


# World Conference 2019 Domestic Violence Legislation

by Malcolm Stephenson & Rick Sarre



HELP

Sadly, violence pervades our world. The Australia Mission Centre resolution recently presented to World Conference was designed to address the issue of violence but at the familial level.

When we were much younger, a popular American TV comedy show was the Jackie Gleason Show. Jackie's wife was a woman called Alice. The script followed a simple pattern. Alice would annoy Jackie and eventually he would utter his trade-mark line, "One of these days Alice, POW, right in the kisser." The audience would applaud and laugh – it was a major comedic part of the show.

Thankfully, most people today would declare Gleason's line is no longer funny. We can be thankful of the change in attitude within our country if not elsewhere.

In 2016, both Adelaide and West Pennant Hills congregations believed the focus of the church on addressing the scourge of domestic violence needed to be renewed. Two factors prompted this.

Firstly, the literature at the half-way mark of the 12-year Australian National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 indicated that Australian police still deal with an average of 650 domestic violence matters every day of the year. That means that every two minutes an incidence occurs. While men are all-too-often victims themselves, for the most part, domestic violence is perpetrated by

men against their intimate partners and their children. Additionally, according to international research, around one in three women has experienced physical violence, and almost one in five has experienced sexual violence, since the age of 15.

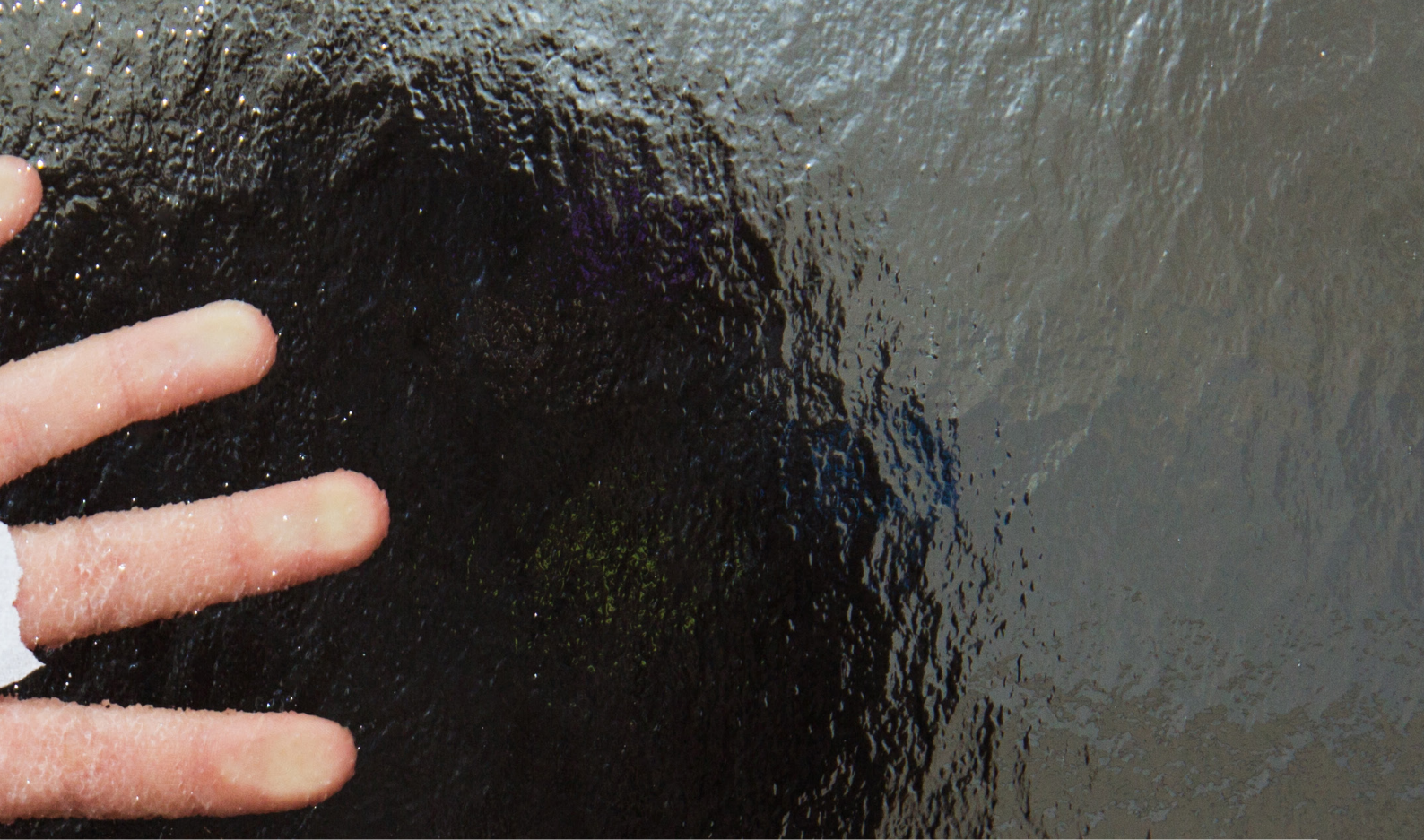
Secondly, Section 163: 4a of our Doctrine and Covenants prompted renewed action. Steve Veazey's words "God, the Eternal Creator, weeps for the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering. Such conditions are not God's will. Open your ears to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers in all nations who desperately seek a future of hope for their children. Do not turn away from them. For in their welfare resides your welfare" were an appropriately stirring challenge.

