

Question on Notice

No. 941

Asked on 21 August 2024

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

QUESTION:

With reference to compensation under the Victims Assist Queensland scheme—

Will the Attorney-General advise, for the years of 2021 to now (reported yearly) (a) how many victims of crime in the Toowoomba region have applied for compensation, (b) how many victims of crime received compensation, and (c) what is the total amount of compensation paid during that period (reported yearly)?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for his question.

The Miles Government is committed to supporting victims of crime in Queensland.

That is why we have launched our comprehensive \$1.28 billion Community Safety Plan, which includes more than \$200 million over the next five years to enhance support for victims of crime in Queensland. This funding includes \$185 million to increase financial assistance limits payable to victims and resources for Victim Assist Queensland (VAQ).

We have also committed \$45 million in funding under a targeted victim's support package to help vulnerable Queenslanders when they need it most. This includes more than \$15 million for VAQ to ensure the timely delivery of financial assistance to victims of crime.

The financial assistance scheme is governed by the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009* (the VOCA Act) and, whilst the purpose of the scheme is to provide financial assistance to eligible victims, it is not intended to duplicate assistance provided under compensation or insurance schemes.

In determining the amount of financial assistance payable to an eligible victim, VAQ must take into account relevant payments received from other schemes including Compulsory Third-Party Insurance (CTP), Nominal Defendant and Workers' Compensation.

I am advised that in 2021-22, VAQ received 146 applications for financial assistance from victims of crime in the Toowoomba local government area (Toowoomba region), including 18 applications which were withdrawn or closed due to lack of information provided. 115 applications have been assessed as eligible for financial assistance. VAQ paid \$432,106 in total to eligible victims of crime from the Toowoomba region in that financial year.

I am advised that in 2022-23, VAQ received 255 applications for financial assistance from victims of crime in the Toowoomba region, including 50 applications which were withdrawn or closed due to lack of information provided. 192 applications have been assessed as

eligible for financial assistance. VAQ paid \$1.26 million in total to eligible victims of crime from the Toowoomba region in that financial year.

It should be noted that, in February 2024, VAQ introduced an immediate eligibility triage process. A dedicated team reviews and triages primary victim applications to identify whether an eligibility decision can be made based on minimum evidentiary requirements. Where eligibility is confirmed, assessors are able to grant an immediate assistance payment based on the category of act of violence that eligibility has been determined for.

I am advised that in 2023-24, VAQ received 555 applications for financial assistance from victims of crime in the Toowoomba region. As at 30 August 2024, 318 applications have been assessed as eligible for financial assistance and VAQ has paid \$3.19 million in total to eligible victims of crime from the Toowoomba region in that financial year.

I am advised that between 1 July and 30 August 2024, VAQ received 48 applications for financial assistance from victims of crime in the Toowoomba region. As at 30 August 2024, eight applications have been assessed as eligible for financial assistance and VAQ has paid \$948,864 in total to eligible victims of crime from the Toowoomba region during this period.

It is noted that applicants can apply for additional recovery expenses for up to six years after the date their application is decided. The processing of financial assistance may occur across different financial years. Due to processing times, VAQ may receive an application in one financial year and decide the application and make a payment in another financial year.

It should also be noted that a significant portion of VAQ applications are domestic and family violence (DFV) related. In 2022-23, 58.2% of all applications received were DFV related.