

Annual Report 2024-25

Acknowledgement of Country

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and waterways upon which our lives depend.

We acknowledge and pay respects to ancestors of this country, Elders, knowledge holders and leaders – past and present.

We extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. VCAT acknowledges the ongoing leadership of Aboriginal communities across Victoria in striving to build on these strengths to address inequalities and improve Aboriginal justice outcomes.

Artwork: **Corey He (Bunurong/Boon Wurrung)**
'Liz Family' 2024, acrylic on canvas



VCAT purchased several pieces of artwork from The Torch for our new headquarters. The Torch is a not-for-profit First Nations-led arts organisation that provides art, cultural and arts industry support to First Nations people who have lived experience of incarceration in Victoria.

Responsible Body Declaration

FEEDBACK

We welcome your feedback about this report. Please email communications@courts.vic.gov.au.

VCAT

vcat.vic.gov.au
1300 018 228

Rental Dispute
Resolution Victoria

rdrv.vic.gov.au
1300 01 7378

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30 September 2025

The Hon. Sonya Kilkenny
Attorney-General

Dear Minister

We are pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, in accordance with section 37 of the *Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998*.

Yours sincerely



Justice Ted Woodward
President



Fiona Chamberlain
Chief Executive Officer

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Resolution Officer
Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria
Stacey Greer



President and CEO message



President
Justice Ted Woodward



Chief Executive Officer
Fiona Chamberlain

This year has been characterised by a relentless focus on improving VCAT’s performance.

We want to begin this report of VCAT’s performance by acknowledging VCAT’s people – our members and staff – who have been essential to the improvements we have made to the service we provide Victorians, to our burgeoning reputation for tribunal excellence and to VCAT being charged with establishing **Residential Dispute Resolution Victoria** (RDRV), an important commitment under the Victorian Government’s Housing Statement.

VCAT was established to improve Victorians’ access to justice, to provide people with an informal, affordable and speedy pathway to a fair outcome. These are the foundational characteristics of VCAT and they have continued importance today, as Victorians deal with cost-of-living pressures and an increasingly complex and intimidating regulatory environment. VCAT’s foundational characteristics have directed our focus on performance improvement throughout the 2024–25 financial year.

In the latter part of 2024, we brought a longstanding backlog of residential tenancies cases to zero. By clearing the case backlog we created more capacity for important reform work under the auspices of **Towards Excellence**, our three-year roadmap for reform, which we announced on 1 July 2024.

In mid 2024, we launched the **Operating Model Improvement Project** (OMIP) to increase the efficiency and speed with which we resolve cases. The great promise of this project has continued to build throughout this financial year and VCAT has now finalised more than 4,000 cases under this new way of operating, the majority of those reaching an outcome without a hearing and usually within two weeks of people coming to us for help. The OMIP began by focusing on residential tenancies cases, has since expanded to civil claims and guardianship cases and it forms the basis for how VCAT will deliver its service into the future.

In late 2024, the Victorian Government announced RDRV will be established as part of VCAT. RDRV opened to Victorians on 23 June 2025 as a dedicated dispute resolution service for renters and rental providers. Based on early resolution methods developed in the OMIP and boosted by new digital tools and a user portal, RDRV now helps people to resolve common renting issues in ways that are faster, easier and free of charge for Victorians.

Throughout this financial year we have continued to **expand VCAT's services in Victorian communities**, at our community-based venues and at Courts Group locations throughout Victoria, and in many instances in partnership with community organisations that provide local support to our service users.

Our focus on performance improvement is resolute and this means we are honest about our performance challenges, and that we address them with intelligence, energy and purpose. Unsustainable delays have emerged with some case types – some civil, motor vehicle and freedom of information cases, and guardianship reassessments – and we are working to resolve these with our new operating model.

We have also instituted a dedicated governance mechanism, the **VCAT Case Efficiency Program**, to monitor progress and drive efficiency throughout the business of VCAT.

As we have identified, VCAT's performance and achievements over the 2024–25 financial year are the result of the day in and day out diligence and dedication of our people. Our success to date with eradicating case backlogs, our skill in designing and delivering key elements of our future operating model, our ability to chart and assess our progress, and our growing reputation as a leading tribunal and an institution Victorians can trust; these things are driven by the efforts of our members and staff and for this we are very grateful.

We are grateful for the support and investment from our stakeholders and the Victorian Government, so that we can continue to improve VCAT's performance and Victorians' experience of tribunal services.

Looking ahead, our work under *Towards Excellence* to improve our performance will continue at pace. Over the coming year this effort will be bolstered by a new organisation design with more efficient division, list and administrative structures, the completion of our new digital case management system, and our relocation to a new headquarter location in Melbourne's CBD that we have designed with our users front of mind.

Our program of improvement and reform is ambitious and we will need to navigate many more challenges. But we are cautiously optimistic. Our record in recent years and the commitment and capability of our people, give us genuine confidence that we will realise the aspirations of *Towards Excellence*.

We are pleased and honoured to serve at VCAT.



Justice Ted Woodward
President



Fiona Chamberlain
Chief Executive Officer



Helping Victorians
solve problems
fairly, quickly
and at low cost.

VCAT's Strategic Direction 2024–27

VCAT plays a vital role in Victoria's justice system, resolving more than 75,000 cases each year – from rental disputes and small claims to complex planning and human rights matters. As our population grows and the world becomes more complex, VCAT must evolve to meet demand, make the best use of resources and serve Victorians in ways that are fast, fair and accessible.

In 2024, we started a three-year program of transformation to reimagine the way we work. *Towards Excellence* is a strategy that guides our decision-making, planning and activity through to 2027 to better serve the Victorian community.

**VCAT Community-based
Venue Manager, Oakleigh**
Gabriele Cagnin

Towards Excellence focuses on three key areas:

Our people

VCAT's 500+ members and staff are our greatest strength. We're investing in leadership, performance, wellbeing and training, and creating new roles to better match the way we work now and in the future.

Our work

We're redesigning systems and introducing a new service model that allows for earlier, lower-cost resolutions. We're also focused on reducing the number of pending cases and embedding continuous improvement in everything we do.

Our organisation

We're modernising technology, improving service locations and updating our structures to be more responsive, efficient and sustainable.



Senior Member
Holly Nash

Our ambition is for VCAT to be a leader of tribunal excellence that is trusted by Victorians.

We are committed to:

Respect and professionalism

Treating all people who come to VCAT with respect and professionalism

Clear information

Explaining processes clearly and keeping people informed

Expert decisions

Providing impartial, expert decisions with minimal cost and delay

Access and fairness

Ensuring access and fairness for all Victorians

Towards Excellence describes VCAT's **purpose**, which is to provide equal access to high-quality justice for Victorians. Our **aim** is to help people reach a fair outcome at low cost and as quickly as possible.

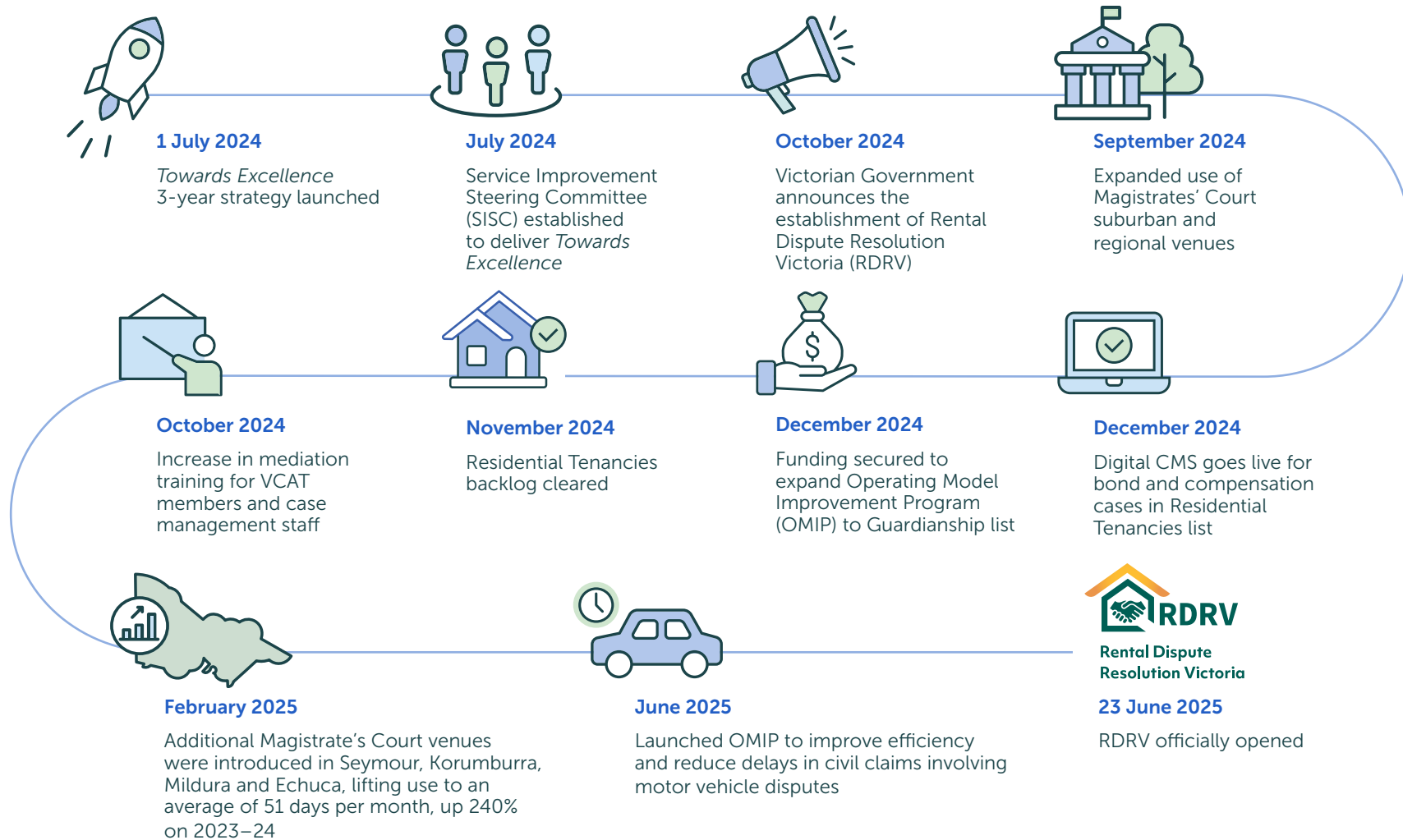
In 2024–25, we made strong inroads into our change program. The graphic on the following page shows the major milestones achieved over the past 12 months and our path ahead.

Implementing our strategy

The **VCAT Improvement Plan 2024–27** outlines the practical steps we're taking to implement our *Towards Excellence* strategy. It sets out a three-year program of reform across the three key areas – **our people, work and organisation** – to modernise systems, improve user experience and increase efficiency.

The plan is informed by leading evidence and practices, and backed by detailed implementation projects and governance. Its core focus is to help Victorians resolve their disputes quickly, fairly and affordably – with respectful service and accessible justice.

2024–25 key milestones



Year in review 2024-25

74,245



new applications

78,136



matters finalised

20,704



pending cases

↓ 17% from 2023-24

7 weeks



median time
to resolution

↓ 30% from 2023-24

105%



clearance rate

(finalised matters divided by the
number of new applications)

88%



increase in the rate of
utilisation of community-
based venues

Increasing our use of appropriate dispute resolution

Residential tenancies matters that followed an early case resolution pathway were resolved

88% faster

than those finalised via a hearing




2,831 
compulsory conferences/
mediations (non-RDRV)



Total compulsory conferences conducted (non-RDRV): **2,192**

Total mediations conducted (non-RDRV): **639**

1,299 
settlements by compulsory conferences/mediations (non-RDRV)



Settled by compulsory conferences (non-RDRV): **975**

Settled by mediation (non-RDRV): **324**

The following are the activities we started or continued this financial year. Note that many of the activities will continue into 2025–26 as part of the VCAT Improvement Plan, which is a three-year program of work to achieve tribunal excellence.

Our people

- **Workforce redesign started:** reshaping roles and structures to support new ways of working
- **Appointment of new Heads of Division** and redefined leadership responsibilities
- **Leadership development:** continued training of member leaders
- **Mediation training:** expanding skills across members and staff
- **Culture statement:** co-designing a statement to reflect values and behaviours

Our work

- **Cleared the residential tenancies** backlog in November 2025
- Introduced the **VCAT Caseload Efficiency Program (VCEP)** to increase service efficiency, reduce wasted effort and institute a strategic focus on service performance
- **Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria (RDRV) launched:** implementing a streamlined rental dispute resolution model
- **Appropriate Dispute Resolution (ADR):** finalising changes to improve early resolution options
- **Operating model reform:** embedding new service systems that help users resolve cases faster
- **Standardised decision-making:** templates for orders and reasons across VCAT
- **Rules and powers review:** expanding registrar capabilities to reduce bottlenecks

Our organisation

- **Decentralised service delivery:** expanding access to justice across regional locations
- **Digital case management system:** major transformation underway to fully digitise case handling
- **Jurisdictional restructure:** started work on streamlining divisional structures and optimising member resource allocation



"The development of Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria by VCAT reflects a genuine commitment to improving the way rental disputes are resolved for the two million Victorians who rent their homes. We've welcomed the opportunity to contribute our expertise and advocate for renters throughout its development, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration with VCAT to ensure the system is fair, accessible, and effective for all renters."

Jennifer Beveridge,
*Chief Executive Officer,
Tenants Victoria*



About VCAT

The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) helps people in Victoria resolve disputes in a fair, quick and low-cost way.

VCAT is one of the world's largest tribunals because it deals with many types of disputes. It was set up in 1998 and is an independent part of Victoria's justice system. VCAT follows the rules set out in the *Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998* (VCAT Act).

Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria

Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria (RDRV) began on 23 June 2025, following a launch by the Victorian Premier. It represents a new way of working for VCAT.

RDRV is a free, digital-first service that aims to resolve disputes informally, before a formal hearing is required. Each application is assigned a trained resolution coordinator to manage the case from start to finish, with support from experienced VCAT members.

There is no fee to apply to RDRV.

**Resolution Coordinator,
RDRV**
Seamus Rooney



How VCAT is funded

VCAT receives funding from the Victorian Government and from trust funds administered by Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Victorian Legal Services Board, among other sources to help pay for its services. There is a fee for applying to VCAT and this revenue also helps to fund our operations. The fee is waived in some cases and reduced for some concession card holders.

What VCAT does

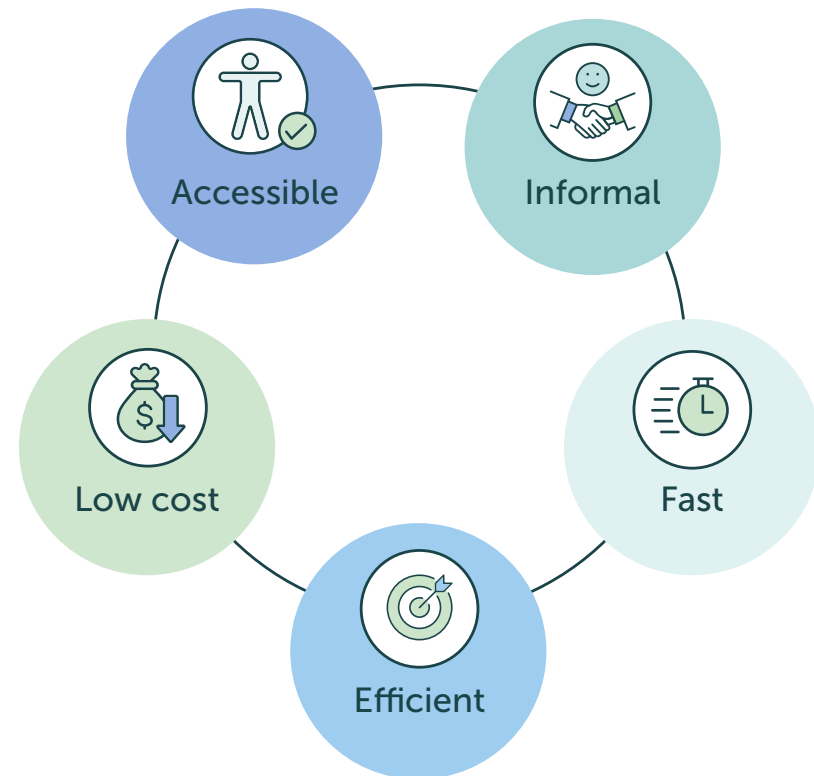
VCAT resolves a wide range of disputes and reviews government decisions. It handles matters such as residential tenancies, planning, goods and services, building and construction, guardianship and administration, owners corporation issues and government decision reviews.

