

Media Release

The Hon Martin Pakula MP
Attorney-General
Minister for Racing



Friday, 7 July, 2017

IMPROVING ACCESS TO VICTIMS OF CRIME ASSISTANCE TRIBUNAL

The Andrews Labor Government is working to make it easier for victims of crime to access compensation through the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT).

Attorney-General Martin Pakula today asked the Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC) to broaden its current review of the way VOCAT engages with family violence victims to consider all victims of crime.

Last year, the Labor Government asked the VLRC to provide advice on ways to improve the experience of victims of family violence who engage with VOCAT, delivering on a recommendation made by the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

The original Terms of Reference will be extended to look at ways to improve the experience of all people who engage with VOCAT.

The VLRC will consider whether the existing law can be simplified to help victims better understand their entitlements and access help without the need for legal support in some cases.

It will also consider whether eligibility tests can be improved to help victims avoid unfair or unnecessary legal costs, and whether the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* recognises the appropriate people as victims of crime.

The VLRC will also provide advice about whether any processes, procedures or requirements under the Act cause delays in helping victims of crime, and whether there are other models that could deliver assistance more effectively.

VOCAT administers Victoria's state-funded scheme to provide financial assistance to victims of crime. In 2015-2016, VOCAT provided a total of \$46.3 million to victims of crime.

The VLRC will report back to Government in July next year.

Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Martin Pakula

"I've asked the VLRC to extend its current reference so it can consider ways to improve the experience for all victims of crime and minimise any additional trauma."

"We want to make sure that victims of crime can access state-funded assistance in a way that is fast, fair and equitable."

"Victims of crime shouldn't have to jump through hoops or face unnecessary delays just to receive help. This review is about making sure that the right people get the right help when they need it."