Anglican Diocese of Melbourne Preventing Violence Against Women project. University of South Australia 23 March 2017. Genieve Blackwell

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and share the experience of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne implementing a violence prevention project.

My name is Genieve Blackwell and I am an Assistant Bishop in the Diocese which covers the Anglican churches of Melbourne and Geelong.

I also wish to acknowledge the first peoples of this land, the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging and to any here today.

I am Bishop of the Marmingatha Episcopate in the Diocese of Melbourne – we are privileged by our Archbishop Philip Freier being able to consult with the elders of the Wurundjeri tribe and so the name our episcopates Marmingatha (divine, supreme
being), Jumbunna (proclamation), Oodthenong (gathering) and Monomeeth (abundance and well being) – conveying the sense, the meaning of our Diocesan vision: to make the word of God fully known.

**History**
The Anglicans Helping Preventing Violence Against Women Project was established in 2011 in the Diocese of Melbourne on two premises:

1. that if violence against women is happening in society then it will be happening in our churches;

2. and that churches have a role in prevention.

The focus has been preventing this violence before it occurs by taking action to address the underlying drivers. This is also known as primary prevention. Scott Holmes (Our Watch and also on our Steering group) in the previous presentation has outlined the different levels of response: the pyramid of
• tertiary response to violence that has happened or is happening,
• secondary or early intervention and
• primary prevention seeking to address the key drivers.

Much of the material I am going to outline is documented in what is now our Diocesan Strategic Policy for 2017 -2020 – adopted in April this year by the governing body of the Diocese Archbishop in Council and affirmed by our Diocesan Synod (the annual meeting of our diocese which includes both clergy and lay people) just last week.

In effect, this Strategic Policy is building on and learning from the experience of implementing our first Strategic Policy.

This was presented to the 2011 Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. The Synod resolved to support the proposal of the Social Responsibilities Committee (SRC) to
commence the Anglicans Helping Prevent Violence Against Women Project based on this draft policy. It remained the primary document guiding the overall direction of the project over these last six years supported by

- a logic model

The project has been the responsibility of the Social Responsibilities Committee. A Steering Group was appointed which over the years included members from

- the Diocese including a member of the SRC who was the first Chair,
- Scott Holmes, who has also been the Acting Chair – as you have heard a priest of the Diocese who has also brought his sector expertise with Our Watch and more recently myself and our Archdeacon for Parish Partnerships who is the current Chair of what is
now the Management Committee; the former CEO of Our Watch who is an Anglican has also been involved in the work of the Steering Committee

- our partner and related agencies – the welfare agencies of Brotherhood of St Laurence, Anglicare Victoria and the counselling agency Life Works.

The Committee through the Diocese appointed a consultant Ree Bodde of Think Prevent for delivery of the project.

The development of the current policy has been the result of reflecting on achievements, challenges and learnings from the six years of this project which we are taking into the next phase. We have been greatly helped in this last year by the Diocese commissioning a formal review of the project conducted by Kate Redwood and Associates. Thank you again for the opportunity to articulate them now in this forum.
This is of vital importance given, not only recent attention in the media on domestic violence in Christian churches and other faith communities, but also because of three recommendations of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence which particularly focus on faith based communities.

We are very conscious that there has been significant change during the implementation of this project in the area of preventing violence against women, particularly in the state of Victoria where the Diocese of Melbourne is located:

1. Violence against women is now strongly recognised as a major human rights and social justice issue with an increased awareness of its impact leading particularly in Australia to renewed social and political response.

2. Nationally: The National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children
leading to the establishment of a national primary prevention agency Our Watch (2013) and the development of a national framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia *Change the Story* (2015).

3. *In Victoria*: The Royal Commission into Family Violence delivered its seven volume report in March 2016 – the most comprehensive investigation into domestic violence - with the sixth volume of its report dealing solely with prevention. The Executive Director of one of our partner agencies BSL was a Commissioner. The State Government has made the unprecedented decision to accept every one of the 227 recommendations, three of which apply specifically to faith communities. It will include the development of a ten year strategy. The Multicultural and Social Cohesion division of the Department of Premier and Cabinet are
overseeing the implementation of recommendations concerning faith communities with the support of the Multifaith Advisory Group. It is also committing significant funding for programs.

Achievements, Challenges and Learnings
We celebrate the following achievements:
The Church saying this is an important issue. The ‘mother’ church (the Archbishop in Synod) resolving this is a priority, committing funds and people and so our parishes (local Anglican churches) responding. The importance of this is seen in the summary of the Report of the Royal Commission into Family Violence commending the work of the Anglican Church: that is the Anglicans Helping to Prevent Violence Against Women project.

From its inception this has been a co-operative venture: a high level partnering between the Diocese and its key agencies I have already
mentioned. It is a very significant precedent in the Diocese. The funding has been provided by the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, together with the Melbourne Anglican Foundation, and the two welfare agencies: Brotherhood of St Laurence and Anglicare Victoria. Funding has been important for delivery. Just as importantly it enables the sharing of expertise given the significant amount of work each do in the area of family violence. This has been invaluable in the project phase but I think it is in the next phase there will be the opportunity to more fully realise the potential with this.

