



**Mark Speakman**

Attorney General

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### NEW LAW PROTECTS PETS FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence victim-survivors and their companion animals will have greater protections from abuse under new laws that commenced this weekend.

Attorney General and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Mark Speakman said the protection of animals will now be a standard Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) condition after [reforms passed Parliament in November](#).

“Perpetrators often use animals to coerce or control victims, threatening to hurt or kill pets to keep them in a relationship or as punishment for leaving,” Mr Speakman said.

“This cruelty and manipulation can leave victims terrified of the consequences for their beloved animals and can therefore delay or prevent them from leaving a violent situation. These reforms aim to help guard against this abhorrent form of abuse.”

Amendments to the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* will:

- change the definition of ‘intimidation’ to indicate explicitly that harm to, or harm threatened to, animals is a form of intimidation. (Intimidation is an existing criminal offence with a maximum penalty of five years’ imprisonment); and,
- prohibit harm to animals as a standard condition in all ADVOs and Apprehended Personal Violence Orders.

Delia Donovan, CEO of Domestic Violence NSW, the state’s leading organisation for specialist domestic violence services, said pets are an integral part of some people’s lives, and perpetrators often use them to gain control with threats to kill or hurt animals.

“These reforms are essential to improving the safety of people experiencing domestic violence, and we wholeheartedly support them,” Ms Donovan said.

RSPCA NSW CEO Steve Coleman said for too long, animals in domestic and family violence situations have not been given the recognition they deserved.

“We are pleased to see changes and the opportunity for more services to be equipped to support people and help animals live free from violence and abuse,” Mr Coleman said

In addition, the NSW Government has invested \$500,000 in the [Pets and Animal Welfare Support \(PAWS\) Grants Program](#). The funds have been awarded to 19 women’s refuges and animal welfare organisations across NSW, enabling them to better support companion animals and victims escaping domestic violence.

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