



Victims Services
Attorney General & Justice

The new victims support scheme

A detailed guide

If you are a victim of crime in NSW call the
Victims Access Line for information and support

1800 633 063

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1. Summary

The NSW Attorney General has announced a new victims support scheme that will result in victims of violent crime receiving faster and more effective assistance.

An extensive and independent review of victims support in NSW has been undertaken that included consultation with victims and their support groups. The old scheme was not meeting the needs of victims as the process was difficult to understand, impractical, and took too long.

The new scheme provides a coordinated approach to information, support and referral, with an emphasis on immediate assistance and access to free counselling. It will assist victims with urgent needs such as medical and dental treatment, home security upgrades or for crisis accommodation to avoid further violence.

What does the new scheme look like?

The new scheme provides a coordinated approach to information, support and referral, with an emphasis on **immediate assistance** and **access to counselling**.

Victims will be able to access the services they need **when they need them most**. Victims will be allocated a **support coordinator**, who will conduct a comprehensive assessment of each situation, develop a tailored plan and then guide them through the criminal justice and human services systems. The support coordinator will provide **information, referrals to other services and ongoing advice**.

A package of care may include some or all of **five types of support**:

1. Information, referrals and advice
2. Counselling
3. Financial assistance for immediate needs
4. Financial assistance for economic loss
5. Recognition payment

2. Why is victim support changing?

The old compensation scheme was not meeting the needs of victims at the right time. It was complex, time-consuming, lengthy and costly. Victims were not adequately supported through the process, dealing with multiple contact points and having to tell their story multiple times.

What are we hoping to achieve with the change?

- To provide assistance to victims at the time they need it most.
- To simplify the process for victims.
- To give victims one point of contact/support through the entire process and link them with other appropriate services.
- To ensure victims receive more holistic and wide-ranging assistance, rather than solely financial compensation.

Key benefits of the new scheme

The new victims support scheme:

- Provides assistance when victims need it most.
- Builds a package of care tailored to individual needs.
- Is simpler and faster.
- Provides financial and emotional support straight away.
- Removes the need for solicitors or legal advice.

3. Overview

The new victims support scheme is focused on building a package of care to support and assist at the time victims need it most. We can provide information, referrals to other services and ongoing advice to help negotiate the criminal justice and human services systems. The package of care may include some or all of the following five types of assistance.