VCAT helps people solve disputes by encouraging agreement where possible. If parties cannot agree, VCAT holds a hearing and makes a legally binding decision. VCAT is neutral and treats everyone equally, basing decisions on facts and the law.

People apply to VCAT for help under more than 150 Victorian laws (listed in Appendix B, page 110). Some disputes are straightforward and resolved quickly, like rental issues, while others – such as planning or building disputes – are more complex and may require expert input.

VCAT is a judicial body supported by Court Services Victoria (CSV), which provides centralised administrative services for Victoria's courts and tribunals.

VCAT's guiding principles



Our locations

VCAT exists to resolve disputes fairly for all Victorians. We operate from 50 locations throughout the state. As Victoria's population grows and becomes increasingly diverse, VCAT is adapting to expand our physical presence into community-based venues (CBVs) and improving our existing facilities to create a more welcoming, contemporary setting for resolving disputes.

On 23 June 2025, RDRV opened to offer Victorians a dedicated hub for accessing service and support for all rental disputes.

In early 2026, our head offices will relocate from 55 King Street and 414 La Trobe Street to a single purpose-built venue at 308 La Trobe Street. This will significantly improve the functionality and comfort for VCAT's users by creating an environment that is more welcoming and conducive to resolving disputes. It will also improve efficiency for VCAT's members by providing them with the technology and support needed to hear matters efficiently.

VCAT-operated venues:

- 414 La Trobe Street
- 55 King Street
- Frankston CBV
- Oakleigh CBV
- Bundoora CBV

VCAT non-operated venues:

- Bendigo Law Court
- Neighbourhood Justice Centre – Collingwood
- Geelong Magistrates' Court
- Ballarat Magistrates' Court
- Warrnambool Magistrates' Court
- Shepparton Magistrates' Court
- Wangaratta Magistrates' Court
- Wodonga Magistrates' Court
- Sale Magistrates' Court
- Bairnsdale Magistrates' Court
- Sunshine Magistrates' Court

- Dromana Magistrates' Court
- Korumburra Magistrates' Court
- Seymour Magistrates' Court
- Mildura Magistrates' Court
- Echuca Magistrates' Court

Opening November 2025

From 17 November 2025, VCAT will begin hearing matters in the new Wyndham Law Courts building delivering in-person services to support people in one of Victoria's fastest-growing communities.



Wyndham Law Courts

Mildura



Echuca



Shepparton



Bendigo



Seymour



Sunshine
Wyndham



Geelong



Warrnambool



Bundoora



Oakleigh



Frankston



Dromana



Korumburra



Wodonga



Wangaratta



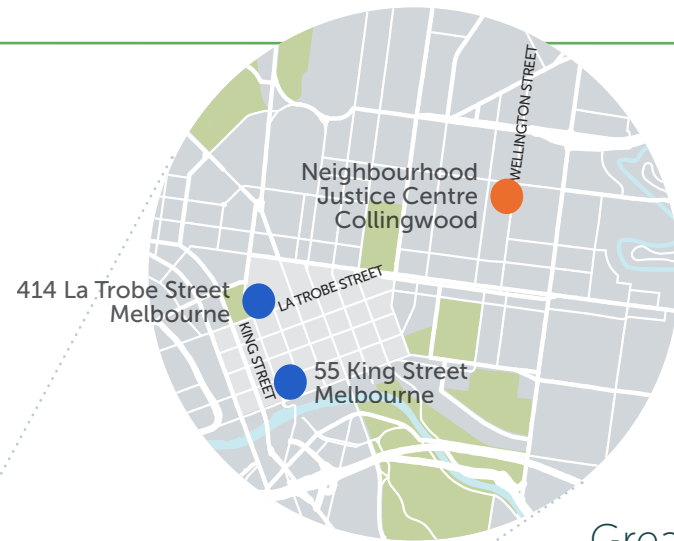
Bairnsdale



Sale



Victoria



Greater Melbourne area

Governance



Our governance environment helps leaders make good decisions and ensures we comply with legal and other obligations. This supports VCAT's role as an independent decision-maker and dispute resolution provider.

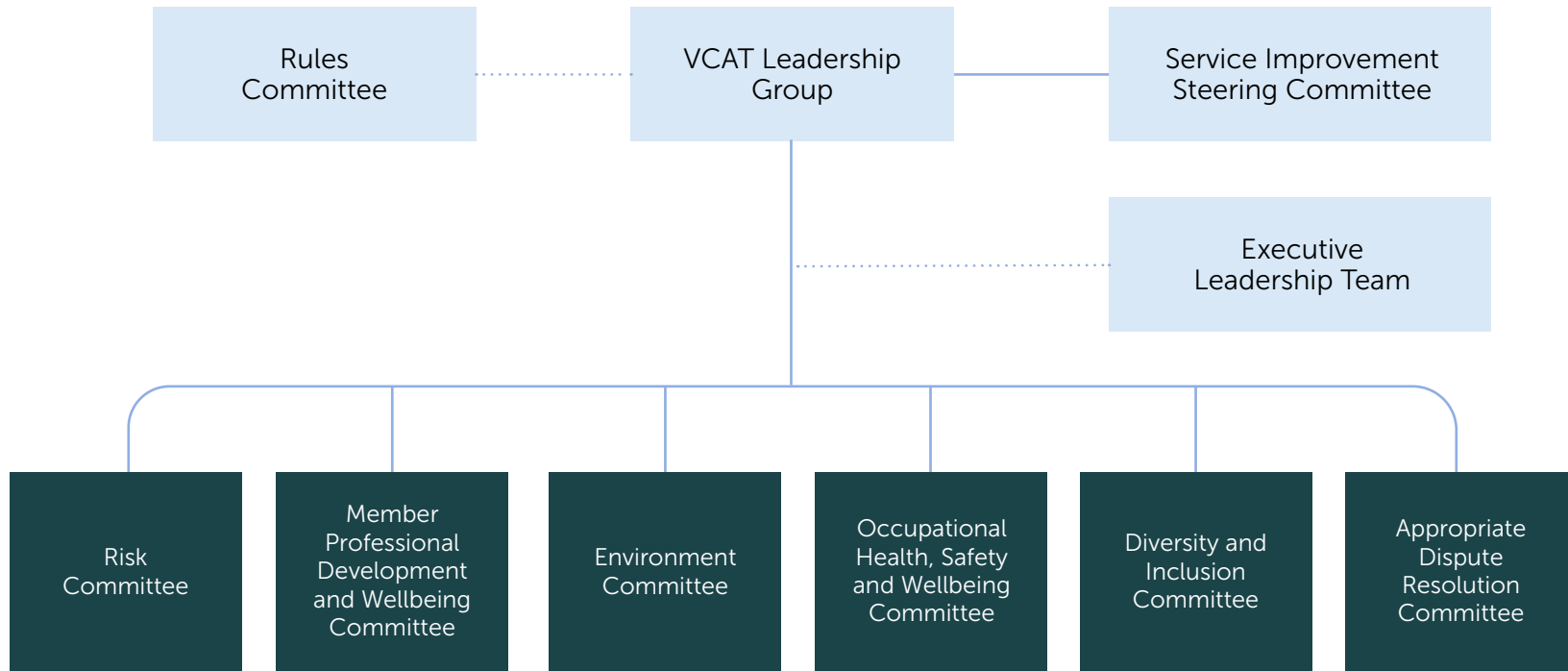
Our governance structure is guided by these key principles:

- Reflect statutory requirements for VCAT's administration
- Consult with members and staff for better decision-making
- Align governance with the new executive leadership structure
- Use member and staff expertise effectively, avoiding unnecessary structures for information-sharing.

The Courts Council is Court Services Victoria's (CSV) governing body and is responsible for directing the strategy, governance and risk management of CSV. VCAT President Justice Ted Woodward sits on the Council, along with other heads of jurisdictions from Victoria's court and tribunals.

Regional Administrative Officer
Amanda Kaddis

VCAT's governance structure



*Note: The VCAT Leadership Group may direct short-term committees be established from time to time. Short-term committees operational during 2024–2025 include the **Artificial Intelligence Committee** and **VCAT Caseload Efficiency Program Steering Committee**.*

VCAT Leadership Group

The VCAT Leadership Group (VLG) is the primary formal body within VCAT's governance environment.

The VLG sets VCAT's strategy, reviews and approves key policies, and considers issues that have a strategic or operational impact at a high level of materiality to the administration of VCAT.

Our leadership group is formed between VCAT members (who are appointed by the Governor in Council to ensure VCAT's independence) and senior staff employed by Court Services Victoria (CSV).

As of 30 June 2025, the VCAT Leadership Group consists of the following roles and individuals.



President
Justice Ted Woodward



Vice President
Judge Caitlin English
*(concluded residency
on 27 June 2025)*



Deputy President
Ian Lulham



Chief Executive Officer
Fiona Chamberlain



Vice President
Judge My Anh Tran
*(began residency
on 1 July 2025)*



**Head of Civil Division
and Residential
Tenancies Division
Deputy President**
Lindsay Warren



**Head of Environment
and Planning Division
Deputy President**
Teresa Bisucci



**Head of Human
Rights Division
Deputy President**
Julia Lever-Davidson



**Head of Legal
and Policy Division
Deputy President**
Richard Wilson



**Head of
Administrative Division
Deputy President**
Ian Proctor



**Executive Director
Experience, Strategy
and Transformation**
Zoe Dyson



**Executive Director
Operations and
Support Services**
Warwick Mitchell



**Executive Director
Service Infrastructure
Strategy**
Katie O'Keeffe



**Executive Director
Strategy, Governance
and Legal**
Kathryn Martin



**Chief People Officer
(Court Services Victoria)**
Dr Tina Parras



Member
Stuart Webb

Rules Committee

The VCAT Rules Committee is established under the VCAT Act to develop and manage the rules and procedures for how VCAT works. This committee plays a vital role in helping VCAT run smoothly and efficiently.

The main roles of the Rules Committee are:

- **Making rules:** The Committee can create rules about how VCAT cases are handled, as allowed or required by the VCAT Act.
- **Issuing practice notes:** It can issue practice notes that guide how VCAT processes should be followed.
- **Educating and training:** The Committee oversees the training of VCAT members on the rules and practice notes.

Parliament oversees the functions of the Rules Committee, which means that any rules the Committee makes can be rejected (or 'disallowed') by Parliament.

Service Improvement Steering Committee

The President and CEO (Principal Registrar) are accountable for VCAT's systems of work and related processes, which drive the service quality for our users. 'Service improvement' constitutes any changes to service delivery models, service levels, processes, key artefacts (such as order templates, forms, public information and content). The Service Improvement Steering Committee (SISC) guides and complements existing governance committees by ensuring that service improvement-related decision-making remains in line with VCAT's Strategic Direction.

Advisory committees

Advisory committees are established to promote innovation and improvement in specific aspects of VCAT's work. The committees give guidance and make recommendations to the VCAT Leadership Group (VLG). The committees also report to the VLG on matters that are strategically important.

VCAT's advisory committees comprise staff and member representatives from across VCAT. Each of the following committees meets quarterly and reports into the VLG:

Committee	Responsibilities
Appropriate Dispute Resolution (ADR) Committee	Advises on the streamlining and improvement of ADR in all its forms across VCAT. Also contributes to national reforms of mediation standards.
Artificial Intelligence Committee	Explores current and potential uses of artificial intelligence (AI) to resolve cases fairly and efficiently. Makes recommendations for the ethical, lawful and effective use of AI at VCAT. Engages in consultation with the Victorian Law Reform Commission.
Diversity and Inclusion Committee	Advises on the development, implementation and monitoring of initiatives to improve inclusion and diversity at VCAT. Leads the design and delivery of the Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, with a focus on priority groups.

Committee	Responsibilities
Environment Committee	Provides oversight on environmental and sustainability-related matters affecting VCAT's operations and its people.
Member Professional Development and Wellbeing Committee	Advises on the development and delivery of structured professional development and wellbeing programs for members.
Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing (OHSW) Committee	Supports continuous improvement in workplace safety and ensures compliance with occupational health and safety obligations.
Risk Committee	Monitors risk in line with legislative requirements and the risk management frameworks set by Courts Council for the whole of Court Services Victoria and whole-of-Victorian Government frameworks.
VCAT Caseload Efficiency Program Steering Committee	Oversees governance of VCAT's investments aimed at improving case handling efficiency and resource allocation, including reduction of pending caseloads to drive timely, fair dispute resolution.



Our work – *creating value for Victorians*

Victoria is home to around 7 million people. Every day, Victorians enter contracts to build houses or buy cars. They buy goods or services from businesses. They rent homes or lease out their investment properties. And every day, some of those transactions result in disagreements.

VCAT was established to create a fair, efficient and affordable way for the Victorian community to resolve disputes. Increasingly, VCAT tries to bring the parties together, as early as possible, and guide them towards an acceptable outcome. This process – called Appropriate Dispute Resolution (ADR) – is designed to empower people coming to VCAT with the ability to resolve their differences with appropriate support and guidance. In cases where ADR is not successful or suitable, VCAT’s role is to decide the matter impartially and as quickly as possible. Access to fast, cheap and fair justice benefits all Victorians. It allows people to get on with their lives and avoids the financial and emotional toll of protracted legal proceedings.

VCAT is on a path of transformation. We want to be faster and better align our resources to the complexity of the matters in dispute. We are well on the way towards this, but we recognise there is more work to do to achieve our ambition of tribunal excellence. Outlined below are some key areas of our progress over the past 12 months.

Clearing the backlog of residential tenancies cases

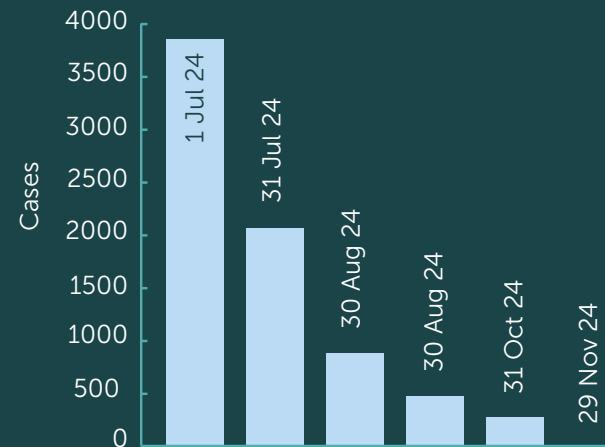
Residential tenancy disputes represent around 80 per cent of matters that come before VCAT. They include:

- Disputes about bond and compensation
- Rent increases
- Possession applications (for example because of non-payment of rent or because the rental provider wants to move back in or sell the property).

These types of disputes – which impact someone’s living arrangements or investment – are often urgent. They can be emotionally and financially charged matters and, in some cases, involve family violence issues. Resolving them in a timely and fair manner is a priority.

In November 2024, we cleared the backlog of cases for claims for rental bonds and/or compensation, which at its peak had reached 24,000 cases. This was a significant achievement and reflected a concerted effort enabled by additional funding from government. This funding was used to recruit and train 18 additional VCAT members and appoint specialist registrars to triage cases and progress matters to resolution or hearing.

