

**Domestic abuse** Seven victims a day in suburbs

# Statistics reveal hidden violence

■ Emma Partridge

There are at least seven victims of domestic violence every day in Sydney's eastern suburbs - two of which are at immediate risk of being killed, according to new figures obtained by Fairfax Media.

The alarming statistics come from a groundbreaking domestic violence co-ordination site at Waverley, which has helped 2601 women in the past year.

The Safer Pathway pilot site at Waverley, run by Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, is one of six sites in NSW where agencies and service providers come together to figure out a safety action plan for women at risk of being hurt or killed.

Family and Community Services, police, domestic violence workers, counsellors and non-government service providers meet fortnightly to discuss the cases of victims at "serious threat". It is a referral system that prevents survivors from having to repeat their story or being passed from agency to agency. Victims are able to get all the services they need in one spot. Women are referred to the co-ordination point by police.

It has been one year since the trial of Safer Pathway at Waverley and Orange and a total of 4180 women have been referred. There were also 1758 men referred to the sites, 308 of whom were assessed as having a "serious threat" to their lives as a result of domestic violence.

Sarah\* did not see it coming when her

boyfriend walked in the door of their Paddington apartment after a few work drinks. He slammed her head against the wall, dragged her into their bedroom and spent the next half hour squeezing her throat until the point just before she passed out.

Holding a pillow just above her face, he repeatedly told her: "I am going to kill you." She managed to escape and called the police.

Sarah said the co-ordination site helped her find a counsellor, gave her advice on how to get out of her lease, put her in touch with people to help her through the court process and made her feel like someone cared.

"They talked about my case and they asked and reviewed what they could do to make me safe," she said.

NSW Attorney-General Gabrielle Upton said the co-ordination sites linked victims to support services, from counselling to housing, making it easier for them to move on.

"Safer Pathway makes it easier for people escaping domestic violence to get the help they need when they need it most," Ms Upton said.

In Orange, 1570 women were referred to a Safer Pathway site in the past year. One third were deemed at risk of being killed. The sites have since been rolled out at Tweed Heads, Parramatta, Bankstown and Broken Hill.

Minister for Women and Prevention of Domestic Violence Pru Goward has said the Safer Pathway sites will be rolled out state-wide by 2019.

\*Not her real name.