



# ANNUAL REPORT

2022–2023



VICTIMS OF  
CRIME ASSISTANCE  
TRIBUNAL

# Year at a Glance

8,421 applications filed  
**UP BY 15%**



5,700 awards of assistance made  
**UP BY 14%**



8,782 orders finalising applications  
**UP BY 18%**



\$74 million awarded  
**UP BY 20.8%**



8,169 pending applications  
**UP BY 1.9%**



117,796 unique visits to our website  
**DOWN BY 4.4%**



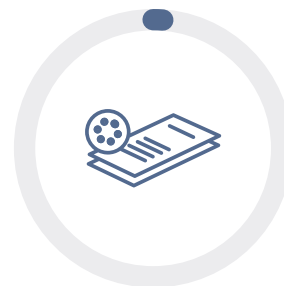
Judicial Registrars made  
**12.1% OF FINAL ORDERS**



Koori List applications  
**UP BY 49.6%**



Interim awards of assistance  
**UP BY 1%**



Tribunal Officer List made  
**37.4% OF FINAL ORDERS**



Average award amount \$9,180  
**UP BY 9.5%**



Variation awards of assistance  
**DOWN BY 7.3%**



Tribunal's operating cost  
**DOWN BY 4.4%**



3,350 online applications filed being  
**39.8% OF ALL LODGEMENTS**





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# Letter to Minister

1 September 2023

The Honourable Jaclyn Symes 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 2023.

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

Yours sincerely,



**Justice Lisa Hannan**  
Chief Magistrate

# Chief Magistrate's Message

THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE LISA HANNAN, CHIEF MAGISTRATE

**The Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal sits within the Magistrates' Court of Victoria. Over the 26 years of its existence, the Tribunal has considered applications from victims of crime for financial assistance at all 51 courts throughout the state.**

In preparation for the transition to the new Financial Assistance Scheme, VOCAT has centralised the majority of applications into the Melbourne registry at its new location – level 5, 555 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. There, applications will be considered by Tribunal Members, being Magistrates, Judicial Registrars, and Tribunal Officers.

Hearings, where appropriate, will continue to occur online or in person. The Tribunal has increased registry resources at Melbourne and has also received additional funding to further increase registry resources over the next 12 months.

The Tribunal Officer List, established in 2021, has finalised 37.4% of the Tribunal's applications this reporting period and has made a significant contribution to the timely finalisation of applications.

The decision-making jurisdiction of Judicial Registrars was expanded, to enable them to consider applications involving family violence, sex offences (where findings of guilt have been made) and related victim applications.

In the nine months prior to centralisation, VOCAT allocated staff and judicial assistance to regions. This assistance included file preparation, consideration of applications, archiving and registry support. As a result, many applications were able to be finalised prior to centralisation.

Some applications have remained at their original locations, where already part-heard by Tribunal Members or where significant judicial consideration of those applications had occurred.

In addition to the establishment of new premises, the preparation for and centralisation of operations, the Tribunal has received 8,421 new applications this financial year, the highest number to date.

I am pleased to say that the Tribunal has finalised 8,782 applications, again the highest number of applications finalised to date, with the total amount of financial assistance awarded this year, \$74,011,450 (including legal costs).

The Tribunal received an increased number of applications in the Koori VOCAT List, no doubt due to the promotion of the List through the Dhumbumana Healing Strategy, introduced in 2022. These applications are dealt with by Tribunal Members specifically trained and allocated to the Koori List, where the Tribunal aims to ensure the cultural safety and inclusion of the applicant throughout the process.

The Tribunal also saw an increase in the number of applications relating to sex offences. Applications relating to family violence continue to form approximately one third of the applications received by the Tribunal.

The introduction of the Tribunal Officer List and the work carried out prior to centralisation have resulted in a reduction in the time taken for applications to be finalised, with the majority of applications finalised within nine months. It is intended that the centralisation of applications will see more applications being finalised more quickly.

In terms of the overall awards, Special Financial Assistance for primary victims formed almost a quarter of the total financial assistance awarded. In terms of financial expenses, most financial assistance was awarded for counselling, by way of interim awards, final awards and by way of variations of final awards. Safety related expenses were also a large component of the expenses awarded.

The new Financial Assistance Scheme is due to commence in 2024, after which time, VOCAT will no longer receive new applications. However, VOCAT will finalise all applications which are before it as at that time. The Tribunal has a very busy time ahead but is well placed to ensure that applicants have their matters considered in a trauma-informed, timely way.

I wish to acknowledge the leadership and commitment of Supervising Magistrate Fiona Hayes and Donna Caruana, Principal Registrar of VOCAT. Throughout this period of significant change, they ensured that VOCAT continued to serve the people of Victoria and to ensure that applicants were able to access the essential services the Tribunal provides to victims of crime. Together they have expertly guided VOCAT and supported staff, state-wide, in adapting and continuing the important work of the Tribunal.

I also commend the outstanding work of the VOCAT staff over the last year and recognise their commitment and dedication to applicants in this jurisdiction. I thank them for their diligence in the centralisation process.

My thanks also to the VOCAT Coordinating Committee which brings together judicial officers and the administrative team to plan, implement and respond to issues evolving in the work of the Tribunal. Their work has supported and assisted the Supervising Magistrate and leadership team, as well as judicial officers and staff at all of the Tribunal locations throughout Victoria.

**Justice Lisa Hannan**  
Chief Magistrate





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## About VOCAT

The Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) is an integral part of Victoria's justice system and plays a pivotal role in the victim services sector. 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 26th year of operation and was established by the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* (the VOCA Act). We are a part of the Magistrates' Court of Victoria and during this reporting period operated at all court venues across the state. Each of the Court's 189 Magistrates including the Chief Magistrate, are also Tribunal Members. The Court's 22 Judicial Registrars and 11 Tribunal Officers also have Tribunal powers delegated to them by the Chief Magistrate to determine certain types of applications.

VOCAT is unique in being a tribunal within a court, constituted by judicial officers who also preside in the Magistrates' Court. This means victims of crime can receive 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 a Supervising Magistrate to support VOCAT's effective operation. Magistrate Fiona Hayes has been the Supervising Magistrate for the Tribunal throughout 2022/23.

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 Magistrate to carry out these duties. The Committee is constituted by the Supervising Magistrate, five other Magistrates, one Judicial Registrar, the Executive Director Specialist Courts and Programs, the Principal Registrar of VOCAT, two Standards and Compliance Officers, Learning and Development Advisor, Transition Project Lead, Senior Tribunal Officer, the Senior Registry Manager and Registry Manager, Melbourne.

The Chief Magistrate has delegated certain powers under the VOCA Act to Judicial Registrars and newly created Tribunal Officer roles, VOCAT's Principal Registrar and other Registrars of VPS grade 3 and above. For Registrars, this includes the power to grant an award of interim assistance of no more than \$5,000 and to make basic awards for variations.





## 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 VOCA 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 26 years, VOCAT has received 140,224 applications for financial assistance, and awarded \$1.12 billion to victims of crime. This has included 104,534 awards of financial assistance, and tens of thousands of awards of interim financial assistance.

Pre-pandemic, applications to VOCAT had increased almost every year. Following a COVID-induced decrease to 7,075 applications in 2020/21, increases continued to 8,421 in the current reporting period. The number of applications filed this financial year is 4.4% higher than the highest number previously recorded by the Tribunal – 8,067 applications in 2018/19.

## Supervising Magistrate's Message

MAGISTRATE FIONA HAYES

VOCAT has had two key priorities over the 2022/23 financial year:

1. To improve the timeliness of consideration and finalisation of applications;
2. To prepare for the commencement of the Financial Assistance Scheme.

Underlying all of the work outlined above is the recognition that applicants for victims of crime assistance should be able to engage with the Tribunal in a trauma-informed, respectful and culturally safe way.

The Tribunal, as part of the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, adopts the 4 pillars of the Court's Strategic Plan – to serve, empower, innovate and connect. The Tribunal is committed to deliver high-quality, accessible and inclusive Tribunal services. Becoming a Tribunal of excellence means providing justice responses tailored to the adapting and changing needs of Victorians – no matter where or how they access our Tribunal.

Over the last 12 months, VOCAT has implemented a very significant plan of consolidation, in preparation for the commencement of the Financial Assistance Scheme in 2024.

VOCAT's leadership team formulated a detailed schedule of 286 days of blitz assistance to regions, utilising staff from the Melbourne registry to work with local VOCAT staff. This combined effort ensured that many applications were considered and progressed to finalisation before centralisation commenced.

In addition, VOCAT planned and executed a comprehensive logistical task in the centralisation of most files from around the state, into the newly established VOCAT premises at level 5, 555 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.

A very committed and expert team of archivists and staff ensured the safe delivery of 9350 files and then the unpacking and allocation of those files at the Melbourne registry. VOCAT is very grateful to the Regional Co-ordinating Magistrates, Senior Registrars and staff at metropolitan and regional court locations for their assistance and cooperation in the centralisation task.

The purpose of centralisation is to devote significant resources to the progress of as many claims for assistance as possible before the commencement of the Financial Assistance Scheme. Judicial Officers, Tribunal Officers, the leadership team, the registry and finance teams are co-located at the new VOCAT premises. There will be monitoring of all aspects of the progress of applications to ensure reduction of backlog, timeliness of decision-making and payment of financial awards and expenses.

I am pleased to say that VOCAT has increased the number of matters finalised, as well as the speed with which matters are finalised. We have also seen an increased number of applications, including Koori applications. Our focus, now that most matters have been centralised, is to engage with applicants as quickly as possible to assess their applications.



I would like to acknowledge the huge amount of work of the leadership team within the Tribunal. We have established and moved into new premises, moved files into storage and the CBD, recruited and inducted new staff, all the while continuing the important work of assisting applicants, in record numbers.

Donna Caruana, Principal Registrar of the Tribunal, has demonstrated the highest quality leadership in directing all of the work achieved by the Tribunal. She has been expertly supported by Stephanie Oliver and Melissa Smith, who together fill the role of Standards and Compliance Officer, with extensive knowledge and expertise. Charlene Griffin, Transition Project Lead, very ably led the centralisation process, including the archiving of 33,800 files from around the state into secondary storage. With many logistical considerations involved, this process was achieved with detailed planning and preparation, and expert oversight.

Naomi Nolet, Learning and Development Advisor developed and delivered the successful blitz assistance program to regions prior to centralisation, which involved significant coordination. She has also continued the important work of inducting and training new and existing staff into the work of VOCAT.



I wish to thank the VOCAT Coordinating Committee, made up of Tribunal Members and the VOCAT leadership team, who provide expert guidance and support on a range of issues relevant to the Tribunal.

I also acknowledge the dedicated and hard-working operational managers and staff members of VOCAT at Melbourne, and MCV staff throughout the state, who support and assist applicants, in addition to the Tribunal Members.

**Fiona Hayes**

Supervising Magistrate,  
Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal





# 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 the physical or psychological impacts of crime, 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 Victim Services, Support and Reform (VSSR) within the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS), who oversee the Victims of Crime Helpline and the statewide Victims Assistance Program. Many victims of crime learn about VOCAT either from the Victims of Crime Helpline, Victims Assistance Program, other victim support services or from Victoria Police. These services can support victims through the process of applying to VOCAT for financial assistance. Victims can also receive assistance from lawyers to prepare their claim without reducing the award amount.

## 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](http://www.vocat.vic.gov.au) or at any Magistrates' Court venue in Victoria.

As of 1 April 2023, all new VOCAT applications should be filed with the Tribunal's Principal Registry at Melbourne. All application types are now managed centrally with separate lists established for claims where:

- ▶ the applicant identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (the VOCAT Koori List), or
- ▶ the applicant is a primary victim where the offence doesn't relate to sexual offending or family violence, and the applicant has reported the act of violence to police (the Tribunal Officer 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. In April 2018 Parliament amended the VOCA Act to remove the time limit for child victims of sexual and physical abuse.

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.

The screenshot shows the VOCAT online application form. The header includes the VOCAT logo and the text 'Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal'. The form is titled 'Application for Assistance' and contains several sections: 'Applicant Details', 'Details of Person Wanting Assistance', and 'Before You Apply'. The 'Before You Apply' section includes a sidebar with links to 'Applicant Details', 'Offence Details', 'Your Application', 'Decceased Details', 'Authorisation', 'Supporting Material', 'Legal Representation', 'Acknowledgement', 'Review Application', and 'Confirmation'. The 'Applicant Details' section includes a 'Status' dropdown menu (set to 'New') and a 'Details of Person Wanting Assistance' section with fields for 'Surname', 'Given Names', 'Former Names', 'State' (dropdown), 'Telephone (please provide at least one phone number)', and 'Phone (After Hours / Home)'. The 'Details of Person Wanting Assistance' section also includes a 'Status' dropdown menu (set to 'New').

## 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 three 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 to prepare for final hearing. This can assist us to make decisions more quickly without creating additional stress for applicants.

## How long before a result?

The VOCA 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 added 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.

With the introduction of the Online Magistrates' Court (OMC), it has been possible to significantly reduce listing delays. It is now possible to list urgent matters for directions hearing within a fortnight of the decision to do so.

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, Tribunal Officer 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 enable applicants to explain directly the impact of the crime on them and the supports that they seek and why. If they have not been awarded the level of assistance sought, the hearing affords the opportunity to hear 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.



Hearings held in the OMC, by agreement with the applicant, continue to offer the opportunity for applicants to speak directly with a Tribunal Member. In addition, this mechanism of hearing allows the applicant to remain in the comfort of their home, with the support of family or friends, while the hearing takes place. This process reduces some of the anxiety involved in attending at court buildings and is hoped to be less intimidating for applicants.

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.

On very rare occasions, where VOCAT is required to decide whether a crime occurred, the Tribunal Member may consider it appropriate to ask the alleged offender if he or she wants to be heard. To reduce any possible stress and anxiety the hearing will be conducted in a manner which limits contact between the parties, for instance, by having a party give evidence via a video-link. In March 2022, changes to the VOCA Act took effect prohibiting an alleged offender from being notified of a Tribunal hearing in matters that relate to family violence, sexual offences or offences related to stalking, threats to kill or threats to commit serious injury.

