

Media Release

The Hon Martin Pakula MP
Attorney-General
Minister for Racing



Getting Things Done.
Making Things Fair.

Tuesday, 27 March, 2018

NEW LAWS FOR BETTER ACCESS TO JUSTICE

The Andrews Labor Government introduced new laws today to strengthen Victoria's legal assistance sector, improve access to legal information and make it easier and faster to resolve civil disputes.

The Justice Legislation Amendment (Access to Justice) Bill 2018 implements 16 recommendations from the Government's 2015 *Access to Justice Review* and builds on the \$34.7 million provided in response to the Review.

Victoria Legal Aid will have a new role coordinating Victoria's legal assistance sector, working with government, community legal centers and private lawyers to coordinate the delivery of legal assistance services across the state.

The Victoria Law Foundation will have a new role as a research centre on legal need, access to justice and civil justice, to help inform future changes to the legal system.

Courts will have clearer powers to make 'protective costs orders' to cap the legal costs of disadvantaged Victorians in legal proceedings which raise public interest issues.

Proceedings at VCAT will be simpler and faster by allowing electronic service of documents, and making it easier to access mediation services, enforce VCAT orders, and seek written reasons from VCAT.

The Access to Justice Review was commissioned by the Labor Government in 2015 and undertaken by the Department of Justice and Regulation, with the assistance of Crown Counsel, Melinda Richards SC, and the former Chair of the Queensland Legal Aid Commission, Rachel Hunter.

For a copy of the Government's response, visit <https://engage.vic.gov.au/accesstojustice>

Following reforms to the Commonwealth *Marriage Act 1961*, the Bill will also ensure that Victorian law is consistent with the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* by removing the requirement for a person who wants to change the sex recorded on their birth certificate to be unmarried.

By removing the requirement for a person to be unmarried, the Bill ensures that a person does not need to divorce their spouse in order to have a birth certificate that reflects their sex.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Martin Pakula

"These reforms will make it simpler and fairer for Victorians to resolve disputes and access legal information and assistance services when they need them."

"These reforms build on the Government's significant \$34.7 million investment in additional grants of legal aid, legal aid duty lawyers, Legal Help phone services, translator and interpreters, and improved online legal information."