



VICTIMS OF
CRIME ASSISTANCE
TRIBUNAL

Annual Report 2015–2016





Year at a Glance



**JUDICIAL REGISTRARS
MADE 21.9%
OF FINAL AWARDS.**



**KOORI LIST
APPLICATIONS
DOWN BY 19.3%.**



**6,221 APPLICATIONS
FILED, UP BY 2.8%.**



**4,161 AWARDS OF
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
MADE, DOWN BY 6.7%.**



**\$46.3 MILLION
AWARDED, DOWN
BY 2.7%.**



**AVERAGE AWARD
AMOUNT \$7,784,
UP BY 1.8%.**



**INTERIM AWARDS
FOR ASSISTANCE
UP BY 13.1%.**



**6,757 PENDING
APPLICATIONS,
UP BY 11.8%.**



**797 ONLINE
APPLICATIONS,
UP BY 161%.**



**25 FUNDED REGISTRY
POSITIONS ACROSS
VICTORIA, UP BY 4.1%.**



**32,273 UNIQUE VISITS
TO OUR WEBSITE,
UP BY 17.3%.**



**TRIBUNAL'S
OPERATING COST
DOWN BY 0.4%.**

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Letter to Minister

01/09/2016

The Honourable Martin Pakula MP
Attorney-General
121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne Vic 3000

Dear Attorney-General,

In accordance with the requirements of section 68 of the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996*, I am pleased to present the annual report of the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal for the year ending 30 June 2016.

The report sets out the performance of the Tribunal's functions, powers and duties during the year under review.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Lauritsen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Peter Lauritsen
Chief Magistrate



Chief Magistrate's Message

CHIEF MAGISTRATE PETER LAURITSEN

The Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) commenced operation in July 1997 replacing the former Crimes Compensation Tribunal. It has become a key component of the Victorian criminal justice system in its 19 years of operation.

Magistrates hold dual appointments as members of VOCAT and as Magistrates. To be able to hear criminal cases in the Magistrates' Court and victims of crime applications in the Tribunal assists Magistrates better appreciate the impact of crimes on victims. Given that in sentencing an offender a Court must have regard to the impact of the offence on any victim of the offence, the work of the Tribunal enables Magistrates to keep a balance to the work they undertake in each jurisdiction.

VOCAT is not the only source of assistance available for victims of crime, but it can often be the most effective pathway for relief. A victim may apply to the sentencing court for an order requiring the perpetrator to pay compensation however this is of little value if the offender has no assets, which is frequently the case. Further, an award of compensation from the sentencing court is not an option that can be pursued if the perpetrator of a crime has not been identified or if an offender has been charged but found not guilty after a hearing. In each of these cases, VOCAT may still offer victims an avenue of financial assistance and redress.

Perhaps most importantly, VOCAT provides a forum for victims to tell their story and have their experiences of loss and suffering acknowledged. The Tribunal is not required to conduct itself in a formal manner nor is it bound by strict rules as to evidence and procedure. It can inform itself in any manner that it thinks fit. It is not uncommon for a Tribunal Member to sit at the bar table with a victim and engage in a frank discussion about the impact the crime has had and to investigate openly options which the Tribunal could fund to assist in recovery from the act of violence.

This year the Tribunal has received 6221 applications for assistance. This is an increase of over 3% from the previous financial year following a 5% increase in 2014/15. In addition to steady increases in the number of new applications, the Tribunal is dealing with increasing levels of complexity in a greater number of applications each year. Applications which arise from family violence related crime are a prime example of the kinds of matters which require additional sensitivity and intense management. As noted elsewhere in this report, in the last financial year 28.4% of new applications recorded a family relationship between the victim and the alleged offender. This is an increase of approximately 3.5% on the last financial year when a significant increase was also noted. Another indicator that matters are proceeding more cautiously is that the number of interim awards made by the Tribunal has increased by 13.1% over the course of this reporting period.

It is apparent from the statistics that, despite the significant contribution made by Judicial Registrars to the work of the Tribunal, the Tribunal is facing challenges in keeping pace with the increased number of applications. Unfortunately the number of pending matters increased by 11% over the reporting period, and the number of finalised applications fell by 3.3% compared to the previous year.

The VOCAT Coordinating Committee is conscious of this trend and will be looking to better understand the reasons for any increased delays with a view to implementing strategies to improve efficiency and timeliness. A sub-committee has also been set up to consider and progress the implementation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendations relevant to the VOCAT jurisdiction. It is envisaged that a more streamlined system may be implemented to deal with delays in finalising these more complex applications.

The Magistrates' Court has undertaken considerable work in 2015/16 to identify and configure an electronic case management system for VOCAT. This has been a complex project because of the need to integrate any new VOCAT system with the existing case management system (Courtlink). The net benefits of an electronic system will be particularly advantageous for VOCAT as there is currently a heavy reliance on voluminous, paper-based files being transported to and from Tribunal Members. Having the capacity to instantaneously provide links to workflow from any computer across the state should relieve the administrative burden and delays associated with transporting hard copy files and improve the efficiency of the Tribunal.

A continued focus on training and development has improved the knowledge and efficiency of registry staff who work hard at ensuring that legal and evidentiary requirements are met before passing files on for decision. They also make urgent interim awards of assistance. As a result of this increased training and the resultant confidence gained, interim awards made by Registrars have increased by 35% over the reporting period. Importantly, this saves Magistrates and Judicial Registrars considerable time and allows them to perform other more complex tasks.

As noted earlier, Judicial Registrars have continued to make a substantial contribution to the work of VOCAT. Judicial Registrars undertake prescribed Tribunal functions delegated to them by me as Chief Magistrate. This year's figures show that our eight Judicial Registrars were responsible for 21.9% of all final awards across the State. This percentage represents 949 matters which were finalised "on the papers" and the conducting of 112 VOCAT hearings. This is a 12% increase in the number of matters that have proceeded to a hearing, another indicator that matters in the reporting period have been increasingly complex. In addition two new Judicial Registrars have recently been appointed which should assist in achieving timelier resolution of applications.

Throughout 2015/16, VOCAT and the Court have had to manage additional pressures arising out of the closure of the Heidelberg Magistrates' Court. A flood in early 2015 led to the complete closure of the Court, requiring Magistrates and Registry staff to perform all Heidelberg duties out of the Melbourne Magistrates' Court. It is a credit to both Heidelberg and Melbourne staff that all services were maintained with a minimum of inconvenience to Court users. In fact, during 2015/16, VOCAT applications to the Heidelberg Court increased by 17% whilst final orders increased by an extraordinary 32%. All those concerned are to be commended for these positive outcomes.

The Tribunal operates a Koori List which aims to ensure that VOCAT provides an accessible and culturally appropriate service to Koori victims of crime. VOCAT received 238 new Koori List applications during 2015/2016. Whilst this figure represents a decline of 19% when compared to the previous year, it must also be noted that in the previous reporting period the number of applications had increased by 78%. The Tribunal has dedicated a specialised registrar to engage with the Koori community and liaise with Koori support agencies across the State. The list operates as informally as possible, and respect is shown to culture by the acknowledgement to country which occurs before each sitting. The applicant and any family members or others who have come to support them are encouraged to speak and have their say on what would assist the victim recover from the offending.

As a community, we continue to experience increasing rates of reporting and policing of family violence offending. The Tribunal has worked hard throughout the year to address some of the unique issues faced by victims of family violence who seek assistance from VOCAT. As referred to earlier, the VOCAT Coordinating Committee has set up a working group to assist in the implementation of relevant recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The Tribunal also looks forward to the recommendations of the Victorian Law Reform Commission's review of the Role of Victims in the Criminal Trial process, which the joint Supervising Magistrates refer to in their report.

This year, the Tribunal awarded over \$41 million in financial assistance to victims of crime, and an additional \$5.1 million in legal costs to lawyers assisting applicants. The Tribunal made 4,161 awards of financial assistance over the reporting period, with the average amount of financial assistance awarded on final determination increasing slightly to \$7,784.

I would like to thank VOCAT's Principal Registrar Rod Ratcliffe and all registry staff for their continued contribution. VOCAT Registrars closely manage VOCAT applications, gathering information, reviewing materials and making recommendations to Tribunal Members and Judicial Registrars. This ensures that our judicial officers have the evidence and information they need to make timely decisions about a victim's entitlements.

I would also like to thank the Senior Registrars and their staff in each of the state's 51 courts for ensuring that staff, court rooms, facilities and administrative support is provided in a timely and efficient manner each and every time it is required. Without this collaborative approach the Tribunal could not run as efficiently.

Thanks are also due to the members of the VOCAT Coordinating Committee for their commitment and problem solving skills. The Committee meets monthly and focuses on developing and overseeing initiatives to improve VOCAT's operation. I thank VOCAT Supervising Magistrates Andrew Capell and Jo Metcalf for their hard work and leadership. Special recognition should also be accorded to the work of former Deputy Chief Magistrate Dan Muling who retired from the bench in December 2015. His expertise and attention to detail at the VOCAT Coordinating Committee are sorely missed.



Peter Lauritsen
Chief Magistrate





About VOCAT

The Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) is an integral part of Victoria's criminal justice system. By providing assistance to help victims recover – and a forum in which they can fully express their experiences of violence – we acknowledge the effects of violent crime on our community.

Who we are

VOCAT is now in its 19th year of operation and was established by the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* (the Act). We are located within the Magistrates' Court of Victoria and operate at all 51 Court venues across the state. Each of the Court's 114 magistrates and 14 reserve magistrates, including the Chief Magistrate, are also Tribunal members. The Court's 10 judicial registrars also have Tribunal powers delegated to them by the Chief Magistrate to determine certain types of applications.

VOCAT is unique in being an administrative tribunal within the Court, constituted by judicial officers who also preside in the Magistrates' Court. This means victims of crime gain acknowledgement of their experiences by a judicial officer in the criminal justice system, but in the more flexible, informal and intimate manner afforded by an administrative tribunal.

The Chief Magistrate is responsible for the arrangement of VOCAT's business, and appoints Supervising Magistrates to support VOCAT's effective operation. Since January 2014, Andrew Capell and Johanna Metcalf have jointly supervised the Tribunal.

Supervising Magistrates encourage best practice across the regions, and are responsible for liaising with the judiciary, staff and community in relation to issues relevant to VOCAT. They provide feedback and make recommendations to improve the procedural framework within which VOCAT operates. Additionally, they have input into developments within the wider justice system that may affect victims of crime.

VOCAT has a Coordinating Committee that supports the Supervising Magistrates to carry out these duties. The committee is constituted by the two Supervising Magistrates, nine other Magistrates, a Judicial Registrar, the Principal Registrar of VOCAT, the Standards and Compliance Officer and the Registry Manager, Melbourne.

The Chief Magistrate has delegated certain powers under the Act to judicial registrars, VOCAT's Principal Registrar and other registrars of VPS grade 3 and above.

What we do

VOCAT supports victims to recover from violent crimes committed in Victoria. We acknowledge their pain and suffering, and provide assistance to help meet the costs of their recovery.

VOCAT determines who is eligible to receive financial assistance in accordance with the Act. We can make awards to cover:

- ▶ funeral expenses
- ▶ the reasonable costs of counselling
- ▶ medical and safety-related expenses
- ▶ loss of or damage to clothing worn at the time of the crime
- ▶ loss of earnings; and
- ▶ other expenses that will assist a victim (in exceptional circumstances).

VOCAT also has the power to make lump sum payments to certain victims of crime. These payments are offered as symbolic expressions of our community's recognition of – and empathy towards – victims and their distress.

In the last 19 years, VOCAT has received 86,632 applications for financial assistance, and awarded \$693 million to victims of crime. This has included 68,208 awards of financial assistance, and tens of thousands of awards of interim financial assistance.

Applications to VOCAT have increased almost every year. There were just over 1,000 applications in 1997–98, while 6,221 applications were received in the current reporting period; this represents a 2.8% increase from the preceding year.



Supervising Magistrates Andrew Capell and Johanna Metcalf

Focus on Law Reform:

Over the past year there has been much reform activity underway looking at how to improve the effectiveness of justice system responses to victims of crime. In our report this year, we highlight some areas of review that were a focus for VOCAT during the reporting year and that will continue to be a priority for us.

VLRC's Review of Role of Victims in the Criminal Trial Process

The Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC) has been conducting an enquiry into *the Role of Victims of Crime in the Criminal Trial Process* and is expected to report to Government in September 2016. The VLRC's Terms of Reference are wide ranging, requiring it to consider the role of victims before, during and after the trial process, as well as current supports offered to victims throughout that process. Part of the enquiry is directed towards reviewing the making of compensation, restitution or other orders for the benefit of victims against offenders as part of, or in conjunction with, the criminal trial process. This aspect of the review has direct relevance to VOCAT's operations, as state-funded assistance awarded through VOCAT is one of three avenues through which victims of crime may seek financial assistance. The other methods of redress are compensation or restitution orders against the offender under the *Sentencing Act 1991*, and the bringing of civil court proceedings for damages against the perpetrator.

In a Consultation Paper published in July 2015, the VLRC discussed a number of issues with each of these processes, and sought comments on suggestions such as whether the categories of offences giving rise to an eligibility for assistance under the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* (the Act) should be expanded, and consideration of the role that restorative justice processes could play in VOCAT proceedings.

Consideration of these issues is very timely, and we anticipate keenly the VLRC's report and recommendations. The area of sexual offending in particular has seen the creation of many new offences in recent years to grapple with advances in technology that have enabled offending to occur in ways not previously contemplated. Yet despite the harms caused to victims of such crimes, many of the new offences would not satisfy the eligibility requirements of the Act. For example, a victim of an "upskirting" offence would not be able to claim assistance under the Act, nor would a victim of grooming behaviour against Commonwealth laws.

