



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

Manager's Message

The National Victims of Crime Conference "Bringing Healing to Victims of Crime: Restoration and Transformation" will be held in Sydney on 26 and 27 February 2004. The conference is a joint initiative of the Victims of Crime Bureau and Mission Australia Victims Support Service. Details about the conference and speakers are included in this edition.

The Bureau will continue our work promoting the Charter of Victims Rights and assisting government agencies to train their staff regarding their obligations under the Charter of Victims Rights. Victims Services will continue to run information sessions for community groups, government departments, solicitors and Approved Counsellors throughout the State.

We also plan to look more closely at how we deliver our services to people with disabilities and indigenous people to ensure that the service is accessible to all.

Meet the new Director.....

I am pleased to introduce myself as the new Director of Victims Services, following Claire Vernon's appointment to a senior position in the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.

A broad range of services is required to support victims of crime. It is important that these services are fully accessible, are sensitive to individual needs, and that appropriate and accessible information is available concerning these services.

Effective interagency collaboration is essential in providing appropriate support and assistance to victims of crime. I am looking forward to working with you in continuing to improve the quality and range of services available.

An important initiative being pursued by the government is the **Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Amendment (Victim Impact Statements) Bill**. The Attorney General introduced this Bill into Parliament on 2 December 2003. The Bill is expected to be debated when Parliament resumes this year. The Bill expands the circumstances in which victims of violent crime may make victim impact statements in the local court. The Bureau will be working with other agencies to ensure a smooth implementation of this amendment if it is passed by Parliament.

I will be leaving the Bureau in mid January and wish you all a very happy 2004.

Maggie Smyth
Acting Manager
Victims of Crime Bureau

Further changes:

At the time of going to print this edition of the Chronicle, Ms Smyth vacated the position of Acting Manager of the Bureau in order to pursue further studies in law.

The National Victims of Crime Conference here in Sydney, is fast approaching. This is an important opportunity to exchange ideas, hear about latest developments and to consider further improvements to services to victims of crime.

Further information on the conference can be found in page four of this edition of the Chronicle and from Mission Australia.

John Le Breton
Director
Victims Services



Contemporary Issues in Sexual Assault: An Information Seminar.

An opportunity has been created by the Northern Sydney Sexual Assault Service for counsellors to be up-dated on issues relating to sexual assault. A free seminar is to be held at the service on Tuesday 9th March 2004 where counsellors registered with the Approved Counselling Scheme at Victims Services will be able to hear speakers talk on three important contemporary issues: drug facilitated sexual assault, sibling sexual abuse and sexual assault in intimate relationships.

These are three important areas for counsellors to have up to date and relevant knowledge:

- ◆ The numbers of drug related sexual assaults have increased very dramatically over the last years and now accounts for a very large percentage of crisis sexual assault presentations. Victims typically have issues in respect to having no memory as to what has occurred and there are many difficulties in the prosecution of offenders.
- ◆ Sibling sexual abuse has long been misunderstood and minimised and yet research is showing that it is highly prevalent and often particularly violent.

It is associated with complex issues in family dynamics and creates a situation where loyalties are divided and has a severe impact on the survivor of the abuse.

- ◆ Sexual violence in an intimate relationship is one of the most common forms of domestic violence. Recent research done in this area is showing that women who are in this situation are not tending to view such violence as sexual assault. Reports to police are low compared to sexual assault by strangers although probably much more prevalent.

The Northern Sydney Sexual Assault Service is wishing to up-date Victim's of Crime counsellors in these important issues. In the process the service will be up-dating its own referral list. This seminar morning will give the service the opportunity to meet counsellors in general practice and to expand on the referral base for the many survivors of child and adult sexual assault with whom the service has contact.

To register for the morning seminar please ring the Northern Sydney Sexual Assault Service on 9926 7580 by Friday the 5th March 2004.

Light refreshments will be available.

New service to assist clients in making applications for Approved Counselling and Statutory Compensation for victims of violent crime

Victims Services has recently appointed a Client Support Manager to provide advice and assistance to clients interested in making applications for compensation and/or applications for approved counselling, and to oversee the provision of information to clients about available services.

Assistance is provided on the victim's request to help them to complete application forms, to advise them how to find a solicitor (if they wish to engage one) and to give general advice about how applications are processed, for example, the sort of material that could be provided in support of their application. The Client Support Manager can also provide leaflets containing helpful information about available services.

While applicants for compensation are not required to approach a solicitor, some may be advised to seek legal advice because of issues particular to their application. (The Client Support Manager cannot offer legal advice to clients). In the majority of cases, however, clients can be assisted to the point of formally lodging an application and receive advice on further steps they may wish to take to prepare their application for compensation for determination eg., arranging an interview with an authorised report writer.

Assistance can be provided to clients face to face or over the phone.

The Client Support Manager may be contacted on 9374 3111 or toll free on 1800 069 054.

For assistance in completing applications, clients may make an appointment to see the Client Support Manager at the Victims Services offices Level 6, 299 Elizabeth Street, Sydney.

