



## NEW COLLABORATION BETWEEN BALLARAT POLICE AND CENTACARE

With the launch of a new collaboration between Ballarat Police and Centacare, Victims of Crime will have a faster way of getting the support they need.

The Victim Assistance Program is the thirty-second such initiative across the state and the eighth involving Centacare which sees a care worker stationed at Ballarat Police Station two days a week, but can also be used on call if situations arise.

Inspector Dan Davison said by having a co-location with Centacare, it would enable police to provide even better support to victims of crime. "It provides us with a one-stop shop for our victims, rather than us having to send off a referral electronically. Here we have more of a personal approach," Inspector Davison said.



"We have a Centacare worker here who can assist, have one-on-one conversations with investigators and be able to make sure we can put the necessary and specific support in place for victims. The members will have a conduit at Centacare and we'll seek that advice whenever necessary in order to put the best care we can in place for victims. The ultimate goal is that if you have experienced crime, you are able to come out the other side better."

The program began in 2010 as a response to the Victims Charter Act 2006. It is based on successful research carried out in the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

Centacare Chief Executive Officer Tony Fitzgerald said this was the fourth Centacare and police collaboration in the western region, with others in Stawell, Horsham and Ararat. "We've also got another four that we participate in the Barwon-Southwest region," he said. "There is no doubt that this operates at its optimum when the co-worker is located within the police station, it's much more effective due to the quicker referral and our records show the quicker they get the support the better the outcome is. If somebody is available in the police station, it's much more effective."

While the role is officially two-days a week, case manager Helen Dunster-Jones said she would be available when required. "There will be days when I'm in court, and if I'm needed I can be over here straight away," she said. "I'll be sitting in the station two days a week and three days back in the office, or in court, but it will be flexible that I can be used whenever they need me."

The Victims of Crime Helpline is available from 8am-11pm every day on 1800 819 817. The Victims of Crime Helpline is the official Victorian Government service for helping people manage the effects of violent crime.

*Article courtesy of the Ballarat Courier, text by Greg Gliddon and photo by Kate Healy*

*Photo: CEO of Centacare Tony Fitzgerald, Victim Support Worker Centacare Helen Dunster-Jones, Superintendent Jenny Wilson and Inspector Dan Davison at the launch of the collaboration*