



Public Accounts and Estimates Committee 2021-22

Budget Estimates Hearings

The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP
Minister for Victim Support

Wednesday 30 June 2021



Victims of crime support services

Delivered by a highly specialised and skilled workforce of trained victim support workers.



Victim Support 2021-22

Budget Overview

Single greatest level of investment in victim services with **\$64.5 million** provided to build a **financial assistance scheme for victims**; and ongoing funding for a critical program to **support adults with a cognitive disability and children** to navigate the justice system.



\$ 54.6 million

To **improve services for victims** through:

- undertaking detailed service design of the new **Financial Assistance Scheme**
- establishing new legislation to enable the new Scheme to operate
- building a **major ICT platform** to operate and administer the new Scheme
- preparing for the physical transition from the current Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal to a new business operating model
- address the backlog of cases at **VOCAT**; and
- establishing a **new Victim Legal Service**



\$9.9 million

To continue the Intermediaries Program

Delivering on our commitments

Support for victims of crime from 1 July 2020 – 31 May 2021



12,549

Calls made to the Helpline



15,097

victims of violent crime were supported by the Victims Assistance Program



21,405

victims referred by Victoria Police to the Helpline, including **17,004** victims of family violence and **4401** victims of a violent crime



1,034

children and their families were supported by the Child Witness Service (many of these in cases relating to child sexual abuse)



235

victims joined the Victims Register to receive information about an offender after conviction



1,285

requests for assistance through the Intermediaries Program since pilot began in July 2018



Support for victims of crime during COVID-19

The **Victims of Crime Helpline** and the **Victims Assistance Program** continued to support victims of crime, without disruption to services.

Victims of Crime Helpline

- Provides an intake, triage and referral service, including risk and needs assessment and psychological first aid.
- Operates 8am to 11pm, 7 days per week, and staffed by 15.25 full time equivalent employees.
- The sole referral pathway for male victims of family violence.
- It takes, on average, seven seconds to answer a call.

Victims Assistance Program

- Provides flexible case management services to meet the practical, emotional and psychological needs of crimes.
- Delivered by community service organisations in allocated regions across the State.

Support for victims of crime during COVID-19

As part of a broader funding package to address COVID-19 related delays across the justice system, an additional **\$2.3 million** was provided for victim services in 2020-21.



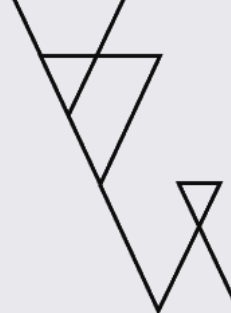
\$1.8 million

For new remote witness rooms, to support witnesses give evidence remotely at local court locations.



\$0.5 million

For the Virtual Court Support Program, which will allow the Child Witness Service and the Intermediaries Program to provide flexible options for victims and witnesses to engage safely in court hearings online.



Delivering on our commitments

Key reforms



Significantly progressing the recommendations of the Victorian Law Reform Commission's review into the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996 and Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT).



Introducing new laws to assist in addressing the current backlog of cases at the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT).



Delivering the Victim Services Review, the first comprehensive analysis of the victim services system since it was created more than two decades ago.



Strengthening the rights of victims of crime by prescribing key justice agencies to report to the Victims of Crime Commissioner on their compliance with the Victims Charter. The Commissioner then tables this report in Parliament.



Thank you.

