



Hon Greg Smith SC MP

Attorney General
Minister for Justice

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW GOVERNMENT TO SPEED UP VICTIMS OF CRIME PAYMENTS

The NSW Government has ordered an independent assessment of the Victims Compensation Scheme with a view to delivering faster and more effective financial support to victims of violent crime.

NSW Attorney General Greg Smith told Parliament he was concerned the scheme was unnecessarily complex and that claims were taking too long to be processed.

“Victims are often in the greatest need of financial assistance shortly after the crime has been committed against them, when they are faced with expenses for urgent medical and psychological treatment,” Mr Smith said.

“The NSW Government wants the scheme to provide prompt and practical financial support to victims rather than being a drawn-out process that delivers lump-sum payments to people long after their injuries have been treated.”

In the 2010-2011 financial year, 4973 claims for victims’ compensation were determined and more than 3000 victims received total payments worth \$63.2 million in compensation and counselling.

However, applications for compensation are taking an average of 20 months to be processed.

The NSW Government will engage independent experts to:

- develop a profile of victims eligible for compensation;
- examine alternative ways to provide support and rehabilitation services to victims; and,
- conduct a comparative assessment of compensation schemes in other jurisdictions.
- consider the value and effectiveness of restitution processes

“It is of the utmost importance that NSW has a Victims Compensation Scheme that is effective and sustainable,” Mr Smith said.

Victims’ advocates are supporting the review, with Howard Brown from Victims of Crime Assistance League saying the current process often involved protracted legal action.

“We need to identify a method by which already traumatised victims are not financially burdened through their experience,” Mr Brown said.

“Victims often see the compensation as ‘blood money’ and refuse to tarnish the reputation of their loved ones by applying.”

Aside from the compensation scheme, the NSW Government also provides a range of other free services to victims including face-to-face counselling and telephone support.

More than 64,000 people called the Victims Access Line (ph: 1800 633 063) in 2010-11, compared with just over 48,000 in the previous year.

Eligible victims can also receive up to 10 hours free counselling upfront and apply for more sessions if necessary. More than 6500 people received counselling through this service in 2010-11, up from 6378 in 2009/10.