## How we make decisions

VOCAT makes decisions in accordance with the VOCA Act. Our role is to ensure victims receive their full entitlement under the VOCA 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 VOCA 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 VOCA 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.

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 their 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.

## 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 2021*, and the particular circumstances of the primary victim or the injury suffered.

## 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.

A review of a VOCAT decision made by a Judicial Registrar or Tribunal Officer is heard and determined by a Tribunal Member who is a Magistrate.

## Tribunal Officer List

The VOCAT Tribunal Officer List (TOL) commenced in July 2021. An outline of the TOL model was included in the Magistrates' Court / VOCAT submissions to the 2017 Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC) review of the VOCA Act. The submissions advocated for the creation of a new layer of VOCAT decision maker to provide a more effective way to determine certain categories of applications. The proposed model aimed to provide assistance to victims more efficiently and reduce the backlog of pending matters.

Informed by these submissions and the subsequent VLRC recommendations, amendments were proposed to the VOCA Act to establish the TOL and provide for the delegation of decision-making powers to Tribunal Officers (TOs). The *Justice Legislation Amendment (Supporting Victims and Other Matters) Act 2020* carried these changes through to Royal Assent on 17 November 2020 and came into effect the following day.

The Chief Magistrate, Justice Hannan signed the Instrument of Delegation to Tribunal Officers on 9 March 2021, conferring decision making powers on TOs and establishing the limits of those powers. Practice Direction 3 of 2021- Tribunal Officer List, was subsequently issued by the Chief Magistrate on 18 May 2021 which provided a practical framework for the delegated powers to be exercised.

Pursuant to the delegation of powers and Practice Direction, TOs have the power to determine primary victim applications pursuant to Section 33 of the VOCA Act, save for applications where the act of violence alleged is sex or family violence related or was not reported to police within a reasonable time. All new files statewide from 1 July 2021 that fall within the TO delegation are referred to and managed by the TOL.

In May 2021, the Victorian state budget provided an allocation of \$3.6 million over three years to establish the TOL. This allocation provided funding for the following roles on a fixed term basis until 31 December 2023:

- ▶ Senior Tribunal Officer (VPS 5)
- ▶ VOCAT Transition Lead (VPS 5)

- ▶ Learning & Development Advisor (VPS 5)
- ▶ Tribunal Officers (VPS 4)
- ▶ Administrative Deputy Registrars (VPS 2)
- ▶ Finance Officers (VPS 2).

As at June 2023, the number of pending applications managed by the List was 2,453 which represents thirty percent of pending applications statewide.

Having six Administrative Deputy Registrars (ADRs) within TOL has meant that there is a 1:2 ratio of ADRs to TOs. Five of the six ADRs are each assigned to two TOs to provide assistance in case management. One ADR is not assigned to a specific TO, rather they act as a support ADR to provide targeted assistance across all TOs where required. This assistance is in addition to their existing duties which includes initiating applications and clerking hearings.

Tasks completed by ADRs when assisting TOs typically involve the more administrative tasks of case management, including printing and filing material received from external parties, processing authorised future expense awards, sending out Section 33 advice and inputting orders onto Courtlink. This has allowed ADRs to diversify their skillset and gain experience in case management, as well as assisting TOs in progressing matters to determination and decreasing backlog within the List.



Over the past year, TOL has also helped support the Melbourne Registry in the lead up to and throughout centralisation. Members of TOL contributed greatly to the pre-centralisation blitz, with many of the team providing assistance to metropolitan and regional courts to prepare for centralisation. This has also helped upskill TOL staff, especially the ADRs in case management, and has allowed TOL to further support headquarter courts with backlog and their pre-centralisation preparation.

TOL continues to be supported by Judicial Registrars, with Ms Leah Hickey, Ms Samantha Dixon and Ms Shannon Dellamarta all working closely with TOs and providing valuable advice and assistance over 2022/23. In the past year, they were responsible for 23.8% of the final determinations recorded on TOL matters. Matters are often referred to Judicial Registrars in instances where a hearing is required or where a Section 33 advice proposed by a TO has been rejected. With the significant increase of new applications lodged in TOL in recent months, more matters are being referred to Judicial Registrars at the discretion of TOs to assist in progressing matters quickly to further reduce backlog.

### TOL performance snapshot

In the last year, 3,288 final orders have been made on TOL applications. Final orders include final awards, strike outs, withdrawals and refusals. This represents 37.4% of the final orders made across the state during the 2022/23 period.

With close to 42% of all new applications being lodged with TOL, a significant volume of VOCAT workflow has been diverted away from suburban and regional court venues and, with the completion of centralisation, the Melbourne Registry.

The performance snapshot for the second year of TOL operation demonstrates the contribution that TOL has made to backlog reduction and efficient processing of applications.

The number of new applications lodged within TOL has increased significantly over the past year, with a total of 3,521 new applications lodged in 2022/23 compared with 2,864 in 2021/22. This combined with impacts from centralisation and staffing changes has resulted in a higher caseload across all of TOL. Despite this, TOL recorded its highest number of finalisations in a month in May 2023 with the List finalising 329 applications. This is indicative of the enormous amount of work being done across the team.

TOL's overall capacity has been impacted by a number of factors this reporting period including blitz support, increased centralisation caseload and staffing changes which have compromised the List's overall productivity. The 2023/24 state budget has provided funding for additional resources to increase backlog reduction across all areas of the Tribunal, allowing the appointment of additional TOs and ADRs to TOL to strengthen its determination capacity.

	<b>Applications Lodged</b>	<b>Final Orders Made<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Awards Made</b>	<b>Interim Awards</b>	<b>Variation Awards</b>	<b>Pending Applications</b>
2022/23 TOL totals	3,521	3,288	2,052	957	270	2,453
As a percentage of state total	41.8% of 8,421	37.4% of 8,782	36% of 5,700	27.6% of 3,464	11% of 2,464	30% of 8,169

1. "Final orders" includes awards of assistance, applications refused, applications struck out and applications withdrawn

## Focus on Judicial Registrars

In the 2022/23 financial year, Judicial Registrars heard and determined 1,059 VOCAT applications, down from 1,393 in the previous year. This figure constitutes 12.1% of all VOCAT final orders. Judicial Registrars also made (261) 10.6% of all variation awards and (244) 7% of all interim awards.

There are now 22 Judicial Registrars appointed to the Magistrates' Court, a portion of whom determined a significant amount of VOCAT applications prior to the VOCAT centralisation project commencing. As a result of centralising VOCAT applications into the Principal Registry at Melbourne, the Tribunal now has two dedicated Judicial Registrars who determine VOCAT applications whilst also providing significant support to the Tribunal Officer List.

On 1 April 2023, the Chief Magistrate issued a new instrument of delegation, increasing the powers of Judicial Registrars to determine VOCAT matters. The previous instrument allowed Judicial Registrars to determine primary and secondary victim applications that were not family violence or sex offence related. The new delegation now provides Judicial Registrars with the power to also determine non-Koori List applications made by related victims, as well as applications where the act of violence arises from circumstances of family violence, and sexual offences where the offender has been found guilty of the act of violence.

This new delegation significantly increases the range and volume of applications that Judicial Registrars can consider, relieving workload pressures upon Magistrates and facilitating the efficient determination of applications.

## VOCAT Koori List

The VOCAT Koori List commenced operation in 2006 as a pilot and continues to operate as an ongoing integral part of the Tribunal. With a focus on ensuring culturally safe access, the Koori List manages all matters where the applicant identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

The administration of the Koori List is conducted at the Tribunal's Principal Registry in Melbourne, currently located at 555 Lonsdale Street. The applications are managed by a small group of dedicated Tribunal Members and staff to allow a culturally sensitive focus and consistent approach. With an emphasis on responding with maximum flexibility, steps are taken to create a culturally safe environment for Koori victims of crime.

The Koori List adopts practices to promote access to the assistance available through the Tribunal and to address barriers which exist for Koori applicants. These developments include engaging with specific services, having Aboriginal flags and artworks displayed, hearing rooms and registries ceremonially smoked, re-drafting of standard letters and publications, cultural awareness training and flexibility in listing practices.

The processes and procedures utilised within the VOCAT Koori List are continually updated by staff to ensure its effective operation. To address the timely management of applications and mitigate the impact of limited resourcing, the Tribunal is constantly reviewing processes within the List to address delay and improve quality of service. The pandemic facilitated the introduction of new initiatives such as WebEx hearings to allow more flexibility and an increase in digital communication. With these new initiatives, the Tribunal Members and staff continue to work together to review processes to ensure the objectives of the List are still met.

At the conclusion of the financial year, the Tribunal was managing a record number of applications (679) in the Koori List at Melbourne. The Koori List saw 582 new applications, an increase of 49.6% compared to the previous financial year and the highest number of new applications in a financial year since the List commenced.

The overall number of finalisations in the List increased by 77% to 515 matters (291 in 2021/22).

## Koori List Artwork



Title: Dhumbumana    Artist: Marcus Lee Design Pty Ltd

## Dhumbumana Healing Strategy

The Tribunal's Dhumbumana Healing Strategy (pron: thum-boo-mah-nah) was launched in late June 2022 focused on continuous improvement within the VOCAT Koori List and enhancing VOCAT's capacity to engage with Koori communities and assist in their journey to healing. The Strategy's initiatives have enhanced the Tribunal's delivery of a culturally appropriate service, and will help to form a targeted outreach program to local Koori communities.

The Strategy creates opportunities for Koori applicants who have been affected by trauma to regain a sense of empowerment and control over their lives. It promotes reconnecting with culture to assist in establishing pathways back to country to heal spiritually.

Initiatives under the Strategy aim to:

- ▶ increase awareness of VOCAT as a culturally specific financial assistance scheme for Koori victims of crime
- ▶ recognise and reduce barriers to accessing VOCAT
- ▶ better understand how Koori people use our services
- ▶ improve our current practices to better promote cultural safety and
- ▶ better support Koori victims of crime during VOCAT hearings.

Aligned with the Tribunal's Healing Strategy, a Cultural Support Plan was launched within the VOCAT Koori List, to capture significant cultural information for a Tribunal Member's consideration when making an award – acknowledging that an applicant's cultural journey affects their ability to heal from the 'act of violence'.

Upon the Tribunal receiving an application for assistance, a return acknowledgment is sent together with a Dhumbumana Healing Strategy brochure, and Cultural Support Plan. This information explains and encourages an applicant's participation. Where an applicant may not have the assistance of a solicitor, our Koori Engagement Registrar will personally connect with the applicant and explain VOCAT processes, and the significance of the Cultural Support Plan – noting that their participation is entirely voluntary. Within this financial year, the Tribunal has received twelve completed Cultural Support Plans from applicants. Each returned plan is then affixed to the physical application and provided to a Tribunal Member. This information is vital for a Tribunal Member to understand the importance and depth of an applicant's cultural history, and how best to assist in their ongoing healing journey.





As part of the Strategy, the Tribunal has now redeveloped external publications and presentation material to support engagement within the VOCAT Koori List. This information reiterates that the Dhumbumana Healing Strategy holds culturally symbolic and safe principles to assist Koori victims of crime, and provides context on the meaning of 'Dhumbumana' and its origin from the language of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. This material has been actively distributed across Koori Support services throughout the financial year, and new Dhumbumana branding forms the basis for many Tribunal publication designs such as our Annual Report and online hearing and meeting backdrops.

External publication material and information also speaks to the role of VOCAT's Koori List, the kind of assistance that can be awarded, and how this may assist a Koori applicant in their healing journey. New brochures were created and circulated to Koori List stakeholders for distribution within community. An engagement plan targeting Koori support services has also been formulated, and this schedule will commence early in the 2023/24 financial year upon the appointment of a new Koori Engagement Registrar.

Also aligned to the Strategy, Tribunal staff have enhanced their cultural awareness and understanding by completing training programs and partaking in CSV Koori Cultural Awareness Webinars as an inclusion of the Tribunal's induction and training program for all staff.

All staff have welcomed the addition of an Acknowledgment of Country at all meetings, and on all email signatures, formal documentation and information sheets, and will continue learning about their place in Country with the assistance of our Koori Engagement Registrar.

The VOCAT Koori List is now operational from a new inclusive and culturally safe space, 555 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. The registry holds artwork where staff have contributed to designs that were created whilst celebrating Reconciliation Week, each representing what Reconciliation means to them. Koori flags are also immersed throughout the building in both public and registry spaces.

In May 2023, an indoor smoking ceremony was conducted upon relocation of the Tribunal's Principal Registry to 555 Lonsdale Street, to enhance cultural safety aligned with the Tribunal's Strategy commitments. The Smoking Ceremony was conducted by Amos Roach – an award-winning musician, dancer, director and proud Djab Wurrung/Gunditj Mara and Ngarrinderi man. Amos also performed on the Yidaki which was a truly special experience for all who attended. At the conclusion of this event, distinguished guests and staff shared in traditional Aboriginal dishes prepared by Mabu Mabu – an Indigenous owned caterer.

Into the next financial year, the Tribunal will continue to implement Strategy initiatives including further targeted community engagement, continued revision of Koori List publications, strengthening the use of Cultural Support Plans as well as enhancing referral pathways with other support services such as Umalek Balit.

## Telehealth

During the 2022/23 financial year, the Tribunal supported the decision to continue authorisation of remote psychological or counselling sessions where an award had previously been made for face to face sessions. Authorisation for remote counselling, initially introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, now extends to any new request for counselling sessions. *Practice Direction 1 of 2022 – Counselling Expenses* provides the authority for the continuation of telehealth.

The Tribunal has received encouraging feedback from applicants and service providers confirming that remote counselling is allowing assistance to reach remote communities and many applicants who would have otherwise been unable to obtain this critical assistance due to the unavailability of local services or their inability to attend an office in person.

## Legal and other professional help for applicants

Access to justice for victims of crime is of paramount importance, and VOCAT generally pays for victim legal representation. In the reporting period, we amended the Legal Costs Guideline (Guideline 1 of 2023), 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. It must be noted that the amount of costs paid to legal practitioners is never deducted from the victim's award. It is hoped that the use of legal practitioners will assist victims to receive the maximum award available under the current legislation.

