



## **Pru Goward**

Minister for Mental Health

Minister for Medical Research

Assistant Minister for Health

Minister for Women

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Wednesday, 14 October 2015

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDERS TO FACE MANDATED BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROGRAMS**

The NSW Government will invest \$19.5 million in mandated behaviour change programs, the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Pru Goward announced today.

Ms Goward said the NSW Government's commitment will empower the criminal justice system to order medium to high risk domestic and family violence (DFV) offenders to undertake change programs that force them to address their behaviour.

"More than one in five domestic violence offenders will end up in court convicted of another domestic violence offence within two years," Ms Goward said.

"These programs compel offenders to address their entrenched attitudes and behaviours which cause so much pain and trauma to families and our communities.

"This investment will deliver earlier intervention to disrupt repeated patterns of DFV offending.

"The safety of DFV victims is the NSW Government's highest priority. We need to break the cycle of abuse, power and control by forcing perpetrators to face up to their criminal behaviour."

Ms Goward will work with the non-government sector, the Men's Behaviour Change Network, Corrective Services NSW, the Chief Magistrate, the Judicial Commission and the DFV and Sexual Assault Council over the coming months to develop the most appropriate models of intervention.

This commitment complements the recommendations of the Hatzistergos Bail Review which recommended providing judicial officers with additional assistance and guidance when assessing risk in bail decisions involving domestic violence. It is also in addition to the \$5.28 million commitment the NSW Government recently announced for voluntary non-government Men's Behaviour Change Programs.

## FACT SHEET

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROGRAMS

#### What are behaviour change programs?

Domestic violence behaviour change programs are treatment programs for domestic and family violence (DFV) perpetrators. The programs focus on key themes relating to power and attitudes towards their partners within relationships. They provide important intervention that can reduce reoffending and prevent further victimisation.

The NSW Government will strengthen its response to tackling perpetrators by investing **\$19.5 million** over two years into mandated behaviour change programs for DFV offenders. This commitment will empower the criminal justice system to order medium to high risk DFV offenders to undertake behaviour change programs.

#### Who are these programs for?

Perpetrators assessed as medium to high risk of re-offending typically have histories of domestic violence. Their offending often involves behaviours including physical violence, intimidation, coercion and control. Higher risk offenders have serious repeat violent offences in their criminal history, ranging from assault to grievous bodily harm and attempted murder.

These higher risk DFV perpetrators often also engage in other types of offending. They are also more likely to present with complex issues related to substance abuse and mental health. Many display strong anti-social attitudes, including acceptance of violence, minimisation of offending, and resistance to intervention.

#### Who delivers behaviour change programs?

Corrective Services NSW currently delivers a 20-session EQUIPS Domestic Abuse Program (DAP) to some medium to high risk offenders in custodial and community corrections settings. The DAP is often provided as part of a suite of interventions that address all the risk factors assessed as relevant to re-offending. It is combined with formal supervision of offenders.

Voluntary men's behaviour change programs are also delivered by non-government providers in parts of NSW. These programs are predominantly targeted as an early intervention and prevention initiative and tend to attract lower risk offenders. These community-based programs are generally shorter in duration than the DAP and do not include formal supervision. They may receive self-referrals from men wishing to change their behaviour, and referrals from government agencies including courts, Family and Community Services, Corrective Services and the Police.

#### Co-designing best models of treatment

The NSW Government will consult with key stakeholders to examine the current models of intervention in NSW and how new models can intervene with higher risk offenders who are most likely to reoffend.

The Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and the Attorney General will work with the non government sector, the Men's Behaviour Change Network, Corrective Services NSW, the Chief Magistrate, the Judicial Commission and the DFV and Sexual Assault Council over the coming months to develop the most appropriate models of intervention.

The consultation process will also consider the approaches from other jurisdictions across Australia and internationally to better understand what works and delivers the best outcomes for perpetrators and victims.

## **GETTING HELP**

- Anyone in immediate danger should call 000.
- For information and support call the NSW Domestic Violence Line on 1800 656 463 or 1800 RESPECT on 1800 737 732.
- For information and referral to crisis accommodation and support call Link2home on 1800 152 152.
- Men having problems with violent behaviour can call the Men's Referral Service on 1300 766 491.