[Date]

[MP NAME]

[ADDRESS LINE 1]

[ADDRESS LINE 2]

By email: [insert email]

Dear [Title, Surname]

**Re: Proposed changes to NSW Victims Support Scheme will deny victims-survivors access to vital supports**

We are writing to raise significant concerns about proposed changes to the NSW Victims Support Scheme.

If implemented, the changes will deny many victims-survivors of violence in NSW access to support they have a right to and need. They do so by shifting the burden from Victims Services to victim-survivors to:

* Collect their own evidence of violence and injury before being able to submit a claim for victims support.
* Find an approved counsellor to help them in their recovery.

**We are particularly concerned about the impact these changes will have on victims-survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and child sexual assault.**

Every barrier put in a victim’s-survivor’s way will deter them from accessing support. Many victims-survivors forced to collect their own evidence within the strict timeframes set by the scheme or find their own counsellor will just give up due to the impact of complex trauma, literacy and language issues (including digital literacy), lack of access to a computer or the internet, and cost.

**We are also deeply concerned by the lack of proper consultation with victims-survivors and their advocates on these changes.**

Victims Services initially announced the changes on 20 April 2020, and they were due to come into effect just 5 days later from 5pm on 24 April 2020. In response to community concerns, implementation has been paused while Victims Services consults with stakeholders. We appreciate the Commissioner Victims Rights delaying implementation to consult. We remain concerned that the issues we are raising are not being adequately addressed.

**The government must conduct a statutory review of the NSW Victims Support Scheme by May 2021.**

It is our strong view that this review should start immediately, should involve proper consultation, and that any proposed changes to the scheme should be scrapped until after it reports.

Any reform should strengthen a system, not reduce or remove support for those who need it most. We do not understand the rationale for these changes or the urgency with which they are being
implemented.

We urge you to write to the Attorney General and Minister for Domestic & Family Violence, the Hon Mark Speakman, and ask him to abandon these regressive reforms and commence the statutory review of the Victims Support Scheme immediately with proper consultation.

Yours Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]

[Title]

[Organisation]