

MEDIA RELEASE

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VICTIMS OF CRIME DEALT UNFAIR BLOW – VCC CALLS FOR PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

The Victims Compensation Coalition (VCC) describes the recent changes to the victims of crime compensation as “grossly unfair and minimising the traumatic plight” to victims of abuse.

The NSW Government has pushed through significant changes during the last sitting days prior to Premier Kristina Keneally proroguing parliament.

The recently formed Victims Compensation Coalition says the changes greatly disadvantage those people who have suffered multiple incidents of abuse and violence over a long period of time such as adult survivors of child sexual assault, domestic violence and trafficking.

“Victims who have suffered abuse over a long period of time can now only submit one claim regardless of how many abusive acts with a maximum amount available of \$50,000” states lawyer Jemima Brewer who has worked with thousands of victims of crime.

“It is grossly unfair that the experience of a person who has been subjected to years of abuse and violence is being treated the same as a person who experiences or witnesses a single violent act. It is clear the system is simply not right and must be amended urgently” Brewer continued.

The recent Victims Compensation changes will also reduce victim’s access to much needed legal representation . “The reduction in payments to legal practitioners representing victims at the Tribunal will only serve to further disadvantage claimants. These claims are frequently complex and the role of legal practitioners is very important in preparing the case and advocating for a fair outcome” Jemima stated.

The expectation that victims may be able prepare their own documentation for a claim which can take up to two years, and then go on to represent themselves in what can be an overwhelming situation is in itself an example of how a system can further abuse vulnerable people.

The Victims Compensation Coalition asks the question : Why would any government intentionally create such a situation? The NSW Government has claimed that key groups working in this area were consulted in the decision making process, however members of the VCC were not consulted, nor are they aware of exactly “who” was.

“Members of the VCC are deeply concerned that these changes were introduced with little to no consultation with key groups working in this area. Compensation payable to sexual assault and domestic violence victims should not be the focus of cost saving measures.”

The Victims Compensation Coalition is calling for a Parliamentary Inquiry into the recent changes made in conjunction with a comprehensive consultation process with those groups and professionals working with victims.

FOR MEDIA COMMENT

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The Victims Compensation Coalition is a group of concerned organisations who work on a daily basis with those affected by the changes to victims compensation legislation.