



**Mark Speakman**  
Attorney General  
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REFORMS PASS PARLIAMENT

Domestic violence victim-survivors will have greater safeguards in court while every Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) will contain a new protection against animal abuse after the NSW Government's domestic violence Bill passed Parliament this week.

Attorney General and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Mark Speakman said the significant reforms contained in the *Stronger Communities Legislation Amendment (Domestic Violence) Bill 2020* aimed to address the stress and trauma of testifying in court.

"Attending court can be overwhelming for victim-survivors who've suffered terrible abuse. Our reforms sought to ease that burden to ensure they are supported during criminal proceedings, particularly while giving evidence," Mr Speakman said.

NSW Parliament passed the following reforms that amend the *Criminal Procedure Act 1986*:

- Complainants in domestic violence criminal proceedings, and Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) hearings arising from the same circumstances, will have a prima facie entitlement to give evidence in closed courts and remotely via audio-visual link.
- They will also, upon commencement of the relevant provision, no longer be personally cross-examined by self-represented defendants.
- Other parts of the domestic violence proceedings may also be heard in a closed court.
- A new jury direction for domestic violence criminal proceedings will state that the absence of complaint, or delay in reporting, by a domestic violence complainant should not necessarily be viewed as evidence suggesting the allegation is false.

Mr Speakman said the Government's Bill also amended the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* and expanded the conditions of ADVOs to address animal abuse.

"Animals are often used as an instrument of coercive control designed to torment domestic violence victims, with perpetrators using animals to manipulate victims during the relationship and after separation as punishment for leaving," Mr Speakman said.

The reforms changed the definition of 'intimidation' to indicate explicitly that harm or threatened harm to animals is a form of intimidation. The protection of animals will be a standard condition now in all ADVOs.

"These crucial changes will make it easier to respond to this vile form of abuse and improve the safety of those experiencing domestic and family violence," Mr Speakman said.

Further details of the Bill are available on the [NSW Parliament website](#).