

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing for my submission to be included for the review.

The current legislation has failed victims of serious crime. We have been left feeling like beggars, instead of being supported by the government and services that we put our trust in. Many of us have been left to fight, when government and services have let us down.

I first contacted Victims Services in March, 2013, I was not made aware, by any services, of the impending changes to legislation. My application was received on the 15th May, 2013, instead of being supported from this date (before the legislation was passed on the 30th May, 2013, and before it was assented into legislation on the 3rd June, 2013), it was held over until the legislation for Recognition Payment was in place, and all the work for the new legislation was prepared. It appears they also held my rights over until, they too, could be passed. This is perhaps the hardest thing to accept. Victims Rights should be set in stone, not picked at like vultures scavenging, and shuffled around to suit government. Victims no longer have the certainty that they will be supported in a fair and just manner. Not only was I not informed what was happening, my information was taken from the original application and it was transferred to the Recognition Payment forms. This was done electronically by Victims Services, without my signature and without my permission. I was not aware of the changes to legislation or the applications until late in August, 2013. This should never have been allowed. It could only have been done in this manner as an attempt to mislead victims of crime.

Since then, I have felt as if I have to beg for everything, filling out multiple applications for very little amounts in relation to the actual harm I suffered. Forms have to be filled out for the Recognition Payment, proven loss of income, proven expenses, proven hardship, two separate forms for twenty-two hours of counselling, which the counsellor requests(not the victim). Unable to physically prove expenses and loss of income, I receive less than \$11,000. To put it in perspective, if your daughter was abducted tomorrow, indecently assaulted twice, repeatedly raped over a number of hours, to the point that she did not think she would be alive at the finish, then was threatened to be raped with a foreign object, she might not receive the appropriate amount, and support will depend on the filling out multiple forms that can also re-traumatise the victim. She may also have to attend many court cases, each on causing more trauma. She might receive as little as \$10,000.

I am certain that an assessor could be appointed in the most severe cases, they should be assessed individually, as to how severe the crime was, trauma suffered and one amount could cover all aspects, without the victim having to contact places to prove harm caused.

Counselling should be the victims choice of an accredited counsellor. I was sent to a counsellor who was a volunteer in my workplace. It was not appropriate. It would be better for Victims Services to offer more free confidential counselling services that are available for sexual assault victims to attend when they feel it is needed the most, they should be specifically trained to work with victims of sexual assault. This counseling should not be linked to Victims payments. They should not have to apply for counselling. I was sent to an elderly lady, who ran the business from her home. I will never know what happens to those

notes. We should be limiting the sensitive information to one service, as it should have been in the first place. Counsellors would need only acknowledge attendance in relation to the crime. This would make victims feel more at ease when they divulge sensitive sexual assault information. In Hobart, they have the Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS).

If a lawyer had have been appointed for me when I first reported the crime in 2010, they would have assisted me and my application would have been received well before the cut off date. Instead, it appears that the Scales of Justice have slipped too far in favour of support for perpetrators, while victims are being left to fight for what very little rights they have left. There needs to be some serious adjustments made to those scales, starting with the victims who have suffered since the changes of 2013.

Government has a duty to act in fair manner, minimising repeated trauma. The previous amount was more inclusive, less invasive (of privacy) and fair. As with my case, (one proven in court), some victims will not be adequately compensated with current legislation. I have spoken to the ombudsman, lawyers and services and no-one believes this was fair.

With kind regards

Michelle Aorangi