

## FACTSHEET:

# Better protection for victim-survivors of domestic violence and their animals



Victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and their animals will be better protected as a result of recent legislative amendments.

## Why is it important to protect the animals of domestic violence victim-survivors?

Domestic and family violence perpetrators are known to abuse animals to intimidate and control victims. The tactic is used to manipulate victim-survivors during the relationship, and after separation as punishment for leaving.

## How will the commencement of legislative amendments better protect victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and their animals?

In November 2020, the NSW Parliament passed the Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020 which includes a range of amendments to the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 (CDPV Act)*. The CDPV Act is the legal framework in NSW for responding to domestic and family violence. The purpose of these changes is to recognise and better protect victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and their animals.

A number of these legislative amendments will start on 27 March 2021. This includes changing the definition of intimidation in the CDPV Act to explicitly include harm to, or harm threatened to, animals belonging to, or in the possession of, the victim-survivor (or a person they are in a relationship with) as a form of intimidation. Intimidation is a crime with a maximum penalty of imprisonment for five years.

The amendments also enhance the protections that can be provided under the CDPV Act as part of an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO). The AVO scheme enables the making of two types of orders - Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders and Apprehended Personal Violence Orders. Mandatory conditions that apply to every AVO will now explicitly state that harm to animals belonging to, or in the possession of the victim-survivor (or a person they are in a domestic relationship with) is prohibited.

All AVOs also contain a prohibition on the defendant stalking, harassing or intimidating the protected person. Changes to the definition of intimidation will therefore also enhance protection against harm to animals under an AVO. Breaching an AVO is a crime with a maximum penalty of imprisonment for two years.

## What other initiatives are supporting victim-survivors and their animals to leave violent relationships?

As part of the NSW Government response to COVID-19, stimulus funding of \$500,000 was made available to support women's refuges and animal welfare organisations.

This funding was delivered as a one-off grants program for infrastructure upgrades and related costs, such as veterinary services, pet supplies and staff training. The program had two streams: one to enable crisis accommodation to become animal-friendly, and one to enhance the capacity of animal shelters.

Nineteen organisations across NSW were successful in their applications for funding. Further information is available at: <https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/families-and-communities/domestic-and-family-violence/domestic-and-family-violence-pets-and-animal-welfare-support-dfv-paws-grant-program>