

# Statement

**The Hon Jill Hennessy MP**

Attorney-General

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



Wednesday, 28 October 2020

## PROTECTING PEOPLE TO SPEAK ABOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT

Last week the Government introduced a Bill to empower living victims to share their stories without a court order, as well as protect people who want to speak up about the sexual assault of someone who has passed away.

Currently, Victorian law prohibits public identification of victims of sexual assault who are deceased and there is no clear pathway for families or the media to have that prohibition lifted.

This prohibition has been in place for decades.

It's not right and we're taking the steps needed to change it.

The *Justice Legislation Amendment (Supporting Victims and Other Matters) Bill 2020* will give people wishing to speak about a deceased sexual assault victim a mechanism to do that legally – by obtaining a court order.

Without this change there is no way to legally, safely share stories which identify a deceased person as a victim of sexual assault.

This interim measure will give people the protection they need and deserve, while further work is done on a long-term solution.

We have not imposed any additional restrictions in relation to deceased victims, and would not do so without consulting with their families.

The advice from experts and advocates has been clear – these reforms are complex, we need to take time to get it right.

Any changes need to consider the wishes victims expressed before they died – person's right to privacy about one of the most difficult and painful things that may happen in their lives shouldn't evaporate because of their death.

The views of a person about their own story should not cease to have any value because they have died.

We will continue to work with families and advocates to develop and deliver meaningful, long-term reform – so they feel confident and safe to tell their story, and the story of the loved one they lost.