

Media Release

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MORE POLICE POWERS TO CRACK DOWN ON ORGANISED CRIME

Police will be given stronger powers to investigate organised crime, seize ill-gotten gains and target cyber criminals, under new laws introduced into Parliament today by the Andrews Labor Government.

The *Major Crime and Community Safety Legislation Amendment Bill 2022* will strengthen Victoria's asset confiscation laws, giving authorities more power to investigate, seize proceeds of crime and disrupt organised crime on the black market.

To help respond to the growing issue of cyber-crime, specialist Victoria Police staff will have more power to investigate online child grooming using assumed identities, under the supervision of a police officer.

The Bill will allow for intelligence officers to more easily acquire or use an assumed identity by removing the requirement for the Chief Commissioner of Police to be satisfied that it would be impossible or impracticable for a sworn officer to do so.

Authorities will also have greater power to identify and seize digital assets, in response to the growing use of digital cryptocurrencies by organised crime. They will be able to compel cryptocurrency platforms to hand over information about suspects like banks currently must, and seize digital "wallets".

Search powers will also be updated to reflect the realities of modern policing, improving police powers to obtain electronic data when executing search warrants such as taking copies off computers and storage devices, letting officers bring specialist help or skills to execute a warrant like a locksmith, and streamlining court oversight of the execution of search warrants.

More victims' compensation will be able to be paid from forfeited property including by removing the requirement that compensation must relate to the same offence for which someone's property was forfeited. A conviction for possessing a traffickable quantity of firearms and other drug and sexual offences will also trigger the automatic forfeiture of assets.

The Bill will ensure that appropriate safeguards and oversights remain, such as court oversight over the execution of warrants and court direction that a seized item be returned to its owner.

These changes deliver on the Government's *Community Safety Statement 2018-19*, strengthening Victoria's laws to target proceeds of crime and improve Victoria Police's search warrant powers, crime scene powers, and ability to effectively gather and manage evidence.

Quote attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

"These reforms will provide law enforcement with greater opportunities to confiscate proceeds of crime, ensuring there's no pay day for criminals."

Quote attributable to Minister for Police Anthony Carbines

"The way criminals operate is changing rapidly – we need to be just as quick in empowering our police to respond to new ways of offending, crack down on crime and keep the community safe."

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