

Media Release

The Hon Martin Pakula MP
Attorney-General
Minister for Racing



Thursday, 22 October, 2015

REVIEW SEEKS BETTER ACCESS FOR VULNERABLE VICTORIANS

The Andrews Labor Government will seek new measures to boost vulnerable Victorians' access to justice while making it cheaper and quicker to resolve everyday legal disputes.

Attorney-General Martin Pakula today announced a review aimed at reducing the barriers to dispute resolution and improving access to legal assistance services.

Rising costs, complexity and the limited services for vulnerable people with legal problems are among the challenges to be reviewed.

A recent Productivity Commission investigation found concerns across Australia that the justice system is too slow, expensive and adversarial.

The Department of Justice and Regulation, assisted by Crown Counsel Melinda Richards SC and Rachel Hunter, former Chair of Legal Aid Queensland and Director-General of the Queensland Department of Justice, will conduct a wide-ranging investigation into ways to improve access to justice for Victorians.

The review will examine ways to divert people from unnecessary and costly court action, ensure appropriate alternative dispute resolution is available, and increase the community's understanding of how they can get help with everyday legal issues.

The review will also look at how to get the most from funding for legal aid providers and community legal centres, boost access to pro bono legal help and better support people who want to navigate the system themselves.

Mr Pakula said the government is investing \$2 million in a Community Legal Centre Assistance Fund to support vital programs and services, including family violence coordinators, and lawyers and online services for rural and regional youth.

A further \$1.2 million for community legal centres is delivering additional family violence duty lawyers to support victims.

Another \$2.1 million is providing free legal assistance for victims to ensure proper legal representation in family violence matters.

The Department of Justice and Regulation will complete the access to justice review by August 2016.

Website: www.myviews.justice.vic.gov.au/accesstojustice.

Quotes attributable to Attorney General Martin Pakula

"A justice system that supports the most vulnerable in our community and gives the disadvantaged better access to legal services means a fairer, safer Victoria."

"The current system means some people are being locked out of justice, whether it is by postcode, price or their understanding of the legal system."

"The aim of this review is to improve access to justice for Victorians with everyday legal problems, and ensure that disadvantaged and vulnerable Victorians receive the support they need."

Media Contact: Christine Tyrrell 0423 092 752 | Christine.tyrrell@minstaff.vic.gov.au