



Robyn Preston MP

Member for Hawkesbury

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW LAWS TO HELP PROTECT PETS FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATORS

Domestic violence victim-survivors and their animals across the Hawkesbury Electorate will have greater protections under proposed Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) reforms.

Member for Hawkesbury, Robyn Preston MP, said animals are often used as an instrument of coercive control designed to torment victims.

“Perpetrators use animals to intimidate, retaliate against, and manipulate victims during the relationship and after separation, as punishment for leaving,” Ms Preston said.

“Reports from victims of the abuse inflicted on their pets is quite sickening – and presents yet another barrier to them fleeing abuse for fear of leaving their animals unprotected.”

The Government’s Bill, to be introduced in NSW Parliament this week, will amend the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* and expand the conditions of ADVOs.

Currently, ADVOs have conditions that prohibit the defendant from harassing, stalking or intimidating the protected person, or from destroying or damaging their property or the property of anyone with whom they are in a domestic relationship.

The reforms will change the definition of ‘intimidation’ to indicate explicitly that harm to, or harm threatened to, animals is a form of intimidation. The Bill will also ensure that the protection of animals will be a standard condition in all ADVOs.

While there are existing animal cruelty laws, this reform means if offences are committed in the context of a domestic relationship, with intent to coerce or control the victim, or cause intimidation or fear, they may be also charged as domestic violence offences.

Further details of the Bill will be available on the [NSW Parliament website](#), when it is introduced this week.

In addition, the NSW Government has invested \$500,000 in a one-off grants program for refuges and animal shelters to support companion animals when victims flee violent homes.

Ms Preston encouraged Hawkesbury refuges and animal shelters to apply to the Pets and Animal Welfare Support (PAWS) Grants Program this week.

“These funds will enable refuges to become pet-friendly and to enhance the capacity of animal welfare services to provide temporary foster care for animals so victims can leave violent homes without worrying their pet will be harmed,” Ms Preston said.

The grant program funds formed part of the NSW and Commonwealth Government's [\\$21 million boost to frontline domestic violence services](#) and other supports, during COVID-19.

To apply to the PAWS Program, visit <https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au/dfv-paws>

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