

Chief Victims Advisor ‘delighted’ with plans to boost safety and support for victims

A raft of changes designed to help victims of crime are being welcomed by Chief Victims Advisor Dr Kim McGregor.

“I am delighted that Minister of Justice Kiri Allan has pushed hard for a more victim-centric justice response to victims,” Dr McGregor says.

“The Minister has heard the call from victims and advocates and has insisted justice sector agencies act to improve the safety planning for victims of serious crime, and improve supports for child victims and their families.”

“Victims and their families have told us they do not feel safe and supported, and they don’t have enough information or a voice in the criminal justice system. Victims have a right to feel safe and supported.”

The changes announced today are designed to address some key gaps through:

- three court pilots focused on high-priority issues for victims;
- extra support for existing victim services; and
- legislative changes.

The three pilots will be focused on improving safety planning and coordination for victims of serious crimes, ensuring victims’ views on bail are heard, and providing extra support to child victims of sexual violence going through the court system.

“It is vital that our response to the needs of victims is more joined up and responsive across the board. I will be watching progress on these pilots with interest.”

Dr McGregor said plans to remove the ability for defence counsel to ask children under 12 years who had suffered sexual violence about consent are hugely significant.

“Children should not be cross examined as to whether they consented to a sexual assault.”

“Children and young people who are victims in sexual violence proceedings are not always well supported through the criminal justice process. These victims are particularly vulnerable and need to feel safe and supported.”

Plans to make it easier for adult victims’ to have name suppression lifted, and to give courts the tools needed to deal with litigation abuse were also welcomed by Dr McGregor.

“These changes will make a significant difference to our most vulnerable victims, protecting them from re-victimisation, and providing them with increased safety and support.”

In addition, Victim Support will receive more funding for its crucial service.

“Victim Support is our only nation-wide agency that supports all victims of crime. They are also our safety-net when other NGOs are unavailable to provide support, especially when disasters occur.”

“These changes are all about giving victims a voice and improving their safety and support throughout the criminal justice system. They have the potential to make a real difference to victims, and I will be following the reforms closely.”