

## STATEMENT ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A long and sustaining tradition of Jewish life has been the sanctity of the family as a source of security, love, caring, compassion and healing.

The N.S.W. Rabbis' Taskforce (1993) stated

"The family ought to be free of any forms of Domestic Violence-physical, sexual or emotional. All forms of violence in the family are un-Jewish and unacceptable."

	The JBOD recognizes that Domestic Violence (DV) is a social evil which cannot be condoned in any civilized society.
Domestic Violence is a term used for behaviour that is used to control and intimidate within the family.	Domestic Violence refers to physical, sexual, economic and social abuse and may be a combination of any or all of the above.
DV is a criminal act.	The law is able to act on behalf of the victims, through laying of criminal charges or by apprehended violence orders. Often victims don't feel empowered to seek protection. There is a need for there to be access for victims to legal remedies.
Jewish law prohibits abuse.	A cornerstone of the Jewish system of law – the Halacha – is the principle that all human beings should be treated with dignity and respect. Rabbinic writings throughout the ages have condemned and prohibited "wife abuse". Torah law prohibits physical abuse and excessive physical punishment. Abuse, manifested in overly harsh criticism, name calling and intimidating and degrading speech is also Biblically prohibited even if the victim is a minor.
Shalom Bayit (the principle of Peace within the Home) should not be used as an excuse to hide the experience of violence.	Jewish traditions and laws emphasise the importance of the family and the sanctity of the home. However, an attempt to preserve "Shalom Bayit" should not be made at the expense of the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of a woman experiencing Domestic Violence that is, "Shalom Bayit" should not be used as a basis for covering up Domestic Violence. The community must be conscious of the fact that in certain situations the withholding of a Gett by a spouse may be indicative of the existence of Domestic Violence in a household.

The right to live without fear	We affirm the right of all people to live without fear of abuse, and to live in a safe and secure environment. (Needs reference to UN conventions re rights of the child and rights of women)
A problem that hurts the whole community	When a person is abused, all members of the family are affected. DV has deleterious effects on the children which can be lifelong. This is not just a "women's issue", the whole community is affected.
The secret and hidden nature of this crime	The crime of DV is often shrouded in shame and denial. The secret is kept by the victims to protect the good name of the perpetrators. The psychological and physical health of the victims are compromised. Many families suffer in silence. We must work towards breaking the silence and bringing the issue into public discourse.

- Myths about DV help perpetuate it. Refuting the myths surrounding Domestic Violence is one of the first steps in combating its occurrence. Domestic Violence may occur in families at all socio-economic levels, not only in families which are affected by poverty. It occurs in families irrespective of level of Jewish religious observance. Male violence against women within the family is the most common form, but it may also be exhibited in the form of female violence against males (and parental violence against children).

Domestic Violence is a serious problem that occurs in the Jewish community as it does in the wider community.

The Jewish Board of Deputies recognizes the need to continue the work started some years ago to address this problem in our community. This is in keeping with the traditions and laws of Judaism which emphasise the importance of families and the well-being of all their members.

Prevention through education and support activities. • The NSW Jewish Board of Deputies will foster the need for the public recognition of the problem, and will support an ongoing communal education process through a variety of channels as an integral part of a meaningful prevention programme. It is crucial that the community is sufficiently/adequately informed about the incidence of DV, its effects and the steps necessary to prevent its occurrence.