

**\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\***

## **VICTIMS GET 30 YEARS**



Victim Support Service (VSS) is proud to announce that the agency turns 30 in October this year. "We wish to pay our respects to all victims of crime in SA during this anniversary year", says Michael Dawson, Chief Executive. VSS has an excellent reputation and is well-known as a pioneer in developing victims' rights internationally. Mr Dawson believes that "VSS has become an icon in this field and is a credit to its founders and the South Australian community".

In 30 years VSS has helped over 35,000 crime victims (since records have been kept) to overcome the traumatic impact of violent crimes against the person, as well as the effects of other property and less traumatic crimes. "We have been providing this service for a long time and are specialists in dealing with the effects of crime and trauma recovery" and are called upon more and more to provide education and training to others. Mr Dawson proudly explains that "This is a very rewarding time for our staff and volunteers who gain great satisfaction from helping so many crime victims in their time of need". A great milestone was reached when seven country offices were opened to provide services to crime victims in rural areas, in addition to the Adelaide office. "We are the oldest and largest non-government crime victims service in Australia".

VSS has 25 qualified staff and nearly 80 trained volunteers who provide: free information; support; counselling; advocacy; consultancy, training and community education, and crime prevention programs to those effected by crime, as well as people in the health, welfare, justice and community sector who work with victims of crime.

Michael Dawson explains that "VSS has many changes it wants to see in the criminal justice system which would make it fairer to victims, more respectful of victims' needs, and a more participative environment. We believe there are things which can be done to give the community, especially victims, more faith in the system, trust it more and therefore participate to a greater degree by reporting more than the 50% of crime that they do now." He acknowledges there has been much progress in 30 years but that "victims are still the forgotten ones in many respects and we still have some way to go".

**\*\*\*End of Press Release\*\*\***



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