Lawyers are not the only professionals who help victims of crime to access VOCAT. The Government-funded Victims Assistance Program, Victims Legal Service and non-government counselling services, also play a role. 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.

## Demand and financial assistance awarded

8,421 applications filed  
**UP BY 15%**



8,782 orders finalising  
applications **UP BY 18%**



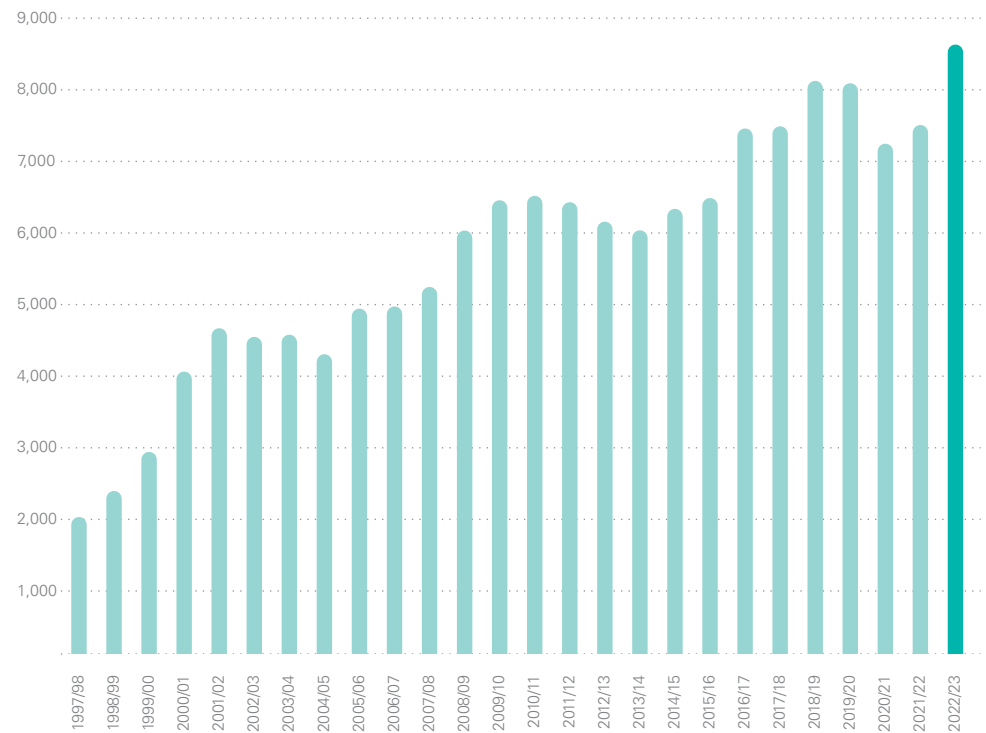
5,700 awards of assistance  
made **UP BY 14%**



\$74 million awarded  
**UP BY 20.8%**

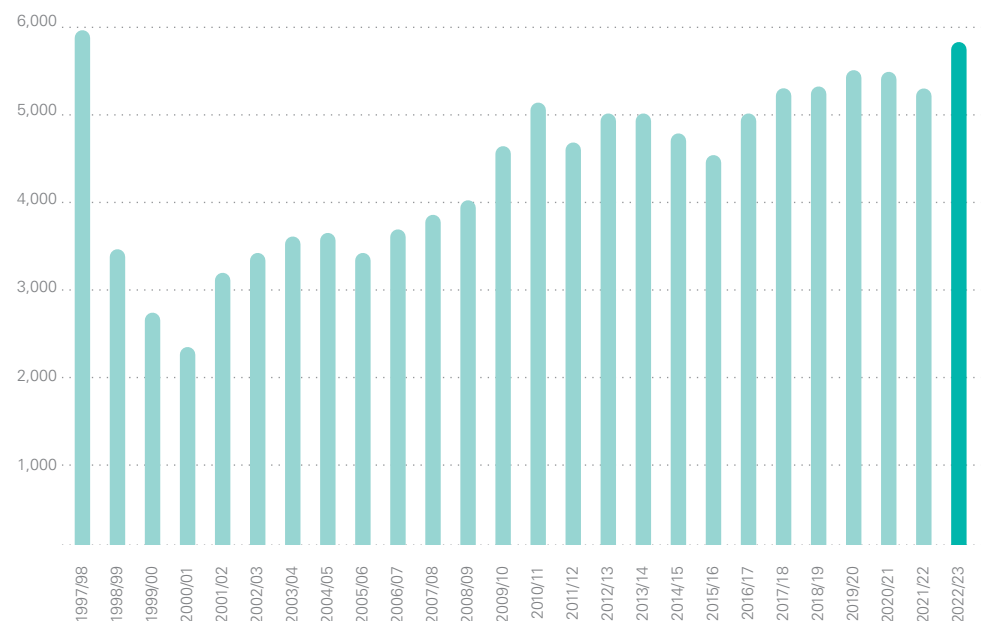


**CHART 1: Number of applications for financial assistance lodged annually**



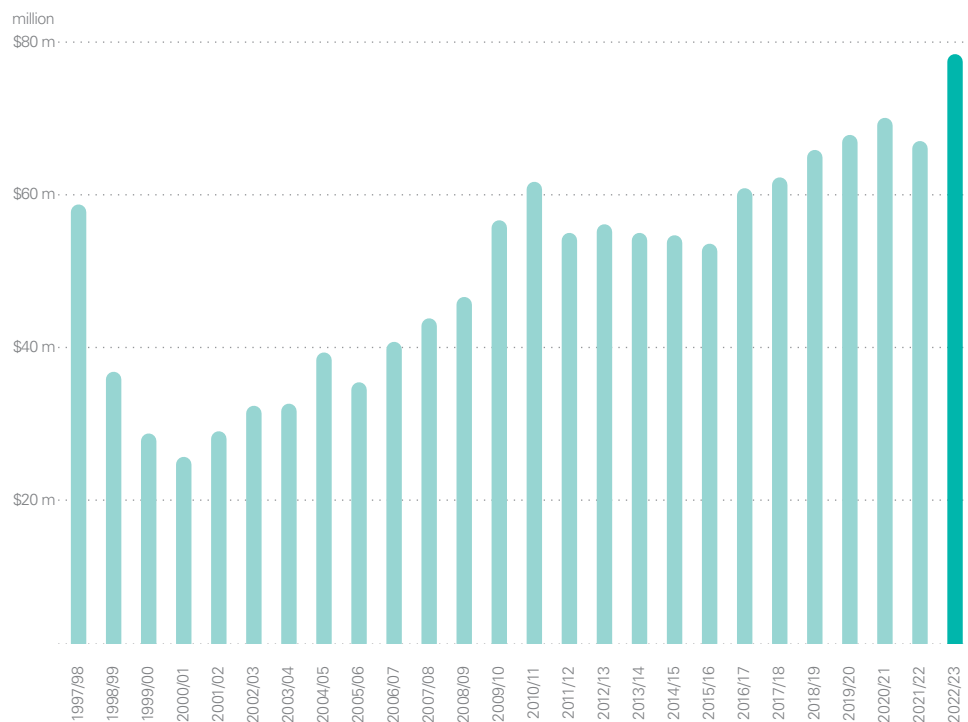
Demand for financial assistance has increased almost every year since the Tribunal commenced on 1 July 1997.

**CHART 2: Number of awards made annually**



This reporting period, the Tribunal recorded the second highest number of awards annually since its commencement.

**CHART 3: Total amount of financial assistance awarded including legal costs ordered annually**



The Tribunal has awarded the most in its history this reporting period, largely attributed to the increase in determinations.

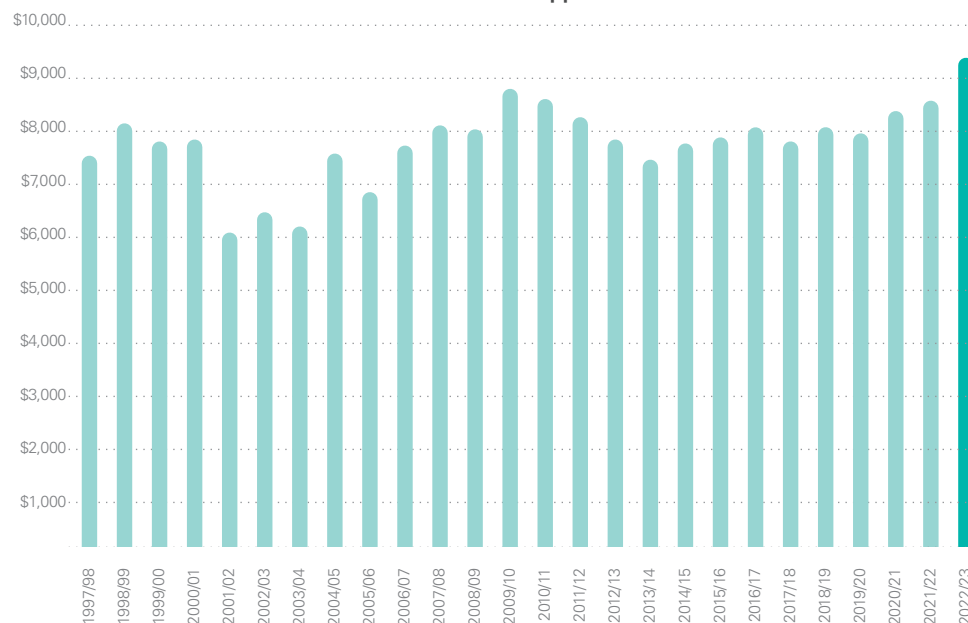
Average award amount \$9,180  
**UP BY 9.5%**



Koori List applications  
**UP BY 49.6%**



**CHART 4: Average amount of financial assistance awarded under the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996* on determination of applications**



The average amount of financial assistance has remained steady over the past 10 years, increasing this reporting period to the highest on record.

Interim awards of assistance  
**UP BY 1%**



Variation awards of assistance  
**DOWN BY 7.3%**









# The Tribunal – Year in Review

There were 8,421 applications filed in the reporting period which represents an increase of 15% compared to the previous year (7,325). The Tribunal recorded higher than average lodgements for ten months of the reporting period.



## Applications lodged

There were 8,421 applications filed in the reporting period which represents an increase of 15% compared to the previous year (7,325). The Tribunal recorded higher than average lodgements for ten months of the reporting period.

More than one third of applications (33.4%) arise from an incident of family violence.

Within the 6,207 applications lodged with the Melbourne VOCAT Registry, 582 applications were filed within the Tribunal's Koori List, 3,521 applications within the Tribunal Officer List and 2,104 applications within the general registry list.

After Melbourne, Broadmeadows was the Tribunal venue with the highest number of applications filed. There were 227 applications for assistance lodged at the Broadmeadows Court in 2022/23, down from 246 last year. Ringwood (184 down from 339), Dandenong (180 down from 271), Heidelberg (180 from 232) and Sunshine (166 down from 332), also saw significant reductions in lodgement numbers diverted to TOL.

## Application outcomes

VOCAT finalised 8,782 applications in the reporting period. This is 18% higher than the previous year, and the highest number of disposals ever recorded by the Tribunal.

VOCAT awarded 5,700 applicants financial assistance representing 64.9% of all final orders<sup>2</sup> made in 2022/23. In 2021/22, the 5,000 awards of assistance made up 67.2% of all finalisations.

Additionally:

- ▶ Applications were determined at hearings in 3.3% of cases (293) down from 3.9% in 2021/22.
- ▶ As in previous years, the majority of awards (86.8%) went to primary victims, with 4,950 awards being made this reporting period, compared to 4,430 last year (an increase of 11.7%). Secondary victims made up 6.2% (down from 6.4% in 2021/22) and related victims made up 6.8% (up from 4.9% in 2021/22) of all awards of assistance upon final determination.
- ▶ The overall number of interim awards increased marginally to 3,464 (up from 3,429). The average amount awarded per victim at the interim stage increased by 18.4% to \$2,256 from \$1,906.
- ▶ The number of variation awards decreased by 7.3% in 2022/23 and the average amount awarded on variation increased by 19.4% to \$2,647 (\$2,217 in 2021/22).
- ▶ The average final award increased by 9.5% to \$9,180, compared to \$8,386 in 2021/22. This is the highest the figure has been since 2009/10 and reflects the greater complexity of cases being finalised.

## Active applications

One of the best indicators of VOCAT's current level of demand is the number of cases that are active or "pending" at any given time. Pending cases are applications that have been lodged with the Tribunal but not yet finalised. The number of pending cases increased by 1.9% from 8,018 at 30 June 2022 to 8,169 at 30 June 2023.

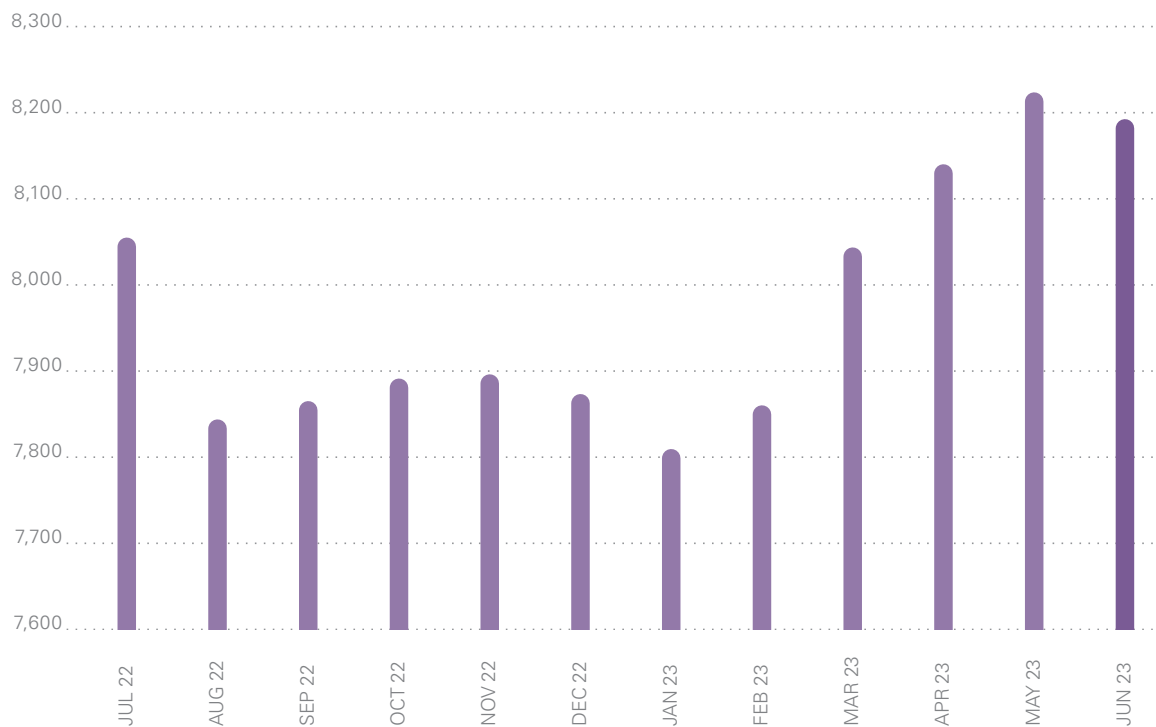
Pending cases increased steadily in the second half of this financial year to a peak of 8,218 in May 2023, despite concurrent above average finalisation rates. This steady increase was largely driven by higher than average lodgements which were experienced for 10 out of 12 months in 2022/23, equating to a 15% increase in application demand this reporting period.

