



The Hon Jaclyn Symes MP
Attorney-General

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FAIRER, MORE RESPONSIVE JUSTICE FOR ALL VICTORIANS

Reducing court delays, more support for victims and restoring community confidence in the criminal justice system lead the Andrews Labor Government's investments to build a safer and fairer Victoria.

The *Victorian 2021/22 Budget* will invest more than \$700 million to strengthen our justice, legal and court systems. This includes an expansion of our family violence court network, enhancing online services and a new fast-track model for victims of wage theft.

Victoria's courts will receive more than \$210 million for measures aimed at increasing efficiency and clearing case backlogs, caused by the pandemic as court services were suspended or reduced to keep the community safe.

This funding will boost online services in the Magistrates' Court and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and provide additional judicial resources for the County Court, new court support staff, and remote-hearing services so matters can be heard more quickly.

It also includes a \$55.3 million package to support Victoria's justice agencies to provide better support to courts and the community, dealing with growing demand and backlogs in the court system – including Victoria Legal Aid, Victoria Police, the Office of Public Prosecutions (OPP), Corrections Victoria and victim services.

This investment will ensure a more responsive justice system for Victorians – and it will create more than a thousand new positions, providing more jobs for Victorians.

Victim survivors of family violence will receive better support while perpetrators will be held to account with \$78 million to expand the network of specialist family violence courts to include Broadmeadows, Dandenong, Geelong, Latrobe Valley, Melbourne, Ringwood and Sunshine.

These courts are designed to make attending court a less confronting experience for victims, including children, with tailored services from specially trained court staff, in safer environments.

A further \$13.7 million will fund perpetrator intervention programs, programs to support women in prison, expanded legal services in the Orange Door Network and family violence training across the justice system.

Delivering on the Labor Government's promise to ensure wage theft cases are heard quickly, a new fast-track model will be established in the Magistrates' Court with \$9.6 million, ensuring Victorian workers can get justice where employers haven't held up their end of the bargain.

The OPP will also receive \$51.6 million to support its work prosecuting our most serious offenders, including specialist support for victims and witnesses, increased use of digital evidence and a strong focus on family violence.

Support for young people in contact with the justice system will be boosted, with nearly \$15 million going towards independent advocate and guardianship programs as well as establishing a disability advice and response team to support young people with a disability who have matters before the Children's Court.

Funding of \$18.8 million will help support the implementation of the Royal Commission into Mental Health, supporting the mental health and wellbeing of people in contact with or at risk of entering the criminal and youth justice systems.

Programs aimed at preventing Aboriginal deaths in custody will receive \$33.1 million in funding, including regional legal assistance to meet the needs of Aboriginal communities, after-hours family violence support and expanded Aboriginal-led diversion and residential programs.

Vital legal assistance and critical early intervention support services, including support for community legal centres, legal aid and dispute resolution will receive \$30.4 million, allowing them to continue their crucial frontline work.

The important work of the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine will be boosted with \$93.1 million, to support its world-class forensic medical service, helping to ensure high quality evidence for court cases and criminal investigations – as well as a new MRI machine and funding for the Donor Tissue Bank of Victoria.

A \$87.92 million investment will support implementing recommendations from the Royal Commission into the Management of Police Informants – with a range of measures to restore confidence in the criminal justice system – including a Special Investigator and Implementation Monitor, together with investment in IBAC and the courts.

Protections for young and vulnerable people will receive a \$33.3 million boost to further support the Working with Children Check unit, and the NDIS worker screening unit that checks to confirm that existing or prospective NDIS workers do not pose a risk to people with disability.

The Budget will invest \$2.8 million to support the legal rights of LGBTIQ+ Victorians through funding for the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to implement a civil response scheme to address harmful LGBTIQ+ change or suppression practices.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

“We’re investing where it’s needed to ensure our justice system is responsive and fair.”

“Our investments provide targeted support for vulnerable Victorians while seeking to empower women, Aboriginal people, people with disability, older Victorians and children. Most importantly this budget will make sure all Victorians have access to justice.”

“Every worker has the right to get a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work, that’s why we are making it easier and faster for Victorian workers to get what is rightfully theirs.”