Actual rate of backlog reduction



Appropriate Dispute Resolution

Appropriate Dispute Resolution (ADR) refers to ways of resolving a dispute without going through a full hearing at VCAT. These methods are often quicker, less stressful and cheaper. Pathways for ADR are varied but range from early informal discussions between the parties that may result in a settlement of the dispute, to mediation and compulsory conferences which are led by a VCAT member who supports the parties to reach an agreement themselves.

VCAT's goal is to maximise the number of matters that are finalised through ADR. It's a process that encourages parties to come together – sometimes for the first time, where they are encouraged to participate in a non-adversarial way to resolve their disagreements. There are some disputes that are not suitable for ADR and our goal is to triage those at the earliest time so that they can be actively case managed and listed for hearing before a VCAT member.

ADR is suitable for all types of proceedings where the parties are willing to participate. It can be particularly useful in high volume, simple matters, but also effective in longer, more complex and costly matters. In the Planning and Environment Division, ADR is now the default pathway for most proceedings, with compulsory conferences outnumbering hearings and achieving settlements faster. This year, there were 1,072 compulsory conferences conducted in the Planning and Environment Division, the highest-ever number, up 12 per cent from 2023–24.

There were **1,072** compulsory conferences conducted in the Planning and Environment Division, the highest-ever number.

Other matters that involve original jurisdiction (such as proceedings seeking declaratory relief) will usually be fast-tracked straight to a hearing. This year has seen:

- An increase in the number of compulsory conferences
- Training and accreditation of mediators able to facilitate ADR
- Updates to practices and protocols
- Development and implementation of an 'ADR benchbook'
- Optimising the use of community-based venues.

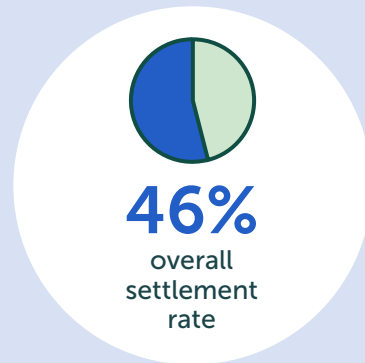
VCAT is also exploring ways to further embed the use of ADR across all types of disputes, so that it becomes our default pathway for most cases. We will continue to offer non-ADR pathways for matters that require a decision by a VCAT member via a hearing.

VCAT is involved in national reforms to mediation standards, including the transition from the National Mediator Accreditation System to the Australian Mediator and Dispute Resolution Accreditation Standards.

VCAT is a registered provider for mediation accreditation.

Appropriate Dispute Resolution data 2024–25

The table on the following page shows the number of matters that had a compulsory conference or mediation across the VCAT jurisdiction.



Senior Member
Sam Cimino



Conducted compulsory conference or mediation – total files

	Building and Property list	Civil Claims list	Guardianship list	Human Rights list	Legal Practice list	Owners Corporations list	Planning and Environment list	Residential Tenancies list	Review and Regulation list	Total
ADR type										
Compulsory conference	391	328	14	63	11	123	1072	40	150	2192
Mediation	517	5	0	106	0	10	0	1	0	639
Total	908	333	14	169	11	133	1072	41	150	2831

Settled by compulsory conference or mediation – total files

	Building and Property list	Civil Claims list	Guardianship list	Human Rights list	Legal Practice list	Owners Corporations list	Planning and Environment list	Residential Tenancies list	Review and Regulation list	Total
ADR type										
Compulsory conference	132	212	8	40	7	68	439	34	35	975
Mediation	267	2	0	51	0	4	0	0	0	324
Total	399	214	8	91	7	72	439	34	35	1299
Settlement rate	44%	64%	57%	54%	64%	54%	41%	83%	23%	46%
Compulsory conference settlement rate	34%	65%	57%	63%	64%	55%	41%	85%	23%	44%
Mediation settlement rate	52%	40%	0	48%	0	40%	0	0%	0	51%

Note that this table excludes matters resolved through the OMIP and backlog recovery programs.



CASE STUDY

Using Appropriate Dispute Resolution in planning disputes

“In the Planning and Environment Division, we have made a concerted effort to embrace ADR. Following several years of implementing our ADR strategy, we have reached a maturity now where ADR is the default pathway. This is very exciting because ADR is closely aligned with VCAT’s purpose and its foundational characteristics – informality, accessibility, efficiency, speed and inexpensiveness – and it empowers Victorians to resolve their disputes.

Our default ADR pathway is currently compulsory conferences. In accordance with our strategic direction, *Towards Excellence*, we are continually improving and looking at further opportunities to expand our ADR methods for resolving disputes. We have trained and accredited more mediators this year, so we have a greater capacity than ever before to convene conferences.

Our role is as an expert neutral facilitator. The specialist subject matter expert brings their accredited expertise and can professionally facilitate the resolution of the dispute. This is a fantastic outcome for Victorians and results in a much less adversarial context. It’s also faster, cheaper and a lot less stressful for the community, which is exactly what VCAT strives to be.”

**Deputy President
and Deputy Head
of Planning**
Carol Daicic

Operating Model Improvement Program

A key initiative of our transformation under our *Towards Excellence* strategy is the Operating Model Improvement Program (OMIP). It began as part of a dedicated program of work to improve the way we manage residential tenancy applications and tackle the large number of unresolved matters (24,000) that built up during the COVID-19 pandemic years.

We have since begun applying the lessons we learned from this activity to significantly improve caseload efficiency to other priority lists across VCAT. The aim of the OMIP is to review our processes and resource allocation across each list to eliminate duplication and unnecessary handoffs, improve adoption of ADR across all lists, and free up VCAT member time to hear and decide matters that need a hearing as early as possible.

Following the successful pilot of the pre-Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria (RDRV) case resolution model, we are turning our OMIP efforts towards high-volume civil claims, freedom of information (FOI) matters and reassessing guardianship orders, each of which has a high number of pending matters. We are in the process of now implementing a pilot to address the high number of outstanding motor vehicle dispute applications (see following page).



Addressing outstanding pending motor vehicle cases

In 2024–25, VCAT continued to address significant delays in the Civil Division, particularly affecting motor vehicle matters. The increase in volume of pending matters has been driven by a combination of system-related and resourcing issues, combined with a steady influx of new cases.

We have established a milestone to finalise all applications **received before 28 February 2025 (1,088 matters at the time the program began in July 2025)**. This milestone is part of a broader objective to fast-track resolution of all motor vehicle-related cases in the Civil Claims list.

Motor vehicle applications cover a broad range of disputes, including vehicle purchases, repairs, warranties and include all types of vehicles, from cars, motorbikes, caravans and trailers. Due to the essential nature of vehicles in people's daily lives, delays in resolving these cases can create hardship and distress for users.

VCAT is actively working to address these issues. Specialist registrars have been appointed to improve caseflow and more than 50 process

Since beginning the process improvements, we have finalised 221 cases (20 per cent of the pre-28 February 2025 cases). As at 1 August 2025, there were 867 pending matters with 108 of these listed for hearing.

improvements have been identified to reduce timeframes and streamline operations. Continuous improvement efforts are underway to increase efficiency and service.

VCAT has engaged with external stakeholders, including the Consumer Action Law Centre (CALC), to better support vulnerable users and improve case handling approaches. Feedback from CALC has already informed enhancements to our processes. These efforts reflect our commitment to user-focused service delivery and improving timeliness and efficiency across VCAT.

CASE STUDY

VCAT–Victorian Bar Pro Bono Barrister Referral Scheme



**Head of Legal
and Policy Division
Deputy President**
Richard Wilson

On 1 May 2025, VCAT and the Victorian Bar launched a pilot of a new Pro Bono Barrister Referral Scheme for human rights and guardianship cases. The scheme enables VCAT members to refer select cases for pro bono assistance from barristers, either to represent a party or act as amicus curiae.

In legal proceedings, an amicus curiae is not a party to the case, but is a person permitted to assist the court or tribunal by offering information, expertise or insight that has a bearing on the issues in the case. Their role is to help the court or tribunal make a more informed decision, especially in complex or technical matters.

Referrals are at the discretion of VCAT and aim to support unrepresented parties and improve access to justice. Following the pilot, the scheme may be expanded to other types of cases. Internal protocols, templates and training are in place to support consistent implementation and ongoing review.

Feedback and complaints

VCAT Complaints Registrar independently investigates and makes a recommendation on response to the VCAT President.

VCAT welcomes feedback and we have a process in place to resolve concerns raised by people who come to VCAT. Our service teams strive to resolve issues raised over the phone or at our venues, while also offering a formal process for investigating complaints that cannot be resolved on the spot. We take all complaints seriously.

Note that VCAT is not able to investigate complaints regarding a VCAT decision or outcome. Refer to the 'Appeals' section on page 94 for information about appeals.

Complaint about

Conduct or capacity of a VCAT member

Handled by

Judicial Commission of Victoria

Complaint about

VCAT's administrative services (i.e. our processes and administrative staff (non-members))

Handled by

VCAT Complaints Registrar independently investigates and responds to complaints and makes recommendations about systemic problems to the Principal Registrar for action

2024–25 complaints data

The VCAT Registrar Complaints received 507 complaints in 2024–25, an increase of 13 per cent from the prior year’s total of 442. This represents approximately 0.68 per cent of new initiations this year, noting that complaints received may relate to applications made in prior years.

This includes complaints that were:

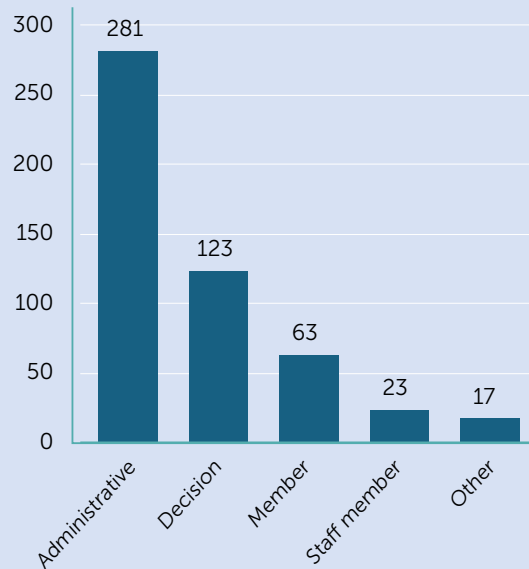
- Received directly via the complaint@courts.vic.gov.au email address
- Escalated to the Registrar Complaints via internal staff.

It does not include complaints to external bodies, such as the Judicial Commission of Victoria.

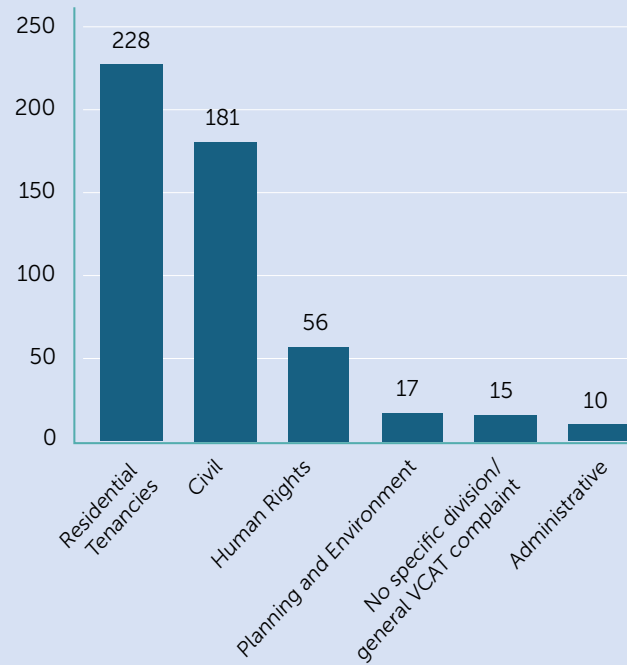
VCAT uses insights from our complaints process to review and improve our operations where this is required. We aim to continuously improve the way we service the Victorian community and address systemic issues that have been identified, promptly.

An overview of the complaints received and reviewed by VCAT in 2024–25 is provided below.

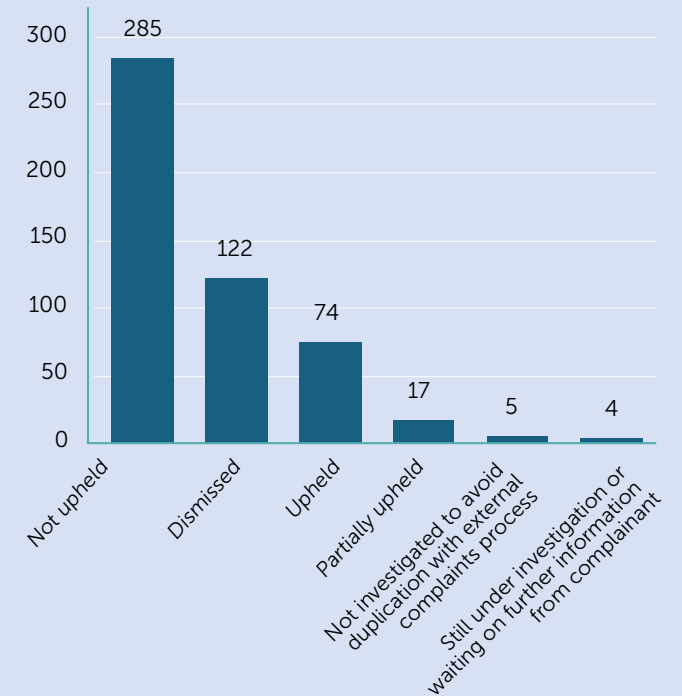
What the complaint is about



Division



Outcome of complaint



Expansion of powers for specialist registrars

A recent rule change at VCAT is helping to improve the efficiency of dispute resolution by allowing trained staff to take on more decision-making responsibilities.

Previously, certain powers could only be exercised by VCAT members. However, under updated VCAT rules in 2024, VCAT can now delegate a wider range of functions, such as making directions in a case, to the Principal Registrar. The Principal Registrar can then sub-delegate those functions to suitably qualified staff, including specialist registrars.

This reform is an important step in building staff capability and supports more active case management. By allowing trained staff to handle certain VCAT functions, it frees up VCAT members to focus on hearings and complex matters, ultimately speeding up the dispute resolution process and improving access to justice for Victorians.

Making VCAT orders clearer and more consistent

VCAT is undertaking a major reform of our order templates to improve clarity, consistency and accessibility. With around 2,000 templates in use, the project is focused on simplifying and standardising commonly used orders, replacing legal jargon with plain English, and introducing a consistent format across all lists.

