

Question on Notice

No. 943

Asked on 23 August 2023

MR T NICHOLLS ASKED THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, MINISTER FOR PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE (HON Y D'ATH)

QUESTION:

With reference to special assistance payments for primary victims in each of the following categories (i) child abuse, (ii) domestic and family violence, (iii) sexual violence, (iv) physical assault, (v) being threatened with a weapon or with force, (vi) stalking, kidnapping or deprivation of liberty, (vii) dangerous driving causing grievous bodily harm and (viii) attempted murder— Will the Attorney-General provide (reported separately by year and category) for the last five years (a) the number of applications received, (b) applications approved, (c) the amount paid out to victims and (d) the average time taken for the payment to be paid out to the victim?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government, through Victim Assist Queensland (VAQ), provides financial assistance to help victims recover from the physical and psychological impacts of violent crime.

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to supporting victims of crime.

Since the 2017 legislative amendments which extended support to all victims of domestic and family violence (DFV), including non-physical DFV, there has been a 195% increase in applications for financial assistance. In 2022-23, 56% of all financial assistance applications came from DFV victims.

Since 2021-22, the Palaszczuk Government has provided substantial investment in supporting victims of crime, including an additional 17 full-time ongoing positions to support victims of crime.

These extra resources, and the implementation of internal reforms to streamline decision making, have improved efficiencies and reduced the waiting time for applications to be decided.

The investment has contributed to a 200% increase in financial assistance decisions, an additional \$23.7.6 million provided to support victims and a 45.3% improvement in processing times in 2022-23 compared to 2021-22.

From 1 July 2023, the Government has invested an additional \$9 million over four years to support victims of violent crime, including \$5.4 million to support resources for a more timely assistance to victims of property crime with violence, and an extra \$3 million over four years to address service gaps of non-government organisations to help victims of property crime and youth crime involving violence.

\$0.6 million has also been provided to undertake a review of the legislated financial assistance model to ensure it is meeting the needs of victims of violent crime. The review which commenced in August 2023 will consider alternative models for the administration of the scheme that are trauma-informed, victim-centric and provide timely outcomes to victims of crime.

The *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009* (VOCAA) determines the amount of special assistance available to victims based on the offence type and the victim's circumstances, including the seriousness of the victim's injury. Victims can apply for ongoing recovery expenses for 6 years after their applications are decided, which can be several years after the act of violence where VAQ are required to defer deciding their applications until their compensation/litigation claims, workers compensation, insurance or other claims are finalised.

VAQ prioritises urgent medical treatment, funeral expenses, security and relocation expenses for DFV victims referred by High Risk Teams. These timeframes vary considerably and as such any averaging would not reflect the individual response times (which cannot be provided due to the unreasonable diversion of departmental resources). However, noting the importance of the cost burden on applicants for funeral expenses these are prioritised with the average time for payment being 21 days.

For non-urgent applications, for the period of 2018-19 to 21-22, applications took an average of 347 days to be paid. In 2022-23, this improved to 295 days, and work is continuing to reduce these timeframes further. This includes the current review to identify additional measures to streamline the processes.

In 2018-19, VAQ received 4,192 applications for financial assistance and decided 2,854 applications. 92.3% of applications decided in 2018-19 were eligible for assistance (2,634). Non-urgent applications took an average 7.2 months (215 days) to be decided.

In 2018-19, VAQ paid \$15.3 million to victims of crime in Queensland, including \$8.6 million in special assistance.

2018-19 Financial Year								
	DFV	Sexual violence	Physical assault	Threats and stalking	Motor vehicle related violence*	Burglary	Robbery	Total (all applications)
Applications received	1756	665	1,232	62	40	41	76	4,192**
Applications eligible***	1,088	419	865	24	11	39	41	2,634

*Any motor vehicle related violence must go through a CTP process prior to having applications assessed at VAQ

**20.2% of applications received related to offences perpetrated against applicants who were children at the time of the offence (848).

***Applications are not always decided in the same financial year they are received.

In 2019-20, VAQ received 4,174 applications for financial assistance and decided 2,412 applications. 88.4% of applications decided in 2019-20 were eligible for assistance (2,132).

VAQ paid \$13.1 million to victims of crime in Queensland, including \$7 million in special assistance.

2019-20 Financial Year								
	DFV	Sexual violence	Physical assault	Threats and stalking	Motor vehicle related violence*	Burglary	Robbery	Total (all applications)
Applications received	1,587	670	1,415	123	42	34	73	4,174**
Applications eligible***	968	292	638	32	16	6	28	2,132

*Any motor vehicle related violence must go through a CTP process prior to having applications assessed at VAQ

**19% of applications received related to offences perpetrated against applicants who were children at the time of the offence (797).

***Applications are not always decided in the same financial year they are received.

In 2020-21, VAQ received 4,605 applications for financial assistance and decided 3,497 applications. 90.1% of applications decided in 2020-21 were eligible for assistance (3,152).

VAQ paid \$17.9 million to victims of crime in Queensland, including \$10.7 million in special assistance.

2020-21 Financial Year								
	DFV	Sexual violence	Physical assault	Threats and stalking	Motor vehicle related violence*	Burglary	Robbery	Total (all applications)
Applications received	1,932	741	1,418	87	38	18	84	4,605**
Applications eligible***	1,378	469	980	40	18	12	33	3,152

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**18.1% of applications received related to offences perpetrated against applicants who were children at the time of the offence (835).

***Applications are not always decided in the same financial year they are received.

In 2021-22, VAQ received 4,935 applications for financial assistance and decided 2,869 applications. 93.2% of applications decided in 2021-22 were eligible for assistance (2,675).

VAQ paid \$15.9 million to victims of crime in Queensland, including \$10 million in special assistance.

2021-22 Financial Year								
	DFV	Sexual violence	Physical assault	Threats and stalking	Motor vehicle related violence*	Burglary	Robbery	Total (all applications)
Applications received	2,309	785	1,347	67	46	74	59	4,935**
Applications eligible***	1,360	441	649	50	4	13	36	2,675

*Any motor vehicle related violence must go through a CTP process prior to having applications assessed at VAQ

**16.7% of applications received related to offences perpetrated against applicants who were children at the time of the offence (829).

***Applications are not always decided in the same financial year they are received.

In 2022-23, VAQ received 7,621 applications for financial assistance and decided 7,800 applications. 95.8% of applications decided in 2022-23 were eligible for assistance (7,471).

VAQ paid \$39.6 million to victims of crime in Queensland, including \$29 million in special assistance.

2022-23 Financial Year								
	DFV	Sexual violence	Physical assault	Threats and stalking	Motor vehicle related violence*	Burglary	Robbery	Total (all applications)
Applications received	4,337	891	1,518	63	37	68	118	7,621**
Applications eligible***	4,092	1,089	1,720	50	22	64	73	7,471

*Any motor vehicle related violence must go through a CTP process prior to having applications assessed at VAQ

**20.1 of applications received related to offences perpetrated against applicants who were children at the time of the offence (1,533).

***Applications are not always decided in the same financial year they are received.