More than half of all files were completed within 9 months of lodgement (52%, up from 48.2% in 2021/22). The age of the Tribunal's caseload decreased this reporting period, with 37.5% of applications pending for more than 9 months as at 30 June 2023 (down from 46.1%) and 28.7% pending for 12 months or more (down from 35.6% as at 30 June 2022).

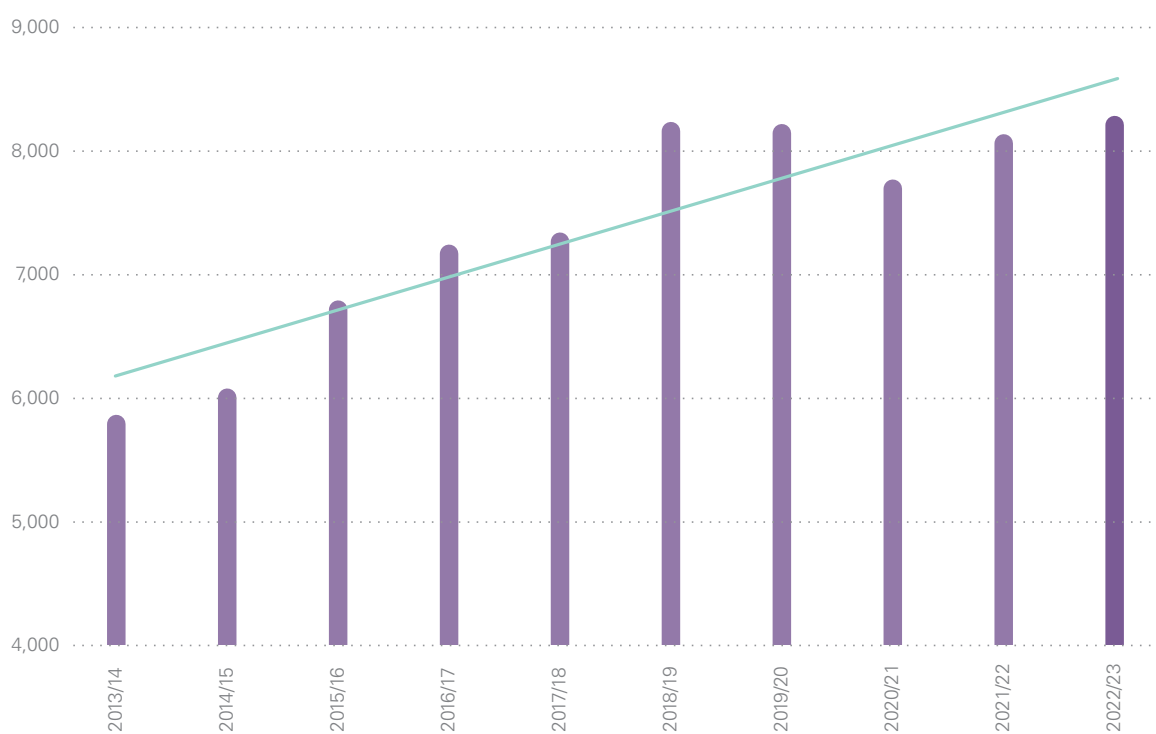
The pending cases data over the last 10 years still shows an upward trend despite a decrease in 2020/21.


2. "Final orders" includes awards of assistance, applications refused, applications struck out and applications withdrawn.

**CHART 5: Pending cases 2022/23**



**CHART 6: Ten year trend – Pending cases**





## Financial assistance awarded

In the reporting period, VOCAT awarded a total of over \$74 million in financial assistance and legal costs to victims of crime, up by 20.8% from the \$60.8 million awarded in the previous year.

The average amount of financial assistance awarded to each victim was \$9,180 compared to \$8,386 in the previous year, an increase of 9.5%. This figure has remained fairly consistent over the past 10 years, increasing this reporting period to the highest on record.

## Review applications from VOCAT

In the reporting period, eight applications for review of VOCAT decisions were determined by VOCAT. The Victorian Government Solicitor's Office represents VOCAT (as the original decision maker) in all VOCAT review matters. In one of those matters the Tribunal's decision was overturned or varied in some way and two more matters were remitted to VOCAT for reconsideration. These cases were less than 0.01% of VOCAT's finalised cases, varied on review.

## Online applications

Applications for financial assistance can be completed and filed via the Tribunal's website by clicking the 'Apply Online' link on our website's homepage. Hard copy forms are available from any court location but more and more people each year are choosing to utilise the electronic form of lodgement. In this reporting period the Tribunal received 3,350 online applications, this constitutes 39.8% of VOCAT applications lodged online up from 37.9% last year.

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 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.

## VOCAT Transition

The Victorian Law Reform Commission conducted a review of the Victims of Crime Assistance Act in July 2017. A recommendation followed in September 2018 that a new financial assistance scheme (FAS) be established separate from MCV to replace the Tribunal.

In February 2021, the Tribunal recruited a VOCAT Transition/Project Lead to oversee and manage transition work alongside the VOCAT leadership group prior to FAS commencement. Over the past two and a half years the Tribunal has successfully undertaken 3 major interlinking transition projects:

1. The VOCAT Archiving and File Management (VAFM) Project
2. The Tribunal's Principal Registry relocation from the William Cooper Justice Centre (WCJC) to 555 Lonsdale Street Melbourne, and
3. Centralisation of the Tribunal's operations as part of its backlog reduction strategy.

The VAFM project has included the consolidation of all statewide VOCAT records into a master file spreadsheet in preparation for the Tribunal's centralisation and transition to FAS, in addition to archiving assistance provided to 51 court locations which finalised the archiving of all historical applications, years 2020 and prior, into Grace Records.

Currently VOCAT is working with the Public Records Office of Victoria (PROV) to amend the VOCAT Records Disposal Authority to allow for destruction of eligible historical files currently within secondary storage prior to FAS commencement.

In March 2023, the Tribunal relocated its principal registry from the WCJC to 555 Lonsdale Street Melbourne. The 555 Lonsdale Street relocation project facilitated a fully fit for purpose space to adequately support and accommodate the additional caseload and increased workforce in readiness for centralisation into the Melbourne principal registry. Ahead of the centralisation of statewide operations, the Tribunal restructured the composition of its principal registry workforce, including the creation of 13 new central roles to support the increased statewide caseload. This resulted in a significant recruitment, onboarding and training schedule for the Tribunal between October 2022 and March 2023.

The Tribunal centralised statewide operations into the principal registry between January and June 2023, with the majority of the 9,350 files centralised over the 12-week period between April and June.



VOCAT Archivists undertook the file transfer and boxing up of all files. Many Melbourne based staff supported regions undertaking a pre-centralisation blitz over the 9 month period prior to assist with backlog and centralisation preparatory work, and Melbourne based staff undertook the large task of supporting the receipt of all centralised files, whilst case managing and prioritising urgent files throughout.

Centralisation has been the largest project in the Tribunal's history and has been an outstanding success thanks to the dedication of the entire VOCAT team, in particular the VOCAT leadership team, judiciary, VOCAT archivists, Melbourne VOCAT staff and the headquarter and regional VOCAT teams.

The Tribunal is pleased to now have a registry space and workforce that is solely dedicated to the critical work of VOCAT which will have a significant impact upon the quality of our application management and the service we offer to victims and their service providers.

## Backlog reduction

In addition to the centralisation of Tribunal operations to enhance caseload efficiency, the Tribunal's backlog reduction strategy has focused upon the targeted reduction of delay across various registry tasks throughout the reporting period. This has involved the creation of a backlog blitz plan and backlog data management report, designed to monitor a variety of workload performance indicators and caseload pressures across the Tribunal's operational teams.

The report continues to be supported by a monthly data dashboard which is a visual tool to monitor the vital work of each registry team. The dashboard also assists staff with time management, given their competing priorities to ensure all elements of case management are equally allocated. In addition, the report has also been a vital tool in acknowledging and celebrating the copious amounts of work staff are completing each month to keep up with increased demand.

During the Tribunal's centralising project, files were transferred from their original Tribunal locations into the Tribunal's Principal Registry at Melbourne, along with any outstanding work to be actioned. In an attempt to reduce backlog ahead of centralisation and ensure appropriate resourcing for pre-centralisation preparatory work, additional resources were allocated from the Melbourne team to headquarter locations statewide in the months leading to centralisation. Supervising Magistrate Hayes also travelled to headquarter courts during this time to increase judicial capacity in an attempt to finalise as many applications as possible prior to centralisation.

This additional support was welcomed by Senior Registrars and judiciary statewide, and it saw urgent tasks attended to without further delay. The redirection of resources to these locations observed a reduction in pending applications across most courts, an increased volume of files processed to chambers, and an increase in the processing of authorised future expense invoices. In addition to backlog reduction in these areas, this additional support and resourcing ensured that centralised files were prepared for transfer in a way that ensured a smooth transition into Melbourne.

As files have been received into the principal registry at Melbourne, VOCAT staff have done an exceptional job managing incoming files and changes in workload, focused daily on urgent applications and reducing any pre-centralisation delays.

The previously created backlog report has pivoted its original focus and now is a key tool in understanding the areas where staff may require additional training and resource support. The VOCAT leadership team utilise this backlog report to understand any gaps in essential task management, whilst supporting teams closely to ensure adequate guidance and training is available.







## Managing VOCAT

This reporting period a Principal Registrar, leadership team and staff across 51 venues throughout Victoria all supported 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, tribunal officers, 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 VOCAT's community presence and contributing to positive outcomes for victims of crime. Having decision makers as well as those who manage the administrative functions of VOCAT on the Committee promotes consistency between the judiciary, tribunal officers and registrars and considers issues affecting them.

To support consistency across venues prior to the Tribunal's centralisation at the end of this reporting period, the Coordinating Committee also regularly reviewed the Chief Magistrate's Practice Directions and Guidelines and made recommendations to the Chief Magistrate for the issue of new Practice Directions and Guidelines where necessary.

### Committee Chair:

Supervising Magistrate Fiona Hayes

### Members:

Judicial Head of Division Pauline Spencer; Magistrates Felicity Broughton, Andrew Capell, Jo Metcalf, Sharon McRae and Simon Guthrie; Judicial Registrar Samantha Dixon; Executive Director, Specialist Courts and Programs Jane Craig; Principal Registrar Donna Caruana; Standards and Compliance Officers Stephanie Oliver and Melissa Smith; Transition Project Lead Charlene Griffin; Learning and Development Advisor Naomi Nolet; Senior Tribunal Officer Madeleine Spain; Melbourne Senior Registry Manager Damian James; Melbourne Registry Manager Michelle Soares.

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

- ▶ the review and update of the Tribunal's legal cost and counselling fee guidelines
- ▶ legislative amendments to alleged offender notification and the review and update of the Tribunal's relevant Practice Direction
- ▶ consideration of the new Financial Assistance Scheme transition and data sharing provisions with the Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS)
- ▶ review of proper venue provisions for Koori applications ahead of centralisation, and update of the relevant Practice Direction
- ▶ extension of telehealth counselling session provision and update of the relevant Practice Direction
- ▶ the implementation of Koori cultural support plans as part of the Tribunal's Dhumbumana Healing Strategy
- ▶ the establishment and monitoring of the pre-centralisation blitz to support backlog reduction and delay prior to centralisation
- ▶ relocation of the Tribunal's Principal Registry to 555 Lonsdale Street Melbourne and the expansion of the Tribunal's workforce ahead of centralisation of statewide operations
- ▶ centralisation of statewide operations, including the issue of new Practice Directions
- ▶ review and update of the MCV digital recording policy
- ▶ introduction of the DJCS – Victims Legal Service and provision of information to Tribunal staff and judiciary
- ▶ expansion of the Judicial Registrar delegation to determine VOCAT matters
- ▶ the Tribunal's record management strategy, including plans for the management of archiving and disposal of Tribunal records, and proposed redrafting of the Tribunal's Records Disposal Authority
- ▶ review of the Tribunal's witness summons procedures
- ▶ direction regarding Legal Services Board matters
- ▶ direction regarding the provision of State Trustee payments for VOCAT award recipients
- ▶ staff well-being initiatives and the ongoing monitoring of the impact of increased work demand on Tribunal staff, and
- ▶ monitoring of statistical information across venues regarding the number of applications for assistance lodged and determined, awards of assistance made (including interim awards), pending caseload, types of pending matters across venues and the amount of assistance awarded.



