It affects people from all backgrounds and walks of life. Violent relationships are characterised by a breadth of abusive behaviour and patterns of control and intimidation over time. Domestic abuse can cause significant harm to an individual’s wellbeing. We saw, among our participants:

- The experience of various forms of violence – physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, social, economic and spiritual abuse
- Early warning signs or “red flags” that participants commented were sometimes present in the relationship before the violence escalated
- Contrasts between violence at home and the image presented by the abusive partner in public
- Coercive controlling dynamics and cycles of abuse
- Participants’ efforts to try and make sense of the abuse, especially personality disorders and problems (for example, narcissism)
- The impact of the abuse on participants’ wellbeing and identity
- Ways that participants used their agency, the ability to make choices and act on them, in the abusive relationship.

2.5 Findings on role of the church in experiences of abuse

When people in abusive relationships are part of Anglican Church communities, their church interactions may be overwhelmingly positive or overwhelmingly negative. However, our research suggests that it is common for churches to play a complicated and varied part. Church leaders and the church community play a role:

- Within the dynamic of ongoing abusive relationships
- In supporting people in abusive relationships to make choices and act on them and/or in impeding them from doing so
- In helping or hindering them to rebuild and recover life.

2.5.1 Religious teachings and norms

Faith and church can both assist and hinder victims of domestic violence. Christian faith and being part of a church community can both assist and hinder people living in situations of intimate partner violence. Social and religious norms shape how people think they ought to behave within a local church context and also how they actually behave (Changing Minds n.d.). This impacts on expectations and interactions with clergy as well as among churchgoers.

Christian teachings can sometimes contribute to and potentially amplify situations of domestic violence. Our interviews showed that, however unintended it may be, teachings related to marriage, gender and forgiveness can be a contributing factor in extension of the cycle of IPV and can create a situation of harm for people in abusive relationships. Absolutist discourses related to marriage as a lifelong commitment, the submission of the wife to the husband, unconditional forgiveness, and suffering for Christ – whether they are taught by church leaders, internalised by victim-survivors, or co-opted by abusers in this way – are harmful for those who experience abuse. Participants recounted feelings of self-doubt, self-blame, entrapment and shame that they directly attributed to certain discourses about intimate relationships. Conversely, discourses such as marriage as a covenant, the equality of partners in a marriage, and God's mercy and love can help to empower victim-survivors to extricate themselves from abusive relationships.

Perpetrators' misuse of Christian teachings and positional power. Participants shared examples of how perpetrators made claims about Christian teachings and used their power in relation to church structures to control and extend the cycle of abuse. In some cases, participants said that their abusive partners used obligations around the sanctity of marriage, the headship of the husband, and the imperative to forgive to control them.

Examples of what was experienced as harmful within the context of abusive relationships are:

- Marriage is a lifelong commitment and a covenant that cannot be broken in any circumstances
- Being the "perfect wife"
- A man has control in a marriage and a wife must submit to her husband
- Being faithful involves suffering and total self-giving
- Forgiveness must be unconditional.

2.5.2 A culture of awareness and readiness to respond

Christian teaching that addresses IPV can also empower victim-survivors to begin a process of change. At key moments - or crucial instants or occasions - in the cycle of abusive relationships - where people have an opportunity to make choices and act on them, clergy and church leaders can offer alternate perspectives that empower victim-survivors to begin a process of change. Among

participants were people whose church had helped them to realise that they were experiencing domestic violence and that it wasn't acceptable. A sermon, or talking with their minister/pastor, helped provide a framework and language for their understanding. When clergy speak in ways that are fully sensitised by the reality of IPV in church communities – whether in teaching and preaching or privately in conversation – it can carry considerable weight with members of the congregation.

Discourses that participants described as liberating, whether heard from church leaders or sometimes by means of participants' own reading or listening, included:

- Marriage is a covenant between two parties and requires two parties to uphold it
- The partners in a marriage are equal and there is no place for one partner controlling the other
- God is merciful and loving and would support a partner leaving their abusive relationship
- God doesn't want vulnerable people to suffer.

Participants commented that Christian teachings about marriage and gender need to be communicated in ways that actively addresses the potential for and the reality of abuse in intimate relationships.

When churches acknowledge that domestic violence happens it can help victim-survivors. Giving visibility to the reality of intimate partner violence and acknowledgement of abusive relationships in church communities can support people living in situations of IPV.

Churches who have built awareness of domestic violence are more able to respond when victim-survivors are ready. People in abusive relationships can be better equipped to seize key moments for change if they know where to access to a scaffold of multi-faceted support.

2.5.3 Ongoing trusted and caring relationships

In our analysis, we understood churches as places of or spaces for relationship. In this study, we were sensitised to the relationships and social interactions between our participants, church leaders and congregants. In cases where the partner was also a part of that church community, this also included relationships between the abusive partner and others in the church.

At its best the church community can provide a vital set of relationships, independent of the perpetrator, that can sustain victim-survivors across the trajectory of their experience.

Trusted relationships in churches reduce isolation for victims. While a person remains within the context of an abusive relationship, church relationships characterised by care and trust can reduce social isolation and provide support for people living in situations of IPV.

Trusted relationships within church communities support people to make choices and act on them by enabling meaningful, ongoing support and disclosures at key moments.

Participants highlighted the critical importance of genuine care. Asking after an individual's wellbeing may or may not result in a disclosure, but if done out of genuine concern for that person and in a way that doesn't expose them to other people or to judgment, this signals to the victim-survivor that this is someone they could perhaps reach out to in future. Trusted people in the church might not always know what to do or what to recommend, but if they show genuine concern for a person's wellbeing, perspective and agency it can make a real difference.

The central role of specialist domestic violence services and health professionals. Specialist domestic violence support services and health professionals – sometimes in conjunction with church – play a central role in helping participants find safety and improve their overall wellbeing.

2.5.4 Support to rebuild and recover life

In our analysis we saw how churches can help or hinder those who experience abuse to meet their needs and based on a review of the data, framed needs as follows:

- To be safe
- To have material provision
- To be in relationships of care, empathy and acceptance
- To have an identity
- To make a contribution
- To have a spiritual life and relationship with God.

In this study, at the time of their interview, all participants had physically separated from their abusive partners. As participants shared their stories, it emerged that the impact of trauma often continued. Analysis revealed that church can play a role in fulfilling the following needs after separation as a contribution to rebuilding and recovering life.

To be safe. The church can be a place of safety and healing after separation. In cases where both partners have been part of a church community, there is no single solution about who remains connected. If a perpetrator remains in the community, the church needs to be equipped to hold the abuser to account and to keep the abused partner (and other people) safe.

To have material provision. After separation victim-survivors may need material support including individualised support services and day-to-day help with finances, food, housing and accessing specialist domestic violence support services such as counselling and legal aid.

To be in relationships of care, empathy and acceptance. After separation connections and relationships inside church characterised by empathy, care and trust were essential for a participant's wellbeing after separation.

To have their own identity. After separation churches can support victim-survivors as they re-establish their own identity by (1) not identifying the victim-survivor by their experience or marriage status; (2) allowing victim-survivors space and time to re-establish a self-identity.

To make a contribution. To be offering, helping to produce or achieve something was frequently a significant need for participants after separation. Many participants spoke about how they used their own experiences of IPV to support other victim-survivors. Several participants were active in raising awareness, both through formal church organisations and informal relationships. After separation, many participants went on to make significant contributions to the church through lay and ordained ministry.

To have a spiritual life and relationship with God. After separation, church was a place that facilitated transcendent experiences and healing for some participants, where they could grow in their understanding of and connection with God through and beyond their experiences of abuse. Key people in church, especially clergy, were central in this journey. However, often when participants were not adequately supported by their church community during their experiences of IPV their involvement with church remains fraught. Some also described their greater empathy for others who were on the margins of the church.

2.6 Participant recommendations for the Anglican Church

The influence of church leaders and whole church community relates to how they:

- Present and reinforce religious teachings
- Create a culture of general awareness and readiness to respond when abusive relationships are present in a church context
- Provide ongoing trusted and caring relationships across the full trajectory of a person's experience
- Offer various types of support to help those with an experience of violence to meet their needs for safety, material security, relationship, spirituality and identity, including referral to specialist domestic violence support services and health professionals.

Participants were invited to share insights from their experience of abusive relationships. From this material, their recommendations for Anglican church communities and for church leaders are summarised below.

2.6.1 Participant recommendations for church communities

- Acknowledge that IPV happens. The hidden nature of IPV in churches adds to shame and disconnection
- Have visible IPV resources in church. These help to educate the community of the signs of abuse and let victim-survivors know how and where to get support.
- Use many different methods to inform and empower, including: sermons, seminars, pre-marriage preparation courses and direct conversations
- Do not allow discomfort to deter from raising the issue
- Be alert, aware of the signs and ask questions about needs on a regular basis
- Provide safe spaces
- Keep connections in place
- Address self-doubt: have key trusted people to affirm their sense of reality
- Know about processes and support service options for key moments
- Don't make assumptions about what help is needed in individual circumstances. Ask questions in key moments of crisis about what support and resources victim-survivors require.

2.6.2 Participant recommendations for church leaders

- Provide IPV training for clergy, lay leaders and congregations
- Ensure that professional standards and regular reviews for clergy include an IPV dimension
- Provide pastoral workers to work with perpetrators and address their behaviours
- Ensure that all processes and procedures are informed by victim-survivor input
- Develop a scaffold of key people and services where leaders and congregation members can obtain information about how to offer assistance in situations of crisis (including IPV)
- Develop and make widely available easy to access pamphlets and booklets on IPV in a Christian context
- Offer Christian teaching on marriage and gender that addresses the potential for and the reality of abuse in intimate relationships.

2.7 Conclusion

This study explored the experiences of IPV among those with a current or previous connection to the Anglican Church by means of a scoping survey and 20 in-depth interviews. The aim was to achieve a greater understanding of how Anglican churches have intersected with these experiences and thereby gain a foundation to support the further development of Anglican Church policy and practice in relation to IPV.

Our interview participants were subjected to multi-faceted violence and control from their intimate partners over long periods of time which impacted on their wellbeing in multiple ways. Churches played a complexity of roles, both positive and negative, during their abuse relationships, in key moments in the trajectory of the experience of abuse, and after separation from the abusive partner. Churches both helped and hindered participants in meeting their needs in relation to safety, material provision, relationship, spirituality, identity, and making a contribution.

The study shows that teachings and norms about intimate relationships play an important role for people in churches who experience IPV. Relationships characterised by care and trust, that are independent of the abusive partner, support people through their experiences of abuse. The presence of an abusive partner in the same church as the abused partner adds considerably to the complexity of the role of the church in the experience of violence.

Interview participants offered a range of recommendations for the Anglican Church. These were related to IPV training and awareness raising, teaching and preaching about marriage, how to extend care and concern to someone experiencing IPV, and access to support services and material help. Participants indicated that victim-survivors should be asked about what support and resources they require in their individual circumstances – assumptions should not be made. Processes and procedures to respond to IPV should be informed by victim-survivor input.

3 Introduction



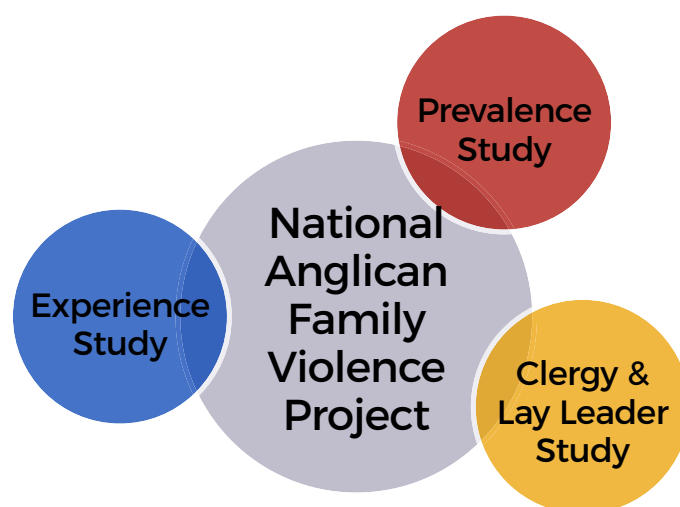
The Anglican Church of Australia (ACA) General Synod Standing Committee has formed a working group to address matters related to family violence and the Anglican Church. The Family Violence Working Group is convened by Reverend Tracy Lauersen. The ACA have engaged NCLS Research to undertake the National Anglican Family Violence Project (NAFVP) to help the General Synod to understand the nature and prevalence of intimate partner violence (recognising it as a significant part of family violence) among those with a connection to the Anglican Church, and to equip the General Synod to respond through policy and practice in ways that foster safer family environments.

In this project, intimate partner violence (IPV) is defined as violence between partners who are or were in a married or de facto relationship or a dating relationship.

The National Anglican Family Violence Project comprises three studies:

- Prevalence Study: Prevalence of intimate partner violence among Australians who identify as Anglican
- Clergy and Lay Leader Study: Attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and practices regarding domestic and family violence among Anglican clergy
- Experience Study: The nature of experiences of intimate partner violence for those with a connection with Anglican churches.

This report is focussed on one of the three studies: the Experience Study. This study focuses on the nature of experiences of those who have been personally impacted by IPV and who have, or previously had, a connection with the Anglican Church. It uses a mixed methods approach with two phases. First, an initial online scoping survey, (Sep 2020 to Jan 2021) was completed by 305 people who fitted the criteria. Twenty survey respondents subsequently participated in individual in-depth qualitative face to face interviews (Nov 2020 to Feb 2021).



NAFVP Prevalence Study

Prevalence
Study

The Prevalence Study assessed the prevalence of IPV among Anglicans and among regular church-attending Anglicans (people who identify as Anglican and who attend services of worship at least monthly) by means of an online survey of over 2,000 men and women aged 18+, conducted in November- December 2019.

See NAFVP Prevalence Study Report.

NAFVP Experience Study

Clergy &
Lay Leader
Study

The Clergy and Lay Leader Study focuses on the attitudes and practices regarding domestic violence among Anglican clergy and local church leaders. Research questions were about attitudes and knowledge, practices in their local church contexts and how equipped they are to respond. The study used a mixed methods approach with two phases: focus groups followed by an online survey. The final number of survey respondents was over 800.

See NAFVP Clergy and Lay Leader Study Report.

3.1 Definitions

There are no generally agreed or accepted standards for defining what constitutes violence. Terms related to violence within families include domestic abuse, domestic violence, family violence and intimate partner violence. The term “domestic violence” has been commonly used in the community and is typically used in surveys of social attitudes. The terms family violence and intimate partner violence are now commonly used in policy and research. The term “domestic abuse” is becoming more widespread as it may be more effective in highlighting that violence is not limited only to acts of physical violence.

Defining intimate partner violence (IPV): In this project, IPV is defined as violence between partners who are or were in a married or de facto relationship or a dating relationship. IPV is a subset of family violence, which refers to violence between family members, such as intimate partners, parents and children, siblings and extended family members (AIHW 2018). IPV is defined by the World Health Organisation as: “behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours” (WHO 2010, p.10) and similarly the Australian National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey as: “any behaviour by a man or a woman within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm to those in the relationship” (ABS 2018). Typically, one partner tries to exert power and control over the other, usually through fear (AIHW 2018).

Behaviour toward the victim can include the following (AIHW 2018):

- Physical violence: slaps, hits, punches, being pushed down stairs or across a room, choking and burns, as well as the use of knives, firearms and other weapons
- Sexual violence: rape, sexual abuse, unwanted sexual advances or harassment, being forced to watch or engage in pornography, sexual coercion, having sexual intercourse out of fear of what a partner might do
- Psychological and emotional abuse: intimidation, belittling, humiliation, and the effects of financial, social and other non-physical forms of abuse. This may also include “gaslighting”, where the abuser attempts to make the victim doubt their perceptions, thoughts and sanity (Gleeson 2018)

- Spiritual abuse is a form of psychological and emotional abuse that is specific to religious/spiritual contexts (Oakley et al. 2018).
- Coercive control: isolating victims from family and friends, controlling access to finances, monitoring their movements, restricting access to information and assistance.
- Threats of violence: against the victim, children and others who are important to the victim.

This is not an exhaustive list of all possible behaviours that may constitute IPV.

In summary, IPV:

- Is a subset of a broader concept known as “family violence”, which concerns violence between family members
- Is between intimate partners: those who are or were in a married or de facto relationship or a dating relationship
- Is multi-faceted: Physical violence is only one type of violence. Violence can be expressed in various ways – including physical, sexual, psychological, social, emotional, financial, and spiritual
- Is about individual acts and sustained patterns: It is not only individual violent acts, but also patterns of sustained violence wherein a person tries to intimidate and control their partner or former partner
- Is used synonymously in this project with the terms “domestic violence” and “domestic abuse”.

Limits to project scope: This project had to have some limits in its scope in order to conduct meaningful and effective research. So, the project does not address:

- Violence between people who are not intimate partners
- The abuse of children (anyone under 18 years of age)
- The abuse of elders
- Violence within specific minority groups, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community

This project **DOES** cover:

- Violence within the context of an intimate partnership. i.e. marriage, de facto relationship
- Men and women
- People 18 years and over
- People who have a current or historic link to the Anglican Church

This project **DOES NOT** cover:

- Violence beyond intimate partner violence
- Child abuse
- Elder abuse
- People who do not have a current or historic link to the Anglican Church

3.2 Rationale for the NAFVP Experience Study

Much has been reported in the international literature about the intersection of IPV and faith-based communities. Factors underlying and contributing to violence lie in a range of environments, with “faith-based institutions” cited as one such environment (VicHealth 2007). Prior to the NAFVP, no Australian data existed on the prevalence of IPV in Christian faith communities, but the evidence available internationally suggested that IPV occurs in Christian faith communities at rates similar to those seen in general populations (Lock 2018; Knickmeyer et al. 2010; Nason-Clark 2009; Levitt and Ware 2006). Other research shows how IPV might be supported by Christian structures, language and beliefs (Westenberg 2017; Nason-Clark 2009). Yet, while international studies have contributed to understanding around the nature of experiences of IPV in Christian church communities (Gezinski et al. 2019, Chireshe 2014; Nash et al. 2013), a research gap exists. Current research into the nature of domestic and family violence experiences in Australian Christian communities is urgently needed (Priest 2018).

Recent testimonies given to Baird and Gleeson (2017a, 2017b, 2018) and Lim (2015) provide anecdotal evidence of the nature and continuance of experiences of IPV for those with a connection to Anglican churches in Australia. With the existing research regarding the nature of IPV experiences Australian Anglican churches being dated (Last and Gilmore 1994), new investigations are required.

Attitudes of communities and bystanders are significant both in the support of those experiencing family violence and ongoing preventive frameworks (VicHealth 2007). It is vital that the voices of people experiencing family violence are heard (Hamence 2018) and that multi-level actions are taken within churches that challenge contributing behaviours and cultural norms (Priest 2018). This study focuses in detail on the nature of experiences of IPV and how these experiences interact with connections to Anglican churches. An informed understanding of the nature of experiences of IPV within the Australian Anglican population is key to the development of policies, pastoral care and prevention frameworks and training modules across all Anglican contexts.

3.3 Research questions

1. What is the nature of experiences of IPV for those with a connection with Anglican churches?
2. How has the Anglican Church featured in these experiences?
3. What are the attitudes to IPV amongst those with a connection to the Anglican Church?

3.4 Expected outcomes

The target outcomes for this study are:

- An understanding of what roles Anglican churches have had in the nature of people’s experiences of IPV
- An understanding of what aspects of church life have contributed to experiences of IPV and in what ways
- An understanding of how people’s association with the Anglican Church intersected with their experiences of and responses to IPV, and the meanings associated with their experiences and responses
- Acknowledgement from the Anglican Church of the role the churches have played in the nature of people’s experiences of IPV
- An empirical foundation to support the further development of Anglican Church policy and practice in relation to IPV.

3.5 Project design: mixed methods

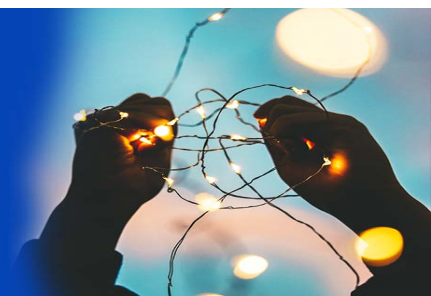
The participants in this study were individuals who had a personal experience of IPV and a connection with the Australian Anglican Church. The study used a mixed methods approach with two phases.

Phase 1: Online scoping and recruitment survey. This online scoping and recruitment survey aimed to probe the diversity of experiences of IPV across the Anglican Church and to assist with the recruitment of interview participants.

Phase 2: Face-to-face interviews. Phase 2 involved individual in-depth qualitative face-to-face interviews with 20 people who had experienced violence from an intimate partner and who were handpicked following the online scoping and recruitment study.

These two phases of this study are presented in this report as two separate parts.

4 Phase 1: Online scoping and recruitment survey



The purpose of the online scoping survey was to probe the diversity of experiences of IPV across the Anglican Church and to assist with the recruitment of interview participants. Respondents were recruited through various Anglican Church networks.

The survey collected preliminary information about the respondent's demographics, church history, church tradition, experiences of IPV, association with Anglican churches before, during and after these experiences, whether or not they approached a church for help, and their evaluation of this help.

The online survey was designed to allow individuals to respond anonymously if they so wish. At the end of the survey, participants who had experienced violence from an intimate partner were asked if they were willing to take part in Phase 2, an individual in-depth face to face interview. Suitable participants were handpicked for Phase 2 of the study.

The survey methodology is now presented in detail.

4.1 Methodology for Phase 1 Survey

4.1.1 Participants for Phase 1 Survey

The participants in this study were individuals, male or female, aged 18+ who had a personal experience of IPV, and either:

- Had a connection with the Australian Anglican Church (such as church attenders and clergy) at the time of the survey, or
- Previously had such a connection.

Because this study is concerned with the nature of experiences of IPV, nonprobability sampling techniques were used that relied on participants identifying themselves for inclusion in the study. It was expected that individuals who put themselves forward to take part in the survey would have had experience of and interest in this topic. This approach allows rich and deep information to be collected.

4.1.2 Recruitment for Phase 1 Survey

Respondents for the online survey were recruited by various purposive community sampling methods through Anglican Church networks. Letters, advertisements and flyers specifically indicated that individuals who: 1) currently have a connection with an Anglican Church (such as church attenders and clergy) or who have previously had such a connection with Anglican churches, and 2) have personal experience with intimate partner violence, were being sought to participate.

Participants for the survey were found using snowball sampling, a process of building a sample through referrals (O'Leary 2010). People were asked to pass on the details of the study to potential participants. Potential participants then accessed the online survey or contacted NCLS Research to ask further questions.

There was no clear target sample size for the scoping/recruitment survey, other than sufficient participants to achieve 20 interviews from a diversity of people. Potential interview participants were clearly informed of the likely interview sample size at the online survey stage.

Distribution methods included:

- *Letter and email to all Anglican churches:* A written invitation from the Anglican General Synod was sent to every Anglican Church in Australia (based on best available addresses, starting with NCLS churches database). Local churches were provided with the survey link and asked to promote it within their church using any means available (e.g. bulletins, enews, church service announcements, email lists etc). The same approach was used in emails as for the letter. (See Appendix B: Recruitment Material, Section 1)
- *Letter and email to Anglican organisations/groups:* A written invitation from the Anglican General Synod was sent to Anglican organisations and groups with a request for them to promote the survey through their appropriate communications channels. (See Appendix B: Recruitment Material, Section 2)
- *Contact with Anglican women's groups via social media* (Facebook)
- All individual contacts were asked to forward the information to anyone they knew who was no longer connected and who may be interested in the study.
- *A media release* to all Anglican newspapers. (See Appendix B: Recruitment Material, Section 3)
- *Video invitation.* One of the researchers prepared a brief invitational video, which was located on the NCLS Research project site and promoted via social media
- *Social media:* The survey was promoted via boosts on social media and people were requested to share this link. (See Appendix B: Recruitment Material, Section 4).

The survey website (<http://ncls.org.au/research/NAFVP>) included the following:

- Information about the study
- Survey Participant Information Statement (Appendix C)
- Information about domestic and family violence support services, to be provided to all participants and prospective participants (Appendix D)
- Introduction page to the survey, where participants will be asked to indicate by checking a box that they have read the survey participant information statement, that they understand that there is a possibility that they may experience emotional distress, that they freely give their consent to take part and to their data being used for specified project outputs (Appendix E).

4.1.3 Phase 1 Survey instrument

The online survey consisted primarily of closed-ended questions, where respondents were asked to select the response closest to their preference, and some open-ended text questions, which allowed individuals to write full responses without restriction.

The survey collected information on:

- Demographics (e.g. age, gender, education, marital status, household structure)
- Religious or spiritual practices, beliefs, experiences and identity
- Previous and ongoing connection with Anglican churches
- Personal experiences of IPV
- Attitudes towards IPV
- Experience of approaching church leaders or other congregants for assistance
- Current circumstances with regard to experiences of IPV to assess if the person is in a stable housing situation and has access to support.

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked whether they were interested to participate in an interview, with further questions about how best to initiate phone contact.

Online survey respondents were able to withdraw by not filling out the survey to completion. Respondents who completed their survey and provided their name were able to withdraw their data (survey responses) until a given date when the dataset is closed for analysis. No-one took up this option.

A paper copy of the survey was available to prospective respondents upon request. No such requests were made.

See Appendix F for the Experience Scoping Survey Instrument.

4.1.4 Data analysis for Phase 1 Survey

Data was extracted to SPSS statistical software for analysis, which included general frequencies and cross-tabulations. These analyses, together with an examination of open text responses, were used to assist with the selection of potential participants for the face-to-face interviews.

4.2 Results for Phase 1 Survey

4.2.1 Phase 1 Survey participants

The Experience Scoping Survey was launched in September 2020 and was closed on 21 January 2021. At that time there were 305 respondents. Some 81% had some sort of personal experience with IPV, comprising:

- 58% who had experienced violence from an intimate partner (we call them “victim-survivors” for clarity)
- 47% who had supported a victim-survivor
- 5% who had been violent towards an intimate partner
- 9% who had supported someone who was violent towards an intimate partner
- 16% who indicated that they had another personal experience of IPV.

Most respondents were highly connected to the Anglican Church. The large majority (89%) were attending Anglican church services at least monthly at the time they completed the survey (77% at least weekly). Some 74% participated either in small prayer, discussion or Bible study groups; in fellowships, clubs, social or other groups; or in both. Close to half (46%) were in a ministry role, primarily a lay role (33%).

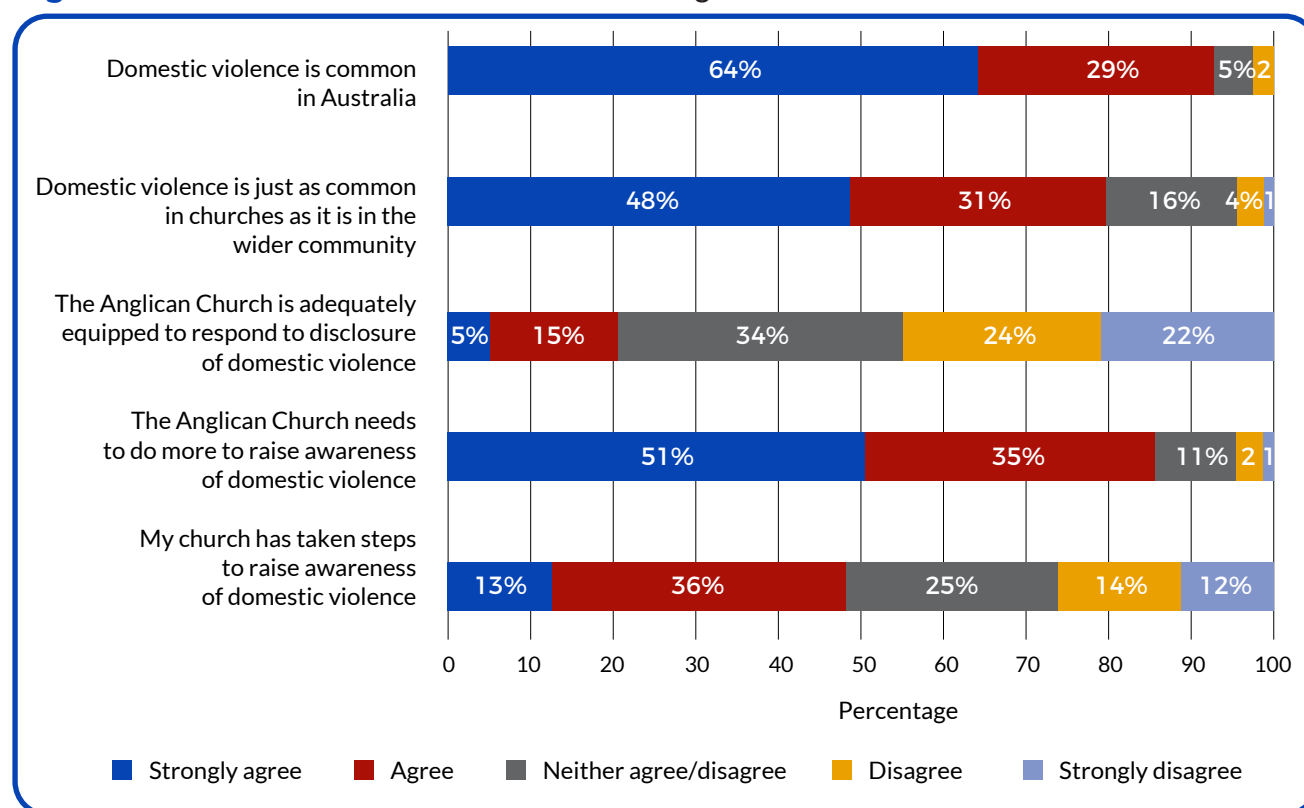
The survey was conducted primarily for the purpose of recruiting interview participants. The data does, however, provide a source for examining the diversity of experiences of IPV in relation to the Anglican Church. We concentrate here on a limited analysis of responses to closed questions about attitudes to and experiences with the church in relation to IPV.

All survey respondents were asked about their attitudes towards domestic violence. Only respondents with personal experience with IPV (i.e. 81% of all respondents, including 58% who were victim-survivors) were asked about their experiences with the Anglican Church.

4.2.2 Attitudes to IPV

Figure 1 shows respondents' attitudes to domestic violence. Almost all agreed with the statement that domestic violence is common in Australia, and three in five that it is just as common in churches as it is in the wider community. Just a fifth felt that the Anglican Church is adequately equipped to respond to disclosure of domestic violence. A large majority (86%) agreed that the Anglican Church needs to do more to raise awareness of domestic violence. Half (49%) indicated that their churches had taken steps to raise awareness of domestic violence.

Figure 1: Attitudes to domestic violence and the Anglican Church



Source: NAFVP Experience Study Survey (n=286-288).

4.2.3 Experiences of those who sought help from an Anglican church

Of those who had personal experience with IPV, almost half (48%) had sought help from an Anglican church (54% of those who were victim-survivors, 68% of those who were victim-survivors and were willing to be interviewed for this study, and 31% of those who weren't victim-survivors). Some 83% of the people who had approached a church for help were victim-survivors. Because of the small numbers of respondents who weren't victim-survivors and who had sought help, we don't present separate results for them.

Some 19% of respondents who were victim-survivors indicated that they had experienced IPV in their current relationship, and 83% in a previous relationship. More than half, 58%, had been in an abusive relationship for at least 10 years. Some 58% indicated that they experienced abuse more than five years ago (including 41% who had experienced it more than 10 years ago), while some 16% had experienced abuse within the last 12 months.

The 58% of victim-survivors who had approached an Anglican church for help overwhelmingly approached clergy (87%, Table 1). Around a third approached other people in leadership and regular members of the congregation. Most commonly, the help offered was emotional support/listening ear (70%), followed by prayer (59%). Practical help was offered to 32% of respondents, and information about other organisations who could help to 24%.

On the most recent occasion that the victim-survivors had approached an Anglican church for help, the response they received helped to positively change the situation for 33%, while for 31% the response didn't change the situation but helped them to feel supported. It did not make any difference to the situation or their feelings for 16% of respondents. It made things worse for 20% of victim-survivors.

Table 1: Approaches to and experiences of the church in relation to IPV

	% of those with personal experience with IPV who had approached a church for help	% victim-survivors who had approached church for help
Person approached for help (n)	(114)	(94)
A clergy person (e.g. priest, minister, deacon)	85%	87%
A staff worker employed by the church (not a clergy person)	15%	16%
A person in leadership at the church (not a clergy person or staff member)	35%	35%
A member of a church who wasn't in a leadership role	32%	30%
Somebody else	8%	6%
Type of help offered (n)	(111)	(92)
Emotional support/listening ear	71%	70%
Practical help	30%	32%
Financial help	14%	16%
Prayer	59%	59%
Mediation/intervention with the violent partner	22%	20%
Information about other organisations who could help	26%	24%
They did not offer any help	14%	14%
Other response	20%	21%
Experience of support (n)	(113)	(94)
Helped to positively change the situation	33%	33%
Did not change the situation but helped me feel supported	34%	31%
Did not make any difference to either the situation or how I was feeling	14%	16%
Made things worse	19%	20%

Source: NAFVP Experience Study Survey.

4.2.4 Experiences of those who did not seek help from an Anglican church

Some 52% of respondents who had personal experience with IPV had not approached an Anglican church for help. Just 15% of those had considered doing so – they numbered just 18 people, including 12 victim-survivors. The most common contributing factors in not seeking help among victim-survivors who had considered doing so were that they were too embarrassed or ashamed, they felt it was wrong to talk negatively about their partner at church, they felt that it was their duty to make the relationship work, and that they blamed themselves for their partner's behaviour. Other factors indicated by a large minority were, they didn't know that they were experiencing IPV, they didn't think people would believe them (Table 2).

