

23 June 2020

Ms. Dubravka Šimonovic,

Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences

By email: [vaw@ohchr.org](mailto:vaw@ohchr.org)

Working Group on discrimination against women and girls

By email: [wgdiscriminationwomen@ohchr.org](mailto:wgdiscriminationwomen@ohchr.org)

Ms. Claudia Mahler,

Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons

By email: [olderpersons@ohchr.org](mailto:olderpersons@ohchr.org)

Dear Ms Šimonovic, Ms Mahler and Working Group members,

**Urgent communication relating to proposed changes to Victims Support Scheme in New South Wales, Australia, prior to comprehensive statutory review**

1. # This communication is respectfully submitted on behalf of the signatories to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls; and to the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons for your urgent action.
2. # This communication relates to proposed changes to the Victims Support Scheme in New South Wales, Australia (**Victims Support Scheme**) which if implemented will disproportionately impact women, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, refugee and migrant women including women on temporary visas, women with disability, women in regional, rural and remote communities, women in prison, LGBTIQ+ communities, younger and older women. This is because the proposed changes primarily impact people who have experienced complex trauma, including gendered violence such as domestic violence, sexual violence, child abuse and child sexual abuse as well as the families of homicide victims. The changes primarily impact people seeking a component of victims support called

recognition payments, 74% of who are women<sup>1</sup>, and people seeking counselling, 76% of whom are women.<sup>2</sup>

3. # We acknowledge the gendered nature of child sexual abuse - it is estimated the lifetime prevalence of child sexual abuse in Australia before age 18 will be at least 30% for females and 12% for males.<sup>3</sup>
4. # We also acknowledge that boys, men and people who are non-binary have also been significantly impacted by child sexual abuse, as highlighted by Australia's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.<sup>4</sup>
5. # Further, on average, disclosures of child sexual abuse are 22 years after the abuse.<sup>5</sup> The significant delays in reporting and seeking help to recover means that victim-survivors may be older people. Almost one in three survivors who attended private sessions with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia were aged 60 years or older at the time of their private session.<sup>6</sup> We are therefore also concerned by the disproportionate impact of the proposed NSW Victims Support changes on older people who have experienced child sexual abuse.
6. # The signatories to this letter believe the proposed changes to Victims Support are in violation of the right to equality and non-discrimination under Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (**CEDAW**) as well as Australia's due diligence obligations under that treaty and in the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995* including "access to just and effective remedies" in response to violence against women;<sup>7</sup> the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health under article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (**ICESCR**); and the United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (**Basic Principles**).

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<sup>1</sup> Victims Services NSW Department of Justice, *Victims Support Data Profiles 2017-18: Applications for Victims Support*, p2, accessed at: [https://www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/profile\\_2017-18\\_support-summ.pdf](https://www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/profile_2017-18_support-summ.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Victims Services NSW Department of Justice, *Victims Support Data Profiles 2017-18: Counselling applications*, p 1 accessed at: [https://www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/profile\\_2017-18\\_counsel.pdf](https://www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/profile_2017-18_counsel.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Ben Mathews, Kerryann Walsh, Michael Dunne, Ilan Katz, Fiona Arney, Daryl Higgins, Olivia Octoman, Samantha Parkinson, Shona Bates, *Scoping study for research into the prevalence of child abuse in Australia*, Social Policy Research Centre, 2016, p59 (66) accessed at:

[https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/research\\_report\\_-\\_scoping\\_study\\_for\\_research\\_into\\_prevalence\\_of\\_child\\_sexual\\_abuse\\_in\\_australia\\_-\\_causes.pdf](https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/research_report_-_scoping_study_for_research_into_prevalence_of_child_sexual_abuse_in_australia_-_causes.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Australia's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse access at: <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>

<sup>5</sup> Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Interim Report Volume 1* (2014), p6 (13) accessed at: [https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/interim\\_report\\_volume-1.pdf](https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/interim_report_volume-1.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Final Report: Private Sessions, Volume 5*, Table N.7, accessed at: [https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final\\_report\\_-\\_volume\\_5\\_private\\_sessions.pdf](https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/final_report_-_volume_5_private_sessions.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995*, paragraph 124(d) accessed at: [https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing\\_Declaration\\_and\\_Platform\\_for\\_Action.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf)

