

Public Accounts and Estimates Committee 2020-21 Budget Estimates Hearings

The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP

Minister for Victim Support

15 December 2020



Victim Support Budget Overview

Invested **\$4.3 million**
over one year for
victim services.



\$2.1 million

To support Victims of Crime Helpline (the Helpline) and the Victims Register. This will deliver frontline Helpline services and meet COVID-19 and other growing demands on the Victims Register.



\$2.2 million

To continue the Intermediary Pilot Program (IPP) for one year.



Victims of crime support services

Support during critical incidents

Specialist in-house capability to quickly and effectively support victims following a critical incident

Victims of Crime Helpline

Provides telephone support, needs assessment and referral to services for victims of crime against the person.
The Helpline operates 8am to 11pm, 7 days per week.

Child Witness Service

Specialist support to child witnesses and their families to prepare them for the role of being a witness and support them throughout the court process

Victims Register

Victims may register to receive certain information when an offender becomes eligible for certain custodial permits, parole and post sentencing orders, or where a prisoner absconds or dies in custody. Only victims of offenders who have committed violent crimes and have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment are eligible for the Victims Register

VICTIMS OF CRIME SUPPORT SERVICES

Intermediary Pilot Program

Communication specialists who facilitate communication with vulnerable witnesses - both at court and at VARE police interviews (where police video record the victim's statement that is then treated as evidence in chief by the court).

Victim support for Youth Justice Group Conferencing

Provides support for victims of young offenders who participate in a legislated, pre-sentence restorative justice program.

Victims Assistance Program

Flexible case management services to meet the practical, emotional and psychological needs of victims

Family Violence Restorative Justice Program

Provides a way for eligible victim survivors to have safe, facilitated restorative conversations to address the harms they have experienced as a result of family violence.

Delivering on our commitments

Support for victims of crime in 2019-20



14,099

people called the Helpline for support



18,084

victims of violent crime were supported by the Victims Assistance Program



23,543

victims referred by Victoria Police to the Helpline, (including **17,369 male victims of family violence** and **6,174 victims of a violent crime**)



1,077

children and their families were supported by the Child Witness Service (many of these in cases relating to child sex offense)



380

victims chose to join the Victims Register to receive information about an offender after conviction

Delivering on our commitments

Key reforms



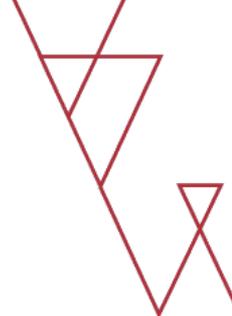
Introducing new laws to assist in addressing the current backlog of cases at the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal.



Delivering the Victim Services Review, the first comprehensive analysis of the victim services system since it was created more than two decades ago.



Significantly progressing the recommendations of the Victorian Law Reform Commission's review into the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* and the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal.



Support for victims of crime during COVID-19

The **Victims of Crime Helpline** and the **Victims Assistance Program** continue to support victims of crime, without any disruption to services during COVID-19.

Both services have seen a decrease in the number of new referrals, however, there has been an increase in the intensity of support required by victims.

The Child Witness Service (CWS) and the Intermediary Pilot Program (IPP) also continue to support child victims, family members and other vulnerable witnesses, with some disruptions due to court adjournments and suspensions.

Both services are providing intensive support to victims to prepare them to safely participate in online court hearings.

The CWS and IPP have both recommended providing face-to-face support.



Support for victims of crime during COVID-19

Throughout COVID-19 (from State of Emergency to latest available data – 18 Nov):



The Helpline has received

8,910
calls

3,245
Victoria Police e-referrals

12,507
L17 referrals for male victims of family violence



4,511

referrals to the Victims Assistance Program from the Helpline



185

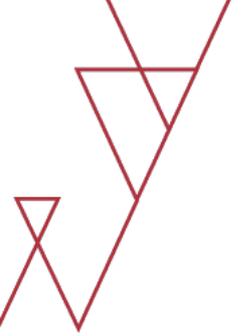
victims notified of early release of prisoners due to the use of Emergency Management Days (EMD) by Corrections Victoria



125

witness supported online by the Child Witness Service in:

- 69** pleas
- 45** sentence hearings
- 3** appeals
- 1** committal hearing
- 1** s198A hearing
- 2** contest hearings
- 1** mental health impairment hearing



Thank you.