Table 2: Factors influencing decision not to seek help from an Anglican church

	% of those with personal experience with IPV who had considered seeking help	% victim-survivors who had considered seeking help
I was too embarrassed or ashamed	50%	67%
I felt that it was wrong to talk negatively about my partner to someone at church	50%	67%
I felt that it was my duty to make the relationship work	50%	67%
I blamed myself for my partner's behaviour	38%	50%
I didn't expect anyone to believe me	38%	42%
I didn't know the signs that I was experiencing intimate partner violence	38%	50%
The church did not have the right expertise to help	38%	25%
I was worried about confidentiality and other people at church finding out	31%	33%
I felt the church might make things worse	31%	33%
I had a position of responsibility which made it difficult to confide in others	25%	25%
My partner had a position of responsibility which would make it difficult to confide in others	19%	17%
There was no one that I know or trust well enough	13%	17%
I was worried that what I said might be reported to another organisation	6%	8%
Other factor	25%	25%

Source: NAFVP Experience Study Survey (n = 16 respondents who had considered seeking help, n = 12 victim-survivors who had considered seeking help).

4.2.5 Discussion of survey results

The survey was open to anyone to take part. Most of those who did so had experience with domestic violence, including just over half who had experienced violence from an intimate partner. Large majorities agreed that domestic violence is common in Australia, that it is just as common in churches, and that the Anglican Church needs to do more to raise awareness of domestic violence. A minority felt that the Church was adequately equipped to respond to disclosure of domestic violence.

Around half of our survey respondents who had personal experience with IPV had sought help from the Anglican Church, as had around half of all victim-survivors and around two-thirds of victim-survivors who were willing to be interviewed for the study. This suggests that seeking help was linked with an increased motivation to participate in the study. It is likely that there are many more people who did not participate and did not seek such help. Recruitment relied on publicity through a variety of channels. We are aware that there are many people who would not have heard about the study – for example, those with a peripheral connection to the Anglican Church, or those who previously had a connection but no longer did so, including for reasons to do with their experiences of abuse. It is likely that there were also people for whom it was too difficult, dangerous or painful to take part. It is possible that those with a negative experience of their churches were under-represented in this survey.

Overwhelmingly, those participants who were victim-survivors and had sought help from an Anglican church approached clergy. Comparison between these results and the NAFVP Clergy Study shows a difference in terms of the type of support that was received compared with that which clergy said they offered. Victim-survivors indicated that they had mainly received emotional support and prayer. Just a quarter said that the help that was offered to them included information about other organisations who could help. In contrast, in the clergy survey, a large majority of clergy who had dealt with specific domestic violence situations indicated that they had referred victims to a service agency (e.g. crisis support, counselling, legal support, financial support) (see Clergy Study). The reasons for the discrepancy between the two studies is unclear. The survey questions were worded differently, but this is unlikely to account for such a large difference. The Experience Study Survey was based on small numbers of victim-survivors (n=92 reported on the help they had received), nevertheless this discrepancy is worthy of further investigation.

Among those who did take part in the survey and had sought help from an Anglican church, most either had a positive experience or felt supported on the most recent occasion when they approached a church for help. However, it is possible that those whose experiences were negative were less likely to participate in the survey, including because they might have moved on from their church and did not hear about the survey or did not wish to participate in it.

When the survey was designed, it was considered best to only ask those who had considered approaching a church for help but hadn't done so about what had influenced them in making this decision. Future work among those with a close connection to churches (such as regular churchgoers) could ask everyone who hadn't approached a church for help about these factors. Nevertheless, based on the small numbers in the present study who were in this situation, the prominence of shame, self-blame and internalisation of responsibility is notable. The in-depth interviews that comprised the next phase of this study provides much insight into dynamics that prevent victim-survivors from disclosing to their church. As discussed later in this report, churches can take actions to help reduce feelings of shame and self-blame among those who are living in abusive relationships, as well as to increase awareness of the signs of IPV.

5 Phase 2: Methodology for face-to-face interviews



The second phase of data collection involved 20 in-depth interviews. Participants who were handpicked using data collected in Phase 1 were invited to attend an individual face-to-face interview using video conferencing or in person at a suitable location (e.g. a room in the local library or a community centre, or the participant's home or a friend's home).

Initial plans had been that all interviews would be conducted in person. However, due to changing COVID restrictions on travel during 2020, an application was made to the Charles Sturt University Human Research Ethics Committee to change the plans to be able to conduct interviews using Zoom video conference software with full end to end encryption. This change was approved, which allowed interviews to be conducted across Australia.

The interview involved responding to a series of open-ended questions relating to the nature of the participant's experience of IPV, the participant's connection with the Anglican Church and the intersection between the two. Each face-to-face interview took between one and two hours depending on a participant's responses. A list of sample questions was provided to the participant prior to the interview. The interviews were digitally recorded then transcribed.

5.1 Participants for Phase 2 Interviews

In the Phase 1 scoping survey, 178 out of the 305 respondents indicated that they had personally experienced violence from an intimate partner. About half (85 people) were interested to be interviewed in depth. A handpicked sample of these were approached for Phase 2 of the study. Handpicked sampling is a non-random, targeted sample where judgement is used to determine the most suitable participants (O'Leary 2010). In this study it was used to guarantee a diversity of participants.

Prospective interviewees had to:

- Have experienced violence from an intimate partner (i.e. be victim-survivors of IPV)
- Have a current connection with the Australian Anglican Church, or a previous connection that ended no longer than ten years ago
- Span a diversity of socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds
- Span a diversity of experiences of and views about the Anglican Church in relation to IPV (e.g. positive, negative, mixed experiences)
- Meet a range of safety-based criteria, if they were currently experiencing IPV (defined as having experienced it within the previous 12 months), namely:
 - Have access to people who provide support
 - Have contact with professional service providers or know how to access such providers if needed
 - Be in a sufficiently stable housing situation (e.g. not in a shelter).

Participants who indicated a willingness to participate in Phase 2 but did not meet these criteria for participation or were not handpicked for an interview were informed. Delayed recruitment for a person who was willing to participate, but was in current crisis, was held as an option, however it was not utilised (Knickmeyer et al. 2010; Campbell et al. 2019).

The sample size for the individual in-depth face to face interviews was planned to be sufficient to achieve saturation in data coding. Previous experiential studies indicated that approximately 20 would be required (Gezinski et al. 2019; Knickmeyer et al. 2010; Knickmeyer et al. 2003; Nash 2006). Ultimately 20 interviews were conducted. Coding was conducted after the completion of all interviews.

5.2 Recruitment for Phase 2 Interviews

Many research studies in the field of IPV recruit their participants via support services. This is not the case for the current study. In order to safeguard the safety and wellbeing of participants, it was important that they received suitable support, so we provided all prospective participants with contact details for counselling, mental health and domestic violence support services.

A protocol was developed for those who completed Phase 1 of the online survey and indicated they were willing to be interviewed, and were not initially excluded based on set criteria, but were subsequently not hand-picked for interview (Appendix G).

After being hand-picked for participation from their responses to the online survey (Phase 1), prospective participants for Phase 2 (interviews) were sent further information about the study:

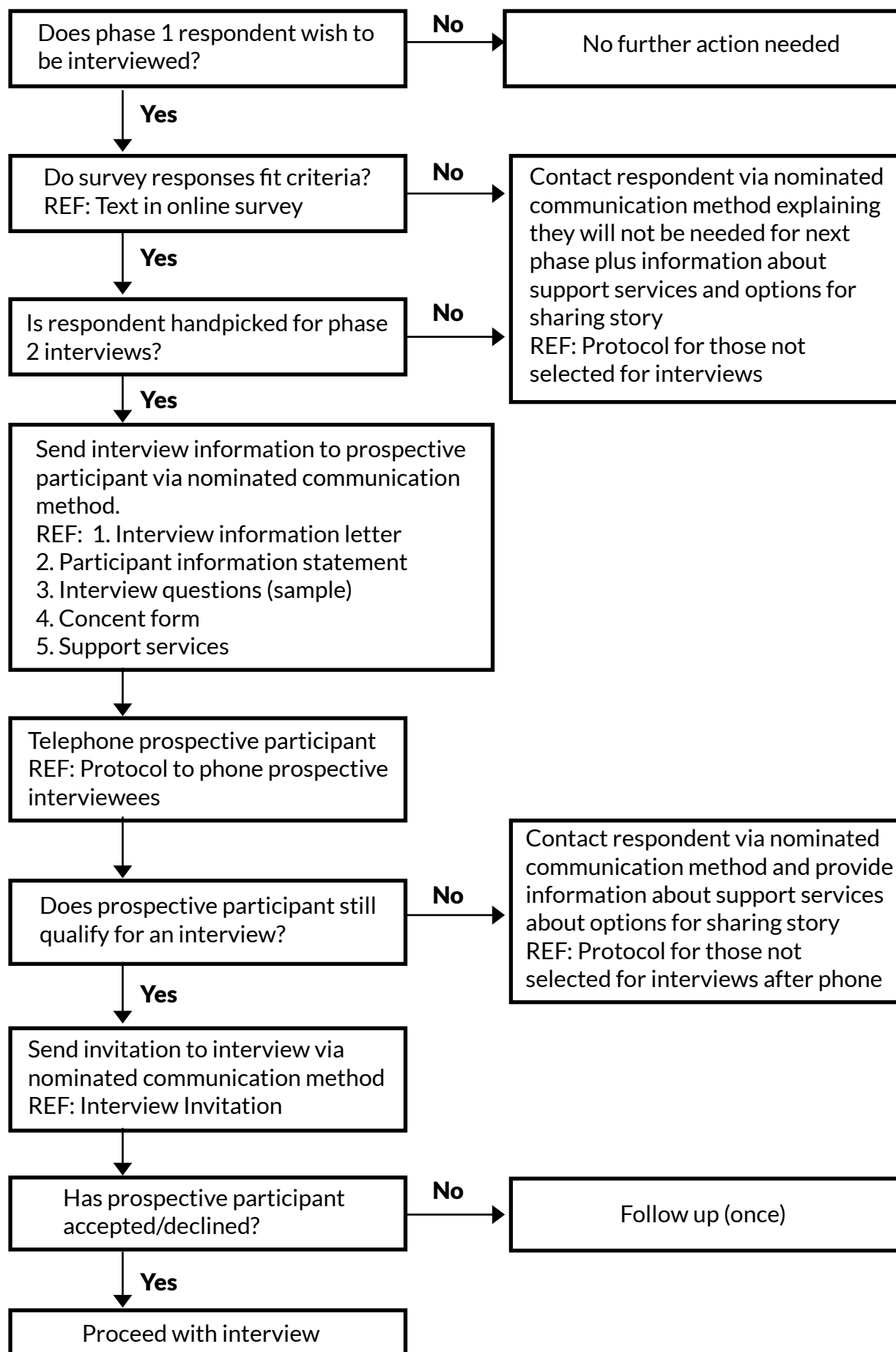
- Interview Information Letter (Appendix H)
- Interview Participant Information Statement (Appendix I)
- Interview Consent form (Appendix J)
- sample list of interview questions (Appendix K)
- support service information (Appendix D).

This material was sent out via the communication method that participants nominated in the online survey (either email or post). Within a few weeks of sending the study information, a member of the research team would telephone the prospective participant. The purpose of this telephone conversation was to:

- Discuss whether they wish to participate in an interview
- Confirm that they met the criteria for inclusion (confirming their survey responses)
- Confirm that they met the safety-based criteria (have access to people who provide support if IPV is a current concern, and were in a stable housing arrangement) and discuss any safety or wellbeing concerns that the participant may have. For those who did not currently meet the safety criteria, recruitment might not be possible within the timeframe for the study
- Determine options for a safe, private location for the interview.

Researchers had a protocol which was developed and rehearsed for these phone calls, in order to protect the wellbeing and safety of prospective interviewees in a range of potential scenarios (Appendix L). Following a review of the answers given by the prospective interviewee in the phone conversation, they were sent a formal invitation to an interview and asked to confirm these arrangements (Appendix M). If the individual hadn't made contact within one week, the researchers contacted them once more.

Below is a flowchart showing the steps in recruitment.



5.3 Data collection for Phase 2 Interviews

Due to changing COVID restrictions on travel, interviews were conducted in person for most people in NSW. Other interviews were conducted using Zoom video conference software with full end to end encryption or by phone. Dr Miriam Pepper conducted 12 interviews and Dr Ruth Powell conducted 8 interviews. Interviews took place between November 2020 and February 2021.

Participants were asked about the nature of their experiences of IPV, responses to violence, and the meanings associated with these experiences, including in connection with their faith and their church. Interview questions were designed to encourage participants to share their experiences in detail, with a particular focus of the role of the Anglican Church and its clergy and congregants in these experiences. Interviewers used active listening techniques, to demonstrate empathy, compassion, and appreciation for participants' strengths, agency and choices (Campbell et al. 2019; Hardesty et al. 2019).

Trauma-informed approaches to research provide choices to participants, facilitate their sense of agency and control, bolster their strengths and promote their safety and recovery (Campbell et al. 2019). Care for participants' wellbeing was upheld at all times: before, during and after the interviews. Prospective interviewees were assured that they could stop the interview at any time and take a break and/or withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason. Interviews were conducted by researchers who had received training about domestic and family violence research interviews and trauma-informed research practices.

Contact details for counselling and other support services were provided to all participants (Appendix D). In addition, a specialised support services sheet which provided information about the services local to the participants was provided immediately after the interview. Researchers also took the initiative to follow up participants with an email or call in the days after the interview. A participant distress protocol was developed and implemented for the interviews (Appendix O).

5.4 Confidentiality

All participants were told that any information collected by the researchers which might identify them will be stored securely and only accessed by the researchers unless they consent otherwise, except as required by law. Data will be retained securely for at least 5 years at the offices of NCLS Research and survey data will also be suitably stored in a CSU data repository as an anonymised dataset with appropriate terms and conditions for access.

Every effort has been made to ensure the confidentiality of participants. Identifying data of survey participants (names and contact details) was separated and stored separately from the dataset to be used for analysis. The dataset used for analysis included a randomly generated code for each participant. A version of the dataset will be prepared for a data repository for use in future research. This dataset will be de-identified and a reduced set of variables will be provided to protect respondent confidentiality (e.g. age brackets rather than exact age, incomplete set of variables on connection with the Anglican Church, no open text responses).

Confidentiality of face-to-face interview participants was protected by not identifying participants in transcripts, using a data protocol adapted from procedures employed by the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (WHA n.d.). The interviewer edited the text to remove all identifying

features to ensure anonymity. This included names, children's names, ages, church names, denomination names (other than Anglican), locations, such as towns and cities, organisation names, occupations, years when events took place and more. (See Appendix P for Data Anonymity Protocol). The second researcher then read through the anonymised transcript to confirm that all identifiers had been removed.

The confidentiality risks associated with sharing qualitative data from studies of this nature can be large (Campbell et al. 2019; Finkel et al. 2015; Ross et al. 2018). To protect the privacy and confidentiality of interviewees, audio recordings and transcripts will not be made available in the data repository or beyond the project.

Survey participants and interview participants have been de-identified in all outputs. Quotes used in this report have been further redacted to protect participants' confidentiality. No anonymous participant identifiers are provided in this report. Where one quote directly follows another, this signifies a quote from a different participant unless stated otherwise.

6 Phase 2: Interviews analysis framework



Face-to-face interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. There were more than 400 pages of transcripts (approximately 270,000 words).

The interview transcripts were analysed by means of coding, which is the process of labelling and organising the data to identify themes and the relationships between them, and interpreting the meaning and significance of the data at a deeper level.

The primary purpose of this study is to learn from those with direct experience of intimate partner violence what roles Anglican churches have had in such experiences. We present the results in a way that gives prominence to the voices of our participants. We have included extensive direct quotes from the in-depth interviews.

Before explaining the details of our approach to analysis, we make three general points.

First, we are aware that the interviews captured participants narratives or stories about their experiences at a particular point in time as they shared them with us. The situations and understandings of people who have experienced violence may evolve and shift.

Second, in our writeup in this report, we often use the terms “victim-survivor” and “abusive partner”, “abuser” or “perpetrator”. We are aware that in the field of research on IPV there is often a preference for using terms such as “person who has experienced IPV” and “person who has perpetrated IPV”, because labelling people as “victims”, “survivors” and “perpetrators” may limit individual self-agency and identity (Partners for Prevention n.d.). By using terms such as “victim-survivor” and “abuser”, we do not intend to fix people who have experienced abuse and people who abuse them into these roles. We use them to avoid added complexity in our communication when dealing with multiple people and multiple roles.

Third, we did not make assumptions at any point in our research about what choices our participants should make. “Victim blaming” is all too common in conversations about domestic violence – for example, “why didn’t they tell someone?”, “why didn’t they leave?”. Our participants had lived in abusive, controlling relationships where their partners exerted power over them in multi-faceted ways. We were sensitised to our participants’ agency. Agency does not necessarily mean liberation from an abusive relationship or a complete rejection of religious discourses and norms that contributed to a pattern of abuse. Agency implies a process of self-knowledge and self-determination – that is, the capacity to make choices and act on them, often within significant constraints. We were particularly attuned to the ways that churches did or didn’t support participants to use their agency to bring about changes that they wanted to see in their situations – whatever that change may be.

6.1 Coding

Interview transcripts were coded using NVivo software¹ in a series of steps based on a modified grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Shooter 2018). As a first step, all interview transcripts were coded by assigning conceptual “codes” to sections of the text, using NVivo software. The codes identified in this stage became the foundational building blocks of analysis. Once a foundational set of codes was established, categorical relationships between codes were investigated and either accepted or rejected during a process of grouping codes based on themes and events in the trajectory of the participant’s narratives. Coding continued in this way until a coding model emerged. The coding model was considered complete when new codes were no longer being added to the model. As a final step, the data query and visualisation features of NVivo software were used further investigate relationships between codes, test hunches, and identify coding trends and common themes. Throughout the coding and analysis process, the researchers communicated frequently and kept records of ideas and theoretical decisions.

6.2 Framework for analysis

At the heart of our analysis is the role of churches – particularly local churches/parishes – in participants’ experiences of IPV. Matters of individual faith and spirituality were not the primary focus of this study, although we have content on this – the focus was the role of church. The two are, of course, intertwined. But our attention to matters of faith is in the context of the broader culture, relationships, and interactions within a church. So, for example, we are not primarily concerned with how participants’ experiences of God helped or didn’t help them in their journey, but we are concerned with how those experiences intersect with the church.

The participants in our study were subjected to multi-faceted violence and control from their intimate partners over long periods of time, decades in some cases, starting typically from when they were young adults. The abuse was hidden from participants’ church communities for at least a time, and still remains hidden in some cases. For some of our participants, their interactions with their churches were overwhelmingly positive or negative, but it was common for the church to play a nuanced role. Most participants were no longer a part of that same church when we interviewed them, and all were physically separated from their partners. Some participants had initiated the separation, others had not. Some had divorced and some were widowed. Some participants’ churches assisted them in various ways in the process of separation, and others’ churches impeded them. For some, the abuse continues, although it may have changed form and severity. For many participants, but not all, churches have been of some help to them in rebuilding their lives. The trajectory of abuse, or how abuse played out in their story, was different for each individual.

To effectively analyse this complexity and diversity, we needed a number of strong but flexible tools. We used several concepts which emerged through interaction between our coding frame, our awareness of the literature, a return to the interview transcripts in their entirety, and writing up the results. They were as follows:

- Phases related to the experience of intimate partner violence and the importance of “key moments”
- Churches as cultures and places of relationship
- Human needs.

¹NVivo software provides the capability to code and analyse qualitative data with management, query, and visualization tools.

6.2.1 Phases and key moments related to the experience of intimate partner violence

The trajectory of abuse was different for each participant. But they all had one thing in common – they had physically separated from their partners. In our analysis, we attended to two phases of life for our participants in order to help us to synthesise across the diversity of their experiences. The first was life in the abusive relationship, when the participants were living with their partners and the abuse that they were experiencing was typically hidden from their church communities. The second was separation from their partner and beyond. In examining the transition from life in the abusive relationship to and beyond separation, we use a concept we called “key moments”, which draws from work on domestic violence by investigative journalist Jess Hill.

In her book *See what you made me do: Power, control and domestic abuse* (2019), Hill uses storytelling to spotlight the prevalence and reality of IPV in Australia. As she explores narratives of abuse she identifies and explains that for victim-survivors there are critical moments in the trajectory of their IPV where they emerge from the “underground”, the hidden place where IPV occurs. In these instances there is opportunity to vision the possibility of an alternative future:

When – even for a moment – her private abuse becomes public, she sees other people seeing it and seeing her. In a rare moment of clarity, the fog shrouding the underground clears enough for her to get some perspective and see the danger she’s in. She senses – but dares not to believe – the possibility of an alternative future. These moments are to be seized immediately. If they are missed, her belief that nobody can help her is confirmed. The fog closes back in, and she slips underground again, where the abuse continues, unseen (Hill 2019, p. 229-230).

We employ a looser formulation of the critical moments concept than Hill, in that we do not necessarily rely on the private abuse becoming public. From our analysis of the trajectory of participants’ narratives, we contend that key moments are crucial instants of clarity for victim-survivors in the course of IPV where there is an opening and opportunity to make choices and act on them. Again and again our participants talked about “moments”, “point”, “instance”, “catalyst”, “lightbulb”, “pivotal moment” when they had perspective on or acknowledged their situation. It is important to note that participants did not generally use the words “key moment” – this phrase and concept belongs to us as researchers. Key moments are diverse. They may include, for example, an individual’s sudden awareness that they are living in an abusive relationship, a realisation that God does not want them to suffer, or a sense that living in the abusive relationship is no longer tenable. As we conceive of key moments, they may or may not include disclosure of abuse. Action on the part of the person experiencing abuse and those who support them may or may not follow a key moment.

We do not contend that key moments are the only thing that is important in bringing about freedom from abuse. Nor do we maintain that victim-survivors should necessarily disclose their abuse to their churches or call on them for help. We do assert that in key moments it is possible to support someone living in a situation of IPV. The presence and availability of trusted people who see and hear the victim-survivor and are willing and able to offer assistance can be crucial for victim-survivors to imagine and realise the possibility of a future beyond their IPV experience. We also assert that, through their actions, churches can fail to respond to key moments and even reduce the possibilities for them to occur.

6.2.2 Church culture and relationships

When looking at the church and its role in our participants' experiences of IPV, we thought about churches in two ways: as cultures, and as places of or spaces for relationship.

First, we understood churches in terms of culture, that is, the shared beliefs, customs and behaviours of a particular group of people. Theologian Vincent Jude Miller provides a helpful way of thinking about culture in the context of religion:

Religious traditions consist of religious beliefs, symbols, values and practices. The meanings of the cultural objects that constitute traditions are rooted in their interrelations... Religious traditions also consist of particular institutions and practices that relate beliefs and symbols to the practice of everyday life (Miller 2003, p.31).

Cultures are not fixed but are dynamic and evolving. Beliefs, customs and behaviours may also be contested.

In considering the links between a church culture and our participants' experiences of IPV, we were especially sensitised to values, beliefs and practices regarding intimate relationships, including how these are taught and/or propagated in churches and families. We were sensitised to two concepts in particular in this regard:

- Discourses: Discourse refers to how a particular topic (intimate relationships in this case) is communicated or expressed in language
- Norms: Norms are standards for behaviour. A norm can be: descriptive – what someone perceives as typical behaviour (regarding intimate relationships) in a particular social context, subjective – what someone understands others would approve (or disapprove) of them personally doing, or personal – how someone thinks that they personally should behave.

Second, we understood churches as places of or spaces for relationship. In work on church health, NCLS Research maintains that churches seek to foster relationships between their people and God, between individuals and groups in the church, and between the church and the wider community (Kaldor et al. 1992, 1997; Powell et al. 2019). In this study, we were sensitised to the relationships and social interactions between our participants, church leaders and congregants. In cases where the partner was also a part of that church community, this also included relationships between the abusive partner and others in the church.

6.2.3 Needs of people who have experienced intimate partner violence

During our interviews and throughout our analysis we noticed the wide variety of ways our participants told us that churches did and didn't support them – from providing caring relationships, facilitating transcendent experiences, and providing accommodation or material support; to compromising their physical or emotional safety, judging their actions, and not seeing them for who they were. We saw how churches can help or hinder those who experience abuse to meet their needs.

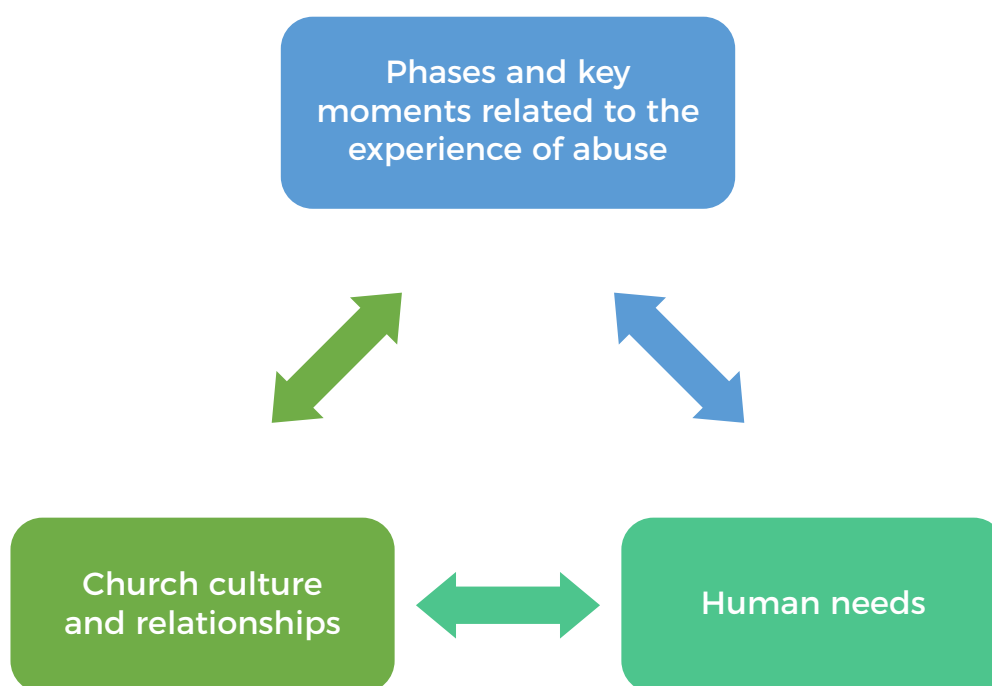
Two scholars have been particularly influential in theories of human needs – Abraham Maslow and Manfred A. Max-Neef. Maslow, a psychologist, posited six sets of needs: physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs (respect from others and self-respect), self-actualisation (achieving one's full potential), and transcendence beyond the self (Maslow 1943, 1969; Koltko-Rivera 2006). Economist Max-Neef's taxonomy consists of: subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, idleness, creation, identity and freedom (Max-Neef 1991).

We did not hold these needs as fixed concepts, but rather, we used them to be open to the diversity of ways that our participants told us about helpful and harmful experiences in their churches. After an iterative process of examining our data, we framed needs as follows:

- To be safe
- To have material provision
- To be in relationships of care, empathy and acceptance
- To have their own identity
- To make a contribution
- To have a spiritual life and relationship with God.

6.2.4 Applying the concepts in our analysis

Each of these concepts – phases and key moments in the experience of abuse, church culture and relationships, and needs of people who have experienced intimate partner violence – intersect across our analysis. First, phases and key moments related to the experience of IPV structure our work overall. In our writing we start with the role of the church in participants' experiences of life in an abusive relationship, then move to the role of church in relation to key moments, and finish with the role of the church during and after participants' separation from their abusive partners. Second, church culture and relationships particularly informed our analysis of the church as regards the dynamic of abusive relationship relationships and key moments and structured our writing in these sections. Discourses, norms and social interactions in churches helped and hindered our participants in their experiences of abuse and were involved in possibilities for and responses to key moments. Third, participants' needs were key to understanding how churches helped and hindered and were the primary concept used to structure our final section – the role of the church in rebuilding and recovering life when participants separated from their partners and beyond.



Terms used in our analysis

Narrative: A participant's account of their experiences of IPV, as shared in conversation with the interviewer.

Culture: Shared beliefs, customs and behaviours of a particular group of people (church in this case).

Discourse: The specifics of a particular topic (intimate partner relationships in this case) as communicated or expressed in language.

Norm: A standard for behaviour.

Trajectory of abuse: The way that abuse plays out in the course of somebody's life.

Key moment: A crucial instant of clarity for a victim-survivor in the course of IPV where there is an opening and opportunity for agency.

Agency: Participants' capacity to make choices and act on them.

7 Phase 2 results: About interview participants and features of violence



7.1 About the interview participants

Twenty people were interviewed for this study. They came from across the age range and from different backgrounds and locations. Anyone can experience domestic violence; it affects people from all backgrounds and walks of life, and the participants in our study were diverse. Our participants also had strong connections to the Anglican community. Many had been embedded in church communities for much of their lives, which was a motivator for their involvement in the project.

7.1.1 Diverse and 'ordinary' people

Twenty people (19 women and one man) were selected from across Australia from the 85 who were willing to be interviewed. They came from across the age range with the youngest in their 20s and the oldest in their 70s. Most were aged between 30 and 60. They were from a diversity of educational, socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. Most, but not all, had been married. While it was not an intentional selection, two of the participants had experienced abuse in same-sex relationships.

The participants also spanned a diversity of experiences of and views about the Anglican Church in relation to IPV. Some were clergy wives and some were ordained within the Anglican Church after their period in an abusive relationship had ended. Most had mixed experiences to report – both positive and negative – about their interactions with the church with reference to their own stories of abuse and of building a new life after the relationship had ended. A few who had overwhelmingly positive stories about their interaction with church and a few had overwhelmingly negative stories.

Anyone can experience intimate partner violence. This was reflected in the diversity and “ordinariness” of our survey respondents and interview participants. One participant expressed this reality in this way:

So, the women [who have experienced], intimate partner violence, are well educated, lawyers, teachers, psychologists and power dressers, people that are drop-dead gorgeous women, women that are 50 kilos overweight, everything in between, gorgeous women, intelligent women, funny women, confident women, they're in domestic violence situations. So please don't dismiss her and also please don't think "I would never let that happen to me, I would never let that happen to my daughter" ... [Among] gay couples, intimate partner violence is just as prevalent, so no reason why it wouldn't be, male couples, female couples, whatever. Again, there's no rhyme nor reason to who can be the abusive person and who might not. The women or the men that are getting abused – you can't pick it.

In this report we describe themes and patterns that emerged from interviews conducted for the purposes of this study. It is important to emphasise that each story and journey is unique. Therefore, the results of the study apply to IPV situations in Anglican churches in a general sense. Specific situations vary considerably.

7.1.2 Strong connections to the Anglican community

In general, the participants are a group of people who have been embedded in church communities for much of their lives. A number spoke of their parents' and children's involvement in local Anglican churches as well as their own lifetime participation. Others had been involved in churches in other denominations, as well as the Anglican Church.

I'm what I call an active, practising Anglican. I do attend church most Sundays, just the once a week, but I pray daily, and I would consider myself very much a faith-based person. I was brought up in a very traditional Anglican, Christian, household. Mum and Dad were both very active members of the church.

This sense of identity and connectedness appears to have been one motivator to invest their time and courage to be heard through this study. At the end of a number of the interviews, participants were curious about what would be happening with the research findings and were hopeful that their contribution, along with others, would make a positive difference for the Anglican Church.

7.2 Features of violence from the intimate partner

Participants were invited within the interview to share as much, or as little, of their story as they chose. In this context, they offered reflections on their ex-partners. We cannot disclose details of the personal histories of people; however, we have extracted some common themes that illustrate the violence that was experienced and its impacts. This section covers:

- Early warning signs or “red flags” that were sometimes present in the relationship
- The many forms of violence experienced by the participants
- Contrasts between violence at home and the image presented by the abusive partner in public
- Coercive controlling dynamics and cycles of abuse
- Participants' efforts to try and make sense of the abuse
- The impact of the abuse on participants' wellbeing and identity
- Ways that participants used their agency in the abusive relationship.

7.2.1 Early warning signs and unstable histories

A number of participants spoke of early warning signs of abuse in their relationship. Some participants used the phrase “red flags” to refer these signs, which included such things as warnings from family or friends and changes in character. Some also spoke about unstable work histories and outbursts.

Sometimes warnings came from friends and family, both within the church community and beyond.

[A marriage counsellor] said to me, “It doesn't take a genius to know that it's not going to work out between you two.” And she suggested that I do not marry him ... And I just thought no, I think I'm just going to have to forge ahead and try and make this work, and just hopefully it's going to work. And I was so naive, [a young age] and had no family support, and was ... considered a vulnerable person ... I just hoped because he said he was a Christian that, and that he had grown up in a Christian family, I just hoped that it was going to be okay. And it never was okay. It was never okay.

An early warning sign of dysfunction that was mentioned in a number of interviews included a change of character in early marriage or when a significant event happened, such as the birth of a child.

I mean, looking back in hindsight, I'm sure you hear this all the time, "in hindsight," some of the red flags were already there. Periods where he'd just go really quiet, he wouldn't talk, or periods where he'd go and make phone calls and not tell me who he was talking to.

As well as retrospectively naming the early warning signs, some participants also spoke about features of their partner's behaviours across the trajectory of the relationship. Signs of dysfunction in their partners across time that were raised included unstable work histories and public and private outbursts. These features sometimes, but not always, acted as 'red flags' for others, such as employers or members of the church community.

It nearly all came undone for him once. I don't know what happened but he lost his temper at church in front of [a church leader], and actually ... started yelling at him. I thought, finally. They're finally going to see what happens at home, they've finally seen it. But like I did the first time I saw it, everyone dismissed it as a one-off, he was stressed. As long as he apologises, we'll forget it, all that sort of stuff. So, it continued.

7.2.2 Forms of violence

As noted earlier in this report, intimate partner violence covers a range of abusive behaviours. It is much broader than acts of physical or sexual violence. It is any behaviour that causes harm – physical, sexual or psychological harm.

Organisations and agencies have used various approaches and frameworks to describe types of violence or abuse. All highlight the fact that violence and abuse take many forms. For example, one tool that provided insight and understanding for a few participants was Duluth Wheels, with particular reference to the Power and Control Wheel. In the Power and Control Wheel, the acts of physical and sexual violence are located on the outside of the wheel, with other forms of abuse located within the wheel as tactics to achieve an overall goal of power and control ("What is the Duluth Model?" n.d.).

We do not want to dwell on the details of the harm caused. The participants in this study were often quite understated in their descriptions of the types of violence that they had been subjected to. However, this is an important opportunity to address the reality that is not universally grasped – that all abuses are forms of violence, and that violence is more than physical actions.