Report of the Royal Commission into Family Violence

Some of the most complex and affecting applications for assistance that we receive are from victims of family violence. In the last financial year 28.4% of new applications lodged with VOCAT recorded a family relationship between the victim and alleged offender. An initial request may be for funds to enable improvements to the home to increase safety and offer protection from the perpetrator of the violence, or for assistance in re-locating altogether to a new home. We have seen first-hand the suffering and courage of victims who seek the Tribunal's assistance to move on from the cycle of violence and make changes in their lives.

In March 2016, The Royal Commission into Family Violence released its Final Report after an extensive consultation, hearings and submissions process. The Royal Commission's Terms of Reference required it to inquire into and report on how Victoria's response to family violence can be improved by providing practical recommendations to stop family violence.

In its Report, the Commission made 227 Recommendations designed to improve the way our community deals with the terrible harm caused by family violence, to provide better support to victims and to ensure that perpetrators of family violence are held accountable for their behaviour. Many of these are focussed on improving the effectiveness of justice system responses and ensuring that victims are adequately supported when they come forward for help and protection.

The Commission's Report details how family violence can reduce victims' physical and mental health, social and economic participation, and ability to live free from fear – and that the effects of family violence can be prolonged and damaging of victims' lives in many different ways. The cumulative effects of these various experiences can be compounded by difficulty in navigating the available justice and service systems, and in attempting to regain financial and social independence.

In a chapter focussing on Victim Recovery, the Commission considered challenges and opportunities in the area of health and well-being support for victims of family violence. The limitations in a victim of family violence's eligibility for relief from VOCAT and the difficulties some victims experience when attempting to navigate the separate streams of assistance offered by VOCAT and the Victims Assistance Program (run by the Victims Support Agency) are discussed.

VOCAT contributed to a joint submission from the Magistrates' and Children's Courts of Victoria to the Royal Commission suggesting changes to increase the support provided to victims of family violence and to improve their safety, and suggesting that a review of the operation of specific provisions of the Act would be beneficial. We also recommended changes to ensure that victims of family violence whose applications proceed to a hearing have access to appropriate counselling and de-briefing where required, as well as legislative changes to apply the same protections to them as would apply to victims testifying in a sexual assault or family violence criminal case.

Examples of such protections include a ban on victims being personally cross-examined by the alleged perpetrator, restraints on the sorts of questions that may be asked and ensuring that victims have access to remote witness facilities and other alternative arrangements for giving evidence as a matter of right.

Submissions to the Royal Commission acknowledged the important role that schemes such as VOCAT can play in recovery – by assisting financially and validating a victim's experience, but the Commission also noted concerns raised in some submissions about how victims of family violence access and engage with the scheme.

Barriers to accessing the scheme were said to include that non-criminal forms of family-violence behaviour fall outside the Act, and that some breaches of intervention orders result in an eligibility for assistance while others would not. Other issues discussed in the Report included the process notifying alleged perpetrators in some applications; the need for extensions of time to be sought where the acts of violence occurred more than two years prior to an application; the requirement for VOCAT to take into account the conduct of the applicant when considering whether to make or refuse an award, and in determining the quantum of any award; the VOCAT process as therapeutic for victims; a lack of awareness of the VOCAT scheme; and issues to do with timely payment of interim awards and the time taken to finalise some applications.

The Commission concluded that expanding the definition of 'act of violence' in the Act to encompass family violence behaviours that do not amount to a criminal offence (such as emotional or economic abuse) could result in unintended and complex consequences, and would be inconsistent with the current purposes of the scheme.

It recommended, however, that an anomaly concerning eligibility to claim under the Act in relation to breaches of family violence intervention orders be reviewed. The drafting of the current provisions means that a victim of a breach of an intervention order involving an assault, injury or threat of injury would be eligible to apply to VOCAT for assistance, provided the incident resulted in a physical or psychological injury. However, victims of other types of intervention order breaches, for example where the breach involved the sending of messages in contravention of the order but which messages did not involve a threat, would be ineligible to apply for assistance.

The Commission also supported consideration of changes to ensure that VOCAT adequately takes into account patterns of violence commonly experienced by victims of family violence, and a legislative approach that ensures the cumulative and ongoing effects of family violence are taken into account. This would include potentially increasing the maximum award of SFA to recognise the harms caused by repeated criminal family violence offending, and appropriate amendments to ensure that the Tribunal takes into account the nature and dynamics of family violence. The Commission also supported continued education and training for magistrates addressing the sorts of family violence issues that can arise in VOCAT proceedings.

The Commission also identified an urgent need to expand the number and range of counselling services available to victims of crime, and the means to provide therapeutic interventions that are flexible and tailored to specific needs.

The Commission noted that, as with other victims of crime more generally, there are two pathways through which victims of family violence can seek support, being through the Victims Assistance program, run by the Victims Support Agency, and VOCAT. This means that some victims will have to navigate two separate schemes through two different doors, which may give rise to inefficiency and potentially re-traumatise a victim who must separately recount their experiences. It recommended that development of a more streamlined approach be considered, with the caveat that any changes in the level of assistance provided, or limitation periods on the provision of that assistance, should not disadvantage victims of family violence.

Recommendation 106 provides that:

The Victorian Law Reform Commission consider the matters the Commission raised in this report in relation to the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal and the Victim Assistance program in its Victims of Crime in the Criminal Trial Process review. To the extent that these matters do not fall within the terms of reference for that review, the Attorney-General should amend the terms of reference or ensure that a separate review of these matters is carried out.

As at the date of writing, we are unaware of the intended process for review of the matters referred to in Recommendation 106. In the meantime, we have established an internal working group to consider and progress implementation of the many Royal Commission recommendations that are relevant to the VOCAT jurisdiction.

We believe that VOCAT has an important role to play in providing practical and flexible assistance to victims of family violence, and in offering a therapeutic forum for victims to tell their story and have their experiences acknowledged. We will continue to strive to improve our services for the benefit of all victims of violent crime.

Jo Metcalf and Andrew Capell
Joint Supervising Magistrates, VOCAT

CASE STUDY

TAMARA

Tamara was involved in a domestic violence assault in 2010 by her former partner. The alleged offender would become violent when he used drugs and alcohol. The alleged offender would take all of Tamara's money, leaving her with no food or items to look after herself or her children.

She reported the incidents to the police but did not want any further action taken as she was frightened of how the alleged offender would react.

The Tribunal finalised her application by awarding 24 sessions of counselling and \$1300 in Special Financial Assistance. She was also awarded \$5500 for a vehicle to assist with her recovery and \$1000 associated with the cost of a computer to assist her in achieving her study goals.

Tamara was granted a variation of the award approximately 6 months later to enable her and her children to go on a family holiday in the amount of \$1779. Based on the material filed from Tamara's psychologist, the Tribunal was satisfied that the family's recovery would benefit from time away to reconnect and strengthen their bond as a family unit.

Tamara recently sought a further variation so that she can attend a course educating her on the effects of Alcohol and Other Drugs, which the Tribunal Member agreed to.

Tamara's psychologist sent a letter to update the Tribunal on the progress of her treatment and recovery. In this letter the psychologist advised of the success of the family holiday that was awarded. Tamara and her family went to Queensland and visited the theme parks in April. Tamara had saved hard since Christmas for spending money so that her family could enjoy themselves. Whilst Tamara and the family were away she sent texts and photos to her psychologist of the children on the water slides having fun with big smiles on their faces. Tamara noted that it was the first time in a long time that her two boys were playing together, happy, laughing, with the older brother enjoying the company of the younger brother. She thanked the Tribunal for the opportunity to bond as a family unit and said that they will be able to look back on these enjoyable times and positive memories if times get tough in the future.

Awards held in trust – Transfer of historical trust files

Awards of financial assistance to a child under 18 years, or a person incapable of managing his or her own affairs due to injury, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are held in trust until the child turns 18 or the Tribunal otherwise orders.

Pursuant to the Act, the Senior Master receives and invests funds ordered by the Tribunal to be held in trust on behalf of the applicant.

This financial year the Tribunal continued its review of historical trust files invested directly with the Tribunal. The review has revealed that, in many cases, transferring historical trust files to the Senior Master would be of great benefit to applicants. As part of the review, the Tribunal has successfully transferred more than 80 historical trust files to the Senior Master's Office for ongoing management and continues to audit and transfer remaining files.



Supporting Victims of Crime

Before they seek VOCAT's assistance, victims may have spent months, or even years, dealing with the after-effects of violent crime. Apart from crime's obvious physical or psychological impacts, the process of helping police with investigations, being a witness in court, and trying to get their lives back on track can also affect victims' health and wellbeing. VOCAT can help to validate their experiences and restore a sense of dignity, while providing financial help to assist a victim's recovery.

Accessing VOCAT

VOCAT has strong links with the Victims Support Agency (VSA), Victims Helpline and the state-wide network of victim support services and programs. Many victims of crime learn about VOCAT either from the Victims Helpline, the police, Victims Assistance Program, or other victim support services. These services can support victims through the process of applying to VOCAT for financial assistance. Victims can also receive assistance from lawyers.

CASE STUDY

OMAR

Omar was a 25 year old male working as a service station attendant. In June 2015 he was working at the Service Station when he was approached by a male who threw him a bag, produced a knife and a meat cleaver and told the applicant to put cash in the bag. The offender waved the meat cleaver around and threatened to hurt Omar. Omar complied and the offender threatened to kill him if he followed him out of the store. Omar was not physically harmed during the incident. He lodged an application with the Tribunal in August 2015.

The Police obtained CCTV footage of this incident and a similar armed robbery at another service station 2 days before. Police identified the alleged offender and charged him with 2 counts of armed robbery. The offender was found guilty and sentenced to 3 years imprisonment.

Although Omar had not been physically injured at the time of the incident, he detailed to the Tribunal in a letter the effects that the armed robbery, returning to the same workplace and seeing video of a similar robbery close to his workplace had on him. In the months following he started having chest pains and provided evidence of medical tests on his heart.

The Tribunal was satisfied that Omar was a victim of an act of violence which caused a psychological injury. In May 2016 the Tribunal awarded Special Financial Assistance –of \$3250, a \$50 reimbursement for medical consultation and legal costs.

Omar also has 6 years from the time his final award was made to apply for further financial assistance from the Tribunal.

Who can apply?

VOCAT can award financial assistance to primary, secondary, and related victims, or anyone else who has incurred funeral expenses for a person who died as the result of a violent crime.

A primary victim is a person who is injured or dies as a direct result of an act of violence, or is injured or dies trying to assist a victim of a violent crime or trying to prevent a violent crime.

A secondary victim is a person who is injured as a result of:

- ▶ being present at and witnessing a violent crime or
- ▶ being a parent or guardian of a child who is a primary victim.

Where a primary victim has died, a related victim is a person who was at the time of the crime:

- ▶ a close family member of the victim
- ▶ in an intimate personal relationship with the victim or
- ▶ a dependent of the victim.

An injury can be physical or psychological, and includes pregnancy or the exacerbation of a pre-existing psychological illness/disorder. It does not include an injury resulting from property loss or damage.

The application process

There is no fee to make an application to VOCAT. All applicants must file an Application for Assistance form, this can be done online at the Tribunal's website www.vocat.vic.gov.au or at any Magistrates' Court venue in Victoria.

Applicants can usually lodge forms at the Court venue closest to where they live, however, applications must be lodged at the Melbourne Magistrates' Court if:

- ▶ they relate to the death of a person
- ▶ the applicant lives outside Victoria or
- ▶ the applicant identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (for inclusion in the Koori VOCAT List).

Applications must generally be lodged within two years of the crime, however in some circumstances VOCAT can extend this timeframe. In making this decision, VOCAT will consider issues such as the applicant's age at the time of the crime, their mental health, and whether the person who committed the crime was in a position of power, influence or trust in relation to the applicant.

Most applicants are legally represented and the Victims Assistance Program or Law Institute of Victoria can help applicants find lawyers to assist with their applications. VOCAT usually covers the reasonable cost of the lawyer's fees, and lawyers cannot bill clients for a VOCAT application without VOCAT's approval.



Electronic Document Management Project

Tribunal administration are keen to improve the way we do business. In line with Courts' priorities, the concept of a paperless Tribunal is currently being explored, with the potential to pilot an exclusively electronic file within the Koori VOCAT List. Any new electronic document management system must be consistent with and adaptable to any new case management system that may be introduced to the broader Magistrates' Court in the future.

The existing mainframe case management system which was introduced in 1987 has proven to be difficult to integrate into a modern document management system. The clear funding priority for the Magistrates' Court and indeed VOCAT is the replacement of the case management system which may delay the introduction of any front-end electronic management software.

It is inevitable that all future VOCAT files will be lodged and determined electronically. This will improve the efficiency, cost and environmental impact of processing VOCAT applications. It is imperative at this stage that we strategically explore which option will work best for VOCAT while continuing to consider the broader objectives of the Magistrates' Court.

What happens after an application is lodged?

VOCAT has investigative powers to help make its decisions. Once an application is lodged, we ask Victoria Police for information to help determine whether a crime occurred, and whether the applicant is a victim of that crime. We also obtain from Police the criminal history of the alleged offender and of the victim. In many cases, police can also provide information about a victim's injuries. The Tribunal can also obtain information from hospitals where the victim was treated.

We ask applicants to provide all the documents they will rely upon to support their claims, for example, reports from treating health professionals and psychologists. Applicants have four months to provide this information; however, they can request further time, if needed.

