

# Media Release

The Hon Jill Hennessy MP  
Attorney-General



Tuesday, 15 December 2020

## INVESTING IN COURT RECOVERY AND FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT

The Andrews Labor Government is building a stronger and more accessible justice system to improve the safety of family violence victims and help reduce delays caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Attorney-General Jill Hennessy today announced an additional \$23.1 million boost to provide greater flexibility in court and justice processes, while keeping all court users safe.

Following a successful pilot at the Frankston Magistrates' Court, the package will include \$7.8 million to expand the specialist family violence legal services model which focuses on early legal advice – helping to resolve family violence matters outside of court.

This model seeks to expand pre-court legal advice to resolve family violence intervention order (FVIO) matters prior to the court listing day.

This will reduce pressure on the courts through significantly shortening court lists and supporting the safety of family violence victim survivors through the provision of early legal assistance.

To further reduce the need for face-to-face hearings, an additional \$3.6 million will be delivered across the Magistrates' Court, Children's Court and VCAT to boost audio-visual technology support staff – allowing more matters to be heard remotely and safely.

New judicial registrars and support staff will be appointed thanks to a \$5.7 million investment to focus on simpler cases, freeing up time for Magistrates to determine more complex matters. These roles will form part of an expansion for the Online Magistrates' Court and the Children's Court Online Case Management.

A further \$6 million will support other initiatives, including the Victoria Legal Aid Help Before Court service to assist people prepare before their court date online and new legal service hubs for regional Aboriginal Victorians.

Additional legal assistance will also be provided for vulnerable women experiencing, or at risk of, family violence while pregnant or with young children, while more staff will support the Coroners Court to respond to demand including for special investigations into the deaths of aged care residents arising from the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Labor Government is delivering more than \$80 million in total to increase court capacity and hear and finalise more matters, quicker and safer.

### Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jill Hennessy

*"The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on our justice system – this funding is not just about recovery, it's also about creating a stronger, faster and more flexible justice system on the other side of this pandemic."*

*"Those experiencing family violence do not need the added burden of unnecessary delays at court – this is about minimising backlogs to deliver the decisions and support people desperately need."*

*"We want our courts to operate safely and effectively – resolving more cases outside a courtroom will reduce the pressure on our justice system and improve safety for victims."*

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