

For Immediate Release

Friday 26 June 2020

Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) calls for the proposed changes to Victim Services to be abandoned immediately.

Despite continued pleas from specialist organisations across the Women’s Legal Services, specialist Domestic and Family Violence and Women’s Health sector, the NSW Victim’s Commissioner plans to implement changes which will make it harder, or in some cases impossible, for vulnerable victim/survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence to receive support.

“These changes go against a trauma informed approach which is fundamental to Victim Services.” says Delia Donovan, Interim Chief Executive Officer from DVNSW. *“We are extremely concerned that despite consistent feedback from across the sector advising against these changes, they are intended for 1st July 2020.”*

Under the proposed changes, the burden of providing evidence will be placed on the victim/survivor rather than on support services and Victim Services as it stands currently. Further, there will be stricter added time-limits to have all evidence submitted. The existing trauma caused by Domestic and Family violence and additional pressure added through this process may prove too overwhelming for many women.

“The proposed changes will disproportionately affect people from communities such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse and regional and rural communities who already face significant challenges accessing support” says Ms Donovan.

The DVNSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Steering Committee has previously met with the Commissioner for victim’s rights and expressed their particular concerns about the impacts on women in their communities to access the help they need. Their views must be heard.

The changes also propose that victim/survivors will need to find their own counsellor which presents another barrier to accessing support.

DVNSW calls for the proposed changes to be abandoned and for the Commissioner of Victim’s Rights to undertake thorough consultation process with victims-survivors and their advocates prior to implementation any further changes.

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Domestic Violence NSW is the peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services in NSW. DVNSW provides a representative and advocacy function for specialist services and the women, families and communities they support. Their mission is to eliminate domestic and family violence through leadership in policy, advocacy, partnerships and the promotion of best practice.