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Some victims' rights restored but still not good enough

Yesterday the NSW Attorney General outlined how victims compensation impacted by the new scheme would be dealt with by the Government.

"We warmly welcome the NSW Government's acknowledgment that a mistake was made and that in the interests of justice and fairness this mistake should be fixed," says Mr Nassim Arrage, Chairperson Community Legal Centres NSW.

"Survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault have been unfairly affected by the new law. Take 'Susie'*, for example, who has a significant psychological injury as a result of years of domestic violence. Under the old scheme she was entitled to a payment of up to \$50,000. Susie was assessed under the new scheme. Under the new scheme, Susie received a payment of just \$1,500," explains Ms Helen Campbell, Executive Officer, Women's Legal Services NSW. "Susie now has the chance to have her application re-assessed under the old rules and to receive the substantial compensation she needs to get her life back together."

"While commending the government for listening to the voices of survivors of violence, we are concerned by the very short time frame in which applicants have to reapply – only 12 months," says Ms Emma Golledge, Acting Director, Kingsford Legal Centre.

"It may take a long time to contact some victims – for example, in the case of Susie, due to the complex trauma she has experienced, she may not have stable housing or have difficulty in understanding official correspondence," says Ms Campbell. "How will she know to contact Victims Services?"

"It is important that these changes are accompanied by a comprehensive and widespread awareness raising campaign so victims hear about it through agencies they come into contact with or for those not accessing services through culturally appropriate media, such as the Koori Mail and community radio," says Ms Rachael Martin. Rachael Martin, Principal Solicitor Wurringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre.

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* not her real name