

Media release

18 June 2025

The announcement by the Government today provides the ACT Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) with one additional FTE (at the ASO5 level) to the Witness Assistance Service (WAS), and support to service the additional criminal listings from the announcement of the creation of a 10th Magistrate position. The funding for one WAS position and support to service the additional Court listings is welcomed, however, does not meet current demand for victims and witnesses facing complex barriers to justice and falls short of the necessary long-term funding to meet the increased demand of the work of the ACT DPP.

“The ACT DPP prosecute all matters charged by police, from breaches of family violence orders to child sexual assault, incest, organised crime and murders. Community protection depends on these matters being prosecuted fairly and skilfully. If the ACT DPP is not adequately funded, community safety is compromised.”

The DPP recognises today’s announcement yet remains extremely concerned about the base funding of its agency, which compromises the needs of vulnerable people at the centre of the justice system. This is despite two consecutive recommendations from the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs that the Government increase funding to office.

“The WAS scheme continues to operate at drastically lower levels compared to the WAS support available in other jurisdictions, to the detriment of those who interact with the criminal justice system, namely victims of crime. The WAS provide critical support to vulnerable victims and witnesses and are often the only support service that a victim or witness engages with whilst facing an unknown and complex system.”

“The appointment of a 10th Magistrate is welcomed, however, the funding to assist the office to service the Court listings of a 10th Magistrate will not address the sustained increase in demand on the DPP over the last decade and the unmet resourcing needs. As the frontline agency entrusted with achieving justice outcomes for Canberrans through the Court system, this is concerning.”

Any other changes made with the intent of improving the experience of victims in the space of sexual and family violence matters, or other improvements to the system, are hampered if the organisation responsible for bringing the matter to Court on behalf of the community is not funded adequately to do the work. The DPP looks forward to working with the ACT Government to address the unmet need.

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

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