



MEDIA RELEASE

Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC
Attorney General
Minister for Citizenship
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Domestic violence victims guided through the court process

The Keneally Government has today launched a state-wide guide that will assist victims of domestic violence through the legal justice process and help them obtain the necessary safeguards they need against their abusers.

NSW Attorney General John Hatzistergos and Member for Camden Geoff Corrigan today launched the ***Your Court, Your Safety*** guide in Campbelltown as part of the State Government's \$50 million Domestic Family Violence Action Plan, *Stop the Violence End the Silence*.

"Figures released by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research indicate that in 2008 there were almost 26,000 domestic violence related assaults in NSW," Mr Hatzistergos said.

"In fact, since the introduction of the Domestic Violence Act in that same year there have been 15,665 convictions for Domestic Violence offences including 1,431 convictions for the domestic violence offence of stalking, intimidation or harassment," he said.

"Domestic violence, however, is still one of the most underreported of crimes in the state and victims of this kind of abuse need to be given as much support as possible to break the cycle of violence," he said.

Mr Hatzistergos said that going to court can be a difficult experience for victims of domestic and family violence, particularly when they or the Police are applying for an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order.

"Victims throughout the community need to be aware of their rights so that they can make informed decisions about the safety of their family as well as themselves," he said.

"This guide takes victims of domestic violence step by step through court procedures, explaining in plain language what legal terms mean and the responsibilities of all parties.

"Contact details for a range of domestic violence support services available in NSW and frequently asked questions are also listed in the guide.

"The dynamics of domestic and family violence in relationships and its effect on children are explained as well as further steps such as going to the Family Court," he said.

Minister for Women, Jodi McKay welcomed the initiative saying the booklet would help ensure all victims of domestic and family violence receive the same reliable information.

"The guide will be given to victims at their first contact with justice agencies and support services to consult throughout the court process and to aid their recovery from violence," Ms McKay said. This guide is one of a number of initiatives currently being undertaken by the Keneally Government to support victims of domestic violence and their families. Other initiatives include:

- The establishment of the Domestic Violence Death Review Team, which will review domestic violence related homicides and make recommendations on systemic changes to ways to reduce the incidence of domestic violence related deaths;

- The Domestic Violence Court Intervention Model – which improves safety and support for victims of domestic and family violence in contact with the criminal justice system through a
- Victim’s Advocate and collaboration of Government agencies, including Police, Community Services and the Department of Justice and Attorney General;
- Increased funding of the Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program by \$2.7 million to \$6.9 million, so that there is a state-wide network of more than 100 courts where victims can access support workers; and
- The introduction in 2008 of a domestic violence Act for the first time, and permanently marking domestic violence offences on the perpetrator’s record.

Mr Corrigan said the Government’s initiatives would greatly benefit the community.

“No member of the community should ever feel they have to tolerate being a victim of domestic violence and the **Your Court, Your Safety** guide is another link in the chain of initiatives helping to break the cycle of abuse,” he said.

Karen Mifsud, a solicitor of the Women’s Legal Resource Centre and contributor to the Guide also welcomed its release.

“Women’s Legal Services NSW welcomes this user friendly guide to navigating a complex system.

We believe it will assist domestic violence victims to understand the legal process and seek protection,” she said

The Department of Justice and Attorney General has produced the Guide in consultation with other justice agencies including NSW Police Force, Legal Aid NSW and the Office of Women’s Policy.

For more information about the Guide please visit www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd or contact the Crime Prevention Division of the Department of Justice and Attorney General on 8688 3277.

To obtain a copy of the NSW Government’s Domestic Violence action plan Stop the Violence End the Silence, please visit: www.women.nsw.gov.au