REFORMS CONTINUE TO IMPROVE JURY DIRECTIONS

The Andrews Labor Government introduced new laws in Parliament today to further simplify and improve the way information is provided to juries in criminal trials.

The *Jury Directions and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2017* will clarify that jury parades are not an essential part of the jury empanelment process.

The changes, introduced in Parliament today, will also allow trial judges to address misconceptions that victims in sexual offence trials should be able to remember all the details of an offence and describe it consistently every time.

Under the reforms, trial judges will be able to explain to jurors that victims often describe the offence differently at different times.

The new laws will also remove the mandatory six hour minimum timeframe for jury deliberations before a majority verdict can be accepted in a criminal trial.

This means that trial judges will be able to make directions sooner if a jury becomes deadlocked early in its deliberations.

These reforms follow a number of changes the Labor Government has made to jury directions to help reduce delays, deliver shorter trials and ensure fewer costly appeals and retrials.

For more information visit premier.vic.gov.au/jury-directions-to-be-simpler-and-clearer/

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Martin Pakula

“Re-trials due to errors in the jury selection process can be very distressing, particularly for the victims and families involved. That’s why we’re taking the steps to prevent this from happening in the future.”

“We’re also making jury directions clearer and easier to understand, which will result in shorter trials and reduced delays.”