

Media Release

The Hon Martin Pakula MP

Attorney-General

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NEW LAWS TO BOOST FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTIONS

Victims of family violence will be better protected under new legislation introduced in Parliament today by the Andrews Labor Government.

Responding to 11 recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Family Violence Protection Amendment Bill 2017 will increase protections for women and children, and enhance the justice system's response to family violence. The reforms include:

- faster and simpler processes for serving family violence intervention orders (FVIOs)
- new measures to prevent abuses of the intervention order appeal process
- allowing pre-recorded evidence to be used in some proceedings for family violence offences
- increased protections for children subjected to family violence

Family violence intervention orders (FVIOs) will be able to be served by email or post, rather than in person.

FVIOs will also become immediately enforceable if the respondent was present in court and was given an explanation of what the order means by a magistrate.

Courts will also have the power to strike out appeals of an FVIO if the respondent fails to attend court. This will help to prevent perpetrators from harassing and intimidating victims by using delaying tactics, such as failing to attend hearings, seeking adjournments at late notice and filing appeals without good reason.

Provisions under the *Criminal Procedure Act 2009* will also be expanded to allow children and people with a cognitive impairment to give pre-recorded evidence in proceedings for family violence offences. This will help to reduce the trauma experienced by victims who have previously had to give their evidence in front of their abuser.

Additionally, the jurisdiction of the Koori County and Koori Magistrates' Courts will be broadened to deal with breaches of family violence safety notices and intervention orders.

The Bill also establishes the Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths Unit in legislation under the *Coroners Act 2008*, to ensure that it can continue to assist coronial investigations and provide evidence-based research into family violence-related deaths.

The Government is continuing to work on implementing all 227 recommendations made by the Royal Commission.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Martin Pakula

"This legislation will deliver on 11 of the recommendations from the Royal Commission to ensure that more Victorians feel safe and free from family violence."

"Our changes will help to better protect victims, hold perpetrators to account and help to change community attitudes around violence against women and children."