



Media release

18 July 2024

The ACT Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has welcomed vital funding to expand its Witness Assistance Service (WAS).

This funding lifeline will inject much-needed resources into the witness support services at the ACT DPP.

The WAS scheme received \$404,346 to expand the team for 12 months. This will allow for three additional WAS staff. Historically the WAS scheme has operated at significantly lower levels compared to the WAS support available in DPPs in other jurisdictions.

WAS is an integral part of the DPP - an essential frontline service to ensure witnesses and victims are given the support they need from within the DPP to navigate the criminal justice system. This includes access to information on how their matter is proceeding and what to expect through the Court process. A well-resourced WAS gives witnesses and victims agency from within the DPP.

This funding comes from the Confiscation of Criminal Assets (COCA) Distribution Surplus Funds. COCA is a lesser known yet important part of the DPP. COCA is responsible for the confiscation of criminal assets in the ACT. These funds are distributed across the ACT's justice system.

'This funding will help plug an immediate gap and will assist us to better meet our commitment to providing a trauma informed service to witnesses and victims in the ACT. A stronger WAS allows the DPP to not only meet its obligations to witnesses and victims, but also to ensure it is engaging effectively with external victim support services in the ACT.'

'It is of vital importance that we build an effective WAS in the ACT. The current short-term funding will go some way to providing an immediate need. I look forward to continuing working with the ACT Government to ensure victims and witnesses who come into contact with my office are given the support necessary.'

All quotes are attributable to Victoria Engel SC, Director of Public Prosecutions.

For all DPP media enquiries
Contact: Bec Rohan-Jones
M: 0432 836 191
E: DPPMedia@act.gov.au