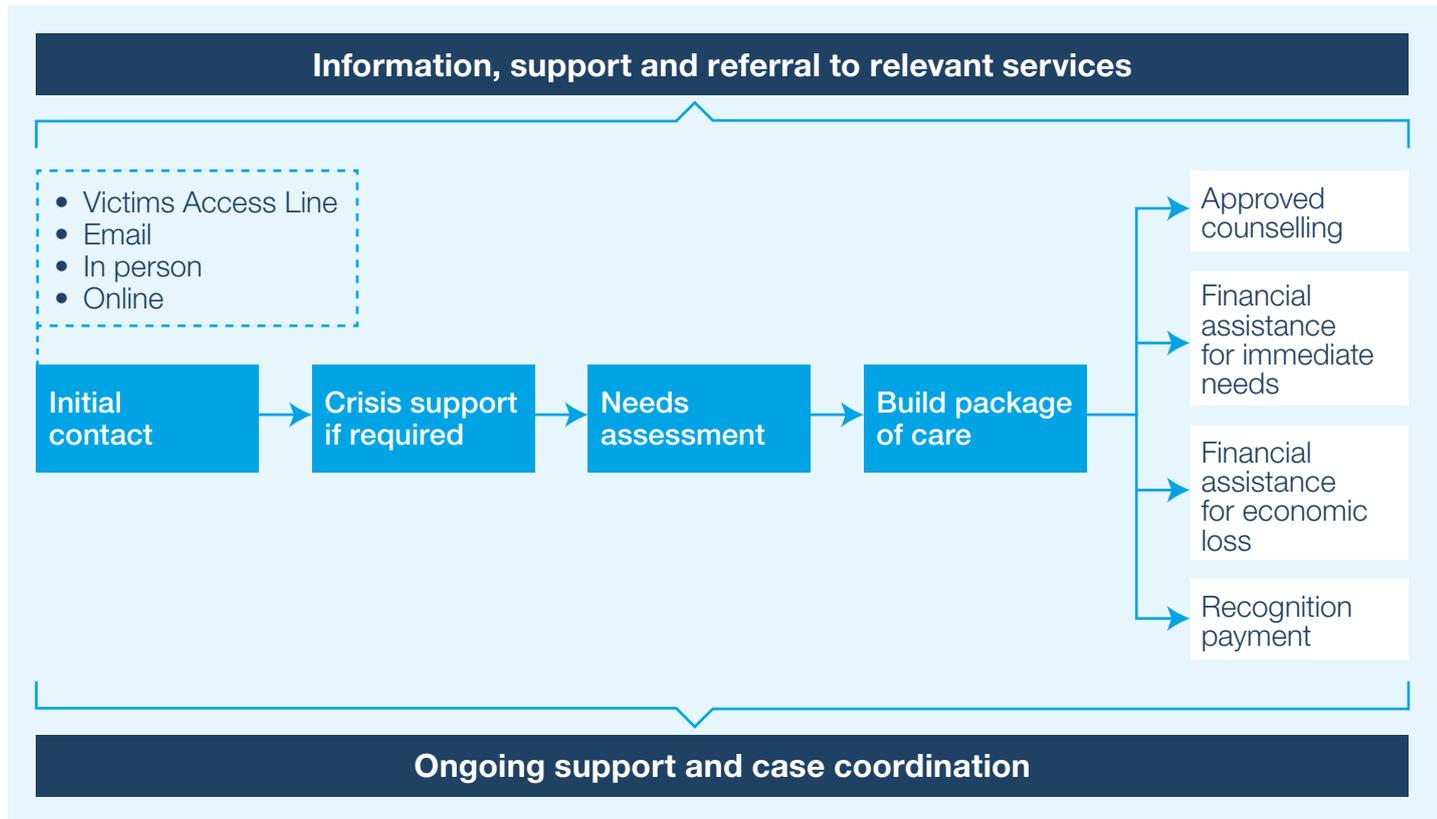
	Purpose	Benefits	Who is eligible to apply?	What evidence is required?	How long do you have to claim?
Information, support and referral	To assist in your recovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and information about the court process, criminal justice and human services systems. • Access and referral to a wide range of other services available to victims of crime. • Crisis support. • Support throughout the process of applying for counselling and financial assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All victims of crime. 	None.	No time limit applies.
Counselling	To assist in your recovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An initial ten hours of counselling. • A further 12 hours if required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All victims of violent crime. 	A simple application form.	No time limit applies.

	Purpose	Benefits	Who is eligible to apply?	What evidence is required?	How long do you have to claim?
Financial assistance for immediate needs	To address your urgent needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance in relocating to a safer location. • Implementation of safety measures, eg changing locks • Emergency medical and dental expenses. • Crime scene clean up. • The package of benefits will be capped at \$5,000. • Funeral costs capped separately at \$8,000. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary victims. 	One piece of evidence such as a police or medical report, plus evidence of expenditure if you are claiming expenses.	No later than two years from the incident or within two years of turning 18 for children.

	Purpose	Benefits	Who is eligible to apply?	What evidence is required?	How long do you have to claim?
Financial assistance for economic loss	To aid your rehabilitation and recovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable travel expenses. • Medical and dental expenses. • Assistance with cost of living and other expenses including rent assistance, furniture, child care and household bills capped at \$5,000 for those victims who were not employed at the time of the crime. • Expenses associated with damage to personal effects capped at \$1,500. • Justice related expenses capped at \$5,000. • Loss of actual earnings capped at \$20,000. • Total limit is \$30,000. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary victims. • Parents of a child victim may be eligible. • Family members of homicide victims can access justice-related expenses 	A report from police or government agency and evidence of injury is required plus evidence of expenditure if you are claiming expenses. In some cases further information may be required.	No later than two years from the incident or within two years of turning 18 for children. There is no time limit for victims of sexual assault (if they were a child at the time the incident(s) occurred) to claim for justice-related or out-of-pocket expenses.

