

The Victims of Crime Chronicle

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www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vcb

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The Chronicle is a quarterly newsletter produced by the Victims of Crime Bureau, a Unit of Victims Services, NSW Attorney General's Department.

Manager's Message

The start of the new year brings an exciting new stage in responding to victims of crime.

Three new Victims of Crime Rural Co-ordinator positions have been created in NSW to provide an additional focus for victims of crime in rural and regional NSW. The Rural Co-ordinators are located in the local courts at Batemans Bay, Port Macquarie and the Far West.

The Co-ordinators are building on existing networks and resources available for victims of crime to increase the delivery of services to victims. A main focus is to establish regular regional interagency forums with key organisations working together to identify and respond to the needs of victims of crime.

The Bureau has appointed an Aboriginal Project Officer to work with Aboriginal communities to develop culturally appropriate responses to indigenous victims of crime in NSW. The Project Officer will be consulting with Aboriginal communities, initially to develop a communication strategy for the Victims Support Line, counselling and compensation. A further project will be to develop a culturally appropriate model for victims of crime using the Approved Counselling Scheme.

The Project Officer and the rural co-ordinators will be working closely together in the interests of victims of crime in rural and regional NSW.

Susi Blacker
A/Manager



Recently appointed Rural Co-ordinators Preeti Kotwal (left), Elna Martin (right) and Neil Randall, Aboriginal Project Officer. (See profiles on page 2).

Victims of Crime Conference 2002

**EMPOWERMENT AFTER TRAUMA:
Enhancing Resilience in Victims of Crime,
Workers & Organisations.**

Brisbane 30 - 31 May, 2002

This National Conference is for those who work with or have an interest in issues affecting victims of crime.

To register please visit the web site:
www.vocaq.asn.au

Please direct all enquiries and correspondence to the conference secretariat as set out below.

Shan Fleming Email:
shan@eventsolutions.com.au

Event Solutions,
PO Box 165,
Arana Hills Q 4054

Ph: (07) 3855 3711
Fax: (07) 3855 2811

New Horizons for the Victims of Crime Bureau

NSW Rural Co-ordinators - north and south

Elna Martin (South East Region) is originally from Canberra and is a psychologist with a Diploma in Community Counselling. A quest for new challenges led her to Bourke as a PANOC (Physical Abuse and Neglect of Children) and Domestic Violence Counsellor.

Elna's last position was as the Regional Sexual Assault Co-ordinator for the Macquarie Area Health Service where she jointly established the Dubbo child protection interagency, following her concerns about the need to ensure the rights of children to feel safe and secure in their own homes, schools and other support networks.

In the Dubbo region Elna worked closely with the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Police, Health and Department of Community Services and community groups. The Macquarie Area Health service provided both on-going counselling and medical forensic procedures for victims of recent sexual assault.

Elna is located at Bateman's Bay Local Court. Her contact phone number is (02) 4472 9311, mobile 042 849 6121, e-mail: elna_martin@agd.nsw.gov.au

Preeti Kotwal (Northern Region) has a Masters of Social Work degree from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (Bombay). While still a first year social work student, a tidal wave swamped the state of Andhra Pradesh on the east coast. Student social workers were deployed to provide direct social work assistance to the disaster victims.

In India, Preeti worked as an educator, negotiator and community development worker in rural and village towns.

Recently Preeti returned to India to provide trauma counselling following an earthquake in the state of Gujarat, where she provided counselling to the earthquake's primary victims and also doctors, nurses, drivers and other welfare workers affected by the natural disaster.

In Australia, Preeti has practiced as a social worker with Centrelink in the Fairfield Regional Office in western Sydney. At Centrelink, Preeti often worked with non-English speaking people who were victims of crime in their country of birth.

Preeti is located at Port Macquarie Local Court. Her contact phone number is (02) 6583 9351, mobile 042 7785 356, e-mail: preeti_kotwal@agd.nsw.gov.au

Aboriginal Project Officer

Neil Randall has recently been appointed as the Aboriginal Project Officer with the Victims of Crime Bureau.

His job will take him to a number of communities throughout NSW to talk and listen to suggestions that may be both beneficial and culturally appropriate for Aboriginal victims of crime and to consult with them about the Approved Counselling Scheme and the Victims Support Line.

Neil is originally from Maclean, on the North Coast of NSW, in the Bundjalung Nation and is familiar with the Yaegl language. He has lived in Sydney for a number of years. Neil commenced work with the Bureau in June 2000 and has also been working in the Counselling Team in the Victims Compensation Tribunal since July 2001.

