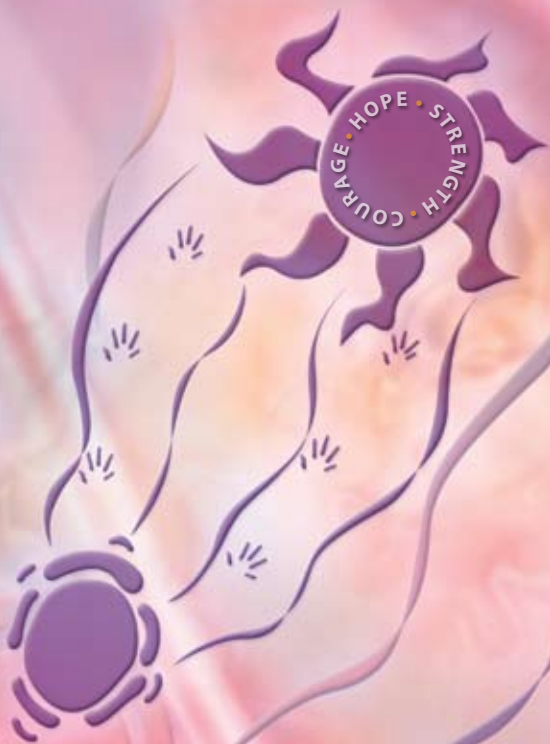


# Planning for your **Safety**





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*The cover art work and the poem were created by Rachel, a client of the Staying Home Leaving Violence project at Bega. We thank her for her contribution.*

*For people dealing with  
violence or abuse*



The courage you have shown  
Shows how much you have grown  
You will always shed a tear  
With memories of the fear  
No-one will completely know  
Because a lot you didn't show  
But with the help and understanding  
Your heart is finally mending  
So hold your head high  
And breathe with a sigh  
You can now see a future  
One step at a time  
But in the end, you can turn and say  
This life is MINE.

*Rachel*

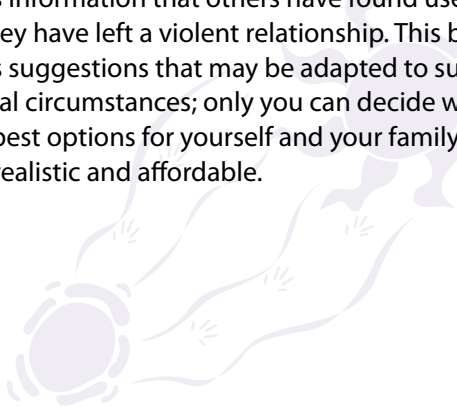


## What is Domestic or Family Violence?

Domestic or Family Violence occurs when a person uses violence, threats, intimidation or force to control or coerce a family member, partner or former partner. That abuse can take the form of verbal or physical abuse; including sexual abuse; social isolation; financial abuse; emotional abuse and intimidation; including threats to harm; property damage; spiritual deprivation; threats towards or actual harm of pets and threats to commit suicide as a form of manipulation. It is any act or behaviour that causes fear.

It is against the law for one person to assault another person, whether they are living together or not.

The information provided in this booklet is not an exhaustive list of options. It is not a checklist. It contains information that others have found useful when they have left a violent relationship. This booklet contains suggestions that may be adapted to suit your individual circumstances; only you can decide which are the best options for yourself and your family and what is realistic and affordable.



## What is a Safety Plan?

*A Safety Plan is a guide for staying safe from violence.*

Planning for your safety is a process of looking at your situation and assessing what you might need to help you feel and be safer. Your safety plan must be relevant to your needs and be adapted if your situation changes. It needs to incorporate an escape plan as well as practical strategies to improve your home and personal security. Safety planning is not about focusing on living in fear; it is about taking proactive steps to improve your and your children's safety. It is about taking back control over your life.

Safety plans need to include safety strategies for different environments such as home, social, work and vehicle security.

This booklet highlights some strategies for making your home and workplace safer. There is also space for you to make your own notes.

# Planning for My Safety

## Your Home:

- If there has been any threats made against you or your family, contact the police on 000.
- Speak to the Domestic Violence Liaison Officer at your local police station or any other police officer, about applying for an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) which can include an exclusion order to keep the person you fear away from you.
- Report all breaches of your ADVO to police.
- Keep a record or diary of any breaches of ADVO orders or suspicious behaviours such as phone hang ups.
- Keep a note by your phone that includes information such as your street address and nearest cross-street that will help guide police to your location.
- Have dead locks installed. Do not dead lock yourself in at night, you need to be able to leave the building in case of an emergency such as fire.

*NB: The cost of changing locks and installing sensor lights may be reimbursed through the Victims Assistance Scheme or you may be eligible for support from a Staying Home Leaving Violence Project.*

- Install lockable security screens, where possible and keep them locked.
- Keep external doors locked when at home.
- If door keys go missing, change the locks.
- Make sure windows and sliding doors have good locks. You can lock windows cheaply by drilling a hole through the window jamb into the window frame and using a bolt to secure the window shut. A dowel stick can be used to prevent sliding doors and sliding windows from being opened (make sure these are an exact fit so windows cannot be jemmied open).
- Be alert to any suspicious people hanging about. Don't ignore any 'funny feelings' – trust your intuition.
- Ask for identification before opening the door.
- Install a veranda light at a height that makes it hard to reach. Consider installing a sensor light.
- Trim shrubs and bushes from entrance ways.
- Ensure pathways are well lit.