With this in mind, active support was expressed in the resolution for those organisations and community groups allied to the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

The 2017 Australia Mission Centre Conference affirmed the resolution.

We did our homework to determine where the church had addressed this issue in times past. We found that the World Conference had declared opposition to domestic violence and violence against children in World Conference Resolution (WCR) 1195 in 1986, WCR 1235 in 1992, WCR 1250 in 1996 and WCR 1276 in 2002.

The Australia Mission Centre resolution was



adapted slightly by the First Presidency to make it more globally directed. During the non-legislative part of World Conference, attendees have opportunity to discuss, not debate, legislation. Many views resonated with our resolution. Intimate and emotional personal stories of domestic and familial violence were shared by men and women about their experience in abusive relationships where the priesthood had stood by and ignored them. Some of those stories were repeated when the resolution was finally placed before the conference.

In his speech to move the resolution, Rick included the following observations:

Women are killed, too, on a regular basis, most often by people they know and, in a significant proportion of cases, by their intimate partners or former partners. The numbers are startling and trending upwards. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reports that, in 2017, across the world each day, 137 women are killed by their partners, former partners, or a member of their family. Six women are being killed every hour by someone they know. That means that another will die in 10 minutes. LGBTIQ communities remain at great risk too.

Rick then reminded the conference of current legislation that called upon all church members and associates to redouble our efforts to rid the world of this insidious evil, and to address this horror. An amendment was passed that added a third resolved to the motion.

Resolved, That

1. The 2019 World Conference express its solidarity with and show active support for those organizations and community groups that currently aim to eradicate familial and domestic violence wherever it occurs.

2. Congregations world-wide be called upon anew to prioritize with urgency the admonitions found in WCR 1195, 1235, 1250 and 1276.

3. The conference requests that the First Presidency develop or make available culturally appropriate study materials regarding domestic and sexual violence and abuse with the intent that such material will become part of the required course curriculum for all current priesthood members and candidates for priesthood office.

When the vote was taken, the results were 1609 in favour and 207 opposed.

**We hope this resolution will renew and strengthen us all to tell the world anew that our church condemns violence in any setting, but in particular in the home, and, in particular, sexual violence wherever it occurs.**

Malcolm Stephenson is a resident of Sydney, a retired minister and member of Australia Mission Centre Leadership team.

Professor Rick Sarre is the Dean at the University of South Australia's Law School and member of Australia Mission Centre Leadership team.