



Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Mr Peter Cain MLA

Addressed to: Minister for Human Rights

Reference: Attorney- General

Hearing: 19/02/2025

In relation to: Victim Rights

Question received: 25/02/2025

Answer Due: 05/03/2025

1. What are the common issues being raised in the 124 victim rights concerns reported to Victim Support in 2023–24?
2. How is the government addressing these concerns to prevent recurrence?
3. What are the current average wait times for victims seeking therapeutic support services under the Victims Services Scheme (VSS)?
4. What steps are being taken to reduce these wait times and ensure timely access to therapeutic services?

Ms Tara Cheyne MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. In the last financial year, the most common areas of victims rights concern have been with respect to a justice agency not engaging with a victim respectfully and with appropriate regard to the victim's personal situation, needs, concerns, rights and dignity as required by s 14C of the *Victims of Crime Act 1994* ('the Act') (100 victims rights concerns raised) and the police not updating victims about the status of investigations as per s 16A of the Act (30 victims rights concerns raised).

The third most common issue that victims raised with the Victims of Crime Commissioner in 2023-24, was that justice agencies did not ensure a victim is provided with, or is able to access any special requirement the victim is entitled to in relation to a proceeding for the offence under the *Evidence (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1991* and any aid or adjustment that is reasonably necessary to enable the victim to fully participate in the administration of justice for the offence as required by s 15A of the Act (20 victims rights concerns raised).

2. The Government will soon commence a statutory review of the Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime (the Charter). This will examine the effectiveness of the victims' rights framework in

the *Victims of Crime Act 1994* and whether there are opportunities to improve the scheme. The review will be wide-ranging and will enable stakeholders to provide comments on any issue around victims' rights – including victims' rights concerns and ways these concerns could be mitigated in the future. The consultation process will seek submissions, comments and feedback not only from Victim Support ACT, other victim advocates and justice agencies but also from victims themselves. The themes and concerns that emerge from this feedback will inform the future direction of the Charter and any amendments to the legislation.

3. The current average wait time for victims seeking therapeutic services under the VSS is 10-12 weeks. The wait time for individuals depends on the complexity of their needs, their location and provider preferences.
4. VSACT currently has approximately 220 providers available under the Victims Services Scheme (VSS) and in the last financial year victims accessed 9,810 hours of services.

Over the past 4 financial years additional funding has been provided to support increases in demand for Victim Support Act's services, including the VSS. The 2021/22 Budget provided additional ongoing funding for an additional two FTE to manage the increased demand and an additional \$500,000 per annum for VSS service provider payments. In the 2022/23 Budget Review, the government allocated recurrent funding of \$1.615m over four years to provide services to family members of victims whose death resulted from a motor vehicle offence and the implementation of PAVER (Project Assisting Victims Experience and Recovery Review) recommendations which include work to improve delivery of client-centred services. In the 2023/24 Budget, an additional three FTE were provided for the VSS over 2 financial years to progress outstanding recommendations made in the Project Assisting Victims' Experience and Recovery (PAVER) Review. In the 2024/25 Budget, \$1.057m was allocated over four years (indexed and ongoing) for the VSS to increase the amount paid to psychologists and social workers providing counselling under the scheme to \$200 per hour and to supplement base Victim Support Scheme funding.

In recent years VSACT has increased both the size and diversity of the provider pool for the VSS which has significantly reduced average wait times. Increased provider payments have resulted in an increase in telehealth providers from interstate.

Wherever possible VSACT has redirected resources from other teams to support administration of the VSS. For short periods when an additional FTE resource has been available to support VSS administration the wait time for victims accessing therapeutic services has been reduced to 6-8 weeks.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs

Signature:

By the Minister for Human Rights, Ms Tara Cheyne MLA

Date:

7/3/25