We provide every opportunity for applicants to file supporting documents, but if we do not receive them, the claim can be struck out. Applicants can ask to have claims reinstated if they subsequently provide supporting documents.

We may ask an applicant or, more usually, their lawyer to attend directions hearings to decide any preliminary questions, provide guidance about preparation of the application and help manage applicants' expectations. This can assist us to make decisions more quickly without creating additional stress for applicants.

How long before a result?

The Act and general rules of procedural fairness mean VOCAT is required to have regard to matters that can impact on the time it takes to finalise an application. These may include:

- ▶ awaiting the outcome of a criminal investigation, trial or inquest
- ▶ the need for further enquiries or, in some cases, for the alleged offender to be notified of the application
- ▶ waiting for an injury to stabilise so an accurate prognosis can be provided; and
- ▶ in related victim applications, identifying and communicating with all potential related victims of the deceased to advise them of their rights in relation to VOCAT.

Applicants can request that VOCAT determine their application with or without the need to appear at a hearing. Many straightforward applications are decided without the need for a hearing, which is the best way to ensure victims receive the assistance they need without unnecessary delay.

Sometimes, a hearing is necessary or desired by the applicant. If a hearing takes place it is usually within six weeks of a VOCAT member deciding to conduct it. If an applicant asks for a hearing, it generally happens within six to ten weeks of the applicant filing all supporting material.

Applicants who need urgent assistance (e.g. for counselling, funeral or safety related expenses) can seek an interim award of financial assistance. If awarded, either by a Tribunal member or a Registrar, this award can be paid to the applicant before VOCAT makes a final decision on the merits of their application.

The hearing process

Our intention is to create a sympathetic and compassionate forum for applicants to relate their experiences as victims of crime. The hearing process can assist in restoring an individual victim's sense of dignity. It can also help applicants to better understand their place in the criminal justice system, or, if they have not been awarded the level of assistance sought, the reasons why.

Although located in the Magistrates' Court, VOCAT is not a court. VOCAT hearings are less formal, and do not have set rules about what evidence is allowed or the manner in which evidence can be given. Instead, Judicial Officers hearing applications can investigate, inquire, and gather any information needed to help make a decision, in the way they think is most appropriate to the circumstances of the application.

Tribunal Members and Judicial Registrars conduct hearings in a demonstrably victim-centred way. For example, they may sit down at the table with applicants and encourage them to talk openly about their experiences. Engaging in this way allows them to address the emotional impact of crime on victims, and more carefully tailor financial assistance to help in their recovery. Applicants can also ask for hearings to be 'closed' (kept private) and can bring any support people they wish. The Tribunal may also, on its own initiative, direct that the whole or any part of the hearing be closed to members of the public.

Related victim hearings usually occur some time after the primary victim's death. A hearing can offer families the opportunity to talk together about the deceased family member, and the impact that the death and the criminal justice process has had on them.

In situations where we are asked to decide whether a crime occurred, we may consider it appropriate to ask alleged offenders if they want to be heard. To reduce any possible stress and anxiety where an alleged offender is notified, VOCAT will generally meet the cost of the alleged offender's legal representation and make directions for the hearing to be conducted in a manner which limits contact between the parties, for instance, by having a party give evidence via a video-link.

How we make decisions

VOCAT makes decisions in accordance with the Act. Our role is to ensure victims receive their full entitlement under the Act; however, the legislation governing VOCAT also requires us to have regard to other factors, such as the victim's level of co-operation with police, any conduct of the victim that contributed to the crime and the criminal history of the applicant.

As with other administrative tribunals, VOCAT decides questions of fact on the balance of probabilities (i.e. more likely than not) rather than 'beyond reasonable doubt'. This means VOCAT can find that a crime occurred, even if a criminal court has found the alleged offender not guilty. This in itself can provide a sense of closure for some victims.

VOCAT can therefore award financial assistance even though no one has been charged with, found guilty of, or convicted of an offence arising from the act of violence committed.

Before we award financial assistance, we must first be satisfied, on the balance of probabilities, that:

- ▶ a violent crime occurred
- ▶ the applicant is a primary, secondary or related victim of that crime, or a person who has incurred funeral expenses
- ▶ the applicant is eligible to receive the assistance and
- ▶ the applicant does not qualify for financial assistance from another source for the loss or expense sought from VOCAT.

In deciding whether to make an award, or what amount should be awarded, we must also take into account:

- ▶ whether the applicant reported the crime to police within a reasonable time, and to what extent the applicant assisted police in their investigations
- ▶ the applicant's conduct and attitude before, during and after the crime, and their character, including any past criminal activity and
- ▶ whether the offender will benefit from an award made to the applicant.

Any financial assistance available under the Act may be awarded only where compensation cannot be obtained from another source. We therefore take into account any damages, compensation, assistance or payment the applicant has received, or is entitled to receive, from other sources such as claims against the offender, WorkCover, the Transport Accident Commission and insurance schemes.

VOCAT can require applicants to refund some or all of the financial assistance awarded to them if they later receive damages, compensation, assistance or payments of any kind for injuries suffered as a result of a violent crime.

What we can award

The type and amount of financial assistance we can award is set out in the Act and differs between primary, secondary and related victims. In all cases, the amount must be reasonable, and the expenses claimed must have directly resulted from the crime. We must also be satisfied on the evidence that the type and amount of assistance sought will help the victim recover from the effects of the crime.

Types of assistance

Where VOCAT finds an applicant is a victim of crime, it can award financial assistance for past or future reasonable expenses associated with:

- ▶ counselling
- ▶ medical treatment, including dental, optometry, physiotherapy, hospital and ambulance
- ▶ lost or damaged clothing worn at the time of the crime
- ▶ measures to help a victim feel safe, for example, change of locks and other measures to increase home security
- ▶ providing a funeral for a deceased victim and
- ▶ in exceptional circumstances, VOCAT can award any other type of assistance that will go to the heart of assisting victims in their recovery. Examples include tutoring costs to assist child victims to refocus on their schooling, training to allow victims to return to work and some alternative approaches to healing.

We can authorise payment of future expenses such as ongoing counselling, surgery, or safety expenses. After such services or goods have been provided to the victim and we have received the invoice or receipt, we pay the service provider or reimburse the victim.

In addition to the expenses outlined above, we can award up to \$20,000 for lost earnings for primary or secondary victims, covering a period of up to two years after the crime. This is intended to help victims who are unable to work as a direct result of the crime.

We can also award a related victim an amount of money that, but for the death of the primary victim, the related victim would have been reasonably likely to receive from the primary victim during a period of up to two years after their death.

The Tribunal has adopted guidelines about the amounts payable for counsellor's fees, legal costs and funeral expenses. These guidelines help the Tribunal decide whether claims are reasonable and to ensure consistency.

Amount of financial assistance available

The amounts of financial assistance VOCAT can award are not intended to compensate victims for their loss. They are instead intended to provide a level of targeted assistance for victims' recovery, and an expression of the community's sympathy for, and recognition of, victims' suffering.

SPECIAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

In some cases, we can award a 'special financial assistance' lump sum (up to \$10,000) directly to a primary victim. This is not intended to reflect what could be obtained at common law, or compensate for the harm a victim has suffered. It is meant as a tangible and symbolic expression by the State of the community's sympathy and concern for victims of violent crime.

We determine the amount of special financial assistance according to the category of crime as set out in the Victims of Crime Assistance (Special Financial Assistance) Regulations 2011, and the particular circumstances of the primary victim or the injury suffered.

We can award:

- ▶ a **primary victim** up to \$60,000 for reasonable expenses and lost earnings, plus any special financial assistance up to an amount of \$10,000
- ▶ a **secondary victim** up to \$50,000 for reasonable expenses, and, in exceptional circumstances, lost earnings suffered as a direct result of the crime and for some secondary victims, expenses to assist recovery and
- ▶ a **related victim** financial assistance of up to \$50,000. Within this sum may be awarded an amount in recognition of their distress, (or in the case of a child, likely future distress) as a result of the primary victim's death. Where there is more than one related victim of a deceased primary victim, the overall maximum amount of financial assistance we can award to all related victims is limited to \$100,000, unless exceptional circumstances exist. As much as possible, we involve families in decision-making to ensure we award assistance where it is most needed.

Awards held in trust

Awards of financial assistance to a child under 18 years, or a person incapable of managing his or her affairs due to injury, illness or physical or mental infirmity, will be held in trust until the child turns 18 or as the Tribunal otherwise orders.

Right of Review

An applicant who is not satisfied with VOCAT's decision, where a Tribunal Member has presided, can apply to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for a review of the decision. VCAT can conduct a new hearing, including considering any new evidence, and can:

- ▶ confirm or vary the original order
- ▶ make a new order or
- ▶ return the application to VOCAT to be reconsidered.

Review of Decisions of Judicial Registrars

An applicant who is not satisfied with VOCAT's decision, where a Judicial Registrar was presiding, may apply to review the final decision of a judicial registrar. The review is considered by a Tribunal member de novo, with the Tribunal able to determine the application on the material submitted or by conducting a hearing.

On review, the Tribunal member may:

- ▶ affirm the final decision of the judicial registrar; or
- ▶ set aside the final decision and make another in substitution.



**JUDICIAL REGISTRARS
MADE 21.9%
OF FINAL AWARDS.**

Focus on Judicial Registrars

By Judicial Registrar, Sharon McRae

In the 2015/2016 year, Judicial Registrars heard and determined 1290 of the applications finalised by the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal.

This contribution by Judicial Registrars assists the Tribunal in achieving the objectives of the Victims of Crime Assistance Act ("the Act"). It also greatly assists victims in receiving assistance in a timely and efficient manner.

The introduction of Judicial Registrars in the Tribunal was an initiative of the Tribunal.

Judicial Registrars have been delegated powers by the Chief Magistrate to hear and determine certain types of applications under the Victims of Crime Assistance Act.

During this reporting year there have been no changes to the types of matters that Judicial Registrar's can hear and determine. Judicial Registrars can hear and determine applications under the Act by primary and secondary victims except,

- (i) where there are allegations of sexual assault or family violence, or
- (ii) where the act of violence was not reported to police.

Judicial Registrars cannot determine related victim applications.

Judicial Registrars can also hear applications for an extension of time to lodge an application, make interim awards, consider requests to access documents and determine variation of award applications, as well as give directions.

Judicial Registrars commenced work in the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal from 1 February 2012. Initially a pilot programme commenced at Heidelberg, Ringwood and Melbourne Tribunal venues. Due to the success of the pilot programme it was extended to all metropolitan, regional and rural courts in February 2013.

At the time of commencement of the pilot programme there were six Judicial Registrars. Two Judicial Registrars were appointed in the 2013/2014 year and a further two Judicial Registrar's were appointed in May 2016.

Judicial Registrars undertake work in the Tribunal at all metropolitan Tribunal venues and in the country in the Barwon South West, Gippsland and Grampians regions. It is anticipated that with the appointment of the further two Judicial Registrars more allocations to country regions will occur and that Judicial Registrars will continue to successfully hear and determine more applications in the next year than previously.



VOCAT Registrar

Gill Skountzis is a Registrar who has been working with the Court for over five years.

Having cut my teeth at the Melbourne registry of VOCAT, and learned to stumble/walk upright through Heidelberg's VOCAT, I felt quietly confident when the Senior Registrar of Shepparton Law Courts bestowed upon me the role of Shepparton VOCAT Registrar. The departing Registrar left me with 100 open files, training notes and the sage words – "the manual's there, if you have any issues, contact me". I was excited.

My experience of VOCAT from both Melbourne and Heidelberg had been very positive. I thoroughly enjoyed the jurisdiction and was keen to take on the VOCAT challenge at Shepparton. What struck me the most was the differences between the registries at each location. Shepparton itself is quite isolated, located nearly 200kms up the Hume and Goulburn Valley Highways away from Melbourne, the VOCAT Registrar is in the thick of the action within the general registry.

This is in stark contrast to Melbourne; where the VOCAT registry is tucked away, downstairs on the lower level, quiet and contemplative, the atmosphere of a library. So too, Heidelberg, where the VOCAT Registrar sits in the registry but away from the others.

As Shepparton's VOCAT Registrar, my role encompassed all aspects of the general registry. Ensuring that all initiating – criminal and civil was completed in a timely manner, all correspondence was attended to, and that clients' needs were being met at the counter and on the telephone. At Shepparton being a multijurisdictional law court, I had the wonderful opportunity of balancing my VOCAT role with County Court registrar training. With all these pressures one might think that the VOCAT work suffered, but the holistic nature of my position had me well placed.

One of the great things about country life is that even though things might be far in kilometres, everything in reality is local. The police station is next door to the court and is the station that provides the majority of briefs for VOCAT. Police officers tend to drop their briefs off at the counter when they have other business at court.

Solicitors are a stone's throw from the front door, so they can literally walk over right there and then when required. This personal touch reminds me that underneath all the correspondence and paperwork of VOCAT is a human applicant.

Solicitors that handle VOCAT in the regions are few and friendly; it is easy to build and maintain strong professional yet relaxed relationships with them. The Tribunal Members in the region are the Magistrates in the region, and as such they often deal with the criminal case that relates to the VOCAT application. The VOCAT registrar is the lynchpin between Tribunal Members and solicitors. At Shepparton that pin helps facilitate ongoing learning and development by identifying common themes and issues arising in correspondence and claims, and working with the Tribunal Members to organise professional training afternoons. Shepparton Magistrates' Court conducts committals for the region and listing times are excellent. Having the County Court on circuit in the same building ensures that trials get on fairly swiftly (no one wants to wait for the next circuit to come to town if they miss out on their allotted one).



