



Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal

Practice Direction

No. 1 of 2023

Centralisation of the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal

PRACTICE DIRECTION ISSUED PURSUANT TO SECTION 58
OF THE VICTIMS OF CRIME ASSISTANCE ACT 1996

Background

The Victorian Law Reform Commission conducted a review of the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* in July 2017. A recommendation followed in September 2018 that a new Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) be established separate from the Magistrates' Court of Victoria (MCV) to replace the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT). The *Victims of Crime (Financial Assistance Scheme) Act 2022* was passed in early June 2022 and the current proposed date for commencement of the FAS is January 2024. The default date for commencement of the FAS is 1 December 2024, if not commenced earlier.

In preparation for the commencement of the FAS, all pending VOCAT applications will be progressively transferred into the Tribunal's Principal Registry in Melbourne for centralised management.

VOCAT responsibilities at local Tribunal venues will cease and parties will be notified of the pending claim transfer.

Proper venue provisions

From 1 April 2023, the Melbourne VOCAT Registry will be the proper venue for **all** VOCAT applications. All new applications for assistance from this date should be filed with the Melbourne Registry at 555 Lonsdale Street Melbourne.

Correspondence

Original email addresses currently utilised by Tribunal locations will be automatically redirected to admin@vocat.vic.gov.au on the date of transfer to the Melbourne Registry. To complement this redirection, an automatic reply will be sent in response to all emails received advising of the redirection. This management of emails will be in place for 3 months from the date of transfer at each location. After this time, original email inboxes will become inactive.

All hard copy correspondence received at the original Tribunal location, following centralisation, will be forwarded by registry staff to the Melbourne Registry for processing at:

Melbourne VOCAT
GPO Box 882
Melbourne 3001

All external hard copy correspondence intended for the Tribunal should be directed to the above address.

Residual file management plan

Original Tribunal venues will continue to manage any application that is deemed to have had significant Judicial involvement.

Applications are considered to have had significant Judicial involvement where:

- a s33 indication has been made;
- a Directions Hearing held;
- a Final Hearing listed; or
- where a Tribunal Member determines a matter to be complex and has deemed it appropriate to retain the application given their involvement.

Upon an application being finalised at the original venue, the application file will be sent to the Melbourne VOCAT registry for storage purposes. Any future variation requests received for this finalised application will then be managed by the Melbourne VOCAT registry.

Hearing management

Following centralisation, the Tribunal will list matters for hearing in person and via WebEx. A hearing via WebEx will be offered in appropriate cases at the time that a notification of hearing is issued by the Tribunal. Where an in-person hearing is deemed appropriate by the Tribunal or requested by an applicant, a hearing may be scheduled at a local Magistrates' Court in consultation with the presiding Tribunal Member and Court Coordinator.

Commencement

This Practice Direction has effect from 1 April 2023.



Justice Lisa Hannan
CHIEF MAGISTRATE

Dated: 3 March 2023