

Aim: Legal Aid NSW will deliver high quality, client-centred and holistic services to people affected by domestic and family violence

People who are affected by domestic and family violence will usually experience a series of complex, interrelated and ongoing legal problems.

These legal problems are not only criminal in nature, but also include family law, child protection and civil matters such as parenting, property settlement, child support, housing, social security, immigration and debt. Victims of domestic and family violence are particularly vulnerable and often have complex legal and non-legal needs, calling for high quality, flexible and holistic legal service delivery. Although men experience domestic and family violence, women and children are significantly overrepresented and impacted upon as victims of domestic and family violence.

Legal Aid NSW is well placed to assist people affected by domestic and family violence. Legal Aid NSW currently provides a comprehensive range of legal services to people affected by domestic and family violence through its:

- crime, family and civil law practice areas;
- specialist units and services (including specialist child representation in the family law, care and protection and criminal jurisdictions); and
- funding of domestic violence-specific services, such as the Domestic Violence Practitioner Scheme (DVPS), and the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program (WDVCAP), which administers 28 Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS).

Legal Aid NSW also has extensive experience working with vulnerable clients, and building strategic and collaborative partnerships to respond to the diverse legal and non-legal needs of clients.

The Legal Aid NSW planning context

One of the four objectives of the Legal Aid NSW Plan 2015-2016 is to promote access to justice through early intervention and prevention and better targeting of legal assistance to disadvantaged people. A key action under this objective is the development of a new Domestic and Family Violence Strategy across all areas of legal service delivery.

The Legal Aid NSW *Domestic and Family Violence Strategy 2016-2018* implements this action. It sets out guiding principles, objectives and actions to ensure that Legal Aid NSW can deliver high quality, client-centred and holistic services to people who are affected by domestic and family violence, and in particular victims.

Many of the actions in the *Domestic and Family Violence Strategy 2016-2018* also contribute to the achievement of the other three objectives in the Legal Aid NSW Plan 2015-2016, namely:

- the pursuit of excellence, innovation and efficiency in legal service delivery (Objective 2);
- the support and development of staff and the improvement of our systems to meet organisational goals (Objective 3); and
- building strong, effective service partnerships to respond to the legal and non-legal needs of our clients (Objective 4).

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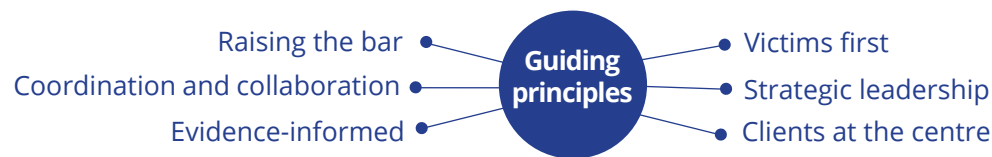
Relationship to national and NSW priorities and objectives

The Legal Aid NSW *Domestic and Family Violence Strategy 2016-2018* supports and aligns with broader government and justice sector goals to prevent and reduce domestic and family violence in NSW. For instance, people experiencing, or at risk of, family violence are a priority client group under the National Partnership Agreement on Legal Assistance Services. Reducing domestic violence is a NSW State Priority under *Making it Happen*, where the Government has committed to reduce the proportion of domestic violence perpetrators re-offending within 12 months by 5%.

Legal Aid NSW is a central partner in the implementation of reforms under *It Stops Here: The NSW's Government's Domestic and Family Violence Framework for Reform*. One is the *NSW Domestic Violence Justice Strategy 2013-2017 (DVJS)*, which outlines the approaches and standards justice agencies in NSW will adopt to improve the justice system's response to domestic violence. The NSW Government priorities in the DVJS are to make victims safer, hold perpetrators accountable and prevent domestic violence from reoccurring.

Another element of the NSW Government reforms is *Safer Pathway*, which implements streamlined referral pathways to secure victims' safety and recovery. The WDVCSs have been chosen to host the Local Coordination Points for *Safer Pathway*, specialist support services for domestic and family violence victims, and to support Safety Action Meetings. Safety Action Meetings are local meetings of key government and non-government service providers aimed at preventing further harm, injury or death to victims and their children who are assessed at serious threat of violence.


Legal Aid NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategy 2016-2018



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OBJECTIVES

ACTIONS

	1 Improve our capability and capacity to provide services to people affected by domestic and family violence	2 Prioritise victims of domestic and family violence in the delivery of our services	3 Deliver coordinated, client-centred services to people affected by domestic and family violence	4 Prevent and reduce domestic and family violence, including engagement with defendants	5 Increase awareness and understanding of our domestic and family violence services
	1.1 Review, develop and roll out domestic and family violence resources and tools for staff	2.1 Review and amend conflict policy and practice to maximise opportunities to provide in-house services to victims	3.1 Equip DVU staff with the skills, knowledge and relationships to demonstrate leadership and best practice in holistic client service delivery	4.1 Expand targeted services to communities disproportionately affected by domestic and family violence	5.1 Collect, review and analyse data on Legal Aid NSW services to people affected by domestic and family violence
	1.2 Develop and introduce mandatory and specialised training on domestic and family violence for staff and panel practitioners	2.2 Review and amend grants policies and guidelines to maximise access to legal assistance for victims	3.2 Strengthen referral pathways and relationships between Legal Aid NSW practice areas and the WDVCSs	4.2 Review, redesign and expand community legal education on domestic and family violence	5.2 Provide NSW Police Force with training on the WDVCP
	1.3 Establish and evaluate the Domestic Violence Unit (DVU), including targeted services in South West Sydney	2.3 Provide strategic direction and mentoring to WDVCSs to ensure victims receive a consistent, effective and trauma-informed service	3.3 Monitor the implementation of the Strategy through the Legal Aid NSW Domestic and Family Violence Committee	4.3 Improve service delivery to defendants in domestic and family violence matters so as to contribute to the reduction of reoffending	5.3 Review and enhance digital access to Legal Aid NSW domestic and family violence services
	1.4 Develop and implement a new model for the Domestic Violence Practitioner Service		3.4 Continue and develop the Legal Aid NSW Family Violence Specialist Network	4.4 Provide advice externally to improve domestic and family violence law, policy and service delivery	5.4 Launch the DVU and promote the range of Legal Aid NSW domestic and family violence services