



Your Voice

Update from the Commissioner for Victims of Crime

A message from the Commissioner

Welcome to the first edition of *Your Voice* – a regular update from the Commissioner for Victims of Crime.

Since commencing in the inaugural role as Commissioner last year, I have consistently heard that – given the inevitable focus on the accused person or offender in the justice system – having your voice heard is crucial for many victims of crime.

It is still relatively new for people who have been directly harmed by crime to be recognised and heard, both in court, and in having services provided specifically for them.

Great steps forward have occurred in the last twenty years or so though: the passing into law of the *Victims of Crime Act 1994 (WA)*, the introduction of Victim Impact Statements in relation to sentencing of offenders, and the establishment of specialist victim support services, including child witness and family violence services.



In 2012/13 alone, \$32.66 million was awarded to 1,675 victims of crime who made applications for criminal injuries compensation.

The creation of this new position of Commissioner for Victims of Crime, which aims to advocate within the State Government for victims of crime and increase awareness of the guidelines for treatment of victims of crime under the *Victims of Crime Act*, is another milestone.

A considerable amount of activity and momentum in Western Australia for the support of victims of crime continues.

The achievements within the last year that are touched upon in this update tell some of that story. I look forward to being back in touch with you as more initiatives come to fruition.

In closing, a thank you is also due: to the many people – many individual victims of crime, victim of crime representatives, those engaged in the not for profit sector, government officers, senior public office holders – who have shared with me their lived experience, expertise and different points of view about the next milestones that need to be realised to support people directly harmed by crime. Be in no doubt that your voice is being heard.

I hope you enjoy our first update.

Jennifer Hoffman
Commissioner for Victims of Crime

Initiatives to support victims of crime since mid 2013

- In July 2013, the Attorney General, The Hon Michael Mischin MLC announced additional funding of \$3 million, to be expended over four years, for Victim Support Services in regional Western Australia and for the expansion of victim support services in the Peel region of metropolitan Perth.
- An allocation of \$3 million, from the Royalties for Regions funded, culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal victims of crime in remote and regional communities. This funding forms part of the Aboriginal Justice Program within the Department of the Attorney General.
- Late last year the Attorney General also requested the WA Law Reform Commission to examine current legislation and practice in relation to family and domestic violence (FDV) and recommend ways to better ensure FDV victims are protected within the law.

The final report from the Law Reform Commission is expected to be received shortly.

- The Attorney General launched Djinda Services in late 2013, following the provision by the State Government of funding for \$600,000 per annum to establish a new family violence legal service for Aboriginal Western Australians in the metropolitan area.
- Victims of road trauma related crime also have access to government-funded support and counselling through the newly established Road Trauma Support WA.
- Services for victims of crime provided by non-Government, not-for-profit groups have been offered a substantial boost – up to \$168,045 - from the latest round of the State Government's Criminal Property Confiscation Grants Program, recently announced by the Attorney General.
- As announced in the Legislative Council by the Attorney General in December 2013, a range of new victim of crime policy initiatives have already commenced, following a review by the Commissioner for Victims of Crime. These include the development of new guidelines by the Director of Public Prosecutions that will enhance consultation with victims of crime regarding prosecutorial decisions, provision of Victim Impact Statements to the boards who consider the release of prisoners on parole, and a review of victim notification procedures. We will have updates on each of these initiatives in upcoming editions of Your Voice.

Road trauma support service launched

A new road trauma support service recently launched aims to help reduce the ongoing psychological and social distress for people affected by road trauma in Western Australia. This includes people who are victims of driving-related crimes.

The not-for-profit service, Road Trauma Support WA, was officially launched on 17 November 2013 and is publicly funded and delivered by the Injury Control Council of WA.

Road Trauma Support WA will work with Victim Support Services in the Department of the Attorney General

in relation to linking clients to court-related support in appropriate cases.

The service offers free, client focused support and counselling to those:

- involved and/or injured, the bereaved and their families, carers and friends witnesses
- emergency services personnel and associated industry workers.

For more information visit www.rtswa.org.au or call 9420 7262.



Upcoming grants information session

Two not-for-profit service providers supporting victims of crime were among those offered grants in the latest round of the State Government's Criminal Property Confiscation Grants (CPCG) Program, administered by the Department of the Attorney General. The grants offered to directly support victims of crime total \$168,045 and will support victims of crime to make criminal injuries compensation applications, and education programs.

An information session about the CPCG Program application process (specifically for organisations that may be interested in providing services to victims of crime) will likely be held in July or August 2014.

To register your expression of interest to attend this information session, email CPCG Program Grants Administrator Nora Chan-Furness on nora.chan-furness@justice.wa.gov.au.

The Department of the Attorney General administers this grants program on behalf of the Attorney General, drawing on funds collected

under the *Criminal Property Confiscation Act 2000*.

Criminal money and property is seized by Western Australian Police and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Grants under the CPCG Program can only be used to prevent or reduce drug-related crime and drug abuse, support crime victims and to aid law enforcement.

Eligible not-for-profit community organisations and local government authorities can apply for funds of up to \$200,000 to implement projects for the above purposes.

The CPCGP is a matching grant program. Applicant organisations will need to contribute both monetary and in-kind services towards the project. Grant funding is non recurrent and is available for projects that will run for a minimum of one year and a maximum of two years. More information about the Criminal Property Confiscation Grants Program is available on the Department of the Attorney General website at www.dotag.wa.gov.au.

Regional focus for Commissioner

A visit to Kununurra in late 2013 gave Commissioner for Victims of Crime Jennifer Hoffman a direct insight into the unique issues that regional victims of crime face within the criminal justice system. Jennifer worked with the Western Australian Ombudsman's Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program to take part in the outreach visit.

"The three days spent in Kununurra were a great opportunity to hear and see firsthand the realities of how the justice system works for victims of crime in this part of WA," Jennifer said.

"It is so important to meet with people and hear their stories. You cannot substitute the face to face interaction with reports or other types of communication."

Jennifer went on to say the she intended to take up more opportunities in 2014 to promote regional and remote areas awareness of the provisions of the *Victims of Crime Act 1994 (WA)*, which requires that Government agencies who deal with victims do so with respect and fairness. Bunbury and Kalgoorlie visits are scheduled for June and August 2014.

New services for regional Aboriginal victims of crime

Aboriginal victims of crime in regional and remote communities will have access to new culturally appropriate services, including community education and awareness programs from recent Royalties for Regions funding.

The Department of the Attorney General's Aboriginal Justice Program (AJP) was allocated the funding in August 2012 to the value of \$3 million over three years.

The funding aims to assist Aboriginal people who are victims of crime, particularly victims of family and domestic violence.

Starting in July 2013, Anglicare WA received more than \$1.5 million in funding over three years to deliver FDV support services to a selection of communities within the Shire of Derby-West Kimberley and Shire of Halls Creek.

These support services focus on direct service delivery to individuals and communities, and community development, prevention and education.

Further worthwhile funding opportunities are being explored with stakeholders through an audience-based approach.

The Commissioner for Victims of Crime met with the Aboriginal Justice Congress on 21 November 2013, and for a full day on 1 May 2014.

Matters discussed included how the further Royalties for Regions funding could best be put to use to support victims of crime.

The views of Congress members will be a key part of shaping the funding proposals. More details will be provided as these programs come into operation.



(L-R) November 2013 Congress: Betty Logan, Jennifer Kniveton, Bob Taddeo, Ayla Stewart, Carol Pettersen, Phil Whyte, Patricia McKay and Peter Sibosado.