Through Think Prevent, the Preventing Violence Against Women Project has successfully delivered active bystander training in churches, as well as a range of awareness raising activities such as speaking in services and parish groups and organising an ecumenical Holding the Light service (for those who have suffered family violence).
Mothers Union have been a significant partner of this work. Active Bystander training introduces people to the concept of gender equality and the power relations leading to inequality and gives a number of intervention responses appropriate to different situations. I have been part of a workshop delivered to Anglican ordinands – men and women accepted for ordination as deacons and priests – as part of their training. It was powerful to see the shift for some as they interacted with the material, took it on board even though for some it was challenging and even realised that they had already been active bystanders. It has also been instrumental for us in highlighting particular issues for some of our multicultural congregations within Anglican parishes, in particular dowry. The steering group together with Think Prevent has also developed protocols for churches: often people can display a resistance to the information
presented and it is important that the leadership of
the church is present and endorsing the message
being given. Also for responding to disclosures of
family violence – to minimise the risk associated
with Think Prevent unhelpfully getting involved in
response work.

It is worth noting at this point that beyond the
Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, Think Prevent has
been able to work with other Victorian Anglican
Dioceses, other Christian Denominations and on an
interfaith basis. In September Kempster
Consultants received advice that a formal review of
the Think Prevent program is being undertaken by
the University of Melbourne in a project funded by
the Victorian Minister of Multicultural Affairs which
will contribute to the evidential base of this work
and encourage its wider application.

We have experienced the following challenges and
learnings:
This project phase has largely operated on the local passions networking model (a term I attribute to Tony Nicholson – ED BSL) seen particularly in the work of the SRC and being able to partner with our agencies who have a common passion for this work. I will come back to the opportunity in this but in terms of challenge it has meant that all those involved have been doing this on top of already busy roles. I don’t mean it has been ad hoc but it has had to rely in a sense on volunteerism.

The steering committee has sat under the SRC – a group of committed people undertaking again in a volunteer capacity this important work for the Diocese concerning the church’s response and contribution to social issues I the public square – one of which is violence against women. This has presented challenges in progressing the project from a governance perspective exacerbated by an under resourced Diocesan office.
It has been a key learning to move from being a project to a program embedded in the Diocese. It is now placed within the Parish Partnerships ministry of the Diocese. The Archdeacon for Parish Partnerships Jan Crombie is the Chair of what is now the Management Committee as I have mentioned previously. This represents a shift or turning point in moving to put a framework around the local passions networking model of management, strategy, compliance and accountability. Through the Chair there will be regular ongoing communication with the SRC and senior leadership of the Diocese and report to Archbishop in Council and all stakeholders with an annual report going to the Synod of the Diocese.

While we have been able to begin to deliver Active Bystander training workshops on the ground in our parishes, in effect raising awareness of violence against women and its key driver gender inequality,
it has been a challenge to ensure a holistic and systematic approach more widely in the Diocese. The objectives of our Diocesan Strategic Policy for 2017 -2020 outline how we intend to build on the initial phase of the project (for which we are currently in the process of developing an action plan)

1. Building the leadership capacity of both our clerical and lay leadership within the Diocese. This leadership capacity is needed in the areas of prevention, support and education for equality between men and women. It is important that we are able to give appropriate responses when we receive disclosures, or become aware of violence against women. We do not want to be playing catch up as we have had to do with children and sexual abuse. We want to be leading the way as a place of respect and equality between men and women.

2. Developing our Diocese as an organisation with policy, standards and best practice
guidelines which reflect the equality of men and women for all levels of work and ministry in the Diocese.

3. Changing the culture of our Diocese through through Diocesan wide training and capacity building.

4. Continuing and building on our partnering and collaborative approach. The Diocese and its Foundation and our partners committing to continue and increase funding has enabled another exciting precedent for our Diocese and the Anglican Church of Australia: creating a staff position for this important work – building on the groundbreaking work of the past six years. The project review recommended a 1.5 (program manager and administrative assistance to adequately fulfil the program objectives).

Further to the project phase we also aim to collaborate with our related organizations such as schools, parish community groups eg
kindergartens and play groups and to enhance the work of our agencies as they focus on response and early intervention with also working together for primary prevention. Hopefully the appointment of a Program Manager will facilitate the access to government grants and other appropriate resources. We are also committed to including evaluation strategies as part of all of the project’s activities, and to align those strategies with evaluation and monitoring frameworks being used locally and nationally. That is, collaborating to build the evidence base for primary prevention of violence against women: what works to address the gendered drivers of violence.

This last objective points to the potential I spoke of previously. It is imperative that now we have moved to this ‘management’ phase that we hold in
creative tension the local passion of each contributing organization. It might be a bit all over the place but if we hold in creative tension - each of the flames a bit all over the place but together exponentially enhancing what can be achieved for the prevention of violence against women. (An image I attribute to our Management Committee Chair Jan Crombie).

The local passion network will keep the truth of the project alive.

It is not just a problem with men or just a problem for women.

We all need to come together to achieve what we all want: equal access to opportunities and people living without fear of violence in whatever form.

The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne Preventing Violence Against Women project is, at its heart, about
shifting from being simply reactive to being proactive in our culture - moving beyond a crisis response.

And that the church, the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne in particular, can play a key role in this important work of primary prevention.
Key documents:

*Anglicans Preventing Violence Against Women Strategic Policy 2017 -2020*

*Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence Recommendation 163* is asking for training packages on family violence and sexual assault for faith leaders and communities. It is time bound - within three years - and is recommending these packages build on existing work, reflect leading practice, include referral pathways and be suitable for inclusion in training institutions and for professional development.

*Recommendation 164* is asking that specialist family violence service providers ensure standards
and services take into account the needs of people in faith communities who experience family violence. Again it is time bound – within two years. **Recommendation 165** is asking faith leaders and communities to look at how we currently respond to family violence in our communities and whether any of our practices operate as deterrents to the prevention, reporting or recovery from family violence or are used to excuse or condone abusive behaviour.

In summary - recommendations which challenge us to get our house in order.