So, here we provide one framework for understanding different types of violence prepared in Australia by BaptistCare, who provide descriptions of seven types of violence: physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, social, financial and spiritual (BaptistCare n.d.).

- **Physical Abuse:** Physical abuse includes directly assaulting the body; using weapons; driving dangerously; destructing property; abusing pets in front of family members; assaulting children; locking the victim out of the house; and depriving sleep
- **Sexual Abuse:** Any form of forced sex or sexual degradation, such as sexual activity without consent; causing pain during sex; coercive sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease; making the victim perform sexual acts unwillingly; criticising, or using sexually degrading insults
- **Emotional Abuse:** Blaming the victim for all problems in the relationship; constantly comparing the victim with others to undermine self-esteem and self-worth; sporadic sulking; withdrawing all interest and engagement (e.g. days or weeks of silence)
- **Verbal Abuse:** Continual put-downs and humiliation, either privately or publicly, with attacks following clear themes that focus on intelligence, sexuality, body image, and capacity as a parent and spouse

- **Social Abuse:** Systematic isolation from family and friends through techniques such as ongoing rudeness to family and friends; moving to locations where the victim knows nobody; and forbidding or physically preventing the victim from going out and meeting people – in effect, imprisonment
- **Economic Abuse:** Having complete control of all monies; granting no access to bank accounts; providing only an inadequate ‘allowance’; using any wages earned by the victim for household expenses; excessive expenditure and accumulation of debt left for victims to repay
- **Spiritual Abuse:** Denying access to ceremonies, land, or family; preventing religious observance; forcing victims to do things against their beliefs; denigration of cultural background; using religious teachings or cultural tradition as a reason for violence.

Based on the interview evidence, we extended the BaptistCare definition of economic abuse to include “excessive expenditure and accumulation of debt left for victims to repay.”

We have included a few selected quotes that come directly from victim-survivors, organised under these seven headings, to underline the breadth of what is truly violent and harmful behaviour (see Table 3). Further selected quotes to illustrate each type of violence have been included in Appendix Q.

Warning: This section contains graphic descriptions of violence.

Table 3: Types of violence with examples from participants

Type of violence	In their words
<p>Physical Abuse</p> <p>Physical abuse includes directly assaulting the body; using weapons; driving dangerously; destructing property; abusing pets in front of family members; assaulting children; locking the victim out of the house; and depriving sleep.</p>	<p><i>He used to get triggered by small things ... For example, if I didn't cook dinner, he used to hit me. If I didn't clean the house, he used to hit me. And I never understood why that happened. In my family, that never used to happen ... Because those days, I had to call in sick all the time because I would be bruised all over ... That was next level violence ... Yes, it was tough. Those days were tough because I would end up with pain and aches in my body.</i></p>
<p>Sexual Abuse</p> <p>Any form of forced sex or sexual degradation, such as sexual activity without consent; causing pain during sex; coercive sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease; making the victim perform sexual acts unwillingly; criticising, or using sexually degrading insults.</p>	<p><i>Later ... the sexual violence started ... He came and physically picked me up out of the shower and took me to the bedroom and lay me on the bed and pinned my arms down and had sex with me. I didn't know that saying no was okay sort of thing. I mean had said no, but I didn't know that keeping on saying no or fighting off your husband or whatever, but I couldn't because he was so strong, I couldn't do anything to stop him. That pretty much continued for the rest of the marriage.</i></p>

<p>Emotional Abuse</p> <p>Blaming the victim for all problems in the relationship; constantly comparing the victim with others to undermine self-esteem and self-worth; sporadic sulking; withdrawing all interest and engagement (for example, days or weeks of silence).</p>	<p><i>He was spiralling into some sort of meltdown – break down. He would go off. He would leave for a couple of days. I didn't know where he'd gone. And blame me for whatever was going on ... He would just disappear. He would just go. "Well, I'm going." I didn't know what was going on. I was completely freaked out by those episodes.</i></p> <p><i>He was just – I look back on it now and I see very clearly what it was, it was psychological emotional manipulation, he was very manipulative and very – always right, never apologise, everything was my fault all the time, I was a terrible person, I never supported him well enough and I just felt terrible. I just felt like the worst wife in the history of the world and didn't know what to do.</i></p>
<p>Verbal Abuse</p> <p>Continual put-downs and humiliation, either privately or publicly, with attacks following clear themes that focus on intelligence, sexuality, body image, and capacity as a parent and spouse.</p>	<p><i>There was obviously ... verbal abuse. A lot of just belittling, when I got friends, a lot of cutting me down in front of friends. You know, quite humiliating. Making comments about the toilet, stuff like that, like really sordid sort of "funny" comments. A lot of gaslighting, a lot of setting himself up as being in control of, even just things like whether I was just allowed to go to sleep, whether I was allowed to read while he watched the television.</i></p> <p><i>It was mainly psychological mental abuse and torture. He started to wake me up in the night and keep me up in the night to have long discussions about whatever I'd done wrong next.</i></p>
<p>Social Abuse</p> <p>Systematic isolation from family and friends through techniques such as ongoing rudeness to family and friends; moving to locations where the victim knows nobody; and forbidding or physically preventing the victim from going out and meeting people – in effect, imprisonment</p>	<p><i>A [friend] would say to me, do you want to have a coffee, or do you want to go and have a coffee, so we'd make a date and then I would say to him, I'm going to have a coffee with such-and-such. He'd ... kick up a stink ... he'd chuck a tantrum. I'd just be like, well it's not worth it, so I'd cancel, and I did it all the time and I'd cancel at the last minute or friends that he approved of.</i></p> <p><i>Probably the worse things were the threats and the intimidation where he would just follow me around the house. He couldn't trust me alone in a room in the house. He had to know which room I was in, what I was doing all the time, and if he wanted to tell me something - and he often wanted to tell me something - he would just follow me around and yell his side of the argument until I just said, "yeah, okay, I agree with you" or I just begged him to go away so much. I remember ... he would lock me in rooms, he would barricade the front door or stand in front</i></p>

	<p>of the front door ... “No, you’ve got to sit down, you’re going to listen to me.” ... It was just soul destroying because I just thought I have no voice and I have no freedom. I just do what he wants because if I don’t, it’s much worse.</p>
<p>Economic Abuse</p> <p>Having complete control of all monies; granting no access to bank accounts; providing only an inadequate ‘allowance’; using any wages earned by the victim for household expenses; excessive expenditure and accumulation of debt left for victims to repay.</p>	<p><i>For all of our married life he had controlled the money. I earned it, but he managed it and he gave me access to it. Even my phone, my personal mobile phone wasn’t in my name, it was in his. I didn’t know how to pay a bill because he wouldn’t let me; he managed all of that. I had no idea about our finances, I wouldn’t have known how to access our money. I didn’t know passwords or anything like that ... He was happy for me to earn the money, but in terms of anything that would actually involve me having any autonomy or independence, no, that wasn’t done ... even if I wanted to spend money, I needed to ask him and provide receipts and things like that.</i></p> <p><i>I wasn’t expecting to be ripped off over [large amount of money] a month! And he was pulling money not only from my account, but also from ... the children’s accounts, he robbed my parents ... because he went to them with cap in hand saying how destitute we were ... he left me in excess of [large amount of money] in consumer debt, at 30 per cent interest, and obviously it was accumulating daily, because of the amount of money that he had been withdrawing from credit cards.</i></p>
<p>Spiritual Abuse</p> <p>Denying access to ceremonies, land, or family; preventing religious observance; forcing victims to do things against their beliefs; denigration of cultural background; using religious teachings or cultural tradition as a reason for violence.</p>	<p><i>I started to wonder about that and think, is there somebody else, is there something going on here that I don’t know about, it was thrown back in my face. You know, “you call yourself a Christian, I thought you trusted me, and as a Christian you are supposed to forgive me”. And so, you know, he was smart enough to throw a few well-known scriptures at me, when we had an altercation, and I didn’t have a response.</i></p> <p><i>Everything else he could control because he was the dispenser of that wisdom. So, my prayer life was stupid ... Going to church I shouldn’t need ... There was a lot of spiritual abuse happening which I’m only really just this year working through the consequences of. You know, “your faith is infantile”, things like that ... And again, I believed him ... So yeah, it was all very much wrapped up in that spiritual abuse. It’s been the thing that’s taken me the longest to work through. And it’s sort of the last wound to reveal itself I suppose.</i></p>

Source for definition of types: “More than skin deep” website (BaptistCare n.d.).

7.2.3 Coercive control: the dynamics of abusive behaviours

IPV is “behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours” (WHO 2010, p.10).

Fundamental to the dynamics in abusive behaviour is the misuse of power and control. Typically, one partner tries to exert power and control over the other, usually through fear (AIHW 2018).

The term “coercive control” has gained increased traction in Australia, with the support of the speciality family violence sector. It draws attention to the fact that an incident in isolation may seem insignificant, but when viewed in a context of a pattern of ongoing violence, its significance is more impactful. While isolated events or actions can be explained away, or perhaps seen in terms of a struggling or “bad” marriage, the idea of coercive control captures the ongoing nature of domestic violence, which can pervade all of life and refers to the full breadth of abusive behaviours including physical, sexual, psychological, and more. It includes isolating victims from family and friends, controlling access to finances, monitoring their movements, restricting access to information and assistance (AIHW 2018). It impacts on victims’ independence, wellbeing and safety and is the most common risk factor leading up to an intimate partner homicide (Snell 2020).

Examples of control that our participants described are as follows.

The big things like did he pin us down and try to choke us and that, yeah, but that was only once or twice and what really made us feel scared wasn't that one time, it was the daily little things. So, I guess what constitutes abuse and how it can ramp up.

I remember just wishing that he'd hit me, because then I would know, I would know what that was, I could identify that's domestic violence and I can leave; if he does that, I can leave. He didn't ever hit me. He scared me and he did some really quite physically aggressive things, but nothing that ever physically harmed any of us. I didn't have an understanding of spiritual abuse or financial control or coercive control or any of the kinds of emotional abuse, I didn't understand any of that.

I think a big part of that was also then isolating me. I mean it ticked every box for domestic violence quite early. The isolation, the gaslighting, monitoring phone calls ... He was monitoring my emails. He would “borrow” my laptop. He was very much controlling who I saw and who I didn't. There was financial abuse. There was obviously physical and mental and verbal abuse ... A lot of gaslighting, a lot of setting himself up as being in control of, even just things like whether I was just allowed to go to sleep, whether I was allowed to read while he watched the television.

Confidence, intelligence, position in society, does not make you immune to psychological or emotional abuse because you get groomed. Then once you're in the midst of it, your confidence is so rocked that who you thought you were, is no longer who you think you are, and it just makes it worse. He just is able to control even more.

7.2.4 Cycles of violence

A common way that some participants described their experience of intimate partner violence was as a cycle. There were periods when the situation was less or not abusive, but then things would deteriorate again. This cyclic dynamic was one of a range of factors that kept victims ‘trapped’ in their situation.

Domestic violence is - it's a cycle. it's not a straight line ... Because you are trapped inside this cycle.

You kind of just keep going and it's one foot in front of the other and you do what's necessary to hold it together and keep the peace and smooth things over. And then, typically in the cycle of violence of course, it cycles and cycles up and it cycles down, and you'd have a few bad times, and then he'd come home with a very nice [gift] and you'd think it's not all bad, is it?

When I look back now, it was the classic kind of cycle of control, which there was like the honeymoon period, everyone's happy, and then something would niggle at him until it exploded in him and it was my fault and there was blame and there were threats of divorce, all that kind of stuff. Then he would come good again at a point. And when I look back, those cycles were fairly long, I think. They were probably three months-plus that that was the case. And then they kind of got shorter and shorter as it went along.

7.2.5 The contrast between the public and private face

Some participants highlighted the difficulty or even confusion of living with a person of “two faces”. A charming public presence was in stark contrast to the private reality. When the couple were both involved local church communities, the façade of a happy marriage was sometime sustained, in part, by both people. This dynamic, which occurred within longer term patterns of coercive control, was one factor that kept the patterns of abuse hidden.

I was trapped in a cycle of someone who was very charming in public and then in private was just a nightmare to live with. And you just question your own sanity. You think, “I must have made that up” or “It can't have been that way”. Everyone else was saying, “What a wonderful [person] he was”, and I just thought, “What a rotten husband and father he is”.

But when we were at church together he was a completely different person. He just looked like the most wonderful [partner] anyone could have, and everyone used to tell me how lucky I was, everyone thought he was really popular ... He was really good looking, he was young, he was attractive, he was personable in public ... It was really hard to actually say, I couldn't really say, to anyone, “Yeah, but you should see what he's like at home.”

It took a long time for me to really feel how angry I was with [my ex-partner]. Then even to process it. Part of that is really due to having to be that perfect front at church and other places, but you know that you've got it all together, this ... loving husband who's so concerned for you all the time ... I say if something's too good to be true, it's because it is. No one's that nice all the time.

7.2.6 Making sense of the abuse

The focus of these interviews was not to try to explain why people become perpetrators of violence and abuse. However, participants offered their own ideas about how they have tried to make sense of what had happened. Many participants described the extensive reading and other forms of learning they had undertaken to try to process it.

So, all these things I've learned over these last few years. I've read goodness knows how many books on psychology and various things, because I needed to understand, how could you behave like that, how could I end up in the situation I'm in?

I guess the other thing is ... that this happened to me but it's still such an ongoing thing that I'm trying to process. I'm reading books that are helping me process it and attending groups that have been so beneficial, but it is a really long term, even if you've only been in the situation of domestic abuse for a short time. It's still really destroying of who you are and who you think you are and how you face the world sometimes.

Some of the most common factors raised by interviewees related to their abusive partner were:

- Personality disorders and problems (which may or may not have been formally diagnosed)
- Mental illness
- Alcohol and drug-taking
- Damaging childhood experiences.

Having a personality disorder was one factor that a number of participants believed had contributed to or exacerbated the violent behaviour. In particular, narcissism or narcissistic traits was mentioned multiple times. Narcissism is characterised by selfishness, a sense of entitlement, a lack of empathy, a need for admiration and an inability to handle criticism (Hill 2019).

Whether or not a formal diagnosis had been given, narcissistic traits were recognised by participants, both at the time, and also after the relationship had ended.

Maybe he was a narcissist ... The narcissist decides some people are good and some people are bad, but then within that, it was, like he viewed me like I was all bad sometimes and I was all good sometimes. I don't know, it's a really classic thing when you read borderline personality stuff or narcissistic – anyway, yeah.

By the time I started to work out, I started to think about what is this? And I started to do a bit of research and think, oh he's narcissistic, maybe he's narcissistic, maybe that's what it is, that was only the last [number] years of being married to him ... He came out, the psychometric testing showed him to be paranoid narcissistic personality disorder.

A small number of participants also mentioned that their ex-partner had suffered from mental illnesses, such as anxiety and depression.

His behaviour – I found him deeply unpredictable, depressed frequently, unreliable, etcetera.

He suffered from depression and anxiety which he found to be quite crippling at times and it wasn't until many, many, many years later that I realised that a lot of what he did was an active choice.

The consumption of alcohol and/or drugs was another factor that appeared to heighten the likelihood of violence was the consumption of alcohol and/or drugs.

I remember that he was drinking a lot more and when he was intoxicated, he was more irritable, more selfish as you'd expect.

And what I realise now ... the tantrum on our honeymoon were actually symptoms of his alcoholism. The fact that he hadn't been able to drink affected him profoundly, and I hadn't realised ... There was also ... [medication that] affected his mood. And not taking it affected his mood. And he was abusing them, so he'd run out for a couple of days every month. And then he'd go down.

Some participants noted, with compassion, the damage that had occurred in their ex-partners' childhoods. While not excusing the abusive behaviours, they attributed these early negative experiences of abuse and neglect as having an impact.

A number of participants were very young when they met their partner and described themselves as inexperienced. Marrying a Christian was important and was accompanied by a sense of hope that things would work out ok. This commitment to the ideal of a Christian marriage was a recurring theme.

I'd always grown up in the church and I never wanted to marry anyone who wasn't, you know, an Evangelical Anglican...So when I met [my ex-partner] I was thinking well he fits the profile, well brought up, nice young man ... Christian, has a steady job and people just expected that we would get married ... I was inexperienced in the world really. I think you are very hopeful and especially as a Christian, you are always hopeful that God can change people.

7.2.7 Impacts on wellbeing and identity

In their interviews participants frequently shared stories that revealed the negative and potentially harmful impact of their IPV experiences. Multiple participants recalled feeling that they had lost their sense of self.

It's still really destroying of who you are and who you think you are and how you face the world.

They used the words "frazzled", "lost", "couldn't think", "powerless", "disassociated", "desensitised", "confused" to convey how they felt in their abusive relationship.

As a result of all of that I certainly, I got very lost, and I lost all sense of myself and any hope for anything different or better in the future. I just thought, well, this is my lot in life, and I've got to just make the best of it that I can. I guess I'd describe myself in [that time] as the lights were on but nobody was home.

Although many participants used the words "lucky" and "blessed" to describe how God and other people had provided for them during and after their abusive relationships, they also expressed the following feelings of harm:

- self-doubt – a lack of confidence in oneself and one's perceptions

That was a kind of shock to me and I felt like okay, maybe I was wrong or maybe that's why he hit me, like I was wrong and that's why he hit me. I manipulated myself that way.

- guilt - the emotional response to believing – accurately or not – that a standard of conduct has been compromised

I can't tell you – it's certainly not what you think a Christian life will be ... especially when you have put your faith in God ... and tried to live your life the way that He would have you live it. ... I've had to deal with all the guilt and the, have I let Him down?

- self-blame – attributing the blame for an event to oneself

And I don't know ... I felt that [and] I still do, that I am to blame. That sits behind it and it's very hard to eradicate that. That you're actually to blame for his behaviour towards you, you see? That you're wicked and he's the one who's putting the finger on you.

- anger – an intense emotional state or response to hostility, hurt or threat

In terms of my faith, I just got to the point where I think I was so angry with [my-ex-partner] and I don't know, I wasn't necessarily angry with people at church, but I ended up not being able to go to church with him.

- entrapment – the action or process of being caught in a trap

I had felt trapped, and sort of trapped to do what he wanted.

I got to a point where I just felt like I'm trapped. I'm stuck, because there's no way out - well, not that I could see - and there's no way through, and I just thought I don't know what to do from here, but I know that I'm just stuck with this.

- shame - the belief that one is or is perceived by others to be inferior or unworthy because of one's shortcomings.

Shame is a massive part, which I guess is why I say to you, pride and shame for me are two sides of the same point. Shame is massive because particularly in my experience, optics is very big in the church, you've got to have it all together. I don't have it all together, I never have, I was just very good at looking like I did.

A number of participants spoke of the ongoing health challenges they faced as a result of the violence they experienced, including substance abuse, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. Several participants recounted that they had considered self-harm, including suicide, during their abusive relationship.

7.2.8 Agency in an abusive relationship: making choices and acting on them

In presenting material on the violence experienced by our participants and how it impacted them, we do not intend to convey that our participants were passive “victims” with no agency or choices and no ability to enact control. A number of participants describe moments where they were able to use their agency to enact change.

I was standing on the corner ... saying, what do I do, what do I do, I'm going to be in so much trouble ... Yeah, I will never forget this moment, standing on this street ... I was like, yeah, this is really bad and the fact that I'm thinking like this, that I'm scared of the consequences ... that's not good and I actually think I'm done, done living like this, done feeling worried and scared and anxious about every reaction that he's going to have and trying to manage everything to not upset him, yeah, I'm done.

Agency, however, should not be understood only as actions or choices that end an abusive relationship. As explained above, agency does not always mean liberation, but instead implies a process of self-knowledge and self-determination. Throughout and beyond an abusive relationship, agency is activated and materialises in the ability to make choices and act on them.

We saw multiple stories of where participants took action to defy or resist abuse or its impact on them or within the often-severe constraints of their situation. For instance, one participant got back at her partner for injuring her. Another described how he was sometimes able to de-escalate violence from his partner.

Then she started hitting me. So, she'd tell me, "What are you doing? You're doing something wrong." Whack across the face. On some occasions I would just duck. Sometimes I got hit. On some occasions I'd actually catch her hand mid-flight ... I did something radical, which was what I'll do is I'll try and get her to avert her gaze from staring at me and yelling at me, and see if that will work, and I don't know if it'll work. So, what I did was in her pushing and shoving me, I held her arms. I then ensured, okay, what I'll do ... How do I change that? ... After probably a minute, because she wasn't looking at me, she lost track of what she was yelling at, and then I thought okay, I've got that one done. She then changed from – instead of yelling abuse she changed to, "Let go of me. Let go of me." And I thought, okay, that's actually a good change.

A few participants described how they were able to influence their abusive partners to achieve what they wanted or needed.

I became very good at manipulation, because if I want to do something or I wanted us as a family to do something, I needed him to think it was his idea. I became very good and he was narcissistic, so it wasn't that hard. But I became very good at twisting what I wanted to be his idea, even though I'd already made a decision in my own head about what I wanted, it would generally be, what do you think about, which then made him think it was his idea and it never was. Call me manipulative, but it's called survival. I never realised how bad it was until after ... Now I'm going, were you dumb? No, desensitised and it just became the norm.

Sometimes participants told us that they resisted control from their partner by doing things that their partner didn't want them to do, either with or without their partner's knowledge.

If I was a bit weaker or if I was just more scared and less defiant, I guess, I wouldn't have gone out of the house, because that's what he wanted. He didn't want me to go out of the house at all, but my view was, well, screw you, I don't give a crap. You go [out], you do whatever the hell you want, I'll go and do whatever the hell I want, and I just stopped telling him stuff because it was too hard, and I would just get berated, and screamed at, and interrogated whenever I told him anything.

One participant described what she did to protect her feelings.

It just got more and more and more toxic. At one point I remember sitting on the lounge thinking, this is just too painful. Every time he opens his mouth, I get really hurt, emotionally hurt, so I'm just going to stick my feelings in a little box ... I closed up the lid and that's where my feelings went so that he couldn't get to them. I started to live with him like he was a stranger and didn't engage with him and that made him worse. Then everything became my fault because I had emotionally withdrawn from him.

Throughout their experiences of violence our participants showed a great deal of fortitude and resilience.

8 Phase 2 results: The role of churches



We now move to an analysis of the roles played by Anglican churches in our participants' experiences of abuse from their intimate partners. From our analysis of their narratives, we establish that churches play complex and important roles. Although church interactions were overwhelmingly positive or negative for some participants, it was more common for church to play a changing and complicated part.

First, we analyse the role of Anglican churches in the dynamic of abusive relationships while they are ongoing. Based on the stories of IPV that make up this study, this analysis brings to light instances where churches were helpful and also when they failed to offer support to people in abusive relationships.

Second, we examine the role of churches in supporting people in abusive relationships towards change. At key moments in the trajectory of an IPV relationship, church communities have aided and/or hindered victim-survivors to make choices and act on them.

Third, we explore the complex role of churches in participants' lives after they physically separated from their abusive partners. We present six overarching needs and discuss how interactions with church did and did not meet these needs.

The three parts in this section are:

- The role of churches in the dynamic of abusive relationships
- The role of church in supporting people in abusive relationships towards change
- The role of church in rebuilding and recovering life.

8.1 The role of church in the dynamic of abusive relationships

The participants in our study were subject to multi-faceted violence and control from their intimate partners over long periods of time, decades in some cases. The abuse was hidden from participants' church communities, for at least a time, and still remains hidden in some cases. In this section, we examine the role of church during that experience of ongoing abuse. We identify cultural factors and social interactions and the ways that they intersect to help and hinder people living in situations of IPV.

8.1.1 Key points

- a) Christian faith and being part of a church community can both assist and hinder people living in situations of IPV.
- b) Teachings related to marriage, gender and forgiveness can extend the cycle of IPV and create a situation of harm for people in abusive relationships.
- c) Such teachings and positional power are also used by abusive partners to control and extend the cycle of abuse.

- d) Church relationships characterised by care and trust and that are independent of the abusive partner can reduce social isolation and provide support for people living in situations of IPV.
- e) An abusive partner being part of a victim-survivor's church, especially when they hold a position of power, contributes to the hiddenness of abuse and extends the cycle of violence.
- f) The visibility and acknowledgement of IPV in church communities can support people living in situations of IPV.

8.1.2 Cultural factors: Discourses and norms in the context of abuse

Our participants were people of faith who were involved in Anglican churches during their experiences of abuse. Many shared how their faith had sustained them through their abuse. Frequently, participants described their faith as fruitful, with God active and present in their lives communicating directly with them in times of need. Matters of individual faith in and of themselves, however, were not the focus of this study.

Here we attend to the role that specific cultural factors, namely discourses and norms regarding intimate relationships, had in their experiences of living in an abusive relationship. The focus of our analysis is prior to separation, where in many cases the abuse was hidden from participants' church communities.

While it wasn't the case for all participants, many explained how teachings around marriage and gender reinforced feelings of harm.

I was feeling like I was a hopeless Christian wife. I was feeling complete guilt and starting to believe a lot of the things that he was saying that it was my problem, and I wasn't doing enough ... I kind of just thought, well, I need to work harder, I need to read my Bible more, I need to be a more submissive wife. I need to try and have more open, honest conversations with him, which just led to more abuse. My faith is what carried me through and God is what held me in those moments where I had nothing and no-one else to hold me and yet, at the same time, it was not God but the teachings and the way that the Bible can be interpreted, and the way that those views are put across, and even the words of the Bible itself can be not fully understood within the overall character of God and the overall context can be really difficult to try and work out what it means for your life.

Our analysis revealed that particular discourses around marriage and gender often contributed to, and in some cases amplified, situations of IPV. When assertions about how partners in intimate relationships should relate to one another were understood as absolute norms for behaviour, free from context – whether taught by church leaders or internalised by victim-survivors in this way – the cycle of abuse was extended. Our analysis identified examples of what were experienced as harmful discourses within the context of abusive relationships:

- Marriage is a lifelong commitment which cannot be broken in any circumstances
- Being the “perfect wife”
- A wife must submit to her husband
- A man has control in a marriage
- Being faithful involves suffering and total self-giving
- Forgiveness must be unconditional.

There were counter discourses concerning intimate relationships that were helpful for many of our participants in their trajectory of abuse. We address these in due course. For now, our attention is to the discourses that played a role in extending the abuse. Some illustrative quotes are provided for each of these discourses below.

- Marriage is a lifelong commitment which cannot be broken in any circumstances

I was brought up in a very traditional Anglican, Christian, household ... and very much a part of my upbringing. So, with that came very traditional values about the sanctity of marriage and respect for other people and, yeah, so that I guess brought about I guess some big issues for me when it came to my own marriage, and it kept me in that very unhealthy relationship ... it was my Christian values about the sanctity of marriage and the importance of that covenant that kept me there.

- Being the “perfect wife”

I think what was hard was battling that inner Anglican that said marriage is forever and you don't get divorced. And I'd been brought up to love and obey, submit, I was a perfect Anglican wife. I'd been brought up to believe that men were the head of the household and what they said went, not to question anything like that, just to pray hard and keep the kitchen clean and keep the children's faces clean and tidy.

- A wife must submit to her husband

I remember at one point going – I don't even remember where it was but it was with a group of people from church, I think women, and we were discussing things and we were just talking about different things, and one of the things that came up was women with a husband who doesn't believe or isn't engaging with the church, and that sort of thing, and I'm like yeah, what do I do in this situation, and so one of the ladies from church, incredibly well meaning, guided me to a verse that talked about how – I can't even remember where it is now but it was a verse about how a wife's – I don't remember what the words were but just your acts and the way that you live your life, and the way that you submit to your husband should be the biggest voice in guiding him to salvation. I felt really conflicted and then I felt just really guilty because I thought clearly, I'm just not doing enough of that. I remember talks and I remember studies where we looked at the passages on submission and headship and I remember feeling incredibly guilty. I remember feeling like I am literally the most unbiblical wife in the world because here I am sneaking off not even telling my husband things, I'm going completely against him, but I'm trying to make my marriage work and I just felt so conflicted, and so I think that's where the struggles definitely came into play.

- A man has absolute control in a marriage

I don't mind the whole complementarianism thing. I do think that that fathers and stuff do need to take a lot responsibility for the way their families flourish or decline and all that kind of stuff. That's a very big responsibility ... and they need to be accountable. I do agree with complementarianism in that way. But I just don't agree with that real overbearing control. I mean all of a sudden, you know, you're a human being that loses your ability to make decisions as soon as you get married. I didn't agree with that at all, and I don't think that's biblical.

- Being faithful involves suffering and total self-giving

I had no concept that I might have rights ... in actual fact the last [few] years there was hardly any violence at all and certainly zero to the kids because I did everything, I smiled, I consent to everything, I was very supportive, very loving, I just kept giving, giving, giving, because I had come to a point where I was like, this is how I show that I'm Christian, this is me suffering for Christ.

- Forgiveness must be unconditional.

Any time I started to wonder about that and think, is there somebody else, is there something going on here that I don't know about, it was thrown back in my face. You know, you call yourself a Christian, I thought you trusted me, and as a Christian you are supposed to forgive me.

Participants recounted stories of how their partners used many of the discourses described above in their relationship.

I think my concerns about leaving the marriage and things came from ... my husband really, because he would remind me at various points that our vows to each other were lifelong commitments and that we'd be breaking those that we'd made, commitments we'd made to each other before God sort of thing.

Especially in situations where the abusive partner held a clergy position or other ministry role, unequal power relations allowed them to control the narrative in the abusive relationship and extend the cycle of abuse. One participant spoke of how her clergy ex-partner had used his teaching authority to assert the marriage commitment and the headship of the husband.

That was the message I kept on getting from him. He told me for years there's no grounds for separation or divorce and if one partner in the marriage is not honouring their vows, that is not an excuse for the other person to leave, they just have to be godly, be godly, love them more. I just hated it, I was so angry with God that I had this biblical prerogative to stay in this situation and rejoice somehow and I just was so resentful. He was saying, oh well, it's my job to lead you, so I'm going to solve this problem, we're going to study the Bible together. That just made it worse. It felt authoritative and it was just all bad.

Another participant said that her clergy ex-partner had used his position to establish himself as a conduit to God.

I think my [ex-partner], in becoming this mentor and this dispenser of wisdom, [he] really set himself up as God in my world. He created God for me in his own image, really. So that God was basically, and I mean obviously not literally, but it was basically a 50-50 whether God would, you know, backhand me or reach out in love. And everything I was learning, everything I was developing in terms of my understanding of perhaps a new way of looking at the faith of my childhood I was beholden to him for, and ended up being used against me, and essentially God ended by being used against me. And I've had to really work through a lot of anger at God around, how could you let yourself be used like that? And that's something I've really only come to terms with [recently]. And I mean also the fact that he was a priest.

From our analysis we can assert that sermons, seminars and discussions in church communities about norms for marriage that place the wife in a subservient relationship to the husband can create a harmful environment for women in situations of IPV. A number of participants spoke about the effect that teachings and perceptions about Christian marriage had on them as young woman approaching marriage.

So, we both grew up in the [same decade] in young adult and youth church services where there was lots of preaching about obedience in the marriage relationship, particularly when you're youth and young adult and you're starting to investigate dating and marriage and all that sort of stuff, you do listen quite hard to a lot of that and take it very to heart. I think that's a lot of where that comes from, particularly for young women who grew up in the church with that sort of teaching ... But when you've sat in church week in, week out, for however many years and there's lots of focus on relationship and

the marriage relationship and obedience in that relationship and I'm not sure whether it was – it certainly always felt like obedience in terms of servitude, as opposed to an honouring, obedience in an honouring sense. I wonder what impact that has now on women who are in abusive relationships and where that mindset is.

One participant who was a clergy wife described the formation she experienced during her ex-partner's clergy training.

They ran a weekly talk, so there were talks about submission, there were talks about sex and everything was about serving your husband and you don't exist as your own – would never be said in that blatant language, but that was the message – you exist for the service of your husband, his ministry comes first, everything else is secondary. If you are feeling discontent with something, then that's a problem with your faith and you need to repent, pray more, read your Bible more until you can serve cheerfully in whatever form, providing sex for your husband, doing what he needs you to do, putting your needs on hold ... don't ask for help with the kids, don't ask for help at bath time, don't ask for help with dinner, you're freeing him up so that he can do gospel work. That message was loud and clear.

Participants proposed that Christian teachings about marriage and gender need to be communicated in ways that actively addresses the potential for and the reality of abuse in intimate relationships. Participants argued that it needs to be clearly and consistently affirmed that:

God does not require you to live in a relationship that is physically, emotionally, psychologically damaging for you.

There is a really, really, really clear distinction between ... a marriage that God intends and ... a marriage that you do not have to stay in. ... God's character is one of compassion and love, and he does not want to see you crumbling and hurting every day and he does not say that it's a sin to walk away.

Women aren't an extension of their husbands ... they are human beings in their own right. They're not objects, women are not objects.

In their recommendations for the Anglican Church, many participants reported the need and urgency for proactive IPV training – which includes information regarding Christian teaching on marriage and gender – communicated through sermons, clergy training, congregational seminars and in pamphlets. Some participants contended that silence around IPV contributed feelings of harm during their experiences of abuse.

8.1.3 Relationships in the context of abuse

Our analysis revealed that relationships within church communities often helped participants remain connected with friends and support networks throughout their experience of IPV. Ministry roles and groups such as bible studies and play groups provided participants with multiple contact points and structures of support.

We always had Growth Groups and Bible Study groups there ... I would carefully raise the issue and just say something like, a generic prayer point of, "Can you pray for our family? There's a couple of challenges," and leave it at that ... There was a case where people did come up to me, and this might have been just random members of the congregation, or particular friends I had who were in the parish council level, who would say, "How are things actually going because we're a bit concerned?"

They would ask that from a personal care perspective, not necessarily from a what can the church do in this situation.

Further, the knowledge that participants were being upheld in prayer was life-giving and sustained them during their abusive relationship.

They supported me ... And when I was going through a lot, they prayed for me and that was really great. That was the only thing I needed at that time, prayers. It was amazing.

Central to a culture of care and support in a church community were ongoing relationships that offered love and acceptance.

It was my Bible study leader and then the Bible study of really beautiful, supportive women that I found myself in who just constantly built me up and kept saying to me that this is not something that you should have to deal with, and God doesn't think of you this way, he thinks of you this way. Just pointing me back to those truths that I needed to hear.

As well as the emotional and prayer support offered by church communities, the material assistance extended by church also eased some of the hardship experienced during abusive relationships.

