



New Domestic Violence Unit study provides valuable data to inform roll out

The Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) of Legal Aid NSW began delivering services in January 2016. A new study by the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, [Legal Aid NSW Domestic Violence Unit: process evaluation of the first nine months](#), examined the early operation of the DVU.

The DVU was set up to meet the need for a more integrated and intensive response to the complex legal and non-legal issues faced by women experiencing or at serious risk of domestic or family violence. At the time of the evaluation, the DVU provided a dedicated legal advice line and regular legal advice clinics, duty lawyer services at Bankstown, Burwood, Fairfield and Liverpool Local Courts,¹ as well as social work support and coordination with other Legal Aid NSW and human services.

The evaluation involved quantitative analysis of Legal Aid NSW administrative data, and interviews and focus groups with stakeholders. It examined key questions such as whether the DVU is reaching disadvantaged clients and delivering appropriate services.

Lead author Dr Christine Coumarelos said: "The Law and Justice Foundation was engaged by Legal Aid NSW to help build the evidence base to inform service delivery. We drew on the views and experiences of the DVU's partners and stakeholders, including other Legal Aid NSW workers, as well as external agencies and professionals such as the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, NSW Police Domestic Violence Liaison Officers, magistrates and court registry staff. The findings demonstrate that building collaborative relationships at the local level, supported by protocols, is key to the success of the DVU."

The evaluation suggests that the holistic approach adopted by the DVU enables it to fill important service gaps. Stakeholders reported numerous benefits for clients, including timely access to services, a safer, more supported and empowering experience, and better wraparound services to address the range of legal and non-legal issues they face.

The report can be downloaded from <http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/reports/dvueval>

About the Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales

The [Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales](#) is an independent, statutory, not-for-profit organisation established in 1967 to advance the fairness and equity of the justice system, and to improve access to justice for socially and economically disadvantaged people. Through our research, the Foundation identifies legal need, and what strategies work to address that legal need, to support the planning and delivery of the most effective legal assistance services.

Domestic and family violence help

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, you can ring the 24-hour NSW Domestic Violence Line for help on **1800 65 64 63**.

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¹ DVU services have now expanded to include duty lawyer services at Liverpool, Newcastle, Wollongong and Wyong Local Courts and at family law registries in Newcastle, Parramatta, Sydney and Wollongong.