



Media Release

INDEPENDENCE FOR VICTORIAN COURTS & VCAT

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Legal history will be made today when Victorian courts and tribunals gain independence from departmental and political control and become truly independent.

From today, all courts and tribunals will be supported by the newly formed statutory body, Court Services Victoria (CSV). CSV is a new court-focused and court-administered statutory body to provide the services and facilities needed by the State's judiciary and court users.

Speaking on behalf all heads of jurisdictions, Chair of the Courts Council, Chief Justice Marilyn Warren, said independence of the judiciary was a foundation principle of our constitutional democracy.

'This move is one of the most significant legal and constitutional developments in almost 180 years of court history in Victoria,' she said.

'The courts themselves will remain as separate entities and maintain responsibility for directing its individual function. Each jurisdiction will continue to have a chief executive officer for that jurisdiction.

'The CSV chief executive officer will be responsible for managing CSV's day to day operation and staffing, with powers, functions and obligation similar to those of chief executive officers in other independent statutory bodies.

'The main function of CSV will be to provide the administration facilities and services necessary for the performance of the judicial and administrations functions of the courts and VCAT.

'The governing body of the CSV will be the Courts Council. Chaired by the Chief Justice, it will comprise the heads of each jurisdiction and up to two co-opted non judicial members,' Chief Justice Warren said.

Chief Justice Warren said that for many years the judiciary had sought to achieve administrative arrangements which would reflect and support the independence of the courts as a third arm of government.

'We now have an enhanced capacity to innovate and respond to emerging issues based on first-hand knowledge of the court system. This structure will enable the courts and VCAT to better serve the Victorian community with the assurance that we do so independently of executive government.

The historic changes do not affect the day-to-day operations of the courts. They are administrative changes that will bring Victoria in line with the High Court, the Federal Court, the family Court, the South Australian Courts and other international courts, including Ireland, where the courts have already established independence from their respective governments.

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