Our church has a free pantry. When he had the breakdown and he stopped going to work ... we had [some] months of pretty hard – eating everything from the cupboard. We got lots of free food when we needed free food, like Weetbix and milk.

Social isolation is a common experience for people experiencing IPV. Participants explained how they experienced being socially isolated in various ways. Some spoke of how their abusive partner had cut off their contact with other people, including family and friends.

I think a big part of [the domestic violence] was also then isolating me ... The isolation, the gaslighting, monitoring phone calls ... he was monitoring my emails ... He was very much controlling who I saw and who I didn't ... when I got friends, a lot of cutting me down in front of friends. You know, quite humiliating.

One participant described how her ex-partner had actively prevented her from building and fostering relationships in their church community. This was not simply a matter of not being able to associate with people. It was about being denied the opportunity for genuine relationship in which the participant could be herself.

Through [my ex-partner] undermining and slandering me, but also isolating me from, like, saying things about me to others that would isolate them from me and then saying things about them to me that isolated me from them. So, I feel like my identity has been taken. I never really got the chance to really be part of a church on my own sort of volition and getting to know and growing in God with other Christians. Yeah, like freely, on my own. That was all taken from me and my identity was stolen at the same time because people don't know me. They think I'm something else. They think I'm something, you know, I'm [ex-partner's] narrative, I'm not my own narrative.

For other participants, there was social contact with a few people who were sanctioned by their partner, but either those people didn't see or didn't know what is going on for the participant.

A [friend] would say to me, do you want to have a coffee, or do you want to go and have a coffee, so we'd make a date and then I would say to him, I'm going to have a coffee with such-and-such. He'd be

like, what for? Or he'd kick up a stink ... he'd chuck a tantrum. I'd just be like, well it's not worth it, so I'd cancel, and I did it all the time and I'd cancel at the last minute or friends that he approved of. So, my [friend], her husband and [my former partner] were good mates, really good mates and we used to hang with them a fair bit. But he approved, yeah, there was a lot of that.

A few participants conveyed how they purposefully socially isolated themselves out of fear the truth of their abusive relationships would be exposed.

I didn't really feel like I had a lot of friends ... very early on I didn't really want to say that he'd been unfaithful because I wanted him to come back. It took a long time for me to just be honest with people about that so then I just wouldn't talk to people. Plus, he was always the social organiser.

When participants were able to maintain or build connections with their church community, they indicated their feeling of isolation lessened.

I joined a [small group] there and it was actually really, really helpful because it allowed me to then get to know a bit better a lot of the families and the mums ... because I felt quite isolated at the [service] ... It just felt like I knew no one. So, getting in with that [small group] allowed me to just know at least a few key people that I could all of a sudden say hi to on a Sunday ... without feeling really weird or awkward. It was just a way to be able to feel a little bit more known and welcomed in the church.

Even single points of contact were important to participants when IPV involved their abusive partner isolating them from family and friends.

Anyway, after my [children] I was, of course, not working, I suddenly could go to a daytime Bible study again. Thank goodness... just having that connection with other people, and I guess you could say – I mean, if I was a bit weaker or if I was just more scared and less defiant, I guess, I wouldn't have gone out of the house, because that's what he wanted. He didn't want me to go out of the house at all ... I just stopped telling him stuff because it was too hard, and I would just get berated, and screamed at, and interrogated whenever I told him anything.

We noted in our analysis that the dynamics of the local church in relation to the cycle of abuse were more complex when an abusive partner was embedded or actively involved at the church. It was important for the participant's wellbeing that they had relationships that were independent of the abusive partner. While this was particularly true in instances where an abusive partner held a position of power in a church community (for example: clergyperson, parish councillor, church employee), it was also the case when a participant's identity in the church community was enmeshed with that of their abusive partner.

One participant indicated that her role as her partner's carer meant that people at church did not see her, in her relationship with her partner, as anything other than a devoted partner to a sick man.

The big thing that I was told constantly was basically how much of an angel I was for looking after [my ex-partner]. People would say you're amazing, you're wonderful, you're so devoted... it was after I left that our church friends, our mutual church friends started to see how he was in the sense that he would do things.

Another participant spoke of how her abusive partner was in a position to use their unequal power relationships related to church to control when and where she was able to participate in her ministry.

My formal church membership ... it's not common ... There are actually limited places you can go for that kind of liturgy, ... everyone definitely knows everyone ... [My ex-partner] had a lot of fingers in a lot of pies and could've pulled strings so that no one would've actually wanted me in their congregation anyway. Whether what he said to people, whether that was true or not, it would've tarnished the reputation enough that it would've been difficult to fit into anywhere else because I would've been this person who left one church under dubious circumstances, "Just be careful with her, she's not particularly known to be stable," or, "She's a bit dodgy." To find the sort of church I was looking for limited me to where I could go, and because of his position of authority my options were fairly well blocked, anyway.

Our analysis showed that when an abusive partner held a position of power in a community the community was often impotent in responding to poor behaviour. Some examples given by participants were:

- Church leaders ignored an abusive partner's unstable work history

We bumped around in the diocese from position to position. Basically, we just moved on every time he burnt a bridge. And the church being what it is they didn't [address it], they just sent him to another parish.

- Church leaders ignored an abusive partner's instability, unsuitability for ministry or inappropriate public outbursts.

I think there was probably at the selection conference in retrospect or even at the time there were probably some reservations about [my ex-partner's] suitability. There you go ... I don't know at what point people had reservations about his ministry ... When he had the – he called it midlife crisis – breakdown ... if the bishop or the diocese ... initiated any support or help, I don't know. I don't know that. Maybe they did. Right? But I certainly felt – I thought – I get left alone. I'm left alone in this ... [In the parish] they got used to dealing with somebody who is unattainable or really internally chaotic and stressed ... You could say that increasingly it was obvious that here we have a person who has mental health problems, is an unusual personality, has, to some degree, a not stable pattern of management and leadership.

From our analysis we concluded that the terror of judgement, exposure and not being believed contributed to participants' sense of disconnection from their church communities. Participants whose abusive partners were embedded in the church community, especially if the partner held a ministry or church leadership position, conveyed how they worried about individual, social and workplace repercussions if they were to disclose or if people were to discover the abuse that they were experiencing.

Day to day I knew people in the parish [where my ex-partner was minister] as both friends and fellow parishioners. And I knew people at work. So, I'm not going to be talking to people in the parish about [my ex-partner]. And I'm not going to talk to people about [my ex-partner] at work because they don't know him and I'm not going to have – I don't know. I'm not going to. So, I didn't talk to anyone.

I wouldn't have said this at the time but looking back, I think there was an element of shame that I didn't want people to know what was happening outside of a few close friends and because we were both so involved ... It's not that I didn't think I'd be believed but I think the fact that [my abusive partner] was so involved might have led people to see that somehow, they had to take sides, I guess.

Fearful of exposure, these participants often stayed silent and even though church leaders sometimes knew or suspected that IPV was present in the relationship they did not act.

I think they knew that [my ex-partner] was acting in an inappropriate way in terms of certainly emotional violence, and occasionally physical violence. But as I said, again, it was all hearsay. I never made a complaint, so [the church leaders] only had other peoples' gossip to go on, and the way that I was appearing if I turned up upset or crying or obviously something was wrong, but they never inquired into that for specifics. I think they probably spoke in general terms about, "Look, we have a feeling this might be happening but what do we do with that?" And then I think they just came to the conclusion of, "Well, actually we can't do anything at this point." [My ex-partner] was also [a church leader], I think, for a long time, too. That made it difficult, too.

One participant, when asked, "To what extent did you think you had adequate support from your church during your experience of violence from your former partner?" replied:

That's a tricky one to answer because I suppose I have to summarise that by saying I had as much support as I wanted because I didn't want to be sharing with anybody and them knowing what sort of support I needed, I suppose.

Even when some clergy wife participants had strong connections with their church communities through their ministry participation, they still expressed a need to remain hidden, at least for a time.

I was trying to hide everything from them ... I feel like domestic violence survivors would make amazing spies, because we are so good at flying under the radar, at staying hidden, at ... I'm a terrible liar but I'm very good at being dishonest by omission. And that's something I've had to really face about myself ... in that space it was this odd sort of mix of the default was to remain hidden. The terror was exposure, in terms of the threat to [discredit me] at church.

Earlier on we noted how participants' partners used discourses about religious teachings to abuse them. Our analysis also revealed that cycles of abuse often continued because abusive partners were able to use their positional power and peer relationships within church communities to control the narrative and extend the cycle of abuse. Some examples participants conveyed were:

- An abusive partner's positional power gave threats of slander more weight

So, it was very much, if I speak up, it will ruin both our lives, and that will be on me, that will be on my hands sort of thing. And the other example of that was there was just a night, I can't even remember what [my ex-partner] said, but it was if you leave, and I remember the exact quote from here, "I will make your name mud at the church".

- An abusive partner's positional power meant church communities were unlikely to or were unable to facilitate change.

They, too, were tied by the fact that [my ex-partner] was [in a position of authority]. He could fire them at any stage. He could disband [the ministry] at any stage, or certainly not offer them [ministry] opportunities and things; they, too, were a little bit bound by his power to help their [ministry] careers as well. I understand how tricky that all was ... There wasn't really that many people I could turn to from the church because they were equally trapped. Even though the priest knew what was going on, she didn't want to get rid of him either because he was doing such amazing things.

One participant articulated very clearly the costliness for a leader in taking a stand against an abusive partner who uses their power and peer relationships in a church community. This works against that leader taking action.

It's very, very, very costly for a [minister], I think, to come down on one side or another. It's costly because these men usually have their little band of followers and men that think that they're right. So, it's a divisive thing for a minister to do, to come down on her side or to come down on his side. So, you've got to have guts to come down on her side. If you've got an assistant minister and people – the wife comes and says, I'm scared of him, whatever she gives you, that becomes extremely costly because then you get a division in the whole church. So be aware of what the cost is when someone speaks up ... because if you don't think about it ahead of time and kind of understand the dynamics of how it's going to play out on the ground, then you're much more likely to back off as soon as it comes because suddenly you're hit with, "oh gosh, but if I say that to him, he's going to get upset and then all his cronies will get upset with me and then they might leave the parish council and then I'm – but they're big givers for the church, I can't really actually – I can't put him offside because his best mate will stop giving to the church, or it's the warden's best friend and he's my warden" or whatever it is, there will be a cost, because we're about relationships, because it's in the church.

There was at least one instance in a participant's narrative where a church service folded because of community division after a minister supported the participant.

In fact, it had such a negative impact on our congregation, you know ... there were [a number] of us who attended church [in that service time] ... It ceased. Because there was this very obvious divide and taking sides ... the division was there, the unrest was there, and people just decided that it was easier not to attend, pick another service, pick another church.

8.1.4 Introducing key moments

Here, we introduce the concept of “key moment”, a crucial instant of clarity for a victim-survivor in the course of IPV, a time when they have a perspective on or acknowledge their situation. For instance, one participant recounted a moment during her life in an abusive relationship when her church involvement and faith had been life-giving.

And I had one moment, I think it was the Easter ... they have a beautiful Easter service that goes for three hours, it's like contemplation and meditation. You generally end up being there an hour with small children. And I just was – they read all the stuff about Jesus' suffering and loving and being – all those things. It's in Isaiah somewhere. And that just really touched me, like I was just like, oh my goodness, this is what that was like, that's what it's like for me, like I'm just waking up and having to be ready to deal with an onslaught of verbal barrage ... And so, I just had this kind of moment, I was like that Jesus understands the suffering that I'm going through. And it wasn't that I needed to suffer in silence.

Another participant spoke of where in an occasion of desperation, she used her church ministry involvement as a source of hope and solace.

I actually went up to [a location] one morning, on a Sunday morning, just because things were so, so bad, I couldn't see a way out. And I climbed over the fence and stood right on the edge ... I remember thinking, I can't jump because we're singing [a certain composer's musical work] this morning. So, I just climbed back over the fence and drove to the church. And I actually can't engage with that [musical work] without just being so, so grateful and so, so emotional now. It's one of the most beautiful pieces of music ever written. So yeah, the music and the singing gave my spirituality an expression that my [ex-partner] couldn't take.

From our analysis of the trajectory of participants narratives, we contend that key moments are instants of clarity where there is an opportunity for people to make choices and act on them. One participant recounted how she seized a key moment to leave her abusive relationship.

[The abusive situation] came to a head when he actually pulled a [weapon] on me ... he was so [intoxicated]. And I thought well I'm not, if one of us slip, that's the ballgame ... So, it got to the point where I thought, I have to leave. So ... I packed my bags while he was sleeping it off ... Got in his car, because I wasn't allowed my own ... And I went back and told him I was leaving. And did. And never went back.

From our analysis we saw how in key moments it is possible to support someone living in a situation of IPV to take steps towards finding safety. In key moments, some participants reached out to people they trust for help.

One day [my ex-partner] had a terrible fight with me before work and said, "I'm going to divorce you." And I used to always cry and say, "Don't do that, I can't deal with that." And he'd say, "You would never survive without me and you won't get a job, and no one would love you and you've got too many kids. You're a useless wife, you don't listen." And he went to work, and it was the first time ever I didn't cry. I actually rang one of my girlfriends who I'd been friends with since I was [a child]. And he pushed away almost all of my friends, but she was very persistent, and she was a long-distance friend. I rang her up and said, "He has offered me a divorce and I want to do it." And so, for the very first time I ... realised that my whole life was a lie. So, if you think, "But he loves me, how could he do this to me" and "He doesn't mean it and he's such a lovely, godly man in public and it's just he's tired" or whatever and I used to make excuses. And at that point I realised what I was dealing with was not love it was just trauma bonding.

We observed many instances in the stories of IPV recorded in this study where church extended assistance or failed to offer support to people in abusive relationships in their key moments. In the next section we explore the role of church in supporting or impeding participants to make choices and act on them in key moments during their IPV relationship.

8.2 The role of church in supporting people in abusive relationships towards change

The previous section detailed factors that participants in this study revealed helped and/or impeded them throughout the course of their abusive relationships. Through analysis of participants interviews, we identified and named as “key moments” those times in the trajectory of an abusive relationship where there are openings and opportunities for people to make choices and act on them. In this section we examine the role of church in aiding or hindering participants in key moments in the trajectory of their IPV relationship. The cultural and social factors that we demonstrated in the context of abuse were also at work, in various ways, in these key moments. Sometimes, the church helped to facilitate key moments – for example, a leader took an action that contributed to a moment of realisation for a participant – or responded to a disclosure from a participant in ways that helped to empower them. At other times, churches did not respond in ways that were helpful. There were also dynamics that militated against possibilities for key moments in church contexts.

8.2.1 Key points

- a) At key moments where people in abusive relationships have an opportunity to speak out and seek change certain religious discourses can disempower and increase feelings of being trapped.
- b) Conversely, clergy and church leaders can counter harmful discourses and help empower victim-survivors to begin a process of change.
- c) Sometimes those who are living in abusive relationships are not aware that they are experiencing abuse. Environments and interventions that enable them to perceive this can help them to view their situation differently.
- d) A lack of diversity in family and household structures in the church community can interact with other dynamics to limit the options that people who are living with abuse perceive are open to them.
- e) Relationships characterised by care and trust enable meaningful, ongoing support and disclosures at key moments.
- f) People in abusive relationships can be better equipped to seize key moments if they know where to access a scaffold of multi-faceted support.
- g) Specialist domestic violence support services and health professionals – sometimes in conjunction with church – play a central role in helping people who are abused to find safety and improve their overall wellbeing. This highlights the importance of referrals to specialised support services.
- h) A lack of knowledge or training about IPV impedes effective church responses in key moments.

8.2.2 Cultural factors: Discourses and norms in relation to key moments

In interviews, participants recounted key moments in their IPV relationships where various factors inhibited their agency and ability to speak out and/or make choices and act on them. Often in these moments’ participants expressed how feelings of hopelessness and isolation prevented progress towards positive change. Their impression that they were “trapped” was exasperated by religious discourses that were represented and expressed as church teachings by their abusive partner and/or church leaders and people in a position of trust. These discourses (explained in detail in the previous section) include:

- Marriage is a lifelong commitment which cannot be broken in any circumstances
- Being the “perfect wife”

- A wife must submit to her husband
- A man has absolute control in a marriage
- Being faithful involves suffering and total self-giving
- Forgiveness must be unconditional.

Conversely, church leaders and people in positions of trust sometimes played a role in IPV education and countering religious discourses that contributed to participants' harm. At key moments, when participants were given information and encouragement that permitted them to make sense of their situations, constructive change typically followed.

A few participants described sermons that specifically addressed IPV and helped them to view their situations differently.

He did a sermon on domestic violence, and I'd already kind of started to work some things out before then but it was then that I sat there and I looked at the thing, and it listed different categories of controlling and violent behaviours, and as I was reading through it none of them were physical. They were all jealousy, they were all intimidation, and they had examples, and I was reading the examples going, yes, yes, yes, and then went, oh. It was strange. It was harrowing and horrible and completely relieving all at the same time. Just going, oh, yeah. In fact, relief was probably the biggest. The relief was the number one thing. It was that oh, okay, this is not something I am just stuck with for the next few decades of my life. This is not something that I have to just keep putting up with. I know what this is now.

Informal conversations with clergy and church leaders were also significant in helping some participants recognise that they were living in an abusive relationship.

Then I reached out to our local priest at the time. And she was fantastic ... So anyway, I fessed up and told her what was going on. And she said right, ok, you do realise that what you are describing to me is domestic and family violence ... And wow, did the lights go on ... I had absolutely no idea. I truly thought domestic and family violence was all fisticuffs and heads through walls or, you know, constant rape in marriage, or a combination of the two. I had never put myself in that category or never described myself as a victim. So that was a huge light bulb moment for me. And it took some time to actually digest that.

Harmful discourses around marriage were countered by religious leaders, or sometimes by means of participants' own reading or listening. Discourses that were liberating for participants included:

- Marriage is a covenant between two parties and requires two parties to uphold it

Having that very candid conversation with the priest who identified what I was going through was domestic and family violence, financial and emotional abuse, every other time I'd sort of looked at it, there was only ever things about the sanctity of marriage and family, and keeping the family unit together ... However, as well-meaning as that is, the big difference that she made was she informed me that hey, your marriage covenant has already been broken. You know, you're working over and above trying to rekindle whatever there was or hold onto whatever there is, but it's been irrevocably broken and some years ago. I mean if he has strayed, and if he has been abusing you emotionally and financially for all these years, where's the trust? Where's the love? Where's all of these things that feed into the covenant and sanctity of marriage and family? They've gone. They've long since left. And I was just like, huh? I thought I had to forgive, you know, 70 times 7, and all this stuff! And you turn the other cheek, and you press on, he hasn't hit you, he

sexually abused you, you've got to take the good with the bad. You said you would take him for richer or for poorer, you made that vow. Well, the fact that you've been poorer for all these years, you know, that's your lot in life. That was my attitude. And it was such a revelation when she was like, uh-uh-uh-uh-uh. Let's look at these vows, let's look at marriage at what's involved there, and that covenant has well and truly been broken and for many years. So, what are you hanging on to? And I had to agree – I don't know. A fantasy, basically. And as difficult as that was, and as confronting as it was, that's what I needed.

- The partners in a marriage are equal and there is no place for one partner controlling the other

I'd had a conversation with our minister at one point and he said, no I don't think that's what the Bible says at all, I don't think God would oblige you to remain in that situation. There's clearly a power issue in this marriage and there's no place for that in a Christian marriage. There is at least some abuse going on in your home and that's done a lot of damage to you and you don't have to stay with that, you shouldn't be feeling scared in your own home. There's no place for control, you should be equal. I left with his support and I stayed separated from [my ex-partner] with the [minister's] support.

- God is merciful and loving and would support a partner leaving their abusive relationship

It sounds outrageous, but [leaving] hadn't been a viable option. [A relative] had been making these suggestions and had made a plan and was like, "Call the police if you need." And I'm saying, "Oh, I don't think we need to call the police. It's not that bad", it's not whatever. But when [my minister] said it, it was probably that it was someone outside of my family and it was someone who, after talking for 30 minutes, could say no, this isn't okay, this is all bad and you need out. And then also, I think possibly that the spiritual kind of input, in that he was saying this is okay, God sees, and this is perfectly acceptable. I was like, that makes perfect sense.

- God doesn't want vulnerable people to suffer.

It's hard, because the stuff [in my spiritual life] that helped me also helped me stay [with my partner]. So, I see it in a different light now, so like – it was interesting, this is what made me realise I could separate and remember, I didn't intend to leave. I asked him to leave and it's only then because he called the pastor and then the pastor, I spoke to him and the pastor encouraged me to leave ... But there was a growing sense in me that year, of like there's actually a lot of sin in my family and what had gotten me through everything was like I was suffering for Christ ... Suddenly I had this growing sense, on my own, reading, that wasn't suffering for Christ at all, I was suffering for someone else's sin ... I've actually listened to some stuff from the States, like a guy who's done a PhD on it and that's actually helped me a lot. He talks about how anyone could read the Bible and the one verse in Malachi that's God hates divorce and then what Jesus says in Matthew and then what Paul says about abandonment and think that somehow that, because there isn't a specific exemption for abuse and obviously there's a few scholars out there who were saying that Paul's one about in such cases, like abandonment does cover abuse. But what he says is how anyone could read the Bible and see how much God hates how you treat vulnerable people and think that he's not in favour of helping wives and kids like that just doesn't really know God. Then that's made me go, well I didn't really know God then, because I thought I was supposed to put up with it.

We have shown how religious discourses can both help and hinder people who are experiencing abuse. From our analysis across interviews, we contend that cultural factors that hinder are not only related to matters of explicit discourses around intimate partner relationships. They are sometimes also related to the issue of what is normative in communities in the sense of the makeup of the community or what people observe to be typical for that community. We noticed that a community lacking in diversity, in terms of family and household types and even sexuality, tended to work with other dynamics to obstruct a participant's disclosure at key moments. One participant described how she didn't know anyone who had ended their marriage.

And I think at the time, I was very young and idealistic and the thought of even ending a marriage is just abhorrent. I didn't even know anyone who was divorced. I didn't know how to do anything like that plus I had a young child. So, all that expectation you know.

Another did not disclose to her church community, in part, as she felt she would be judged because her abusive partner was female.

I saw that I couldn't approach and talk about it then ... Within the Christian community, they are judgmental, they judge. I've witnessed socioeconomic judgment. This whole same sex, they're trying to, from what I can see, they're trying to accept it purely because it's legal now, so oh we have to accept it ... But they still are judgmental about gay, gay-ism. There are people in [the] congregation who have offspring ... who are gay, male and female and they say they accept it, but they don't ... they're judgmental and I think that's human nature.

Often participants mentioned that in Christian communities the stereotypical image of the perfect Christian family of "wife, husband, children" proved problematic for them in their abusive relationships.

There were some things that were really, really, really important to me ... like a family, a Christian kind of family unit, where the mother stayed home, and the children come home from school and they get, you know, milk and cookies. And everyone's really happy, and the white picket fence kind of, you know, going to church and wearing conservative clothing, and having bake-offs with women. Like those kind of things were sort of family, yeah, actually having my own family was super important to me. And because that was super important to me, I compromised myself in ways that I didn't need to.

8.2.3 Relationships in relation to key moments

Our analysis revealed that a participant's knowledge that someone else recognises the dangerous reality of their IPV situation and is willing and able to offer assistance is central in the imagining the possibility of a future beyond an abusive relationship. Even when participants described instances where church members supported them in key moments, in this study it was more likely to be family, friends and health professionals who took the primary supportive role.

- Friends

I think it was because friends [outside church] were starting to say that you need to get out. And they'd been saying that for about two years before I finally did leave. It took me a little while to hear what they were saying but some friends had been telling me that this wasn't healthy.

- Family

I don't know if I ever would have felt empowered enough to leave without Mum in particular and without a couple of key friends who kind of slapped me around the face metaphorically and said, if that was me, I would have divorced him years ago, get out. I'm really grateful for them.

- Specialist domestic violence services and health professionals (including general practitioners, psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors, 1800-RESPECT, Al-anon, and other helplines).

The parenting line people that I talked to; they were very helpful but one particular guy I was saying basically – this was towards when I was at the end of my tether/ [I said] [My partner] stopped me from seeing my friends. He has hit me a couple of times, he's done this, he's done this and the guy on the other end said to me, "you know these are just really controlling abusive behaviours?" I went, oh. Well because I had said to this guy, "I just want to know what I can do to make it stop, to make it better". He said, "you're not going to be able to" and gave me the numbers for Relationships Australia and Centacare. I ended up ringing Centacare and getting into one of their self-help groups and never looked back, really.

The central role that domestic violence support services and health professionals – sometimes in conjunction with church – played in helping participants in this study find safety and improve their overall wellbeing highlights the importance of referrals to specialised support services.

Participants who were supported by their church in key moments tended to be strongly connected in their church community. It emerged that the relationships participants formed, independent of their partners, that were characterised by trust and care were important in enabling disclosures and the provision of ongoing support.

And then, I came up with a couple of [injuries]. One of my friends from church noticed when I was visiting her one day and she goes, "What's that big bruise ... ?" It wasn't a normal bumped-into-the-table bruise. And I said, "I fell," at first but she just went [silent pause]. And so ... I said, "He actually pushed me over," and I showed her the big bruise ... where I'd fallen, and she goes, "If you ever need to go anywhere, you can come here."

Participants who reflected positively on the role of people at church often talked about how they had multiple points of connection with church. This included such things as participation in small groups of various sorts (for example: bible studies, music groups), groups for young children, making their own ministry and leadership contributions, as well as informal friendships. For instance, one clergy wife was strongly involved in ministry in her own right and had a strong relationship with her senior minister.

I supported a lot of [my partner's] ministry, mainly hospitality and just freeing him up really so that he could go and run his courses or prepare sermons or whatever. But I was heavily involved in women's ministry, creche, helping run the creche and music ministry, as well as running events and things like that, organising one-to-one ministry, did lots of things ... Yeah, but I do feel like I was in a position where we had that friendship and good strong relationship [with the senior minister]. I knew that he would listen, so I felt like I could talk to him.

A few participants said that leaders collaborated together to support them.

My Bible study leader, she was really, really key, she could pick up things really, really well ... She was just so good. She just listened to things that were going on for me and week after week she just kept checking in with me ... It was my Bible study leader and then the Bible study of really beautiful,

supportive women that I found myself in who just constantly built me up and kept saying to me that this is not something that you should have to deal with and God doesn't think of you this way ... I suspect that [my Bible study leader] was working or getting help from other people in the church ... the church leaders or senior minister ... I don't know whether that was the catalyst ... but [the senior minister] did a sermon on domestic violence ... The very next day after that sermon, which was Sunday, Monday I had playgroup up at the church. I took the kids up to playgroup and I just said to one of my friends, "Can you just mind my kids for a bit?" so I could go in and chat with [the senior minister]. He just listened to absolutely everything that I had to say.

A lack of confidence or fear of not being believed by others in a church community often prevented people speaking out in key moments.

I think having been in the same church for a long time ... I honestly did not think anyone would believe me, honestly that's what I thought, because the 10 per cent that they saw of him was not what I lived with and was not my reality the rest of the time. That's honestly why I never said anything, because I did not think anyone would believe me.

This was a particular problem for participants whose abusive partner was charming towards other people at church.

[My ex-partner] he presented a very charming face at church and it would switch off literally as soon as we walked in the door at home ... He's very engaging, funny in a nerdy way, very unthreatening to anyone who went to church with him. He was really popular with the oldies ... They'd cook him food and they just loved him. I don't think it was people's natural tendency to assume that he'd been doing anything wrong at home. In fact, I've had a couple of people tell me, oh I just thought you were being unreasonable. Yeah, so I know people who thought that I was just being – I don't know what.

When participants described their relationships with clergy and church leaders who enabled them to seek change, they used the words "trustworthy", "care", "familiar", "like family", "present", "friends", "supportive", "listen", "fantastic", "wonderful". Both men and women were depicted in this way.

She just kept supporting me and she was just wonderful. She'd just send messages, or she'd just regularly make time to see me and she made it clear that she was happy for me to message or call her. She was just available to me. Obviously, she was seeing other people too so she didn't always answer but then, she would get back to me.

On the other hand, not all participants felt that their ministers were approachable, and so they didn't go to them for help.

I'm just thinking of [my ministers] at the time. Both, I think would have been supportive but the rector, lovely man, but he was very into being a rector, not so much power, but the authority that it gives you. And I'm sure if I had sat down and told him what was happening, he would have been sympathetic, but he wasn't someone that I felt that I could just go up and approach.

One participant's minister took the initiative to approach the participant, and because the participant trusted her, the participant opened up.

She came to me ... She said, "You look terrible" ... She said, "Obviously, it's your choice whether you tell me or not, but I would really like to have a chat with you." And I'd known her for sufficiently long and trusted her, and I stayed behind, as much as I wanted to run, I did stay behind, and then within a

couple of minutes I was a mess as well and told her what I knew or what I thought was going on. But I said, "Maybe I am crazy. Maybe I am completely barking up the wrong tree and maybe there's nothing going on and I'm just this horrible suspicious witch" ... And she just went, "No, no." She said, "Not that I want to speak out of turn or overstretch my limits", but, she said, "I can assure you that you are not going mad and that your suspicions are warranted".

When participants spoke about key moments in their abusive relationship and the process of being able to make choices and act on them, we observed that what made the difference was a scaffold of adequate multi-faceted support. From our analysis we noticed that the availability of practical and material help was flagged by participant's as central to visioning life outside their IPV relationship.

In interviews, participants frequently reported emotional and financial abuses. A participant's lack of access to finances was often used by their abusive partner to reinforce the notion that they would not cope outside the relationship.

I honestly did not believe that I was capable of living on my own, because that confidence had been just so undermined, and you know, my [ex-partner] was always saying, you can't manage money, you won't understand your taxes, you won't, you know, he wouldn't even let me get the mail ... Basically, you won't be able to adult on your own ... So, I think that while I was in [my abusive relationship], the knowledge of that safety net would have, could have got me out sooner.

Our analysis revealed that for many participants, the visioning of a possibility of an alternative future involved rebuilding confidence alongside the development of skills for practical living. Participants who recounted being able to seize key moments and begin a process of change generally expressed an awareness of who they might be able to seek out for emotional, material or practical support.

My [friends from church] knew a few of those things ... After [the abusive] incident, I went straight to my [minister] and told her, "I want to talk with you, and this is happening. I need help. If you could pray for me, that would be a great help for me." I said that to her and then, they said, they suggested to me that this is not the right thing ... And domestic, family violence is not acceptable in Australia and there are so many helps out there and they went with me, one of the members. One of the leaders of the church, they went with me to the police station ... They showed me lots of help, 1800 RESPECT, various free and many more like that. They just text me all this support and we went together.

As explained in the previous section unhelpful dynamics were likely to be amplified when the abusive partner was embedded in the church, for example, when they were well liked, held a position of power, and/or controlled the narrative about the relationship with the participant. This often led to participants feeling unable to disclose what was happening to them.

So, then I got a phone call from [minister] and [minister] says, "[Your partner] spoke to me, and you know, you have a right to feel safe in your own home." And I said "okay". But I didn't know what to say, because I didn't know what [ex-partner] had said, I just didn't know what to divulge or whether I was welcome to. And at the same time, I was really concerned that [ex-partner] was going to lose his job and that that would be my fault and that I would be blamed for that. I had no assurances that, or there was no, there were no sort of alternatives offered to me in any way. There was just you should feel safe in your own home and then there was nothing.

8.2.4 Key moments and impediments to change

As described above, people in positions of trust often encouraged participants to make choices and act on them. However, as participants told stories of their key moments, there were instances where progress was thwarted, and the cycle of abuse continued. From our analysis we noted these were occasions where:

- Clergy and church leaders or friends and family, often unwittingly due to lack of training in IPV, directed participants to services that were inadequate or made the situation worse

The first thing [the minister] did was get us into marriage counselling, which I think was probably not the right thing to do, but he didn't know. He hadn't been trained in caring for people in that scenario before. I didn't know either. Of course, I was wanting things to be better and very willing to work on them, so went off to marriage counselling, which really was just another avenue for [my ex-partner] to control the narrative and make me look unreasonable and hysterical and all the rest while he's just sick and misunderstood.

- Clergy, church leaders or congregation knew that IPV was present in the abusive relationship but dismissed it because they didn't think it was serious enough

Then one day he got me around the neck again and started shaking me again ... I told [the minister] that and he said, "well it's not like he's left any bruises on you". So that was good, that made me feel really good <said with sarcasm> and thought, "yeah, no, that's true, he hasn't, yeah, it's not that bad". So, I stayed. I just kept staying and staying and staying.

- The victim-survivor expressed a desire to stay in their abusive relationship and counsellors, clergy and church leaders or friends and family did not offer an alternative

I went around to the Minister's house ... And I said, "[My ex-partner] has been violent to me". I don't think I, I didn't exactly say, you know, "He's beating me up and cutting me with knives and stuff like that and trying to kill me." But I just said, "He's been violent and abusive". And at that point the Minister said to me, "Well what do you want to do?" ... And I was very idealistic, and I said, "Oh, you know, I want to stay married and I want him to change", kind of thing. I think if there was any point that I could go back and change it would be that exact moment. I would just want the Minister to hand over [some money] and say, "Catch the next train out of here ... and don't worry about anything else after that."

- Clergy and church leaders were well-meaning and well-intentioned but ill-informed about IPV

There were a few people that never really got it at church. I just didn't particularly bother with them. I just kind of ignored them. It was really the leadership of the church, when they didn't get it, it was very, very painful and very, very difficult. When they did, it was fantastic. It's the position of power, isn't it, it's just what it is ... I don't think any of them framed it as domestic violence until the last year or two. Then somewhere in that time was when he grabbed me around the throat and started shaking me the second time, which is when [the minister] said, "oh it's not like he left [a mark]".

- Members of the congregation, friends and family knew about the abuse but did not recognise it as IPV

Church friends ... and I'm still friends with them, but I did say to one of them on the phone, "oh I think I'd drop in", that's right, I'd drop in... hang out. They used to have some lunch occasionally ... I did say to her, "oh look I haven't been coming, I had to stop, I just haven't been coming because sometimes I got home and I'd be abused, verbally and a really bad vibe, uncomfortable. Then another time, I got spat at in the face". She just said, "oh that's not very nice". Didn't really offer a solution, actually no, didn't offer a solution. Just, "oh can't you get rid of her, can't you ask her to move out?" I didn't bother explaining any further; yes, I've tried that.

