



Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Budget Estimates Hearing

The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP

Minister for Victim Support

Wednesday 18 May 2022





Delivering on our commitments

Support for victims of crime from 1 July 2021 – 30 April* 2022



12,651

people called the Victims of Crime Helpline for support



13,108*

victims of violent crime were supported by the Victims Assistance Program



18,890

victims referred by Victoria Police to the Helpline, including 14,893 male victims of family violence through L17 referrals



1,156

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



262

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



426

requests for assistance through the Intermediary Program



Victim Support

2022-23 Budget Overview



\$39.5 million over four years to commence operation of the reformed **Financial Assistance Scheme**

The 2022-23 Victorian Budget provides \$39.5 million over four years to commence operation of the new Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS), including:

- a Decision Maker Directorate to oversee the operations of the FAS;
- a Financial Assistance Unit to perform critical client support; and
- operational non-staffing costs.



\$4.8 million over four years for the **Victims of Crime Commissioner**

The investment is reliant on the support of the Parliament for the reforms

The 2022-23 Budget also provides \$4.8 million over four years for the Victims of Crime Commissioner to support implementation of her regulatory and monitoring functions.



Putting victims first

Key reforms



Delivering a new Financial Assistance Scheme for victims of crime

- The Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance Scheme) Bill 2022 was introduced into the Victorian Parliament on 6 April 2022.
- This Bill establishes the new administrative Financial Assistance Scheme to replace VOCAT.



Making VOCAT safer while we build the Financial Assistance Scheme

- Recent amendments to the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* prohibit the notification of, or attendance at, VOCAT hearings by alleged offenders of family violence, sexual offences, stalking, threats to commit serious injury and threats to kill.



Delivering a new Victims Legal Service

- The new Victims Legal Service will provide legal assistance to victims making applications to the new Financial Assistance Scheme and to victims seeking restitution and compensation orders, filling a current gap in the system.



Victim Support Financial Assistance Reform

“A big concern at VOCAT is you often need the offender to be found guilty first before an application can proceed. For a woman to go through the criminal justice process, they often have to go against the whole family, their kids, the community – it can cause significant rifts for someone to have to go through that before they can have a chance at accessing assistance.”

“Taking this out of a courtroom environment will make a big difference for victims of crime, given the trauma/PTSD response that being in court can trigger in victims of crime”





Victim Support Update

Previous funding commitments:

\$54.6
million

over four years to progress the Government's pledge to replace VOCAT with a more accessible and trauma-informed financial assistance scheme, including **\$7.3 million** to establish a new, dedicated Victims Legal Service.

\$9.9
million

over four years to secure the future of the Intermediary Program ongoing.

\$2.3
million

including **\$1.8 million** to establish a new, co-located premises for the Child Witness Service and the Intermediary Program, including new remote witness rooms and **\$0.5 million** for the Virtual Court Support Program.





Thank you.

