

Media Statement

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for Immediate Release

NSW Government recognises the vital work of WDVCSs in its' 2016-17 budget

The NSW Government has recognised the vital work of the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS) in its domestic violence funding announcements of the 2016-17 budget. In an announcement made on 11th June by the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Pru Goward, the NSW Government committed to increase the core funding to WDVCSs by \$6.3 million over 4 years, as well as committing \$53 million for *Safer Pathway* over the next 4 years, including \$7.8 million for the roll out of 19 sites in 2016-7.

“This funding commitment recognises the life-saving work that is undertaken by the WDVCS on a daily basis,” says Anita Cox, Chair of WDVCS NSW Inc. “Furthermore, the NSW Government is recognising the necessity to provide dedicated, ongoing funding for crisis and early crisis intervention services such as WDVCS, alongside early intervention programs and programs targeting perpetrators.”

Renata Field, Director of WDVCS NSW Inc. says, “The rise in profile of domestic and family violence has led to an increasing number of women seeking help, and an ever increasing demand for our service.” In the period July – December 2015 there was an 89% increase in the number of clients supported by WDVCS compared with the same 6 month period in the previous year¹. Since the last substantial funding increase was made to WDVCS in 2009, there has been a 180% increase in the number of clients supported².

“This extra commitment to our core funding will allow us to increase the hours of staff in order to offer the support so desperately needed by women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.” says Ms Field. “WDVCAS NSW Inc. welcomes the expedited roll-out of *Safer Pathway*. The funding to *Safer Pathway* will offer women across NSW the specialised, integrated response which is improving the safety and the lives of women and children in the 6 launch sites.”

Safer Pathway is a reform which offers additional support to women experiencing domestic and family violence, through an integrated, interagency response to victims coordinated by a Local Coordination Point, hosted by the WDVCS. As part of *Safer Pathway*, women who have accessed Police due to an incident of domestic violence are automatically referred to the WDVCS's Local Coordination Point for follow up support one business day after the incident. The 6 sites already running have had extremely successful results with the increased level of support and safety they are able to offer women. In areas with *Safer Pathway*, a fortnightly Safety Action Meeting is held which brings together support workers from government and non-government agencies to offer wrap-around support to improve the safety of women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. *Safer Pathway* is a successful NSW Government initiative which is saving the lives of women and children in domestically violent situations.

WDVCAS NSW Inc. eagerly awaits the announcement of the specific localities that will host the new 19 *Safer Pathway* sites.

The Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program, funded by Legal Aid NSW, has been running for over 20 years and is the only state wide specialist Domestic Violence service that works at a

¹ Data retrieved from the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program database, 16.2.16.

² Based on a comparison between the 6 month period July-December 2009 and July-December 2016. Data retrieved from the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program database, 16.2.16.

local level throughout the state. WDVCSs unique situation of being funded by Legal Aid and auspiced by a local NGO 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.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Renata Field, Director, WDVCS NSW Inc. 0474 779 847

Anita Cox, Chair, WDVCS NSW Inc. 0405 901 207

Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service NSW Inc. is the peak body for 28 Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services across NSW. WDVCS NSW Inc. and the 28 WDVCSs across NSW are funded by Legal Aid NSW through the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program.