

Response to the **NSW Recorded Crime Statistics quarterly update June 2021:**

Much-needed sexual and family violence reform is vital in NSW, after data once again shows a significant increase in reported incidents.

New data released today from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, shows recorded incidents of sexual assault rose 21 per cent from June 2019-21 (up 1,367 incidents). This was the only major crime to show a significant increase during the 24-month period.

Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia chief executive officer Hayler Foster said the rise highlights the desperate need for reform, to ensure the system is equipped to deal with the issue.

"We've been talking about this for a long time, and the horrendous situations taking place during the pandemic shows us more support is needed," Ms Foster said.

"Even though we're seeing less sexual violence through dating violence and through school parties or the like, the rates are still going up. This is largely due to sexual violence in the home."

"We know increases in reporting can be a positive thing, in particular the increase in historical case reporting, but we need to make sure the system is equipped to deal with this."

"This means ensure specialist sexual assault services can meet increased capacity, and that the path to justice is both safe and attainable."

"We can't let them down now. We can't turn a blind eye to this."

The reports show a 27.7 per cent increase in historical child sexual assault reports and a 12.4 per cent increase in child victims reporting current sexual assaults.

Ms Foster said to keep these statistics strong, the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program must be rolled out state-wide immediately to improve the criminal justice process for children as well as adult complainants to reduce prevent re-traumatisation and make the justice process fairer.

"It is an abomination that the Child Sexual Offence Evidence Program still hasn't been rolled out beyond Sydney and Newcastle. At the moment, less than 1.5 per cent of perpetrators are held to account in this country. If we don't improve this, survivors will not feel confident to report and increases will cease," she said.

Ms Foster also raised the urgent need to update the NSW Police Sexual Assault Reporting Option, which currently requires the victim to print out a PDF form and give it back to police to document their experiences.

“People need to be able to access a quick, online form to make a record about their experience, even if they don’t want to proceed,” she said.

“We reached out to NSW Police about this during the lockdown period in 2020 and still nothing has been done.”

For further information or comment, call Hayley Foster on 0477 442 122 or email ceo@rape-dvservices.org.au

We can also organise comment from survivors to speak on the issue.

If you or someone you know needs support dealing with the impact of sexual, domestic or family violence (including childhood sexual abuse and vicarious trauma), our expert counsellors are available on the phone or online, 24/7.

Please see details below.