**KOORI LIST
APPLICATIONS
DOWN BY 19.3%.**

Koori VOCAT List

While all VOCAT hearings are generally flexible and informal, the Koori VOCAT List enables us to respond with maximum flexibility to the particular circumstances of Koori applicants. Steps are taken to create a culturally safe environment for Koori victims of crime. Aboriginal flags and artworks are displayed, and hearing rooms are ceremonially smoked before they can be used.

In operation since 2006, the List was introduced to help overcome barriers faced by Koori victims of crime in accessing the financial assistance and acknowledgements to which they may be entitled under the Act.

A small number of dedicated VOCAT members – and the Koori VOCAT List Registrar – intensively case manage applications within the List. The Registrar, and all the members who sit on the VOCAT Koori list, participate in cultural awareness training to give them an understanding of the issues Koori victims of crime face.

Koori List applications must satisfy the same requirements as the general list before we can make an award of financial assistance. Sometimes, as a result of entrenched disadvantage and dislocation, Koori victims of crime have a range of other legal and personal issues that need addressing in a holistic way. The Koori VOCAT List is designed to flexibly respond to applicants experiencing these needs.

The Koori Lists' successes can be measured both by reference to the data, and also by observing and reporting on individual's experiences of the List. Part of the purpose of the List is to get in early with interim assistance; provide simplified processes; targeted cultural hearings; and meaningful awards and acknowledgements.

238 applications were filed in the Koori VOCAT List between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016. This number equates to roughly 4% of the total applications filed state-wide over this period. This is slightly lower than the 2014/15 period but still some 55% above the average between 2009 and 2014 when the average per year was steady at 150.





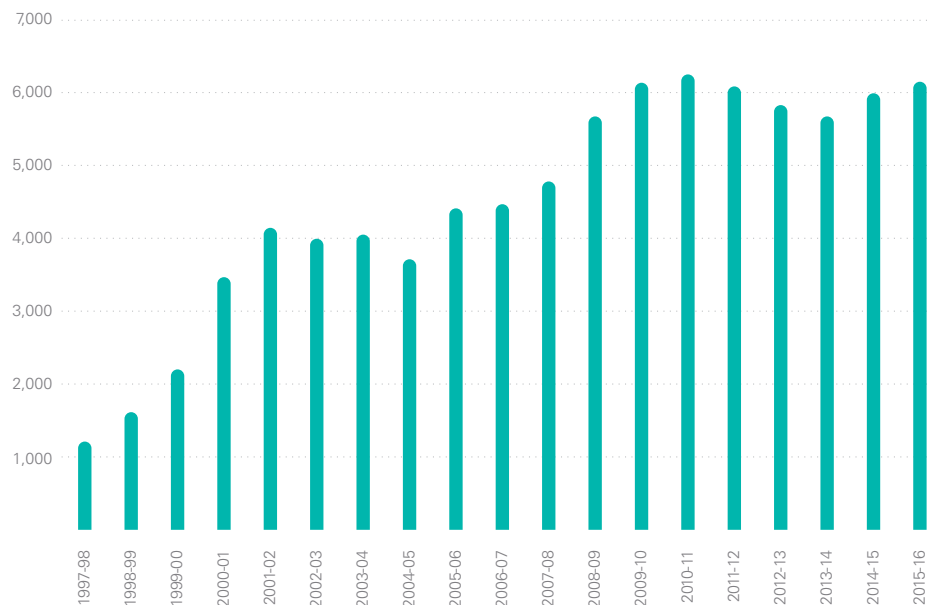
6,221 APPLICATIONS FILED, UP BY 2.8%.



4,161 AWARDS OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE MADE, DOWN BY 6.7%.

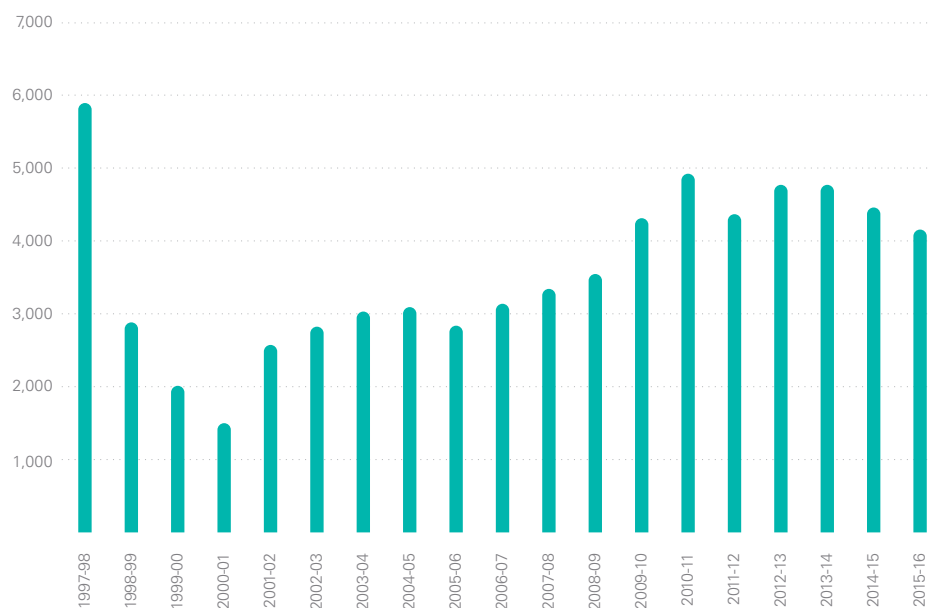
Demand and financial assistance awarded

CHART 1: Number of applications for financial assistance lodged annually 1997/98 – 2015/16



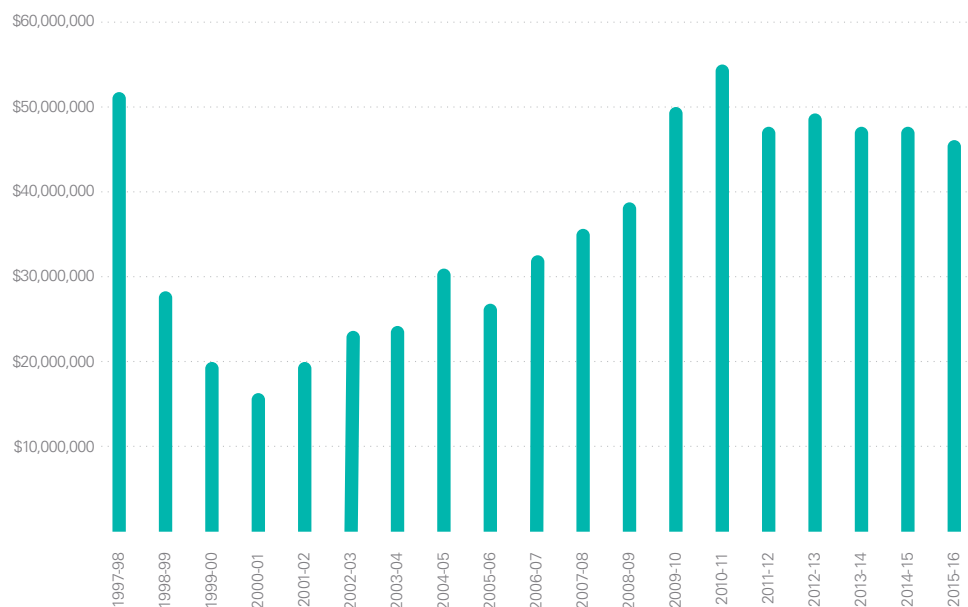
Demand for financial assistance from victims of crime has increased almost every year since the Tribunal commenced on 1 July 1997, with the trend continuing upward this financial year.

CHART 2: Number of awards made annually 1997/98 – 2015/16



There is a slight drop in the number of awards made in 2015/16.

CHART 3: Total amount of financial assistance awarded including legal costs ordered annually 1997/98 – 2015/16



Figures have once again dropped slightly over the reporting period consistent with a small drop in the number of final awards.

CHART 4: Average amount of financial assistance awarded under the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* on determination of applications, 1997/98 – 2015/16



Despite the increasing amount of financial assistance awarded by the Tribunal most years since it commenced in July 1997, the average amount of assistance awarded to applicants each year has remained remarkably consistent, with a slight increase in the year under review.



**\$46.3 MILLION
AWARDED, DOWN
BY 2.7%.**



**AVERAGE AWARD
AMOUNT \$7,784,
UP BY 1.8%.**



The Tribunal – Year in Review

Applications lodged

There were 6221 applications filed in the reporting period which represents a 2.8% increase over the previous year (6053). This was the highest number of applications in any year except 2009/10 which included over 300 applications following the fires of Black Saturday. Female victims made up 57.3% of the total applications. Around 92% of all rape victims during the reporting period were female and 63% of all robbery victims were male.

Applications arising from allegations of assault comprised roughly half of the total applications filed. Almost 80% of victims of family violence are female. Of the 540 applications arising from a homicide, 268 of the victims were female and 222 were male.

Over 11% of all victims were under the age of 18 at the time of the offence. Of these 242 were female and 224 were male.

See page 50 for further details about applications lodged.



**INTERIM AWARDS
FOR ASSISTANCE
UP BY 13.1%.**



**6,757 PENDING
APPLICATIONS,
UP BY 11.8%.**

Application outcomes

We finalised 5,910 applications in the reporting period. This is slightly lower than the previous year and reflects an increased workload, not only in VOCAT but across the Magistrates' Court more generally. The number of interim awards that were granted within this reporting period increased by over 13% over the previous reporting period.

We awarded 4,161 applicants financial assistance (representing 70.4% of all orders made) compared to 4,462 in the previous year. Additionally:

- ▶ Applications were determined at hearings in 23.1% of cases which is slightly lower than the 25% in the previous year.
- ▶ 105 applications were refused, compared to 131 in the previous year. Refused applications comprised 1.8% of all finalising orders made.
- ▶ 1,644 applications were withdrawn by the applicant or struck out by the Tribunal, compared to 1,518 in the previous year (an increase of 8.3%,).
- ▶ As in previous years, the majority of awards (86%) went to primary victims, with 3,577 awards being made this reporting period, compared to 3,740 last year (a decrease of 4.4%).
- ▶ We made 287 awards of financial assistance to secondary victims, compared to 296 last year. Secondary victims represented 6.9% of all awarded applicants, which is a slightly larger proportion than the previous year.
- ▶ For related victims, 289 final awards of financial assistance were made, compared to 410 in the previous year. Related victims applications which all arise out of homicide cases represent 6.9% of all awarded applications. Related victim applications are often the most complex and time consuming matters.

Financial assistance awarded

In the reporting period, we awarded a total of \$46.3 million in financial assistance and legal costs to victims of crime, which was slightly lower than the \$47.6 million awarded in the previous year. This is commensurate with the decrease in the number of finalisations during the reporting period.

The average amount of financial assistance awarded was \$7,784, compared to \$7,639 in the previous year. This figure has remained fairly consistent over the past 19 years showing that the Tribunal Members are applying the legislation consistently.

Review Applications from VOCAT

In the reporting period, 11 applications for review of VOCAT decisions were determined by VCAT and 1 at the Court of Appeal. The Victorian Government Solicitor's Office represents VOCAT (as primary decision maker) in all review matters.

Counsel assisting the Tribunal

The Tribunal may engage counsel to assist with respect to an application for assistance. In the year under review, counsel was engaged to assist the Tribunal in only one application for assistance.

Timeliness

The time it took to finalise applications (measured from the time of lodgement) has increased during the reporting period. Over 62.9% of applications were finalised within 12 months, with 47.6% being finalised within nine months. At the end of the reporting period, 6,757 applications were pending, compared to 6,039 in the previous year. The pending cases as at 30 June 2016 will include some active matters that were previously finalised due to the Applicant's inactivity and then reinstated upon the filing of further material. There were 407 matters reinstated in the reporting period.

The increase in pending cases is as a result of a higher number of new applications in the reporting period, an increase in the number of interim awards sought and an increase in the overall workload of the Magistrates' Court. The Coordinating Committee has set themselves a goal of ensuring that the Tribunal develops efficiency measures that will ensure that all applications are dealt with in a timely fashion.

Some applications are more complex. This is a result of changing notions about what may constitute a violent crime and the possible ways in which a person can be victimised. Applications for assistance for family violence offences are complex and continue to rise in number. New offences, for example, cyber-crimes, are becoming more prevalent. The complexity of applications impacts on the time required for each of them to be finalised.

Below are some of the initiatives we anticipate will assist in improving timeliness:

Judicial Registrars at VOCAT

Judicial registrars are independent decision makers appointed by the Governor in Council to assist the Magistrates' Court in disposing of a variety of matters that come within the court's jurisdictions.

Judicial registrars have had a considerable impact on the timeliness of finalising VOCAT applications. This year judicial registrars finalised 1,295 applications for assistance, being 21.9% of all finalisations down from 24.3% in the previous year. It should be noted that the number of hearings conducted by Judicial Registrars increased by 12%.

Interim awards for safety-related expenses

Since July 2010, VOCAT has been able to make awards to primary victims for safety related expenses without them needing to demonstrate exceptional circumstances. Registrars are able to make awards for safety-related expenses up to \$5,000.

This has allowed VOCAT to respond more quickly and effectively to victims of family violence in particular. Many of these applicants are at risk of further violence and require urgent assistance to improve their security, such as new locks or security alarms at their homes. Some must leave their homes and incur relocation or accommodation expenses. In some cases, magistrates are able to make family violence protection orders and then, sitting as VOCAT members and using the evidence they heard in the intervention order application, make urgent awards of financial assistance.

