



Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Budget Estimates Hearing

Jaclyn Symes MP
Attorney-General

Wednesday 18 May 2022





Working with the courts and VCAT to support justice system recovery and work smarter



Court system returning to normal

- Jury trials resumed statewide in Supreme and County Courts
- Return of in-person criminal hearings in the Magistrates' Court
- Case clearance rates returning to 100%



Delivering justice recovery through innovation

- Digital platforms including Online Magistrates' Court, Children's Court Online Case Management, Supreme Court eCourts
- County Court active case management saw 60% of cases resolved without a trial
- Reintroduction of judge alone trials



Providing resources to the system

- New judicial registrars at the Children's Court
- Bringing forward judicial appointments in the County Court
- New members for VCAT



Government investment is helping to clear backlogs

- Across the courts and VCAT, case backlogs have reduced by 5% from July 2021 to April 2022
- \$340 million total funding for backlog reduction since pandemic began



\$30m to help the courts clear backlogs

- A new centralised service centre at the Magistrates' Court to streamline enquiries
- Supporting eCourts in the Supreme Court
- A program of works to deliver safe, functional courthouses



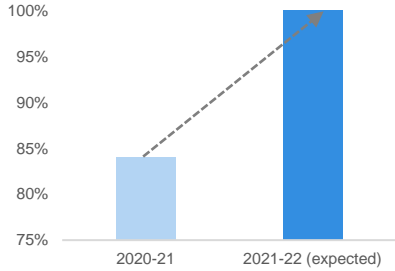
Targeted support for VCAT

- \$21m for more VCAT members to hear more matters, especially residential tenancy matters
- Builds on \$56m provided last year for the digital transformation project
- Planning & Environment list now completely digitised

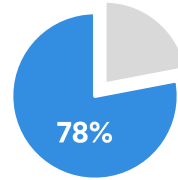
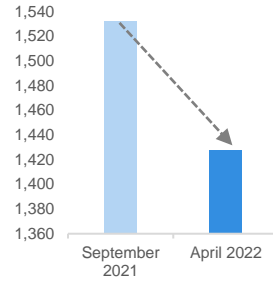


Court data across the system demonstrates recovery

100 per cent clearance rate for FVIO matters projected in 2021-22

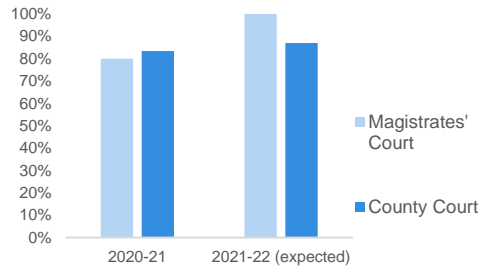


County Court criminal division is driving down its trial backlog

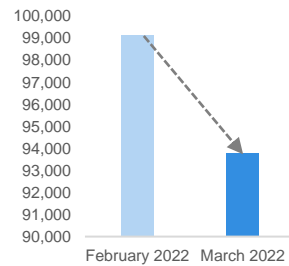


of cases processed on-time in 2021-22 (projected), 2% higher than previous year

Improving clearance rates for criminal matters



Fewer pending criminal matters in Magistrates' Court



-5% Drop in the criminal backlog in one month, after in-person hearings resumed

729,375 Listings heard online across Victoria since 1 July 2020



Juries across the state are supporting trials to verdict – Jan to April 2022 in the County Court

160+ Juries empanelled

66 Trials already completed to verdict in Melbourne

28 Trials already completed to verdict in regional Victoria



A whole justice system approach to address the backlog



\$21.6m to boost OPP capacity

- \$15m for staff working criminal trials
- \$2m to upgrade systems to meet demand for digital evidence processing
- \$4.5m to increase efficiency through digital doc and records management



Supporting our community legal centres

- Distributed 21/22 funding to enable 19 integrated services and health justice partnerships to continue
- Specialist family violence and mortgage stress services supported
- An extra \$6.5m in 22/23 for community legal centres to improve access to justice



Targeted legal services

- \$1.6m to support specialist LGBTIQ+ legal services at the Victorian Pride Centre
- Funding for St Kilda Legal Service to provide legal advice and assistance to sex workers throughout Victoria, particularly during transition to a decriminalised sex work industry



\$11m for early resolution programs

- Continuing specialist family violence pre-court legal services
- VLA Help Before Court for summary criminal matters
- Piloting a specialist OPP team to support active case management in the courts



\$59m for justice agencies to support the courts

- Justice agencies including Victoria Legal Aid, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, the Office of Public Prosecutions, Victoria Police and the Department of Justice and Community Safety will also share in \$59 million to support the new resources provided to courts and VCAT.





