



ACT Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

MEDIA STATEMENT

I recognise the pain and trauma that is felt by the victim-survivors in the Mitchell matter. As a result of the matter being before the Court, there is a limit to what can be said publicly at this time. However, given the recent statements by the Attorney-General, and the need to preserve confidence in the justice system, I wish to make the following comments.

I commenced as ACT Director of Public Prosecutions just over two weeks ago on 6 May 2024. On the first day of my tenure, I met with the victim-survivors in the Mitchell matter who had been affected by the issue the subject of the recent appeal brought by the offender. That appeal had been conceded by my office prior to the commencement of my tenure. I had been advised that questions had been taken on notice by the then Acting Director of Public Prosecutions in a meeting he had had with the same victim survivors in April 2024, and I wanted as far as possible to provide some answers to those questions for the victim-survivors.

In my meetings with the victim-survivors on 6 May, I frankly acknowledged that a significant error had occurred in the information provided to them in 2022 and expressed to them my genuine apology for that. I gave them my assurance that a mistake of that nature would not happen again; I am able to make that assurance as a matter such as theirs would require review and approval by me as the Director. I provided answers to the questions taken on notice from April. Since that meeting, further information has been provided to the victim-survivors in relation to matters raised with me on 6 May 2024.

To the extent that systemic changes are required to address public confidence going forward, I immediately commenced an internal review on 6 May. Changes have already been implemented. Any further improvements identified by the review will also be introduced. I hope to continue working with the victim survivors to ensure their concerns are heard and that lessons will be learnt from the error that was made. I also look forward to working with the Attorney-General and Government to ensure my office is funded adequately to meet its obligations to the community.

One of the requests made by the victim-survivors to me on 6 May was to release a letter they understood had been sent to the Attorney-General in April 2024 relating to this case. I indicated my in-principle agreement to that in the meeting, and that letter has today been released to them. One of the issues raised in that letter by my predecessor is the complexity involved in the relevant legislation.

In my two weeks leading the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, I have been exceptionally impressed at the calibre and commitment of the staff that I have come to lead. Every day they serve the ACT community, dealing with difficult content, and do so for the most part in matters that remain out of the public eye. They have my confidence and respect. I do not say that to take away from the error made in this matter, or to diminish the pain that the Mitchell victim-survivors are feeling. I also do not intend to convey that improvements cannot be made, nor that lessons will not be taken from the error made in this matter.

Victoria Engel SC
ACT Director of Public Prosecutions