Members of the Committee also participated in:

- ▶ the provision of materials and information sessions about VOCAT for new Magistrates, Judicial Registrars and Tribunal Officers
- ▶ the provision of VOCAT training for new Magistrates' Court of Victoria staff
- ▶ the provision of VOCAT training and updates to key stakeholder agencies such as VSSR, Victim Assistance Programs and Funds in Court
- ▶ meetings with representatives of DJCS, the Victims of Crime Commissioner and VSSR to discuss issues relating to services for victims of crime
- ▶ meetings with staff from the Financial Assistance Scheme to aid in new system development and plan for the operational transition
- ▶ a statewide VOCAT Registrar conference
- ▶ MCV Executive Leader and Senior Registrar meetings to provide VOCAT updates
- ▶ the Whole of Government Steering Committee and working groups in relation to the proposed Financial Assistance Scheme
- ▶ the Koori Self Determination Committee and the Courts Collaborative Working Group
- ▶ the Disability Justice Operational Forum and
- ▶ the Specialist Courts and Programs Leadership Committee.

## Our Registries

During this reporting period VOCAT's Principal Registry relocated from the William Cooper Justice Centre in Melbourne to 555 Lonsdale Street; however, every Magistrates' Court venue in Victoria provided registry services that helped 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.

This reporting period, the Tribunal funded 58 positions across Victoria and was further supported by Registrars and administrative staff of the Magistrates' Court.

The Melbourne office of VOCAT is staffed by:

- ▶ the Tribunal's leadership team, comprising the Principal Registrar, Standards and Compliance Officers, Transition Lead, Learning and Development Advisor, Senior Registry Manager, Registry Manager, Senior Tribunal Officer and Finance Team Manager
- ▶ our Melbourne registry, consisting of 12 Registrars and 8 Admin Deputy Registrars
- ▶ our Tribunal Officer List, inclusive of 10 Tribunal Officers and 6 Admin Deputy Registrars, in addition to
- ▶ 3 Finance Officers and an archivist.

This reporting period VOCAT funded 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 from the Magistrates' Court provide additional support. The operation of the Tribunal's Principal Registry was also significantly supported this reporting period by the engagement of fixed term contract staff in an attempt to combat increased backlog and rising caseload demand pressures.

The 2023/24 state budget provided \$6.6m for VOCAT over two years for Tribunal Officers, support staff and associated operating costs to help clear the Tribunal's pending caseload. This will allow the extension of current fixed term Tribunal Officer List staff and associated transition support roles, in addition to the creation of additional training and finance support roles, and several Tribunal Officer, Registrar and Admin Deputy Registrar roles, fixed term to 30 June 2024 to target caseload reduction in readiness for the Tribunal's transition to the new Financial Assistance Scheme.

## VOCAT Registrars

Registrars are the main points of contact for many 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 support to the Tribunal Members in their consideration of 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 include:

- ▶ 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 applications for interim financial assistance up to \$5000 and can make minor variations up to \$500.

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.

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

## Learning and development

A Learning and Development Advisor position was created and commenced in August 2021. Over the 2022/23 period, a number of notable outcomes have been achieved.

A comprehensive induction and training package has continued to be delivered to 33 MCV Registrars, Administrative Deputy Registrars and Tribunal Officers statewide. This 4.5 day package explores the case management process as well as an introduction to communicating with applicants, building and maintaining resilience, the risk of vicarious trauma and promoting self-care. The modular nature of this package enables new staff to attend comprehensive training, or experienced staff to access limited components of the training as a refresher.

In addition to the above training and induction package, four Tribunal Officers have completed specialised decision-making and legal research training and assessment prior to commencing independent decision-making. Ongoing professional development has also been facilitated by experienced Tribunal Members.

Eighteen Administrative Deputy Registrars completed bench-clerking training, enabling the Melbourne Registry to facilitate additional hearings.

Staff across the Tribunal have also completed Koori Cultural Awareness training, Dealing with Difficult Calls training, Foundations for Building Trauma Awareness training, and career development and VPS interview training.

Additional e-learning modules have been added to the VOCAT suite covering initial claim stages to enhance professional development for our staff.

A work placement program has been introduced to support university students to complete placements as part of their tertiary studies. Ten students have been immensely useful in initiating new applications for assistance and supporting the centralisation of files to Melbourne.

The next priorities for learning and development within the Tribunal are to onboard and train additional staff to address the pending caseload, implement a program to enable current staff who are Law graduates to complete their practical legal training with the Tribunal and to support the Tribunal's transition plans in the lead up to the commencement of the new Financial Assistance Scheme.

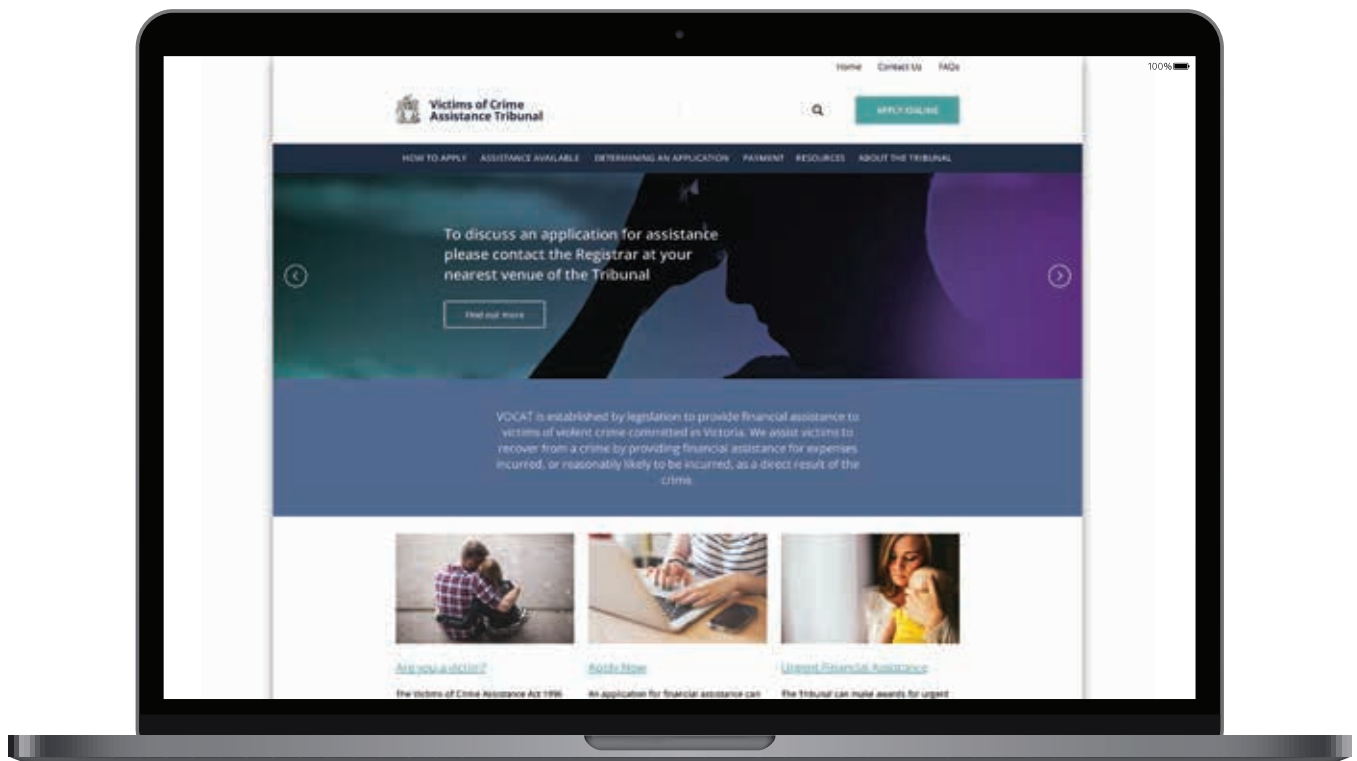
## VOCAT website

The Tribunal's current website ([www.vocat.vic.gov.au](http://www.vocat.vic.gov.au)) contains useful information, including:

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

The VOCAT website can be used on any device including smart phones, tablets and PCs. This means it can be used anywhere and at any time. The ease of access and user-friendly experience saw a dramatic increase in visitors to the website after it was redeveloped in 2016. This year the website received 117,796 unique visits, compared to 123,242 in the previous year, a decrease of 4.4%.

As with the previous year, the 'Application for Assistance form' was the most commonly downloaded publication/form and most common page views related to how to apply for financial assistance and victim categories. The current website enables the content to be translated into other languages. This reporting period the site was translated 4,302 times including 3,615 times into Chinese languages such as Mandarin and Cantonese.







# Our Statistical Report

The tables in this section 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, 2020/21 to 2022/23**

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Caseload</b>			
Number applications lodged	7,075	7,325	8,421
Number orders made finalising claims	7,917	7,441	8,782
Number applications pending on 30 June	7,717	8,018	8,169
<b>Case processing times</b>			
Proportion of applications finalised within 9 months of lodgement	49.2%	48.2%	52.0%
Proportion of applications finalised within 12 months of lodgement	64.3%	63.0%	65.3%
<b>Age of pending caseload</b>			
Proportion of applications pending for 9 months or more on 30 June	43.9%	46.1%	37.5%
Proportion of applications pending for 12 months or more on 30 June	34.4%	35.6%	28.7%

## Applications lodged by applicant gender and category of crime

**TABLE 2A and TABLE 2B: Number of applications for financial assistance lodged by category of offence, and gender of applicant, 2022/23<sup>3</sup>**

	Male		Female		Indeterminate/ Unspecified/ Intersex (X)		Total	
	Total Male	Male FV	Total Female	Female FV	Total X	X FV	Total	FV
Abduction / kidnap	10	3	16	11	0	0	26	14
Assault	1,858	244	1,393	618	7	1	3,258	863
Aggravated burglary	386	8	433	26	2	0	821	34
Criminal damage by fire	18	2	20	3	0	0	38	5
Family violence	159	159	731	731	2	2	892	892
Harassment	30	7	131	56	0	0	161	63
Homicide	183	24	230	39	1	0	414	63
Other	315	16	324	54	1	0	640	70
Robbery	151	2	90	2	0	0	241	4
Sex offences	205	79	1,320	582	6	2	1,531	663
Threats	163	39	233	101	3	0	399	140
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3,478</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>4,921</b>	<b>2,223</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8,421</b>	<b>2,811</b>

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



TABLE 2B:

	Distribution %				
	Male	Female	X	% of total applications lodged	FV
Abduction / kidnap	38%	62%	0.00%	0.3%	53.8%
Assault	57%	43%	0.21%	38.7%	26.5%
Aggravated burglary	47%	53%	0.24%	9.7%	4.1%
Criminal damage by fire	47%	53%	0.00%	0.5%	13.2%
Family violence	18%	82%	0.22%	10.6%	100%
Harassment	19%	81%	0.00%	1.9%	39.1%
Homicide	44%	56%	0.24%	4.9%	15.2%
Other	49%	51%	0.16%	7.6%	10.9%
Robbery	63%	37%	0.00%	2.9%	1.7%
Sex offences	13%	86%	0.39%	18.2%	43.3%
Threats	41%	58%	0.75%	4.7%	35.1%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>0.26%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>33.4%</b>

## Outcome of finalised applications

TABLE 3: Number of orders made upon final determination of applications for financial assistance, by order type, 2020/21 to 2022/23

	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Application granted/award made	5,319	67.2%	5,000	67.2%	5,700	64.9%
Application refused	70	0.9%	122	1.6%	101	1.2%
Application struck out/withdrawn	2,528	31.9%	2,319	31.2%	2,981	33.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,917</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7,441</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8,782</b>	<b>100%</b>

TABLE 4: Number of awards of financial assistance made upon final determination of applications for assistance, by award type, 2020/21 to 2022/23

Award Type	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Primary victim award	4,612	86.7%	4,430	88.6%	4,950	86.8%
Secondary victim award	391	7.4%	318	6.4%	355	6.2%
Related victim award	306	5.8%	247	4.9%	386	6.8%
Award for funeral expenses only	1	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	0.1%
Award made under <i>Criminal Injuries Compensation Act 1983</i>	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other	9	0.2%	5	0.1%	3	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,319</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5,000</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5,700</b>	<b>100%</b>

**TABLE 5: Number of awards of financial assistance made, by age and gender of awarded applicants, 2022/23**

Age at Award	No. applications				Distribution %			
	Male	Female	Other	Total	Male	Female	Other	Total
0 – 18 years	378	444	1	823	45.9%	53.9%	0.0%	14.4%
19 – 25 years	323	418	3	744	43.4%	56.2%	0.0%	13.1%
26 – 35 years	584	800	3	1,387	42.1%	57.7%	0.2%	24.3%
36 – 60 years	950	1,334	6	2,290	41.5%	58.3%	0.3%	40.2%
61 years +	215	233	0	448	48.0%	52.0%	0.0%	7.9%
Unknown	1	7	0	8	12.5%	87.5%	0.0%	0.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,451</b>	<b>3,236</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5,700</b>	<b>43.0%</b>	<b>56.8%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**TABLE 6: Number of active cases by Tribunal venue, 2020/21 to 2022/23**

Region	Tribunal venues within region	Pending		
		No. of active cases as at 30 June 2021	No. of active cases as at 30 June 2022	No. of active cases as at 30 June 2023 <sup>4</sup>
Barwon South West	Colac	17	4	2
	Geelong	469	245	43
	Hamilton	24	15	3
	Portland	25	15	9
	Warrnambool	105	50	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>63</b>
Broadmeadows	Broadmeadows	429	440	31
Dandenong	Dandenong	372	278	23
Frankston	Dromana	77	24	5
	Frankston	406	230	7
	Moorabbin	304	127	9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>787</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>21</b>
Gippsland	Bairnsdale	84	87	20
	Korumburra	26	17	1
	Latrobe Valley	200	185	19
	Moe	0	0	0
	Sale	78	58	17
	Wonthaggi	26	18	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>58</b>

4. For regions outside of Melbourne, these figures demonstrate the number of files retained for local finalisation post centralisation of Tribunal operations.

