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Australians Who Are Victims of Serious Sexual Crimes Remain Unheard

For Release: As we reflect on International Women's Day, attention should be squarely focused on the basic expectation for female victims of violent crimes. In Australia 1 in 3 women will be victims of domestic abuse, 1 in 5 will experience sexual violence. Only 10% of those experiencing these serious crimes, will report them. When they do report, the mishandling by Police is widespread.

This week [Karen Iles](#), Principal Solicitor Violet Co Legal & Consulting, has launched a campaign seeking to elevate this issue of police accountability to National Cabinet and the Standing Council of Attorney-Generals, personally contacting:

- Prime Minister
- Federal Attorney General
- Federal Minister for Women
- Federal Minister for Community Services
- Various key Federal Ministers
- Key NSW & QLD Ministers

Serious crimes against women are not being officially investigated as Australian women continue to be failed by Police despite media attention and action demanded by advocates. Police are falling well below the duty of care they owe victims and their families, often affecting society's most vulnerable. It's time to hold Police accountable for their lack of action.

Iles is speaking out publicly about her experiences of sexual assault as a child (multiple gang rapes and other sexual assaults, by the same group of perpetrators, in QLD & NSW when she was 14 years old) and the poor Police response.

"Australians expect better. At the very minimum those who have been victims of serious crimes deserve their cases to be investigated by the Police. This is the basic right of every Australian. What more do we have to do to get justice for those who are sometimes the most vulnerable in Australian society?" Iles asks.

“A systemic cultural problem exists within the Police force that has to change. This has to change through the introduction of strict rules that have to be adhered to, which are codified by senior management and real consequences that occur in the event of inaction.” Glenn Davies, former Head of the Victoria Police Sexual Crimes Squad expresses. “Unfortunately, this is a national problem, one we are seeing all too frequently particularly with those who are the most vulnerable in our society. “

Karen reported what happened to her in 1993 at the age of 14 in 2004. Redfern Police took a statement in relation to some of the gang rapes and other sexual assaults. Her statement named a co-victim, witnesses, perpetrators, the surf gang they were part of, schools attended, a photograph of a perpetrator and a childhood diary. Within days NSW Police closed Karen’s file. No investigation has ever occurred in NSW relating to offences in NSW, or investigation in cooperation with QLD relating to offences in QLD despite independent legal sources commenting that the allegations – including a gang rape attack by up to 15 teenagers and adult men – are among the most serious sexual crimes ever reported to Police.

“Unfortunately, since commencing my fight too many stories of this nature have come to my attention, and not just crimes against women. We’ve all seen the apathy and involvement of Police in crimes against the LGBTQIA+ community, further brought to light in the recent Royal Commission. Similarly Indigenous Australians are experiencing similar treatment.” Iles confirms.

Iles is campaigning for reforms to our legal system to ensure that women and children who are victims of serious sexual assaults can have their matters taken seriously by police and investigated. She is campaigning for this to be on the National Cabinet agenda.

“Police are making decisions all the time on what they will or won’t do on a busy day. There is then a confusion about when they implement a discretionary investigation. Their discretion becomes clouded by their own judgement, bias, experience, and culture. In my experience you must be the ‘right’ victim, with the ‘right’ crime, a perpetrator who they want to ‘catch’, getting the right officer on the day for the crime to be investigated.” Iles states. “It shouldn’t be like this.”

Iles is asking for changes:

1. Legislation to create legally enforceable duties for Police to ensure that serious crimes are investigated to a minimum set of requirements.
 - a. This goes beyond, and in addition to, training and culture change initiatives. It is about enabling legal remedies for victims/survivors who have been denied access to justice (criminal, and often by default civil) and have suffered re-traumatisation and distress due to instances of gross Police mishandling.
2. Legislation to create transparent independent mechanisms to receive and investigate complaints against Police where it is alleged a breach of their duties occur.

3. Independent legal representation for victim/survivors when reporting to police, and right through their engagement with the justice system.

To get involved:

www.makepoliceinvestigate.org

For further information or interview requests:

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Other spokespeople available:

Police

Glenn Davies, Former Head of the Victoria Police Sexual Crimes Squad

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