

DRAFT Release

Thursday 13 August 2020

NSW Government Makes Hospital Care More Accessible for Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Victims

The NSW Government has reformed the state's hospital fee policy to make it more accessible to victims of domestic violence. Women and children who are ineligible for Medicare and experiencing domestic and family violence are now able to access the treatment they need without having to lodge a police report. **This change also includes waiving extortionate hospital fees for survivors.** The reform is removing the barriers for vulnerable victim-survivors, such as those on Temporary Protection Visas, so they can access immediate help when they need it most.

DVNSW welcomes the change in NSW Health policy to ensure that everyone who has suffered violence can access free care and support in hospital. The policy change is part of the NSW Government's COVID-19 response to domestic violence, after the Australian Institute of Criminology reported that cases of DFV had risen during the pandemic but a large proportion of victims were not reporting to police.

Domestic Violence NSW Interim CEO Delia Donovan says this is another step forward, and a vital barrier removed for women on temporary visas.

"Research has shown that many survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence don't report to police, which is why this policy change is so important," she said. **"Survivors may initially reach out to a friend, a colleague or to service directly.**

Donovan also advised that waiving hospital fees additionally removes stress and pressure on a survivor already experiencing a huge amount of trauma.

"We thank Health Minister Hazzard for responding to the DFV sector's concerns that people on temporary visas experiencing violence face barriers to accessing healthcare, and commends the NSW Government for developing a state-wide 24/7 DFV crisis response.

"We look forward to continuing to work together with the NSW Government towards a safer Australia."

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Media Spokespeople

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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.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence help can be found via:

- **1800RESPECT** or 1800 737 732 which offers a national counselling helpline, information and support
- **NSW Domestic Violence Line** 1800 65 64 63 which offers a state-wide counselling helpline, information and support
- **Men's Referral Service** 1300 766 491 for men, or friends and family of men using violence