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NEW INTERVENTION ORDERS **BETTER PROTECT PEOPLE FROM ABUSE**

South Australian police and courts will soon have wider powers to protect victims of abuse under new legislation that comes into effect on Friday, December 9.

Minister for the Status of Women Gail Gago said a new system of Intervention Orders would better shield people from domestic and personal abuse.

Ms Gago said the Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Act represents a “radical reform” that supersedes the former system of restraining orders for domestic and personal violence.

“These new Intervention Orders aim to protect people not only from physical violence, but also from threatening behaviour,” the Minister said.

“Women who suffer violence or abuse will be assisted to stay in their homes, avoiding the dislocation of uprooting themselves from established networks and children from neighbourhood friends and schools.

“The Act gives police greater powers to take immediate action when individuals and their families are threatened with violence.

“Under this new law, we will no longer have the situation where women have to wait until they have been assaulted before a court can order an offender to stay away from the family home.

“Homelessness is one of the most distressing outcomes of domestic violence.

“It is the intention of the new Act that we give women legal backing that allows them to stay safely in their own homes, rather than fleeing.

“It also specifically protects children from witnessing or being exposed to abuse in their homes because we recognise that breaking the cycle of abuse is an absolutely vital step for their safety in the future.”

Ms Gago said the Intervention Orders Act also provides for:

- The option for police to issue interim intervention orders themselves, bypassing the need to apply to a magistrate;
- A broadening of the range of relationships covered by the Act, including women with a disability and their carer;

- The right of police to enter and search premises to remove firearms, weapons and ammunition; and
- The exclusion of a defendant from the home they share with the protected person despite any legal or equitable entitlement they have.

“When a defendant is excluded from a shared rental property, a court will be able to make a Tenancy Order allowing the protected person and their children to remain in their home and take over the obligations under any tenancy agreement,” she said.

Minister Gago said Intervention Orders would restrict what a defendant can do and require them to work towards rehabilitation.

“These new Intervention Orders will apply to abuse whether it takes place in a domestic relationship or not,” she said.

“It broadens the definition of abuse to encompass damage to property, emotional or psychological harm and denying a person financial, social or personal independence.”

Ms Gago said the commencement of the Act completes the Government’s comprehensive review of laws relating to rape, sexual assault and domestic violence laws.

More information is available at www.dontcrosstheline.com.au including a Quick Find chart which highlights the changes to existing laws and legal services contacts.