Timely hearings

We continued to list matters for hearing according to the Chief Magistrate's listings protocol, which promotes consistency and timeliness in our listing practices. This means we aim to list hearings:

- ▶ within six to ten weeks of a VOCAT member deciding to conduct a hearing or
- ▶ where an applicant asks for a hearing, within six to 10 weeks of the applicant advising that they have filed all their supporting material, and VOCAT is satisfied that all relevant material has been filed.

Extension of time applications

This financial year the Tribunal has incorporated its extension of time process required in applications filed more than two years from the date of incident, into its application for financial assistance form. This has streamlined the application process and removed the requirement to file a separate application substantiating the reasons for filing outside of time.

Improving access

VOCAT provides registry services at all of Victoria's 51 Magistrates' Court venues, making it accessible to applicants across the state. Members conduct hearings at these venues so that, in most cases, applicants do not have to travel far. In some matters such as in the Koori VOCAT list, we are also exploring the use of non-Court venues to make VOCAT hearings even more accessible, and considering how to best meet the needs of VOCAT applicants within our existing Court venues.

Set out below are some of the ways in which we improved accessibility to VOCAT in the reporting period:

Online Applications

The Tribunal launched a new online application on 29 September 2014. Applications for financial assistance can now be completed and filed via the Tribunal's website by clicking the 'Apply Now' link on our website's homepage.



797 ONLINE APPLICATIONS, UP BY 161%.

In addition to many other benefits, the form is designed to be user friendly and easy to complete. It contains electronic filters and rules within it to ensure that only questions relevant to a victim's application type are displayed and all required fields are accurately completed. The online application also provides relevant applicants with information regarding the requirements for matters not reported to police and applications for extension of time, and enables supporting documents to be uploaded throughout the application process.

The program allows users to create a 'log-in' enabling them to save incomplete applications as well as maintain a list of all submitted applications for regular users such as legal practitioners. The form is mobile-device-compatible so can be used on a smart phone or tablet which means it can be accessed anywhere and at any time.

Upon submission, electronic applications are filed instantly with the appropriate venue of the Tribunal and an email confirmation is sent to the applicant and their legal representative (if applicable) enclosing a copy of the application and further information regarding the application for assistance.

At the conclusion of this reporting period the Tribunal had received 797 on-line applications, marking a significant 161% increase in applications, filed online by both legal practitioners and unrepresented applicants from various regional and metropolitan locations across the state.

Removal of verification by statutory declaration

On 2 May 2016 the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* was amended to remove the requirement for an application to the Tribunal to be verified by way of statutory declaration. This has streamlined the Tribunal's online application process, resulting in an immediate rise in the number of applications received on-line. The months of May and June 2016 saw an average of 121 applications filed on-line where the monthly average prior to this statutory change was 55 applications. The removal of the statutory declaration requirement also makes it easier for applicants who are not legally represented to access the Tribunal by removing the requirement to have their application verified before an appropriate professional.

Promoting electronic correspondence

The Tribunal at Melbourne has changed its correspondence and procedures this financial year to promote and increase filing of correspondence via email, reducing delays associated with the use of ordinary postal mail. Practitioners are encouraged to utilise generic email addresses provided in the acknowledgement letter sent by Registry upon receipt of an application form.

Legal and other professional help for applicants

Access to justice for victims of crime is of paramount importance, and VOCAT generally pays for victims' legal representation. In the reporting period, we amended the Legal Costs Guideline (Guideline 1 of 2016), increasing the amount we can award to legal practitioners who represent VOCAT applicants. It is hoped this increase will recognise and encourage high quality legal services for victims of crime.

Lawyers are not the only professionals who help victims of crime to access VOCAT. The Government-funded Victims Assistance Program, and non-government counselling services, also play a role. This reporting period, we worked with the Department of Justice and other stakeholders in reviewing and considering issues related to how victim counselling services are regulated. As much as possible, we want to promote consistent ethical and professional standards for counsellors and health professionals assisting victims of crime to access VOCAT.

VOCAT website

To improve access to information regarding VOCAT, the Tribunal has commenced a project redeveloping its website this financial year. The new site will improve upon current online functions and ensure our website is more responsive to use on mobile devices.

Changing the way we communicate

The first step in ensuring VOCAT's accessibility is ensuring people are aware of us. This means plain language information about VOCAT must be available to assist applicants to access, understand and navigate through VOCAT's practices and procedures. In the reporting period, we continued to review all VOCAT's written information and change our correspondence in an effort to better inform applicants and their lawyers about the progress of their applications.

Contributing to our community

In 2015/16, we continued to contribute to the community we serve by working with our stakeholders, strengthening our public presence, and educating people about our processes. Below are some examples.

Working with our stakeholders

We meet regularly with the Victims Support Agency, Department of Justice and Regulation and Victoria Police to discuss policy and system issues and initiatives. This helps to ensure that we continue to provide an integrated response to victims of crime.

Supervising magistrates contributed to ongoing discussions with the Department of Justice policy-makers about issues affecting victims of crime.

Legal and community education

We increased our use of web-based education resources in the reporting period. We publish on our website VCAT decisions that we consider important. Being publicly available, practitioners can use them to guide their preparation of VOCAT applications.

Tribunal Members and Registrars state-wide regularly attend at or present at relevant community engagement forums, Victim Support Agency and Victim Assistance Program training and events such as Victim Awareness Week. During this reporting period the Tribunal's standard and compliance officer has also facilitated training for the Funds in Court office of the Supreme Court who administer the Tribunal's trust awards and also attended several CASA locations to facilitate information sessions.

The Tribunal is also included in Victoria Police's recruit curriculum, facilitating regular VOCAT training sessions with recruits who visit the Melbourne Magistrates' Court as part of their program at the Victorian Police Academy.

Victims of Crime Consultative Committee

Supervising Magistrate Andrew Capell is a member of the Victims of Crime Consultative Committee which has been set up by the Attorney-General to, among other things, provide a forum for victims of crime and relevant justice and victim service agencies to discuss victims' policies, practices and service delivery and to promote the interests of victims in the administration of justice.

The future

The Tribunal will be responsive to recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence and the Royal Commission into Institutional Abuse of Children. This has the potential to dramatically affect the scope and resourcing of the Tribunal. We also anticipate more complex applications as new laws come into effect dealing with different ways crimes can be committed against the person, for example, cyber-crime and assorted amendments to the Crimes Act.

To ensure we remain accessible and responsive to victims of crime, we will continue to build on this year's initiatives, including:

- ▶ improving how we communicate with victims and legal representatives by reviewing the method, form and content of standard correspondence
 - ▶ continued improvement of external communications
 - ▶ continued professional development and training of Tribunal Members, Judicial Registrars and Registry staff
 - ▶ continue with the redevelopment of the Tribunal's website to improve online accessibility of the Tribunal's information and application form
 - ▶ reviewing processes and legislation in light of recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence in an attempt to increase access to the Tribunal and enhance our services to victims of crime
 - ▶ reviewing the delegation to our Registrars in an attempt to decrease the number of interim applications that require decision by a judicial officer
- ▶ supporting the professionalism of lawyers and other service providers who work with victims of crime
 - ▶ improve arrangements for the management of funds for adults under disability
 - ▶ refining and improving case management processes



Managing VOCAT

A Principal Registrar, Standards and Compliance Officer, and staff across 51 venues throughout Victoria all support VOCAT's goal of providing a timely, empathetic, informal and cost-effective service. Our Coordinating Committee is dedicated to continually improving our performance, including investing in professional development for all members, registrars and staff. This promotes a consistent, compassionate and responsive approach to the needs of victims of crime.

Our Coordinating Committee

VOCAT's Coordinating Committee drives many of the initiatives aimed at improving VOCAT's operation, increasing our community presence, and contributing to positive outcomes for victims of crime.

To support consistency across venues, the Coordinating Committee also regularly reviews the Chief Magistrate's Practice Directions and Guidelines. The Committee makes recommendations to the Chief Magistrate for the issue of new Practice Directions and Guidelines where necessary.

Committee Members

Supervising Magistrate Jo Metcalf chairs the Coordinating Committee. Its members this reporting period included:

- ▶ Supervising Magistrate, VOCAT, Andrew Capell
- ▶ Deputy Chief Magistrates Daniel Muling, Felicity Broughton and Lance Martin
- ▶ Magistrates Amanda Chambers, Susan Wakeling, Duncan Reynolds, Ann Collins, Catherine Lamble, David Fanning, Carolene Gwynn and Timothy Bourke
- ▶ Judicial Registrar, Sharon McRae
- ▶ VOCAT Principal Registrar, Rod Ratcliffe; Standards and Compliance Officer, Donna Caruana and Melbourne VOCAT Registry Manager, Sandra Tennant.

Having decision makers as well as those who manage the administrative functions of VOCAT on the Committee promotes consistency between members and registrars, and takes into account issues affecting them.

Committee Initiatives

The VOCAT Coordinating Committee met on a monthly basis over the reporting period and considered a range of issues, including:

- ▶ the Magistrates' Court submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence
- ▶ of the inclusion of VOCAT training in Victoria Police academy curriculum
- ▶ the review of the Tribunal's panel of independent dentists
- ▶ a review of the tribunal's management of subpoenas

- ▶ preparation of submission to the Victorian Law Reform Commission's Victims of Crime Consultation paper
- ▶ preparation of submission on Victorian Redress Scheme for institutional Child abuse
- ▶ review of the Tribunal's application form and legislative change to remove the requirement for an application to be verified by way of statutory declaration
- ▶ review of appropriate counsellor qualifications and fee guidelines
- ▶ monitoring the progress of the Tribunal's eManagement project
- ▶ review of the delegation to registrars to make interim awards of financial assistance
- ▶ continued monitoring of the delegation of VOCAT cases to judicial registrars
- ▶ ongoing oversight of the Koori VOCAT List
- ▶ endorsement and publication of amended guidelines and practice directions for:
 - Legal Costs
 - Applications for extension of time
 - Counselling fees
 - Funeral expenses
- ▶ considering the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal's (VCAT's) reviews of VOCAT decisions to ensure that Tribunal members are informed of relevant decisions and that decisions that are of sufficient interest are placed on the VOCAT website
- ▶ discussing professional development and training events for magistrates and registrars
- ▶ monitoring statistical information across venues regarding the number of applications for assistance lodged and determined, awards of assistance made (including interim awards), and the amount of assistance awarded
- ▶ undertaking a review of legal publications and information guides to ensure plain language information about the Tribunal is available to assist applicants, the victim support network and wider community to access, understand and navigate through the Tribunal's practices and procedures
- ▶ reviewing and amending correspondence generated by the Tribunal's case management system to victims and agents to better inform them of the progress, requirements and outcomes of their application before the Tribunal
- ▶ discussing issues arising from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires

Members of the Committee participated in:

- ▶ the provision of materials and information sessions about VOCAT for new magistrates
- ▶ the provision of VOCAT training for new judicial registrars
- ▶ continuing professional development and information sessions for staff of the Victims Assistance Program
- ▶ liaison with the Aboriginal Victims of Crime Coordinator at the Victims Support Agency and with the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service
- ▶ regular meetings with the Victims Support Agency to discuss issues relating to services to victims of crime

Consistency and Responsiveness

Apart from working on initiatives, the Committee also monitors VOCAT's activities, keeping up-to-date with trends in application numbers and awards of assistance. It promotes exchange of information with stakeholders and plays a major role in the professional development of Tribunal members and staff. This helps to ensure consistent decision-making across VOCAT. It also helps VOCAT remain responsive to the needs of victims of crime and to prioritise issues according to areas of need.

Ways in which the Committee contributed to responsiveness and consistency include:

- ▶ contributing to the ongoing professional development of Tribunal members, including presenting a session of the Court's Professional Development day
- ▶ familiarising new magistrates and Judicial Registrars with VOCAT, including providing information sessions and maintaining a judicial induction manual
- ▶ contributing to the VOCAT Practice Page on the Judicial College of Victoria website
- ▶ reviewing and publishing relevant VCAT and Court of Appeal decisions on our website
- ▶ reviewing and updating Tribunal Guidelines and Practice Directions



Principal Registrar's Message

A Broader Approach

Principal Registrar of VOCAT, Rod Ratcliffe is admitted to practice as an Australian Lawyer and has worked in courts for 12 years.

Assisting victims is a privilege. The assistance we provide as a Tribunal is an integral part of a much bigger support system. Support agencies, psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors, police, doctors, dentists, service providers and countless others are all working together to give victims the greatest chance to recover from their injuries in a timely fashion and with dignity.

One of my roles is to maintain strong relationships with each of the separate pieces of the assistance puzzle. I was fortunate enough to be asked to present information about VOCAT at the Victims Awareness Week conferences in Dandenong and Mildura. I have also spoken to different groups of support workers, in particular those dealing with victims of domestic violence. I am also a member of the newly established Victims Services Coordination Network which, among other things, aims to improve communication and coordination between the separate service providers.

Some victims require assistance in several ways. The Tribunal is keenly aware that, in order to obtain such assistance from the various sources, these victims are required to tell their story to each new service they encounter. It can be understandably traumatic to repeat this information over and over.

One of the longer term goals of the Tribunal is therefore to develop processes and technologies that allow us to share information between agencies to not only improve efficiency but to ensure that the victim's experience is seamless. We would like to see a "no wrong door" policy across all agencies. Whether a victim's first contact is with a support agency, the family division of the Magistrates' Court or us at VOCAT, we would hope that appropriate referrals could be made to each other service and that information already provided could be used by each other agency obviously with the consent of the victim at every stage.

These goals are consistent with the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence. I am pleased to see that a groundswell of action and communication has begun that will facilitate a collaborative and holistic response to these recommendations. It is my aim to ensure that VOCAT take an active leadership role in affecting such change.