Region	Tribunal venues within region	Pending		
		No. of active cases as at 30 June 2021	No. of active cases as at 30 June 2022	No. of active cases as at 30 June 2023 <sup>4</sup>
Grampians	Ararat	17	18	3
	Ballarat	172	118	32
	Horsham	23	30	6
	Bacchus Marsh	43	54	13
	St Arnaud	14	14	2
	Stawell	5	3	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>57</b>
Heidelberg	Heidelberg	334	263	59
Hume	Benalla	8	7	2
	Cobram	1	0	0
	Mansfield	3	5	1
	Seymour	37	27	8
	Shepparton	112	97	15
	Wangaratta	24	15	0
	Wodonga	45	44	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>37</b>
Loddon Mallee	Bendigo	138	124	2
	Castlemaine	12	14	1
	Echuca	25	33	0
	Kerang	11	12	0
	Kyneton	38	24	0
	Maryborough	38	23	0
	Mildura	99	34	0
	Swan Hill	19	16	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>3</b>
Melbourne	Melbourne	2,006	1,771	4,580
	Koori List	431	559	679
	Tribunal Officer List	0	1,921	2,453
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,437</b>	<b>4,251</b>	<b>7,712</b>
Neighbourhood Justice Centre	Collingwood	64	31	5
Ringwood	Ringwood	783	503	60
Sunshine	Sunshine	420	403	29
	Werribee	153	62	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,717</b>	<b>8,018</b>	<b>8,169</b>

**TABLE 7: Number of applications for assistance lodged, final orders and awards made by Tribunal region, 2022/23**

Region: **BARWON SOUTH WEST**

Tribunal venues within region:	Colac	Geelong	Hamilton	Portland	Warrnambool
Applications Lodged	5	84	9	18	28
Final Orders Made	2	143	15	15	62
Awards Made	2	108	10	12	51

**Barwon South West Totals**



Applications Lodged  
1.7% OF  
STATEWIDE  
TOTAL



Final Orders Made  
2.7% OF  
STATEWIDE  
TOTAL



Awards Made  
3.2% OF  
STATEWIDE  
TOTAL

Region: **BROADMEADOWS**

Tribunal venues within region: **Broadmeadows**

Applications Lodged	227
Final Orders Made	300
Awards Made	229

**Broadmeadows Totals**



Applications Lodged  
2.7% OF  
STATEWIDE  
TOTAL



Final Orders Made  
3.4% OF  
STATEWIDE  
TOTAL



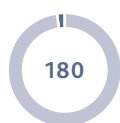
Awards Made  
4.0% OF  
STATEWIDE  
TOTAL

Region: **DANDENONG**

Tribunal venues within region: **Dandenong**

Applications Lodged	180
Final Orders Made	295
Awards Made	189

**Dandenong Totals**



Applications Lodged  
2.1% OF  
STATEWIDE  
TOTAL



Final Orders Made  
3.4% OF  
STATEWIDE  
TOTAL



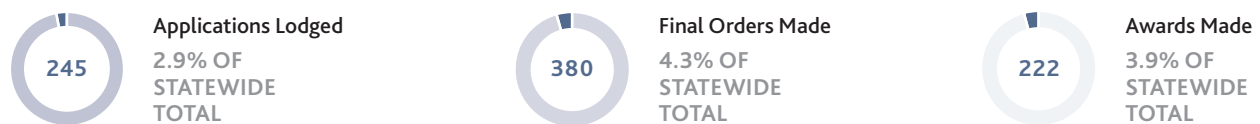
Awards Made  
3.3% OF  
STATEWIDE  
TOTAL

**TABLE 7: Number of applications for assistance lodged, final orders and awards made by Tribunal region, 2022/23**

Region: **FRANKSTON**

Tribunal venues within region:	Dromana	Frankston	Moorabbin
Applications Lodged	15	109	121
Final Orders Made	20	180	180
Awards Made	14	99	109

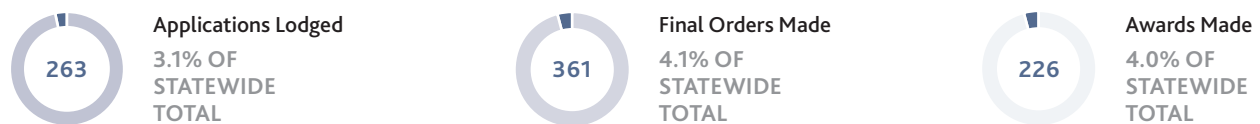
Frankston Totals



Region: **GIPPSLAND**

Tribunal venues within region:	Bairnsdale	Korumburra	Latrobe Valley	Moe	Sale	Wonthaggi
Applications Lodged	50	35	145	0	27	6
Final Orders Made	46	20	213	0	65	17
Awards Made	42	10	136	0	27	11

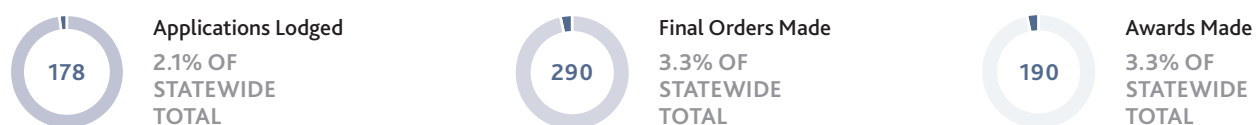
Gippsland Totals



Region: **GRAMPIANS**

Tribunal venues within region:	Ararat	Bacchus Marsh	Ballarat	Horsham	St Arnaud	Stawell
Applications Lodged	2	31	129	10	4	2
Final Orders Made	14	57	171	34	12	2
Awards Made	12	37	113	16	11	1

Grampians Totals



**TABLE 7: Number of applications for assistance lodged, final orders and awards made by Tribunal region, 2022/23**

Region: **HEIDELBERG**

Tribunal venues within region: **Heidelberg**

Applications Lodged	180
Final Orders Made	186
Awards Made	143

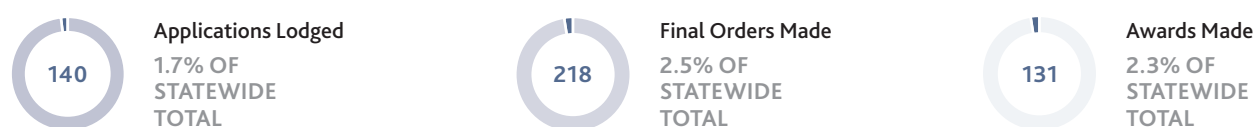
**Heidelberg Totals**



Region: **HUME**

Tribunal venues within region:	<b>Benalla</b>	<b>Cobram</b>	<b>Mansfield</b>	<b>Seymour</b>	<b>Shepparton</b>	<b>Wangaratta</b>	<b>Wodonga</b>
Applications Lodged	10	0	5	21	51	18	35
Final Orders Made	15	0	8	32	96	24	43
Awards Made	10	0	5	22	55	13	26

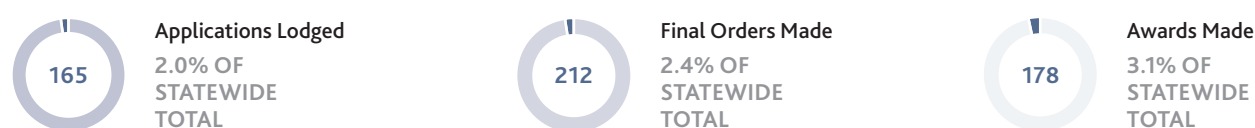
**Hume Totals**



Region: **LODDON MALLEE**

Tribunal venues within region:	<b>Bendigo</b>	<b>Castlemaine</b>	<b>Echuca</b>	<b>Kerang</b>	<b>Kyneton</b>	<b>Maryborough</b>	<b>Mildura</b>	<b>Swan Hill</b>
Applications Lodged	73	8	10	3	23	19	19	10
Final Orders Made	89	10	18	11	12	21	38	13
Awards Made	80	9	10	5	12	17	32	13

**Loddon Mallee Totals**





**TABLE 7: Number of applications for assistance lodged, final orders and awards made by Tribunal region, 2022/23**

Region: **MELBOURNE**

Tribunal venues within region:	Melbourne	%	Koori List	%	Tribunal Officer List	%
Applications Lodged	2,104	25.0%	582	6.9%	3,521	41.8%
Final Orders Made	1,769	20.1%	515	5.9%	3,288	37.4%
Awards Made	1,126	19.8%	306	5.4%	2,052	36.0%

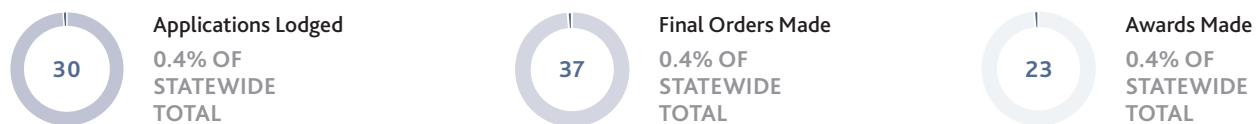
Melbourne Totals



Region: **NEIGHBOURHOOD JUSTICE CENTRE**

Tribunal venues within region:	Collingwood
Applications Lodged	30
Final Orders Made	37
Awards Made	23

Neighbourhood Justice Centre Totals



Region: **RINGWOOD**

Tribunal venues within region:	Ringwood
Applications Lodged	184
Final Orders Made	303
Awards Made	209

Ringwood Totals



TABLE 7: Number of applications for assistance lodged, final orders and awards made by Tribunal region, 2022/23

Region: **SUNSHINE**

Tribunal venues within region:	Sunshine	Werribee
Applications Lodged	166	112
Final Orders Made	316	75
Awards Made	250	43

Sunshine Totals

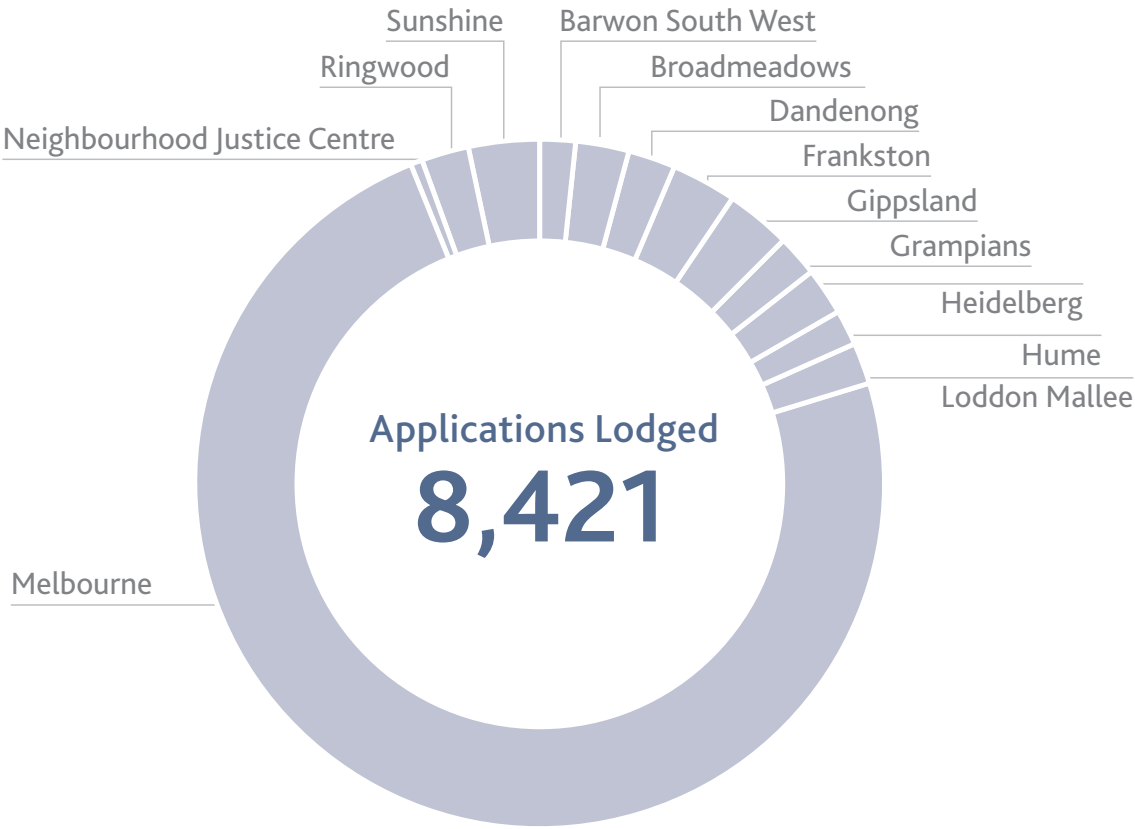
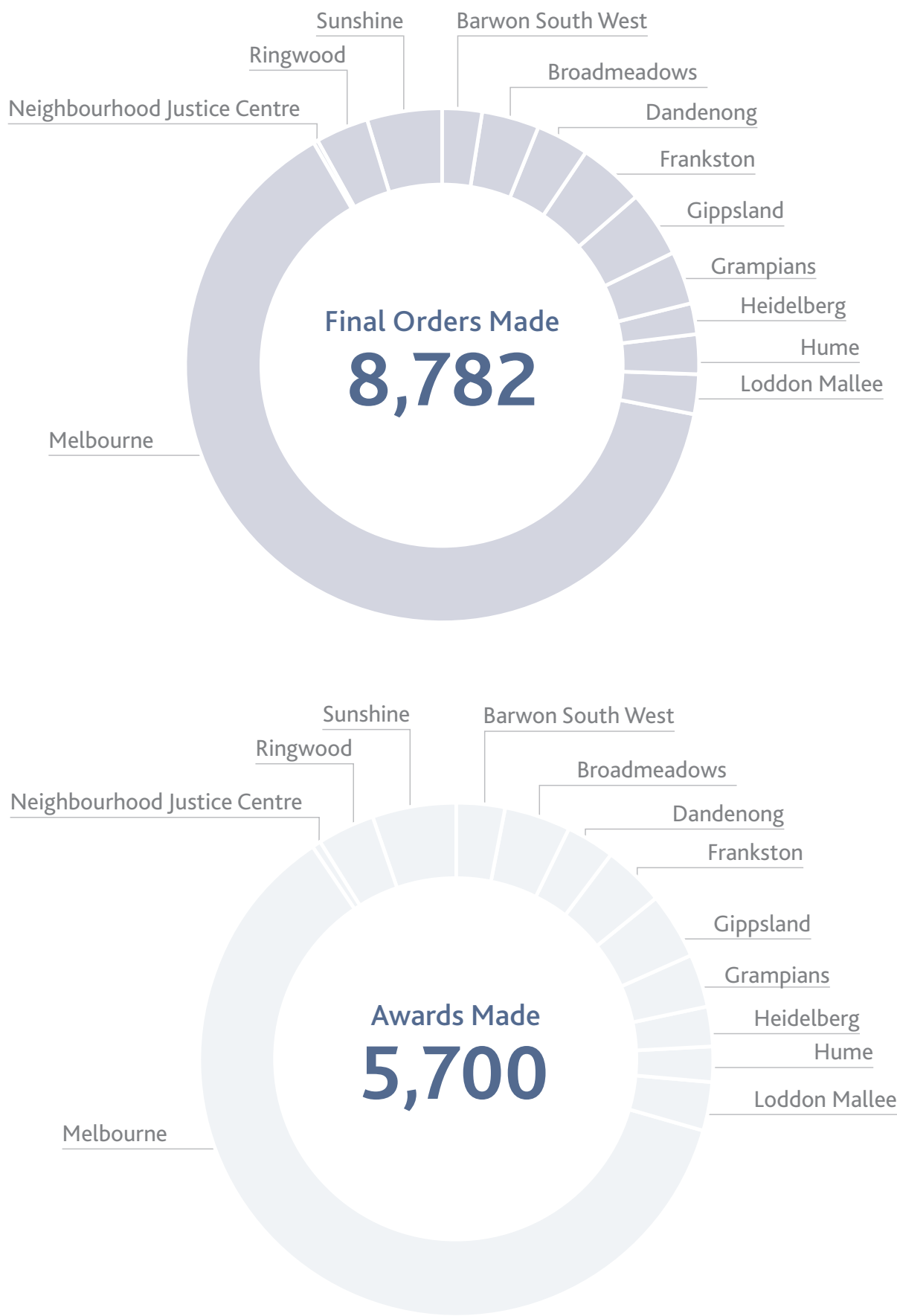


