

5 March 2021

Michelle Vaughan
Commissioner of Victims Rights
Victims Services

By email only: VS@dcj.nsw.gov.au

Dear Commissioner,

Consultation on Victims Services Changes

We write to provide feedback on the changes to processes implemented by Victims Services on 1 July 2020. We understand that Victims Services is undertaking a review of the first six months of operation of the revised application requirements and the process for victims to choose their own counsellor.

We welcome the preliminary review, but any findings at this stage can only be preliminary as we do not have the longitudinal data to observe the real impacts of these changes.

We give Victims Services

long history of trauma. Rhonda was in the fortunate position where she was connected to a support service who were able to refer her to KLC for assistance. We are assisting Rhonda to collect the necessary government issued identification and bank details, as well as supporting evidence, but without our help we do not believe Rhonda would have followed through on this process on her own. She does not have access to printers or scanners and expressed to us that the process was overwhelming and that she could not imagine collecting this documentation on her own.

KLC is aware that not all applicants will have the benefit of a support system or legal assistance. There are also barriers to marginalised people accessing the internet or having access to scanners, which could particularly cause barriers for the elderly, homeless or those in prison. As is further demonstrated by other case studies below, we are concerned that requiring government issued identification at the time of application creates a further barrier to victims-survivors accessing Victims Support.

We recommend that providing government issued identification should be removed from the application form. Identification should be allowed to be provided after an application has been made.

Applicants to provide bank~~ETC P 113 119 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301 302 303 304 305 306 307 308 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339 340 341 342 343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358 359 360 361 362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370 371 372 373 374 375 376 377 378 379 380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396 397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408 409 410 411 412 413 414 415 416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431 432 433 434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444 445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453 454 455 456 457 458 459 460 461 462 463 464 465 466 467 468 469 470 471 472 473 474 475 476 477 478 479 480 481 482 483 484 485 486 487 488 489 490 491 492 493 494 495 496 497 498 499 500~~**end that**

As Huda's story above demonstrates, requiring a victim-survivor to make a number of applications for various records and at their cost causes stress and is an unnecessary burden during an already upsetting and traumatic time. It can also cause delays, as in our recent experience it has taken a number of months to receive COPS reports and has involved numerous correspondence around the scope of the request.

It is important that vetted COPS reports are easily accessible to applicants and/or their authorised legal representative as they could be relevant to reasons for not approving or reducing financial support under section 44 of the *Victims Rights and Support Act 2013* (NSW).

We recommend that COPS reports be made easily accessible and free of charge to victims-survivors or their authorised legal representative. We support Victims Services in advocating with NSW Police around this issue.

Kingsford Legal Centre is concerned that ultimately these changes are creating further barriers to victims-survivors accessing Victims Support, as can be detailed by our client case studies provided above.

We respectfully ask that you pause the changes that have been effected and undertake a proper consultation on these processes where the outcome is not predetermined. It may be appropriate for these changes to be further considered in the upcoming statutory review.

If you have any questions, please contact me at e.golledge@unsw.edu.au.

Yours Faithfully
KINGSFORD LEGAL CENTRE

Emma Golledge
Director

Anita Will
Family/DV Solicitor
Clinical Supervisor