**25 FUNDED REGISTRY
POSITIONS ACROSS
VICTORIA, UP BY 4.1%.**

Our Registry

VOCAT's principal registry is located within the Melbourne Magistrates' Court; however, every Magistrates' Court venue in Victoria provides registry services that help applicants to access VOCAT. The registry functions as the Tribunal's public interface and administrative hub, helping it to operate in a more responsive, integrated and efficient manner.

At 30 June 2016, the Tribunal funded 25 registry positions across Victoria and was further supported by registrars and administrative staff of the Magistrates' Court.

The principal registry is staffed by the principal registrar, a standards and compliance officer, registry manager, six registrars, two trainee registrars and two finance officers.

VOCAT funds a full-time registrar at each of the following Magistrates' Court venues:

- ▶ Ballarat
- ▶ Bendigo
- ▶ Broadmeadows
- ▶ Dandenong
- ▶ Frankston
- ▶ Geelong
- ▶ Heidelberg
- ▶ Latrobe Valley
- ▶ Moorabbin
- ▶ Ringwood
- ▶ Shepparton
- ▶ Sunshine

Although one position is funded at each venue, registrars and finance officers funded from the Magistrates' Court operating budget provide significant additional support.

VOCAT Registrars

Registrars are the main points of contact for victims, providing procedural advice and support throughout the application process. Registrars also work closely with Tribunal members and judicial registrars. In most cases, the Registrars, who have been dealing with the file since it was initiated, review the content of the application and provide advice and recommendations to the Tribunal members regarding directions and awards.

Tribunal members and judicial registrars still retain full discretion in the making of awards but the work of the registrars provides a solid foundation upon which to make those decisions.

The functions of the Registrars includes:

- ▶ obtaining medical and psychological reports, police information about an alleged offence, criminal histories, and prosecution outcomes
- ▶ ensuring applicants file the documents needed to support their applications, and that the information provided is complete and comprehensible
- ▶ making sure applicants receive their awards of financial assistance
- ▶ providing administrative support in relation to applications for the variation of awards
- ▶ ensuring that each file is progressed as expeditiously as possible to ensure that applicants receive their awards in a timely manner
- ▶ answering a high volume of counter and telephone enquiries

Registrars also consider and determine most applications for interim financial assistance up to \$5000.

All Magistrates' Court registrars at Victorian Public Service Grade 3 or above are also VOCAT registrars. At this level, registrars have a wide range of knowledge and skills, developed through their work across a variety of Court jurisdictions. This equips them to deal with the often-challenging nature of VOCAT work.

At major Court venues, registrars perform VOCAT work for six to twelve months. The relevant legislation is complex, and it takes time to develop expertise in this area. VOCAT therefore benefits significantly from having dedicated registrars for extended durations. Registrars also gain valuable experience through their VOCAT work, which in turn benefits all Court jurisdictions.

Registrars and staff supporting VOCAT's operations are accountable through their respective regional managers to the Magistrates' Court of Victoria's Chief Executive Officer.





32,273 UNIQUE VISITS
TO OUR WEBSITE,
UP BY 17.3%

VOCAT Website

The Tribunal's current website (www.vocat.vic.gov.au) was redeveloped in 2011 and contains useful information, including:

- ▶ application forms and guides
- ▶ information about what VOCAT does
- ▶ links to victim support services and resources
- ▶ practice directions and guidelines
- ▶ publications such as reports and brochures and
- ▶ appeal decisions that VOCAT considers important

In late 2014 the website was updated to incorporate an online application form, increasing accessibility to the Tribunal.

This reporting period the Tribunal commenced a website redevelopment project to further enhance the resources available to victims of crime and practitioners online. The new website will not only provide a new look and feel for the Tribunal's online services but will also promote accessibility and responsiveness to modern technologies, making the website and online application form easy to use anywhere and at any time. The new website is expected to launch in October 2017.



This year the website received 32,273 unique visits, compared to 27,494 in the previous year. As with the previous year, the 'Application for Assistance form' was the most commonly downloaded publication/form. The current website also enables the content to be translated into over 70 languages, this reporting period the site was translated almost 300 times.

Professional Development

VOCAT's Coordinating Committee works closely with the Magistrates' Court Professional Development Committee. This ensure judicial registrars and magistrates are equipped for their roles as VOCAT decision-makers.

Because decision-makers have wide discretion under the Act, professional development is an important tool in maximising a level of consistency in their decision-making. Additionally, professional development days help keep VOCAT members – who are also magistrates, located across 51 Victorian Court venues – in touch with each other's practices. This allows them to benefit from the pool of available expertise, which also helps ensure high quality, consistent approaches.

VOCAT's supervising magistrates conduct information sessions on the Act for newly appointed magistrates and judicial registrars, and provide them with written materials and information about the VOCAT website and the Judicial College's VOCAT Practice Page.

Professional development in 2015/16 also included:

- ▶ Regular VOCAT registrar meetings, focusing on training to promote consistency. The meeting provides a forum to discuss current issues
- ▶ Reviewing and distributing to Tribunal members VCAT decisions in relation to appeals from VOCAT
- ▶ Publication of a Judicial Handbook as a reference tool for all judicial registrars and tribunal members inclusive of relevant legislation, papers written by magistrates for judicial decision-makers and other key tribunal resources.
- ▶ Publishing relevant papers and decisions on the VOCAT practice page on JOIN and
- ▶ Supervising Magistrates also presenting at Magistrate Professional Development days on various VOCAT topics.



Our Statistical Report

The tables on the following pages provide information about applicant demographics, awards of financial assistance made, appeals against VOCAT decisions, and case processing times.

TABLE 1: Summary – applications for assistance lodged, finalised and pending, 2013/14 to 2015/16

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Caseload			
Number applications lodged	5,722	6,053	6221
Number orders made finalising claims	6,611	6,113	5910
Number applications pending on 30 June	5,843	6,039	6757
Case processing times			
Proportion of applications finalised within 9 months of lodgement	50.0%	54.7%	47.6%
Proportion of applications finalised within 12 months of lodgement	65.2%	69.4%	62.9%
Age of pending caseload			
Proportion of applications pending for 9 months or more on 30 June	41.1%	39.6%	40.6%
Proportion of applications pending for 12 months or more on 30 June	31.8%	29.3%	31.3%

Applications lodged by applicant gender and category of crime

TABLE 2: Number of applications for financial assistance lodged by category of offence, and gender of applicant, 2015/16¹

	No. applications			Distribution %		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Homicide	222	268	490	45.3%	54.7%	7.9%
Rape	20	253	273	7.3%	92.7%	4.4%
sex (non-rape)	192	672	864	22.2%	77.8%	13.9%
robbery	197	116	313	62.9%	37.1%	5.0%
assault	1637	1455	3092	52.9%	47.1%	49.7%
abduction/kidnap	13	22	35	37.1%	62.9%	0.6%
Criminal damage by fire	9	9	18	50.0%	50.0%	0.3%
Burglary	187	236	423	44.2%	55.8%	6.8%
Harassment	27	91	118	22.9%	77.1%	1.9%
Family Violence ²	78	310	388	20.1%	79.9%	6.2%
Other	76	131	207	36.7%	63.3%	3.3%
Total	2658	3563	6221	42.7%	57.3%	100.0%

Outcome of finalised applications

TABLE 3: Number of orders made upon final determination of applications for financial assistance, by order type, 2013/14-2015/16

	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Application granted/award made	4755	71.9%	4462	73.0%	4161	70.4%
Application refused	229	3.5%	131	2.1%	105	1.8%
Application struck out/withdrawn	1627	24.6%	1518	24.8%	1644	27.8%
Other disposal	0	0.0%	2	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	6611	100.0%	6113	100.0%	5910	100.0%

1 The acts of violence for applicants have been grouped according to the broad offence categories used by Victoria Police in reporting crime statistics.

2 Family Violence was added to the case management system part way through the financial year so the numbers do not represent a full year of capturing this data.

TABLE 4: Number of awards of financial assistance made upon final determination of applications for assistance, by award type, 2013/14-2015/16

Award Type	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Primary victim award	4106	86.4%	3740	83.8%	3577	86.0%
Secondary victim award	269	5.7%	296	6.6%	287	6.9%
Related victim award	365	7.7%	410	9.2%	289	6.9%
Award for funeral expenses only	2	0.0%	4	0.1%	3	0.1%
Award made under <i>Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 1983</i>	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%
Other	12	0.3%	12	0.3%	4	0.1%
Total	4755	100%	4462	100%	4161	100%

TABLE 5: Number of awards of financial assistance made, by age and gender of awarded applicants, 2015/16

Age at Award	No applications			Distribution %		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0 – 18 years	224	242	466	48.1%	51.9%	11.2%
19 – 25 years	264	229	493	53.5%	46.5%	11.8%
26 – 35 years	358	325	683	52.4%	47.6%	16.4%
36 – 60 years	637	557	1194	53.4%	46.6%	28.7%
61 years +	105	107	212	49.5%	50.5%	5.1%
Unknown	269	844	1113	24.2%	75.8%	26.7%
Total	1857	2304	4161	44.6%	55.4%	100.0%

TABLE 6: Number of awards of assistance made by category of offence and gender of awarded applicant, 2015/16

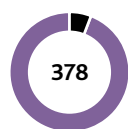
	No applications			Distribution %		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Homicide	148	181	329	45.0%	55.0%	7.9%
Rape	23	160	183	12.6%	87.4%	4.4%
sex (non-rape)	124	538	662	18.7%	81.3%	15.9%
robbery	136	104	240	56.7%	43.3%	5.8%
assault	1215	946	2161	56.2%	43.8%	51.9%
abduction/kidnap	12	17	29	41.4%	58.6%	0.7%
Criminal damage by fire	2	5	7	28.6%	71.4%	0.2%
Burglary	105	144	249	42.2%	57.8%	6.0%
Harassment	13	59	72	18.1%	81.9%	1.7%
Family Violence	20	93	113	17.7%	82.3%	2.7%
Other	56	60	116	48.3%	51.7%	2.8%
Total	1854	2307	4161	44.6%	55.4%	100.0%

TABLE 7: Number of applications for assistance lodged, final orders and awards made by Tribunal region, 2015/16

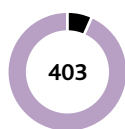
Region: **BARWON SOUTH WEST**

Tribunal venues within region:	Colac	Geelong	Hamilton	Portland	Warrnambool
Applications Lodged	14	232	27	21	84
Final Orders Made	27	243	26	27	80
Awards Made	19	183	22	17	51

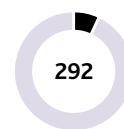
Barwon South West Totals



Applications Lodged
6.1% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



Final Orders Made
6.8% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



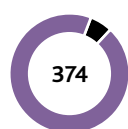
Awards Made
7% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL

Region: **BROADMEADOWS**

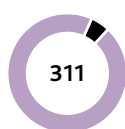
Tribunal venues within region: Broadmeadows

Applications Lodged	374
Final Orders Made	311
Awards Made	229

Broadmeadows Totals



Applications Lodged
6% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



Final Orders Made
5.3% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



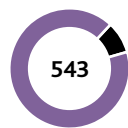
Awards Made
5.5% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL

Region: **DANDENONG**

Tribunal venues within region: Dandenong

Applications Lodged	543
Final Orders Made	492
Awards Made	323

Dandenong Totals



Applications Lodged
8.7% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



Final Orders Made
8.3% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL

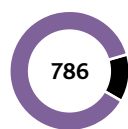


Awards Made
7.8% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL

Region: **FRANKSTON**

Tribunal venues within region:	Dromana	Frankston	Moorabbin
Applications Lodged	139	401	246
Final Orders Made	108	341	262
Awards Made	76	246	165

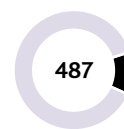
Frankston Totals



Applications Lodged
12.6% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



Final Orders Made
12% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



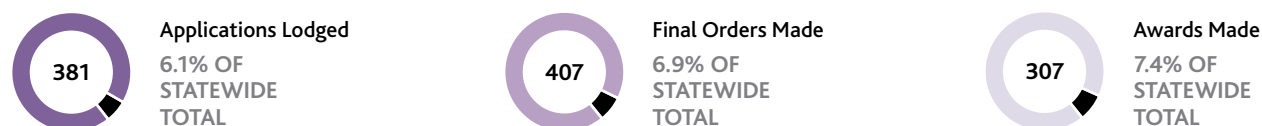
Awards Made
11.7% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL

TABLE 7: Number of applications for assistance lodged, final orders and awards made by Tribunal region, 2015/16 (continued)

Region: GIPPSLAND

Tribunal venues within region:	Bairnsdale	Korumburra	Latrobe Valley	Sale	Wonthaggi
Applications Lodged	52	49	222	49	9
Final Orders Made	55	35	248	54	15
Awards Made	44	26	196	28	13

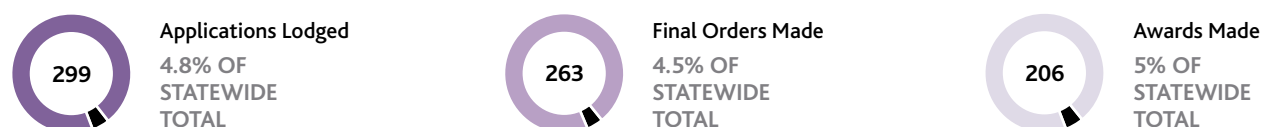
Gippsland Totals



Region: GRAMPIANS

Tribunal venues within region:	Ararat	Ballarat	Horsham	St Arnaud	Stawell
Applications Lodged	20	244	30	5	0
Final Orders Made	19	214	26	2	2
Awards Made	15	169	18	2	2

