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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New 'Tracking App' for victims of crime

\$1 million from the State Budget will go to SAPOL to develop a Crime Tracking App for victims of crime.

The app will give victims the power to track the investigation and progress of their reported crimes through the judicial system.

Victim Support Service (VSS) Chief Executive Julian Roffe has welcomed this initiative, amongst others, announced by the State Government in the Budget.

“A key issue for many victims who report crime is feeling left out or ignored during the police investigation and subsequent court process. We hope the introduction of this app will make the whole process, from the initial report of a crime right through to sentencing, more transparent for victims wanting information about their case,” Mr Roffe said.

Funding has also been allocated to the development of a Domestic Violence Serial Offender Database.

The database will help agencies involved in the Family Safety Framework (FSF) to identify domestic violence serial offenders through improved information sharing and risk assessment.

“VSS is a core agency involved in the FSF. We hope the introduction of this database will make serial offenders more accountable for the harm they cause their victims”, said Mr Roffe.

The rollout of the Attorney General’s new Disability Justice Plan will see the implementation of a Communication Assistant Scheme to support people with a disability to support police investigations and engage with the court process.

“As a founding member of Barriers to Justice (B2J), VSS has worked hard in collaboration with other agencies to call on the criminal justice system to be more responsive and accessible to people with disability. We are pleased the Attorney General is acting on our collective call to action”, Mr Roffe said.

More good news for victims comes with the extension of funding for homelessness prevention programs under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

“We believe every woman has the right to feel safe at home. Another year of funding means we can continue our Staying Home, Staying Safe (SHSS) Program. The security upgrades we provide have helped hundreds of



women who have left domestic violence relationships to feel safe in their own home”, said Mr Roffe.

But the uncertainty about funding beyond June 2015 is cause for concern. The SHSS program is jointly funded by the Federal and State governments, but a full scale review of funding for homeless and housing programs by the Abbott government has left a question mark hanging over future funding.

VSS welcomed the State Government intention to double the maximum payout to victims under the Victims of Crime Compensation (VOCC) Scheme.

VSS actively advocated on behalf of victims of crime before the state election, calling on all political parties to increase compensation amounts and expand services for victims.

From 2015-16, the maximum compensation amounts payable to victims of crime will increase from \$50,000 to \$100,000, funded by an extra \$3.3 million a year from the Victims of Crime Fund.

Richard Fletcher of Fletchers Lawyers says the statutory changes to the VOCC Scheme are “long overdue”.

“For over 20 years the statutory maximum of \$50,000 has remained static”, Mr Fletcher said.

“The doubling of the statutory maximum to \$100,000 will ensure greater recognition is afforded to victims who suffer catastrophic physical or psychological injuries which result in significant economic loss. The main beneficiaries of the proposed changes to the current scale will be children who have been sexually abused with devastating impact on their schooling and adults who are no longer able to work as a result of serious physical injuries.”

From 2015/16, co-victims of homicide under 18 years of age will be able to apply for grief payments.

“This is a positive step toward a fairer system for young victims, but there is still work to be done. Even though the maximum amount for grief payments has increased, and young people will be able access these payments for the first time, a claimant does not have an indivisible right to a claim. This means grief payments have to be shared between members of a grieving family,” said Mr Roffe.

The changes to the VOCC Scheme will also affect funeral payments.

“The proposed increase for funeral payments from \$7,000 to \$14,000 will ensure most families who have lost loved ones as a result of homicide will no longer need to use their own funds to make up the shortfall in relation to funeral costs”, Mr Fletcher said.



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“The compensation increases are a win for victims, but we must remember that the VOCC Scheme is not perfect. It’s not retrospective. This is a significant barrier for many victims wanting to claim compensation for an historical offence”, Mr Roffe said.

“The current limitation leaves many claimants, particularly families of homicide victims, with a sense of injustice as a result of offers of compensation which are often perceived as insulting given the gravity of their suffering. A greater sense of vindication and recognition will almost certainly follow a change in this aspect of the current law”, said Mr Fletcher.

“Victims are being short-changed. The level of injury that needs to be established before a victim can make a claim is too high, and the principles set by the Supreme Court in 1995 for assessing compensation for non-financial loss are unfair and outdated”, said Mr Roffe.

“The current VOCC Scheme is inequitable and in serious need of reform. The State Government has committed to reviewing the scale used to assess VOCC claims. This is a step in the right direction. We will be calling on the State Government to keep this commitment.”

Victims and witnesses seeking support or information can contact the Victim Support Service Helpline on [1800VICTIM](tel:1800VICTIM) or by visiting the website at www.victimsa.org.

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