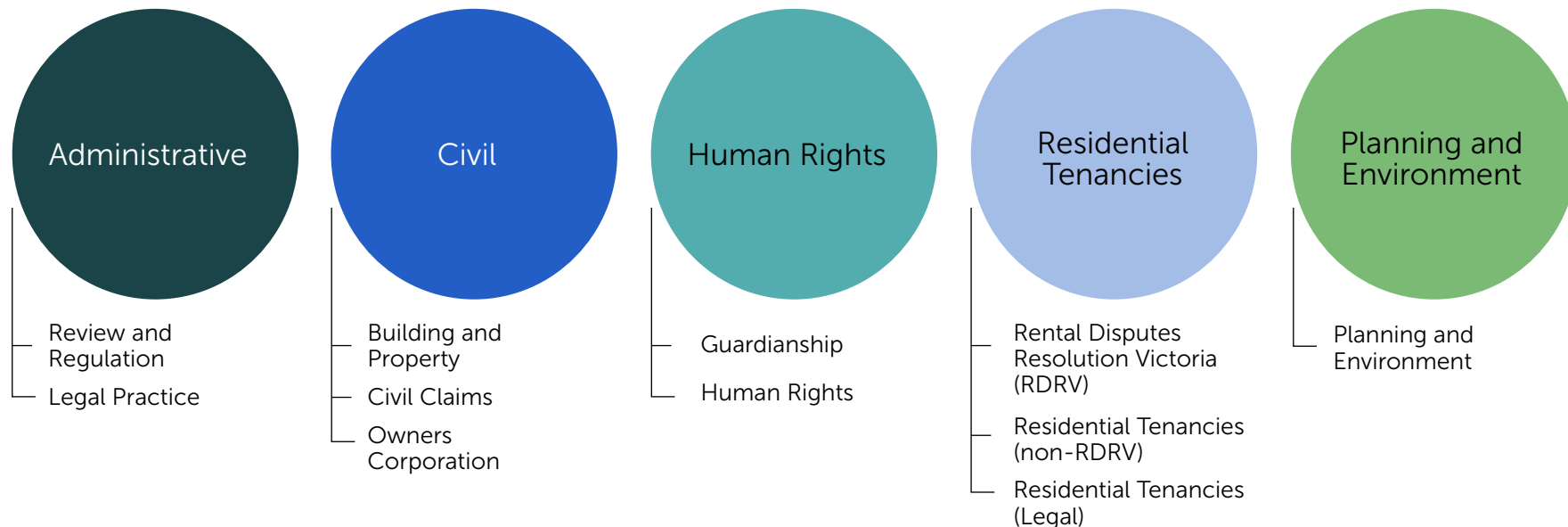
Improving the ease of understanding orders is a key driver for this work. Many people that come to VCAT are self-represented or under significant stress, so improving the readability of orders helps reduce confusion and delays during VCAT proceedings due to misunderstandings.

Led by the President of VCAT, the project will continue into 2025–26, expanding across all lists and integrating improvements into the digital case management system.

Our operations

New applications arriving at VCAT are currently managed within five divisions, depending on the type of matter in dispute. Within each division, matters are streamed into a 'list'. Each list comprises matters that are typically grouped according to the enabling Act – or legislation that the dispute application relates to.

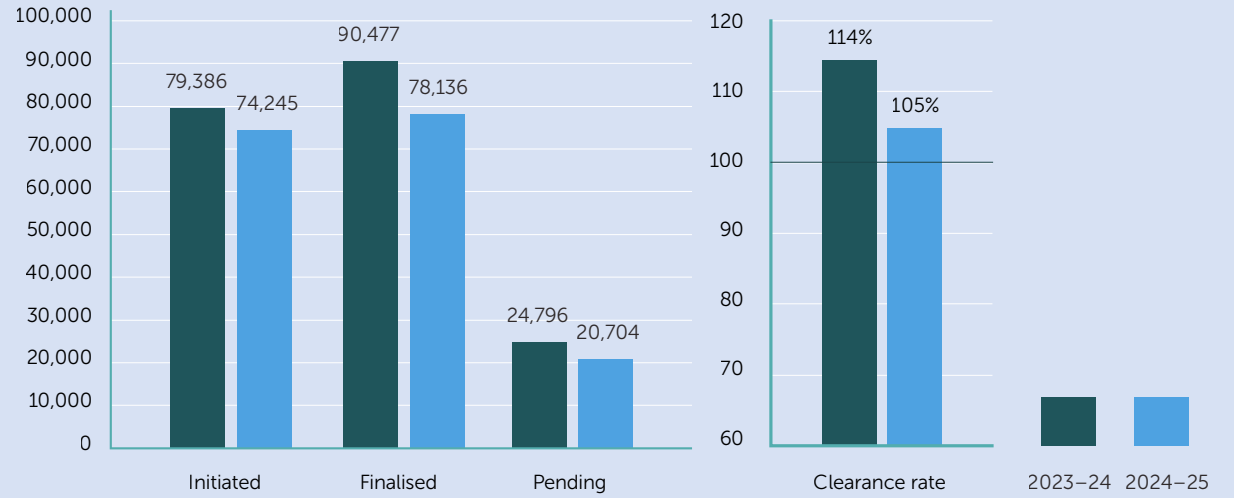
In March 2025, we announced that the number of divisions will reduce from five to three, effective from late 2025. This will simplify our structure and create the opportunity to redesign the way we work so we can better manage workload and improve our resourcing model into the future. The diagram below shows the structure as at 30 June 2025. Our performance is reported according to this structure. We expect this will be different next financial year as we bed down our new divisional structure and roles in the later part of 2025.



Divisional structure as at 30 June 2025

Operations

VCAT activity across all lists



74,245
new applications

↓ 6%



78,136
matters finalised

↓ 13.6%



7 weeks
median time to resolution

↓ 30%



105%
clearance rate

(finalised matters divided by the number of new applications)

↓ 8%



Administrative Division

The Administrative Division handles matters such as professional conduct investigations, reviews of decisions made by government and other authorities, and civil disputes between lawyers and their clients. It has two areas of focus: the Legal Practice list and the Review and Regulation list. Hearings are held either in person or remotely using teleconference or Zoom, depending on what the people involved prefer.

Review and Regulation list

The Review and Regulation list has experienced significant caseload growth, with initiations increasing by 14 per cent and pending cases increasing 30 per cent from 987 in 2023–24 to 1,283 in 2024–25.

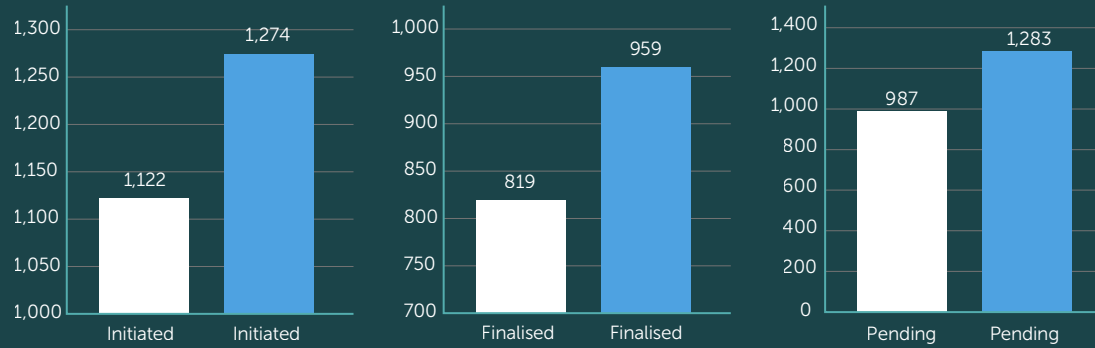
This list finalises more than 1,000 matters each year, many involving life-altering decisions about people's professional registration, public safety and rights. The types of disputes received include:

- **Health practitioner misconduct** (for example, sexual boundary violations, unsafe prescribing)
- **Occupational licensing reviews** (for example, taxi, security, firearms)
- **Working with Children Check** appeals
- **Freedom of Information (FOI)** matters.

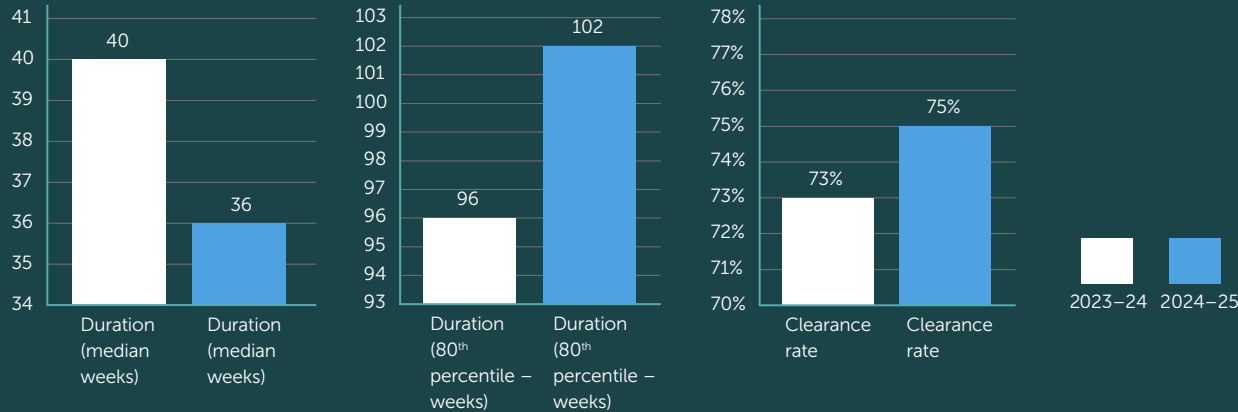
**Head of Division:
Deputy President**
Ian Proctor



Review and Regulation list – initiated, finalised and pending cases



Review and Regulation list – timeliness (weeks) for finalised cases and clearance rates



Service Officer
Jamie Ivarsen



Review and Regulation list – initiated cases by enabling enactment

Applications by enabling enactment	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change	Finalised 2023–24	Finalised 2024–25	Finalised % change	Pending 2023–24	Pending 2024–25	Pending % change
<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>	204	202	↓ 1%	121	140	↑ 15.7%	248	311	↑ 25%
<i>Transport Accident Act 1986</i>	300	387	↑ 29%	266	311	↑ 16.9%	117	186	↑ 59%
<i>Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Victoria) Act 2009</i>	133	113	↓ 15%	99	107	↑ 8.1%	216	216	0%
Others	485	572	↑ 18%	333	401	↑ 20.4%	406	570	↑ 40%
Total	1,122	1,274	↑ 14%	819	959	↑ 17.1%	987	1,283	↑ 30%

Improving our operations

We have introduced a specialist registrar role to handle routine case management tasks and this has significantly improved efficiency, freeing up members to focus on hearings and decisions.

Appropriate Dispute Resolution (ADR) remains central to our case management and compulsory conferences are the primary pathway for revolving matters, with an emphasis on early resolution.

Looking ahead, there are plans to train more members in mediation in the coming financial year.

This year, VCAT has implemented or continued several innovations to avoid a build-up of pending cases despite the spike in new applications, including:

- **Increased use of compulsory conferences** for civil disputes, especially in costs disputes in family law matters, with good resolution rates.

- **Strategic VCAT member allocation**, for example, assigning an ex-Family Court registrar to family law disputes. This has boosted early resolution.
- **Fast-tracking small claims** (under \$15,000) with listings about six to seven weeks out, helping to maintain a 16-week median finalisation time across all case types.
- **Stronger case management**, particularly with respect to longstanding matters to identify the real issues in dispute and prevent unnecessary delays in resolution.

Legal Practice list

VCAT hears a range of disputes involving the legal profession, including:

- **Costs disputes between lawyers and clients** referred by the Victorian Legal Services Commissioner, where the amount in dispute is less than \$78,585 for applications made after 30 June 2025 (\$59,650 for applications up to 30 June 2025)
- **Disciplinary applications** brought by the Victorian Legal Services Commissioner against current or former lawyers
- **Reviews of decisions made by the Commissioner or the Victorian Legal Services Board** where lawyers challenge certain licensing or regulatory decisions
- **Civil disputes about legal services** under the *Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012*, with no monetary limit.

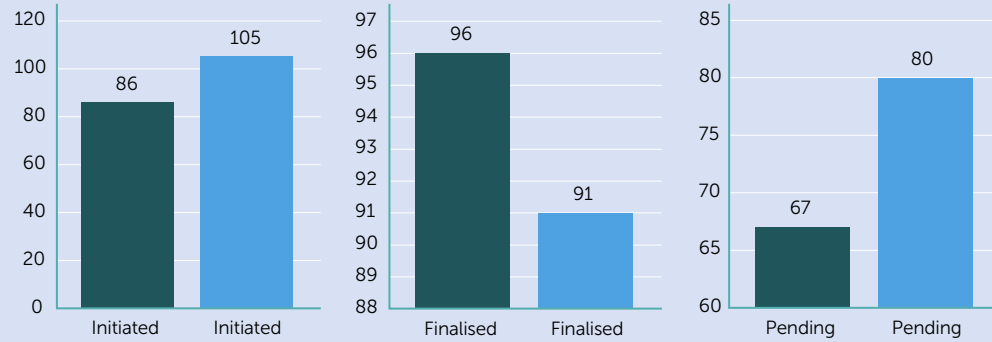
Case trends

There was a significant increase in cases in 2024–25, which may be due to the cost-of-living pressures driving more fee disputes. Initiations increased by 22 per cent to 105 in 2024–25, with a slight reduction in the number of cases finalised, down from 96 cases in 2023–24 to 91 cases this financial year.

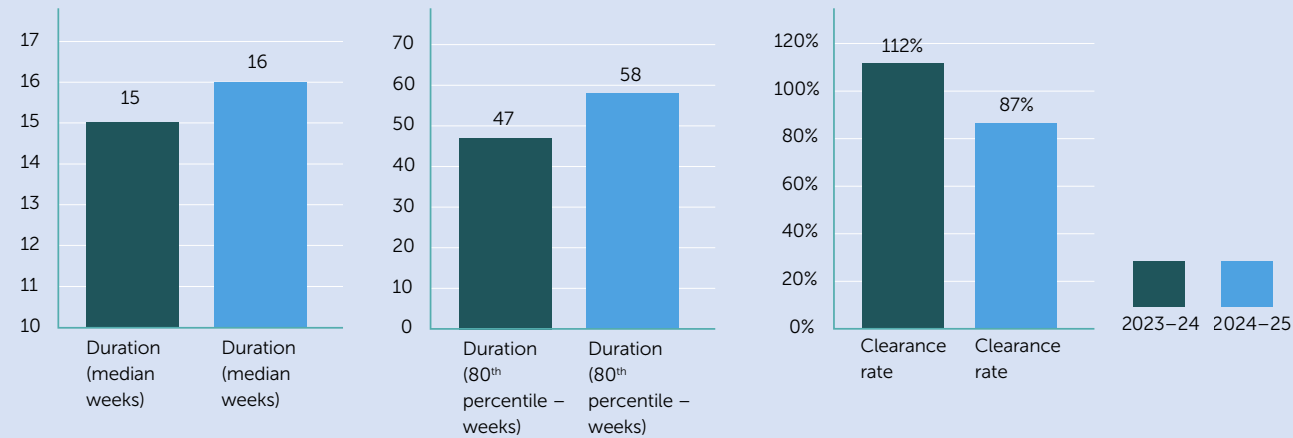
**Head of List:
Senior Member**
Reynah Tang, AM



Legal Practice list – initiated, finalised and pending cases



Legal Practice list – timeliness (weeks) for finalised cases and clearance rates



Legal Practice list – initiated cases by enabling enactment

Applications by enabling enactment	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change
<i>Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012</i>	60	76	↑ 27%
<i>Legal Profession Act 2004</i>	2	0	
<i>Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014</i>	23	28	↑ 22%
<i>Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998</i>	1	1	0%
Total	86	105	↑ 22%

This year has also seen greater demand for in-person hearings in disciplinary and review matters due to contested evidence. Civil cases are still mostly heard via Zoom, offering convenience for self-represented parties.

In February 2025, Senior Member Reynah Tang, AM, Head of Legal Practice List, presented to the National Costs Law Conference, providing the legal profession with insight into VCAT’s approach to costs, including identifying issues in costs disclosures, which is the foundation of many civil disputes.



Member
Clare Lethlean

Residential Tenancies Division

Head of Division:
Deputy President
Lindsay Warren



The Residential Tenancies Division comprises:

- Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria (RDRV)
- Residential Tenancies (non-RDRV)
- Residential Tenancies (Legal)

Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria

On 23 June 2025, Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria (RDRV) opened, following a pilot phase that began at VCAT in early September 2024. RDRV supports renters and residential rental providers to resolve disputes relating to bond and/or compensation, rent increases and repairs – quickly, fairly and without the need for a hearing.

RDRV forms a key part of the Victorian Government’s Housing Statement and was officially launched by Premier Jacinta Allan and Minister for Consumer Affairs Nick Staikos.

RDRV is a free, digital-first service that aims to resolve disputes informally. Each application is assigned a trained resolution coordinator to manage the case from start to finish, with support from experienced VCAT members. If a hearing is needed, the service enables a seamless transition to hearing and a fee only becomes payable if a hearing is needed.