Get your accounts paid

more quickly !

All Approved Counsellors would be familiar with the new invoices designed to fulfil the requirements of the GST. Victims Services thanks all Approved Counsellors for their prompt attention to requests for further information that assists us process invoice payments promptly.

Recent data reveals that over 80% of invoices received for counselling are paid within 28 days of receipt.

Sometimes, there are problems processing invoices for payment. The main issues that delay processing of invoices are as follows:

1 – Payment Name missing from Tax Invoice submitted by Approved Counsellor

2 – ABN missing from Tax Invoice submitted by Counsellor

3 – ABN & Payment name missing from Tax Invoice submitted by Counsellor

4 – The payment name recorded on the blue RCTI (Recipient Created Tax Invoice) submitted to Victims Services for payment is different to the ABN legal or trading name as registered with the ATO and as advised to Victims Services on the RCTI Voucher Agreement form.

For example the payment name on the blue RCTI submitted to Victims Services has the name “Mr Joe Counsellor”. The legal name registered for GST purposes with the ATO discloses “ABC Counselling Services” only.

5 – The ABN recorded on the blue RCTI invoices submitted to Victims Services for payment is not the same as the ABN as advised to Victims Services on the RCTI voucher agreement form.

Other general issues that delay the processing of invoices include presenting invoices for payment of un-kept appointments without including a copy of the letter sent to the client suspending counselling (see Counsellors Handbook 2003 p 22). In addition, some invoices have been presented without the client’s signature. Victims Services is not obliged to pay any invoice where the client has not confirmed their attendance by signing the invoice.

Finally, one way to ensure invoices are paid promptly is to submit invoices within one month of the session(s) for which payment is required (see page 34 Counsellors Handbook). This assists the Accounts department process invoices promptly so that payment can be made within 28 days.

Any further questions regarding payment of invoices please contact the friendly team at the **Accounts Department on (02) 9374 3019.**

Do you need to contact Victims Services?

Who should I ask for?

Contact the following sections for assistance:

If you need information about **payment for Counsellors and Authorised Report Writers**. Phone the Accounts section on (02) 9374 3021 or (02) 9374 3022.

If you require information about progress on **compensation** matters? Phone the Victims Compensation Tribunal on (02) 9374 3111.

If you need information about obtaining **approved counselling or further counselling?** Phone the Victims Compensation Tribunal on (02) 9374 3111.

Please note: The Victims Support line is for victims of crime who require information, support and referral. Enquires about administrative matters should be to the Victims of Crime Bureau’s administration phone number on (02) 9374 3005.

Someone is Missing - a resource to assist families & friends of missing persons

Each year 30,000 Australians are reported missing. For some the period of missing may be a few hours, for others it can be decades. The website and accompanying booklet, is designed to help families and friends recognise how emotional and mental stress might affect them and how to cope during the period the person is missing.

The Families & Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU), within Victims Services, funded the Mental Health Assn NSW Inc. to develop a website resource that focuses on the mental health needs of families and friends of missing persons. The website, Someone is Missing, is believed to be the first website internationally that focuses on, and provides, mental health information for this group.

Existing resources typically provide practical advice about what to do when a loved one is missing. They usually don't address the emotional issues of coping with loss and uncertainty inherent in having someone you love missing.

Someone is Missing provides a resource, which urges those who have a loved one missing to explore how their mental health might be affected and what they can do to minimise the impact.

The booklet was developed after consultation with families and friends of missing persons. It contains a range of issues and experiences, which could be used by others at a very confusing time. The booklet not only addresses issues such as anxiety, depression, grief and loss, but also enables people to understand potential mental health issues affecting the person who is missing.

Copies of the booklet can be downloaded from the *Someone is Missing* website at www.missingpersons.org.au. or by contacting the FFMPU on (02) 9374 3014.

Publications

The Victims of Crime Chronicle can be viewed on the web, alternatively it can be e-mailed to you. Please contact the Bureau on e-mail: vcb@agd.nsw.gov.au for further information.

Numerous other publications are also available on the web. Go to www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs. Click on Application Forms, then click on 'other publications,' which is beneath further reading:

Applications for Further Counselling

Victims Services is no longer using the green, six page form: "Application for Further Counselling by a Primary or Secondary Victim".

The purpose of this is to simplify the process for obtaining further counselling for victims of crime.

Now, applicants only need to fill out a one page form: "**Request for Further Hours of Approved Counselling**".

This form is available on the Victims Services website: Click on the Application Form link on the left hand side and then scroll down the table of forms available for downloading.

National Victims of Crime Conference

Sydney

26 27 February 2004

You can still register.

This year's theme is '*Bringing Healing to Victims of Crime: Restoration and Transformation.*'

The conference is especially relevant for victims of crime, helping professionals, those engaged in justice-related work, legal professionals, as well as researchers, students and academics.

The Conference will span two days, and delegate fees are \$330 inc.GST.

For further enquiries, please phone Danielle Rabie on 9641 5000 and to register please e-mail: rabied@mission.com.au or post to Danielle Rabie
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