Neil can be contacted by telephoning (02) 9374 3006 and e-mail: neil_randall@agd.nsw.gov.au

Approved Counsellors for 2002

Approved Counsellors who have completed their approval requirements for 2002 have recently received confirmation of re-approval to provide Approved Counselling from Victims Services. Feedback from counsellors indicates a high level of acceptance for aspects of the approval process that were introduced this year, including the Working with Children Check.

In particular, the evidence of professional development undertaken by Approved Counsellors over the past year reflects a strong interest by Approved Counsellors in both theoretical frameworks and practical skills for assisting victims of crime.

In the coming year, it is anticipated that Approved Counsellors will provide approximately 20,000 hours of approved counselling to NSW victims of violent crime. To continue to ensure a high standard of counselling provided to victims of crime through the Approved Counselling Scheme, counsellors have indicated their commitment to continue to seek opportunities for professional development, especially in areas that directly address the issues experienced by victims of crime.

Those counsellors who have yet to complete their approval are now unable to receive further referrals. They have received a reminder letter and are encouraged to contact the Bureau if they are experiencing any difficulties in applying for re-approval under the Scheme.

Approved Counsellors Claims for Payment

To ensure prompt payment from the VCT for counselling services provided for victims of crime, follow the four easy steps to save time and avoid unnecessary delays:

- In order to claim payment for any Approved Counselling, counsellors must have obtained prior approval from the VCT to provide Approved Counselling for each victim of crime;
- Provide correct dates for each counselling service provided during the month;
- Provide clear reference numbers for each client who received counselling;
- Remember to ask the client to sign the green invoice at the end of each counselling session.

Further information is available in the Handbook for Approved Counsellors.

Special Notice for Counsellors

Are you planning a sabbatical, holiday or other leave soon (short or long term)?

When Tribunal staff approve counselling hours for a victim to see an Approved Counsellor they check the counsellor's current availability on a database. In cases where the Approved Counsellor has not provided an update about intention to take leave or change of working hours and days or change in practice locations, victims may be disadvantaged.

Please contact the Bureau with your leave details with the dates of your unavailability. It needs to be in writing.

- Email vcb@agd.nsw.gov.au
- fax on (02) 9374 3020, or
- postal address:
Victims of Crime Bureau
Locked Bag A5010
SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 1235

Victims Services Website – www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs

Victims Services' website has been revised to improve the navigation facilities and the content of the information on the site.

All victims compensation and approved counselling forms are available to download from the site and the 2 hour counselling form can now be submitted on-line.

Victims Services attends forums and information sessions for service providers throughout NSW where appropriate. A request form for a forum or information session is available on the 'About Victims Services' page, which can be downloaded and forwarded to Victims Services.

The website also contains a new 'legal' page to assist both applicants and solicitors which includes links to the following:

- The NSW Law Society's Directory, which enables applicants to search for a solicitor in their area;
- The Office of the Legal Services Commission's page 'Winning with your Lawyer', which helps applicants understand their rights;
- The Chairperson's Guide to the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996;
- The 'Top Tips' page, which is a collection of tips provided by Victims Services compensation assessors and staff on commonly asked questions or common errors.
- Victims compensation and victims rights legislation;
- The Schedule of Compensable Injuries;
- Victims compensation appeal decisions at District and Supreme Courts
- The guidelines issued by the Chairperson to assessors pursuant to section 65 of the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996; and
- An improved search facility for ARWs and Approved Counsellors.

Law Week Forum on Victims Rights

Victims of crime will be able to learn more about their rights to counselling, support and compensation at a free forum to be held as part of Law Week 2002.

The forum for legal professionals and interested members of the community, will be hosted by Victims Services.

The forum will provide valuable information on where victims, their families and friends can turn for counselling and support, information on legal processes and avenues for compensation.

Victims Services is comprised of the Victims Compensation Tribunal, the Victims of Crime Bureau and the Victims Advisory Board. These three sections work together to help victims of crime in New South Wales access services and entitlements to assist in their recovery.

Topics to be covered as part of the forum will include:

- ✓ Victims' rights under the Charter of Victims Rights;
- ✓ The Approved Counselling Scheme;
- ✓ The Victims Support Line;
- ✓ Entitlements to victim's compensation and the procedures and policies of the Victims Compensation Tribunal;
- ✓ Measures to help victims of crime in rural and regional New South Wales;
- ✓ The victims of crime website www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/voc

Speakers will include Ms Vernon and Victims Compensation Tribunal Registrar Pam Wilde.

The forum will be held on Friday, May 17, 2002 from 12.30pm to 2pm at the Coles Room, State Library, Macquarie Street, Sydney.

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