- Clergy, church leaders and congregations perceived the abusive partner as a "good person" thwarting the victim-survivor's attempts to seek help

[My ex-partner] was so angry when he got [home] because then he had to meet with the Minister once a week and I'd doxed on him and things escalated from there still. And I think the trouble with domestic violence is it's a cycle, it's not a straight line and you can't see the crescendo really. And so, I was trapped in a cycle of someone who was very charming in public and then in private was just a nightmare to live with. And you just question your own sanity. You think, "I must have made that up" or "It can't have been that way". Everyone else was saying, "What a wonderful [person] he was", and I just thought, "What a rotten husband and father he is".

- Clergy, church leaders or congregations recognised IPV but were not equipped to address it.

Whereas our minister, in this particular church there's only one minister, he's run off his feet. I think he was aware of the situation, but I think he was conscious that there wasn't much he could do about it.

There were "key moments" for all of our participants – whether or not they occurred in the context of church. How they played out varied greatly, as our analysis above has shown. One thing that was common across our participants was that they all physically separated from their partners – either they left their partner or, less commonly, their partner had left or had died. We now move to an analysis of the role of church for participants after separation.

8.3 The role of church in rebuilding and recovering life

In this study all participants had physically separated from their abusive partners when we interviewed them. Yet, as participants shared their stories, it emerged that however a separation came about and wherever it is up to, the trauma often continued. We therefore avoid referring to “post-abuse” and “the end of IPV” because we are aware for many of our participants there is no “post” or “end”. Instead, we use the phrase “after separation” to name the phase after participants physically separated from their abusive partners. In the previous section we explored the role of church at key moments in during participant’s abusive relationships. In this section, we investigate the role of church in participants’ lives after separation.

Our analysis revealed that church plays a complex role in participant’s lives after separation. In this study, even though each participant had forged their own path after separation, several common factors related to their interactions with church emerged. Even within a single participant’s narrative, however, factors related to church often concurrently functioned to help and not help them. Here we conceptualise six overarching needs that emerged in our analysis and discuss how participants’ interactions with church met and did not meet these needs.

- To be safe
- To have material provision
- To be in relationships of care, empathy and acceptance
- To have their own identity
- To have a spiritual life and relationship with God
- To make a contribution.

In previous chapters of this report, we have relied on small sections of text from interviews to illustrate our points. In this chapter we use short narratives, or stories, from individual participants, in conjunction with small sections of text, as an analytical tool to demonstrate the convolution of interactions after separation. However, to maintain confidentiality we have had to simplify some of the complexity in the details of participants’ narratives.

8.3.1 Key points

- a) Churches can play a significant role in assisting victim-survivors to physically leave their abusive partner both in terms of advocacy with the perpetrator and the provision of practical assistance with living arrangements.
- b) When an abusive partner is still a part of their church community a victim-survivor’s emotional and physical safety can be compromised.
- c) In situations where an abusive partner remains in a church community after separation, prioritisation of the victim-survivor’s emotional and physical safety requires holding the abusive partner to account.
- d) The provision of material support to victim-survivors is an important role of church after separation.
- e) Connections and relationships in church communities characterised by care, empathy and acceptance have a significant role in victim-survivor wellbeing after separation.
- f) Churches can support victim-survivors as they re-establish their own identity after separation.
- g) Ministry involvement is one-way victim-survivor can fulfil their need to contribute after separation.

- h) After separation, church can be a place where victim-survivors grow in their understanding of and connection with God through and beyond their experiences of abuse.
- i) When victim-survivors are not adequately supported by their church community during their experiences of IPV ongoing church involvement can be difficult.

8.3.2 To be safe

As a broad conceptual frame, the need to be safe was a theme that featured across most participants' narratives. How participants expressed what they needed in order to be or feel safe differed considerably. A few participants conveyed that it was still extremely distressing to recall their IPV experiences, even years after their separation.

We had a seminar on domestic violence ... [A colleague] organised [some professionals] and a survivor to come and speak. And I lasted about three minutes ... before I had to go ... I couldn't cope with it. It was just far, far too much. And we didn't even get to the survivor. We just got to the [professional], who was the first speaker.

In the initial period after separation, most participants explained that to be safe meant physically leaving their abusive partner and living apart from them. In their interviews, participants gave some examples of church interventions after separation that helped them feel safe. These involved: church leaders and community members using their influence to get an abusive partner to leave the family home, assistance with removing an abusive partner from a rental lease or provision of help that enabled the participant to find new housing. One participant recounted how a minister at the church she and her abusive partner attended together used his influence to get her partner to leave the family home.

I stayed living in the house and [my ex-partner] left, because I had [children] and leaving with all their stuff. I don't think I would have; I think it would have been too hard. [The minister] actually convinced him that he needed to move out. I don't think he ever would have done it if it had just been me saying – well he might have gone for a night, but yeah.

Living arrangements, however, are just one aspect of separation. Multiple participants faced the issue of their ongoing safety in their church community. When a participant's abusive partner was either not Christian or did not attend church, participants conveyed that church was a place they could obtain the emotional and practical support they required to feel safe.

I had my Court hearing. And at that time, my [minister], she went with me, which was a really great help for me because I wouldn't have done by myself. I would have freaked out in that Court because I've never been to Court in my life. That was ... the scariest thing in my life I've ever done.

However, when an abusive partner was still a part of their church community, our analysis showed that participants' safety was repeatedly compromised.

One participant spoke of how she had to continue to interact with her abusive ex-partner at church after their separation. Her ex-partner was employed at the church they attended together. Sometime later, his employment was ended, and the separation was made public, but no reasons were given to the congregation for their separate living arrangements and he continued to have a connection with the church. This situation made interactions with church members, in her words, "super-awkward". Eventually the participant left her church community. She described how, while she felt that one minister in particular was very supportive, her interactions with other ministry staff and their wives were extremely unhelpful at times.

I remember [a minister's] wife saying to me the most important thing is to preserve his ministry, ... I was like, no, it's not, it's not the most important thing at all. That's not more important than me and me being safe ... Those things come first before any of that. I didn't say anything like that to her at the time, I was just so shocked and didn't even know how to respond ... the [ministry staff]. I wish that they'd all been a bit more educated. I think they tried to be really supportive and again, that was really hit and miss. Sometimes they did and said helpful things and other times they did a lot more harm ... The [ministry wives], yeah, really hit and miss as well. I remember one of them saying, "oh we all go through rough patches". No, abuse isn't a rough patch, it's not. It's intolerable and it shouldn't be played down as an ebb and flow or an up and down in a marriage, it's just not acceptable. I remember [a minister's] wife saying, "oh would you consider having him home?" I just about had a panic attack. She asked me at [an event] with [a lot of] people around us. No, actually, the thought terrifies me of having him home again.

A number of other participants also spoke about leaving a church because their ex-partner attended. Some participants left immediately after separation.

I decided to leave [my church community] when we split up ... I didn't feel comfortable being – oh, well, I had a restraining order taken out against my [ex-partner] and so I couldn't be there at the same time as him. He continued to go, and I think [he did] reconciliation and I'm pretty sure became confirmed as well and became a member of the church there.

Participants whose church leaders had consulted them as to how they wanted to proceed regarding their abusive partner's church membership expressed a sense of agency and empowerment.

I know some people have had a terrible time and they've moved churches because their [ex-partner] continues at the church. At one point ... after my [ex-partner] came home and then he left again ... He would come to visit on Sunday, but he'd come to church with us and then have lunch with us and then, that was his visit. And so, for many months we're playing happy families as it were in church and the congregation wouldn't have known that he wasn't still at home. Finally, at one point, I spoke to the [the minister] about it and he never said, "I'm going to do this," or, "You should do that." He always said, "Would you like me to?" and he suggested that it probably wasn't a good idea, and I was coming to the same point ... I didn't want to give the false impression to my church family. But also, I didn't want to, I couldn't talk to them ... You couldn't be real with them because he was there. And so, with my permission [the minister] asked [my ex-partner] not to come back again to church.

Not all participants indicated that they thought their abusive partner should leave their church community. Our analysis of some participants' narratives revealed tension between the desire for abusive former partners to repent and be forgiven and the ongoing and constantly emerging reality of life after separation.

One participant conveyed this tension when she explained the dynamics around her ex-partner's church involvement after their separation. In her interview, she recalls that when she told her ex-partner that she would not go to his church – one they had previously attended together – he kept turning up at the church she was attending. Even when people began to take sides, she explained that she was unsure if forcing him to leave was the right thing to do. Yet, at the same time, she also expressed how his presence in the community allowed the cycle of his abuse to continue.

In [the time] it took me to realise what was happening, it was too late, he was everywhere, right? ... The [minister] said, "okay, how about you go at this time and he goes at another time and we keep you separate?" Well, he agreed to that and I agreed to that and immediately I did, I thought, well that was dumb, you know [my ex-partner is] going to find a way around it, because his tactic has always been to make me agree to stuff. He doesn't care what other people say, because he'll always bully me into it ... So [he said], "I'm going to this service", which is my service that he'd agree to not go to ... and he just goes ... Now I don't know what ... he didn't even tell me which one, he just [went] to whichever one he fancied. Because the whole purpose of that is for me to know, I'm everywhere, people still like me, people don't believe you and so I actually left ... I told my [minister] ... I said, "I can't do it. I can't do it, it's not worth it, it's the one place he can get to me. Everywhere else he can't".

Our analysis revealed that in situations where an abusive partner remained in their church community after separation, participants continued to be unsafe. In their interviews, multiple participants clearly articulated that the failure of their church community to hold their abusive ex-partners to account for their behaviour was a major reason they felt they had to leave their church.

How can you hold things in that tension? Where it's like, I can say to you, "What you're doing is wrong and I don't agree with it, but I'm still helping you in this way?" That is what people [at church] seem to be hopeless at. They can actually be ... friends with both, but it's like people think you have to either listen and never say anything at all, to him ... [That] they have to be on his side or they're totally against him. So, what that means is no one is saying to him, "What the hell is wrong with you? You can't do that to your wife" ... They never hear that; they just hear affirmation. The ones that don't affirm them, stay away from, but there needs to be some in between ... like people ... need to be saying, "Listen man, we love you, we're glad that you're here, but you've got to cut that out, that is wrong and we're not going to say that it's right", or some version of that. If I knew [my ex-partner] had some accountability, whereas instead he's just like running around, turning people against me and they can't - I don't know. Maybe like my friend said, maybe there's church discipline, kick him out, but then it's like, can there be something before that where it's like, say to him, cut it out? We have to teach people the right way to behave, like anything else.

A few participants talked about how their abusive former partners had actually gone on to abuse others, either in the same church or in other churches. This points to the issue of safety for others beyond our participants.

The pattern repeated itself with two or three other girls after me. He eventually left the church and moved to a different church when he broke a marriage ... they had an affair, and the marriage broke. Then I think he moved churches.

One participant spoke clearly about the need for checks as past perpetrators moved from church to church.

So, you move to a new church and that rector knows full well this guy's a pain in the neck, he's awful, but the rector is not going to ring the next rector. So, it takes another three or four years for the people in the church to catch on that this guy, something wrong here ... I would be wondering why on earth they wouldn't. Like you would have to have a really good reason not to pass that information on. "Oh, but I don't want to damage someone's reputation". Oh well, just let her life be damaged, let the kids' life be damaged.

8.3.3 To have material provision

From our analysis of participants' narratives, we contend that the provision of material support is an important role of church after separation. A few participants had and/or were able to draw on their own independent finances to leave their partner, but many needed assistance. And although the need for practical, relevant assistance after separation was articulated by many participants, churches varied considerably in their capacity and willingness to provide material support. For some participants, church was a good source of material support.

The church was really supportive in having people checking in with me, making sure I was okay, and during that time where I was just trying to get back onto my feet with everything, I was regular at the Food Pantry, the food charity things and looking into all the different charity services, because I don't have a [partner] paying any bills now and I've got to kind of rely on Centrelink and whatever else, and kind of manage.

For other participants, their church was not able to offer adequate support.

Probably one thing that they didn't have ... they certainly did not have any resourcing ... They could offer sympathy, they could encourage you, which they did ... But there's nothing set up for the practical, unless an individual in the congregation actually steps forward and either has the physical resources and/or psychological resources to be able to look after someone to do that ... That was something that would have been valuable.

One participant, whose abusive ex-partner worked for a church agency, recounted how the church agency helped him and totally overlooked her need for help.

I was this, in many ways I was, like I'd never lived on my own, I'd never owned a car, I'd never ... I had, I'd done all those things, but in my head I hadn't ... I was [very young] when we got married ... I think what would have just been useful was, [if they had told me] just go along to [the church agency], get them to help you. [The church agency], my ex's employer ... supported him ... What would have been super useful is if they'd said here's a voucher ... I was lucky that I found a social housing place that enabled me, because I was a DV survivor ... Just practical help, you know. I, there were times in those first few months ... that, you know, I had to use food vouchers ... just practical help, like, you know, no one asked me, and I certainly was not in the headspace ... But being asked would have made all the difference.

One participant mentioned that the best thing that people could have done for her is "just turn up".

Lots of people go, "Oh, let me know if I can do anything". You're like, "Well what can you do?" I don't know. What can you do? ... People just go, "Just let me know if there's anything I can do." I'm like, "Would you just turn up? Would you just bring a meal? Don't ask me if I want something because it's hard to ask for help. Just turn up." People really should go, "I was thinking I might come around" – and I try and follow this myself – "I was thinking, I'm cooking today, I can easily make more, I thought I might bring some around. How would that be for you?" Much easier than, "Let me know if you need a meal anytime." Well, "I need a meal." "No, sorry, can't do it today." I don't know.

The type of material support required by participants varied widely. Some examples of support given by people inside and outside church that participants found helpful were:

- Financial management

And then [my close friend] actually sat down and we went through bank account [statements] that I had had to literally go into [the bank] and purchase, I needed the history, and I was not, I didn't have a clue about how to do any internet banking back then ... I'm a whizz on it now. But back then, because he had complete control, and he made it look and feel so complex that I just went ah, I haven't got time for this. Sweetie, you look after that, you're home-based, that's your job, I'll just go out and earn the money.

- Practical assistance connecting essential services (for example: mobile phone, visa, utilities, internet)

[My bible study group] were really supportive and they knew what I was going through and after what happened with [my ex-partner], he cut off with everything like my internet, electricity and everything and I was so freaked out that I didn't know what to do ... everything. ... was in [my ex-partner's] name so I was fully dependent upon him. He would never let me to anything. After what happened that year, I had to work on my visa as well because I was in his spouse visa. One of my members at church ... He came forward to help me with my visa situation ... Everything from the beginning, like I said, until now, I get so much help little by little and in different ways from my church. It's like my home and they are my family. They are more like my family.

- Emergency accommodation.

I got up early the next morning ... left it in the house, and then went to church. I remember that morning just saying ... to my [minister] ... "Can I talk to you for a sec?" I went into his office and I just said, "I don't know what to do but I've got a car full of my stuff ... and I'm not going home." ... He just said, "Don't worry. We'll sort it out." I stayed at my [church leaders house] ... I stayed at hers for a [period of time] ... and then I stayed with another [church] friend.

8.3.4 To be in relationships of care, empathy and acceptance

In their narratives participants frequently recounted how new and old relationships characterised by empathy, care and acceptance contributed to helping them to rebuild/recover life after separation. Our analysis showed that connections and relationships inside and outside church were essential for a participant's wellbeing after separation. When asked where they found support after separation, some participants spoke of the support of parents, new partners and good friends.

My parents still support me. I have a lovely new [partner] ... he's a pillar of strength and very practical and down to earth ... And I think too, I've got a couple of friends through church who stayed with me alongside the journey and that's been really good up here, friends up here that is. And of course, I've got my long-time girlfriends who, we are still in touch.

One participant explained that after her separation she joined a new church where the ministry team proactively provided opportunities for her to build new relationships.

In my current church ... when I changed, the [minister] just as a welcome, he invited me to come and chat to him, have a coffee and so I told him my story and I just said, "What I really want here is to make some new friends that are close by" ... I just said I really

want to make some local friends. I really want my kids to be supported and build relationships with friends but also, male role models ... and then, just later ... one of the other ministers organised this divorce care course.

We found in our analysis that silence around the issue of IPV in church communities contributed to loneliness after separation. Finding others who shared similar experiences tended to ease participants feelings of isolation.

That was something that my new church did, and it was several years down the track for me, but it's just been so helpful ... it really was a first for me in some ways because I had a group of women who had similar experiences to me. And previously, I knew some people even by name who had had infidelity or had to struggle. Whether or not they got back together or not, but they just wouldn't talk to me. They didn't want to discuss it. It's too painful or too embarrassing or not appropriate, I don't know.

Support to rebuild and recover still occurred even when a participant's experience of violence was not known by those offering support. One participant, who has not shared her experience of IPV with people at church, explained the importance of church friendships in her life after separation from her abusive partner.

Because they're safe friendships. I wouldn't say they're open friendships, open-minded friendships, but they are safe, honest friendships. I don't think – there's nothing malicious, that's good. That's a good thing to go for. I prefer to have gentle relationships, friendships. There's no threat.

Yet, although this participant found church friendships safe and wholesome, she also critiqued the lack of diversity in her congregation. She cites this as a reason for her lack of ongoing connection and why she doesn't speak of her IPV experiences with people at her church.

I'd have to say, I don't know, most of the people at the church are old. The young friends, well I don't have the young friends at the church because they're all so stereotypical heterosexual marriage, kids, breeders, that – no, I'm not a friend. I'm friends with the old ladies who are divorced or widowed. It's so stereotypical, the church and I don't know if it's just Anglican ... I think they're very traditional, very stereotypical. If you're not married with children, you're a spinster or you're looked upon as a spinster, not as a single professional woman.

For many – but not all – of our participants who attended church with their partner, it was a different church that provided connection and relationship post-separation. One participant recounts the importance of the connection she has built with the minister in her new parish.

I haven't talked to very many people at this parish about my situation and I don't feel the need to. Oh, not so much need to. I don't particularly want to. And ...with [the minister at my current church], when you're with him, it's not like you're a person with a past. All you are is a person in front of him and a person with a future. It's really nice. It's just his nature. He is a remarkable man in his largeness of faith and heart and belief. Anyway, it's all a bit stereotypical things that you could say. But I've benefited enormously from ministry here. From worship here. And I'm happy here.

A few participants found care and support in Christian networks and individuals beyond a parish setting. In some cases, participants mentioned how social media groups provided an avenue for connection and support.

Our analysis revealed that clergy who care, have empathy and offer acceptance were crucial for participants to continue to feel supported in a church environment.

[It] wasn't really until I got to [a new church, with a] mission priest there. I think I felt comfortable disclosing my past, my history with her, because she was so pro-women and I don't know whether it was because she was a woman that I was comfortable disclosing my history with to her, or just simply because – well I did, yeah, it might be because she was a woman, because I did talk to a couple of the women in my home church; I felt less comfortable with the reception I got from them. But I knew [the minister] was a feminist and I knew she was also very well read in terms of family violence and things, so I felt comfortable talking to her ... she just talks about her views on feminism in the services, I think, yeah, which made it – I guess gave me the opening, well not the opening, but made me feel more comfortable ... the main thing she did was just listen. She listened unjudgmentally and it was incredibly helpful.

Some participants explained that their ministers encouraged them to do take actions that were not helpful for them, but because the participant felt that the minister was acting out of genuine care for the participant, the participant valued this above all.

I can hardly fault [my minister], because his priority was to be really compassionate and he just cared for me so well, even though he didn't always execute it perfectly. I don't ever doubt that he cared for me above everything.

Our analysis showed that in cases where participants were clergy wives, connections with church leadership often became tense. One clergy wife told the story of speaking to a minister at her church after her separation.

After I left, I tried to sit down with, well I did sit down with a [minister] who was attached to the church at that time. Mostly because I sort of felt, I need to kind of inform them that this has happened. And I suppose in hindsight I just wanted some acknowledgment from my community, from my community's leaders that this had happened. And so, we met ... in the meeting room ... And I told him that there had been violence, I didn't tell him [the details] but I told him ... that it had been quite severe ... And he just sort of looked at me and made listening noises, and then he started to tell me that my [ex-partner] was ... so distressed ... and that I needed to be aware of that. And I think I just said well thank you for taking care of him ... [There were] certainly no questions about what support I had, no questions about what had happened.

Yet, this same participant contrasted formal support from church leadership with the friendship she received from a group at her church.

But it was friendship that was offered me in this group, which was a different form of support I suppose. Just the capacity to be myself and to be not okay, it's this is a safe space to be not okay. I don't do vulnerability well. But that this is the space where I can just be quiet, where I can just be, you know what, I'm just going to sit under my tree for a while, or whatever. So yeah, the support that was offered me in terms of the offer of friendship has been life-giving and a great learning for me. The formal support offered by the church leadership has been pretty woeful unfortunately. And I think that's probably more not being equipped to offer support ... I don't think it was a deliberate.

We also noted that clergy wives were often not emotionally supported in diocesan processes.

8.3.5 To have their own identity

From our analysis we established that after separation churches can support victim-survivors as they re-establish their own identity by (1) not identifying the victim-survivor by their experience or marriage status; (2) allowing victim-survivor space and time to re-establish their self-identity.

One participant described how not being able to establish her own identity has become a continuation of the cycle of her abusive relationship.

I think I'm kind of just resigning myself to the fact that I think I'm going to have to live with this abuse for the rest of my life. I'm just going to have to live with it, because I can't do anything to change it and I'll always be seen a certain way and I'll always be treated from the way these people see me. Yeah. And so [ex-partner] is still abusing me by taking my identity ... and that sort of stuff is a continuous thing. And it's such a great loss to me. That's kind of like my deepest pain.

Some participants described how they felt “dumb”, “crazy”, “a freak” or “stupid” for being involved in an abusive relationship and no longer wished to be defined by it. A few participants recounted how they felt judged in their church communities by their marital status or appearance after separation.

So, separating ... and it leading to divorce, as a Christian, I lost so many friends. I was really harshly judged by the church ... I had protected my [ex-partner], because you think that's what you should do, by not telling the full picture to anyone. Nobody knew. People knew little bits and pieces according to where they were in my life ... You present this kind of, you know, we're okay, we're happy. But living through one divorce in the church, where people harshly judged you ... what kind of a Christian is she? I look like a mess, I have no money, I'm on my own, I'm unwell, [my ex-partner] has got ... money, his family has helped him ... So, I'm a mess from having left, he's not, so people look at that and they're like, oh she could have done more. It's like people are not as good judge of characters as they think they are, and they need to be told.

One participant recounted how she joined the gym and found healing through friendship outside her church community.

One of the things I did really early on after [my separation from my ex-partner] - I joined a gym ... I wanted to go somewhere and just be me. I didn't know anyone, no one knew me, no one knew my story, no one knew anything about me. I could just go and be. I do that every [day] and yes, I'm crazy, but it keeps me sane and it actually has been really healing for me to go and meet some amazing people and just be myself and not people have this other idea about who you are.

Another participant described how she moved interstate so she could have a fresh start free from the threat of her ex-partner controlling the narrative about who she is.

I think I was lucky enough that I could take a clean break and move completely away. I was lucky that I could basically start with a clean slate, because I wasn't known [there] at all and I could basically build my reputation again. I was lucky, I got a couple of lucky breaks in being asked to join committees and stuff at really important times so that I was able to become a bit more known reasonably quickly ... Being able to just reset everything and say, “Right, I'm taking a complete break and I'm going start all over again.” I guess that was the option that I'd never thought of when I was with him ...

That was probably my saving grace, was the ability to do that. That allowed me to start all over again.

8.3.6 To make a contribution

To make a contribution – to be offering, helping to produce or achieve something – was frequently a significant need for participants after separation. Many participants spoke about how they used their own experiences of IPV to support other victim-survivors. A key aspect of this was talking about their own experiences.

I talk about [my experience of IPV] a lot. I talk about it a lot at appropriate times, I don't go into Woolworths and say, excuse me, would you like to hear? But I do talk about it when I have the opportunity because it's such a subject that's so hidden that I would like to be able to model talking about it. The [people I work with] ... I reckon most of them, there's been points, like all of them have really very difficult issues to deal with over the time and so there's often been a point where I've been able to say, oh yeah, my [ex-partner] kicked me out of home, my kids were [young], that was a really hard time. I want to say I'm not afraid to talk about this.

A number of participants said that being part of this study was a way to contribute to awareness of situations of IPV in church communities. Several participants mentioned that they were now active in supporting others through experiences of domestic violence and in raising awareness, both through formal church organisations and informal relationships.

After separation, many participants went on to make significant contributions to the church through lay and ordained ministry. A few participants described how they had been ordained since leaving their abusive partners. Other participants referred to their significant involvement and leadership of lay ministries, including music, youth and family ministries, parish councils and other committees, administration services, audio-visual activities and bible studies, play groups and other small groups. One participant shared how she found purpose, meaning and belonging when she joined a new church community after separation.

I only intended to go a couple of times. And I kept going. I really found that I guess [the minister] is probably one in a thousand. So, I am involved there ... I am involved actually in quite a lot of ways at the moment and have increasingly. We have a ... service booklet that I do the work on that ... I'm on the reading roster ... I've been on a committee ... And [my minister] asked me to go [on council] for next year so there you go.

When participants recounted stories of how they contributed to their church communities after separation, it was common for participants to speak about the importance of feeling useful and valued.

8.3.7 To have a spiritual life and relationship with God

Our analysis showed that, after separation, church was a place that facilitated transcendent experiences and healing for some of our participants, where they could grow in their understanding of and connection with God through and beyond their experiences of abuse. Key people in church, especially clergy, were central in this journey.

Many of our participants shared how their faith had sustained them through their abuse. Some expressed a sense of continued assurance and security in their faith throughout their experiences.

I had a very strong relationship with God, I knew that even during the really bad times ... I knew it wasn't God's fault. I never blamed God or my faith, and I guess I drew on that relationship with God to find a strength to either continue on and to go back and try and do the best I could with what I had.

Other participants conveyed how they had wrestled or struggled with their faith. This included reading, questioning doctrines, wrestling with their understanding of God's character and action, and grappling with and through prayer. Often this was through their own individual practice, but there were also times where interactions with others in their church had directly helped them in these experiences. One participant described how, following a mystical experience, she started to meet with someone who helped her to work through her spiritual struggles.

So [we] went to [the church]. And I just wanted to go ... And it ended up being one of the most profound spiritual experiences of my life that has essentially changed my life ... And after that he actually just came up to me ... and he said, you saw something in there. And I couldn't talk about it and he saw that ... But as I was struggling with, I guess the spiritual implications of essentially coming face-to-face with God, which apparently, I hadn't done before, I sought him out, and said I need to have a chat with you ... And just over time it's become, like, we never entered into a formal "this is a spiritual directorship", but we both call it that ... I'm just really, really fortunate in that he's ... an incredibly whole, incredibly prayerful person, which I think makes a difference to the interaction ... And I mean, obviously he hasn't the same lived experience of trauma as I do, he doesn't know what it's like to be female and all of that sort of stuff. But he comes to the interaction with that acknowledgement, and with that prayerful acknowledgement, and that makes such a difference.

Another participant explained, to her surprise, how being part of worship in her new church was healing for her.

And I found when I first saw [minister at current church] and he said a number of things, but one of the things he said – and I would never have known this – is sanctification through worship, healing through worship. And I suppose I thought well worship is whatever worship is. But now that I'm in an Anglo-Catholic parish and I've now got more insight from experience and being part of the service and watching the service and contributing to it, I actually do see worship is a place of healing. It is. You come there and you cannot do it by yourself. You just don't have the heart or the will. I find healing is taking place through worship of which I'm a tiny bit but there. And that may not be for everyone. I don't know. All I know is, it is for me and I'm a dyed-in-the-wool evangelical.

A participant, who was baptised into a community which she sought out during her abusive relationship, said how much life had changed since she was baptised:

What I have experienced is from the day of my baptism, my life has changed drastically. From the day of my baptism, everything had changed so drastically, and I feel like that's God telling me that I have planned for you and you should be faithful in me ... my life has changed, and it changed in a good way and every day is a grateful day for me.

A number of participants talked about how clergy or others in their church who they looked to for spiritual guidance helped them to transcend their experience of abuse through forgiveness. This was very different from entrapment in a dynamic of ongoing abuse and forgiveness while living with an abusive partner. It was about being freed from the abuse and being able to move on.

[My minister] was so helpful. And we prayed quite regularly and started to work on, she gave me a whole stack of literature on forgiveness, not only forgiveness of the other party, she said, to be honest, I know you want to basically kill him. But you can't. And you mustn't. And here's a little, basically, guidebook to help you manage those emotions and get past that. And she said, once you've actually started to forgive them, then you're going to have to start on the really hard stuff, which is to forgive yourself. And I'm like, I'm never going to forgive him, ra-ra-ra. And she said, I know you feel like that, I get it, but trust me, you have to, because if you don't, you will never get through this, and you will never forgive yourself, and that will stay with you for the rest of your life. And you've already donated way too much time and way too much of your life to that particular man, and that situation now, you need to do some hard yards. But you are going to come through the other end ... So, she was very useful in that side of things. She also gave me some really good reading material about forgiveness, and I sort of put that to one side and went, nah, I don't have time for all that. But once I actually picked it up, I couldn't put it down. And it was exactly the sort of nourishment my soul needed at that particular point of time.

Our analysis revealed that when participants were not adequately supported by their church community during their experiences of IPV their involvement with church remained fraught – they remain connected, but not regularly attending a church. One participant who moved to a new town and a new church after separation from her abusive ex-partner spoke of how her relationship with church remained complicated by anger.

I think for a very, very long time I was very angry with God particularly I felt that I wasn't nurtured. Basically, I just felt like I was sort of left to hang out and dry, whereas [my ex-partner] was taken in by all the men at the church and, "Oh poor you, your wife suddenly left you, you had no idea that was happening". And I felt really angry that I was so unsupported and yet he was tucked in the bosom. And I felt too, shame that people who are abusers don't have some sort of big sign tattooed on their forehead because after he left the Anglican Church, because he did leave eventually ... it's just a shame that men like that don't come with a warning ... it did take me a long time to sort of even go back to church ... And even now after COVID, I haven't gone back to church. I'm connected but I'm a fringe dweller.

Another recalled how support from a minister in reading and study of scripture was crucial for her. She now had that support, but she didn't receive it at the time following her separation from her ex-partner:

What has really helped me to reconnect is having a connection with a [minister] who is posting Scripture publicly or enabling me to come and spend time with them, even just on Facebook, reading Scripture together, and then acknowledging that I've read it. Yeah, so having that connection through the public reading of Scripture ... And I think [previous minister], those other times when I contacted him, would have known that probably what I needed the most right then was Scripture and to be in a relationship with God and to be learning about God. And that as a minister that he would be there, ensuring, enabling that I am on a regular basis ... what I really needed was that consistency in Scripture and he failed to provide a productive connection and relationship with me that was scriptural, that was even based on Scripture.

Several participants from more conservative religious backgrounds remarked that they had become more empathetic towards sex and gender diverse people directly as a result of their own experiences of abuse and judgment. For example, they had moved away from “legalistic” views about same-sex relationships.

Stuff like same-sex marriage, I feel really differently about to what I did five years ago. I would have been so staunchly against it and now I feel a heap more open minded, just much more compassionate approach to heaps of things ... I think I'm a lot less legalistic. It's one of the things I really dislike about my [ex-partner], that legalistic approach to faith, so I've gone really the other way ... Yeah, a lot more compassion, grace, leaving a lot more room for different opinions. Yep, there's lots of different opinions out there and I might not be right.

This had led them to a position of greater empathy for others who were on the margins of the church.

I do wonder what God thinks of me ... I'm certainly not the poster child. But neither was Esther, neither was Rahab, neither was David, neither was Noah. I think there is still too much in the church of – regardless of what the Bible says and the people in the Bible that are – absolutely stuffed up their lives, but tried to follow God, the church is still so – you present as this character, of this marriage, as these relationships. And you feel like you don't fit in. And God has brought a lot of gay people into my life in the last couple of years ... I know they feel similarly, completely on the outer of the church. And whether or not God would condone their lifestyle or – he says to come exactly as you are, and the church needs to love people exactly as they are and let God deal with the other stuff.

9 Phase 2 results: Participants speak to the Anglican Church now



This section outlines the specific resources and broader recommendations for support that emerge from the victim-survivor narratives, including responses to the questions (a) If you could have had one thing offered or given to you from your church during your time of need, no questions asked, what would have been most useful to you? (b) Do you have any advice or suggestions for clergy and church communities, to help them improve how they respond to intimate partner violence?

9.1 Key points

- a) The hidden nature of IPV in churches stigmatises victim-survivors and adds to feelings of shame and disconnection.
- b) Visible resources and training are needed within church communities to raise awareness and educate clergy and congregations to the signs of abuse and to let victim-survivors and their supporters know how and where to get support.
- c) It is critical that victim-survivors are believed and understand church as a place of safety and healing.
- d) Aspects of church teachings associated with marriage and gender are distorted in situations of IPV. Victim-survivors should be empowered by sound theological and biblical teaching which specifically mentions IPV in pre-marriage classes, sermons and seminars.
- e) Relationships that connect victim-survivors with the community and are characterised by trust, care and proactive listening are crucial in victim-survivors both recognising IPV and leaving the abusive relationship.
- f) People in positions of trust need to provide a framework for care that includes regularly asking welfare questions.
- g) Victim-survivors require practical support services both while they are in a situation of IPV and as they begin to rebuild their lives.
- h) Individualised support is required in form of day-to-day functional help with finances, food, housing and accessing services such as counselling and legal aid.
- i) Leaders and communities should not make assumptions about what support and resources victim-survivors require.

9.2 IPV awareness

There was a general understanding among participants that IPV was not widely acknowledged as something that happened to people in Christian communities.

Just get a grip. It happens. Stop denying it or stop choosing to ignore it.

A number of participants wanted people in authority and congregations to know that IPV happens everywhere and that hidden secretive nature of IPV in church communities does stigmatise victim-survivors and adds to feelings of shame and disconnection.

I suppose that's something we as a community need to acknowledge more, and need to talk about more, and there needs to be, you know, the definitions, the research. It needs to be normalised.