TABLE 7: Number of applications for assistance lodged, final orders and awards made by Tribunal region, 2022/23



## Financial assistance awarded and legal costs<sup>5</sup>

**TABLE 8: Total amount of financial assistance awarded and legal costs ordered (interim, final determination, by variation and on review), 2020/21 to 2022/23**

	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
Financial assistance	\$57,508,632	89.9%	\$54,435,121	89.6%	\$66,678,064	90.1%
Legal costs	\$6,451,530	10.1%	\$6,326,454	10.4%	\$7,333,386	9.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$63,960,162</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$60,761,575</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$74,011,450</b>	<b>100%</b>

**TABLE 9: Total amount of financial assistance awarded, 2020/21 to 2022/23**

	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
Financial assistance for expenses already incurred and lump sum payments (special financial assistance, distress, loss of earnings)	\$38,155,483	66.3%	\$36,137,959	66.4%	\$42,972,218	64.4%
Financial assistance for expenses not yet incurred	\$19,353,149	33.7%	\$18,297,162	33.6%	\$23,705,846	35.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$57,508,632</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$54,435,121</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$66,678,064</b>	<b>100%</b>

**TABLE 10: Total amount of financial assistance awarded by assistance type, and legal costs ordered, 2022/23**

Assistance Type	Interim Award	Final Award	Award on Variation	Award on Review	Total \$	as %
Special financial assistance	\$5,850	\$14,305,629	\$53,750	\$0	\$14,365,229	19.4%
Pain and suffering	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Distress	\$9,885	\$7,410,645	\$0	\$0	\$7,420,530	10.0%
Funeral expenses	\$380,061	\$240,943	\$4,290	\$0	\$625,294	0.8%
Loss of earnings	\$65,391	\$3,669,509	\$236,353	\$0	\$3,971,253	5.4%
Dependency	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Loss/damage to clothing	\$3,693	\$184,510	\$2,107	\$0	\$190,310	0.3%
Counselling/ psychological/ psychiatric reports	\$906,394	\$1,530,598	\$185,253	\$0	\$2,622,245	3.5%
Counselling sessions	\$4,973,277	\$9,135,905	\$2,550,396	\$4,800	\$16,664,379	22.5%
Medical expenses	\$480,921	\$3,046,882	\$1,064,063	\$324	\$4,592,190	6.2%
Other expenses to assist recovery	\$280,720	\$8,108,885	\$1,745,207	\$13,941	\$10,148,752	13.7%
Safety related expenses	\$706,995	\$4,691,079	\$679,808	\$0	\$6,077,882	8.2%
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$7,813,187</b>	<b>\$52,324,585</b>	<b>\$6,521,228</b>	<b>\$19,065</b>	<b>\$66,678,064</b>	<b>90.1%</b>
Legal costs	\$0	\$7,160,571	\$164,723	\$8,091	\$7,333,386	9.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$7,813,187</b>	<b>\$59,485,156</b>	<b>\$6,685,951</b>	<b>\$27,156</b>	<b>\$74,011,450</b>	<b>100%</b>

5. 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, 2022/23**

Assistance Type	Interim Award	Final Award	Awarded on Variation	Awarded on Review	Total \$	as %
Special financial assistance	\$5,850	\$14,305,629	\$53,750	\$0	\$14,365,229	33.4%
Pain and suffering	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Distress	\$9,885	\$7,410,645	\$0	\$0	\$7,420,530	17.3%
Funeral expenses	\$339,232	\$207,249	\$4,290	\$0	\$550,771	1.3%
Loss of earnings	\$65,391	\$3,669,509	\$236,353	\$0	\$3,971,253	9.2%
Dependency	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Loss/damage to clothing	\$3,333	\$175,340	\$2,107	\$0	\$180,780	0.4%
Counselling/ psychological/ psychiatric reports	\$906,394	\$1,530,598	\$185,253	\$0	\$2,622,245	6.1%
Counselling sessions	\$556,305	\$2,589,981	\$1,077,145	\$0	\$4,223,431	9.8%
Medical expenses	\$143,261	\$1,651,194	\$587,872	\$324	\$2,382,652	5.5%
Other expenses to assist recovery	\$53,279	\$3,400,633	\$899,963	\$13,941	\$4,367,816	10.2%
Safety related expenses	\$142,464	\$2,351,856	\$393,191	\$0	\$2,887,511	6.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,225,395</b>	<b>\$37,292,634</b>	<b>\$3,439,924</b>	<b>\$14,265</b>	<b>\$42,972,218</b>	<b>100%</b>

**TABLE 12: Amount of financial assistance awarded for *expenses not yet incurred*, by type of assistance, 2022/23**

Assistance Type	Interim Award	Final Award	Awarded on Variation	Awarded on Review	Total \$	as %
Counselling sessions	\$4,416,973	\$6,545,924	\$1,473,251	\$4,800	\$12,440,947	52.5%
Medical expenses	\$337,659	\$1,395,688	\$476,191	\$0	\$2,209,538	9.3%
Loss/damage to clothing	\$360	\$9,170	\$0	\$0	\$9,530	0.0%
Other expenses to assist recovery	\$227,441	\$4,708,251	\$845,244	\$0	\$5,780,936	24.4%
Funeral expenses	\$40,828	\$33,695	\$0	\$0	\$74,523	0.3%
Safety related expenses	\$564,531	\$2,339,223	\$286,618	\$0	\$3,190,371	13.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,587,792</b>	<b>\$15,031,951</b>	<b>\$3,081,304</b>	<b>\$4,800</b>	<b>\$23,705,846</b>	<b>100%</b>

**TABLE 13: Number of final awards of financial assistance made, and average amount of financial assistance awarded on final determination, 2020/21 to 2022/23**

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of awards of financial assistance made	5,319	5,000	5,700
Amount of financial assistance awarded	\$44,101,250	\$41,932,468	\$52,324,585
Average amount of financial assistance awarded	\$8,291	\$8,386	\$9,180

**TABLE 14: Number of primary victims awarded special financial assistance and amount awarded on determination of application, by category, 2020/21 to 2022/23**

	Number			Distribution		
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Number of primary victims who were awarded special financial assistance by category</b>						
Category A	842	754	925	18.9%	17.5%	19.1%
Category B	1,150	1,034	1,130	25.8%	24.0%	23.3%
Category C	1,483	1,428	1,653	33.2%	33.1%	34.1%
Category D	991	1,100	1,142	22.2%	25.5%	23.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,466</b>	<b>4,316</b>	<b>4,850</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Amount of special financial assistance awarded by category</b>						
Category A	\$7,297,539	\$6,519,154	\$8,106,670	55.0%	53.8%	56.7%
Category B	\$3,488,877	\$3,117,000	\$3,415,898	26.3%	25.7%	23.9%
Category C	\$1,878,335	\$1,800,155	\$2,075,816	14.1%	14.9%	14.5%
Category D	\$615,095	\$678,852	\$707,245	4.6%	5.6%	4.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,279,846</b>	<b>\$12,115,161</b>	<b>\$14,305,629</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Average amount of special financial assistance awarded by category</b>						
Category A	\$8,667	\$8,646	\$8,764			
Category B	\$3,034	\$3,015	\$3,023			
Category C	\$1,267	\$1,261	\$1,256			
Category D	\$621	\$617	\$619			
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,974</b>	<b>\$2,807</b>	<b>\$2,950</b>			

**TABLE 15: Number of related victims awarded financial assistance for distress and amount awarded on final determination, 2020/21 to 2022/23**

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of related victims who were awarded financial assistance for distress	292	237	368
Amount of financial assistance awarded to related victims for distress on determination of application	\$5,551,387	\$5,330,488	\$7,410,645
Average amount of financial assistance awarded to related victims for distress	\$19,012	\$22,492	\$20,138

**TABLE 16: Amount of legal costs ordered to be paid on the final determination of applications for financial assistance, and average legal costs ordered, 2020/21 to 2022/23**

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of awards of financial assistance made	5,319	5,000	5,700
Amount ordered to be paid for legal costs	\$6,292,666	\$6,142,613	\$7,160,571
Average amount of legal costs ordered to be paid per awarded applicant	\$1,183	\$1,229	\$1,256



## 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 2020/21 to 2022/23**

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of interim awards of assistance made by Tribunal Members	1,352	995	1040
Number of interim awards of assistance made by Judicial Registrars	220	237	134
Number of interim awards of assistance made by Tribunal Officers	0	331	410
Number of interim awards of assistance made by Registrars	573	325	246
<b>Total number of interim awards of assistance made for expenses already incurred</b>	<b>2,145</b>	<b>1,888</b>	<b>1,830</b>
Proportion of interim awards made by Tribunal Officers	0.0%	17.5%	22.4%
Proportion of interim awards made by Registrars	26.7%	17.2%	13.4%
Amount of interim financial assistance awarded for expenses already incurred	\$2,521,948	\$2,240,790	\$2,225,395
Average amount of interim financial assistance awarded for expenses already incurred	\$1,176	\$1,187	\$1,216

**TABLE 18: Number of interim awards of financial assistance made where financial assistance was awarded for expenses not yet incurred, and amount awarded, 2020/21 to 2022/23**

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of interim awards of assistance made by Tribunal Members	1,234	854	999
Number of interim awards of assistance made by Judicial Registrars	164	175	110
Number of interim awards of assistance made by Tribunal Officers	0	281	319
Number of interim awards of assistance made by Registrars	511	231	206
<b>Total number of interim awards of assistance made for expenses not yet incurred</b>	<b>1,909</b>	<b>1,541</b>	<b>1,634</b>
Proportion of interim awards made by Tribunal Officers	0.0%	18.2%	19.5%
Proportion of interim awards made by Registrars	26.8%	15.0%	12.6%
Amount of interim financial assistance awarded for expenses not yet incurred	\$5,235,125	\$4,295,916	\$5,587,792
Average amount of interim financial assistance awarded for expenses not yet incurred	\$2,742	\$2,788	\$3,420

## 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, 2020/21 to 2022/23

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of awards varied to award further financial assistance for expenses already incurred	1,539	1,792	1,599
Amount of financial assistance awarded on variation for expenses already incurred	\$3,072,324	\$3,132,674	\$3,439,924
Average amount of financial assistance awarded on variation for expenses already incurred	\$1,996	\$1,748	\$2,151

**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, 2020/21 to 2022/23

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number of awards varied to award further financial assistance for expenses not yet incurred	856	865	865
Amount of financial assistance awarded on variation for expenses not yet incurred	\$2,561,005	\$2,757,183	\$3,081,304
Average amount of financial assistance awarded on variation for expenses not yet incurred	\$2,992	\$3,187	\$3,562

## Applications for review of decisions

**TABLE 21:** Number of applications for review finalised by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, by outcome, 2020/21 to 2022/23

Outcome	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23	
Original order/award set aside and new award made on review	2	14.3%	1	9.1%	1	12.5%
Award varied on review	1	7.1%	4	36.4%	0	0.0%
Order affirmed on review	5	35.7%	3	27.3%	2	25.0%
Application for assistance remitted to original decision-maker for determination	2	14.3%	2	18.2%	2	25.0%
Application for review dismissed	1	7.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Application for review struck out / withdrawn / abandoned	3	21.4%	1	9.1%	3	37.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>

**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, 2020/21 to 2022/23

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Number awards of assistance made or varied on review	3	5	1
Amount of financial assistance awarded on review	\$16,980	\$76,090	\$19,065
Average amount of financial assistance awarded on review	\$5,660	\$15,218	\$19,065





# Our Financial Report

This year, VOCAT continues to operate as efficiently as possible. More than usual was spent on temporary administrative staff to assist with backlog, the Tribunal's centralisation and increased caseload demand. Priority throughout the year was given to urgent matters including finalising older claims.



## 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.<sup>6</sup>

## Financial assistance paid

In the year ending 30 June 2023, the Tribunal paid a total amount of \$55,081,273 (compared to \$42,979,559 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.

## Operating costs

In the year ending 30 June 2023, VOCAT's operating costs were \$5,358,998 compared to \$5,605,882 in the previous year (a decrease of 4.4%). An increase in the Tribunal's staffing profile, higher than usual contractor engagements to manage backlog and increased demand, centralisation expenses and additional IT set up costs account for much of the increase in operating costs for the Tribunal over the past two reporting periods.

VOCAT's operating costs were minimised in this reporting period as a result of:

- ▶ being accommodated within Magistrates' Court venues for majority of the year
- ▶ having Magistrates and Judicial Registrars as decision-makers and
- ▶ being supported by Magistrates' Court Registrars.

