

On the spot AVO action

By Breanna Chillingworth

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NEW RULES: Changes to AVO laws mean victims can get immediate protection from today by contacting police. Pictured, from left are Tamworth domestic violence liaison officer Constable Kareena Gill, with Lorrelle Munro and Elicia O'Connor from the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services in Tamworth. Photo: Barry Smith 260514BSD04

VICTIMS of domestic violence will be able to get immediate protection with sweeping changes to laws that come into effect today.

Senior police can now issue provisional apprehended domestic violence orders (ADVOs) on the spot, meaning locals who need urgent protection won't have to wait. It comes after a number of high-profile incidents of domestic violence across the country, with local agencies also detailing increasing rates in the Tamworth area.

The new process will provide faster and immediate access to provisional ADVO's for victims at risk of violence before the allegations head to court within 28 days. Oxley police domestic violence liaison officer Constable Kareena Gill said the provisional orders were for immediate protection. "If police have any fears or concerns for the victim's safety we can take out an AVO," she said. "It covers all forms of domestic violence as the act says not to assault, molest, harass, threaten, interfere, intimidate or stalk."

Up until today, interim ADVO orders made in court could not be enforced unless it had been served on the defendant.

Under changes to the laws police will also have the power to detain or remove a person from the scene to secure the victim's safety and detain them to serve the provisional order.

And even if victims are unwilling to make a complaint, police can step in. "If a domestic violence offence is imminent or likely to occur police can make an application for a AVO," Constable Gill said.

The NSW government said the new powers will enable a victim to remain in the home and not have to take emergency shelter, while the defendant is served. "Most ADVOs are sought outside business hours but victims can be assured that the process of obtaining emergency protection will be swift, regardless of what time the domestic incident occurs," Attorney-General Brad Hazzard said.

Once the ADVO is heard in court, the magistrate will make a determination on any permanent orders. Local women can get help to navigate the court system in Tamworth with a dedicated domestic violence team running court advocacy services.

To get help contact the Tamworth Family Support Service-run initiative on 1800 613 083. Anyone with concerns about domestic violence should contact local police or triple-0