

Media Statement

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for Immediate Release

Service at the coalface says: Safer Pathway is delivering positive outcomes for women

“Safer Pathway is clearly delivering positive outcomes for women. The measure of recidivism does not capture increased level of safety and support that our clients tell us about every day,” says Renata Field, Director of WDV CAS NSW, the peak body representing the WDV CAS services. The most recent BOCSAR evaluation (3 May, 2018) does not acknowledge that specialist WDV CAS workers also complete the assessment tool with clients and can upgrade the threat level according to their professional judgement and the concerns of the women themselves. The research also fails to interview women and understand their experiences.

WDV CAS has experienced a 104% increase in clients attending the service since the implementation of Safer Pathway¹ with a 20% funding increase. The Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDV CAS) is the lead agency delivering Safer Pathway in NSW. 71% of clients were previously unknown to WDV CAS, showing that women who previously fell through the gaps in accessing support are now being contacted and referred².

“Reporting Domestic Violence is paramount to a woman’s safety. The BOCSAR evaluation does not reflect the hard work done by WDV CAS’ to ensure women have options and feel safer – knowing there is a service available for support, regardless of whether they are going to court or not,” says Chair of WDV CAS NSW, Tanya Whitehouse. “The BOCSAR evaluation does not capture the full picture of how collaboratively the Police work with WDV CASs across NSW to support women and their children. Every day the WDV CASs talk to women who are not only pleased that someone has called them to discuss their safety and their needs, but are also grateful that they are assessed by DV Specialist Workers around the complexity that is Domestic Violence. Domestic Violence has so many facets within it and the complexities must be assessed by specialist workers such as WDV CAS”.

29 WDV CASs operate across NSW, with 9 services in regional and 10 services in rural areas. Under Safer Pathway, WDV CAS workers contact women who have been a victim of a domestic violence incident involving Police within one working day of the incident to offer safety referrals and support. WDV CAS services also have 13 Multicultural specialist workers and 24 Aboriginal Specialist workers.

The Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program, administered by Legal Aid NSW, has been running for over 20 years and is the only state-wide specialist Domestic Violence service that works on a local level throughout the state. WDV CASs are in a unique situation as their funding is administered by Legal Aid NSW and auspiced by a local NGO which provides an essential link between the justice cluster, the Domestic Violence sector and individuals experiencing domestic violence, thus ensuring that women receive support through the labyrinth of services required to increase their safety and empowerment in their journey to escape domestic violence.

Allwood and Associates are currently undertaking an independent evaluation of WDV CAS services

¹ Data retrieved from the WDV CAP database, February 2018,
<https://wdvcasnetwork.worldsecuresystems.com/Publications/WDVCAS.Service.Stats.2014-2017.pdf>

² Review of the Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service implementation of actions 1.3 & 2.2 of the Domestic Violence Justice Strategy, January 2017,
<http://www.wdvcasnw.org.au/pdf/DVJS-Executive-Summary.pdf>

including focus groups with clients and client surveys, due to be released in July 2018. Consultants ARTD are also conducting an evaluation of Safer Pathway including the DVSAT for the NSW Government, also due to be released in mid-2018.

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Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service NSW Inc. is the peak body for 28 Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services across NSW.

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