7. # The signatories called on the New South Wales (**NSW**) Government, Australia to stop the proposed Victims Support changes since 20 April 2020 when the changes were first announced. Neither the need nor urgency of these reforms has been established.
8. # The signatories have instead called for the NSW Government to immediately commence the scheduled statutory review of the *Victims Rights and Support Act* which established the Victims Support Scheme. This review should be trauma informed, victim-survivor centric, victim-survivor led and involve a comprehensive consultation process. The signatories believe that the review will provide a process by which a thorough and systematic review of the scheme can be undertaken and which can consider issues such as efficiencies of the scheme which are said to be underlying drivers of the proposed changes.
9. # For information about the signatories to this communication, please see Appendix A.

### ***Victims Support in New South Wales, Australia***

10. #All Australian States and Territories currently have individual schemes to compensate or support victims of crime. NSW first established a Victims Compensation Scheme in 1987. This Scheme was abolished in 2013 and replaced by a Victims Support Scheme.
11. #Prior to the establishment of the NSW Victims Support Scheme, a NSW Government commissioned report recommended any new Victims Support Scheme be as *"simple and efficient"* as possible.<sup>8</sup>
12. #The Government commissioned report recommended *"Any changes to the scheme should ensure that all claimants have an equal opportunity to receive support with completing and submitting their applications"* and case co-ordinators within the Government Department Victims Services be appointed to undertake a range of roles, including to *"help them [victims-survivors] collect the documents required to lodge a claim ...."*<sup>9</sup>
13. #The *Victims Rights and Support Act 2013* was introduced on 7 May 2013. The Act established the role of Commissioner of Victims Rights.
14. #The cornerstone of the new NSW Victims Support Scheme was to be its accessibility. The NSW Government stated it *"adopted PricewaterhouseCoopers' recommendations"* and that *"Staff within victims services in the Department of Attorney General and Justice will assist victims to quickly access appropriate help under the Victims Support Scheme by assessing victims' immediate needs and preparing an appropriately tailored support package"*.<sup>10</sup>
15. #The abolishing of the Victims Compensation scheme in 2013 saw the removal of fees for lawyers to complete applications and disbursements to cover the cost of collecting evidence given the roles to be undertaken by Victims Services staff.

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<sup>8</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers, *NSW Attorney General and Justice Review of the Victims Compensation Fund*, 12 July 2012, p69, accessed at: [https://www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/tp\\_report-pwc-vcf-review.pdf](https://www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/tp_report-pwc-vcf-review.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p69-70.

<sup>10</sup> Second Reading Speech to introduce the Bill in NSW Parliament, Victims Rights and Support Bill 2013, 7 May 2013

## **Components of Victims Support**

16. #NSW Victims Support includes counselling; financial assistance, including immediate needs and economic loss; and a recognition payment.
17. #Victims-survivors of crime are eligible for an initial 22 hours of counselling, with the possibility of extension of hours and with victims-survivors of child sexual abuse eligible for unlimited counselling.<sup>11</sup>
18. #Currently there is an Immediate Needs Support Package for victims-survivors of domestic violence which is working well. Applicants must apply for this support within two years of the act of violence or, if the act of violence was as a child, two years after the day of turning 18 years.<sup>12</sup>
19. #Victims-survivors of crime are eligible for a financial assistance package. Applicants must apply for this support within two years of the act of violence or, if the act of violence was as a child, two years after the day of turning 18 years.<sup>13</sup>
20. #There are higher evidentiary requirements for a recognition payment – two forms of evidence – one to establish act of violence and medical evidence to establish act of injury.<sup>14</sup> Victims-survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse have longer to apply for a recognition payment.<sup>15</sup> There is no time limit for victims-survivors of child sexual abuse to apply for a recognition payment.<sup>16</sup>

## **Proposed changes to Victims Support**

21. #On 20 April 2020 the Commissioner of Victims Rights informed stakeholders by email that proposed changes to Victims Support would commence from 27 April 2020.
22. #The proposed changes include:
  - 22.1 #Victims-survivors to find their own counsellor from a list of over 600 entries of approved counsellors on the Victims Services website.
  - 22.2 #Applications will not be accepted unless accompanied by all necessary evidence (despite strict time limits for applying for Victims Support). This would require applicants to collect all the relevant evidence on their own.
  - 22.3 #Identification documentation is required for all applications for Victims Support.

