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ACT DPP partners with DVCS to strengthen support for family violence victims and complainants

Canberrans experiencing family and domestic violence will receive more coordinated support under a new partnership between the ACT Director of Public Prosecutions (ACT DPP) and Domestic Violence Crisis Service ACT (DVCS), launched during Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month.

A DVCS practitioner will be embedded within the ACT DPP for a day a week from mid-June to improve information sharing and victim support as family violence cases progress through the criminal justice system.

The initiative strengthens existing information sharing so support needs can be identified and acted on earlier, forming part of the ACT DPP's expanded focus on providing agency to victims and complainants where possible during the prosecution process.

ACT Director of Public Prosecutions Victoria Engel SC said the shift will help how the office engages with family violence victims, complainants and witnesses whilst managing growing volume and complexity of family violence cases.

"This partnership is about putting victims in the driver's seat when it comes to how they are communicated with," Ms Engel said.

"It will help prosecutors and witness assistance officer better understand victim and witness needs so we can provide information, updates and support faster.

"Whether it's timely updates about bail conditions or reducing the unintended harms that come from victims being contacted by multiple services, this initiative is designed to better support vulnerable individuals, children and families as they move through the justice process."

DVCS CEO Sue Webeck said the initiative builds on existing collaboration and strengthens victim-centred, trauma-informed practice.

"At a time when victim-survivors are under enormous strain, the added burden of being contacted by multiple agencies, at times with the same information, is surely something we can resolve," Ms Webeck said.

“By working side by side, we are responding to the feedback of many victim-survivors and trying to join these pieces together. We have a shared priority and that is making sure justice system involvement does not add to the harm already experienced by victim-survivors.”

This new approach is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen coordination across the justice system, with appropriate boundaries and systems in place to maintain the independence of each service. It builds on the Nominal Informant arrangement between the ACT DPP and ACT Policing, which nominates a dedicated ACT Policing officer to the ACT DPP office to provide support timely information sharing during prosecutions.

Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month is a national campaign held each May to raise awareness of family and domestic violence, promote prevention and highlight the supports available to people experiencing harm.

Support services are available for people experiencing domestic and family violence. Visit: <http://www.act.gov.au/community/domestic-family-and-sexual-violence>

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ACT DPP media contact: Dominic Lavers

M: 0432 836 191