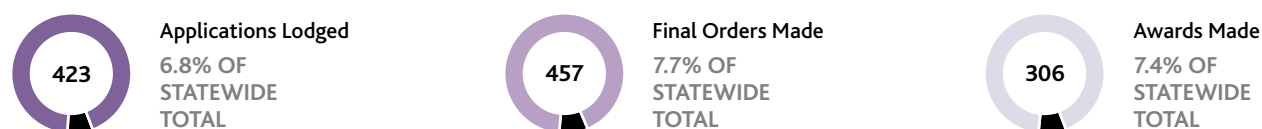
Grampians Totals



Region: HEIDELBERG

Tribunal venues within region:	Heidelberg
Applications Lodged	423
Final Orders Made	457
Awards Made	306

Heidelberg Totals



Region: HUME

Tribunal venues within region:	Benalla	Mansfield	Cobram	Seymour	Shepparton	Wangaratta	Wodonga
Applications Lodged	46	2	2	39	146	36	52
Final Orders Made	39	2	2	44	116	46	63
Awards Made	21	2	2	28	73	31	36

Hume Totals

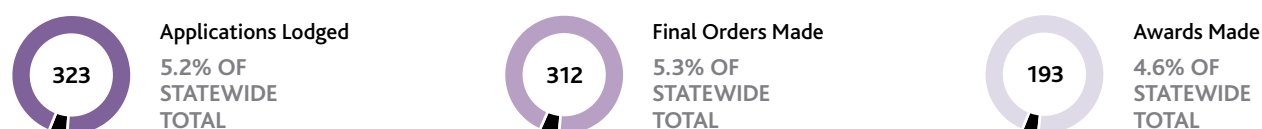


TABLE 7: Number of applications for assistance lodged, final orders and awards made by Tribunal region, 2015/16 (continued)

Region: **LODDEN MALLEE**

Tribunal venues within region:	Bendigo	Castlemaine	Echuca	Kerang	Kyneton	Maryborough	Mildura	Swanhill
Applications Lodged	147	6	25	9	36	15	54	26
Final Orders Made	115	13	39	9	40	16	42	30
Awards Made	93	9	22	5	29	15	32	19

Lodden Mallee Totals



Applications Lodged
318
5.1% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



Final Orders Made
304
5.1% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



Awards Made
224
5.4% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL

Region: **MELBOURNE**

Tribunal venues within region:	Melbourne	Koori List
Applications Lodged	1093	238
Final Orders Made	1075	217
Awards Made	766	116

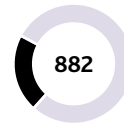
Melbourne Totals



Applications Lodged
1331
21.4% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



Final Orders Made
1292
21.9% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL

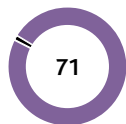


Awards Made
882
21.2% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL

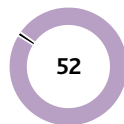
Region: **NEIGHBOURHOOD JUSTICE CENTRE**

Tribunal venues within region:	Collingwood
Applications Lodged	71
Final Orders Made	52
Awards Made	37

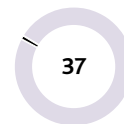
Neighbourhood Justice Centre Totals



Applications Lodged
71
1.1% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



Final Orders Made
52
0.9% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL

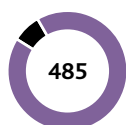


Awards Made
37
0.9% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL

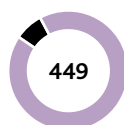
Region: **RINGWOOD**

Tribunal venues within region:	Ringwood
Applications Lodged	485
Final Orders Made	449
Awards Made	331

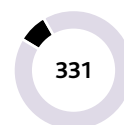
Ringwood Totals



Applications Lodged
485
7.8% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



Final Orders Made
449
7.6% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL



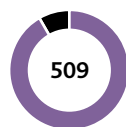
Awards Made
331
8% OF
STATEWIDE
TOTAL

TABLE 7: Number of applications for assistance lodged, final orders and awards made by Tribunal region, 2015/16 (continued)

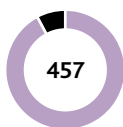
Region: **SUNSHINE**

Tribunal venues within region:	Sunshine	Werribee
Applications Lodged	345	164
Final Orders Made	311	146
Awards Made	230	114

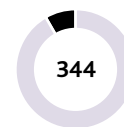
Sunshine Totals



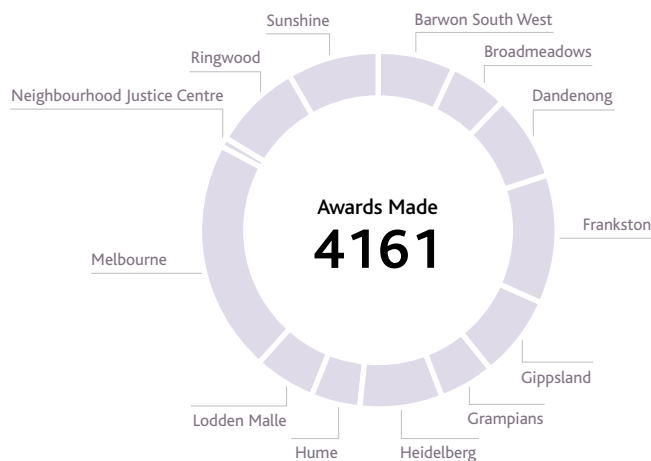
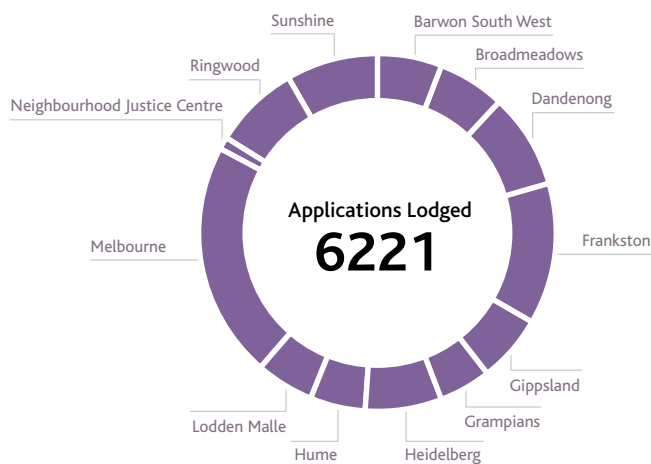
Applications Lodged
8.2% OF STATEWIDE TOTAL



Final Orders Made
7.7% OF STATEWIDE TOTAL



Awards Made
8.3% OF STATEWIDE TOTAL



Financial assistance awarded and legal costs³

TABLE 8: Total amount of financial assistance awarded and legal costs ordered (interim, final determination, by variation and on review), 2013/14-2015/16

	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	
Financial assistance	\$42,315,273	88.4%	\$42,138,270	88.6%	\$41,151,633	89.0%
Legal costs	\$5,542,800	11.6%	\$5,399,559	11.4%	\$5,095,278	11.0%
Total	\$47,858,073	100%	\$47,537,829	100%	\$46,246,911	100%

TABLE 9: Total amount of financial assistance awarded, 2013/14-2015/16

	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	
Financial assistance for expenses already incurred and lump sum payments (special financial assistance, distress, loss of earnings)	\$32,019,820	75.9%	\$31,991,639	75.9%	\$29,870,250	72.6%
Financial assistance for expenses not yet incurred	\$10,188,944	24.1%	\$10,146,631	24.1%	\$11,281,383	27.4%
Total	\$42,208,764	100%	\$42,138,270	100%	\$41,151,633	100%

TABLE 10: Total amount of financial assistance awarded by assistance type, and legal costs ordered, 2015/16

Assistance Type	Interim Award	Final Award	Award on Variation	Award on Review	Total	
					Total \$	as %
Special financial assistance	\$17,150	\$10,330,334	\$28,650	\$10,650	\$10,386,784	22.5%
Pain and suffering	\$0	\$20,000	\$0	\$0	\$20,000	0.0%
Distress	\$15,000	\$5,018,831	\$17,200	\$0	\$5,051,031	10.9%
Funeral expenses	\$473,132	\$59,255	\$0	\$0	\$532,387	1.2%
Loss of earnings	\$108,265	\$2,987,028	\$291,180	\$0	\$3,386,473	7.3%
Dependency	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Loss/damage to clothing	\$4,518	\$118,505	\$1,236	\$0	\$124,259	0.3%
Counselling/ psychological/ psychiatric reports	\$750,887	\$835,833	\$107,818	\$0	\$1,694,538	3.7%
Counselling sessions	\$2,862,612	\$3,625,803	\$976,439	\$430	\$7,465,284	16.1%
Medical expenses	\$426,137	\$2,393,885	\$702,847	\$6,293	\$3,529,162	7.6%
Other expenses to assist recovery	\$293,505	\$5,289,203	\$1,126,159	\$6,289	\$6,715,156	14.5%
Safety Related Expenses	\$368,017	\$1,708,469	\$170,073	\$0	\$2,246,559	4.9%
Subtotal	\$5,319,223	\$32,387,146	\$3,421,602	\$23,662	\$41,151,633	89.0%
Legal Costs	\$0	\$4,937,677	\$146,216	\$11,385	\$5,095,278	11.0%
Total	\$5,319,223	\$37,324,823	\$3,567,818	\$35,047	\$46,246,911	100%

³ Individual figures shown for amounts of financial assistance have been rounded to the nearest dollar.

TABLE 11: Amount of financial assistance awarded as a lump sum payment and for *expenses already incurred*, by type of assistance, 2015/16

Assistance Type	Interim Award	Final Award	Award on Variation	Award on Review	Total	
					Total \$	as %
Special financial assistance	\$17,150	\$10,330,334	\$28,650	\$10,650	\$10,386,784	34.8%
Pain and suffering		\$20,000	\$0		\$20,000	0.1%
Distress	\$15,000	\$5,018,831	\$17,200		\$5,051,031	16.9%
Funeral expenses	\$433,623	\$55,539	\$0		\$489,162	1.6%
Loss of earnings	\$108,265	\$2,987,028	\$291,180		\$3,386,473	11.3%
Dependency	\$0	\$0	\$0		\$0	0.0%
Loss/damage to clothing	\$2,169	\$111,023	\$1,146		\$114,338	0.4%
Counselling/ psychological/ psychiatric reports	\$750,887	\$835,833	\$107,818		\$1,694,538	5.7%
Counselling sessions	\$416,067	\$1,168,313	\$433,908	\$430	\$2,018,718	6.8%
Medical expenses	\$213,181	\$1,405,819	\$359,286	\$6,293	\$1,984,579	6.6%
Other expenses to assist recovery	\$67,845	\$2,778,398	\$686,203		\$3,532,446	11.8%
Safety Related Expenses	\$63,389	\$1,022,150	\$106,642		\$1,192,181	4.0%
Total	\$2,087,576	\$25,733,268	\$2,032,033	\$17,373	\$29,870,250	100%

TABLE 12: Amount of financial assistance awarded for *expenses not yet incurred*, by type of assistance, 2015/16

Assistance Type	Interim Award	Final Award	Award on Variation	Award on Review	Total	
					Total \$	as %
Counselling sessions	\$2,446,545	\$2,457,490	\$542,531		\$5,446,566	48.3%
Medical expenses	\$212,956	\$988,066	\$343,561		\$1,544,583	13.7%
Loss/damage to clothing	\$2,349	\$7,482	\$90		\$9,921	0.1%
Other expenses to assist recovery	\$225,660	\$2,510,805	\$439,956	\$6,289	\$3,182,710	28.2%
Funeral expenses	\$39,509	\$3,716	\$0		\$43,225	0.4%
Safety related	\$304,628	\$686,319	\$63,431		\$1,054,378	9.3%
Total	\$3,231,647	\$6,653,878	\$1,389,569	\$6,289	\$11,281,383	100.0%

TABLE 13: Number of final awards of financial assistance made, and average amount of financial assistance awarded on final determination, 2013/14-2015/16

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of awards of financial assistance made	4,755	4462	4161
Amount of financial assistance awarded	\$34,883,120	\$34,094,333	\$32,387,146
Average amount of financial assistance awarded	\$7,336	\$7,641	\$7,784

TABLE 14: Number of primary victims awarded special financial assistance and amount awarded on determination of application, by category, 2013/14-2015/16

	Number			Distribution		
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of primary victims who were awarded special financial assistance by category						
Category A	863	758	745	21.6%	20.9%	21.5%
Category B	846	819	791	21.2%	22.6%	22.9%
Category C	1484	1314	1237	37.2%	36.2%	35.8%
Category D	796	735	686	20.0%	20.3%	19.8%
Total	3989	3626	3459	100%	100.0%	100.0%
Amount of special financial assistance awarded by category						
Category A	\$7,061,873	\$6,213,672	\$6,033,254	59.9%	57.9%	58.1%
Category B	\$2,412,352	\$2,425,305	\$2,377,000	20.4%	22.6%	22.9%
Category C	\$1,828,258	\$1,633,466	\$1,538,310	15.5%	15.2%	14.8%
Category D	\$495,705	\$454,913	\$427,570	4.2%	4.2%	4.1%
Total	\$11,798,188	\$10,727,356	\$10,386,784	100%	100.0%	100%
Average amount of special financial assistance awarded by category						
Category A	\$8,183	\$8,197	\$8,098			
Category B	\$2,851	\$2,961	\$3,005			
Category C	\$1,232	\$1,243	\$1,244			
Category D	\$623	\$619	\$623			
Total	\$2,958	\$2,958	\$3,003			

