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HELP ON HAND FOR VICTIMS

Sweeping changes to South Australian laws have been included in two new editions of booklets for victims of crime.

The *Information for Victims of Crime* and *Unlocking the Homicide Maze* handbooks have been updated to reflect new laws, which give victims more rights, easier access to information and an independent advocate - the Commissioner for Victims' Rights.

The Attorney-General Michael Atkinson said the booklets explain in straightforward language what rights a victim has, as he or she progresses through the criminal justice system.

"Being the victim of a crime can be a life-changing event. The physical and emotional results can be devastating, not just for the victim but also their families and friends," Mr Atkinson said.

"The trauma of the crime can be aggravated by the stress of navigating the legal system. These booklets help relieve that pressure and make achieving justice a little easier for victims," he said.

Both handbooks reflect the new laws, including:

- The right to be consulted about some decisions by prosecuting authorities;
- The right to request the consideration of an appeal;
- The right to have victims' of crime perceived need for protection taken into account in bail proceedings; and
- The right to information about offenders who are not prisoners but are subject to other orders, such as detention at a mental health facility.

"The booklets provide a starting point for people affected by crime in South Australia, ranging from car theft and robbery to the most serious offences such as rape and murder," Mr Atkinson said.

The booklets point victims to services including counselling, support groups and legal advice. There's also practical information on topics such as personal and household security and advice on State-funded compensation, the legal system and dealing with the media.

The Commissioner for Victims' Rights Michael O'Connell said victims, police officers and support services have helped produce both handbooks.

"They've drawn on their own experiences to help others cope with the effect of crime and recover from it. No matter where you live or what the laws are, anyone can be a victim of crime at any time. These booklets are another step in trying to ensure justice and healing for crime victims."

For an *Information for Victims of Crime* or *Unlocking the Homicide Maze* booklet, phone 08 8204 9635, email voc@agd.sa.gov.au or visit www.voc.sa.gov.au.