Changing lives across the state through therapeutic justice

Delivering court services state-wide

- Launched Drug Courts in Ballarat and Shepparton in early 2022 as well as the County Court Drug Court.
- New Bendigo Law Courts to open in early 2023 and Wyndham Law Court on track to open in 2025.
- Rolling out Specialist Family Violence Courts across the state.
- Launch of the Early Intervention Fast-Track model in the Magistrates' Court for unpaid wage claims.
- Launch of new Koori Courts in early 2022 in Geelong, Wodonga and Wangaratta. Another to open at the new Bendigo Law Courts.

\$8.6m to continue regional Drug Courts and CISP

- **Drug Courts** to continue in Ballarat and Shepparton.
- Continue County Court's **Court Integrated Services Program pilot**.

\$33.6m for new Bendigo Law Courts to increase services in 2023

- **\$19.7m** to increase **judicial staff** and a new **Assessment and Referral Court (ARC)** and **Koori Court to improve system response** to mental health and cultural needs.
- **\$3.1m** for Aboriginal legal services and **\$10.8m** for VLA

\$20.4m to expand ARC across Victoria

- **Responding to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System** by expanding **ARC** to more Magistrates' Court headquarter court locations (in addition to Bendigo).
- Magistrates' Court **Navigation and Triage pilot** to quickly connect vulnerable court users to the right support.



Supporting vulnerable Victorians



Stronger protections for equality

- Equal opportunity reforms to deliver the Government's commitment to provide greater protection against discrimination for LGBTIQ+ Victorians, particularly in schools and in employment.
- Legislation to ban public display of Nazi symbols introduced.
- Spent Convictions legislation commenced, removing unfair barriers for Victorians with historical offences.
- Change or suppression practices legislation commenced, prohibiting these insidious practices and establishing new jurisdiction for VEOHRC to receive and deal with complaints.



Access to justice for young people

- \$8m to support the Children's Court's Youth Control Order and Intensive Bail Order and successful active case management programs.
- \$1.6m for a new after-hours online Children's Court, to help keep children out of custody.
- New Children's Court Judicial Registrars resolving Readiness Hearings and avoiding contested hearings.
- New Dandenong Specialist Children's Court to open in 2023.



Supporting people affected by forced adoption practices

- \$4.8m to implement the Victorian Government's response to the Forced Adoption Inquiry including \$1.6m to scope and design a redress scheme and \$0.9m for hardship payments and support including counselling.
- Legislating to introduce integrated birth certificates.



Funding to support guardianship and Victorians with disability

- \$10.7m to expand the Office of the Public Advocate's support for Victorians with disability, including guardianship services and the Independent Third Person program.



Systemic reforms to deliver more just outcomes



Delivering a new approach to sexual violence

- \$46.9 million across the justice and sexual assault sectors will help survivors of sexual offending get the support they need to seek justice in a way that doesn't retraumatise them.
- Legislating affirmative consent and stealthing.
- Designing an online reporting scheme for survivors of sexual violence.



Improving outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians

- \$155 million announced for the Stolen Generations Reparations Package, with application process for Stolen Generations Reparations Package open from 31 March 2022.
- \$6 million to improved land justice outcomes and enhance capacity for Traditional Owner Corporations.
- 90 per cent of actions in progress or complete under the fourth Aboriginal Justice Agreement.
- Funding reform to develop single, long-term funding agreements with Aboriginal organisations to reduce administrative and reporting burdens.





Maintaining strong service delivery across the justice system



Births, Deaths and Marriages

- \$6.2m in new funding for call handling and \$2.4m to work with Service Victoria on digital opportunities.
- Actioned over 604,000 submissions, with over 95% received through online portals.
- Embedded Service Victoria identity verification in all online certificate applications.
- Justice centres available to assist applicants with their certificate needs.



Worker Screening

- \$3.6m in new funding to improve access to worker screening for the WWCC and NDIS.
- Funding of \$0.2 million to improve the NDIS check application process for volunteers.
- 281,792 Working with Children and 68,497 NDIS clearances issued in 2021-22 (YTD).



Fines Victoria

- Fines Victoria processes on average 17,700 outgoing notices, 2,231 nomination statements and \$2 million in payments per day.
- Applications for FVS and 'special circumstances' enforcement review resolved and now determined within KPIs (120 days).
- 91% of Family Violence Scheme applications (FVS) found eligible.
- Work underway to commence COVID-19 fines concession scheme this year.



Recap and future directions



Getting on top of court backlogs and embedding innovation



A justice system that is integrated



Investing in therapeutic justice



Supporting vulnerable Victorians



Better and fairer outcomes through system reforms



Services that deliver for the Victorian public





Thank you.