The Magistrates' Court absorbs a proportion of VOCAT's operating costs, including Magistrates' salaries<sup>7</sup> and infrastructure costs.

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

For the year ending 30 June 2023, the average cost per finalised application for financial assistance was \$610<sup>8</sup> compared to \$753 in the previous year. This represents a decrease of 19%.

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 Judicial salaries.

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

7. 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.

8. This figure is a simple calculation of the total operating budget divided by the number of applications for assistance that were finalised during the reporting period.



## Financial Statement for year ending 30 June 2023

	Note	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Special Appropriations</b>				
	1			
Salaries, Overtime & Annual Leave		\$2,836,717	\$3,368,335	\$3,407,535
Superannuation		\$170,019	\$286,107	\$370,839
Payroll Tax		\$96,302	\$174,924	\$233,475
Provision For Long Service Leave		\$16,494	\$118,230	\$97,394
Workcover Levy		\$7,321	\$11,822	\$14,515
Fringe Benefits Taxation		–	–	–
<b>Total Salaries and Associated Expenditure</b>		<b>\$3,126,853</b>	<b>\$3,959,418</b>	<b>\$4,123,758</b>
<b>Operating Expenditure</b>				
Travel & Personal Expenses		\$928	\$4,553	\$48,901
Printing, Stationery & Subscriptions		\$42,963	\$69,907	\$59,136
Postage & Communication		\$1,441	\$13,009	\$5,166
Contractors and Professional Services	2	\$325,010	\$833,795	\$412,667
Training and Development		\$9,778	\$51,564	\$25,340
Motor Vehicle Expenses		–	–	\$50
Operating Expenses		\$532,933	\$535,632	\$533,113
Information Technology Costs		\$43,445	\$107,804	\$79,155
Rent Utilities and Property Services		\$27,148	\$30,200	\$71,183
Repairs and Maintenance		–	–	\$529
<b>Total Operating Expenditure</b>		<b>\$983,647</b>	<b>\$1,646,464</b>	<b>\$1,235,240</b>
<b>Total Salaries and Operating Expenditure</b>		<b>\$4,110,500</b>	<b>\$5,605,882</b>	<b>\$5,358,998</b>
<b>Special Appropriations</b>				
Award Payments		\$46,443,727	\$42,979,559	\$55,081,273
<b>Total Awards</b>	3	<b>\$46,443,727</b>	<b>\$42,979,559</b>	<b>\$55,081,273</b>

### Notes to and forming part of the financial statement

This financial statement is based upon financial data available as at 18 July 2023.

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 2023.

Note 2: The expenditure for contractors and professional services relates predominantly to legal costs and contract labour hire.

Note 3: 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 2023.

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

## Chief Magistrate

Justice Lisa Hannan

## Deputy Chief Magistrates

Ms Felicity Broughton  
(until 8 October 2022)

Ms Susan Wakeling

Mr Tim Bourke

## Magistrates

Ms Marita Altman

Ms Susan Armour  
(until 12 August 2022)

Ms Megan Aumair

Mr Julian Ayres

Mr Guillaume Bailin

Ms Donna Bakos

Mr Stephen Ballek

Ms Julia Barling

Ms Hayley Bate

Ms Luisa Bazzani

Mr John Bentley

Ms Amina Bhai

Ms Jacqueline Billings

Ms Angela Bolger

Ms Jade Bott

Ms Caroline Boulton

Ms Jennifer Bowles

Ms Felicity Broughton

Mr Gerard Bryant

Ms Abigail Burchill

Mr Tony Burns

Ms Carolyn Burnside

Ms Alexandra Burt

Mr Darrin Cain

Mr Vincenzo Caltabiano  
(from 18 October 2022)

Ms Suzanne Cameron

Ms Victoria Campbell

Mr Andrew Capell

Ms Megan Casey  
(from 18 October 2022)

Mr Michael Coghlan

Ms Ann Collins

Mr Gregory Connellan

Ms Erica Contini

Ms Suzette Dootjes

Mr Peter Dotchin

Ms Alanna Duffy

Mr Peter Dunn

Ms Rosemary Falla

Mr David Fanning  
(until 29 October 2022)

Mr David Faram  
(until 3 February 2023)

Ms Kathryn Fawcett  
(from 18 October 2022)

Mr Bernard Fitzgerald

Ms Lesley Fleming

Mr Leon Fluxman  
(from 18 October 2022)

Mr Justin Foster

Ms Belinda Franjic  
(from 18 October 2022)

Mr Simon Garnett  
(until 6 September 2022)

Mr Timothy Gattuso

Ms Jane Gibson

Mr Kieran Gilligan

Mr Phillip Goldberg

Ms Anne Goldsbrough

Ms Julie Grainger

Mr Timothy Greenway

Ms Kirstie Grigor

Mr Martin Grinberg

Ms Jennifer Grubissa

Mr Simon Guthrie

Mr Andrew Halse

Ms Robyn Hamilton

Mr John Hardy

Ms Tara Hartnett

Ms Annabel Hawkins

Ms Fiona Hayes  
(VOCAT Supervising Magistrate)

Ms Natalie Heynes  
(from 18 October 2022)

Mr Timothy Hoare

Ms Meghan Hoare

Ms Michelle Hodgson

Ms Cecily Hollingworth

Mr Franz Holzer

Ms Gail Hubble

Mr Trieu Huynh

Mr Graeme Keil

Mr Russell Kelly

Ms Meagan Keogh

Mr Costas Kilias

Dr Michael King

Mr Randall Kune

Mr Nunzio La Rosa

Ms Heather Lambrick  
(from 18 October 2022)

Ms Elizabeth Langdon

Mr David Langton  
(from 19 July 2022)

Mr Rohan Lawrence

Mr Stephen Lee

Mr Dominic Lennon

Mr Gerard Lethbridge

Ms Denise Livingstone

Ms Cynthia Lynch

Ms Mary-Anne MacCallum

Ms Jan Maclean

Ms Kay MacPherson

Ms Urfa Masood

Mr Ross Maxted

Ms Therese McCarthy

Ms Ann McGarvie

Mr Andrew McKenna

Mr Michael McNamara

Ms Sharon McRae

Ms Frances Medina  
 Mr Peter Mellas  
 Ms Johanna Metcalf  
 Mr Peter Mithen  
 Ms Helen Murphy  
 Ms Michelle Mykytowycz  
 Mr John O'Callaghan  
 Ms Julie O'Donnell  
 Mr Jason Ong  
 Ms Kim Parkinson  
 Mr Anthony Parsons  
*(until 24 May 2023)*  
 Mr Shiva Pillai  
 Mr Richard Pithouse  
*(until 24 March 2023)*  
 Ms Roslyn Porter  
 Ms Samantha Poulter  
 Ms Vicky Prapas  
 Mr Hugh Radford  
 Ms Lucia Raponi  
*(from 19 July 2022)*  
 Mr Peter Reardon  
*(until 11 October 2022)*  
 Mr Michael Richards  
 Ms Kay Robertson  
 Mr Gregory Robinson  
 Ms Kristen Rose  
 Mr Mark Sabljak  
 Mr Ronald Saines  
 Mr Marc Sargent  
*(until 11 January 2023)*  
 Mr Andrew Sim  
*(from 18 October 2022)*  
 Mr Paul Smith  
*(until 12 August 2022)*  
 Ms Sharon Smith  
 Mr Brett Sonnet  
*(from 19 July 2022)*  
 Mr Patrick Southey  
 Ms Pauline Spencer  
 Ms Helen Spowart  
*(from 19 July 2022)*  
 Mr David Starvaggi  
 Mr Robert Stary  
 Ms Melissa Stead  
 Ms Fiona Stewart

Mr Mark Stratmann  
 Ms Jacinta Studham  
 Ms Stella Stuthridge  
 Ms Mia Stylianou  
 Ms Kimberley Swadesir  
 Mr Charles Tan  
 Mr Greg Thomas  
*(from 19 July 2022)*  
 Mr Malcolm Thomas  
*(from 18 October 2022)*  
 Ms Noreen Toohey  
 Ms Cynthia Toose  
 Ms Letizia Torres  
 Ms Jennifer Tregent  
 Ms Olivia Trumble  
 Ms Belinda Wallington  
 Mr Tim Walsh  
 Ms Nahrain Warda  
 Mr Mike Wardell  
 Mr Ian Watkins  
 Mr Matthew White  
 Mr Michael Wighton  
 Mr Jarrod Williams  
*(from 18 October 2022)*  
 Ms Christina Windisch  
 Mr Simon Zebrowski  
 Mr Francis Zemljak

## Reserve Magistrates

Mr Ross Betts  
 Mr Barry Braun  
 Mr Brian Clifford  
 Mr Bruce Cottrill  
 Mr Rodney Crisp  
 Mr John Doherty  
 Ms Michelle Ehrlich  
 Mr David Faram  
 Ms Margaret Harding  
 Mr Louis Hill  
 Mr Jonathan Klestadt  
 Mr Bob Kumar  
 Ms Cathy Lamble  
 Mr John Lesser  
 Mr Gregory Levine

Mr Lance Martin  
 Mr Ian McGrane  
 Mr Gregory McNamara  
 Mr Daniel Muling  
 Ms Jelena Popovic  
 Mr Steven Raleigh  
 Mr Duncan Reynolds  
 Mr Charlie Rozencwajg  
 Mr Michael Smith  
 Mr Alan Spillane  
 Mr Brian Wright

## Judicial Registrars

Ms Ruth Andrew  
*(until 19 January 2023)*  
 Mr Julian Bartlett  
 Mr Michael Bolte  
 Ms Shannon Dellamarta  
 Ms Samantha Dixon  
 Ms Kristie Eales  
 Ms Kathryn Fawcett  
*(until 17 October 2022)*  
 Mr Gavin Green  
 Mr Michael Gurvich  
 Mr Anthony Gwynne  
 Ms Leah Hickey  
 Mr Barry Johnstone  
 Mr Sivaratnam Kandasamy  
*(from 26 April 2023)*  
 Ms Stephanie Keogh-Barnes  
*(from 6 September 2022)*  
 Mr Richard O'Keefe  
*(until 10 December 2022)*  
 Ms Alison Paton  
 Ms Lisa Rees  
*(from 26 April 2023)*  
 Ms Katherine Rynne  
 Ms Angela Soldani  
 Ms Allison Vaughan  
 Mr John Wieladek  
 Ms Sally Wilson  
*(from 26 April 2023)*

# Our Locations and Contact Details

## **ARARAT**

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**NEIGHBOURHOOD  
JUSTICE CENTRE**

241 Wellington Street  
Collingwood 3066  
Ph: 03 9087 5739  
Fax: 03 9139 7309

**NHILL**

110 MacPherson Street  
Nhill 3418  
(C/- PO Box 111, Horsham 3400)  
Ph: 03 9063 0115  
Fax: 03 5353 8125  
Also see HORSHAM

**OMEIO**

Main Street  
Omeo 3898  
(C/- PO Box 367 Bairnsdale 3875)  
Ph: 03 7003 4112  
Also see BAIRNSDALE

**ORBOST**

8 Wolsley Street  
Orbost 3888  
(C/- PO Box 367 Bairnsdale 3875)  
Ph: 03 9063 0117  
Fax: 03 5116 2001  
Also see BAIRNSDALE

**OUYEN**

Oke Street  
Ouyen 3490  
(C/- PO Box 5014, Mildura 3500)  
Ph: 03 9063 0112  
Also see MILDURA

**PORTLAND**

67 Cliff Street  
PO Box 374  
Portland 3305  
Ph: 03 9063 0119  
Fax: 03 4505 3711

**RINGWOOD**

39 Ringwood Street  
PO Box 333  
Ringwood 3134  
Ph: 03 9087 5720  
Fax: 03 8863 5463

**ROBINVALE**

George Street  
Robinvale 3549  
(C/- PO Box 5014 Mildura 3500)  
Non sitting days  
Ph: 03 9063 0112  
Fax: 03 5077 3610  
Sitting days  
Ph: 03 9087 5721  
Fax: 03 5061 3110  
Also see MILDURA

**SALE**

79-87 Foster Street  
PO Box 351  
Sale 3850  
Ph: 03 9087 8486  
Fax: 03 4113 7825

**SEYMOUR**

56 Tallarook Street  
PO Box 235  
Seymour 3660  
Ph: 03 9087 5722  
Fax: 03 5785 4110

**SHEPPARTON**

18 High Street  
PO Box 607  
Shepparton 3630  
Ph: 03 9087 5723  
Fax: 03 5895 4511

**ST ARNAUD**

Napier Street  
PO Box 17  
St Arnaud 3478  
Ph: 03 9087 5724  
Fax: 03 5469 3125  
Also see MARYBOROUGH

**STAWELL**

Patrick Street  
PO Box 179  
Stawell 3380  
Ph: 03 9087 5725  
Fax: 03 4344 5025  
Also see ARARAT

**SUNSHINE**

10 Foundry Road  
PO Box 435  
Sunshine 3020  
Ph: 03 9087 5726  
Fax: 03 9007 7169

**SWAN HILL**

121 Curlewis Street  
PO Box 512  
Swan Hill 3585  
Ph: 03 9087 5727  
Fax: 03 5072 3488

**WANGARATTA**

24 Faithfull Street  
PO Box 504  
Wangaratta 3677  
Ph: 03 9087 5728  
Fax: 03 5757 5910

**WARRNAMBOOL**

218 Koroit Street  
PO Box 244  
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Ph: 03 9087 5729  
Fax: 03 4505 0888

**WERRIBEE**

Cnr Duncans Road & Salisbury Street  
PO Box 196  
Werribee 3030  
Ph: 03 9087 5730  
Fax 03 8744 5601

**WODONGA**

5 Elgin Boulevard  
PO Box 50  
Wodonga 3690  
Ph: 02 9087 5731  
Fax: 02 6048 1910

**WONTHAGGI**

Watt Street  
PO Box 104  
Wonthaggi 3995  
Ph: 03 9087 5732  
Fax: 03 5612 8525







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Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal  
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Authorised by the Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal  
555 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne  
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