Many participants expressed a need for IPV “to be brought out into the light and discussed”, and suggested IPV information be communicated widely across church communities.

Educate and make the congregation aware that this is happening across the board, not just to non-Christian people. It is happening within the congregations, within their domestic household, their domestic relationships. Concentrate on the fact that education that and it could be and it may be you that it's occurring in your household behind closed doors.

Visible IPV resources were understood by participants as having the dual functions of (1) educating the community of the signs of abuse and (2) letting victim-survivors know how and where to get support.

One thing that could be done is to have plenty of visible notification advising that this is an area of concern ... at the front door have notices. You could do it actually really well and not be threatening or intimidating to anybody. You could say, “We are a caring community,” and ... “We are a caring community but if we get it wrong or if you think you're in a worrying situation, even at home, here is a phone number and a website” – you have to provide a phone number and a website – “where we might be able to help save your life,” or something like that ... “Are you in danger now? Do you feel uncomfortable,” and the third one is, “Are you worried about what's happening at home?”.

Raising awareness and providing training, however, is not just about pamphlets and brochures in the church foyer. Participants advocated for sermons, seminars and conversations that directly addressed IPV and the cultures that supported it.

If people actually ran a seminar on intimate partner violence, that would have helped. If somebody had actually put it out there that this is what it encompasses, I may have felt more inclined to go and talk to someone.

9.3 Religious discourses

There were specific religious teachings that participants indicated were distorted in their experiences of IPV which added to their feelings of harm and dislocation from church. Multiple participants highlighted the need for victim-survivors to be empowered by sound teaching in sermons and seminars.

What I thought I was struggling with in terms of submission and marriage issues was really domestic violence, but I couldn't see it that way ... having a sermon that makes it really clear what those behaviours are, and it's not just being bashed up, which is what I kind of thought. I thought, well, he's not thrown me to the ground, he's not hurting me ... not realising that him locking me in rooms and ... trying to enforce what I did every single day, yeah, telling women that that stuff is also not okay and that that is domestic violence ... explain that - say what that is, because I had no idea, and I suspect a lot of other women have no idea.

Some participants identified that IPV should be included in pre-marriage preparation courses.

He would remind me at various points that our vows to each other were lifelong commitments and that we'd be breaking those ... commitments we'd made to each other before God ...

I took that really seriously. I think the way that our pre-marriage education ... never ... even mentioned how marriages could go wrong or never even mentioned consent as a point of education for people getting married, especially people of faith.

Participants strongly contended that any perceived discomfort experienced by church leaders while discussing IPV should not be a deterrent to speaking out with issues needed to be engaged with “head-on”, not as a side topic.

As a congregation, [we need] to be told from the pulpit ... because generally ministers don't have experience with abuse, particularly domestic violence in all its forms, they come across as very offhanded about it. They'll be preaching about obedience in marriage and all that kind of stuff and speaking about domestic violence will be a bit of a throwaway ... I know that it's uncomfortable to talk about it. Try living with it. Your five seconds of discomfort standing in front of 200 people and saying it's not okay is nowhere near the discomfort of living with it ... be believable and heartfelt - mean it, because your discomfort saying that to someone is nothing compared to what she's living with.

Furthermore, one participant argued for sermons and conversations to not always be directed towards victim-survivors. Any calling-out of perpetrator behaviour should always be done in a way that is safe for victim-survivors.

If you're going to get up and say that from the pulpit, the first thing you say is, “if you're in an abusive marriage, then abuser, stop abusing. If you are abusing your wife in that marriage, You need help, you need to speak up, you need to go and get some help. I understand that you're probably not going to because you probably think it's her fault, so women, if you are in an abusive marriage, ring this number, the 1800 RESPECT number” or something she can do anonymously. But don't say “come and talk to me” and don't start with her, start with him.

9.4 Relationships characterised by trust, care and listening

A number of participants claimed that relationships characterised by trust, care and proactive listening are crucial for victim-survivors at “key moments” throughout their experiences of IPV. There are signs of abuse, and participants advise church leaders and congregations to be alert, aware of the signs and ask welfare questions on a regular basis.

I think there are signs, I think there are – well I think there should have been, for me, enough red flags that – a question like, “Are you okay?” Well, I probably would have said, “Yes, fine.” But a perceptive question. And an opportunity – it's hard to find one under those circumstances, but I don't think it would have been impossible for somebody in the clergy sort of range to have had some idea that things were not all hunky-dory, shall we say.

The importance of having conversations and asking questions was repeated by many participants.

I think people don't ask the question because they're terrified of the responsibility of hearing the answer ... just being willing to have the conversation and to trust the victim in front of you that she's probably got her own answers, she probably knows what she needs or doesn't need from you. And just ask. And I think any question that's asked with genuine openness and respect can't be a bad question. And if you're shut down that's fine, you've at least asked the question. Because you will be shut down

– that's part of being in that space is being secret. But sometimes the question alone is enough to get a person thinking. Hang on, this person has noticed something, maybe this is not right. So yeah, I suppose that would be the one thing. Just ask.

It was highlighted that while talking about abuse is uncomfortable people should not be afraid to talk about IPV. Participants recognised that in Anglican church communities that there are stigmas associated with IPV. They repeatedly indicated that fear and discomfort about the reality of IPV should not get in the way of having making connections and initiating conversations.

I guess the advice would be to not be scared to talk to people about it. I think what was hardest for me was, no one wanted to talk to me about it. They really didn't want to bring it up because they didn't know where it would go and what they would be able to say with it. But I think even just a small conversation about it. Even just saying, "You know where I am. This will be a tough process; we're going to protect you." ... I think just having a conversation would be a really good start, and not being afraid of learning about it.

Whereas there are no clear answers or singular way of approach, a key theme across participants recommendations was the importance of "connection".

And I don't know what the answers are. I don't know what the advice is, except that for me, the thing that matters is connecting with people, and that's what's made the difference.

The creation of connections can make a difference and several participants expressed that having connections allowed them to act and seek support during their experience of IPV.

Just checking in. If I'm not comfortable, then I wouldn't share it but if you keep on checking on me like, "Are you okay? How is it going?" that can make a difference, I think. In my case, that's how it is. If people keep on checking on me and if you are in contact with them and communicating with them every now and then, it makes you feel connected.

A complex element of IPV is the self-doubt that is generated from emotional abuses such as gaslighting. A few participants raised the importance of having a relationship with a person, independent from their abusive partner, who they could trust to affirm their sense of reality.

The one thing that would have kept me going or the one thing that would have actually been the most helpful thing for me would have been to have two or three reality checkers that I could call and say, he's just said this. So last night we made this decision and this morning he's saying we didn't make the decision and that I've gone nuts. Or did you see him doing this last week because now he's telling me he didn't do it, am I going mad? I think that to have two or three reality checkers would have been the most important thing and it is the thing that I do now.

Participants frequently explained the importance of the emotional, practical and spiritual support they received in of their church communities. But access to resources beyond the church that could offer specialist help in IPV situations was very important as well. Many proposed that processes and procedures are critical to the provision of effective support. They noted that in cases where there are not clear referral guidelines pastoral support can fall short of a victim-survivors needs.

My minister and people at my church, they've ... obviously not been through it themselves. They maybe have never even been in contact with many people who have experienced it and so may not

necessarily know as much, or who to contact, or where to go. Like I said, they dealt with it incredibly well ... but at the same time they just constantly drew a blank. When I said, "What do I do here? Where do I go? Who do I see? How do I do this?" They didn't know. I don't know, even if there was just - I think it would be really, really helpful.

Some participants highlighted that assumptions should not be made regarding what help is needed in individual circumstances. One participant clearly articulated the importance of strong relationships with leaders and communities asking questions about individual requirements in moments of crisis.

You know, ask the questions. Have you got enough? Are you okay financially? Do you need help there? What would be helpful for you right now? I think that is a very good question.

Participants noted that individualised support is vital when victim-survivors are caught in a cycle of abuse. They observed that there is no one correct solution or approach.

9.5 Summary of participant recommendations for church leadership

- 1) Provide IPV training for clergy, lay leaders and congregations

I wish that [the ministry staff] had all been a bit more educated. I think they tried to be really supportive and again, that was really hit and miss. Sometimes they did and said helpful things and other times they did a lot more harm ... I think my experience would have been different if those in authority had that education.

- 2) Ensure that professional standards and regular reviews for clergy include an IPV dimension

You need to have oversight and that oversight needs to be meaningful ... professional development is a mixture of the organisation need and the personal need and the spiritual need of that person and their wellbeing. So, I think it needs regular, twice a year, oversight, and monitoring. Not monitoring to check but engagement. I think the level of [this] engagement. And it isn't through a form or something. It's engaging with this person. Sitting down with them. It takes time.

- 3) Provide pastoral workers to work with perpetrators and address their behaviours

Helping men who have perpetrated family violence. There seems to be training now available. So, you could have a worker that works with people like that.

- 4) Ensure that all processes and procedures are informed by victim-survivor input

Some of the most powerful lectures I've had are from survivors themselves who've actually spoken about their journeys and how they eventually got out of their relationships, and what helped them to get out of their relationship. A lot of them came with lots of fallout as well. A lot of them had to sacrifice their church positions and walk away, and risk reputation damage and things. I think as hard as it is being exposed to some of those stories, if you don't have any experience with it, it would be helpful.

- 5) Develop a scaffold of key people and services where leaders and congregation members can obtain information about how to offer assistance in situations of crisis (including IPV)

I had people asking me on a personal basis, "How are you going?" but if you become aware of a serious situation that is happening, right, somebody is actually getting the AVO orders and that, I think there would be value in having somebody or a ... who could in some way provide support, be it to a congregation, or a service, or to an individual, if a risk was noted that was within the congregation. Not necessarily involving the clergy but within the congregation. But that applies to more than just the domestic violence.

- 6) Develop and make widely available easy to access pamphlets and booklets on IPV in a Christian context

There are a number of churches and faith communities that are now putting out little publications about domestic and family violence and Christian belief and those sorts of things ... I think that if there had been a little resource like that available to either of those priests at the time that would have been enormously helpful ... to have resources that are readily available.

- 7) Offer Christian teaching on marriage and gender that addresses the potential for and the reality of abuse in intimate relationships.

I've had, not strong words, that's the wrong way of saying it, ... [saying] this needs to be taught better because young men are hearing these things and with good intentions or bad, they're going away having heard these things and going, I've got to be the leader, I've got to lead, I've got to be a godly man and the Gospel is important above all things and when I get married, my wife exists to serve me. Young men do go away thinking that, because it's happened, there are so many marriages in which that's what's happened.

10 Discussion



This study focuses on experiences of IPV among those with a current or previous connection to the Anglican Church. The following research questions were set for this study:

1. What is the nature of experiences of IPV for those with a connection with Anglican churches?
2. How has the Anglican Church featured in these experiences?
3. What are the attitudes to IPV amongst those with a connection to the Anglican Church?

The aim was to achieve a greater understanding of how Anglican churches have intersected with experiences of violence and thereby gain a foundation to support the further development of Anglican Church policy and practice in relation to IPV.

The research question concerning attitudes to IPV is a secondary question for this study. Results on attitudes from the scoping survey were presented and discussed earlier in this report. Here we focus on the experiences of our interview participants.

At the outset of the research, we did not have any expectation as to how many people would respond. In just a few months, there were over 300 responses to the online survey, overwhelmingly from people who had a strong and active connection with the Anglican Church, including from 86 people who had experienced violence from an intimate partner and were willing to invest their energy into an intensive interview. This enabled us to ensure that we interviewed people with a wide variety of experiences with their churches, in terms of whether or not they had sought help from at Anglican church in their experience of abuse and whether they had found this helpful or unhelpful.

Our interview participants were subjected to multi-faceted violence and control from their intimate partners over long periods of time which impacted on their wellbeing in multiple ways. From their experience, we are able to say a great deal about the role of the church in the experience of IPV for those with a strong, salient past connection and usually also present connection to the Anglican Church.

It is clear from our interviews that churches can play a complexity of roles, both positive and negative, for those who experience IPV. We now synthesise four cross-cutting issues across the trajectories of our participants' experiences, with a view to providing an empirical base to support further development of policy and practice in the Anglican Church. First, we discuss how teachings and norms can be shaped to help to protect victim-survivors. Second, we highlight the role of relationships characterised by care and trust in supporting victim-survivors throughout their experiences of and recovery from abuse. Third, we emphasise the importance of training, preparation and collaboration for equipping churches to respond to IPV. Fourth, we discuss the extra complexities involved when both the abused and abusive partner are a part of the church community and the need for a proactive stance in this regard. Having discussed these matters, we then talk about the relevance of this study to contexts beyond the Anglican Church.

10.1 The importance of teachings and norms that help to protect victim-survivors

Teachings and norms about intimate relationships play an important role for people in churches who experience abuse from their intimate partners. Our interviews showed that, however unintended it may be, teachings related to marriage, gender and forgiveness can be a contributing factor in extension of the cycle of IPV and can create a situation of harm for people in abusive relationships. Such teachings are also subject to co-option by abusers, who may use them to exert power over their partner. Absolutist discourses related to marriage as a lifelong commitment, the submission of the wife to the husband, unconditional forgiveness, and suffering for Christ – whether they are taught by church leaders, internalised by victim-survivors, or co-opted by abusers in this way – are harmful for those who experience abuse. They are linked to self-blame, shame and entrapment in the relationship for the victim-survivor. Conversely, discourses such as marriage as a covenant, the equality of partners in a marriage, and God's mercy and love can help to empower victim-survivors to extricate themselves from abusive relationships.

Based on the narratives of our participants, it is critical that teaching and preaching regarding intimate relationships are fully sensitised by the reality of IPV in church communities. This includes in contexts such as teaching for young adults and marriage preparation as well as in the wider church. This does not provide immunity to IPV, but it can play a part in helping those who experience abuse to recognise it and to act. When clergy speak in this way – whether publicly through a sermon or privately in conversation – it can carry considerable weight with members of the congregation.

Beyond matters of explicit teachings is the issue of diversity in the makeup of the community – in terms of family, household types and sexuality. The lower presence of separated and divorced people in Anglican churches (6% of Anglicans churchgoers aged 15 years and over according to the 2016 NCLS, compared with 12% in the wider Australian community) might be seen by some commentators as a virtue. However, not knowing people who are divorced or seeing them as inhabiting the margins of a community may limit the options that people living with abuse in a marriage feel are open to them.

Those in non-heterosexual relationships face particular barriers in disclosing abuse when sex and gender diverse relationships are not openly practised and affirmed in a church community. It is notable that several of our participants from more conservative religious backgrounds remarked that they had become more empathetic towards sex and gender diverse people directly as a result of their own experiences of abuse and judgment.

10.2 The importance of caring relationships that are independent of the perpetrator

We saw from our interviews how relationships characterised by care and trust and that are independent of the abusive partner can help people across the full trajectory of their experience of IPV. This study has shown the importance of small groups of various sorts, informal friendships and trusted relationships with clergy and church leaders. Such relationships reduce social isolation and support victim-survivors when they are living with an abusive partner. As one example, when a victim-survivor is subject to gaslighting – where the abuser attempts to make them doubt their perceptions and sanity – having trusted people on hand to affirm their sense of reality is critical for the victim-survivor's wellbeing.

Asking after an individual's wellbeing may or may not result in a disclosure, but if done out of genuine concern for that person and in a way that doesn't expose them to other people or to judgment, this signals to the victim-survivor that this is someone they could perhaps reach out to in future. A victim-survivor can draw on a trusted relationship that the abusive partner does not control to attempt to bring about a change to their situation. This might include a disclosure and/or a request for material or other help. And following separation from an abusive partner, relationships of safety, empathy and care can help a victim-survivor to rebuild their lives. Support to rebuild can still occur even if the person's experience of violence is not known by others in the relationship.

We reiterate the critical importance of genuine care. Trusted people in the church might not always know what to do or what to recommend, but if they show genuine concern for a person's wellbeing, perspective and agency it can make a real difference.

10.3 The importance of preparation, training and collaboration

A key recommendation that our participants made was to provide IPV training for clergy, lay leaders and congregations.

Training about IPV enables a more proactive culture in church communities to address, respond to and prevent IPV, in multiple ways. First, breaking the silence on IPV and making it visible in and to church communities – for example, through sermons, leaflets and signage – can help those who are living with abuse to better understand their situation and can raise general awareness in the church community about the existence and characteristics of IPV.

Second, training and preparation can equip church leaders to shape and communicate teachings about intimate relationships in ways that help to protect people living in abusive relationships from harmful discourses that increase their vulnerability.

Third, training can better equip those in leadership and in the church community more widely to recognise signs of abuse, to ask sensitive questions of people they are concerned about, and to respond to victim-survivors if and as they request help. Training focused on how to practically respond in key moments can equip people to act confidently and effectively in ways that open options for victim-survivors and support them in acting on their choices. This does not replace specialised domestic violence support, but is complementary to it and can help to facilitate it by means of referral so to such services. Specialist domestic violence support services and health professionals play a central role in helping people who are abused to find safety and improve their overall wellbeing.

A level of training or awareness raising is also important not only for those in leadership positions but also more widely. A "frontline responder" to domestic violence might not always be a clergy person – they might be a Bible study leader or friend in the church. Anyone in a church might find themselves in a relationship with somebody who is experiencing abuse. This also points towards the importance of collaboration. Frontline responders might need to draw on support from others in leadership in the church and/or might refer the person experiencing the abuse to them.

Moreover, supporting someone through their experience of IPV might be a process that lasts for years and is costly for the supporter, all the more if the abusive partner is embedded in the church community. Suitable collaboration – including help for the helpers and reflection to improve practice – is key.

10.4 When the abusive partner is embedded in the faith community

We saw from our interviews how the presence of the abusive partner in the same church as the abused partner adds considerably to the complexity of the role of the church in the experience of IPV. This becomes even more complicated when the abuser holds positional and/or spiritual authority, for example, if they are a clergyperson or other church leader.

An abusive partner may behave very differently at church than at home, may threaten the partner in various ways if they were to tell people at church about the abuse, and may have the ability to sully the reputations of their partner and their partner's supporters. Moreover, Christian abusers may use religious discourses to control their partner – demanding obedience, forgiveness, and even claiming access to or taking on the voice of God. This is spiritual abuse. Victim-survivors whose partners are embedded in the church face particular difficulties in both disclosing their abuse and receiving suitable help. This includes the fear of not being believed and fearing the consequences if their abuse is disclosed – fears which may well be realised. Those who are clergy wives may feel a particular sense of obligation to support their husband's ministry and protect his job. It is not impossible for victim-survivors in such situations to seek and receive support from their church, but it relies on strong, safe relationships that the perpetrator does not control; on supporters understanding the dynamics of IPV; and on a willingness by supporters to advocate for the victim-survivor should this become necessary.

We do not make a judgment on whether the abusive partner should leave a church community or stay after a couple has separated. However, churches should be aware of risks for the victim-survivors if they stay. The abuser may attempt to draw on whatever resources are available to them to exercise control over their former partner, and that includes the church. As a result, the victim-survivor may no longer feel safe in or able to attend their church. We saw multiple examples of this in our interviews. Conflict in the church body may also occur. And whether the abusive partner stays or moves on, there are also risks to the safety of potential future partners.

The issue of the perpetrator's embeddedness in the community is not a side issue. In the 2016 NCLS, most Anglicans in a married or defacto relationship reported that their partners were also attending the same church (72%). This suggests that the need for training and preparation for churches not only focused on how to respond well to the needs of victim-survivors, but also on how to respond to perpetrators, including when perpetrators are in leadership roles and positions of power.

10.5 The relevance of this study to other church contexts

This primary focus of this study has been the role of Anglican Church parishes/congregations in the experience of IPV for those who have been abused by an intimate partner. A number of our participants, including clergy wives, gave us insights into the regional structures of the church in the Anglican context – professional standards bodies, bishops, collegial relationships between clergy, and theological colleges – and several recommendations from our participants concern these structures. However, this was not a study of diocesan structures and practices and these were a minority of our participants. Dedicated research focusing on diocesan matters on would be needed to draw more extensive conclusions.

Although this study has focused on the Anglican Church, much of what we have found is relevant to other churches. The breadth of the Anglican tradition has been a strength of this study. Our participants were from diverse faith traditions – evangelical, reformed, Anglo-Catholic, liberal, progressive, traditionalist, along with those who do not consider themselves to be affiliated with a particular tradition. Their experiences show how abuse can play out in diverse Christian contexts with different norms around intimate partnerships. The dynamics of relationships and social interactions in local churches between members of the congregation, clergy and other leaders, and with regards to the embeddedness and power of perpetrators, are common across contexts. Indeed, such relational dynamics are relevant in any social group, beyond the cultural specificities of Anglican and other churches.

11 Conclusion



This study explored the experiences of IPV among those with a current or previous connection to the Anglican Church by means of a scoping survey and 20 in-depth interviews. The aim was to achieve a greater understanding of how Anglican churches have intersected with these experiences and thereby gain a foundation to support the further development of Anglican Church policy and practice in relation to IPV.

Our interview participants were subjected to multi-faceted violence and control from their intimate partners over long periods of time which impacted on their wellbeing in multiple ways. Churches played a complexity of roles, both positive and negative, during their abuse relationships, in key moments in the trajectory of the experience of abuse, and after separation from the abusive partner. Churches both helped and hindered them in meeting their needs in relation to safety, material provision, relationship, spirituality, identity, and making a contribution.

The study shows that teachings and norms about intimate relationships play an important role for people in churches who experience abuse from their intimate partners. Teaching and preaching on these matters should be fully sensitised by the reality of IPV in church communities.

Relationships characterised by care and trust support people through their experiences of and recovery from abuse. It is important that these are independent of the abusive partner and that they prioritise the person's wellbeing, perspective and agency.

The presence of an abusive partner in the same church as the abused partner adds considerably to the complexity of the role of the church in the experience of IPV. This suggests that training and preparation are needed focused not on how to respond well to the needs of victim-survivors, but also on how to respond to those who perpetrate IPV, including those in leadership roles and positions of power.

Interview participants offered a range of recommendations for the Anglican Church. These were related to IPV training and awareness raising, teaching and preaching about marriage, how to extend care and concern to someone experiencing IPV, and access to support services and material help. Participants indicated that victim-survivors should be asked about what support and resources they require in their individual circumstances - assumptions should not be made. Processes and procedures to respond to IPV should be informed by victim-survivor input.

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Appendices



Appendix A: Researcher Distress Protocol

Minimising risks for researchers

In this project, researchers will be exposed to potentially traumatic material, including people's stories of violence and abuse. It is important that researchers are equipped to recognise and respond to vicarious trauma, should it occur, and that suitable supports are in place to support researchers if they experience distress. The following will be undertaken to support and equip researchers, including interviewers and data analysts.

1. Researchers will be trained to be aware of the risks of vicarious trauma and equipped with possible self-care techniques. To date, they have undertaken a masterclass with the Australian Association for the Study of Religion on trauma-informed research practices. Before the commencement of the study, they will undertake the following training with the Blue Knot Foundation: Managing Vicarious Trauma.
2. There will be a nominated counsellor (mental health chaplain and accredited clinical pastoral education supervisor) who will be available to researchers. She will be asked to:
 - initiate contact with researchers at agreed intervals through the project
 - attend group debriefings with our research team (three to four members) on one or more occasions, and
 - be available for one-on-one support for individual researchers if needed.
3. Researchers will be encouraged to debrief together following each interview.
4. The CI will be available to debrief with any researcher involved in undertaking interviews, transcribing or analysing interview transcripts.

Appendix B: Recruitment Material

This appendix contains text for recruitment material via various channels.

- Cover Note and Email and letter to Anglican churches
- Email and letter to other Anglican organisations/groups
- Media release text
- Radio announcement text
- Social Media: sample posts.

1. Cover Note and Email and letter to Anglican churches

Email text

[date]

To clergy and lay leaders of the Anglican Church of Australia

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I write to ask you to assist our Church to take part in important research with survivors of domestic and family violence who also have had a connection with the Anglican Church. Our goal is to improve the Church's policy and practices.

The invitation to take part in this research is open to current attenders of Anglican churches as well as those who no longer attend. An anonymous online survey contains questions about individual details, personal experiences of domestic violence and the positive or negative way in which the Anglican Church featured in their story.

Can you please use your normal communication methods to promote this survey to anyone with a current or previous connection to your parish? Below you will find some short text suitable to include in a church bulletin or newsletter. There is also a full letter which you may distribute as you wish.

Short text for church bulletin:

"Help to build a safer and more supportive Anglican Church for people who have experienced domestic violence. Join a research project aimed to help improve church practices. If you have had an experience of domestic and family violence and a current or previous link with the Anglican Church, please share your perspective

The online survey is anonymous. Go to <https://surveys.ncls.org.au/nafvp/experience/> to find out more."

A full letter written for churchgoers is provided on the next page for you to distribute.

Grace and peace in Christ Jesus

The Most Reverend Dr Philip L Freier
Archbishop of Melbourne & Primate of the
Anglican Church of Australia.
Anglican Church of Australia
General Synod Office
www.anglican.org.au

Reverend Tracy Lauersen,
Convenor: Family Violence Working Group,
Anglican Church of Australia
T: 0414 971 043
E: tracy.lauersen@gmail.com;

About the Family Violence Working Group: <https://anglican.org.au/our-work/family-violence/>
About the Project: <http://ncls.org.au/research/NAFVP>

Letter text
[date]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Re: National Anglican Family & Intimate Partner Violence Study

Have intimate relationships been safe for you?

Our Church is committed to supporting safe and loving homes and safe churches. Recognising that intimate partner violence, which forms part of domestic and family violence, is a serious and widespread problem, with enormous individual and community impacts and social costs – and that the Church is not immune – our Church seeks to improve our policy and practice to respond to these difficult issues.

We humbly ask that if you have had an experience of intimate partner violence as well as an association with an Anglican church, that you consider sharing your perspective. If you know someone who fits this description, please pass on this request to help us build a safer, more supportive church. This anonymous online survey contains questions about demographics (such as age and gender), personal experiences of intimate partner violence and the ways in which the Anglican Church has featured in your story.

[Web link - [https:// https://surveys.ncls.org.au/naftp/experience/](https://surveys.ncls.org.au/naftp/experience/)]

A small number of people will also be interviewed in depth face to face. At the end of the online survey, you may indicate if you are available to be interviewed.

The Anglican Family Violence Working Group has engaged NCLS Research to undertake the research which is titled the National Anglican Family Violence Project. There are three studies that make up the project. Further information for participants is provided by the NCLS Research team. Once you have reviewed this information using the online link, I encourage you to complete the survey.

Grace and peace in Christ Jesus

The Most Reverend Dr Philip L Freier
Archbishop of Melbourne & Primate of the
Anglican Church of Australia.
Anglican Church of Australia
General Synod Office
www.anglican.org.au

Reverend Tracy Lauersen,
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T: 0414 971 043
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About the Family Violence Working Group: <https://anglican.org.au/our-work/family-violence/>
About the Project: <http://ncls.org.au/research/NAFVP>

2. Email and letter to other Anglican organisations/groups

Anglican Church seeks input from survivors of domestic and family violence

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our Church is committed to supporting safe and loving homes and safe churches. However, we recognise that domestic and family violence is a serious and widespread problem, with enormous individual and community impacts and social costs – and that the Church is not immune. Our Church seeks to improve our policy and practice to respond to these difficult issues.

We ask your organisation or group to help us connect with people who have had an experience of intimate partner violence (IPV) as well as an association with an Anglican church, that they can consider sharing their perspective.

We ask that you distribute this request and the link to the online survey to your contacts. Some text has been provided below for use in your communication.

People who have experienced intimate partner violence and who also have had a connection with the Anglican Church are being invited to contribute to a research project to help improve the Church's policy and practices.

"Our Church is committed to supporting safe, loving homes and safe churches. However, we recognise that domestic and family violence is a serious and widespread problem, with enormous individual and community impacts and social costs – and that the Church is not immune. Our Church seeks to improve how we to respond to these difficult issues" Reverend Tracy Lauersen, Convenor of the Family Violence Working Group, Anglican Church of Australia.

The invitation to take part in this research is open to current attenders of Anglican churches as well as those who no longer attend. An anonymous online survey contains questions about demographics (such as age and gender), personal experiences of intimate partner violence and ways in which the Anglican Church featured in your story.

[Web link - <https://surveys.ncls.org.au/naftp/experience/>]

A small number of people will also be selected for in depth face to face interviews.

The Anglican Family Violence Working Group has engaged NCLS Research to undertake the research which is titled the National Anglican Family Violence Project. There are three studies that make up the project. More information can be found online:

About the Family Violence Working Group: <https://anglican.org.au/our-work/family-violence/>

About the Project: <http://ncls.org.au/research/NAFVP>

Thank you for any efforts you can make to help us all build a safer and more supportive church.

Grace and peace in Christ Jesus

The Most Reverend Dr Philip L Freier
Archbishop of Melbourne & Primate of the
Anglican Church of Australia.
Anglican Church of Australia
General Synod Office
www.anglican.org.au

Reverend Tracy Lauersen,
Convenor: Family Violence Working Group,
Anglican Church of Australia
T: 0414 971 043
E: tracy.lauersen@gmail.com;

3. Media release text

Anglican Church seeks input from survivors of domestic and family violence

People who have experienced intimate partner violence and who also have had a connection with the Anglican Church are being invited to contribute to a research project to help improve the Church's policy and practices.

"Our Church is committed to supporting safe, loving homes and safe churches. However, we recognise that domestic and family violence is a serious and widespread problem, with enormous individual and community impacts and social costs – and that the Church is not immune. Our Church seeks to improve how we respond to these difficult issues" said Reverend Tracy Lauersen, Convenor of the Family Violence Working Group, Anglican Church of Australia.

The invitation to take part in this research is open to current attenders of Anglican churches as well as those who no longer attend. An anonymous online survey contains questions about demographics (such as age and gender), personal experiences of intimate partner violence and the ways in which the Anglican Church featured in your story.

[Web link - <https://surveys.ncls.org.au/nafvp/experience/>]

A small number of people will also be selected for in depth face to face interviews.

The Anglican Family Violence Working Group has engaged NCLS Research to undertake the research which is titled the National Anglican Family Violence Project. There are three studies that make up the project. More information can be found online:

About the Family Violence Working Group: <https://anglican.org.au/our-work/family-violence/>

About the Project: <http://ncls.org.au/research/NAFVP>

4. Social Media: sample posts

Help to build a safer and more supportive Anglican Church for people who have experienced domestic violence. Join a research project aimed to help improve church practices. If you have had an experience of domestic and family violence and a current or previous link with the Anglican Church, please share your perspective

The online survey is anonymous. Go to surveys.ncls.org.au/nafvp/experience/ to find out more.

Appendix C: Survey Participant Information Sheet

Invitation

You are invited to participate in a study which aims to explore experiences of domestic and family violence –specifically “intimate partner violence” (IPV) – among people who have a connection with the Anglican Church in Australia.

The study is being conducted by Dr Ruth Powell and Dr Miriam Pepper from NCLS Research and the Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre, Charles Sturt University. NCLS Research is a world leader in research focused on connecting churches and their communities.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to participate in this study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

What is the purpose of this study?

Violence between intimate partners – those who are or were in a married or de facto relationship or a dating relationship – is recognised to be a serious and widespread problem in Australia, with enormous individual and community impacts and social costs. Church communities are not immune, but the prevalence of IPV in Australian church communities is unknown. In other studies people who have experienced violence from a partner have reported mixed responses from churches. This study provides an opportunity to learn more from people about their experiences and the role of the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church hopes results will help equip them to respond through policy and practice in ways that foster safer family environments.

Why have I been invited to participate in this study?

This online survey is open to anyone to take part. NCLS Research has used various methods across the Anglican Church to promote this survey link, such as local churches, dioceses and agencies. We have also used some media outlets to reach people who are no longer connected with the Church.

What does this study involve?

You are asked to take part in an anonymous online survey. The survey will collect information on your:

- demographics (e.g. age, gender, education, marital status, household structure)
- Religious or spiritual practices, beliefs, experiences and identity
- Previous and ongoing connection with Anglican churches
- Personal experiences of intimate partner violence, including current circumstances
- Attitudes towards intimate partner violence
- Experience of approaching church leaders or other congregants for assistance

At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you are willing to be considered to take part in a second phase, involving a face to face interview of up to two hours long. Only a small number of people will be interviewed in-depth. If you wish to be considered for Phase 2, you will need to provide your name and suitable contact details. If you are invited for an interview, you will receive further detailed information about Phase 2.

Are there risks and benefits to me in taking part in this study?

The survey questions deal with highly sensitive issues, namely intimate partner violence, that may be distressing for some participants. If you find any of these personally distressing, you may skip the question or stop taking the survey. You may also contact 1800RESPECT (<https://www.1800respect.org.au/>, 1800 737 732) or one of the domestic violence hotlines listed at <http://ncls.org.au/research/NAFVP/hotlines>. There will be no benefit to you in taking part, other than contributing to improvements in Anglican Church policies and practices.

How is this study being paid for?

The project is commissioned and paid for by the Anglican General Synod which is the national governing body for the Anglican Church of Australia.

Will taking part in this study cost me anything, and will I be paid?

There is no cost to you and there will be no financial reimbursement for your time to do the online survey.

What if I don't want to take part in this study?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. By completing the survey you are consenting to take part in the research. You can withdraw from the study at any time while completing the survey questions without adverse consequences.

What if I participate and want to withdraw later?

If you provide your name with your survey, you may withdraw your data up until two weeks after the survey closing date. You may also choose to review or edit your survey responses within this timeframe. If you do not provide your name, you cannot withdraw after you have completed the survey.

How will my confidentiality be protected?

This is an anonymous survey. If you provide your name and contact details because you wish to be considered for Phase 2 of the study (interviews), these details will solely be used for the purpose of approaching you for Phase 2. Any information collected by the researchers which might identify you will be stored securely and only accessed by the researchers unless you consent otherwise, except as required by law. There are limits on assurances of confidentiality as law may subpoena research data/records.

All data will be anonymised and retained for at least 5 years at the offices of NCLS Research and in a data repository at Charles Sturt University with appropriate data access policies and protocols.

What will happen to the information that I give you?

