

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee 2024 -25

Budget Estimates Hearings

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Attorney-General

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Attorney General Portfolio

2024-25 Budget Overview



Investment to support a trusted, safe and sustainable justice and community safety system

The 2024-25 Victorian Budget provides over \$250 million over 5 years for the Attorney-General's portfolio. This investment includes:

- Improving access to justice and inclusion by supporting our legal assistance sector
- Supporting the Office of Public Prosecutions to bring perpetrators to account
- Supporting victim-survivors of family violence and prioritising women's safety
- Reducing First Nations peoples' interactions with the justice system
- Continuing to support outcomes focused justice across Victoria through therapeutic courts programs



Improving access to justice

\$28.78 million over four years to continue early intervention programs that provide legal assistance for Victorians suffering hardship.



Community Legal Centre initiatives delivering Integrated Service Projects and early intervention **Health Justice Partnerships**. This funding helps vulnerable Victorians deal with legal issues, avoid homelessness, resolve financial matters, put in place safety plans and manage family violence issues



Programs delivered by Victoria Legal Aid, including the **Help Before Court program** to support early resolution of summary criminal matters, and the **Independent Family Advocacy and Support program** that works with parents and primary carers in the early (pre-court) phase of child protection involvement

\$15.61 million over three years to supporting access to justice for Victorians with a disability



Continuing the Office of the Public Advocate (OPA)'s **guardianship, investigation and Independent Third Person programs**, to support the OPA to promote and safeguard the human rights and interests of Victorians with disability.





Supporting the Office of Public Prosecutions (OPP)

\$31.39 million over three years for the OPP to ensure appropriate public prosecution services



Supporting **frontline prosecution resources**, including core prosecution solicitors, briefing fees and a specialist Prosecution and County Court Team who facilitate the triage, case management and early resolution of matters



Assisting the OPP to adopt **a modern electronic document and records management system** to increase the OPP's productivity



Prioritising Women's Safety

\$16.84 million over three years to strengthen the justice system response to family violence, including through self-determined family violence supports for Aboriginal women and families



Further strengthen and embed the justice system's response to family violence through continuing **family violence workforce training** and **implementation of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management framework** across the justice portfolio



Grant funding to Aboriginal Organisations to continue culturally-appropriate **programs that support Aboriginal families experiencing, or at risk of, family violence** – including out-of-hours services.

This builds on our government's significant achievements to date, including **Specialist Family Violence Courts** and the **Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine's** new clinical forensic medicine service model for victim-survivors of sexual and other assaults

Reducing First Nations peoples' interactions with the justice system

\$31.86 million for Aboriginal organisations to continue to deliver self-determined justice diversion programs and culturally appropriate supports



- **Self-determined justice diversion programs delivered by Aboriginal Organisations** - including through continued grant funding for Bramung Jaarn and other Aboriginal youth diversion programs.
- **Culturally appropriate supports in the corrections system** including continuing the Indigenous Arts in Prisons and Wadamba Prison to Work programs, and Aboriginal Wellbeing Officer roles
- **Balit Ngulu specialised youth legal service** provided by the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service to support young First Nations Victorians.



Photo source: Bendigo Law Courts: Koori Court

Therapeutic court programs - continuing to support outcomes focused justice across Victoria

The 2024-25 Budget continues the Government's commitment to supporting vulnerable court users and improving community safety by providing **\$139.61 million over four years (\$87.32 million to Court Services Victoria and \$52.29 million to the Department of Justice & Community Safety)**, including for:

- **Drug Courts** in **Ballarat, Shepparton**, and the **County Court** to help participants address substance abuse issues
- **Court Integrated Services Program** to support people on bail access services including housing, mental health support, drug and alcohol treatment and Koori services
- Victoria Police, Office of Public Prosecutions, Victoria Legal Aid and corrections and justice services **to support therapeutic courts.**



Photo source: Shepparton Law Courts
(inclusive of Shepparton Drug Court,
Court Services Victoria)

Backlog recovery continues in the Courts and VCAT

The Victorian Government has made significant investments in Courts and VCAT over recent years, which continues to show good results



Total reduction

11% total reduction in pending case load across all courts and VCAT
(2023-24 to date)



Pending cases are reducing

- **27% reduction** in VCAT's pending case load
- **11% reduction** in the Magistrates' Court pending case load
(2023-24 to date)



VCAT backlog has significantly reduced

- VCAT is on track to **clear the Residential Tenancy COVID-19 backlog** by November 2024.
- **45% reduction** in VCAT's pending Residential Tenancies matters.
- VCAT has finalised **74,830 cases** with a current clearance rate of 115%.
(2023-24 to date)



Case processing and clearance rates

- For courts and VCAT 10 out of 11 measures for on time case processing for expected outcomes **are above 2022-23 results.**
- Expected criminal clearance rates in 2023-24:
 - Supreme Court: 96%
 - County Court: 100%
 - Magistrates' Court: 109%
 - Children's Court: 104%

2024-25 Output Performance Statement

Legislative and reform priorities in 2024 and beyond



Anti-vilification reforms

- Victoria is consulting publicly on legislation to strengthen laws to prevent hate speech and hate conduct, guided by recommendations made by the Parliamentary Inquiry into Anti-Vilification Protections in Victoria
- A consultation summary will be published imminently



Youth justice

- Victoria will introduce new youth justice legislation, including to raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 years in 2024
- This Budget invests \$31.57 million to establish a two-year trial of electronic monitoring. This includes funding to the Children's Court of Victoria to enhance bail supervision and monitor and support high-risk young people on bail



Modern forensic services reform

- The Government has introduced legislation following investment from successive State budgets to ensure the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine's status as a world class forensic institute



Women's Safety

- Government will continue to prioritize reforms on women's safety
- We have implemented significant reforms to strengthen sexual offences including affirmative consent
- Future reforms will include amending the stalking offence, and considering family violence and personal safety intervention orders

Thank you

