

**For Immediate Release**

**21 June 2022**

## **NSW Budget Announces Wrap-Around Support for Women Leaving Domestic Violence**

DVNSW applaud the NSW government on delivering **\$43.6 million** over four years for victim-survivors of domestic violence through the Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS) including:

- **\$37.6m over four years** for all WDVCASs to deliver case management
- **\$3.7 million** for a new WDVCAS online client management system
- **\$3.24 million** for a hearing support pilot in 14 WDVCAS locations.

*“DVNSW applaud funding in today’s budget for the Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDVCAS) to deliver supports to women in crisis due to domestic violence,”* says DVNSW Interim CEO, Elise Phillips. *“This is the largest single increase in WDVCAS funding since the introduction of Safer Pathways in 2014. A workforce strategy to ensure the capacity to deliver this and other DFV sector projects will be vital.”*

WDVCASs currently provide support during crisis and are funded to contact women within a business day of a domestic violence incident. Case management funding will enhance WDVCASs’ ability to provide effective, wrap around support to clients with complex needs. The hearing support pilot will mean women receive support for the duration of their court matters, not simply in the initial phase. The new client management system will reduce the administration workload for WDVCASs and allow more time for direct service delivery.

*“DVNSW advocated for WDVCAS resourcing in a pre-budget submission to treasury in January 2022 and are pleased to see that the initiatives have been funded,”* says Ms Phillips. *“Demand for the WDVCAS service has increased annually for more than five years. This funding will allow services to provide more than an initial crisis call, but thorough and ongoing supports as women navigate the complex justice and social support system.”*

Research has found that WDVCAS’s support is invaluable, with one research participant stating,

*“[Court] wasn’t that bad because I got with the Court Assistance Program, so that I didn’t have to see him. I could go into another room. That was a good experience... She stayed with me all day as well.<sup>1</sup>”*

*“Although we are happy to see the additional funding for WDVCAS, funding for medium and long term safe and affordable housing remains a gap and something DVNSW will continue to advocate for in the lead up to the 2023 NSW election.”* says Ms Phillips.

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<sup>1</sup> Laing, L. (2013). *‘It’s like this maze that you have to make your way through. ‘Women’s experiences of seeking a domestic violence protection order in NSW. P. 27.*

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**About WDVACS:**

The Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDVCAS) is the only specialist domestic and family violence service that covers the entire state; 27 services across regional, rural and metro areas. Overseen by the Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program (WDVCAP) within Legal Aid, the WDVACSs provide women and children with information, advocacy and safety planning. WDVACS workers are imbedded within their local courts and provide legal information to increase clients’ understanding of the ADVO and criminal justice process. Each WDVACS service has an Aboriginal focussed worker to support Aboriginal women in their safety after experiencing abuse. WDVACSs support Safety Action Meetings (SAMs), a cross-agency response to victims at serious threat of injury or death due to domestic violence.<sup>2</sup>

**About 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

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<sup>2</sup> Legal Aid NSW (2020). *Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program*. <https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/community-partnerships/womens-domestic-violence-court-advocacy-program>.