



## 1.0 Purpose

Family violence is a serious issue that poses substantial risk to the health and wellbeing of our communities. Lower Murray Water (LMW), as an essential service provider, actively endorses measures to support customers experiencing family violence, with the safety of our customers being paramount.

It is now widely recognised that Government, corporate and community sectors all have a responsibility to work together to support those experiencing family violence. A collaborative and integrated response is essential in order to effect long term systemic change.

## 2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all LMW customers who may be experiencing family violence, regardless of their current financial capacity and who require assistance.

## 3.0 References

- Key external support networks and resources document
- Lower Murray Water Hardship Policy **CTD/000731**
- Lower Murray Water website - [lmw.vic.gov.au](http://lmw.vic.gov.au)
- Customer Family Violence Procedure
- LMW Customer Charters
- Essential Services Commission Customer Service Codes

## 4.0 Definitions

### Family or Domestic Violence

Family or Domestic Violence is defined by behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person that is/may be:

- (i) physically or sexually abusive; or
- (ii) emotionally or psychologically abusive; or
- (iii) economically abusive; or
- (iv) threatening; or
- (v) coercive; or
- (vi) in any other way controlling or dominating towards the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person; or
- (vii) behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to above.

“**Economic Abuse**” is behaviour by a person (the *first person*) that is coercive, deceptive or unreasonably controls another person (the *second person*), without the second person’s consent;

- (a) in a way that denies the second person the economic or financial autonomy the second person would have had but for that behaviour; or

- (b) by withholding or threatening to withhold the financial support necessary for meeting the reasonable living expenses of the second person or the second person's child, if the second person is entirely or predominantly dependent on the first person for financial support to meet those living expenses.

**“Emotional or Psychological Abuse”** means behaviour towards another person that torments, intimidates, harasses or is offensive to the other person’

**“Hardship Program”** is a program to supports customers who have identified either by themselves, LMW or an independent accredited financial counsellor as having the intention but not the financial capacity to make the required payments in accordance with LMW’s payment terms. Customers’ financial hardship may be temporary or permanent in nature. The program aims at providing assistance through payment arrangements, assistance with the Utility Relief Grant Scheme and referral services.

**“Physical or Sexual Abuse”** is when a person uses physical force against another person and can include, shaking, slapping, pushing, punching, kicking, physical restraint etc. Sexual abuse is any form of forced or unwanted sexual activity.

## 5.0 Policy Statements

Where a customer identifies as experiencing family violence, the customer will be immediately referred to the Customer Team for assistance. The services provided to the customer will not be restricted, and no legal action or additional debt recovery costs will apply while engaging with the Hardship program.

LMW’s role in assisting customers who have identified as experiencing family violence is to provide information on financial relief available to customers from LMW and general information and referral service details only for family violence. It is not LMW’s role to provide any form of counselling or advice on family violence.

LMW has a commitment to supporting our customers and our staff who may have experienced family violence and we have processes and procedures to support the principles of this policy for our staff and customers.

LMW will treat customers in a respectful and sensitive manner with a focus on the customer’s safety and wellbeing. We will ensure the confidentiality and privacy of any details of customers who have identified as experiencing family violence. To ensure our customers are safe and not to add any stress to their complex circumstances, we will not require proof of family violence. We will take people at their word and work towards supporting customers in a timely manner.

LMW will support customers with any debt or payment difficulties through our Hardship Program. We will promote information and ensure awareness for customers of the assistance available for financial support for customers experiencing family violence. We seek to create a supportive environment where customers are aware of the support available and are comfortable in requesting

assistance for family violence related concerns.

LMW understands that providing our staff with guidance and training in understanding, identifying and responding to family violence is critical and that this training also ensures a more positive customer experience for those who are impacted by family violence.

All staff and in particular, Customer facing staff, will be trained to look for identifiers and indicators of family violence. The Customer Team will undergo specific training on family violence to ensure appropriate assistance is provided to customers.

The Customer Family Violence Policy and associated programs and processes will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in consultation with our key partners to ensure they remain appropriate and adequately meet our customer needs.

## **6.0 Review**

**6.1** It is the responsibility of the Custodian of this procedure to ensure it is reviewed as per the review due date listed in the record table (if there is one) or per the metadata of the master controlled document within the Records Management System.

**6.2** The people listed as “to be advised of amendments” must alert the Custodian to the need for procedure review if any amendments are required to the procedure before the review due date.

## **7.0 Appendices**

Community Help Referral Guide

# COMMUNITY HELP REFERRAL GUIDE

## BEYONDBLUE

1300 224 636



Beyondblue works to reduce the impact of anxiety, depression and suicide in the community by raising awareness and understanding, empowering people to seek help, and supporting recovery, management and resilience

## LIFELINE

13 11 14



Provides all Australians experiencing a personal crisis with access to online, phone and face-to-face crisis support and suicide prevention services.  
Trained Telephone Crisis Supporters will answer the call and:  
Listen to the persons situation  
Provide immediate support  
Assist to clarify options and choices available  
Provide that person with referral information for other services in their local area

## NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLING SERVICE

1800 737 732



National counselling helpline, information and support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.  
Is the customer experiencing sexual assault or domestic and family violence? Access counselling delivered by qualified, experienced professionals

## RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE

1300 769 489



Rural Financial Counselling Service Victoria – North West, is a free financial counselling service for farmers and small farm businesses in North West Victoria.  
Our Rural Financial Counsellors can work with you to provide information and develop options, while you make the decisions.  
Rural Financial Counsellors are available to meet with you on your farm, at your business, or elsewhere if required.  
The service is free and independent. Confidentiality is assured.

## SUICIDE CALL BACK SERVICE

1300 659 467



The Suicide Call Back Service is a 24-hour, nationwide service that provides telephone and online counselling to people 15 years and over.  
Assisting people suicidal, caring for someone suicidal or people bereaved by suicide.  
Health professionals supporting people affected by suicide

Local Organisations include:

**SUNRAYSIA (MILDURA) REGION**



Suite 2, 144-146 Lime Avenue Mildura

(03) 5021 2130



136 Lime Avenue Mildura

(03) 5051 0050



MALLEE FAMILY CARE

towards stronger more caring communities

122 Ninth Street Mildura

(03) 5023 5966



cnr Etiwanda Ave & 14th St Mildura

(03) 5023 1647



107-111 Twelfth St Mildura

(03) 5022 1006



140 Langtree Avenue Mildura

(03) 5021 6500



as above MASP

(03) 5021 4353



143A Lime Avenue Mildura

(03) 5018 4200



79 Lime Avenue Mildura

(03) 5023 5750



137 Thirteenth St Mildura

(03) 5022 5444



120 Madden Avenue Mildura

(03) 5018 4100

## SOUTHERN (SWAN HILL/KERANG) REGION



14-18 McCallum Street Swan Hill

**(03) 5033 1899**



70 Nyah Road Swan Hill

**(03) 5032 8600**



9 Nolan Street Kerang

**(03) 5450 3019**



MALLEE FAMILY CARE

*towards stronger more caring communities*

229 Beveridge Street Swan Hill

**(03) 5032 4479**



Mildura/Swan Hill/Kerang

**1800 243 002**