	Purpose	Benefits	Who is eligible to apply?	What evidence is required?	How long do you have to claim?
Recognition payment	To acknowledge the trauma you have suffered.	<p>The award categories are based on the offence and the nature of the violent act:</p> <p>\$15,000 – financially dependent family of homicide victim</p> <p>\$7,500 – non-financially dependent parents of homicide victim</p> <p>\$10,000 – sexual assault: long term, involving serious bodily injury; multiple offenders; or use of an offensive weapon</p> <p>\$5,000 – sexual assault; grievous bodily harm; pattern of child abuse</p> <p>\$1,500 – indecent assault; attempted sexual assault; robbery, assault.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary victims. • Dependent family members and parents of homicide victims. 	A report from police or government agency, and evidence of injury is needed to establish eligibility. In some cases further information may be required.	<p>Within two years of the incident or within two years of turning 18 for children.</p> <p>Claims for domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse offences must be lodged within 10 years, or within 10 years of turning 18 for children.</p> <p>There is no time limit for victims of sexual assault if they were a child at the time the incident(s) occurred.</p>

4. Overall process



5. What do you need to do?

a. If you are victim with an existing claim

Do I need to start again with my claim?	No. Existing claims will be automatically transferred to the new scheme and assessed under the new criteria.
What paperwork do I need to fill in?	None. Your existing claim will, however, need one piece of medical evidence to support your application. Call the Victims Access Line if you are not sure whether you have met this requirement.
How much money will I get?	It will depend on the crime and your eligibility. You can access counselling and recognition payment if eligible. An additional \$5,000 payment may be payable if you lodged your claim within two years of the incident or within two years of turning 18.
How quickly will I get it?	All existing claims will be settled by June 2015.
Can I seek a review of the decision in relation to my case?	You may ask for the decision of the Assessor to be reviewed by a Senior Assessor. If you are still not happy with the decision regarding your recognition payment you may seek an external review by the Administrative Decisions Tribunal.
Can I still access counselling?	Yes. The Approved Counselling Scheme will continue and if you have already had counselling approved nothing will change.
Who can I call for more help and advice?	The Victims Access Line on 1800 633 063 .

<p>I have engaged a lawyer. Will they know what to do? Will Victims Services pay my lawyer?</p>	<p>If you have already lodged a claim and are being represented by a solicitor, we will pay their costs for lodging at the current rate. If you do not have a solicitor and have incurred costs eg for obtaining medical reports, these will be considered by the assessor at the time your claim is finalised.</p>
<p>I have been paid interim money. Do I have to pay it back? Will it affect the amount I will get?</p>	<p>The amount you have received as an interim will be deducted from your award. If the amount received is greater than your award under the new scheme, you will not receive any further payment.</p>
<p>I haven't been to counselling yet. What do I have to do to access this now?</p>	<p>Talk to your support coordinator and they will organise it.</p>
<p>I am in financial hardship and my matter is listed. What happens now?</p>	<p>All existing claims including those already listed will be assessed under the new scheme. Victims Services will endeavour to have all existing claims finalised by June 2015.</p>
<p>How will the changes affect my eligibility?</p>	<p>The new legislation states that all existing claims will be assessed under the new scheme. Therefore, the amount awarded will depend on the act of violence type and the date of lodgement (secondary victims are no longer eligible).</p>
<p>My matter is listed. Will the review change my entitlements?</p>	<p>Yes, all existing claims, including those currently listed will be assessed under the new scheme.</p>

b. If you want to lodge a claim

Where do I get all the information and forms I need?	Victims Services – call the Victims Access Line or visit our website
Do I need a lawyer?	No. You will be allocated a support coordinator to assist with your claim and getting evidence so you will not need a solicitor.
What is different about the new scheme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The process is simpler, faster and more practical.• Assistance will be received when you most need it, rather than having to wait years.• Each victim is eligible for an individual comprehensive needs assessment and to be assigned a support coordinator.• There are fewer forms to fill in, and less need for solicitors or legal advice.
Who pays for my counselling?	Victims Services will pay for counselling.
Will I get more money than I would have under the old scheme?	It depends on the nature of the crime and the costs you have incurred.

