



Hon Greg Smith SC MP

Attorney General
Minister for Justice

MEDIA RELEASE

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HELP FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The NSW Attorney General, Greg Smith SC, today launched a new resource to help victims of crime cope with being in the spotlight in the aftermath of a traumatic event.

The Guide to the Media for Victims of Crime was developed in consultation with victims of crime, support groups, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and media representatives.

“The guide provides victims with practical information about the benefits and risks of publicly discussing their case so they can make informed decisions about how they interact with the media,” Mr Smith said.

“The media gives victims of crime a voice in the community and can be extremely effective in helping them campaign for legal and policy reform, however some victims can be overwhelmed by the sudden attention.”

Mr Smith was joined at the launch today by Detective Chief Superintendent Peter Cotter of the NSW Police, Mary Cusumano (widow of murdered computer shop owner Angelo Cusumano), Homicide Victims Support Group executive director Martha Jabour and broadcaster Ray Hadley OAM.

Ms Jabour told Mr Hadley there had been a lack of material to explain media processes to victims of crime.

“People are often extremely vulnerable after a crime has been committed against them and intense public scrutiny can be confusing, intimidating and detrimental to their recovery if they are unprepared for the experience,” Ms Jabour said.

“This resource offers victims of crime useful information about their rights, privacy issues and who they can contact if they need support or wish to make a complaint.”

A new contact card for the media is also available, which contains details of victims’ support groups and counselling services. The card will assist media in directing victims to relevant support services.

The resources are part of the Respectful Reporting: Victims of Violent Crime Media Strategy, which has been developed by the Victims Services unit of the Department of Attorney General and Justice.

“The strategy focuses on working with the media to support victims of crime and minimise the potential for any additional trauma,” Mr Smith said.

Mary Cusumano said she suffered as a result of invasive and disrespectful media attention when her husband was killed in 1995.

“Shortly after my husband was killed, a photographer caused me great distress by jumping over my fence to take a photo of me inside my house with my young children,” Mrs Cusumano said.

“Since then, I have had mostly positive experiences with the media. It was the courteous and empathetic journalists who ended up with the best stories, because they had earned my trust.”

Detective Chief Superintendent Cotter said police worked closely with victims and could help ensure their voices were heard.

Mr Smith said the respectful reporting strategy could be adopted nationwide, with the issue now on the agenda of the National Justice CEOs Group.

“Guidelines for reporting on victims of crime could be incorporated into media codes of ethics, taught at universities and utilised in the training of cadet reporters,” he said.

The guide is also available at www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vs