

Media Release

The Hon Martin Pakula MP
Attorney-General
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IMPROVING ACCESS TO LEGAL SERVICES FOR VICTORIANS

The Andrews Labor Government today released the *Access to Justice Review* which identifies ways to help disadvantaged Victorians navigate the legal system and resolve everyday legal issues.

The comprehensive review, commissioned by the Government last year, makes 60 recommendations which focus on reducing the barriers facing disadvantaged Victorians, such as the costs of legal services, access to information and securing legal representation.

The review builds on the Productivity Commission's 2014 *Access to Justice Arrangements: Inquiry* report which found there were concerns across the country that the justice system was too slow, expensive and adversarial.

It focuses on ensuring that disadvantaged people, including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds and survivors of family violence, receive the support they need when dealing with legal problems.

The recommendations cover a wide range of areas, including:

- access to legal information
- strengthening Victoria Legal Aid's role and making it more transparent and accountable
- increasing pro bono services
- greater use of alternative dispute resolution
- VCAT small claims matters, including innovative online dispute resolution
- providing better support to unrepresented Victorians.

The review was 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.

It involved extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders and the community. The review received 90 submissions and 339 survey responses, hosted four expert roundtables, and engaged in more than 150 meetings.

The Government is now considering the review and will respond to the recommendations in due course. For a copy of the report, visit <https://myviews.justice.vic.gov.au/accesstojustice>

Quote attributable to Attorney-General Martin Pakula

"We want to make sure Victorians can access the legal services they need, when they need them."

"The review makes wide-ranging recommendations across our courts, legal bodies and organisations, and support services – and we'll now carefully work through those with stakeholders before moving forward."