



MEDIA RELEASE

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Regional, rural and remote WA to benefit from the return of domestic violence helpline.

DVassist has relaunched its confidential helpline to support people in regional, rural and remote WA experiencing family and domestic violence after a ten-month hiatus due to a lack of funding.

The move comes as WA's family and domestic violence sector announced it will hold urgent crisis talks with the State Government today following the violent deaths of two women in the past two weeks.

DVassist Board Director, Lachlan Hunter, said a grant from the Australian Communities Foundation in partnership with Paul Ramsay Foundation had enabled the non-profit to again offer its vital counselling.

"As we have tragically seen over the past fortnight, family and domestic violence shatters lives," said Mr Hunter.

"We need people living in the regions to know there is support available from someone who understands the unique challenges they face and most importantly there is hope and recovery."

DVassist offers telephone counselling and webchat to enable people outside the metropolitan area to 'silently' seek specialist help and advice regardless of their location and without compromising their safety or privacy.

"It also removes the fear that 'everyone in a small community will know you have sought help', which is a significant barrier to people reaching out for family and domestic violence support," said Mr Hunter.

"The multi-session, confidential counselling we offer is free, there is no wait list for our services, and you don't need a GP mental health plan to access our help."

Mr Hunter said DVassist's current funding only allows it to offer its live webchat and confidential telephone helpline Monday to Thursday, from 8am to 8pm.

"We have the experience, the skilled team and the understanding of life in regional, rural and remote areas of WA to make a difference now and urge the State Government to help us expand our opening hours in response to the current family and domestic violence crisis," he said.

Fast Facts:

- DVassist's webchat is available via dvassist.org.au and the helpline via 1800 080 083.
- People living in regional, rural, and remote areas who experience family and domestic violence face specific issues related to their location and the cultural and social characteristics of living in small communities.
- Fear of stigma, shame or community gossip can deter people from seeking help.
- A lack of privacy due to the high likelihood that police, health professionals, and domestic and family violence workers know both the person experiencing the violence and the person using the violence can inhibit people's willingness to use local services.
- People who seek help find difficulty accessing services due to geographical isolation, lack of transportation options, and not having access to their own income.

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