

# FACT SHEET

## Reforms to the Crime Victims Assistance Scheme

The current Crimes Victims Assistance Scheme is a court-based scheme. The proposed reforms will introduce a victims financial assistance scheme based on administrative assessment, removing the need for victims to go to court or be legally represented.

Under the changes, there will be more money for victims of serious crime and free counselling services for victims – delivering more immediate and comprehensive support to victims of crime.

### The changes will deliver:

- Streamlined and fast-tracked process with most claims settled within 6 months – some claims through the current court system can take up to two or three years to finalise
- Up-front, immediate financial assistance available for out of pocket expenses to a maximum \$5000 – this can include medical expenses, relocation expenses, loss of earnings etc
- More certainty in financial award levels with payments per injury set by a table
- Increasing maximum financial assistance for victims with more serious injuries by 60%.

Current court-based scheme	New administrative based scheme
Maximum payment of \$25,000.	Maximum payment of \$40,000.
\$160 up-front court fee.	No fees to process claims.
Requires legal assistance to progress claim through court.	Requires no legal assistance. Various victim services, including the new Crime Victims Services Unit are able to assist victims to lodge applications.
No up-front financial assistance	Up-front financial assistance to compensate out of pocket expenses – up to \$5000, in circumstances of hardship.
Settlement of claim through Court can take up to 3 years.	Fast-tracked settlement – most will be assessed and finalised within 6 months. Immediate up-front payment available for out-of-pocket expenses up to \$5000 while claim processing.
No provision for funded counselling services under the scheme	Access to free crisis counselling to assist victims restore their lives.

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## New administrative-based Crime Victims Financial Assistance Scheme

The new scheme will include financial assistance for economic loss and compensable injury to a maximum of \$40,000 (up from \$25,000).

This reflects government's commitment to provide practical and financial assistance to the victims most affected or injured by crime.

<p><b>Maximum \$40,000 financial assistance payment.</b></p> <p><b>Payment can be for a combination of compensable injury and economic loss to a total maximum of \$40,000.</b></p> <p><b>Minimum threshold of \$7,500 for compensable injury/ies.</b></p> <p><b>Up to \$10,000 available for financial loss with no minimum threshold.</b></p> <p><b>Access to free counselling services.</b></p>	
<p><b>Economic Loss</b></p>	<p><b>Non-Economic Loss Compensable injury - Pain and Suffering etc</b></p>
<p>Maximum economic loss - \$10,000.</p> <p>Economic loss can include out of pocket expenses such as medical expenses, lost wages, broken glasses, dental bills, relocation, security costs etc.</p>	<p>Table of compensable injury to maximum \$40,000.</p> <p>(Up from maximum payment of \$25,000 under the old scheme).</p>
<p>No minimum threshold.</p> <p>Immediate 'up-front' assistance of up to \$5000 available in cases of financial hardship.</p> <p>(The \$5000 immediate assistance forms part of the maximum \$10,000 available for economic loss).</p>	<p>Minimum threshold for compensable injury \$7500.</p> <p>This <u>does not exclude</u> a victim of crime from being compensated for economic loss, eg to cover medical expenses.</p> <p>Introducing a threshold to exclude less serious injuries, enables the funding to be redirected to victims with more serious injuries and to establishing a counselling scheme.</p>

### Examples of Crime Victims Assistance under the proposed administrative scheme:

An assault victim who cannot work due to their injuries but is casually employed with no access to sick leave and is facing financial hardship as a result, may be able to obtain immediate up-front assistance for loss of earnings and other out-of-pocket expenses to a maximum of \$5000.

Under the old scheme no up-front assistance existed and the victim could have faced a wait of up to 3 years for financial assistance.

Domestic violence victims may be able to access up-front financial assistance to help them relocate away from the offender - to a maximum of \$5000. This assistance can help DV victims that face financial hardship escape the cycle of violence. Under the old scheme no up-front assistance existed and the victim could have faced a wait of up to 3 years for financial assistance.