

Media Release

The Hon Jill Hennessy MP

Attorney-General

Minister for the Coordination of Justice and Community Safety – COVID-19

Minister for Workplace Safety



Friday, 26 June 2020

IMPROVING ABORIGINAL JUSTICE OUTCOMES

Aboriginal and government leaders from across Victoria are taking part in the 56th Aboriginal Justice Forum (AJF) to discuss ways to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal Victorians across the justice system.

The AJF brings together leaders in the Aboriginal community and senior government representatives to oversee development, implementation, monitoring and direction of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, which is now in its 20th year.

In 2018, the Victorian Government announced a record investment of \$40.3 million over five years towards the fourth phase of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

Attorney-General Jill Hennessy and Minister for Corrections and Youth Justice Natalie Hutchins virtually attended the AJF today, reaffirming the Government's commitment to address and reduce overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the justice system, and announcing funding for programs that work towards that goal.

The Government today announced that Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and Djirra (Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service) will each receive \$877,000 to respond to coronavirus.

This is part of an almost \$30 million package from the Victorian Government, and the Commonwealth, for legal services across the state to respond to COVID-19.

As part of the Government's Building Works package, Aboriginal men's and women's services will receive \$2 million for infrastructure upgrades, including at Ngarra Jarranounith Place's men's facility, Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place, Koori Women's Place, the Frankston Gathering Place and Kirrip House in Melton.

The Government recently announced \$440,000 in funding for Dardi Munwurro men's hotline, which is the only anonymous 24/7 Aboriginal men's phone support service in Victoria.

The Aboriginal Justice Caucus, consisting of Aboriginal Elders and leaders, is leading the development of the first Aboriginal Youth Justice strategy, which will be informed by the work of the Koori Youth Justice Taskforce, led by the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People in partnership with Youth Justice.

The government has also committed to abolishing the offence of public drunkenness and establishing a spent convictions scheme, following advocacy from the Aboriginal community calling for these reforms.

Quote attributable to Attorney-General Jill Hennessy

"We are working with Aboriginal communities to listen, support and deliver what is needed – this forum, with the funding we've announced today, is crucial to reducing overrepresentation across the justice system."

Quote attributable to Minister for Corrections and Youth Justice Natalie Hutchins

"We need to do more to address high rates of incarceration for Aboriginal young people, that's why we're developing a dedicated Aboriginal Youth Justice strategy that is led by Aboriginal Victorians."

Quote attributable to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams

"Our focus continues to be on listening to Aboriginal Victorians and taking an approach that is focused on self-determination – we know we need to do better and that we can only achieve that through forums like this one."

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