



Guide to

VOCAT

Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal

What is VOCAT?

The Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) was created by the Victorian Government to acknowledge and provide financial assistance to people affected by violent crime committed in Victoria. People who are physically or psychologically injured as a result of a crime may be eligible to apply.

What is the Koori VOCAT List?

The Koori VOCAT List is aimed at increasing Koori access to awards of assistance from VOCAT. This initiative is supported by a broad range of Koori organisations including Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria.

What assistance can I apply for?

- 1) Financial assistance to help you cope and recover from the effects of the crime. For example; costs of counselling and medical expenses
- 2) Compassionate award called special financial assistance if you were the person who was the direct victim of crime.
- 3) Related Victims Support – for funeral expenses, distress, dependency as well as financial assistance.

Financial assistance from the Government is limited. It is not meant to make up for what you have been through, but to acknowledge and assist your recovery from the crime/injury.

Types of awards

Primary victims

You are a primary victim if you are injured or suffer any major effect, as a direct result of:

- an act of violence committed against you
- trying to arrest someone you believe has committed an act of violence,
- trying to prevent the commission of an act of violence
- trying to help/rescue someone you believe is the victim of an act of violence.

Assistance may be available for reasonable counselling expenses, medical expenses, some loss of earnings, loss of or damage to clothing worn at the time, safety related expenses and, in exceptional circumstances, expenses to assist in recovery.

A lump sum payment known as Special Financial Assistance is available for primary victims only. The amount a victim may receive depends on the injury sustained and the effect suffered as a result of the crime.

Secondary victims

You are a secondary victim if you are:

- present at the scene of an act of violence and are injured as a result of witnessing the act of violence; or
- a parent or guardian who is injured as a result of becoming aware of an act of violence to their child under the age of 18.

Assistance may be available for reasonable counselling expenses, medical expenses and loss of earnings in exceptional circumstances, and in some cases expenses to assist recovery.

Related victims

You are a related victim if at the time of the act of violence you:

- were a close family member of
- were a dependant of or
- had an intimate personal relationship with a primary victim who has died as a result of an act of violence in Victoria.

Assistance may be available for reasonable counselling, medical, funeral expenses, distress, dependency and or expenses resulting directly from the death.

Urgent financial assistance

If you require urgent financial assistance, you can make an application for an interim award. This may include counselling, medical, or safety related expenses. More information regarding interim financial assistance is available on the Tribunal's website at www.vocat.vic.gov.au.

VOCAT cannot assist with loss of or damage to property as a result of the crime.

How do I get assistance?

You must complete a VOCAT Application for Assistance form. This form can be obtained from your solicitor, local court, printed from our website, or lodged online (www.vocat.vic.gov.au). We recommend that you discuss your application with a solicitor before you lodge your application. If you do not have a solicitor, please see the useful contacts section of this brochure.

Do I need a lawyer?

You can make the application for assistance by yourself or be represented by a solicitor. The Tribunal usually pays reasonable legal costs.

Do I have to report the crime to the police?

If you did not report the crime to the police, you can still put in an application and be heard. Please seek legal advice first.

If I have committed a crime, am I still eligible for assistance?

Yes, you are still eligible for assistance, however VOCAT must take into account the nature of the crime you have committed and may refuse or reduce your award as a result.

Is there a time limit to process an application to the VOCAT?

An application should be lodged within two years of the date of the act of violence occurring. However, you may apply for an extension of time. You should seek legal advice.

Useful contacts:

Victims of Crime Helpline

Victims of Crime Helpline can refer you to your local Victorian Assistance and Counselling Program office.

Free call: 1800 819 817 (not free from mobiles)
www.justice.vic.gov.au/victimsofcrime

Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) Melbourne Registry

Ph: 03 9628 7855
Free call: 1800 882 752 (not free from mobiles)
Email: koori@vocat.vic.gov.au
www.vocat.vic.gov.au

Legal Advice

Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service Victoria

Ph: 03 9244 3333
Free call: 1800 105 303 (not free from mobiles)
www.fvpls.org

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

Ph: 03 9419 3888
Free call: 1800 064 865 (not free from mobiles)
www.vals.org.au

Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria

Ph: 03 9652 1500 www.communitylaw.org.au