Head of List:
Senior Member
Kylea Campana





Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria

RDRV manages applications about bond and compensation, repairs (both urgent and non-urgent) and rent increases. All other residential tenancies matters are dealt with via the VCAT Residential Tenancies list (refer to page 56 for information).

Following on from our Operating Model Improvement Program (OMIP), which began in April 2024, VCAT began an intensive work program to prepare our systems, people and processes to align with the objectives of the new resolution service announced by the Victorian Government. By early September, we had begun a pilot program that was based on new resolution coordinator roles and an early, proactive approach to resolving matters.

Between September and the go-live date of RDRV on 23 June 2025, we refined our approach to early case resolution and designed a user-centric website, with a digital portal for end-to-end application management. We recruited for and developed the capability of our people through training in mediation and case resolution. We also carefully considered how to best use our VCAT member resources in handling matters that required legal or specialist expertise to progress to resolution.

“The way we work in RDRV has been transformative. Victorians now have a ‘single door’ for their rental disputes and are assigned a resolution coordinator throughout the duration of the matter. Our staff are empowered and exhibit a real sense of purpose and accomplishment. This has a flow-on effect on the parties. It improves their engagement and ability to understand the process and participate effectively in a hearing. RDRV is testament to the positive change that can occur when we all – members, staff and external stakeholders – come together and build new ways of working to improve access to justice.”

Kylea Campana

Senior Member,

Head of Rental Dispute

Resolution Victoria (RDRV)



Pilot phase: 1 September 2024 – 22 June 2025

Since September 2024 when the pilot phase began, 7,440 residential tenancies were coordinated through the pre-RDRV pilot.



Launch of Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria 23 June – 30 June 2025

A total of 635 new disputes were initiated with RDRV between its establishment on 23 June and 30 June 2025.

Who submitted the 2,903 applications?



1,764
rental providers



1,026
renters



113
other parties



Average case duration

Of the cases finalised in 2024–25, those that followed an early case resolution pathway were resolved approximately 88 per cent faster than those resolved via hearing. The average duration overall was 35.2 days.

New service helps resolve disputes sooner

CASE STUDY

“As everyone knows who’s moved house, it’s overwhelming at the best of times. Throw in a rental dispute with your [rental provider] and it’s completely overwhelming and emotional and something that nobody wants to go through...

We were moving out of our rental property. Our rental provider said that we had caused some damage and was asking \$1,000 more than our bond, which was a huge amount of money.

We tried to negotiate with the [rental provider] through our real estate agent, but the rental provider was not receptive to negotiating. We made an application and then an RDRV resolution coordinator gave us a call and asked us a few questions. We set the scenario and then things got in motion from there. He got the context from us, and we filled him in from our side

of things. The resolution coordinator then got in touch with the [rental provider] and asked them the same questions and by the end of two or three conversations, a resolution was made.

My husband and I were very satisfied with the final outcome. The [rental provider] was too, from what I heard from the resolution coordinator. We didn’t have to go to a formal VCAT hearing.

I would recommend going to RDRV, checking out their website if you have any rental dispute. They were easy to deal with. They were professional. It takes the emotion out of it...you don’t have to speak to your [rental provider] directly....you come to that amicable conclusion, which is what everyone wants.”

Lisa
Renter and RDRV user



Scan here
to view
Lisa’s story



CASE STUDY

“I’ve been working in property management for 30 years. It’s definitely not uncommon for rental disputes to happen, sometimes over really simple items, sometimes they happen over more severe issues that are going on in a property.

You’re trying to navigate and work with an investor whose biggest asset is often their investment property, and a renter whose home it is.

The introduction of RDRV and the resolution coordinators is a really valuable asset. Their role is to be able to see both sides and bring both parties together to get a resolution.

One of the major benefits we’ve seen is a quick resolution and both parties not having the stress of a formal hearing. Not all matters can be resolved with RDRV so it’s important to understand that if the matter can’t be resolved, there are still hearing options available for them.”

Leah Calnan
Metro Property Management



Scan here
to view
Leah’s story

Key features of Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria

- The service has been designed to reduce time, cost and stress for all parties.
- Each case is overseen by a resolution coordinator who acts as the single point of contact for both parties – from start to finish.
- All resolution coordinators and team managers are accredited mediators.
- Resolution coordinators are supported and guided by experienced VCAT members.
- The new my.rdrv.vic.gov.au portal allows users to submit applications and upload documents online.

Applications can also be made by calling **1300 01 RDRV (7378)** or in person at five of our locations: **King Street (Melbourne CBD), Oakleigh, Bundoora, Frankston and Bendigo.**

“The Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV) sincerely thanks VCAT for the opportunity to collaborate on the development of the new Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria (RDRV) initiative.

We value and appreciate the considered approach taken by VCAT to engage with industry stakeholders throughout the process. The open and constructive dialogue has provided a meaningful platform to share practical insights from the field and ensure the RDRV is shaped in a way that promotes efficiency, fairness, and better outcomes for all parties involved. This initiative represents an important step forward in modernising and improving the experience of rental dispute resolution in Victoria. Our involvement to date has been both positive and productive, and we look forward to continuing this spirit of collaboration as the RDRV is implemented and refined.

The REIV is committed to supporting the success of this initiative and to working together with VCAT to strengthen confidence in the system for renters, rental providers, and property professionals alike. We thank VCAT for its leadership and genuine willingness to partner with the sector, and we look forward to building on this strong foundation into the future.”

Jacob Caine
Interim CEO, REIV

Guiding parties to resolve their dispute, faster

CASE STUDY

“What I enjoy most is helping people find a way forward.

I’m one of the Team Managers here at RDRV and I’m also an accredited mediator. What makes this role so rewarding is that I get to speak directly with the people involved in rental disputes. When you listen to someone’s story and help them understand their options, you feel like you’ve made a real difference by the end of the day.

You can’t do this job alone. Collaboration is a big part of what we do. I spend a lot of time brainstorming with other resolution coordinators and VCAT members to understand what’s been tried in different cases. We learn from each other and share strategies. It’s very much a team effort.

As a mediator, I assess whether a case is suitable for early resolution. If it is, I’ll facilitate discussions – sometimes over the phone, sometimes via Zoom, or in

person. The aim is always the same: to help parties resolve their dispute at the earliest possible point.

I love working with a team that shares the same purpose and values.

At RDRV, we actively listen. We help renters and rental providers better understand each other and we promote open communication.

It’s a new way of resolving rental disputes – faster, clearer and more empowering for everyone involved.”

Renee Borg

Team Manager and Accredited Mediator, Residential Dispute Resolution Victoria (RDRV)

To learn more, visit: rdrv.vic.gov.au.

Team Manager RDRV
Vimal Verma



Team Manager RDRV
Brooke Webster

“We’re all here to support parties on their journey and that makes RDRV a genuinely rewarding place to work. We’re not just resolving disputes. We’re empowering people with knowledge, clarity and confidence to move forward.”

Residential Tenancies list (non-Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria)

The data referenced in this section relates to applications in 2024–25 that were received:

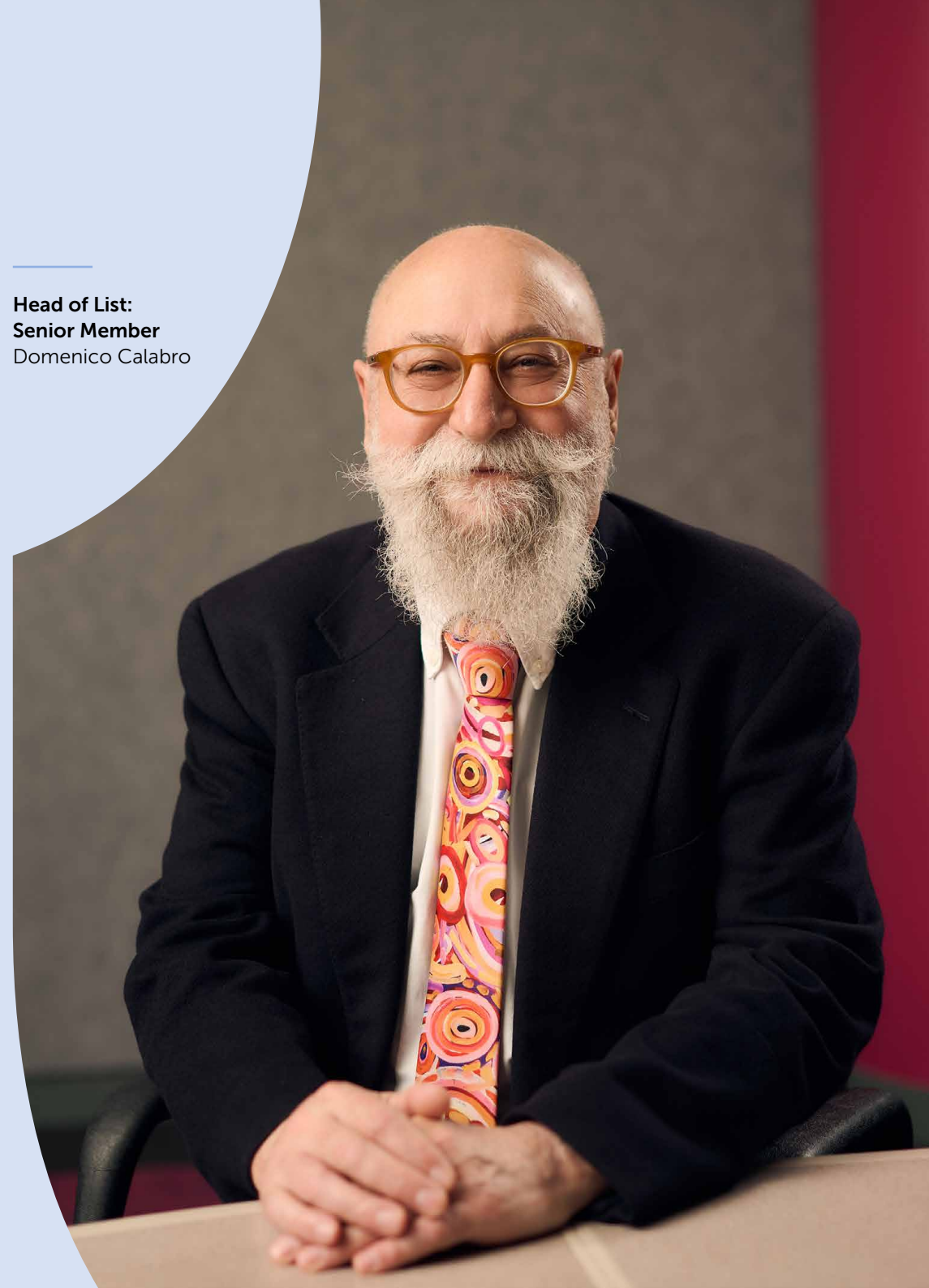
1. before 1 September 2024 when the new pilot RDRV ways of working started; or
2. after 1 September 2024, but do not form part of the RDRV cohort.

RDRV manages applications about bond and compensation, repairs (both urgent and non-urgent) and rent increases. All other matters relating to residential tenancies matters are dealt with via the VCAT Residential Tenancies List.

The most significant milestone during 2024–25 was the elimination of the remaining outstanding cases, a major system-wide challenge. This was achieved through intensive streamlining of processes, strong stakeholder engagement and the creation of new case management roles. Refer to page 27 for more information.

In 2024–25, there was an increase in residential tenancies matters that involved family violence. VCAT provides support to people affected by violence through our specialist team. Refer to page 100 for more information about the support we provide.

Head of List:
Senior Member
Domenico Calabro



In 2021, the *Residential Tenancies Act* was amended, which included the introduction of the 'reasonable and proportionate' test for possession orders. This has added complexity and greater discretion for VCAT. For these matters, it is particularly important that the renter is given the opportunity to be heard, which is why VCAT has been working closely with community organisations, such as Peninsula Community Legal Centre (refer case study on page 61), to increase the likelihood that renters in vulnerable circumstances will appear at the possession hearing.

Case trends

In 2024–25, the number of possession applications remained relatively stable, especially due to non-payment of rent. The number of rental provider-initiated applications for property sales or re-occupation also remained steady, influenced by cost-of-living pressures and possibly changes in land tax regulations.

Family violence-related tenancy applications are also rising. VCAT prioritises these matters, with urgent hearings to terminate leases or transfer them to a victim-survivor.

We are also seeing more cases related to the 2021 amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act*, including the introduction of the 'reasonable and proportionate' measure for making an order for possession. Applying the test of what is 'reasonable and proportionate' is a complex, interpretative task, which turns on the specifics of each case. Hearing from the renter in these matters is very important, which is why initiatives such as the VCAT-Peninsula Community Legal Centre program is so important, because it supports the most at-risk renters – those facing eviction – to get informed advice and access to wraparound services from community legal centres at the time of their hearing. Refer to page 61 for more information.

Head of List:
Senior Member
Andrea Treble (Legal)

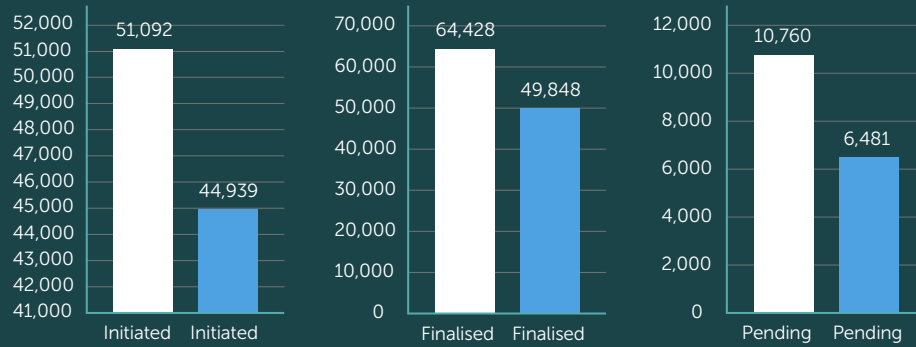


Residential Tenancies list – initiated cases by enabling enactment

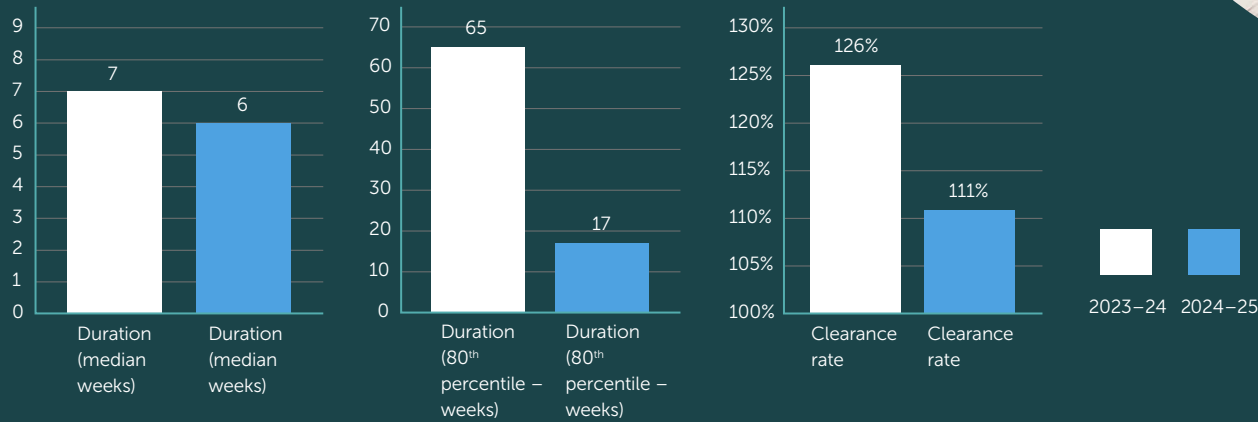
Applications by enabling enactment	Initiated 2022–23	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % Change
<i>Residential Tenancies Act 1997</i>	44,382	49,140	42,976	↓ 13%
<i>Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998</i>	1,470	1,931	1,944	↑ 1%
<i>Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012</i>	3	5	2	↓ 60%
Others	8	16	17	↑ 6%
Total	45,863	51,092	44,939	↓ 12%



Residential Tenancies list – initiated, finalised and pending cases



Residential Tenancies list – timeliness (weeks) for finalised cases and clearance rates



Residential Tenancies list – initiated cases by applicant type

Applications by applicant type	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change
Residential rental provider	30,754	27,162	↓ 12%
Renter	8,866	7,211	↓ 19%
Director of Housing	5,069	4,873	↓ 4%
Private rental provider	4,760	4,245	↓ 11%
Others	1,643	1,448	↓ 12%
Total	51,092	44,939	↓ 12%

Expansion of in-person hearings matters

This year, we continued to increase in-person hearings at key venues, including Frankston, Oakleigh and regional centres, such as Ballarat and Geelong, among others. The in-person access is supported by partnerships with local legal services to ensure renters can receive advice or representation on the day if they wish. Refer to page 61 for more information about VCAT’s partnership with Peninsula Community Legal Centre. VCAT has also partnered with other community legal centres, including West Justice, Barwon Community Legal Centre, the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS) and Tenants Victoria.

