

Opening statement by the Director of Public Prosecutions

Thank you for the opportunity to provide an opening statement.

The Annual Report speaks to the extraordinary work done by the office in 2024-25, and the steps taken to rebuild a prosecution service which acts without fear or favour.

It also outlines the exponential pressure that the office faced over the last reporting year by way of increased demand. Positioned between the inflow of work from police and the scheduling demands of the Court, my office has no control over the volume or timing of incoming matters or when those matters will be dealt with. The pipeline of cases from police, particularly in family and sexual violence, continues to grow, and with it, the strain on the resources of my office.

As outlined in the Annual Report, the office has introduced several measures over the last financial year, to create efficiencies across the justice sector, in light of this unrelenting demand. Some of these measures have included:

- **The Nominal Informant Program** – a collaborative arrangement between ACT Policing and the DPP, which introduced a ‘nominal’ police informant at Court to reduce delays in information sharing between police, my office, the Courts, Legal Aid ACT and other legal representatives. Requests that once took days or weeks are now often answered in minutes, reducing delays and ensuring fairer outcomes.
- **New processes for applying the 'Public Interest' test** – the office has reformed the way it deals with the second step in any prosecution process, giving clearer guidance and capacity to exercise the discretion to discontinue matters that do not need to make their way through the criminal justice process – this can include where there has been victim misidentification, trivial charges or cases involving juveniles or police misconduct, or where a victim no longer wishes to proceed. This results in saving of resources across the system.
- **Early plea identification in Criminal Case Conferencing** – the office has introduced a new approach to Criminal Case Conferencing, helping appropriately resolve matters earlier, reducing pressure on courts and reducing the impact of delayed resolution on victims.

Despite these efficiency measures, the pressure and workload on the office have not abated, but rather continue to grow, particularly in some of the most complex areas of prosecution work. In the last reporting year, Supreme Court listings surged by nearly 50%, the office dealt with more than 23,000 charges before the Courts, and over 4,500 victims interacted with the office.

A prosecution office that receives base funding at a level consistent with the work flowing into the office is something Canberrans should expect when they interact with the justice system. As highlighted in the Australian Law Reform Commission’s landmark 2025 report, ‘Safe, Informed, Supported’, an under-resourced justice system contributes to delays and poorer outcomes for people who have experienced sexual violence.

Necessary base funding for the DPP benefits not only victims, witnesses and complainants who rely on the DPP as the vehicle through which justice is achieved or not achieved, but the whole system. It allows the office to assess early if matters should stay in the system, make early plea offers where appropriate, and run cases properly and efficiently. These efficiencies reduce delays and ultimately deliver savings across the system.

I look forward to the questions from the Committee.