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<sup>11</sup> Clause 7 of the *Victims Rights and Support Regulation 2019 NSW*

<sup>12</sup> Section 40(1) of the *Victims Rights Support Act 2013 NSW*

<sup>13</sup> Section 40(1) of the *Victims Rights Support Act 2013 NSW*

<sup>14</sup> Section 39(b) of the *Victims Rights Support Act 2013 NSW*

<sup>15</sup> Generally, there is a 2 year time limit to apply for a recognition payment or if the act of violence was as a child, 2 years after the day of turning 18 years: Section 40 (1) of the *Victims Rights Support Act 2013 NSW*. In recognition of delays in reporting domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse, there are longer time limits to apply for recognition payments in these circumstances – within 10 years of the act of violence or, if the act of violence was as a child, ten years after the day of turning 18 years: Section 40 (5) of the *Victims Rights Support Act 2013 NSW*.

<sup>16</sup> Section 40 (7) of the *Victims Rights Support Act 2013 NSW*

23. #These changes were announced during COVID-19, with little notice and with no consultation with the bodies established for this purpose, including the Victims Advisory Board, established by the *Victims Rights and Support Act 2013*<sup>17</sup>, and the Victims of Crime Interagency.
24. #On 22 April 2020, over 35 women's, community and human rights organisations wrote an Open Letter to the NSW Attorney General and Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence calling for proper consultation.<sup>18</sup>
25. #On 24 April 2020, the Secretary of the Department of Communities and Justice confirmed there would be a two-week delay in implementation of reforms while the Commissioner of Victims Rights consulted with those who raised concerns.
26. #Representatives from Community Legal Centres NSW met with the Commissioner of Victims Rights on 30 April 2020 and provided written comments expressing concerns about the proposed reforms and providing an alternative proposal on 1 May 2020.<sup>19</sup> Community Legal Centres NSW recommended consultation on this proposal.
27. #A further period of time was provided for consultation. The week of 18 May 2020 the Commissioner met with the Victims Advisory Board, the Victims of Crime Interagency and Community Legal Centres NSW to discuss the proposals, with further feedback due by 29 May 2020.
28. #Section 119 of the *Victims Rights and Support Act 2013* requires there be a statutory review three years after assent of the Act and for there to be subsequent reviews at intervals of "*not less than 3 years and not greater than 5 years*". The Act was assented to on 3 June 2013. The first review was undertaken in 2016. A subsequent review is due any time from now until June 2021.
29. #On 29 May 2020, an Open Letter was sent to the Commissioner of Victims Rights calling for the proposed changes not to proceed and instead for the statutory review to commence immediately with proper consultation and be trauma informed and victim-survivor led.<sup>20</sup> Over 85 organisations and 435 individuals have signed the Open Letter.

## Impacts of proposed changes

30. #The concerns of the signatories to this letter include:

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<sup>17</sup> *Victims Rights and Support Act 2013 NSW*, sections 109-111

<sup>18</sup> Open letter to NSW Attorney General calling for proper consultation with victims-survivors and their advocates, 22 April 2020 accessed at: <https://www.wlsnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Open-Letter-in-response-to-proposed-changes-to-NSW-Victims-Support-Scheme-fa.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Community Legal Centres NSW, Letter to Commissioner with alternative proposal, 1 May 2020 access at: <https://www.wlsnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Letter-to-Commissioner-Victims-Rights-010520-fa.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Open Letter Commissioner Victims Rights, 29 May 2020 accessed at: <https://www.clcnsw.org.au/open-letter-proposed-changes-nsw-victims-support-scheme>

30.1 #That requiring an applicant to collect all evidence to support their claim before they can submit an application would mean some applicants will miss out on Victims Support due to failing to meet strict time limits, denying them access to a remedy to which they are entitled.<sup>21</sup>

