

Media Release

The Hon Jill Hennessy MP

Attorney-General

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



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CRIMINAL RECORD REFORM GIVES VICTORIANS A SECOND CHANCE

A range of minor historical offences will no longer stop people getting a job, finding secure housing or fully contributing to society, under proposed laws introduced into the Victorian Parliament today.

The Victorian Government will introduce the *Spent Convictions Bill 2020* to remove the unfair barriers faced by Victorians who previously committed an offence, but have since demonstrated their ability to rehabilitate.

It means that convictions for eligible minor offences will become “spent” and no longer show up in a police check after ten years, or five years for a juvenile conviction, if the person does not re-offend during that time.

The change will reduce the damaging effect discrimination on the basis of old criminal records can have on people – limiting their ability to gain employment, secure housing or undertake volunteer work.

These impacts are particularly felt by vulnerable parts of the community who are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system – such as Aboriginal Victorians and young people.

Under the Bill, discrimination on the basis of a spent conviction will be outlawed.

By addressing historical convictions, the Bill will significantly improve Aboriginal Victorians’ access to employment and training opportunities, including in community-controlled organisations.

Police and courts will continue to have full access to criminal history information and complete records will still be released when required for certain employers and third parties to make necessary risk assessments – such as checks for working with children.

The Government moved on these reforms following the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee’s Inquiry into a Legislated Spent Convictions Scheme. The Government thanks Committee chair, Fiona Patten, and other members for their leadership on this reform.

The Bill was developed following consultation with Aboriginal community groups, the justice sector, law enforcement and victims’ representatives.

The reform will bring Victoria in line with other Australian jurisdictions, who all have legislated spent convictions schemes in place.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jill Hennessy

“A minor offence in the past should not be a life sentence – this scheme will break the cycle of disadvantage faced by too many Victorians as they seek to turn their lives around.”

“People who have proven they are willing and able to change and make a positive contribution to society should be given every chance to do so.”

“We consulted widely with communities and stakeholders to make sure the scheme will balance the need to deliver reform that is fair and just, while keeping Victorians safe.”

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