

Media release in response to motion passed in Legislative Assembly

16 September 2025

The DPP welcomes the motion brought today by the Opposition, and supported by the Greens and Government, to shine a spotlight on the critical and urgent needs of the DPP, as well as those of the Legal Aid Commission, and are pleased to see the uniform support the motion received. We similarly welcome the recommendations made by the Select Committee on Estimates and thank the Committee for their understanding of the acute demands on the DPP. These recommendations follow similar recommendations from previous Committees in 2024 and 2025.

This motion needs to be met with immediate action. Without a properly funded criminal justice system, access to justice for Canberrans is severely compromised. Every day in the ACT, the community rely on the DPP to fairly and efficiently seek justice on their behalf. ACT policing lay charges, but the DPP is the vehicle through which justice in the Court system is either achieved or not achieved. The increased demands and real time pressure on the DPP, by way of more charges being laid by ACT policing in sexual and family violence, and the increased pressures from the Court, combined with increased complexity of criminal prosecution work, has created a perfect storm in the ACT which is impacting on the DPP's ability to provide the basic level of service Canberrans deserve. At a time when victims of family and sexual violence are rightly demanding better access to justice and protection, not providing the DPP with resources to deliver a base level of service, is unacceptable.

This situation is not new; it has been the subject of agitation by previous Directors for over 10 years. We acknowledge short-term measures that have been implemented to address the Sexual Assault Police Response (SAPR), and short-term funding to meet increased demand from the Courts by way of an additional Magistrate, however, given the long-term systemic underfunding of the DPP, this regrettably does not assist to meet the increase in work over the last decade.

The DPP is one of the few agencies in this sector which relies exclusively on ACT Government funding, with no access to Federal funding, and one of the few agencies that cannot stem the incoming flow of its work. The current situation is simply not sustainable.

The DPP recognises the commitment by the Attorney General at Estimates to work to improve the situation, and the support of the Attorney General in response to today's motion. The Attorney's reflections on the difficult work that the staff of the DPP undertake on a daily basis is also welcomed. In order to both protect the staff of the DPP and the reputation and trust that the community have in the DPP, urgent funding is necessary to rectify a long-standing deficit.

Statement attributable to Victoria Engel SC, Director of Public Prosecutions.

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