The results from this study will:

- Be used in a report, verbal briefing and publicly available summary report to inform an understanding of what roles Anglican churches have had in the nature of people's experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV).
- Support the further development of Anglican Church policy and practice in relation to family violence.
- Aggregated results on IPV and a dataset containing these results and a standard set of demographic questions will be provided to the Anglican General Synod.
- The anonymous dataset will be stored in a data repository (an online storage location) at Charles Sturt University with restrictions on access. No individual response will be able to be identified. It may be made available for future analysis by researchers, but only if specific terms and conditions are met, which will safeguard access.

What should I do if I want to discuss this study further before I decide?

If you would like further information, contact Dr Ruth Powell, rpowell@ncls.org.au, phone 02 9139 2525.

Who should I contact if I have concerns about the conduct of this study?

Charles Sturt University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee on (02) 6933 4213 or ethics@csu.edu.au and quote the number H20036. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Conclusion

Thank you for considering this invitation. This information sheet is for you to keep.

Researchers

Information about NCLS Research can be found online: www.ncls.org.au



Chief Investigator: Ruth Powell, PhD, BA, Director, NCLS Research
Associate Professor, Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre

Co-investigator: Miriam Pepper, PhD, MScTech, BEng, BA, Researcher,
NCLS Research, Research Fellow, Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre



Plus other project researchers and external expert consultants

Anglican Church Family Violence Working Group
This Working Group is chaired by Reverend Tracy Lauersen: fwwg@anglican.org.au



Information about the role of the Working Group can be found online:
<https://anglican.org.au/our-work/family-violence/>

Appendix D: Support Services Information Sheet

Counselling and Mental Health Support

Lifeline – <https://www.lifeline.org.au/> **13 11 14**

Lifeline has a national number who can help put you in contact with a crisis service in your State. Anyone across Australia experiencing a personal crisis or thinking about suicide can call 13 11 14.

Beyond Blue – <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/> **1300 22 4636**

Beyond Blue provides information and support to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health, whatever their age and wherever they live. Call 1300 22 4636.

Face to Face Counselling – Many services provide counselling. Some government-funded services offer low fees or sliding scales for people with limited finances. 1800RESPECT (listed below) can provide you with counselling and/or information on counselling services. Your local GP can also direct you to local counsellors.

Domestic Violence Hotlines

Call 000 for Police and Ambulance help if you are in immediate danger.

1800RESPECT – <https://www.1800respect.org.au/> **1800 737 732**

24 hour national sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling line for any Australian who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Call toll-free 1800 737 732.

Lifeline – <https://www.lifeline.org.au/> **13 11 14**

Lifeline has a national number who can help put you in contact with a crisis service in your State. Anyone across Australia experiencing a personal crisis or thinking about suicide can call 13 11 14.

Men's Referral Service – <https://www.ntv.org.au/get-help/> **1300 766 491**

This service from No to Violence offers assistance, information and counselling to help men who use family violence. Call 1300 766 491 if you would like help with male behavioural and relationship concerns.

Mensline Australia – <https://mensline.org.au/> **1300 789 978**

Supports men and boys who are dealing with family and relationship difficulties. 24/7 telephone and online support and information service for Australian men. Call 1300 789 978 for help.

Kids Help Line – <https://www.kidshelpline.com.au/> **1800 551 800**

Free, private and confidential, telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25 in Australia. Call 1800 551 800 for help.

Relationships Australia – <http://www.relationships.org.au/> **1300 364 277**

Support groups and counselling on relationships, and for abusive and abused partners.

To be connected to the nearest Relationships Australia, call 1300 364 277 (for the cost of a local call).

Aboriginal Family Domestic Violence Hotline – **1800 019 123**

Victims Services has a dedicated contact line for Aboriginal victims of crime who would like information on victims rights, how to access counselling and financial assistance. Call 1800 019 123

Translating & Interpreting Service – <https://www.tisnational.gov.au/> **131 450**

Gain free access to a telephone or on-site interpreter in your own language. Immediate phone interpreting is available 24 hours, every day of the year, on 131 450.

Suicide Call Back Service – <https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/> **1300 659 467**

Free counselling 24/7, whether you're feeling suicidal, are worried about someone else, or have lost someone to suicide. Call 1300 659 467 for help.

Australian Childhood Foundation – <https://www.childhood.org.au/> **1800 176 453 / 03 9874 3922**

Counselling for children and young people affected by abuse. For information, email them at info@childhood.org.au. For counselling services, call toll-free number 1800 176 453.

Blue Knot Foundation – <https://www.blueknot.org.au/> **1300 657 380**

Telephone counselling for adult survivors of childhood trauma, their friends, family and the health care professionals who support them. Call 1300 657 380 between 9am-5pm for counselling services or email at helpline@blueknot.org.au.

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline – <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/complaints> **1800 880 052**

An Australia-wide telephone hotline for reporting abuse and neglect of people with disability. Call the free hotline on 1800 880 052.

Bursting the Bubble – <https://woah.org.au/> What's OK at Home?

This website for young people has been designed to help people understand what family violence is, why it happens, how to recognise it and how to help others who are experiencing it.

Anglicare Support

Anglicare offers counselling services in many dioceses across Australia. Anglicare services that provide counselling are listed on this website.

<https://www.anglicare.asn.au/find-a-provider/-in-tags/tags/Counselling>

Government-funded services offer low fees or sliding scales for people with limited finances. Contact the relevant Anglicare service to find out their fee policy.

To make a complaint about Anglican clergy or church officers

The Anglican Church take allegations of misconduct and abuse seriously and there are Professional Standards Protocols in each of the 23 dioceses which provide formal procedures for handling complaints of misconduct.

Contact details for making a complaint in each diocese are as follows:

NSW/ACT:

- Sydney <https://safeministry.org.au>
- Canberra and Goulburn <https://anglicancg.org.au/safe-ministries/office-of-professional-standards/reporting-abuse-and-complaints/>
- Riverina <https://anglicanriverina.com/safe-churches/reporting-concerns/>
- Bathurst <https://www.bathurstanglican.org.au/safe-ministries>
- Newcastle <https://www.newcastleanglican.org.au/safe-ministry/professional-standards/>
- Armidale http://www.armidaleanglicandiocese.com/safe_ministry/pro-standards
- Grafton <https://www.graftondiocese.org.au/safe-ministry/reporting-abuse/>

Victoria:

- Melbourne <https://www.melbourneanglican.org.au/governance/professional-standards/>
- Gippsland <https://www.gippsanglican.org.au/safe-church>
- Wangaratta <https://www.wangaratta-anglican.org.au/safe-church/>
- Bendigo <http://www.bendigoanglican.org.au/complaints/>
- Ballarat <https://ballaratanglican.org.au/safechurch/professional-standards/>

Queensland:

- Brisbane/Southern Queensland <https://anglicanchurchsq.org.au/safeguarding>
- Rockhampton/Central Queensland <https://anglicanchurchcq.org.au/> (listed on homepage under “Allegations of Abuse”)
- North Queensland <https://www.anglicannq.org/contact/professional-standards-contact>

Western Australia:

- Perth <https://www.perth.anglican.org/feel-safe/>
- North West Australia <https://www.anglicandnwa.org/safe-ministry>
- Bunbury <https://www.bunburyanglican.org/> (see “Professional Standards” at bottom of page)

Northern Territory:

- Northern Territory <http://www.ntanglican.org.au/safe-ministry/>
- South Australia:
- Adelaide <https://adelaideanglicans.com/safe-ministry/safe-ministry-overview/>
- Murray <https://murray.anglican.org/contact> (Professional Standards Director)
- Willochra <https://www.diowillochra.org.au/professional-standards/>
- Tasmania <https://anglicantas.org.au/report-abuse/>

Appendix E: Survey Introduction Pages

(Page 1)

About the survey

The purpose of this anonymous survey is to explore the diversity of experiences of domestic and family violence (specifically intimate partner violence) for those with current or previous connections with Anglican churches. Further, if you sought help from an Anglican church, what was this experience like?

Intimate partner violence is a serious and widespread problem in Australia, with enormous individual and community impacts and social costs. Church communities are not immune to intimate partner violence, and there have been mixed responses from churches – both helpful and harmful. The Anglican Church hopes to learn more from Australians about their experiences in order to make better responses to foster safer family environments.

At the end of the anonymous survey, you will be asked if you are willing to be considered for a second phase, involving small number of face-to-face interviews.

“Next” button

(Page 2)

Participant information statement

(See the text for this page in separate PIS file)

“Back” button

“Next” button

(Page 3)

Consent

By completing the survey you are consenting to take part in the research as follows:

I, the participant, have read and understood the information provided in the Participant Information Statement. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this survey of approximately 20 minutes duration, realising that I can withdraw at any time while completing the survey questions without adverse consequences.

I understand that this survey includes questions about experiences of intimate partner violence and that I may experience emotional distress due to my participation in the research.

I understand that once I have completed the survey, I cannot withdraw my consent as the survey is anonymous. If, however, I provide my name because I wish to be considered for a Phase 2 interview, I understand that I may withdraw my survey data up until two weeks after the survey closing date.

I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

Proceed to the survey by clicking “next”.

“Back” button

“Next” button

Appendix F: Experience Study Scoping Survey Instrument

Some survey items were adapted from Aune and Barnes (2018), the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (ABS 2018) and the 2018 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AuSSA, run by ANU). More general questions were taken from Attender Surveys in National Church Life Surveys (NCLS) and the Australian Community Surveys run by NCLS Research.

NB. The question numbering is provided for reference. The questions that respondents saw was conditional upon their responses and so numbering was impacted by branching logic.

ABOUT YOU

1. In which country were you born?

2. How would you describe your ancestry?

3. What is your age (in years)?

4. What is your gender?
☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Other
5. What is the highest educational qualification you have completed?
☐ No formal schooling
☐ Some primary school
☐ Completed primary school
☐ Some secondary school
☐ Completed secondary school
☐ Trade certificate
☐ Diploma or associate diploma
☐ Bachelor degree from a university or equivalent institution
☐ Postgraduate degree or diploma
6. What is your current employment status? (Mark ALL that apply)
☐ Employed full-time (30 hours or more per week)
☐ Employed part-time (less than 30 hours per week)
☐ Self-employed
☐ Unemployed
☐ Student
☐ Full-time home duties/family responsibilities
☐ Retired
☐ Other

7. What is your present marital status? (Note: married refers to registered marriages.)
- ☐ Never married
 - ☐ Widowed
 - ☐ Divorced
 - ☐ Separated but not divorced
 - ☐ Married in a registered marriage
8. Are you married to, or have you previously been married to, an Anglican clergy person (e.g. priest, minister, deacon)?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
9. Do you have dependent children?
- ☐ Yes – at least one child aged under 18
 - ☐ Yes – but no child(ren) aged under 18
 - ☐ No
10. Which statement best describes your household?
- ☐ Person living alone
 - ☐ Single parent with dependent child(ren)
 - ☐ Couple without dependent child(ren)
 - ☐ Couple with dependent child(ren)
 - ☐ Extended family
 - ☐ Other grouping
11. Please estimate your household's income per year (before tax is taken out).
- ☐ \$0 - \$19,999
 - ☐ \$20,000 - \$39,999
 - ☐ \$40,000 - \$79,999
 - ☐ \$80,000 - \$119,999
 - ☐ \$120,000 or over
 - ☐ Don't know
 - ☐ Prefer not to say

YOUR SPIRITUALITY AND CONNECTION WITH THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

12. Apart from such special occasions as weddings, funerals, etc., how often do you attend church services (worship services) at an Anglican church? (Note: your attendance may be in person or online.)
- ☐ Several times a week or more often
 - ☐ Once a week
 - ☐ 2 or 3 times a month
 - ☐ Once a month
 - ☐ Several times a year
 - ☐ Once a year
 - ☐ Less frequently than once a year
 - ☐ Never

13. In the 12 months prior to March this year, did you attend any church services in person at an Anglican church?
- ☐ Yes, about weekly or more often
 - ☐ Yes, about monthly
 - ☐ Yes, quite a few times
 - ☐ Yes, once or twice
 - ☐ Only for events such as weddings, funerals, baptism etc
 - ☐ No
14. Do any other members of your household attend church services (worship services) at an Anglican church fairly frequently, at least monthly?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
15. Are you regularly involved in any of the following activities at an Anglican church? (Mark ALL that apply)
- ☐ Small prayer, discussion or Bible study groups
 - ☐ Fellowships, clubs, social or other groups
 - ☐ None of the above
16. Do you perform a leadership or ministry role in an Anglican church? (Mark ALL that apply)
- ☐ Yes, an ordained ministry role (e.g. priest, deacon)
 - ☐ Yes, a lay role (e.g. parish councillor, youth leader, childrens ministry)
 - ☐ No
17. Please specify your ordained role:
- _____
18. Please specify your lay role:
- _____
19. Do you currently receive any of the following forms of support from an Anglican church? (Mark ALL that apply)
- ☐ Pastoral or counselling support from a minister or other church leader
 - ☐ Financial or material assistance (e.g. food, clothes)
 - ☐ None of the above
20. Do you have any other current connection with an Anglican church, not already covered above?
- ☐ Yes (please describe): _____
 - ☐ No
21. If you do not have any current connection with an Anglican church, did you have a connection with an Anglican church in the past?
- ☐ I have a current connection
 - ☐ I have no current connection but had a connection in the past
 - ☐ I have never had a connection with an Anglican church

22. Please describe any previous connection that you had with an Anglican church.
-
23. How long ago did your most recent previous connection with an Anglican church cease?
- ☐ Less than 12 months ago
 - ☐ 1-5 years ago
 - ☐ 6-10 years ago
 - ☐ 11-20 years ago
 - ☐ More than 20 years ago
24. Considering your current connections with the Anglican Church, and any previous connections you may have had, how long in total have you been connected with the Anglican Church?
- ☐ Up to 12 months
 - ☐ 1-5 years
 - ☐ 6-10 years
 - ☐ 11-20 years
 - ☐ More than 20 years
 - ☐ My whole life
25. Do you identify with any of the following approaches to matters of faith? (Mark up to TWO options)
- ☐ Anglo-Catholic or Catholic
 - ☐ Charismatic
 - ☐ Evangelical
 - ☐ Liberal
 - ☐ Moderate
 - ☐ Pentecostal
 - ☐ Progressive
 - ☐ Reformed
 - ☐ Traditionalist
 - ☐ I do not identify with such descriptions
26. How often do you pray or meditate?
- ☐ Several times a day
 - ☐ Every day/most days
 - ☐ A few times a week
 - ☐ Once a week
 - ☐ Occasionally
 - ☐ Hardly ever
 - ☐ Never
 - ☐ Don't know

27. How important is religious faith or spirituality in shaping your life's decisions, such as career, relationships and lifestyle?
- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Of little importance
- ☐ Not important
28. Has there ever been a time in your life when you have attended church services (worship services) at an Anglican church fairly frequently, at least monthly?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
29. At about what age did you last stop attending frequently? (Please answer in years)
- _____
30. What was the main reason why you stopped attending?
- _____

YOUR EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OR ABUSE ('INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE')

These questions ask about your personal experiences of domestic violence or abuse. We will use the term "intimate partner violence", by which we mean behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours. By intimate relationship we mean a married or de facto relationship or a dating relationship for longer than one month.

31. Which of the following have you experienced? (Mark ALL that apply)
- ☐ I have experienced violence from an intimate partner
- ☐ I have supported someone who has experienced violence from an intimate partner
- ☐ I have been violent towards an intimate partner
- ☐ I have supported someone who has been violent towards an intimate partner
- ☐ Other personal experience of intimate partner violence
- ☐ I have had no personal experience of intimate partner violence
32. You have indicated that you have experienced violence from an intimate partner. Was or is this violence/abuse in your current relationship, previous relationship or both? (Mark ALL that apply)
- ☐ In my current relationship
- ☐ In one or more previous relationships
33. What was or is the length of your longest abusive relationship?
- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ Less than 12 months
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

34. How long ago was it that you were experiencing violence/abuse from an intimate partner? If you have experienced violence in more than one relationship, please tell us about the most recent time.
- ☐ In the last 12 months
 - ☐ 1-2 years ago
 - ☐ 3-5 years ago
 - ☐ 6-10 years ago
 - ☐ More than 10 years ago
35. You have indicated you experienced violence/abuse from an intimate partner in a previous relationship. How long ago did your relationship with that partner end? If you experienced violence in more than one previous relationship, please tell us when the most recent previous relationship ended.
- ☐ Less than 6 months ago
 - ☐ Less than 12 months ago
 - ☐ 1-2 years ago
 - ☐ 3-5 years ago
 - ☐ 6-10 years ago
 - ☐ More than 10 years ago
36. At the time you are completing this survey, how would you describe the level of severity of the violence/abuse you are currently experiencing?
- ☐ No current experience of violence
 - ☐ Very low
 - ☐ Low
 - ☐ Moderate
 - ☐ High
 - ☐ Very high
37. If you have experienced violence/abuse from an intimate partner within the last year, do you have access to people who provide support for your situation?
- ☐ No support
 - ☐ Very low levels of support
 - ☐ Low levels of support
 - ☐ Moderate levels of support
 - ☐ High levels of support
 - ☐ Very high levels of support
38. Do you currently have contact with professional service providers (such as counsellors, therapists, or other domestic violence support services?)
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No, but I know how to access them if I need to
 - ☐ No, and I would not access them

39. What is your current housing arrangement?
- ☐ I am in a stable housing arrangement
 - ☐ Due to the violence, I am temporarily staying with family or friends
 - ☐ Due to the violence, I am in a shelter/refuge or similar
 - ☐ Other (please specify): _____
40. Please briefly describe your experience of intimate partner violence.
- _____
41. How often were you attending church services (worship services) at an Anglican church at the time this experience started?
- ☐ Several times a week or more often
 - ☐ Once a week
 - ☐ 2 or 3 times a month
 - ☐ Once a month
 - ☐ Several times a year
 - ☐ Once a year
 - ☐ Less frequently than once a year
 - ☐ Never
42. Have you ever sought help from an Anglican church because of your experience of intimate partner violence?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
43. Have you ever considered seeking help from an Anglican church because of your experience of intimate partner violence?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
44. Have any of the following influenced you in not seeking help from an Anglican church? (Mark ALL that apply)
- ☐ I was too embarrassed or ashamed
 - ☐ I blamed myself for my partner's behaviour
 - ☐ I didn't expect anyone to believe me
 - ☐ I didn't know the signs that I was experiencing intimate partner violence
 - ☐ I was worried about confidentiality and other people at church finding out
 - ☐ I was worried that what I said might be reported to another organisation
 - ☐ I felt that it was wrong to talk negatively about my partner to someone at church
 - ☐ I felt that it was my duty to make the relationship work
 - ☐ The church did not have the right expertise to help
 - ☐ I felt the church might make things worse
 - ☐ My partner had a position of responsibility which would made it difficult to confide in others
 - ☐ I had a position of responsibility which made it difficult to confide in others
 - ☐ There was no one that I know or trust well enough
 - ☐ Other (please specify): _____

45. From whom in the church did you seek help? (Mark ALL that apply)
- ☐ A clergy person (e.g. priest, minister, deacon)
 - ☐ A staff worker employed by the church (not a clergy person)
 - ☐ A person in leadership at the church (not a clergy person or staff member)
 - ☐ A member of a church who wasn't in a leadership role
 - ☐ Somebody else
46. What kind of help did they offer? (Mark ALL that apply)
- ☐ Emotional support/listening ear
 - ☐ Practical help
 - ☐ Financial help
 - ☐ Prayer
 - ☐ Mediation/intervention with the violent partner
 - ☐ Information about other organisations who could help
 - ☐ They did not offer any help
 - ☐ Other (please specify): _____
47. Thinking now of the most recent occasion when you approached an Anglican church for help related to your experience of intimate partner violence. Which of the following most closely matches your experience of the response that you received? The response I received...
- ☐ Helped to positively change the situation
 - ☐ Did not change the situation but helped me feel supported
 - ☐ Did not make any difference to either the situation or how I was feeling
 - ☐ Made things worse
48. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of intimate partner violence and your connection with the Anglican Church?
- _____

YOUR VIEWS

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

49. Men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household
- ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree
50. The husband is the head of the wife (as Christ is the head of the church), and the wife should submit to the husband
- ☐ Strongly agree
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Neutral/unsure
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Strongly disagree

51. My church has taken steps to raise awareness of domestic violence
☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree
52. The Anglican Church needs to do more to raise awareness of domestic violence
☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree
53. The Anglican Church is adequately equipped to respond to disclosure of domestic violence
☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree
54. Domestic violence is a topic that should not be discussed in church
☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree
55. Domestic violence is common in Australia
☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree
56. Domestic violence is just as common in churches as it is in the wider community
☐ Strongly agree
☐ Agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

THE NEXT PHASE OF THE RESEARCH

For the next phase of this study, NCLS Research is looking to interview a small number of people (approximately 20) who have had a diversity of experiences of the Anglican Church in relation to intimate partner violence. The interview duration will be up to two hours long.

57. Are you interested in being interviewed?
☐ Yes
☐ No

"Thank you. If you are a candidate for the next phase, we will send you further information about the interviews. We will also need to speak with you over the telephone within a few weeks of sending you the information to ask some final questions and discuss arrangements, before we invite you to an interview.

Please provide your name and contact details below. We will only use your personal details for contacting you for this project - we will not use them for any other purpose or share them with anyone else. Please only provide contact details if it is safe to do so. For example, if it is not safe to provide your address, perhaps you have a safe alternative such as a friend's address."

58. Please provide your Name.

59. Please provide your postcode.

60. What is your preferred way for us to send you further information about the study (participant information statement, sample interview questions, consent form, support services information)?

☐ Via email

☐ Via letter through the post

61. Please provide an email address.

62. Please provide a postal address.

63. What is the best way to initiate a telephone conversation with you?

☐ NCLS Research can initiate the call to me

☐ I would prefer to initiate the call to NCLS Research

64. If you don't pick up the phone, is it safe for NCLS Research to leave you a message?

☐ Yes - voicemail only

☐ Yes - both voicemail and text message are safe

☐ No

65. Please provide a telephone number.

Thank you. If we telephone you, we will refer to "research study on experiences of the Anglican Church".

Thank you. You have now completed the survey.

Your participation will make an important contribution to helping the Anglican Church improve their practices to be a safer, more supportive church.

Access support services [here](#).

Appendix G: Protocol for EOI respondents who were not selected for interview

This protocol is for those who:

- Completed Phase 1 of the online survey and indicated they were willing to be interviewed
- Did not meet the criteria or were not hand-picked for interview.

Method of Communication

Use method nominated by the person in the online survey: either email, phone or letter.

Email text

My name is XX and I am from NCLS Research. You recently completed an online survey with us for a research study on experiences of the Anglican Church. You expressed your interest in being interviewed for the next phase of the research. Thank you.

Your contribution to this research project will already influence the reports we will prepare for the leaders of the Anglican Church. However, for this next in-depth phase of the research, we will not be able to do a further face to face interview with you. We are restricted as we will only be interviewing around 20 people across Australia.

We realise that this project may have brought up issues and feelings for you. Some possible next steps you may wish to take are:

- Seek counselling or other support services. You will find information about a range of support services here [hyperlink].
- Make a complaint about Anglican clergy or lay church leaders. You may contact the Professional Standards Units in each diocese. Click on this link for contacts [hyperlink].

If you wish, we hope that you may find other ways to share your story. Thank you very much for your time and important contribution to this work.

Letter text

My name is XX and I am from NCLS Research. You recently completed an online survey with us for a research study on experiences of the Anglican Church. You expressed your interest in being interviewed for the next phase of the research. Thank you.

Your contribution to this research project will already influence the reports we will prepare for the leaders of the Anglican Church. However, for this next in-depth phase of the research, we will not be able to do a further face to face interview with you. We are restricted as we will only be interviewing around 20 people across Australia and we need to seek a diverse range of people.

We realise that this project may have brought up issues and feelings for you. Some possible next steps you may wish to take are:

- Seek counselling or other support services.
- Make a complaint about Anglican clergy or lay church leaders. You may contact the Professional Standards Units in each diocese.

You will find an information sheet with a range of support services and other contact details enclosed.

If you wish, we hope that you may find other ways to share your story. Thank you very much for your time and important contribution to this work.

Telephone protocol

Call once only. If person doesn't pick up and the individual has indicated that it is safe to do so:

- Leave a message if it is a standard message option.
- Send a text if no voicemail message option (or if 10-second voice-to-text).

Script

My name is XX and I am calling from NCLS Research. You recently completed an online survey with us for a research study on experiences of the Anglican Church. You expressed your interest in being interviewed for the next phase of the research. Thank you very much. I'll just need a minute of your time. Is now a good time to talk?

Thank you.

Your contribution to this research project will already influence the reports we will prepare for the leaders of the Anglican Church. However, for this next in-depth phase of the research, we will not be able to do a further face to face interview with you. We are restricted as we will only be interviewing around 20 people across Australia.

[allow time for person to respond]

We realise that this project may have brought up issues and feelings for you. Some possible next steps you may wish to take are:

Seek counselling or other support services.

Make a complaint about Anglican clergy or lay church leaders. You may contact the Professional Standards Units in each diocese.

Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for your time.

If phone message/text message

My name is XX and I am calling from NCLS Research. You recently completed an online survey with us for a research study on experiences of the Anglican Church. You expressed your interest in being interviewed for the next phase of the research. Thank you very much. I am calling to let you know that we can only interview a small number of people across Australia, and are unable to interview you.

Please call me on [dedicated project mobile] if you would like more information.

Appendix H: Interview Information Letter

Dear XX,

Thank you for taking part in the National Anglican Family Violence Project Phase 1 survey, about your experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) in relation to the Anglican Church.

NCLS Research has reviewed your survey responses and would like to discuss with you your potential participation in an in-depth interview (up to two hours long) for Phase 2 of the project.

In order to safeguard the wellbeing of our participants, there will be several steps before we invite you to an interview:

Step 1: Review study information

Please read the enclosed information carefully:

- Participant Information Statement,
- Sample list of interview questions,
- Consent form, and
- Information about support services.

Step 2: Telephone conversation

Within the next two weeks, a researcher from NCLS Research will ask to speak with you over the telephone. When we call, we will refer to "research study on experiences of the Anglican Church". If you indicated in the survey that NCLS could initiate telephone contact with you, we will telephone you on the number that you provided. Alternatively, if you would prefer to initiate the call, please phone NCLS Research on [dedicated project mobile] Wednesday to Friday, 9am-5pm. You may also call at other times and leave a message. The purpose of the call will be to discuss the following with you:

- Whether you wish to participate, having read the information about Phase 2,
- Any safety issues concerning your participation in an interview, and
- A potential time and place for the interview.

Step 3: Invitation to interview

If you say that you wish to participate, any safety concerns can be adequately addressed, and arrangements for an interview are feasible, NCLS Research will contact you again to invite you to an interview. We will use the contact method and details that you provide in the telephone conversation.

Step 4: Accept invitation

Please contact NCLS Research to accept the invitation. You may still choose not to go ahead with an interview at this point.

Your contribution to Phase 1 will already influence the reports we will prepare for the leaders of the Anglican Church to help them better support those who have experienced IPV. Thank you for considering also taking part in a Phase 2 interview. If you have any further questions at this stage, please do not hesitate to contact us on anglicanexperience@ncls.org.au or [dedicated project mobile].

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Powell
Chief Investigator
National Anglican Family Violence Project

Miriam Pepper
Co-investigator
National Anglican Family Violence Project

Appendix I: Information Statement for Interview Participants

This study aims to explore experiences of domestic and family violence –specifically “intimate partner violence” (IPV) – among people who have a connection with the Anglican Church in Australia. IPV is defined by the World Health Organisation as behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours. There are two phases to this study: there is an initial online survey and the second phase involves an in-depth interview.

Only a small number of diverse people across Australia will be invited to a face to face interview. First, the research team will make phone contact with potential interviewees. Then each person will be notified whether or not a researcher will be able to interview them for the in-depth phase.

The information in this sheet is for people who have received a written invitation to take part in an in-depth interview, following a phone conversation.

Invitation

You have been invited to take part in a study which aims to explore experiences of domestic and family violence –specifically “intimate partner violence” (IPV) – among people who have a connection with the Anglican Church in Australia. Having completed an initial online survey, you have received an invitation for you to take part in the second phase, which involves an in-depth interview.

The study is being conducted by Dr Ruth Powell and Dr Miriam Pepper from NCLS Research and the Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre, Charles Sturt University. NCLS Research is a world leader in research focused on connecting churches and their communities.

Before you decide if you wish to participate in this study, it is important to understand what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

What is the purpose of this study?

Violence between intimate partners – those who are or were in a married or de facto relationship or a dating relationship – is recognised to be a serious and widespread problem in Australia, with enormous individual and community impacts and social costs. Church communities are not immune and other research studies have found that churches can be both helpful and unhelpful in their responses to those who have experienced intimate partner violence. The Anglican Church hopes results will help equip them to respond through policy and practice in ways that foster safer family environments.

Why have I been invited to participate in this study?

When you completed the initial online survey (Phase 1 of this study), you expressed an interest in taking part in a Phase 2 interview. NCLS Research confirms that you are invited to be part of a limited group of people who will now have in-depth interviews about their experiences.

What does this study involve?

You are invited to take part in an interview of up to two hours with Dr Ruth Powell or Dr Miriam Pepper. See <http://ncls.org.au/research/NAFVP/experience> for biographies. You will be asked about your experience of intimate partner violence, your connection with the Anglican Church and the

intersection between the two. You will be invited to share your experiences in depth, with a particular focus of the role of the Anglican Church and its clergy and congregants in these experiences. Please see sample interview questions for further detail.

Note: In some parts of Australia the law requires people to report child abuse to authorities. If you share information about a child being abused during the interview, then the researcher is legally obliged to make a report if the child is in the following jurisdictions:

- Northern Territory: every person is required to report suspected child abuse and neglect
- Victoria: every person is required to report suspected child sexual abuse (under 16 years).

Are there risks and benefits to me in taking part in this study?

The interview will explore your personal experiences of IPV in connection with the Anglican Church. This may be distressing for some participants. Your safety and wellbeing is paramount to the study. The interviewer will work with you to minimise distress and to respond appropriately if it occurs, including through pausing, postponing or terminating the interview should you wish to do so. The interviewer will also provide you with information about support services.

If you are currently at risk from an intimate partner, there may be risks to your safety in participating in an interview. The researchers will work with you to minimise such risks. Findings from this study will help guide church policy and practice in relation to equipping clergy and lay leaders to respond to issues related to IPV, and therefore to better support those who have experienced IPV.

How is this study being paid for?

The project is commissioned and paid for by the Anglican General Synod which is the national governing body for the Anglican Church of Australia.

Will taking part in this study cost me anything, and will I be paid?

While you will not be paid for your time, if there are out of pocket expenses for you to attend the interview, they will be reimbursed.

What if I don't want to take part in this study?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to participate. By completing the Consent Form and doing the interview, you are consenting to take part in the research. You can withdraw from the interview at any time without adverse consequences.

What if I participate in the interview and want to withdraw later?

You may withdraw up to two weeks after your interview (before your transcript is analysed). Your information will then be withdrawn from the study and deleted. You may also choose to review or edit your interview transcript until such time as the dataset is closed for analysis (at the conclusion of all interviews).

How will my confidentiality be protected?

This is an anonymised study and any identifying information you provide, such as dates, names and places will be changed according to the study's Data Anonymity Protocol. You will not be identified in any outputs from the study. Any information collected by the researchers which might identify you will be stored securely and only accessed by the researchers unless you consent otherwise, except as required by law. There are limits on assurances of confidentiality as law may subpoena research data/records. All anonymised password-protected data will be securely retained for at least 5 years at the offices of NCLS Research.

What will happen to the information that I give you?

Information about your experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) and the role of the Anglican Church:

- Will be used in a report, verbal briefing and summary report to inform an understanding of what roles Anglican churches have had in the nature of people's experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV).
- Will support the further development of Anglican Church policy and practice in relation to family violence.
- May be used by the project researchers for academic publication (e.g. journal articles).

What should I do if I want to discuss this study further before I decide?

If you would like further information, contact Dr Ruth Powell and Dr Miriam Pepper on anglicanexperience@ncls.org.au, phone [dedicated project mobile].

Who should I contact if I have concerns about the conduct of this study?

Charles Sturt University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee on (02) 6933 4213 or ethics@csu.edu.au and quote the number H20036. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Conclusion

Thank you for considering this invitation. This information sheet is for you to keep.

Researchers

Information about NCLS Research can be found online: www.ncls.org.au



Chief Investigator: Ruth Powell, PhD, BA, Director, NCLS Research
Associate Professor, Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre



Co-investigator: Miriam Pepper, PhD, MScTech, BEng, BA, Researcher,
NCLS Research, Research Fellow, Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre

Plus other project researchers and external expert consultants

Anglican Church Family Violence Working Group
This Working Group is chaired by Reverend Tracy Lauersen: fvwg@anglican.org.au



Information about the role of the Working Group can be found online:
<https://anglican.org.au/our-work/family-violence/>

Appendix J: Interview Participant Consent Form

Researchers:

Chief Investigator: Ruth Powell, PhD, BA

Director, NCLS Research, Associate Professor, Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre

Co-investigator: Miriam Pepper, PhD, MScTech, BEng, BA

Researcher, NCLS Research, Research Fellow, Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre

Consent:

I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I consent to participating in an interview and the interview being recorded, transcribed and analysed.

I consent to the analysis being used to develop a report for the Family Violence Working Group of the Anglican Church of Australia.

I consent to the analysis being used in a report, verbal briefing and publicly available summary report for the Family Violence Working Group of the Anglican Church of Australia.

I consent to the analysis being used for future academic publication (e.g. journal articles) by the project researchers.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study up to two weeks after my interview, and that I do not need to give a reason for withdrawing.

I understand that I may experience emotional distress due to my participation in this research.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to researchers, except as required by law.

I understand that the researchers will not identify me personally in the transcript or any project outputs.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

I wish to receive a summary of the research results when available (please circle): YES / NO

My preferred method of delivery is (please circle) EMAIL/ POSTAL.

Please provide further contact details (email address/postal address) if you want a copy of the results:

Your Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

NOTE: Charles Sturt University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this project. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee through the Ethics and Compliance Unit via the following contact details:

The Governance Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Ethics and Compliance Unit

Locked Bag 588, Wagga Wagga NSW 2678 Tel: (02) 6933 4628 Email: ethics@csu.edu.au

Please quote reference: H20036

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix K: Interview Questions

NB: These are sample questions. The interview will be an in-depth approach, where the participant is invited to share their experiences and perspectives. Follow up questions will also be asked.