TABLE 15: Number of related victims awarded financial assistance for distress and amount awarded on final determination, 2013/14-2015/16

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of related victims who were awarded financial assistance for distress	360	404	290
Amount of financial assistance awarded to related victims for distress on determination of application	\$6,566,576	\$7,350,793	\$5,051,030
Average amount of financial assistance awarded to related victims for distress	\$18,240	\$18,195	\$17,417.34

TABLE 16: Amount of legal costs ordered to be paid on the final determination of applications for financial assistance, and average legal costs ordered, 2013/14-2015/16

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of awards of financial assistance made	4,755	4462	4161
Amount ordered to be paid for legal costs	\$5,383,380	\$5,210,758	\$4,937,677
Average amount of legal costs ordered to be paid per awarded applicant	\$1,132	\$1,168	\$1,187

Interim financial assistance

TABLE 17: Number of interim awards of financial assistance made where financial assistance was awarded for expenses already incurred, and amount awarded 2013/14-2015/16

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of interim awards of assistance made by Tribunal members	893	1099	1152
Number of interim awards of assistance made by judicial registrars	223	259	267
Number of interim awards of assistance made by registrars	411	541	728
Total number of interim awards of assistance made for expenses already incurred	1,527	1899	2147
Proportion of interim awards made by registrars	26.9%	28.5%	33.9%
Amount of interim financial assistance awarded for expenses already incurred	\$1,521,765	\$1,953,921	\$2,087,576
Average amount of interim financial assistance awarded for expenses already incurred	\$997	\$1,029	\$972

TABLE 18: Number of interim awards of financial assistance made where financial assistance was awarded for expenses not yet incurred, and amount awarded, 2013/14-2015/16

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of interim awards of assistance made by Tribunal members	604	822	924
Number of interim awards of assistance made by judicial registrars	134	146	174
Number of interim awards of assistance made by registrars	347	439	540
Total number of interim awards of assistance made for expenses not yet incurred	1,085	1,407	1,638
Proportion of interim awards made by registrars	32.0%	31.2%	33.0%
Amount of interim financial assistance awarded for expenses not yet incurred	\$1,950,097	\$2,546,763	\$3,231,647
Average amount of interim financial assistance awarded for expenses not yet incurred	\$1,797	\$1,810	\$1,973

Variation of awards

TABLE 19: Number of awards of financial assistance varied to award financial assistance for expenses already incurred, and average amount of financial assistance awarded, 2013/14-2015/16

	2013/14	2014/15	2014/15
Number of awards varied to award further financial assistance for expenses already incurred	1,030	936	986
Amount of financial assistance awarded on variation for expenses already incurred	\$2,507,806	\$2,135,858	\$2,025,508
Average amount of financial assistance awarded on variation for expenses already incurred	\$2,435	\$2,282	\$2,054

TABLE 20: Number of awards of financial assistance varied to award financial assistance for expenses not yet incurred, and average amount of financial assistance awarded, 2013/14-2015/16

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number of awards varied to award further financial assistance for expenses not yet incurred	542	602	588
Amount of financial assistance awarded on variation for expenses not yet incurred	\$1,386,277	\$1,379,370	\$1,389,569
Average amount of financial assistance awarded on variation for expenses not yet incurred	\$2,558	\$2,291	\$2,363

Applications for review of decisions

TABLE 21: Number of applications for review finalised by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, by outcome, 2013/14-2015/16

	2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	
Outcome						
Original order/award set aside and new award made on review	5	17.9%	6	33.3%	3	27.3%
Award varied on review	2	7.1%	1	5.6%	0	0.0%
Order affirmed on review	9	32.1%	3	16.7%	1	9.1%
Application for assistance remitted to original decision-maker for determination	3	10.7%	4	22.2%	1	9.1%
Application for review dismissed	1	3.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Application for review struck out / withdrawn / abandoned	8	28.6%	4	22.2%	6	54.5%
Total	28	100%	18	100.0%	11	100.0%

TABLE 22: Number of awards of financial assistance made or varied by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal on review, and average amount of financial assistance awarded on review, 2013/14-2015/16

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Number awards of assistance made or varied on review	7	7	3
Amount of financial assistance awarded on review	\$66,208	\$28,025	\$23,662
Average amount of financial assistance awarded on review	\$9,458	\$4,004	\$7,887



Our Financial Report

This year, VOCAT continues to operate as efficiently as possible. This is a challenge in the current environment, where there has been significant increase in demand.

Funding source

The Consolidated Fund of the State of Victoria pays for VOCAT's operating costs. The amounts of financial assistance that the Tribunal awards are also paid out of the Consolidated Fund, which is appropriated to the necessary extent.⁴

Financial assistance paid

In the year ending 30 June 2016, the Tribunal paid a total amount of \$36,157,242 (compared to \$39,425,694 in the previous year). This amount comprises financial assistance paid to victims of crime and fees for service providers and legal practitioners. It represents actual payments made in the reporting period. It therefore does not include amounts relating to awards made in the current or previous reporting periods that were not paid in the current reporting period. Neither does it include financial assistance awarded for expenses not yet incurred or not used by applicants.

⁴ Section 69(1) of the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996*



**TRIBUNAL'S
OPERATING COST
DOWN BY 0.4%.**

Operating costs

In the year ending 30 June 2016, VOCAT's operating costs were \$2,841,031 compared to \$2,853,810 in the previous year (a decrease of 0.4 per cent, compared to our 2.5 per cent increase in the previous reporting period).

VOCAT's operating costs are kept low as a result of:

- ▶ being accommodated within Magistrates' Court venues
- ▶ having magistrates as decision-makers and
- ▶ being supported by Magistrates' Court registrars.

The Magistrates' Court therefore absorbs a large proportion of VOCAT's operating costs, including magistrates' salaries⁵, infrastructure costs and corporate service expenses (such as human resource and finance functions).

Salaries and employee-related expenses for Tribunal-funded positions comprise most of VOCAT's operating costs. The balance is made up of expenses associated with the Tribunal's legal costs, training and development, and a contribution to the Magistrates' Court for infrastructure costs such as rent and property services, utilities, repairs and maintenance, postage and communication, and stationery.

Average cost per finalised claim

In the year ending 30 June 2016, the average cost per finalised application for financial assistance was \$481 compared to \$467 in the previous year. This represents an increase of 3% following the previous year's increase of 10.9%. There has been a decrease in the number of finalised claims which has led to an increase in the average cost of finalised claims. It is worth noting however that the Principal Registrar and his staff have managed to reduce the overall operational expenditure during the financial year. This is largely due to a closer management of professional legal costs in review matters.

It should be noted that the cost per finalised claim does not factor in expenses met by the Magistrates' Court operating budget, such as corporate services and magistrates' salaries. The figures therefore do not accurately reflect the true costs of VOCAT's operations.

⁵ Clause 10 of Schedule 1 to the *Magistrates' Court Act 1989* provides that the salaries, allowances and benefits payable to magistrates are to be paid out of the Consolidated Fund.

Financial Statement for year ending 30 June 2016

	Note	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Special Appropriations	1			
Salaries, Overtime & Ann. Leave		\$1,606,799	\$1,610,597	\$1,673,302
Superannuation		\$141,846	\$147,322	\$150,550
Payroll Tax		\$85,433	\$85,555	\$84,866
Provision For Long Service Leave		\$119,148	\$126,119	\$108,424
Workcover Levy		\$12,717	\$12,902	\$13,866
Fringe Benefits Taxation		\$14		
Total Salaries And Associated Expenditure		\$1,965,957	\$1,982,495	\$2,031,008
Operating Expenditure				
Travel & Personal Expenses		\$4,632	\$2,294	\$5,979
Printing, Stationery & Subscriptions		\$73,722	\$20,608	\$30,158
Postage & Communication		\$75,276	\$12,679	\$10,733
Contractors and Professional Services	2	\$350,562	\$273,297	\$145,068
Training and Development		\$14,009	\$2,760	\$3,102
Motor Vehicle Expenses		\$5,068		
Operating Expenses	3	\$9,356	\$540,795	\$533,164
Witness Payments		\$252		
Other Finance Costs		\$70		
Information Technology Costs		\$26,838	\$4,827	\$64,401
Rent Utilities and Property Services		\$245,089	\$14,055	\$17,418
Repairs and Maintenance		\$13,256		
Total Operating Expenditure		\$818,130	\$871,315	\$810,023
Total Salaries And Operating Expenditure		\$2,784,087	\$2,853,810	\$2,841,031
Special Appropriations				
Award Payments		\$39,983,982	\$39,425,694	\$36,157,242
Total Awards	4	\$39,983,982	\$39,425,694	\$36,157,242

Notes to and forming part of the financial statement

This Financial statement is based upon financial data available as at 24 August 2016.

Note 1: The special appropriation for the salaries and on-costs of tribunal members (magistrates) during the reporting period is reported in the annual report of the Magistrates' Court of Victoria for the year ending 30 June 2016.

Note 2: The expenditure for the *contractors and professional services* relates predominantly to legal costs in the year under review.

Note 3: Operating recoups where previously split across different categories however have been consolidated within the Operating expenses category from 2014-15.

Note 4: *Award payments* represents actual payments made for expenses, lump sum payments to applicants and legal costs paid in the reporting period. This does not include awards of financial assistance that were made in the reporting period but not paid as at 30 June 2016.

Our Directory of Tribunal Members & Judicial Registrars in the year under review

CHIEF MAGISTRATE

Mr Peter Lauritsen

DEPUTY CHIEF MAGISTRATES

Mr Barry Braun

Ms Felicity Broughton

Mr Lance Martin

Mr Daniel Muling

Ms Jelena Popovic

MAGISTRATES

Mr Ian Alger

Ms Susan Armour

Ms Megan Aumair

Mr Julian Ayres

Ms Donna Bakos

Mr Thomas Barrett

Ms Luisa Bazzani

Mr John Bentley

Ms Angela Bolger

Mr Timothy Bourke

Ms Jennifer Bowles

Mr Gerard Bryant

Mr Darrin Cain

Ms Suzanne Cameron

Mr Andrew Capell

Ms Rosemary Carlin

Mr Michael Coghlan

Ms Ann Collins

Mr Gregory Connellan

Mr David Cottrill

Mr Rodney Crisp

Ms Jillian Crowe

Ms Sarah Dawes

Mr John Doherty

Mr Peter Dotchin

Mr Peter Dunn

Ms Michelle Ehrlich

Ms Caitlin English

Ms Rosemary Falla

Mr David Fanning

Mr David Faram

Mr Bernard FitzGerald

Ms Lesley Fleming

Mr Simon Garnett

Mr Timothy Gattuso

Ms Jane Gibson

Mr Philip Ginnane

Mr Phillip Goldberg

Ms Anne Goldsbrough

Mr Martin Grinberg

Ms Jennifer Grubissa

Ms Carolene Gwynn

Ms Margaret Harding

Mr John Hardy

Ms Annabel Hawkins

Ms Kate Hawkins

Ms Fiona Hayes

Ms Michelle Hodgson

Mr Franz Holzer

Ms Gail Hubble

Ms Audrey Jamieson

Mr Graham Keil

Ms Meagan Keogh

Dr Michael King

Mr Jonathan Klestadt

Ms Elizabeth Lambden

Ms Catherine Lamble

Mr Nunzio La Rosa

Mr Dominic Lennon

Mr John Lesser

Mr Gerard Lethbridge

Ms Denise Livingstone

Ms Mary-Anne MacCallum

Ms Jan Maclean

Ms Kay Macpherson

Ms Urfa Masood

Mr Ross Maxted

Ms Ann McGarvie

Mr Andrew McKenna

Mr Gregory McNamara

Mr Peter Mealy

Mr Peter Mellas

Ms Johanna Metcalf

Mr Peter Mithen

Mr Stephen Myall

Mr John O'Brien

Mr John O'Callaghan

Ms Julie O'Donnell

Ms Kim Parkinson

Mr Anthony Parsons

Mr Richard Pithouse

Ms Roslyn Porter

Mr Hugh Radford

Mr Peter Reardon

Mr Duncan Reynolds

Ms Kay Robertson

Mr Gregory Robinson

Mr Charlie Rozencwajg

Mr Ronald Saines

Mr Marc Sargent

Mr Michael Smith

Mr Paul Smith

Ms Sharon Smith

Mr Patrick Southey

Ms Paresa Spanos

Ms Pauline Spencer

Ms Fiona Stewart

Mr Mark Stratmann

Ms Stella Stuthridge

Mr Charles Tan

Ms Noreen Toohey

Ms Cynthia Toose

Ms Jennifer Tregent

Mr Jack Vandersteen

Ms Susan Wakeling

Ms Belinda Wallington

Mr Timothy Walsh

Mr Ian Watkins

Mr Iain West (Deputy State Coroner)

Mr Michael Wighton

Mr Brian Wright

Mr Richard Wright

Mr Francis Zemljak

RESERVE MAGISTRATES

Mr Clive Alsop

Mr Ross Betts

Mr John Bolster

Mr Lewis Byrne

Mr Brian Clifford

Mr Louis Hill

Mr Frank Jones

Mr Robert Kumar

Mr Gregory Levine

Mr Ian McGrane

Mr John Murphy

Mr Peter Power

Mr Steven Raleigh

Mr Alan Spillane

Mr Ian Von Einem

Mr Peter White

JUDICIAL REGISTRARS

Ms Ruth Andrew

Mr Julian Bartlett

Mr Michael Bolte

Ms Samantha Dixon

Mr Graeme Horsburgh

Mr Barry Johnstone

Mr David McCann

Ms Sharon McRae

Mr Richard O'Keefe

Ms Angela Soldani

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