*My Notes:* .....

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*NB. In rental properties changing locks or making changes to houses needs to be done with the permission of the owner. You also need to supply your landlord or estate agent with a key to the premises.*

- Keep electric fuse boxes locked. Check with your electricity supplier as they will need access to read the metre and can supply padlocks.
- Keep torches and spare batteries in an easy to reach place.
- Keep side gates and sheds padlocked.
- Consider a back-to-base alarm system with a remote button. Know the range of this device.
- Let trusted people know if you go away, eg. neighbours or family.
- Give a phone contact list of important people or services to people you trust in case of emergencies.
- Consider installing a loud, outside alarm that can be activated from inside the house.
- Make sure everyone in the home talks about suspicious calls or occurrences.
- Choose a code word that you can use without attracting attention e.g. on the phone. Let family and friends know that when they hear the word it means that a crisis is occurring.

- Keep in touch with neighbours; ask them to let you know if anyone has been hanging around your house and to contact the police if they hear any violent incidents or have any concerns about your safety.
- Keep trusted friends and neighbours informed about what's going on.
- Make a safe evacuation plan. Make sure all household members know about and practice it occasionally.

*My Notes:* .....

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- Get a dog. A family dog can be one of the least expensive and most effective alarm systems. Some breeds are better watch dogs, but any breed will bark at an intruder. If this has been a family dog known by the violent person, consider getting another. You also need to check with landlords/ estate agents if it is OK to have a dog.
- Is there a 'safe room' in your house that you can secure and that has mobile phone coverage? This could be a bathroom or laundry with a lock installed that could be a more secure place for you and your children to wait for the arrival of the police.



## How I will teach my children to manage their safety?

- Teach your children how to telephone the police and how to give their full name and address.
- Tell your children's school or child care centre about the situation and about who has authority to pick up the children. Provide the school or centre with copies of any family law orders or ADVO's.

*My Notes:* .....

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## Phones and Mobile Phones

- Get an unlisted phone number. Make sure everyone you give it to knows it's a silent number. Make sure they know not to give it out to anyone.
- Caller identification could also be considered and use an answering machine to screen callers.
- In cases where Family Law court orders provide for contact with your children and you would prefer not to give out your land line details, consider purchasing a pre-paid mobile phone that the other parent can call.

- Make sure you know where in your house you can get reception for you mobile phone.
- Keep your mobile charged and with you in case the phone line is disconnected. Note that portable phones rely on electricity. If there is a power outage, you have no phone.
- Report all phone abuse. This is against the law. Keep accurate records and original messages for police and courts. Do not delete text or voice messages from your phone.
- Consider changing your number if phone abuse continues.
- Dialing 000 on mobilephones will work, however if you have a GSM digital mobile phone the Emergency Services number for Police, Fire and Ambulance is 112.
- Program emergency contacts in your phones, both mobiles and landlines.

## Your Car

- Keep the garage door locked at all times.
- Keep car locked when at home.
- Always park in a secured garage if possible.
- Park in well lit areas when shopping or at work.
- Keep a torch in your car.

- Keep a personal alarm on your key ring (regularly check to ensure battery has not gone flat).

## **Your work, shopping or social events**

- It is important that there is someone in your workplace who knows what is happening for you, but you can be selective about how much to tell them. In a large workplace this could mean a manager and the office person.
- Make sure everyone in the workplace is aware not to give out your contact details.
- Park in a well lit space if possible and ask a work colleague or security person to escort you to your car.
- Form a buddy system with a co-worker in sharing rides or catching public transport.
- Have a plan of action if you are followed home. Know where your nearest police station is and drive there if you are in a car.
- Plan what you would do if you are followed while catching public transport.
- Change your routines. If you have always shopped on a certain day at a certain location, change the days and the shopping places from week to week.
- Purchase a small, battery operated alarm and be prepared to activate it. Have it somewhere you can access it readily.



## Information that may be of help

- Police can carry out a safety audit of your home.
- If there is a Staying Home Leaving Violence Project in your area they can also conduct safety audits of your home and provide some practical assistance.
- You may be eligible for the Victims Assistance Scheme for reimbursement for changing locks. Contact Victims Services in NSW.
- You may also be eligible for a Crisis Payment from Centrelink (this needs to be done within 7 days after an incident).
- Your local domestic violence service may be able to help. Check your phone book for local services.

**Try not to panic.** Each area has its own domestic violence support agencies which can be located in your phone book. Make a note of your local services. This is by no means an exhaustive list. These are only a set of ideas that may provide some options for improving your and your family's safety. Make your own notations of what would work for you in your own situation.





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