

For Immediate Release

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DVNSW Releases Report Outlining Concerns Over Federal Government Domestic Violence Grant

DVNSW has released a report outlining the concerns that have arisen in the implementation of the Escaping Violence Payment (EVP) Program.

The announcement of the EVP Program by the Federal Government August 2021 was initially welcomed by the sector, including DVNSW, as lack of access to funds is a key barrier that prevents victim-survivors from accessing safety and/or forces their return to unsafe situations. However, since the rollout commenced in September 2021, there have been serious concerns about the implementation of the program and challenges for victim-survivors trying to access the payment. DVNSW has continued to raise concerns with Minister Ruston, DSS, and Uniting Care, however underlying systemic issues within the EVP Program administration remain.

In response to the overwhelming number of concerns, DVNSW asked members to complete a survey of their experiences with EVP. 79 member services completed the survey, confirming previous anecdotal evidence revealing systemic issues within the EVP Program administration that are putting victim-survivors at risk, including:

- Dangerously long wait times and delays (up to 12 weeks)
- Lack of communication from EVP workers, leaving women uncertain of their choices
- No access to a cash payment (vouchers only), which severely limits options and freedoms to women escaping violence
- Difficulty having items/services approved for brokerage,
- Insistence on use of preferred suppliers for goods, even when it is not convenient for the victim-survivor
- Reports of payments being capped at \$4000, due to an unanticipated 'administration fee' that was never outlined in the initial fund allocation information

"Our report found a staggering 89% of specialist DFV services had experienced issues with the EVP process, and 72% reported their experience deterred them from referring clients to the program,' says Elise Phillips, Interim CEO of DVNSW. "The most concerning outcomes was that only 15% of services said victim-survivors had received the full \$5000, including vouchers."

Examples of direct member responses include:

“The biggest issue presently is about choice. Clients don't get to choose how they get vouchers. They get a limited number of options. A Kmart voucher is useless - can't be used online. Clients have the right of choice. Give them an EFTPOS card or a Visa debit card. Stop telling them how they can spend money that they are entitled to. It is NOT Wesley's money and being taken from some other budget - this is supposed to be an opportunity to help, support and empower. It's not.”

“It takes too long to process applications. The program is incredibly slow and clunky, this has meant client's escaping violence have not been able to access funds or furniture in a timely manner. It has led to traumatising of clients, and I have had to constantly apologise for the program delays.”

“Accessing the payment took around 3 months for a client I helped support. The outcome ended up being the client was offered \$1000 cash payment and \$500 grocery voucher.”

“The Federal Government needs to be doing **more** to ensure the smooth rollout of the program in order to help women and children fleeing violence,” says Ms Phillips. “DVNSW has proposed recommendations to improve the EVP by improving accessibility and offering dignity of choice to victim-survivors, decreasing delays in payments, reducing re-traumatisation of victim-survivors by improving EVP workers' responses, and reducing the burden of paperwork on DFV services.”

You can read the full report [here](#).

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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

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- **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