Residential Tenancies list – initiated cases by top 15 sections of the *Residential Tenancies Act*

Section	Section description	Initiated 2024–25
91ZM and 91ZM, 213A	possession – rent arrears	13,473
419A	bond repayment order	7,444
419A,452	bond and compensation	6,319
RENEWAL	renewal of proceedings	3,341
452,472(1)(F) & 210	to require the payment of compensation to any person	2,197
73	urgent repairs	1,891
120	review of tribunal order and if granted immediately re-open	1,763
322(1), 91ZZB	possession – premises are being sold	1,476
209	compensation or compliance order	946
322(1), 91ZZD	possession – end of fixed-term residential rental agreement of 5 years or less	700
452	general dispute	698
322(1), 91ZZA	possession – premises to be occupied by residential rental provider or providers family	615
75	non-urgent repairs	568
91ZG	order declaring premises abandoned	559
91ZG, 419A	order declaring premises abandoned and disposal of bond	442

Piloting a better way of working with vulnerable renters

In response to growing housing stress, VCAT partnered with the Peninsula Community Legal Centre (PCLC) to pilot a duty lawyer service supporting renters at risk of eviction. The pilot, launched in late 2024, bulk-listed non-payment of rent applications so PCLC lawyers could be on hand to advise renters before hearings.

“With the current housing crisis, the demand for our services is enormous,” says Jackie Galloway, CEO of PCLC. “We had to work out how we could maximise our impact and prioritise our support to the renters most at risk of eviction.”

VCAT Deputy President, Lindsay Warren, says that many renters don’t attend their hearings when issued with an application for eviction, limiting VCAT’s ability to consider their personal circumstances under the *Residential Tenancies Act*. “The Act states that an order for possession can only be made where it is ‘reasonable and proportionate’ in all of the circumstances of that particular matter, he says. “If the renter doesn’t appear, they cannot make a case that an order for possession doesn’t meet this requirement.”

The pilot aimed to address this by ensuring more renters turned up, understood the process and had help negotiating outcomes.

Robert Braun Practice Manager, one of the duty lawyers involved in the pilot, highlighted the practical benefits. “We help a tremendous amount in terms of

Chief Executive Officer
Peninsula Community Legal Centre
Jackie Galloway



CASE STUDY

CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

the communication between the renter and VCAT and the rental provider,” he says. “It also helps VCAT to run more efficiently, because we’re meeting with some of the renters prior to the hearing, which reduces a lot of the need for back and forth during the hearing itself.”

The pilot has delivered strong results, with nearly 70 renters assisted since January 2025 and the program is now ongoing. Outcomes include negotiated payment plans, avoided evictions and extended warrants. The impact is that tenancies are preserved, while ensuring the residential rental provider has a plan in place to receive rent in arrears and a plan for future payments. The pilot’s hybrid model also supports remote participation.

A key strength of the pilot has been the collaborative relationship between PCLC and VCAT while maintaining VCAT’s independence. “We’ve met regularly and worked through any issues that have come up quickly. That’s been a real benefit,” says Jackie.

The pilot has since expanded to Frankston and Dromana, with potential for further rollout depending on resources. “The biggest challenge right now is the lack of affordable housing. There’s a lot at stake for renters if they’re faced with a notice to vacate,” says Jackie.

Following the pilot’s success at Oakleigh, VCAT has set up another with the **West Heidelberg Community Legal Centre** at Bundoora.

Duty Lawyer
Peninsula Community Legal Centre
Robert Braun



Hybrid and inclusive hearing options

VCAT's objective is to make justice as accessible as possible for Victorians involved in disputes. During 2024–25, VCAT offered hearings via phone, Zoom, in-person and hybrid (a mix of modalities) to accommodate the needs of people coming before VCAT.

Special provisions are made for family violence matters (telephone only) and people requiring interpreters or support services. In some cases, provision can also be made for individuals unable to travel or afford time off work to attend in person.

Engaging sector stakeholders

VCAT resumed quarterly stakeholder forums (mostly virtual) with organisations including Tenants Victoria, Consumer Affairs Victoria, Legal Aid, Aboriginal Legal Services and social housing providers. Where required, we also host one-on-one meetings with legal and advocacy groups to ensure service responsiveness.

The Residential Tenancies User Group meets three or four times a year and involves the Peninsula Community Legal Centre, Tenants Victoria, Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV) and Homes Victoria, among others. This group has been critical to contributing to the reforms that led to the establishment of the RDRV.

During 2024-25, VCAT members spoke at various industry and stakeholder forums (e.g. REIV, community housing providers, property manager training groups). In late 2025, we will return to hosting roadshows to further build transparency and trust, particularly for repeat users.





Supporting fair outcomes for renters affected by family violence

VCAT heard a residential tenancy dispute involving two renters, FAY and RHH, and their rental provider. The rental provider sought to recover unpaid rent and the full bond amount after the renters vacated the property. The bond had been paid out of FAY's account and rent arrears of \$5,635 had accumulated by the end of the tenancy.

FAY applied to have her share of the bond returned and to be protected from further liability on the grounds that she had experienced family violence during the tenancy. She had also obtained an interim family violence intervention order through the Magistrates' Court.

VCAT found that FAY was a victim of family violence and had paid the full bond amount at the start of the tenancy. However, because the bond was part of shared financial arrangements between the two renters, each was found to have a 50 per cent interest in the bond. VCAT ordered that FAY and the rental provider each receive half of the bond (\$975) and the other renter, RHH, was required to repay the rental provider for the outstanding rent and FAY's share of the bond.

To support FAY's access to future housing, VCAT also made an order preventing the rental provider from listing her personal details on a tenancy database, acknowledging the hardship such a listing could cause a victim of family violence.

This case highlights VCAT's role in supporting renters experiencing family violence and ensuring fair and just outcomes in complex residential tenancy matters.

CASE STUDY



Scan to read about the decision

Civil Division

The Civil Division handles high volumes of matters each year. While many are relatively simple in nature from a legal perspective, each matter relates to a consumer, renter or other individual who is in dispute with a retailer or other seller or service provider. These matters are therefore very significant to that individual and VCAT's role is to guide the parties to an acceptable outcome or, if this cannot be achieved, to decide the matter at a hearing.

**Head of Division:
Deputy President**
Lindsay Warren



"Our hearing time is our most important asset. Adjournments are costly as it means that hearing time cannot be used by another matter that might be ready to proceed. It's a waste. Many of our internal process improvements are designed to minimise the chance of that occurring."

Lindsay Warren
Deputy President

Civil Claims list

VCAT receives a high number of civil claims each year on a range of applications under Australian consumer law, ranging from minor to highly complex disputes.

There is no upper monetary limit, although around 80 per cent of applications are claims under \$15,000. Most parties are self-represented. Leave for legal representation is normally granted for more complex applications.

Case trends

In 2024–25, applications regarding car-related disputes, both new and second-hand vehicles, were stable, while applications involving misleading conduct, particularly in relation to real estate agents, have risen. The breadth and depth of consumer disputes is immense, with applications about 'defective pets', wedding dresses, provision of services and website design.

Head of List:
Senior Member
Silvana Wilson



Improving the way we work to address large case volumes

A priority has been to free up VCAT member time to hear matters that require a decision and write those decisions more quickly after the hearing.

In 2024–25, we created two **specialist registrar** roles as part of the internal improvement program. The concept of specialist registrars was introduced during the backlog program to triage and case-manage matters before hearing. These roles free up VCAT members to focus on hearings and their work includes screening procedural applications, drafting preliminary orders and supporting Heads of lists to reduce administrative overload.

We have improved our listings function to ensure that cases are ready for hearing before they are listed. We are changing processes to include:

- Callover lists, where appropriate, before final hearing to assess readiness and reduce last-minute adjournments, improving efficiency and service user experience
- Internal listing changes to provide VCAT members with adequate writing time, which will ensure decisions are written promptly after hearings. This will reduce the number of outstanding cases with unwritten outcomes.

Civil Claims list – initiated cases by enabling enactment

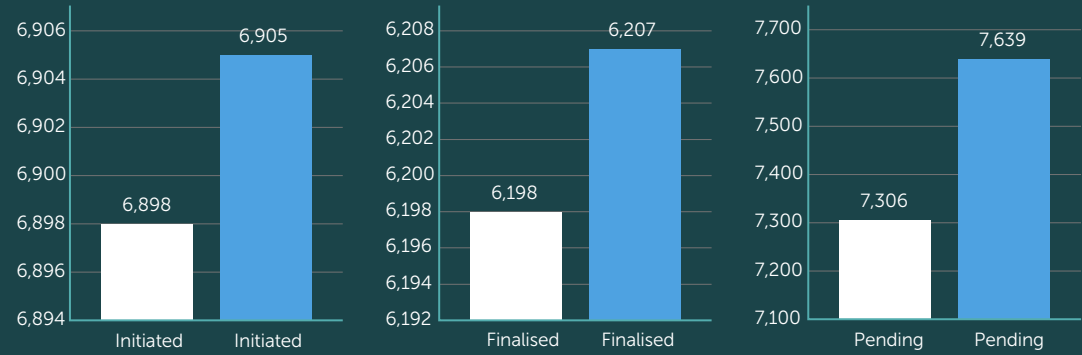
Applications by enabling enactment	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change
<i>Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012</i>	6,686	6,757	↑ 1%
Others	212	148	↓ 30%
Total	6,898	6,905	0%

Civil Claims list by claim amount for initiated cases

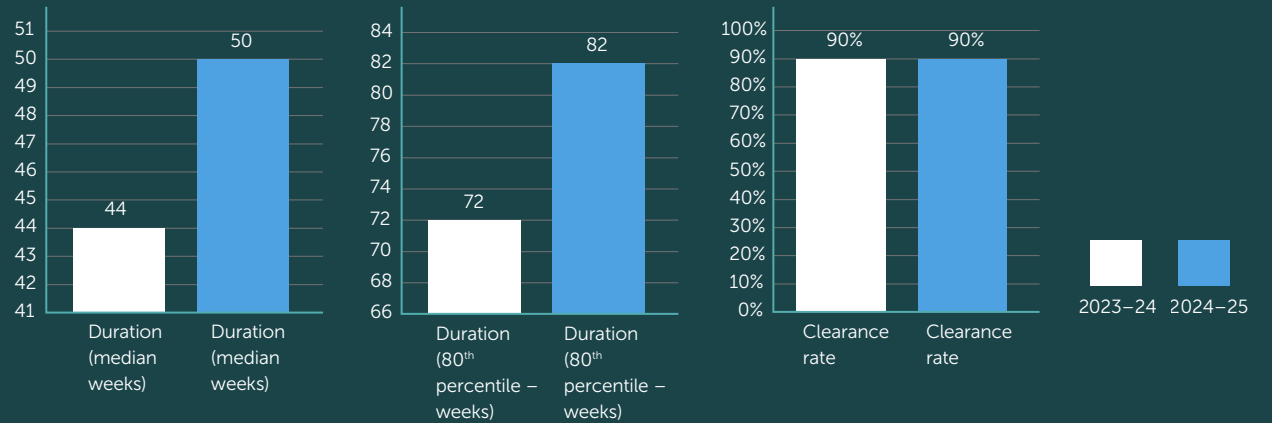
Applications by claim amount	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change
Small claims: <\$15,000	5,699	5,617	↓ 1%
Standard claims: \$15,000 – \$100,000	875	1,025	↑ 17%
Complex claims: \$100,000 +	146	175	↑ 20%
No value	178	88	↓ 51%
Total	6,898	6,905	0%



Civil Claims list – initiated, finalised and pending cases



Civil Claims list – timeliness (weeks) for finalised cases and clearance rates



A significant proportion (65 per cent) of civil claims applications that have a compulsory conference are settled at that stage.

The Civil Claims list was the first to fully implement the new digital case management system (DCMS), which went live in December 2023. Since that time, significant efforts have been made to streamline case management processes, including:

- Launch of the myVCAT portal
- Revisions to small claims case management processes
- Return to in-person hearings as the default listings model, with retention of Zoom hearings if appropriate and a gradual return to community-based venues.
- Planned pilot for car-related cases, which continue to increase in volume.

The Operational Model Improvement Program (OMIP) will drive further transformation, including better case triaging and support models. Refer to pages 33 and 34 for more information about OMIP and the pilot program to improve efficiency in managing motor vehicle disputes.

**Hearing and Service
Support Officer**
Noman Shaik



Building and Property list

VCAT handles disputes related to building and construction, as well as property matters. This includes domestic building disputes, commercial building disputes and disputes between property owners, retail and commercial leases and domestic building warranty insurance.

The types of disputes include:

- Building and construction disputes between property owners, builders, subcontractors, architects, engineers and other building practitioners
- Building disputes involving warranty insurance
- Disputes about co-owned land
- Disputes involving retail and commercial leases and licences
- Disputes involving unreasonable water flow between properties.

Head of List:
Deputy President
Ian Lulham



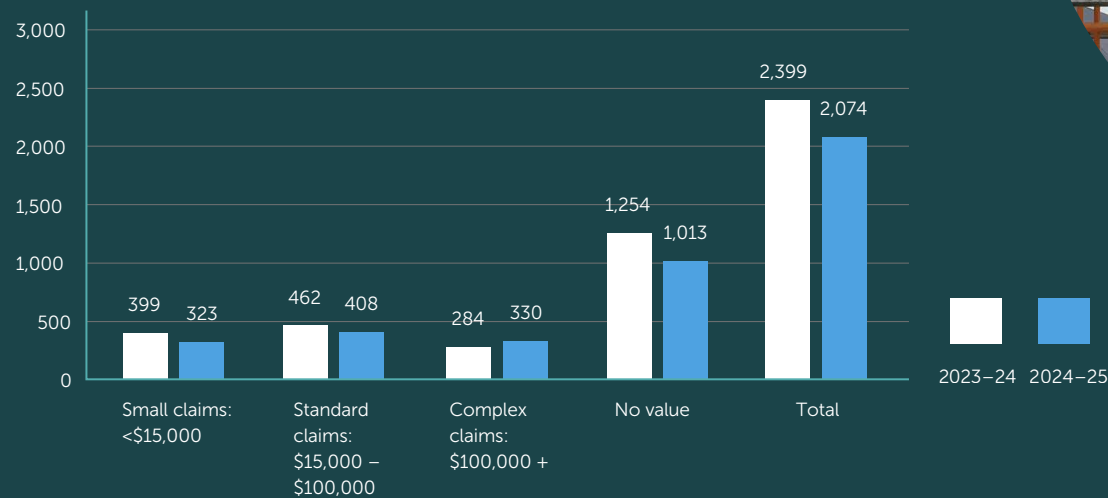
Case trends

The number of new applications reduced by 14 per cent in 2024–25 compared to 2023–24. The lower number of new applications combined with a higher number of finalisations this year (up 24.8 per cent from 2023–24) contributed to a 9 per cent drop in pending cases.

