

## **Purpose**

To establish a policy outlining CMS' approach to the issue of domestic abuse.

## **Definitions**

Domestic abuse refers to acts of abusive behaviour that occurs between people who have, or have had, an intimate or familial relationship. The central element of domestic abuse is an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear, for example by using behaviour which is violent, threatening or manipulative.<sup>1</sup>

CMS Code of Conduct defines domestic abuse as:

- Violent, threatening or other behaviour by a person that coerces or controls a member of the person's family or causes the family member to be fearful. A child is exposed to domestic abuse if they see, hear or otherwise experience the effects of the abuse.<sup>2</sup>

Further definitions of emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual and technological abuse are included in the CMS Code of Conduct.

## **Policy**

1. CMS has zero tolerance of abuse perpetrated by any of its employees, missionaries or volunteers. All forms of domestic abuse are wrong. Perpetrators must stop.
2. The primary focus of this Policy is abusive behaviour inflicted by an adult against a current or former spouse or partner. Abuse involving children should follow child protection procedures.
3. We uphold Scripture and its abhorrence of abuse in our words and public statements by teaching that:
  - Domestic abuse is wrong, and the Bible should never be interpreted to justify or excuse any form of abuse. A relationship between a husband and wife is to be characterised by love, care and kindness;
  - The Bible does not condone abuse and should not be interpreted to demand a spouse tolerate or submit to domestic abuse; and
  - The Bible requires that in love we take active steps to protect and support those who are vulnerable or victims of abuse.
4. We uphold the CMS Code of Conduct as our national code of conduct for CMS staff, missionaries and volunteers. This requires that we do not engage in abuse or harassment of anyone (child or adult). This includes bullying, emotional abuse, harassment, discrimination, sexual harassment, vilification, physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual grooming, spiritual abuse, domestic abuse, financial abuse and technological abuse.<sup>3</sup>
5. We are committed to safe places which
  - Recognise equality amongst people,
  - Promote a culture of healthy relationships of mutual responsibility in marriages, families and ministry contexts,

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Australia Governments, 2011 page 2.

<sup>2</sup> Family Law Act 4(1).

<sup>3</sup> CMS Code of Conduct, standard number 6, page 4.



- Ensure that all people within CMS' sphere of influence feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse,
  - Strive to follow good practice in protecting those experiencing domestic abuse,
  - Refuse to condone any form of abuse, and
  - Enable and encourage concerns to be raised and responded to clearly and consistently.
6. We recognise that domestic abuse requires a serious and realistic response:
- All forms of domestic abuse cause damage to the victim and other parties and are wrong,
  - Domestic abuse can occur in all communities, including churches and in ministry/mission situations
  - Domestic abuse, if witnessed or overheard by a child, is a form of child abuse by the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour,
  - Working in partnership with vulnerable adults and children, statutory authorities and specialist agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of any child or adult suffering abuse,
  - CMS staff, missionaries and volunteers need to obtain advice from those with professional expertise (and, where appropriate, local cultural expertise) when faced with situations of domestic abuse, and
  - Where mistakes in caring for people in difficult situations are made, an apology should be offered and advice sought on how to address any harm caused.
7. We respect people who come to us for help by
- Valuing, respecting and listening to victims of domestic abuse;
  - Valuing, respecting and listening to alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse;
  - Appreciating the need to ensure a distance is kept between the two; and
  - Refusing to condone the perpetration or continuation of any form of abuse.
8. We ensure safety first by
- Taking it seriously: Ensuring that any disclosures of abuse are taken seriously and not dismissed,
  - Requiring all CMS staff, missionaries and volunteers to abide by our Code of Conduct,
  - Training our senior CMS staff and pastoral workers to raise their awareness of domestic abuse and ability to identify its warning signs,
  - Ensuring that those who have experienced domestic abuse can find safety and informed help as a first priority, and can continue to stay safe,
  - Getting help from outside: Working with the appropriate statutory authorities during an investigation into domestic abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the CMS community,
  - Raising awareness of domestic violence agencies, support services, crisis accommodation, resources and expertise,
  - Keeping it confidential: Respecting the need for confidentiality within the bounds of good Safe Ministry practice, noting that reporting requirements exist where there is an immediate danger, where a child is at risk of serious harm or where the matter involves a CMS staff member or missionary as an alleged offender, and
  - Not suggesting inappropriate interventions when there is domestic abuse e.g. relationship counselling or mediation.
9. We offer pastoral support to those in our care by
- Offering informed care: Ensuring that informed and appropriate pastoral care and professional help is offered to any adult, child or young person who has suffered domestic abuse,
  - Being guided by the victim: Never pressuring any victim of domestic abuse to forgive, submit to, or restore a relationship with an offender,



- Understanding that reconciliation comes with conditions: understanding that any reconciliation between victim and offender is dependent principally upon genuine repentance and reformation of the offender, and
- Coordinating the ongoing care: identifying the appropriate relationships of those with pastoral care responsibilities for all victims and alleged or known perpetrators of domestic abuse.

If you have any concerns or need to talk to anyone please contact:

- The Police: dial 000 - 24/7 in emergencies where safety is at risk.
- 1800 Respect national helpline: 1800 737 732 or [1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au) - 24/7 for sexual assault, & domestic violence counselling and advice.
- Child Protection Helpline: 132 111.
- Lifeline: 131 114 or [www.lifeline.org.au/get-help](http://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help) - 24 hour telephone crisis line.
- Safe Ministry Resources: CMS Australia contracts an independent professional to receive complaints. Please contact [helpline@safercommunities.net.au](mailto:helpline@safercommunities.net.au) or 1800 070 511.

If you are serving with CMS overseas, please contact you Regional Mission Director, and the Safe Ministry Resources help line

## Approval

For approval by CMS-A Board  
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