

Media Release

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP

Minister for Crime Prevention

Minister for Corrections

Minister for Youth Justice

Minister for Victim Support



Friday, 3 December 2021

VICTIMS AT THE HEART OF INCREASED SUPPORT

The Andrews Labor Government is giving victims of crime greater access to financial and emotional support, as part of major reforms that will empower victims and help them deal with the lasting impacts of their experiences.

Minister for Victim Support Natalie Hutchins today introduced new legislative reforms to stop perpetrators of family violence and sexual offences being notified of an application to, or attending hearings at, the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT).

Victim survivors no longer need to be fearful of the perpetrator finding out that they have made an application for financial assistance or worse, having to face them in a hearing.

This is an interim step in the Labor Government's overhaul of victims of crime financial assistance, as part of its record \$64.5 million investment in victim services and support.

The Government is building a new trauma-informed financial assistance scheme that will no longer be based in the courts, which will be supported by a dedicated Victims Legal Service, as well as a new innovative Victim-Centred Restorative Justice Program.

Nearly \$9.9 million has also been invested in additional staff at VOCAT to clear the case backlog.

The Government today released its new *Victims Support Update*, which highlights the major achievements already delivered, and outlines how Victoria will become a leader in trauma-informed victim support.

We're listening to victims of crime and making sure their voices are at the centre of our work, with reforms that empower victims of crime to exercise their rights to participate in decisions and processes that affect them.

This is in addition to work completed over recent years to increase system accountability by strengthening the powers of the independent Victims of Crime Commissioner, ordering an independent review of the victim support system and delivering a suite of effective victim support programs and services.

Visit www.vic.gov.au/victims-direction-statement to read the *Victims Support Update* and find out more about how the Government is improving services, support and financial assistance for victims of crime.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Victim Support Natalie Hutchins

"We're delivering victim support that responds to the needs of victims of crime, respects their rights and does not further compound the trauma they have experienced."

"Ensuring victims are better supported to find justice, access financial help and legal advice as they deal with the impacts of crime and navigate the court system are at the heart of these important reforms."