Despite this, the building and property list remains under resourcing pressure, with five vacancies as at 30 June 2025 and three more members retiring or transitioning to being sessional members later in 2025, early 2026. This shortage of experienced members impacts VCAT’s capacity to list multi-day hearings, which are typically more complex and high value matters. Notably, complex applications and applications relating to disputes valued at more than \$100,000 increased by 16 per cent compared to 2023–24.



Building and Property list by claim amount for new applications



Improving case management with fewer resources

The use of Appropriate Dispute Resolution (ADR) is high (up 12 per cent from 2023–24), with a 44 per cent settlement rate across compulsory conferences and mediation combined. To alleviate some of the resourcing pressure, we have introduced the following initiatives to improve efficiency by streamlining processes and reducing member time needed for administrative work:

- Digitising all files and streamlined processes
- Appointment of two specialist registrar lawyers aims to alleviate member workloads, with the second starting in July 2025
- Requirement for all interlocutory steps to be completed before cases requiring more than one hearing day are listed
- Building in preparation days for members handling cases longer than a day so they can make the best use of the hearing time
- Enlisting specialist, non-legal members from Planning Division to sit with building members on certain cases.

Despite the resourcing challenges during the year, our people continued to work diligently to serve the Victorian community, maintaining high performance and clearance rates.

Looking ahead

The new *Building Legislation Amendment (Buyer Protections) Act 2025* is expected to significantly increase the number of applications over the next two years. The Act is designed to overhaul how residential building, especially apartments, is regulated in Victoria, with the goal of bolstering consumer protections and streamlining regulation. Key aspects of the legislation include making domestic building insurance a 'first resort' scheme, introducing the new Building and Plumbing Commission (BPC) to replace the Victorian Building Authority and consolidating oversight, dispute resolution and insurance functions into a single, one-stop regulator.

The first round of the legislative changes took effect on 1 July 2025 with the establishment of the BPC, with the remaining changes starting from 1 July 2026.





**Head of List:
Senior Member**
Louise Johnson

Owners Corporation list

The Owners Corporation list handles disputes about the management and use of common property and areas within subdivided land, such as apartments or units.

Applications in the Owners Corporation list increased by 48 per cent this year to 2,467 compared with 1,662 in 2023–24. The main driver of the increase has been fee recovery matters under the *Owners Corporations Act 2006* (up by 51 per cent in 2024–25).

The number of pending cases is up by 51 per cent, from 810 as at 30 June 2024 to 1,224 as at 30 June 2025.

Key initiatives introduced in 2024–25 to improve the management of owners corporation matters include:

- Recruitment and training of new VCAT members to hear owners corporation matters
- Streamlined on-the-papers resolution model for fee recovery, which has reduced hearing load and delays
- Ongoing refinement of listing and decision-writing processes to improve efficiency.

Notably, 54 per cent of matters that involved ADR (either compulsory conference or mediation) were resolved.



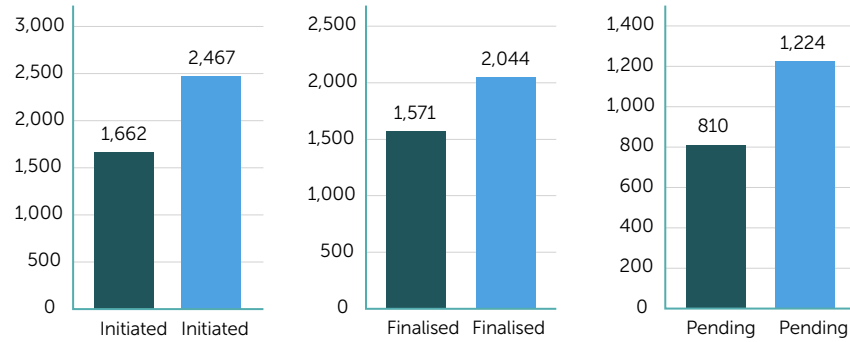
Owners Corporation list – initiated cases by enabling enactment

Applications by enabling enactment	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change
<i>Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012</i>	20	18	↓ 10%
<i>Owners Corporations Act 2006</i>	1,602	2,418	↑ 51%
Others	40	31	↓ 23%
Total	1,662	2,467	↑ 48%

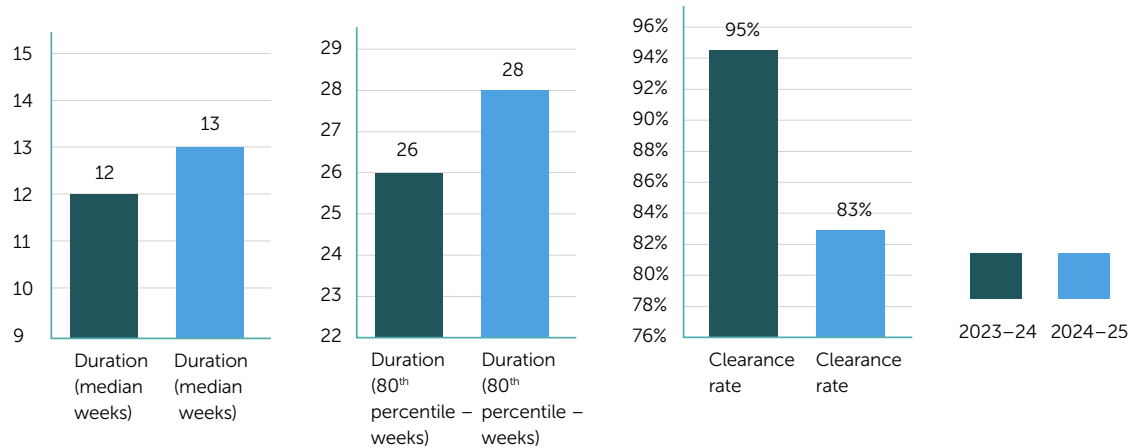
Owners Corporation list by claim amount for initiated cases

Applications by claim amount	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change
Standard claims: <\$15,000	1,200	1,776	↑ 48%
Complex claims: \$15,000 – \$100,000	130	274	↑ 111%
Complex claims: \$100,000 +	13	19	↑ 46%
No value	319	398	↑ 25%
Total	1,662	2,467	↑ 48%

Owners Corporation list – initiated, finalised and pending cases



Owners Corporation list – timeliness (weeks) for finalised cases and clearance rates



Human Rights Division

This year has seen a significant transformation in the Human Rights Division. The main priorities have been to clear the outstanding pending cases, digitise paper-heavy processes and build a more user-centred, efficient service model that reflects the complex and sensitive needs of some of Victoria's most vulnerable people.

Key achievements this year include:

Establishment of the Operating Model Improvement Program in the division

A standout achievement this year was beginning the Operating Model Improvement Program (OMIP) in the division. This dedicated resource enabled the division to address and clear the longstanding delays with pending cases awaiting reassessments of private guardianship and administrative orders that had accumulated during the pandemic. Key aspects of this work included:

- Introducing a **triaging model**, allowing 60 per cent of reassessments to be conducted on the papers, removing the need for a hearing and reducing the burden for parties, while still ensuring full and proper scrutiny of the arrangements, and giving an opportunity for all parties to be heard
- A new streamlined **20-minute hearing model** was introduced for first reassessments, with 10 matters heard per day.

**Head of Division:
Deputy President**
Julia Lever-Davidson



Progress towards digitisation

The division made significant strides toward digitising what is currently a completely paper-based filing system – a change seen as both urgent and overdue. This work, initially scoped by the OMIP team, is now embedded within broader registry reform and aligns with VCAT’s move to a digital case management system (DCMS) and will reduce risk and inefficiencies, improve timely communication with external stakeholders, such as State Trustees, and enable staff to more readily access hybrid work arrangements.

This work will continue throughout the rest of 2025 and in the lead up to our relocation to 308 La Trobe Street in early 2026. We will continue to roll out digital case management tools and back-office reforms, supported by a newly recruited surge workforce of 11 staff. This will enable us to balance ‘business as usual’ demand with directing resources to design continuous improvement processes during this time of major transformation.

Embedding case management and expanding delegations

The division is currently exploring how to extend the existing case management model used for complex guardianship and human rights matters across the broader guardianship portfolio. The team ran delegation training this year and secured new registry-level delegations, improving staff capacity and VCAT member support.



Human Rights list

VCAT has jurisdiction in relation to various matters involving the human rights of Victorians. This includes matters relating to discrimination and legislation, including the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*, *Health Records Act 2001*, the *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* and appeals regarding decisions of the Mental Health Tribunal.

Case trends

In 2024–25, the number of new applications rose slightly (8 per cent) to 550. Pending cases rose by 11 per cent to 528 and the median time to finalisation increased to 34 weeks.

During the year, VCAT established the Disability Act Supervised Treatment Order User Group at the request of the disability services sector. The purpose of this group is for VCAT to be able to consult with the organisations and individuals in the disability services sector who are part of the supervised treatment order process and provide those organisations and individuals with an opportunity to give feedback to VCAT about the supervised treatment order process.

In May 2025, the VCAT-Victorian Bar Pro Bono Barrister Referral Scheme trial started. This allows VCAT to formally refer unrepresented applicants to volunteer barristers for legal support in appropriate matters. Refer to page 35 for more information about the scheme.

Head of List:
Senior Member
Charles Powles



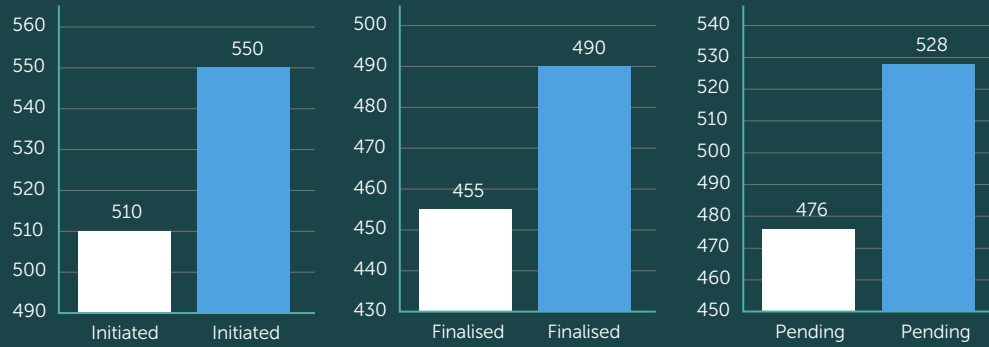
All matters in the Human Rights list will be referred to an accredited VCAT mediator if the parties consent. If the matter is not resolved, the matter will be listed for a directions hearing and then a compulsory conference if deemed suitable. In 2024–25, we held more in-person directions hearings where a duty Victorian Legal Aid lawyer is available to support the unrepresented person if required.

We are striving to increase the number of compulsory conferences by improving our scheduling processes and VCAT member resourcing for these cases.

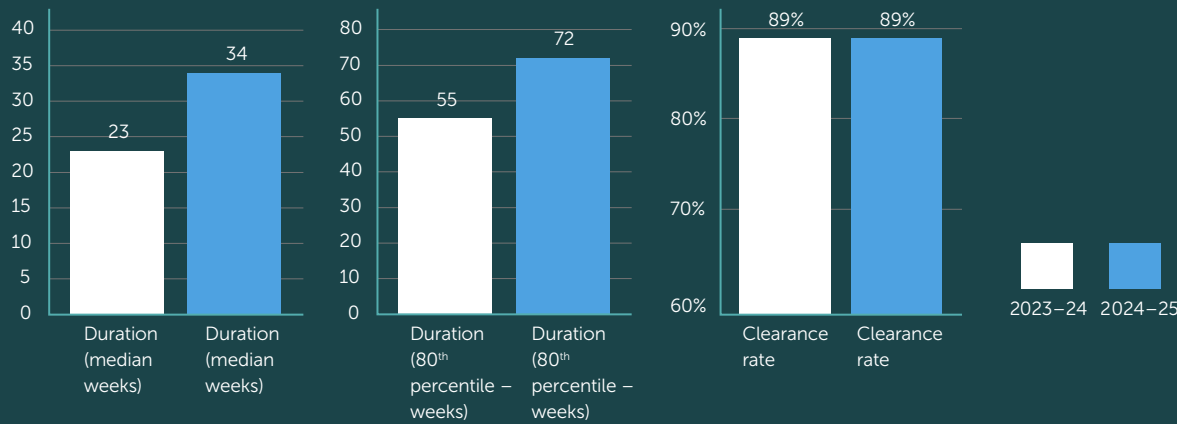
Human Rights list – initiated cases by enabling enactment

Applications by enabling enactment	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change
<i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010</i>	305	303	↓ 1%
<i>Disability Act 2006</i>	73	60	↓ 18%
<i>Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022</i>	43	32	↓ 26%
<i>Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001</i>	15	26	↑ 73%
<i>Health Records Act 2001</i>	18	26	↑ 44%
<i>Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014</i>	10	19	↑ 90%
Injunction application	3	2	↓ 33%
<i>Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998</i>	2	2	0%
<i>Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017</i>	2	1	↓ 50%
<i>Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008</i>	1	1	0%
<i>Mental Health Act 2014</i>	10	0	↓ 100%
Others	28	78	↑ 179%
Total	510	550	↑ 8%

Human Rights list – initiated, finalised and pending cases



Human Rights list – timeliness (weeks) for finalised cases and clearance rates



Hearing and Service Support Officer
Ramona Saldanha

Nurse discriminated against for union activity

Background

A registered nurse and Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) Job Representative, worked at a hospital's emergency department. In May 2021, she applied to move from a part-time permanent role to casual work via the hospital's Health Bureau. This internal process required her resignation and a reference from her manager.

What happened

During a staff meeting, the nurse raised concerns about proposed changes to nurse-patient ratios and emailed the union during the meeting to clarify whether it had been consulted. This action led to a noticeable change in her manager's behaviour and shortly afterward, a significant delay in supplying her reference. When the reference was finally submitted, it included a negative comment referencing the nurse's union-related communications. Her application for casual work was rejected.

Although a revised reference was later provided – removing the union-related comment – her application was again declined. The nurse claimed she was discriminated against for her industrial activity and experienced financial and emotional impacts as a result.