30.2 #That many victims-survivors and particularly victims-survivors of complex trauma, including domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and child sexual abuse, need support to collect evidence and a failure to provide adequate support can compound trauma, undermine the right to health and limit “*access to just and effective remedies*”.<sup>22</sup>

30.3 #That many victims-survivors need assistance to locate a counsellor, with many preferring to elect to be allocated a counsellor by Victims Services in their geographical location to help them in their recovery. To have to select a counsellor from a list of over 600 entries for approved counsellors can be paralysing. An inability to access a counsellor can impinge the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

30.4 #Requiring all applications to be accompanied by a government identification document will be a significant barrier impacting on access to Victims Support for some victims-survivors of gendered violence, particularly those who are most marginalised in community.

### ***Barriers to collecting own evidence***

31. #Signatories have called on the NSW Government to retain the option currently available to applicants to have Victims Services obtain evidence to support an application.

32. #Currently, an applicant can request Victims Services to collect evidence to support their Victims Support claim. As outlined above, this was recommended by the Government commissioned report prior to the introduction of the NSW Victims Support Scheme. This has been the practice since the Victims Support Scheme was introduced in 2013.

33. #The proposed changes would involve a significant and fundamental change to the way Victims Services support victims-survivors by shifting the burden of collecting evidence from Victims Services onto the victim-survivor themselves.

34. #We fear that many victims-survivors, particularly those who have experienced complex trauma will be denied access to the support to which they are entitled to and need because it will be too difficult to collect the necessary evidence on their own.

35. #Signatories to this letter are particularly concerned about the impact of this on victims-survivors of complex trauma.

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<sup>21</sup> Application for financial assistance for immediate needs or economic loss must be filed within 2 years of act of violence or if the act of violence was as a child, two years after the day of turning 18 years: section 40(1) *Victims Rights Support Act*. A recognition payment must be filed within 2 years of act of violence or if the act of violence was as a child, two years after the day of turning 18 years: section 40(2) *Victims Rights Support Act*. 10 years from act of violence if domestic violence, sexual assault or child abuse or if the act of violence was as a child, ten years after the day of turning 18 years: section 40(5) *Victims Rights Support Act*. See also *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995*, paragraph 124(d)

<sup>22</sup> *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995*, paragraph 124(d)



36. #Non-government organisations are not specifically funded to help victims-survivors to collect the evidence they need to support a Victims Support claim.
37. #Often victims-survivors of domestic and sexual violence, child abuse and child sexual abuse (gendered violence) have experienced violence perpetrated by a number of people in a relationship of trust, including multiple ex-partners, family members or family friends over many years. Complex trauma impacts on memory. Victims-survivors of complex trauma may find it difficult to recall dates of acts of violence and the names of services to whom they reported violence. They may find it overwhelming and triggering to contact the services they have accessed to request evidence of act of violence and injury; or they may not have the language or literacy skills required to do so; they may have a disability, including a significant cognitive impairment which prevents them from accessing evidence on their own; they may not have the money to pay expenses for medical and other evidence up front;<sup>23</sup> or they may be leading chaotic lives as a result of trauma and life, including caring for children, which will impact on their access to victim support under the proposed changes.
38. #Their trauma may also be unnecessarily compounded by being exposed to and reading the evidence of act of violence and injury that they will be required to collect on their own. This will likely impact on their right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.
39. #Where victims-survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and child sexual abuse only opt to access a recognition payment, the passing of time will make it more difficult for such victims-survivors to collect such evidence on their own. This highlights the need for Victims Services to continue to undertake the important work of gathering evidence to support victims-survivors to access Victims Support.
40. #This will be compounded by the requirement to provide an identification document, along with the preference for any evidence to be provided in electronic format.

#### ***Barriers to providing an identification document***

41. #The added requirement of an identification document may preclude people who do not have such documentation, particularly impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims-survivors, primarily women noting the high rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.<sup>24</sup> Women with cognitive impairment often lack the ability and/or support to obtain identification documentation for themselves and will also be impacted. Their disadvantage is exacerbated when, as is often the case, their carers are the perpetrators of violence against them. Further, this will also impact on people who no longer have such documentation, for example women and their children fleeing domestic violence or who are transient or homeless or in custody or other closed settings such as group homes or boarding houses with limited access to such an identification document (including being able to provide a copy of such an identification document).

