

23 December 2022

Mr Peter Cain MLA
Chair, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
Via email: cain@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Mr Cain,

JACS Inquiry into Dangerous Driving

Thank you for your letter dated 7 December 2022 and your interest in our proposal to expand eligibility of the Victim Services Scheme to include the families of victims who have died on the roads as a result of driving offences causing death.

In response to your question, I believe these families should have the option of accessing services from Victim Support ACT through any relevant coronial proceedings, noting such proceedings are often protracted, complex and re-traumatising for victims of crime. In this context, you may be aware that improvements to the coronial process are also currently being considered more generally through the ACT's first restorative design process.

As raised in my submission to the Committee dated 5 October 2022, I propose regulation 24 of the *Victims of Crime Act* be amended and resourcing provided to Victim Support ACT to allow the Victims Services Scheme to offer crisis and ongoing therapeutic support to victims alongside case coordination, court support and advocacy services.

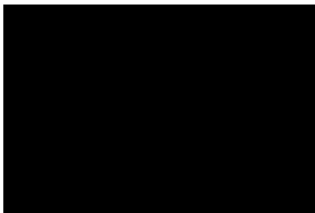
In relation to the need for ongoing *therapeutic* support to families throughout coronial proceedings (as well as other court proceedings), we understand that unfortunately, delivery of the [ACT coronial counselling service](#) based at Relationships Australia has been detrimentally impacted by resource constraints. We understand this service has been unable to regularly accept new referrals for an extended period. Accordingly, the continuation of Victim Support ACT therapeutic services through the coronial process is needed to fill gaps for families who are either waiting for MAI recompense to fund therapeutic services, who cannot be seen by the coronial counselling service and/or where the wait times in the private sector (currently two to three months) are too long.

The Victim Services Scheme should also have the capacity to provide specialist case coordination and advocacy support to families throughout the coronial process. This type of support differs from legal advice and representation, which many families will also seek to aid their participation in coronial and other court proceedings. In this context, advocacy support will ensure that families not only understand the coronial process and their roles and responsibilities, but also have the opportunity to contribute and have their voice heard where appropriate in proceedings.

The Coroner's Court encompasses the important role of a family liaison officer. However, it is likely that many families would prefer to maintain access to a Victim Support ACT case coordinator whom they trust, and who can provide independent advocacy as part of the holistic wraparound service that Victim Support ACT staff are equipped to provide. Furthermore, as with the coronial counselling service, the Coroner's Court's one family liaison officer unfortunately does not have the resources to provide sufficient support to all bereaved families.

I hope this information is helpful and I thank you again for seeking my views on this issue. I would be happy to answer any additional queries or to discuss further with you. [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,



Heidi Yates
Victims of Crime Commissioner
ACT Human Rights Commission

