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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Victim Support Service says demand for victim services on the rise despite drop in reported crime

New figures released by Victim Support Service (VSS) have put a spotlight on increasing demand for victim services in South Australia despite a decline in reported offences.

VSS Chief Executive Julian Roffe said the figures reflect the success of the organisation's new service model in improving the accessibility of help for victims.

"In late 2014, we commenced the roll out of our Statewide 1800 VICTIM Helpline to improve victims' access to counselling, information and practical support. Last year we helped over 43,000 victims to cope with and recover from crime".

VSS Figures: A Snapshot of 2014-15

- Client Contacts up 62% to 43,000
- Client referrals up 24% to over 3,000
- Regional clients up 50% to over 1100
- Over 100 clients supported as part of the Royal Commission in to Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- Home security upgrades for victims of domestic violence up 53% to over 1,000 (representing a 115% increase in 4 years)
- 443 Family Safety Meetings across 18 Police LSAs
- 390 victims supported through the court system by the VSS Court Companion Service

Mr Roffe said the partnership between VSS and South Australia Police played a significant role in the success of the 1800 VICTIM Helpline.

"Around half of referrals to our service come from police. This shows that SAPOL are doing a good job informing victims of their rights, and where to get help with navigating the criminal justice system when they need it.

"We're very pleased that new Police Commissioner Grant Stevens will be attending our Annual General Meeting as our special guest and co-signing a new Memorandum of Understanding".

Mr Roffe says high demand for support from victims, particularly from women affected by domestic violence, shows no signs of slowing down in South Australia.

"VSS has been inundated by contacts from victims of family and domestic violence this year. We've responded by expanding our range of services to include a new legal support service - the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service (WDVCAS).

“The WDVCAS provides free legal advice and court support to women affected by domestic violence who need help with applying for or varying an intervention order.”

Mr Roffe says the WDVCAS has helped over 100 women since the start of the program on 1 July 2015, and that resources are already being stretched to meet demand.

“Greater investment in victim services is needed,” he said.

“We know from Senate Estimates that the Victims of Crime Fund is forecast to grow to over \$360m over the next four years and that demand for support from victims is clearly on the rise”.

“But our forecasts show that our resources will actually shrink over the same period as our costs increase at a rate over and above that of our annual CPI funding increase.”

“So ironically, we’ll be trying to meet higher levels of demand with fewer resources at a time when the South Australian Government is flush with the largest funding pool for victims in history.”

The VSS AGM will be held on Monday 26 October 2015 at The Police Club from 4:30pm to 6:30pm.

To register, please call 1800 VICTIM (1800 842 846) or visit www.victimsa.org

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