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<sup>23</sup> For example, for applications under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 NSW* or for the cost of reports. The Commissioner has suggested some disbursements could be paid, but only after a successful outcome.

<sup>24</sup> Our Watch, *Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children*, Our Watch: Melbourne, 2018, p 6 accessed at: <https://d2bb010tdzqaq7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/11/05233003/Changing-the-picture-AA-3.pdf>

42. #Currently applicants need to provide bank details to obtain a recognition payment. In order to open a bank account a person needs identification documents. However, for the reasons raised above they may no longer have these identification documents or have ready access to such documents. Bank account details should be sufficient.

### **Barriers to choosing a counsellor**

43. #An inability to access counselling for those who would prefer to opt for Victims Services to allocate a counsellor in their geographical area will also likely particularly impact on girl's, women's and older people's right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and is likely to be a barrier to accessing and taking up counselling services.

### **Additional barriers**

44. #In addition to barriers due to language and literacy, there will be further barriers for those who are not digitally literate or who do not have access to a computer or the internet in accessing components of Victim Support or may have specific accessibility needs due to disability. This will likely particularly impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women in prison, women with disability, people who are transient or homeless and older victim-survivors.

45. #Sexual, domestic and family violence are often the pathway to prison for women. A 2015 Network Patient Health Survey found that 70.8% of female inmates in NSW had been involved in at least one abusive relationship and a significant number of female inmates had been subjected to at least one form of sexual violence.<sup>25</sup>

46. #Lawrie's 2003 study of Aboriginal women in NSW prisons found that over 75% of Aboriginal women had being sexually assaulted as a child, just under 50% had been sexually assaulted as adults and almost 80% were victims of family violence.<sup>26</sup>

47. #The signatories to this letter believe any reform should strengthen a system and be designed to be accessible for the most disadvantaged and marginalised, not reduce or remove support for those who most need it.

### **Conclusion**

48. #Every barrier put in a victim's-survivor's way will deter them from accessing the support they are entitled to and need.

49. #If the proposed changes to the NSW Victims Support Scheme proceed, they will provide an institutional obstacle to the full enjoyment of human rights for women and girls and older people in NSW who are the victims of violent crime, particularly domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and child sexual abuse.

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<sup>25</sup> Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network, *2015 Network Patient Health Survey Report*, Sydney, 2017, p72 (74).

<sup>26</sup> Lawrie cited in Natalie Taylor & Judy Putt, "Adult sexual violence in Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia," *Trends and Issues in crime and criminal justice*, Australian Institute of Criminology, September 2007, p2.



50. #In light of this situation, the signatories to this letter respectfully request that the Special Rapporteur, Working Group and/or Independent Expert take urgent action to seek to stop these proposed changes and call on the Australian state party to call on the NSW Government to engage in a comprehensive statutory review of the *Victims Rights and Support Act 2013 NSW* which is trauma informed and victim-survivor led.

Yours faithfully,

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Women's Legal Service NSW



Tim Leach  
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Janene Cootes  
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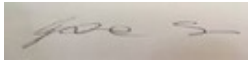
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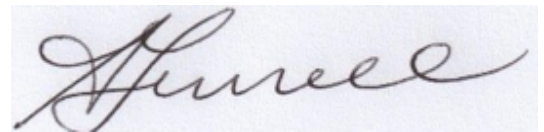
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G Larman

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Denele Crozier  
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Catherine White  
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Nicole Yade

Nicole Yade  
General Manager  
Lou's Place

Tanya Whitehouse  
Program Coordinator  
Macarthur Women's Domestic Violence  
Court Advocacy Service



Sally Stevenson  
General Manager  
Illawarra Women's Health Centre



## **APPENDIX A: Signatories to this urgent communication**

**Community Legal Centres NSW** is the peak organisation for 40 community legal centres across NSW. Community legal centres provide free legal services to people and communities in need. Community legal centres deliver legal services and community legal education, undertake strategic litigation and conduct advocacy and law reform.

**Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre** is an independent, not for profit community organisation that provides free legal advice and other legal services to residents in the Central Tablelands and Blue Mountains, NSW.

**Illawarra Women's Health Centre** provides safe, accessible, appropriate and specialised health and wellbeing services to all women in the Illawarra, NSW at little or no cost.

**Intellectual Disability Rights Service** is a not-for-profit organisation that works with and for people living with cognitive impairment throughout New South Wales, providing legal and disability advocacy services

**Kingsford Legal Centre** provides free legal help to our local community in south-east Sydney, NSW, has extensive experience in providing assistance to people who have experienced domestic violence and is part of the UNSW Sydney Law Faculty.

**knowmore legal service** (knowmore) is a nation-wide, free and independent community legal centre providing legal information, advice, representation and referrals, education and systemic advocacy for victims and survivors of child abuse.

**Lou's Place** is a unique, community-based refuge for women in crisis, feeling isolated or needing support. Most of the women who visit Lou's Place have experienced multiple traumas in their lives and the majority are facing issues of homelessness, domestic violence, mental health or addiction.

**Macarthur Legal Centre** is a community legal centre providing free legal advice, assistance and referrals to residents of the Macarthur region of NSW. Our solicitors have extensive experience assisting clients with Victim Support matters.

**Macarthur Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service** is one of 29 domestic violence specialist services across NSW and work with women facing issues directly associate with domestic violence

**Mid North Coast Community Legal Centre** provides legal advice, advocacy and legal education to residents of the Mid North Coast, NSW, who are otherwise unable to access legal advice for social or economic reasons.

**National Older Women's Network Inc** is a national advocacy body for the Rights, Dignity and Well-being of Older Women in Australia.

**People with Disability Australia (PWDA)** is a national disability rights, advocacy and representative organisation that is made up of, led and governed by people with disability. We are also funded as a peak disability advocacy organisation in NSW. PWDA is recognised as a Disabled People's Organisation (DPO) under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). We have a cross-disability focus representing the interests of people with all kinds of disability.

The **Public Interest Advocacy Centre** is a community legal centre based in Sydney, Australia, that tackles barriers to justice through legal assistance and strategic litigation, public policy development and communication.

**Settlement Services International** is a community organisation and social business that supports newcomers and other Australians to achieve their full potential. We work with all people who have experienced vulnerability, including refugees, people seeking asylum and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, to build capacity and enable them to overcome inequality.

**The Shopfront Youth Legal Centre** is a free legal service for homeless and disadvantaged young people.

**The Trans and Gender Diverse Advisory Council** has been formulated to improve the outcomes and experience of trans and gender diverse individuals engaged with different stages of the criminal justice system – from policing to custody - including those at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

**Western NSW Community Legal Centre** works in regional and remote areas of NSW, Australia, providing free legal assistance to people experiencing disadvantage. Some of this work involves providing assistance to victim survivors of violence, including women and children.

**Western Women's Legal Support** works in regional and remote areas of NSW, Australia, providing free legal and non-legal assistance to women and children victim survivors of family and domestic violence.

**Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre** is a NSW state wide community legal centre which specialises in working with Aboriginal women, children and youth who are or have been victims of domestic, family and or sexual violence.

The **Women's Activities and Self Help (WASH) House Inc.** is a community based resource centre for women operating across Blacktown City, NSW. Our aim is to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of women in our local community by reducing the impact of poverty, social disadvantage and violence on their lives. We provide information, referral, advocacy, case work, counselling and support including group work programs.

**Women's Health NSW** is the peak body for 21 non-government community-based women's health centres in New South Wales.

The **Women's Justice Network** supports and advocates for all women and girls entangled in the criminal justice system to have access to services to meet their needs, to be treated with dignity and to make life lasting significant changes to become empowered to lead crime free lives and become contributing members of our community.

**Women Lawyers' Association of NSW Inc** is the peak professional body representing women lawyers in NSW.

**Women's Legal Services NSW** is a specialist community legal centre that aims to achieve access to justice and a just legal system for women in NSW. We prioritise working with women who have experienced domestic violence and sexual assault.