<p>How long can I wait before I claim?</p>	<p>There is no time limit for applying for counselling. Claims for immediate needs must be lodged within two years of the offence or for children within two years of turning 18. Claims for financial assistance for economic loss must be lodged no later than two years from the incident or within two years of turning 18 for children.</p> <p>There is no time limit for victims of sexual assault if they were a child at the time the incident(s) occurred to claim for justice-related or out-of-pocket expenses. Claims for recognition payment must be lodged within two years of the incident or within two years of turning 18 for children. Claims for domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse offences must be lodged within ten years, or within ten years of turning 18 for children. There is no time limit for victims of sexual assault if they were a child at the time the incident(s) occurred to claim the recognition payment.</p>
<p>What evidence do I need to support my claim?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financial assistance for immediate needs – one piece of evidence, eg police or medical report plus evidence for the expenses that are being claimed. 2. Financial assistance for economic loss – police report and evidence of injury, eg medical or counselling report plus evidence for the expenses being claimed 3. Recognition payment – police report and evidence of injury
<p>How much counselling can I get access to?</p>	<p>An initial ten hours of counselling are granted in the first instance, but if more is required a further block may be granted, up to a maximum of 22 hours in total.</p>
<p>Who can I call for help and advice?</p>	<p>The Victims Access Line or your support coordinator.</p>
<p>Will I receive the payment or will it go straight to the service provider (eg doctor, dentist)?</p>	<p>If you have already paid a service provider, Victims Services will reimburse you for the amount determined by an assessor to be appropriate. If you have been unable to pay a provider for the services you require, Victims Services may make the payment directly to another person who paid for the expense on your behalf, or to the service provider you used to assist your recovery.</p>

How long will the payment take?	There is no set time for how long it will take an eligible victim to receive a payment. The time it takes will depend on each individual case.
How will this affect my Centrelink payments?	As it is classified as criminal compensation, your Centrelink payments should not be affected however you should contact Centrelink to discuss.
Is the payment that we receive from Victims Services taxable?	You should contact the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) to find out whether your payment may be subject to tax. Alternatively speak to your accountant or a tax professional.
Do you still pay for homicide victims funerals?	Yes. We will pay up to \$8,000. You will need one piece of substantiating evidence to show that the person died as a result of a homicide.
I lost my job due to my injury. What assistance can I get as I am no longer earning an income?	You may be eligible for financial assistance. Speak to your support coordinator.
I am in financial hardship and I can't pay to have surgery from my injury. What can I do to get assistance?	You may be eligible for financial assistance. Speak to your support coordinator.
Can I get a solicitor?	Solicitors will no longer be paid directly by Victims Services and we won't pay their costs. All applicants will be allocated a support coordinator to assist you with your claim and getting evidence, therefore you don't require a solicitor.

6. What do the changes mean for counsellors?

What is different about the new scheme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each victim will have an individual comprehensive needs assessment and be assigned a support coordinator.• The process is simpler, faster and more practical.• Assistance will be received by the victim when they most need it, rather than having to wait years.• There is less need for solicitors or legal advice.• Victims are able to access appropriate support, both financial and emotional, when they need it most.• There is no longer a Schedule of Injuries or minimum threshold: the new scheme is based on the nature of the offence and you simply need to show you have received either a physical or psychological injury. There is no need to get a report from an Authorised Report Writer to prove psychological injury, just a report from your counsellor.
How much will I be paid for counselling sessions?	<p>Payment rates for approved counsellors will be increased. There will be three rates of payments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counsellor \$120• Specialist Counsellor \$144• Psychiatrist \$256 <p>All existing social workers (currently \$77.00) and psychologists (currently \$99.00) will be automatically paid the new rate of \$120.00 per hour. Approved counsellors who have completed further relevant study such as clinical psychologists may apply to be classified as a specialist counsellor and be paid the higher rate.</p>
Who can I call for more help and advice?	Victims Services Counselling Coordinator

For more information

1. Go to our website for more information
www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs
2. Call the Victims Access Line –
1800 633 063
3. We have an Aboriginal Contact Line –
1800 019 123
4. Our email address is vs@agd.nsw.gov.au
5. Our fax number is **(02) 8688 9632**
6. Our hours are **8.00am to 6.00pm**
Monday to Friday (exc public holidays)

