


[My  
News](#)
[Local](#)
[Victoria](#)
[National](#)
[World](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Business](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Lifestyle](#)
[Sport](#)

[True Crime Australia](#) [Police & Courts Geelong](#)

## Geelong legal service fears family violence victims could miss key supports

There are fears victims of family violence could struggle to get the help they need, unless a funding shortfall is urgently addressed.


[Olivia Shying](#)
[Follow](#)

[@oliviashying](#)


2 min read

April 5, 2023 - 2:47PM

Geelong Advertiser



2 comments

### Police & Courts

Don't miss out on the headlines from Police & Courts. Followed categories will be added to My News.

[Follow](#)

Survivors of family violence could struggle to access legal representation in a specialist court unless urgent funding is granted, a leading lawyer says.

Barwon Community Legal Services chief executive officer Bryanna Connell said Geelong was one of seven Magistrates Court jurisdictions to not have received funding to support victim-survivors and applicants attending the new Specialist Family Violence Court, which was opened late last year.

She said unless funding was provided by June the service would have to cut back on lawyers and services, which would lead to victim-survivors missing out on legal representation.

“This will have a significant impact on the well-being of our already hardworking community lawyers and support staff,” she said.

“We won’t be able to meet demand, we’ll need to turn away clients and waitlists will grow. It will take a toll.”

The Specialist Family Violence Court was created to improve the safety of victim survivors of family violence and to strengthen accountability mechanisms for people who use family violence through the court process.

Crime Statistics Agency data shows family violence incidents in Greater Geelong grew by 11.2 per cent from 2021 to 2022, with the region recording significantly higher incidences of family violence per 100,000, (1,684), when compared to the Victorian average of 1400.

Ms Connell said the legal service fully supported the formation of the specialist court, but said funding had not been set aside for legal services meaning lawyers could not provide adequate services to clients.

“It’s puzzling as to why Geelong missed out,” Ms Connell said.

“Magistrate Courts Victoria data shows that the number of family violence matters heard at Barwon South West Magistrate’s Courts increased by 38 per cent from 2020-21 to 2021-22.

“We are concerned that resourcing constraints will adversely impact families experiencing family violence who are engaging with the court system, leading to delays in resolving family violence matters in court which could exacerbate court waiting times, and potentially contribute to the safety risks for victim survivors and their children.”

A Victoria Government spokeswoman said there would be further announcements about the upcoming budget when it was delivered.

“We continue to ensure all court locations in Victoria are fit for purpose, safe and accessible. This includes a focus on establishing Specialist Family Violence Courts (SFVCs) at all Magistrates’ Court of Victoria headquarter court locations,” she said.



**Sign up to the Addy's newsletters**  
Get daily AM and PM updates plus breaking news alerts straight to your inbox  
[CLICK HERE to sign up](#)

Stay informed

Here are all the ways you can find news from the Geelong Advertiser



**Download the Geelong Advertiser app**  
Get alerts straight to your phone and stay up-to-date with the latest breaking news

[Download on the App Store](#) [GET IT ON Google Play](#)

