



Women's Domestic Violence
Court Advocacy Service Network Inc

Media Release

Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service NSW applauds media spotlight on an issue often hidden in the shadows and looks forward to the launch of NSW state government initiatives to address domestic violence.

Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service NSW Inc (WDVCAS NSW) acknowledges the valuable role of the media in raising community awareness about domestic violence which is a crime which usually takes place behind closed doors

"WDVCAS NSW also acknowledges the important role of the media in highlighting the seriousness of a regrettably widespread crime and in encouraging the community to confront it and not turn away", says WDVCAS NSW Executive Officer, Helen Brereton.

It has taken a long time for government agencies and many in the community to accept that domestic violence is a crime. In the past, women and children were left isolated and vulnerable in violent homes because their abuse was seen as a private family matter and not taken seriously in law or public policy.

This is beginning to change. "WDVCAS NSW is hopeful that the reforms about to be implemented by the NSW Government will mean such isolation and lack of support is a thing of the past," Ms Brereton said.

The NSW Government's domestic violence reform framework, expected to be launched at two sites later this year, includes the creation of a Safety Action Meetings in a victim's local area. The meetings will be chaired by a senior Police Officer from the area and will bring together senior people from local non-government and government organisations authorised to develop a safety action plan for women who have been assessed as being at serious risk of further violence. The 28 WDVCASs across NSW welcome the opportunity to be hosting the Local Coordination Points for the Safety Action Meetings.

"I believe the Safety Action Meeting is a great idea because it prioritises the needs of women who are at highest risk and because it will make sure senior officials around the table are held accountable" says Charmaine Weldon, a WDVCAS Aboriginal Specialist Worker and WDVCAS NSW board member. Charmaine endured decades of domestic violence and now works to support and encourage other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to come forward to get the help they need. She is a strong advocate for these women in her community.

"An integrated, whole of government / whole of sector initiative such as the reform framework requires a great deal of goodwill and hard work to succeed. WDVCAS NSW acknowledges that there will almost certainly be issues and challenges, including a shortage of specialized domestic violence services for WDVCAS to make appropriate referrals. Despite the challenges we are committed to embracing the opportunities for enhanced victim safety and support offered by the new approach," Ms Brereton added.

For more information about WDVCAS NSW Inc go to our website www.wdvcasnsw.org.au

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