Thank you very much for coming to this interview to share your experience of intimate partner violence (IPV) in relation to the Anglican Church. I know that you have made an effort to be here.

I understand that the topic may be distressing for you. I would like to work with you in this interview to respond to any distress you may experience in the way that works best for you. We can stop the interview at any time.

1. Before we start, do you have any concerns about the interview that you'd like to share with me?
2. People respond differently in distressing situations. Are there things that you do at other times that help you when you have been distressed?
3. Is there anything that I can do to help you? How would you like me to respond if you are experiencing distress?
4. I will look out for you and pause at different points in the interview to ask how you are going. Please feel free to check in with me at any time with how you are feeling at any time. Is that ok with you? We can pause the interview or terminate it at any time – that is not a problem. I want to support you to do what is best for you.

We will start with talking about your faith/connection to church, then I will ask you to share your story of violence from a partner, as much or as little as you like. Then I will ask about your interactions with the church in this situation.

5. Please tell me about your current involvement with the Anglican Church?
6. Can you share with me about your faith history and religious participation, prior to your experience of violence from a partner?
7. And how about your partner's faith and religious participation prior to your experience of violence from them?

Before we talk about how the Anglican Church did or did not support you, I invite you to share some of your own story of violence from your partner.

8. Can you please share with me your story? Share as much as you feel comfortable with.
9. Was there anything in your spiritual or religious life that helped you in your experience of violence? Can you explain?
10. And was there anything in your spiritual or religious life that you struggled with or that made things more difficult for you in your experience of violence? Can you explain?
11. Were there individuals or groups who influenced how you coped with your experience of violence? Please tell me more about this.
12. Did you ever share your experience with other members of your church community or clergy? (If no: Did you ever consider doing so?)
13. Can you share with me any experiences you had seeking help or assistance from your church? How did you come to share your experience? Who did you approach? How did they respond?
14. In what way did your faith and religious practices prevent or assist you in seeking help from your church?

15. And in what way did your experience of your church itself prevent or assist you in seeking help?
16. To what extent do you think you had adequate support from your church during your experience of family violence? Can you explain?
17. If you could have had one thing offered or given to you from your church during your time of need, no questions asked, what would have been most useful to you?
18. Do you feel that your faith has changed as a result of your experience of violence from a partner? If so, how?
19. Do you have any advice or suggestions for clergy and church communities, to help them improve how they respond to intimate partner violence?
20. And do you have any advice or suggestions for anyone who is experiencing intimate partner violence and is part of an Anglican church?
21. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experience?
22. Thank you very much for sharing your experience. How are you feeling? What do you have planned for the rest of the day?

Appendix L: Telephone Protocol to Phone Prospective Interview Participants

Within a few weeks of sending the study information, a member of the research team will telephone the prospective participant. The purpose of this telephone conversation will be to:

- Confirm that they wish to participate in an interview
- Confirm that they meet the criteria for inclusion (confirming their survey responses),
- Confirm that they are still not in immediate crisis – indicated by a stable housing arrangement and, if IPV is a current concern, having access to support from a service provider. For those who are not currently living in a stable housing situation or receiving support, recruitment will be delayed or might not be possible within the timeframe for the study.
- Determine options for a safe, private location for the interview.

Researchers will use the following protocol when making contact

Telephone protocol

Attempt to call prospective participants up to three times. If person doesn't pick up and they have indicated in their survey that it is safe to do so:

- Leave a message if it is a standard message option.
- Send a text if no voicemail message option (or if 10-second voice-to-text).

If phone message/text message

My name is XX and I am calling from NCLS Research. You recently completed an online survey with us for a research study on experiences of the Anglican Church. Thank you. You expressed your interest in being interviewed for the next phase of the research. I am calling to check if you are still open, to tell you a little more about the research and to ask you a few more questions before we can confirm whether or not we will need you for the next phase. Please call me on XXXX XXXX. [dedicated project mobile]

Introduction

My name is XX and I am calling from NCLS Research. You recently completed an online survey with us for a research study on experiences of the Anglican Church. Thank you. You expressed your interest in being interviewed for the next phase of the research. I am calling to check if you are still open, to tell you a little more about the research and to ask you a few more questions before confirming whether or not we will need you for the next phase. We will only be interviewing a small number of people across Australia. I'll need about 10 minutes to talk with you. Is now a good time?

[if no]. Can I give you a number to call at a time that suits you? [If yes] it is [dedicated project mobile]

[If yes, now is good time] We're looking to interview about 20 people in more depth about their experience of intimate partner violence, their connection with the Anglican Church, and the relationships between these two things. The purpose of the research is to help the Anglican Church to better respond. The interviews will be either in-person or via web conferencing and will take between one and two hours. We will ensure that participants are not out of pocket from their participation.

In a few days I will contact you again. You may decide to withdraw after today's conversation. At that point we will also confirm whether or not we will need you for the next small in-depth phase.

1. Did you receive the information about the study (participant information statement, list of interview questions, consent form, information about support services)?

Yes

No

[if yes, continue questions]

[if no] It will help if you have some background on the study. Can I confirm the best way to get this information to you safely - by email or post?

Email (please provide):

Post (please provide):

2. Are you still interested in participating in an interview?

Yes

No

[If no, end call.]

Confirm key responses to survey

I'd like to start by asking you about some of your answers to the online survey.

3. How would you describe your current connections with the Anglican Church?

[If not currently connected] What about your previous connection to the Anglican Church?

4. Is your experience of violence from an intimate partner in your current relationship, previous relationship or both?

5. Is it your current experience or in the past?

[If in the past] How long ago?

6. Have you ever sought help from an Anglican church because of your experience of intimate partner violence?

7. [if yes] From whom in the church did you seek help?

Thank you. Can I just check in to see if you are ok to continue with our conversation?

Screening

The safety and wellbeing of participants is our priority, so I have a few questions to ask you about your safety. It is important that participating in an interview doesn't put you in any danger. Would that be ok?

I'll start by checking some responses you provided to the survey, in case your situation has changed.

8. At this time, how would you describe the level of severity of the violence/abuse you are currently experiencing?
 No current experience of violence
 Very low
 Low
 Moderate
 High
 Very high [Exclude from phase 2]
9. What is your current housing arrangement? [use the following options if prompts needed]
 I am in a stable housing arrangement
 Due to the violence, I am temporarily staying with family or friends
 Due to the violence, I am in a shelter/refuge or similar [Exclude]
 Other
10. Do you have access to people who provide support for your situation?\
11. Do you currently have contact with professional service providers (such as counsellors, therapists, or other domestic violence support services?) If not, do you know how to access them? Would you approach them if needed?
12. Do you have any concerns at all about your safety or wellbeing if you participate in an interview?
 Yes
 No
13. [If yes] Can you tell me a more about your concerns?
 [If Q8 is very high or Q9 is not in stable housing arrangement or Q10 shows no support or Q11 shows no access to support]

Thank you. We will review your information but in general, if someone is currently experiencing intimate partner violence or is at risk from their partner, we would only interview them at this time if they are receiving support. If their situation changes, we may be able to interview them later.

14. Discuss options for interview – time and place.
 If we do proceed with a face to face interview, we will need a suitable place and time. Some ideas might be a room in the local library or a community centre, or perhaps your home or a friend's home. Do you have any suggestions about what would work for you?

And what about timing? Is there anything that would be helpful for me to know?

In the interview you'll be invited to share your experiences in depth. This might be distressing for you. The interviewer will work in partnership with you to manage the time together in ways you find helpful. You may withdraw from the interview at any time. I encourage you to think about how you can care for yourself afterward, particularly in terms of what you plan to do for the rest of the day after the interview.

Next steps

Thank you very much. I will review our conversation and contact you in the next few days either to invite you to an interview at the time and place that we have discussed, or to let you know that we aren't able to proceed. You may still choose not to go ahead after our conversation today.

15. What would be the best way for me to contact you safely with that invitation?

Phone (is that the same phone number that I am contacting you on today?) (If you don't pick up, is it ok if I leave you a message?)

Email (please provide if not already provided):

Post (please provide if not already provided):

Thank you. I will be in touch in the next few days.

Do you have any questions you would like to ask at this stage?

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to be involved in the research.

Follow up phone call

All phone calls will be introduced as follows:

This is XX from NCLS Research. I am calling you about the research study on experiences of the Anglican Church. Is now a good time to talk with you?

Appendix M: Protocol for interview confirmation after phone screen

This protocol is for those who:

- Were hand-picked for an interview
- Were not excluded based on telephone screening
- Indicated in the phone screening that they would like to proceed with an interview.

Method of Communication

Use method nominated by the person in the phone screening: either email, phone or letter.

Email and letter text

My name is XX and I am from NCLS Research. I recently spoke with you over the phone about a research study on experiences of the Anglican Church.

I am contacting you to invite you to an interview on [date] at [time] at [place]. Please contact NCLS Research on anglicanexperience@ncls.org.au or [dedicated project mobile] to accept this invitation.

Please bring your consent form to the interview. We will also provide a copy of the consent form for you on the day, as a backup.

Thank you very much for your time and important contribution to this work.

Telephone protocol

Attempt to call prospective participants up to three times. If person doesn't pick up and indicated in the phone screening that it is safe to leave a message:

- Leave a message if it is a standard message option.
- Send a text if no voicemail message option (or if 10-second voice-to-text).

Script

This is XX from NCLS Research. I am calling you about the research study on experiences of the Anglican Church. Is now a good time to talk with you?

I am contacting you to invite you to an interview on [date] at [time] at [place]. Would you like to accept this invitation?

[If yes] Thank you. Please bring your consent form to the interview. We will also provide a copy of the consent form for you on the day, as a backup.

Do you have any further questions at this stage?

Thank you very much for your time and important contribution to this work. I look forward to the interview.

[If no] No problem. Thank you very much for your time.

If phone message/text message

This is XX from NCLS Research. I am contacting you about the research study on experiences of the Anglican Church, to invite you to an interview on [date] at [time] at [place]. Please contact NCLS Research on anglicanexperience@ncls.org.au or [dedicated project mobile] to accept this invitation. Thank you.

Appendix N: Protocol for those not selected for interviews after phone conversation

This protocol was prepared for those who:

- Were hand-picked for an interview
- Were subsequently excluded based on telephone screening.

However, it was not required in this study.

Method of Communication

Use method nominated by the person in the phone screening interview: either email, phone or letter.

Email text

My name is XX and I am from NCLS Research. I recently spoke with you over the phone about a research study on experiences of the Anglican Church. You expressed your interest in being interviewed for the next phase of the research. Thank you.

Your investment in this research project will already influence the reports we will prepare for the leaders of the Anglican Church. However, for this next in-depth phase of the research, we will not be able to do a further face to face interview with you. We are restricted as we will only be interviewing around 20 people across Australia and we need to seek a diverse range of people.

We realise that this project may have brought up issues and feelings for you. Some possible next steps you may wish to take are:

- Seek counselling or other support services. You will find information about a range of support services [here](#).
- Make a complaint about Anglican clergy or lay church leaders. You may contact the Professional Standards Units in each diocese. [Click on this link](#) for contacts.

If you wish, we hope that you may find other ways to share your story. Thank you very much for your time and important contribution to this work.

Letter text

My name is XX and I am from NCLS Research. I recently spoke with you over the phone about a research study on experiences of the Anglican Church. You expressed your interest in being interviewed for the next phase of the research. Thank you.

Your contribution to this research project will already influence the reports we will prepare for the leaders of the Anglican Church. However, for this next in-depth phase of the research, we will not be able to do a further face to face interview with you. We are restricted as we will only be interviewing around 20 people across Australia.

We realise that this project may have brought up issues and feelings for you. Some possible next steps you may wish to take are:

- Seek counselling or other support services.
- Make a complaint about Anglican clergy or lay church leaders. You may contact the Professional Standards Units in each diocese.

You will find an information sheet with a range of support services and other contact details enclosed.

If you wish, we hope that you may find other ways to share your story. Thank you very much for your time and important contribution to this work.

Telephone protocol

Call once only. If person doesn't pick up and the individual has indicated that it is safe to do so:

- Leave a message if it is a standard message option.
- Send a text if no voicemail message option (or if 10-second voice-to-text).

Script

My name is XX and I am calling from NCLS Research. I recently spoke with you over the phone about a research study on experiences of the Anglican Church. You expressed your interest in being interviewed for the next phase of the research. Thank you very much. I'll just need a minute of your time. Is now a good time to talk?

Thank you.

Your contribution to this research project will already influence the reports we will prepare for the leaders of the Anglican Church. Unfortunately, for this next in-depth phase, we will not be able to do a further face to face interview with you. We are restricted as we will only be interviewing around 20 people across Australia.

[allow time for person to respond]

We realise that this project may have brought up issues and feelings for you. Some possible next steps you may wish to take are:

Seek counselling or other support services.

Make a complaint about Anglican clergy or lay church leaders. You may contact the Professional Standards Units in each diocese.

Do you have any questions?

Thank you very much for your time.

If phone message/text message

My name is XX and I am calling from NCLS Research. I recently spoke with you over the phone about a research study on experiences of the Anglican Church. You expressed your interest in being interviewed for the next phase of the research.

So I can let you know about the outcome, could you please call me on [dedicated project mobile] or via email at anglicanexperience@ncls.org.au at a time it suits you?

Thank you.

Appendix O: Interview Participant Distress Protocol

Protocol outline

This protocol outlines the process for managing distress in the context of interviews with participants that are being undertaken as a part of the National Anglican Family Violence Project. These interviews are with people who have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) and who have or previously had a connection with the Anglican Church. The interviews explore the nature of participants' experiences of IPV, responses to violence, and the meanings associated with these experiences, including in connection with their faith and their church.

All participants will be provided with information regarding support services, including domestic violence services, professional counsellors from within the Anglican Church (Anglicare) and support services outside of the Anglican Church. This information will be made available on a public website and across all phases of participation, upon consent, and at the interview in the form of a printed information sheet and a small card that is easy to hide.

All members of the research team who will have direct contact with participants, including interviewers and those who will phone prospective interviewees, will undertake following training with the Blue Knot Foundation before the commencement of the research which will cover: "Trauma-Informed Care and Practice when Working with Domestic and Family Violence" and "Managing Vicarious Trauma". To date, the researchers have undertaken a masterclass with the Australian Association for the Study of Religion on trauma-informed research practices.

Trauma-informed approach to interviewing

The interviews will be undertaken with utmost concern for participants' wellbeing and in a way that maximises participants' agency and strengths. Our trauma-informed approach will involve the following:

- Being explicit about the interview questions prior to the interview, so that participants are not caught unawares and have an opportunity to prepare themselves
- Using active listening techniques, demonstrating empathy, compassion, and appreciation for participants' strengths, agency and choices, including their choice to proceed with an interview that explores a topic which may be distressing for them
- Partnering with the participant to manage their arousal

Managing arousal:

When the interview is being arranged, the participant will be encouraged to consider their self-care for the rest of the day following the interview.

At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer will address the fact that the topic is distressing and that the approach will be to partner with the participant to manage their arousal and to pause, postpone or terminate the interview if needed. The interviewer will note that people respond differently in distressing situations and ask the participant to draw on their own situation and experience for how they might respond, that is, what do they do at other times when they have become distressed? The interviewer will also flag that they will look out for the participant and pause at different points in the interview to ask them how they are going, and will also encourage the participant to let them know at any time if they are experiencing distress. The interviewer will ask the participant how they would like the interviewer to respond if they do become distressed.

At the end of the interview, the interviewer will acknowledge that the interview has been strenuous (or other observation) for the participant. The interviewer will ask the participant what they intend to do for the rest of the day and will encourage self-care. Responding to distress:

Should a participant demonstrate or voice emotional discomfort or distress, the following actions will be taken:

- The interviewer will pause the interview and check in with the participant. The options of terminating or postponing the interview will be provided.
- If the participant wishes this to happen, the interview will cease
- The interviewer will spend time with the participant and provide assistance, within the scope of the study and the interviewer's role and purpose, to discuss concerns and provide reassurance and immediate support.
- The participant will be provided with follow-up information about support services.
- With consent and agreement from the participant a follow-up phone call will be made by the interviewer the following day to ensure that the participant is alright. During this time, contact information regarding support services can (again) be provided if required.

Detailed description of steps to be taken in the event of distress

Distress

A participant indicates they are expressing distress, discomfort or emotional distress AND/OR the participant is displaying behaviours suggestive that the session is overwhelming and that they may not be coping i.e. restlessness, avoiding eye contact, withdrawn, standing up, pacing, fidgeting etc.

Stage 1: Response

- The interviewer will pause the interview
- The interviewer will supportively assess wellbeing using prompts such as:
 - It looks like you are not doing so well right now. Is there anything I can do?
 - What can we do to help you feel safe?
 - Do you feel you are able to continue with our interview today?
- If the participant is unable to carry on, interviewer to terminate interview – indicating that it can be postponed to another time if the participant wishes.

Stage 2: Response

- Interviewer to encourage participant to discuss concerns with their support network (if appropriate – usual source of pastoral support, supervisor, family member, carer, friend, GP or mental health provider, or support service information provided to participants)
- Offer, with participant consent, for interviewer to contact the identified supports above on their behalf if they do not feel able OR
- If participant is acutely unwell and is unable to de-escalate, immediately contact crisis care providers and follow emergency procedures, including calling an ambulance if deemed necessary

Follow up

- Encourage the participant to call their support networks identified above if he/she experiences increased distress in the hours/days following the interview AND/OR provide appropriate service and/or support details
- With consent and agreement from the participant a follow-up phone call will be made by the interviewer the following day to ensure that the participant is alright. During this time, contact information regarding support services in the community can (again) be provided if required. The interviewer will also explore with the participant whether or not they would like to reschedule the remainder of the interview for another time.

Acknowledgment: This document has been prepared with reference to a Psychological Distress Protocol developed by Dr Kathleen McPhillips, University of Newcastle, for her research.

Appendix P: Data Anonymity Protocol

Acknowledgement: This document has been adapted from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health procedures

Anonymising procedures

The term "anonymise" is used to describe the process whereby qualitative data (i.e. participant comments) are altered so that participants are unlikely to be identified.

1. Responsibility: Anonymising of all qualitative data will be the responsibility of the Chief Investigator (CI). While team members may deidentify the data, the responsibility for ethical procedures and compliance with these guidelines remains with the CI.
2. General guidelines for anonymising qualitative data
 - Dates are removed.
 - Names are replaced with {name}, and addresses with {address}.
 - Names can be replaced with the person's relationship to the participant or their title. For example: {son} {mother} {family member} {friend} {family doctor} {solicitor}
 - Location names can be replaced with: {capital city} {other metropolitan} {large rural} {small rural} {remote}
 - Place names to be replaced by a short descriptor in braces. e.g. {regional centre hospital} or {capital city courthouse}
 - Other less general potential identifiers have been noted, such as unique characteristics (eg. awards) and specific disabilities involving multiple family members. These types of identifiers can be anonymised by changing the characteristics involved, family make-up or other details that do not affect the nature of the analysis being conducted.
 - Where potential participant recognition occurs the CI must be consulted. The liaison will ensure that the participant's data are removed from the dataset.
 - Where a participant is very transparent and specific in their comments, in consultation with the CI, the analyst must decide if the data can be anonymised without losing meaning.
3. Outputs: All outputs will be vetted by the CI prior to publication in any form (presentation, journal paper etc).
4. Data security: All electronic copies of the data must be password protected. If any data are to be printed they must first be anonymised. Raw data are not to be printed. Any printed data must be held securely in keeping with NHMRC guidelines; in a locked cabinet on the premises of their institution.

Source: <http://www.alsw.org.au/how-to-access-the-data/alswh-data>

Document G: Qualitative Processing Protocols Updated September 2014

http://www.alsw.org.au/images/content/pdf/Extra_Files_for_Website/Access_Data/Doc%20G%20Qualitative%20Processing%20Protocols%20sept2014.pdf

Appendix Q: Examples of the breadth of violence described by participants

Warning: This section contains graphic descriptions of violence.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse includes directly assaulting the body; using weapons; driving dangerously; destructing property; abusing pets in front of family members; assaulting children; locking the victim out of the house; and depriving sleep.

He used to get triggered by small things ... For example, if I didn't cook dinner, he used to hit me. If I didn't clean the house, he used to hit me. And I never understood why that happened. In my family, that never used to happen ... Because those days, I had to call in sick all the time because I would be bruised all over ... That was next level violence ... Yes, it was tough. Those days were tough because I would end up with pain and aches in my body.

I hear this massive wham and he's put his fist through the wall, just above where the children are sitting because he was so annoyed, overwhelmed, irritated, I don't know, had had enough. It was just really scary.

I had a ... heavy glass thrown at my head ... I didn't go to the police for that one because I really couldn't be bothered anymore. I'd been there so many times.

I often had bruises ... almost always be in places that didn't show ... at some stage, I think I registered that, that the bruises didn't necessarily show and therefore, it was a – there was some calculation in it. It wasn't all completely spontaneous. But he would throw things ... There were other things that I can vaguely remember got thrown in various ways, but not a lot of things – there was not a lot of damage to stuff. There weren't always broken glasses or cups or whatever.

Then she started hitting me. So, she'd tell me, "What are you doing? You're doing something wrong." Whack across the face ... I started at a point where I thought ... something serious could go on and if the police need to find out why there's a body in the house, so I started to take notes ... and it got to the point where I started telling people.

The threats became, "I'm going to kill your [relative]." And it was all – it seemed flippant enough, in that it was like in passing or it was like, just like, "Leave her in a shallow grave", and I'm like, oh okay, this isn't funny anymore, but he's saying it, yeah. And a threat is still a threat ... [Our animal] was getting kicked intermittently. [and] wasn't getting fed properly ... And I could just see that things weren't quite right.

I think the physical violence just continued through the early years of the marriage particularly. So, he'd try and strangle me or throw me down the stairs or hold knives up or cut me or things like that ... I was definitely afraid that he might go and pick the children up from school or try and kill them. He had a gun, and he was so unstable. I had no idea how he would react.

Sexual abuse

Any form of forced sex or sexual degradation, such as sexual activity without consent; causing pain during sex; coercive sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease; making the victim perform sexual acts unwillingly; criticising or using sexually degrading insults .

Later, ... the sexual violence started ... He came and physically picked me up out of the shower and took me to the bedroom and lay me on the bed and pinned my arms down and had sex with me. I didn't know that saying no was okay sort of thing. I mean had said no, but I didn't know that keeping on saying no or fighting off your husband or whatever, but I couldn't because he was so strong, I couldn't do anything to stop him. That pretty much continued for the rest of the marriage.

Obviously, there was sexual abuse and coercion, and all of this got worse and worse over the course of [relationship time]. A lot of it ... is sort of a very vague collage I suppose There were [number] instances of actual rape rather than coerced sex, actual forced. Which he actually acknowledged and then obviously when he thought about it denied it.

He came back ... one day and said, you know, I've been looking at pornography again. So, he had an ongoing chronic porn addiction, and it was quite a serious one. And when he would tell me. I would say, "Well thank you for being honest, I really appreciate there's some honesty. Wow, I kind of appreciate that." But then there was this time where he said, "Yeah, I've been looking at pornography" ... And the way that he said it I thought, oh, this is such a pattern. There's no remorse in his voice. There's nothing, he's just sort of telling me as though oh yeah, it's just another day, just another week or porn ... there's really no accountability at all ... I guess, called him on the way that he told me. And he immediately reacted, as he does, he got very dominating, and he said, "You have to forgive me," in a really hostile, scary way.

Emotional abuse

Blaming the victim for all problems in the relationship; constantly comparing the victim with others to undermine self-esteem and self-worth; sporadic sulking; withdrawing all interest and engagement (for example, days or weeks of silence).

He was spiraling into some sort of meltdown – break down. He would go off. He would leave for a couple of days. I didn't know where he'd gone. And blame me for whatever was going on ... He would just disappear. He would just go. "Well, I'm going." I didn't know what was going on. I was completely freaked out by those episodes.

He was just – I look back on it now and I see very clearly what it was, it was psychological emotional manipulation, he was very manipulative and very – always right, never apologise, everything was my fault all the time, I was a terrible person, I never supported him well enough and I just felt terrible. I just felt like the worst wife in the history of the world and didn't know what to do.

I remember just wishing that he'd hit me, because then I would know, I would know what that was, I could identify that's domestic violence and I can leave; if he does that, I can leave. He didn't ever hit me. He scared me and he did some really quite physically aggressive things, but nothing that ever physically harmed ... I didn't have an understanding of spiritual abuse or financial control or coercive control or any of the kinds of emotional abuse, I didn't understand any of that. I knew what verbal abuse was, but he didn't swear at me. He made me feel stupid often, he'd talk down to me ... and stuff like that.

Physical was unusual. The verbal and threatening and other emotional abuse was standard. It was really the blanket of our marriage. The emotional stuff never stopped... That was just constant. I never knew what I was coming home to, whether he was going to be happy, loving or a complete prick. There was never really an in between and that was probably the hardest thing...but the walking on eggshells all the time and it changed in an instant.

He became more moody, he'd lock himself in ... and not come out, or he'd lock me in [a room] and not let me out. All that sort of stuff. It just got more and more – I was less and less looking forward to going home at night because I knew something would happen. I knew either I'd get talked down to or sometimes there'd be a lot of pushing. There was not often a lot of hitting, only occasionally, but there was a lot of pushing and shoving, and sometimes kicking and that sort of stuff. There was nowhere really to go.

Verbal abuse

Continual put-downs and humiliation, either privately or publicly, with attacks following clear themes that focus on intelligence, sexuality, body image, and capacity as a parent and spouse.

There was obviously ...verbal abuse. A lot of just belittling, when I got friends, a lot of cutting me down in front of friends. You know, quite humiliating. Making comments about the toilet, stuff like that, like really sordid sort of "funny" comments. A lot of gaslighting, a lot of setting himself up as being in control of, even just things like whether I was just allowed to go to sleep, whether I was allowed to read while he watched the television.

It was mainly psychological mental abuse and torture. He started to wake me up in the night and keep me up in the night to have long discussions about whatever I'd done wrong next.

There was a lot of yelling and name calling and projecting, like he's talking about me being desperate for things that he had been doing ... He was just projecting and angry but name calling and, "You're a loser. You're desperate," and just nastiness ... he was a lot more when he was drinking obviously.

He was furious with me ... absolutely livid. I don't know why but went ballistic. I was really frightened of him, very frightened. So that night I slept on the floor ... against the door, with the door closed, because I was just too scared. I thought he was going to come in and do something.

Then what she used to do was, instead of just ordering me to do stuff, which in most cases I just did, it got to the point where she was yelling at me, screaming at me, telling me that I was not supporting her ... [my ex-partner's] criticism got to the point where she was using words and expressions that became threatening. "I ought to bash you. I'll lock you out of the house," and then she would lock me out of the house.

Social abuse

Systematic isolation from family and friends through techniques such as ongoing rudeness to family and friends; moving to locations where the victim knows nobody; and forbidding or physically preventing the victim from going out and meeting people – in effect, imprisonment

A [friend] would say to me, do you want to have a coffee, or do you want to go and have a coffee, so we'd make a date and then I would say to him, I'm going to have a coffee with such-and-such. He'd ... kick up a stink ... he'd chuck a tantrum. I'd just be like, well it's not worth it, so I'd cancel, and I did it all the time and I'd cancel at the last minute or friends that he approved of.

Probably the worse things were the threats and the intimidation where he would just follow me around the house. He couldn't trust me alone in a room in the house. He had to know which room I was in, what I was doing all the time, and if he wanted to tell me something - and he often wanted to tell me something – he would just follow me around and yell his side of the argument until I just said, "yeah, okay, I agree with you" or I just begged him to go away so much. I remember...he would lock me

in rooms, he would barricade the front door or stand in front of the front door... "No, you've got to sit down, you're going to listen to me." ... It was just soul destroying because I just thought I have no voice and I have no freedom. I just do what he wants because if I don't, it's much worse.

He was controlling in a way that it took me a long time to see. The situation was slightly complicated, but I imagine everybody's situation is complicated ... At first, it was okay. He was fairly charismatic and attractive personality but as his health got worse, it meant that I could do less outside the home. He never restrained me from going out of the house, but he did make it clear verbally that he was not happy with what I was doing and that I really should have stayed home.

I had small children and babies, so yeah, sort of busy, really busy with that. So, if we met some people ... and we caught up with them, or if they didn't even go to the church that we were going to, then we couldn't really associate with because we had different beliefs, so we didn't associate with them. So, I was really only allowed to associate with people that we went to church with ... And then those people that we did have to do with in church, [my ex-partner] would say things about them.

We went there ... [my ex-partner] said, "We're not going to see your parents." I said, "What do you mean, we're not going to see my parents? We're here for [a time]." [He said] "No ... I don't want to see them." [I said] "Can I go? I'll go and see them when you're [busy]." [He said] "No, no, no, you're not going to see them." I didn't feel like I was being controlled. I'm just like, hang on, if I just reason with him better, will this work.

Economic abuse

Having complete control of all monies; granting no access to bank accounts; providing only an inadequate 'allowance'; using any wages earned by the victim for household expenses; excessive expenditure and accumulation of debt left for victims to repay.

For all of our married life he had controlled the money. I earned it, but he managed it and he gave me access to it. Even my phone, my personal mobile phone wasn't in my name, it was in his. I didn't know how to pay a bill because he wouldn't let me; he managed all of that. I had no idea about our finances, I wouldn't have known how to access our money. I didn't know passwords or anything like that ... He was happy for me to earn the money, but in terms of anything that would actually involve me having any autonomy or independence, no, that wasn't done ... even if I wanted to spend money, I needed to ask him and provide receipts and things like that.

Then there's always been massive secret debts and so when it got more violent and controlling and there was other stuff as well like sexual stuff and things like that, it was always when things were bad. Now I realise financially it was a way of controlling me. I was not going to tell anyone about where our finances were at. I was always told to work because ... I can earn a reasonable wage.

I wasn't expecting to be ripped off over [large amount of money] a month! And he was pulling money not only from my account, but also from ... the children's accounts, he robbed my parents ... because he went to them ... saying how destitute we were ... he left me in excess of [large amount of money] in consumer debt ... and obviously it was accumulating daily, because of the amount of money that he had been withdrawing from credit cards.

There's never been any physical violence. I've never been hit in any way or hurt physically ... I went into the marriage with [assets] ... By the time our marriage ended, I ended up with [a large amount of money] of personal debt, apart from him. He had the same. And it baffles me how - that he would

say, "You've never been good with money. I'm the one that's good with money." ... And any kind of a sign that I would be hiding any money, he would go into a rage about. And yet, if I challenged him at all with his spending ... He would go beside himself, "That was not in the budget. You can't go doing that. Look at all the debt we have. It's all your fault." And I'd just be – I'd believe him. And I'd try and explain things.

Spiritual abuse

Denying access to ceremonies, land, or family; preventing religious observance; forcing victims to do things against their beliefs; denigration of cultural background; using religious teachings or cultural tradition as a reason for violence.

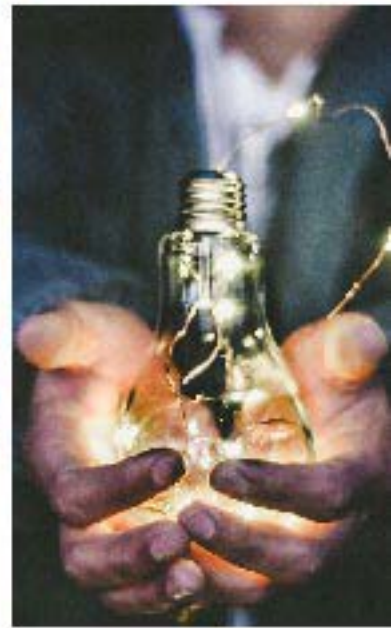
I started to wonder about that and think, is there somebody else, is there something going on here that I don't know about, it was thrown back in my face. You know, "you call yourself a Christian, I thought you trusted me, and as a Christian you are supposed to forgive me". And so, you know, he was smart enough to throw a few well-known scriptures at me, when we had an altercation, and I didn't have a response.

Everything else he could control because he was the dispenser of that wisdom. So, my prayer life was stupid ... Going to church I shouldn't need ... There was a lot of spiritual abuse happening which I'm only really just this year working through the consequences of. You know, "your faith is infantile", things like that ... (He said) if you leave, and I remember the exact quote from here, "I will make your name mud at the church". And again, I believed him ... So yeah, it was all very much wrapped up in that spiritual abuse. It's been the thing that's taken me the longest to work through. And it's sort of the last wound to reveal itself I suppose.

He just stands over me and said, "Well, I'm telling you as your minister you're ... spiritually dead." And goes downstairs. I go to work ... When someone takes the voice of God as he has, it's sometimes very hard to hear the voice of God apart from that voice. That's been a bit slow to recognise and to combat that.

If I would ever raise something, say this is a problem for me and could you do something about this, it's making me really unhappy or it's making me feel really uncared for or neglected or lonely or whatever, there was never any willingness to accept that anything was wrong. Yeah, my feelings were always downplayed, or I was told my expectations are too high or I'm being unreasonable and no, no, you need to rejoice at all times and just do what you can to bring glory to God no matter. You promised in sickness and in health ... and if you're finding that hard, well that's a problem with you, not me.

I guess I felt there was that sort of underlying unspoken pressure to me that I wasn't supposed to show emotion towards God, I just had to be in control of myself all the time. And so it kind of stifled my relationship with God, and I guess that was a control thing as well, and that I wouldn't be able to say to him, question that, because he either, he didn't want to talk about it, he would refuse to talk about things, because he didn't have time, or there were far more important things to do than to talk to me about anything that was important to me, or he would just say no.



The NAFVP Experience Study is one of three studies that make up the National Anglican Family Violence Project (NAFVP), commissioned by the Anglican Church of Australia. The aim of the project is to help the Anglican Church to understand the nature and prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) among those with a connection to the Anglican Church.

The Experience Study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of experiences of IPV for those with a connection with Anglican churches?
2. How has the Anglican Church featured in these experiences?
3. What are the attitudes to IPV amongst those with a connection to the Anglican Church?

Pepper, M., Powell, R. & McEwan, T. (2021). *NAFVP Experience Study Report: The nature of experiences of family violence for those with a connection with Anglican churches*. NCLS Research Report for the Anglican Church of Australia. NCLS Research.



NAFVP Experience Study Report



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