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Legislative Council

PETITION

Number: 666

Sponsored by: Rachel Payne

Directed to: Attorney-General

Tabled on: 17 June 2025

Grievance:

The Petition of certain citizens of Victoria draws to the attention of the Legislative Council the imminent collapse of Victoria's Honorary Justice System with less than 3,500 Justices of the Peace (JPs), many of whom are not active, serving a population of seven million. While Queensland has 80,000 and New South Wales has 75,800, Victoria's shortfall places additional strain on the already under resourced police. Access to justice is further undermined by government-approved, authorised witnesses, who unlike JPs, often charge fees, lack training, and are not accountable.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Council call on the Attorney General to enact systemic change in the effectiveness and engagement of the Honorary Justice Services Support, resulting in the recruitment of 5000 new Justice of the Peace (JP) by 2027 and 500 new JPs per annum, thereafter.

Reply:

I thank the member for sponsoring this petition, and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedicated service that justices of the peace (JPs) provide to the Victorian community.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety completed an extensive recruitment campaign in 2024, with 800 new JPs being appointed. All 800 new JPs are now available to provide services in their local communities, bringing the total number of JPs in Victoria to 3,714.

JPs offer their services in person or remotely, and many choose to operate out of Document Signing Stations, which provide the community with convenient access to services. There are 129 stations throughout Victoria in locations such as police stations, public libraries, and community centres.

The services of JPs are supplemented by a significant number of authorised witnesses, who include legal practitioners, medical practitioners, financial advisers, accountants, engineers, pharmacists, and public servants. Many automatically become authorised witnesses because of their profession.

Recruitment campaigns for JPs are targeted toward local government areas (LGA) with the greatest identified need, considering existing JP numbers and population growth for that area. Once an LGA is identified there is a public recruitment campaign and successful candidates undertake probity assessments and training, and they are then considered for appointment by the Governor in Council. The Department has informed me that they regularly engage with JPs to understand the demand for services, and any further recruitment will be based on demand.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'S' and 'K' followed by a long horizontal flourish.

**The Hon. Sonya Kilkenny MP
Attorney-General**

12-8-2025