Public Accounts and Estimates Committee
Inquiry into the Victorian Government’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Hon Jill Hennessy MP
Attorney-General
Minister for Workplace Safety
Minister for the Coordination of Justice and Community Safety – COVID-19

Wednesday 26 August 2020
Emergency response and legal assistance

- Emergency legislation – the COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) Act 2020 – to ensure the justice system is best-placed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic

- Emergency regulations to support:
  - electronic signing and witnessing of key legal documents (e.g. wills)
  - tribunals and courts to hear matters remotely

- Additional funding allocated to:
  - Family violence
  - Front line legal assistance services
  - Office of the Public Advocate

$40.2 m
FAMILY VIOLENCE PACKAGE

$17.5 m
FIRST FUNDING TRANCHE FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE SECTOR

$0.321 m
FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE DIRECTED LEGAL ASSISTANCE SERVICE IN MELBOURNE’S WEST
Courts, VCAT and Aboriginal Justice

Courts and VCAT

- Courts and VCAT continue to operate, performing safe essential services
- New civil and criminal jury trials remain suspended
- Family violence, remand, warrants, guardianship and human rights matters prioritised
- New online Magistrates’ Court hear more matters remotely and greater use of audio-visual hearings has reduced in-court appearances

Aboriginal Justice

- Established the Aboriginal Community Response and Recovery Fund
- Targeted funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to expand remote service delivery for Aboriginal family violence, legal and support services
Corrections and Youth Justice

- All facilities are operational and any impact of COVID-19 on operations is assessed on a daily (or more frequent) basis.

- All prisoners and young people entering custody are subject to a 14-day quarantine period. Specialist isolation protocols for all suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases.

- Screening and temperature checks for prisoners, young people, staff, professional visitors and contractors entering correctional facilities.

- Personal face-to-face visits remain suspended.

- Enhanced cleaning procedures, strong focus on personal hygiene, physical distancing protocols and use of PPE.

- Telehealth to support primary and mental health services.

- More opportunities for prisoners to interact with family and friends through virtual meetings.
Supporting rental fairness and Victorian businesses to reopen and rebound

- Temporary laws introduced to protect Victorian tenants, landlords and the rental market have been extended
- Ongoing relief measures including fee waivers and refunds are supporting businesses during pandemic
- Delays in charges, tax relief and payments are assisting the hospitality businesses during closures
- Ongoing work with the hospitality industry to support safe reopening at the appropriate time
Workplace safety

- WorkSafe is taking compliance and enforcement action to ensure employers are meeting their Occupational Health and Safety obligations.

- A total of 194 compliance notes have been issued in relation to COVID-19.

- 130 workers’ compensation claims have been accepted related to COVID-19.

- Medical Panels and Accident Compensation Conciliation Service have adapted their operations to align with Stage 4 restrictions, including virtual assessments and conciliation over the phone.
Thank you.