

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12 April 2016

Commonwealth and States coming together on tackling family and domestic abuse

The Social Development Committee examining family and domestic abuse in South Australia has released its recommendations, calling on the State Government to “expand the Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program throughout South Australia to play a coordination role in helping victims navigate their way through the court system.”

The Victim Support Service (VSS) is funded by the South Australian Office for Women to deliver the Women’s Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service (WDVCAS). WDVCAS provides free independent legal advice to women on all matters relating to intervention orders and residential tenancies.

VSS Chief Executive Julian Roffe said the WDVCAS provides a greater level of support within the court system for women who experience family and domestic abuse. “Since its inception in July 2015, the WDVCAS has assisted more than 350 women,” Mr Roffe said.

“If the State Government commits to the Committee’s recommendation to expand WDVCAS, hundreds more South Australian women will benefit from free legal assistance to help them navigate the criminal justice system and recover from the impact of family and domestic abuse.”

The findings of the Committee report suggest that the safety and wellbeing of child victims of family and domestic abuse should also be a priority.

“The Committee report calls on the State Government to ensure that therapeutic support services for children experiencing family and domestic abuse are expanded,” Mr Roffe said.

“Children are the hidden victims of domestic violence. Everyday, our Helpdesk receives calls from parents seeking support for their kids who witness the impact of abuse yet we know the depth of support available to them is far short of what it should be.”

The Committee’s findings follow similar reports from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children and the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence.

VSS Chief Executive Julian Roffe said the increasing synergy between Commonwealth and States will be warmly welcomed by family and domestic abuse service providers and victim advocates.

“What we’re hearing from the various tiers of government is strong agreement around supporting a range of key initiatives to improve access to services for victims and prevent family and domestic abuse,” said Mr Roffe.

“In tandem, the various Commonwealth and State enquiries have called for the introduction of Safety Hubs in local communities to make it easier for victims to find help and gain access to a broader range of services.”

“There is also strong support from all sides for an investment in future generations through the expansion of respectful relationships education in schools.”

To ensure that sensible proposals lead to positive outcomes for victims, Mr Roffe said that an immediate funding boost is necessary to ensure that existing family and domestic abuse services can continue to meet the needs of at risk women and children. “Last year VSS saw a 49% increase in family and domestic abuse referrals.”

“Support services in South Australia are under huge pressure to meet growing demand from victims of family and domestic abuse.”

“If extra funding for specialised family and domestic abuse services in South Australia is not found, hundreds of women and their children will remain at risk.”

Victims of crime seeking information, therapeutic and practical support can call the 1800VICTIM Helpline (1800 842 846).

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Victoria Laughton

0419 668 437

media@victimsa.org

[@VictimSSsa](https://www.instagram.com/VictimSSsa)

Victim Support Service (VSS) is a statewide, community based not-for-profit organisation in South Australia that provides practical and therapeutic support to more than 40,000 victims and witnesses of crime each year in South Australia. Our services include:

- information and advocacy
- therapeutic intervention
- practical assistance
- support for victims of family/domestic violence.

For more information go to www.victimsa.org.