



Factsheet

Victims Support Scheme

The Victims Support Scheme provides support and compensation to victims of crime. Through Victims Services it provides:

- Counselling
- Payments recognising the injury
- Financial assistance for immediate needs
- Financial assistance for economic loss

The money for the Victims Support Scheme comes from the NSW Treasury and from funds that have been recovered from offenders.

Eligibility

The following people are eligible to receive assistance under the scheme.

- **Primary Victims** - any person who is injured as a direct result of an act of violence. They are eligible for counselling, a payment recognising the injury, financial assistance for immediate needs, and/or financial assistance for economic loss.
- **Secondary Victims** - any person who is injured as a result of witnessing the act of violence. They are eligible for counselling only.

- **Parent, Step-parent, or Guardian caring for a child who is a primary victim** injured by an act of violence. They are eligible for counselling, and financial assistance for economic loss.
- **Family Victims** - any person who is a member of the immediate family of a primary victim who has died as a direct result of an act of violence. They are eligible for counselling, a payment recognising the injury, financial assistance for immediate needs, and/or financial assistance for economic loss.

Victims of Crime

In order to make a claim under the scheme, it is important that the injury is a result of an act of violence.

- **Act of Violence** - a single act or a series of acts that occurred during a crime involving violence and has resulted in injury or death.
- **Injury** - any actual bodily harm or psychological or psychiatric harm.

Counselling

- Counselling is provided to assist in the recovery of the victim.

- An initial ten hours of counselling is available on application. A further 12 hours is available if required.
- Counselling is available to all victims of violent crime. There are no time limits to apply for counselling.

Recognition Payments

- Recognition Payments recognise the injury that the primary victim has received.
- There are several categories of recognition payment. Note that the following categories are a brief guide only.
 - **Category A** – Homicide. Family victims may claim up to \$15,000.
 - **Category B** – Aggravated Sexual Assault. Primary victim may claim up to \$10,000.
 - **Category C** – Sexual Assault, Attempted Sexual Assault resulting in serious injury, Grievous bodily harm, or Assault of a child that is one of a series of acts. Primary victim may claim up to \$5,000.
 - **Category D** – Indecent Assault, Robbery that involves violence, Assault not resulting in grievous bodily harm. Primary victim may claim up to \$1,500.

Financial Assistance for immediate needs

Financial Assistance for immediate needs is a payment that covers expenses or other urgent costs that have arisen as a result of the injury, to secure the victim's safety, health or well being.

This may involve the costs associated with moving house, changing locks, or for urgent medical or dental treatment.

The maximum amount of financial assistance for immediate needs available is \$5,000 and claims take an estimated 15 days to assess once the evidence is received.

Financial Assistance for economic loss

Financial Assistance for economic loss is a payment that covers economic loss suffered by the victim as a direct result of the act of violence.

This may be from loss of earnings, damage to personal effect such as clothes or personal items, or further medical or dental costs.

If you were in a domestic violence situation and were financially dependant on the perpetrator, you may be able to claim loss of earnings.

If, after the act of violence, you applied for Centrelink and there was a gap in time before receiving payments, you may be able to claim for loss of wages in that time.

For family victims, you may be able to claim funeral expenses.

The maximum amount of financial assistance for immediate needs available is \$30,000 (if you were working at the time of the violence) and claims take an estimated three months to assess.

Time Limits for Compensation

If you are applying for financial support and a recognition payment, then any

application must be made within **two years** of the act of violence.

If the victim was a child, they must make an application within two years after the day which they turned 18.

If the application is for injuries arising as a result of domestic violence, then the time limit is increased to ten years.

There is no time limit for applications for injuries arising as a result of sexual assault where the victim was under the age of 18 when the assault occurred.

If the application is for financial support for a family victim, then the time limit is two years from the date it was established that the person died as a direct result of the act of violence.

Protecting Your Claim from Reduction

In order to prevent an assessor from making a reduction in your claim, you should take the following steps:

- Report the matter to the police within a 'Reasonable Time'
- Report any injuries to a health practitioner
- Give reasonable assistance to the police.
- Take reasonable steps to reduce the extent of the injury.

If you participated in the offence or contributed to the injury, the assessor may also make a reduction in your final payment.

Making the Application

- Applications can be made online at the Victim Services website.
- There is no application fee.
- If you have doctor's records or hospital records, with your permission Victim Services can obtain these after you have made your application. Victim Services can also access any police records.
- If preparing an application costs you money, you may be able to claim these costs from Victim Services as a part of your application.

If you believe that you are eligible to receive Victims Support, the NRCLC may be able to assist you in making a claim and completing the application.

Useful Contacts

Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre:
02 6621 1000

Northern Rivers Women's Domestic
Violence Court Advocacy Service: 1300
720 606

Victims Services: 1800 633 063

Law Access: 1300 888 529