Outcome

VCAT found that the hospital:

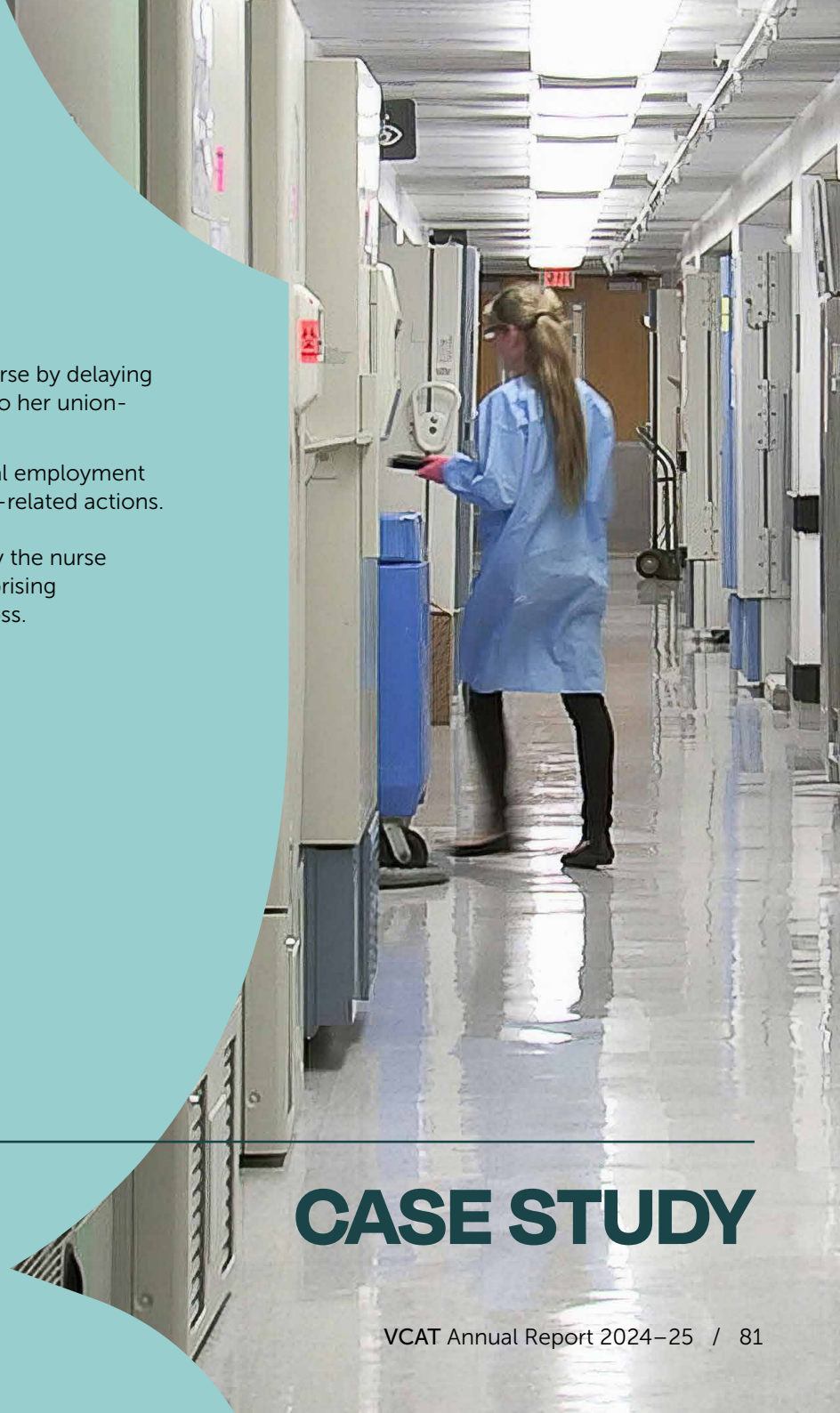
- Discriminated against the nurse by delaying her reference and referring to her union-related actions
- Unlawfully refused her casual employment in part because of her union-related actions.

VCAT ordered the hospital to pay the nurse \$40,000 in compensation, comprising economic and non-economic loss.



Scan here
to read about
the case

CASE STUDY



CASE STUDY



Upholding a patient's right to refuse electroconvulsive treatment

DQL, a man with a longstanding diagnosis of schizophrenia, was receiving inpatient care at a hospital under a treatment order. In July 2024, the hospital sought approval from the Mental Health Tribunal to administer up to 12 sessions of electroconvulsive treatment (ECT). The Mental Health Tribunal approved the application, despite DQL's objections.

VCAT review

With support from the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, DQL applied to VCAT for a review of the decision. He also requested an urgent injunction to stop the ECT while the review was underway. By that time, two ECT sessions had already occurred.

VCAT granted the interim injunction and proceeded to hear the full review. Evidence included medical reports, progress notes and oral testimony from DQL, his family, legal team and treating clinicians.

VCAT decision

VCAT found that DQL met all the legal criteria to make an informed decision about his treatment:

- He understood what ECT involved and why it was being proposed.
- He could remember and weigh up this information.
- He clearly communicated his decision to not proceed with ECT.
- He consented instead to continue oral medication, which VCAT found was a viable and less restrictive treatment option.

VCAT set aside the original decision and refused the application for ECT. The ruling reinforced the importance of respecting patient rights to make their own informed treatment decisions, even when they are receiving compulsory mental health care.



Scan here
to read about
the case



**Head of List:
Senior Member**
Brendan Hoystead

Guardianship list

VCAT is outwardly focused in relation to engaging with stakeholders around guardianship matters. We hold regular meetings with the Office of the Public Advocate, State Trustees and other large administrators.

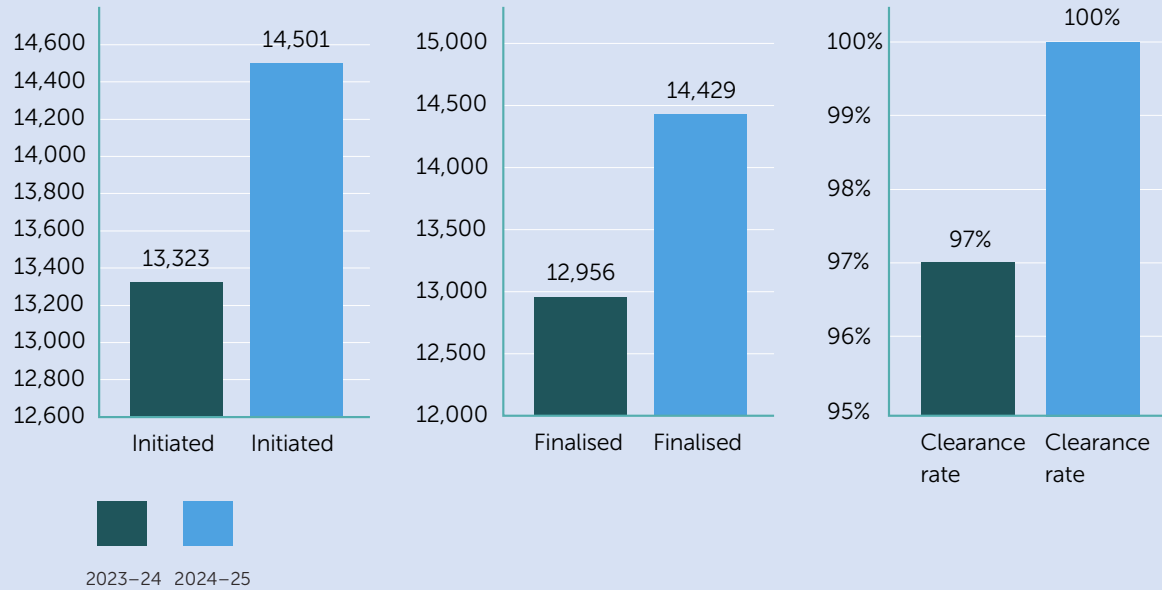
The Guardianship team delivers face-to-face hospital hearing lists at seven locations across Victoria – many unfunded – to ensure access to justice for people unable to travel. Private administrators (often family members) are now provided with practical information sessions by VCAT’s specialist accountants members to support compliance with financial reporting.

VCAT also welcomed users of the Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service for in-person education and familiarisation sessions during the year.

Case trends

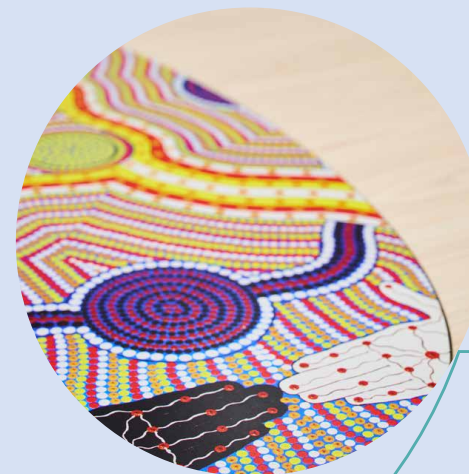
Guardianship applications dropped by 6 per cent in 2024–25 to 5,891, down from 6,237 in 2023–24. Overall caseloads in the Guardianship list increased by 7 per cent, largely driven by a 19 per cent uptick in reassessment orders.

Guardianship list – initiated, finalised and pending cases



Guardianship list – activities by enabling enactment

Breakdown of other applications/activities by Act and sections	Initiated 2023-24	Initiated 2024-25	Initiated % change
Advice to administrator	3,636	4,177	↑ 15%
Directions	565	480	↓ 15%
Orders about appointed medical treatment decision-makers and support persons	61	39	↓ 36%
Reassessment of order to comply with guardian's decisions	3	1	↓ 67%
Comply with guardian's decisions	18	30	↑ 67%
Rehearing for party to application	43	51	↑ 19%
Rehearing for non-party to application	5	10	↑ 100%
Additional activities	583	645	↑ 11%
Total	4,914	5,433	↑ 11%



Part of the table within the Koori Hearing Room at VCAT Oakleigh

Guardianship list – initiated cases by enabling enactment

Major applications/activities by Act and sections	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change
Guardianship and/or administration orders	6,237	5,891	↓ 6%
Reassessment orders	5,300	6,283	↑ 19%
Powers of Attorney	591	584	↓ 1%
Others	4,914	5,433	↑ 11%
Total	17,042	18,191	↑ 7%

First Nations engagement

A new Koori-specific listing initiative is in development in partnership with State Trustees, led by First Nations VCAT members and culturally trained staff.

The division actively draws on support from VCAT’s Koori Engagement Team and is helping to lay the groundwork for broader cultural safety practice across VCAT.

Looking ahead

VCAT has prepared for major legislative change, including the *Aged Care Restrictive Practices Substitute Decision-maker Act 2024*, which commenced on 1 July 2025. We expect to receive a number of cases under this legislation in the coming period.

Powers of Attorney activities for initiated cases for the Guardianship list

Description	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change
Resignation of Attorney under Enduring Power of Attorney	9	10	↑ 11%
Conflict transactions	33	35	↑ 6%
Disagreement between personal and financial attorneys	9	8	↓ 11%
Compensation	47	56	↑ 19%
Orders about Enduring Power of Attorney	422	425	↑ 1%
Orders about Supportive Power of Attorney	11	16	↑ 45%
Advisory opinions	56	31	↓ 45%
Relief of personal liability for attorney	0	2	
Time limit for application for order for compensation	1	1	0%
Requirement to rehear	1	0	
Rehearings	0	0	
Compel production of will & make copy available to attorney	2	0	
Total	591	584	↓ 1%

Planning and Environment Division

The Planning and Environment list resolves disputes related to planning, environmental and land valuation matters in Victoria. This includes applications under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, *Environment Protection Act 2017* and *Valuation of Land Act 1960*, as well as disputes under other relevant legislation, such as the *Heritage Act 2017* and the *Subdivision Act 1988*. The list also deals with disputes concerning natural resources and environmental protection.

The Planning and Environment list has a mix of high volume, relatively straightforward matters and a smaller volume of highly complex applications.

Case trends

In 2024–25, new applications regarding land valuations increased by 9 per cent (to 113 applications, up from 104 in 2023–24), while all other applications were lower this year.

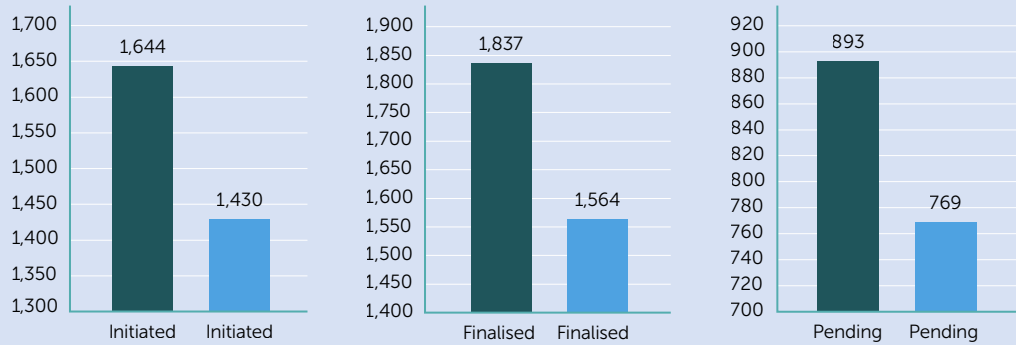
The drop in new applications (down 13 per cent from 2023–24), combined with sustained finalisations led to a clearance rate of 109 per cent. This resulted in a 14 per cent reduction in pending matters (down from 893 in 2023–24 to 769).

While numbers are relatively low, we are seeing an increase in the complexity of matters related to water and land use. Refer to page 90 for more information about VCAT's role in flood and water-related planning disputes.

**Head of Division:
Deputy President**
Dr Teresa Bisucci



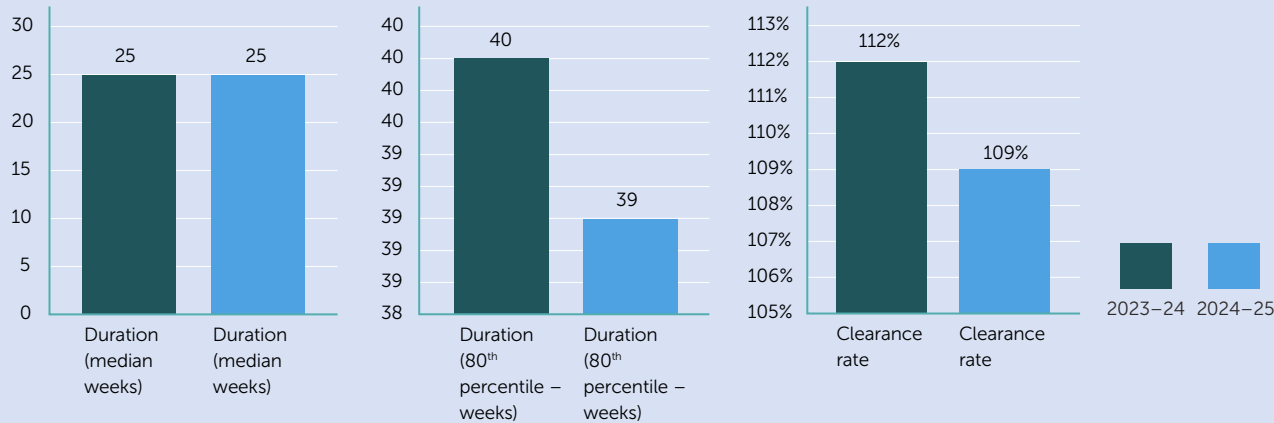
Planning and Environment list – initiated, finalised and pending cases



Koori Hearing Room at VCAT Oakleigh



Planning and Environment list – timeliness (weeks) for finalised cases and clearance rates



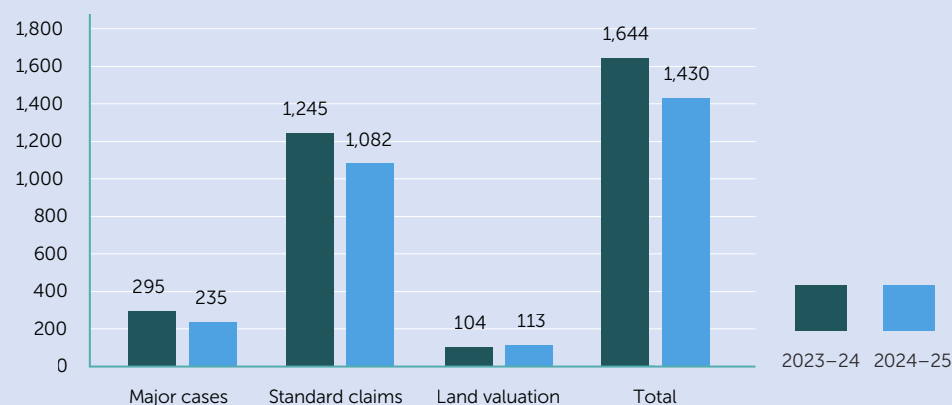
Planning and Environment list – initiated cases by sub list

Sublist	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change	Finalised 2023–24	Finalised 2024–25	Finalised % change	Pending 2023–24	Pending 2024–25	Pending % change	Clearance rate 2023–24	Clearance rate 2024–25	Clearance rate % change
Planning and Environment	1,540	1,317	↓ 14%	1,768	1,481	↓ 16.2%	818	665	↓ 19%	115%	113%	↓ 2%
Land Valuation	104	113	↑ 9%	69	83	↑ 20.3%	75	104	↑ 39%	66%	74%	↑ 11%
Total	1,644	1,430	↓ 13%	1,837	1,564	↓ 14.9%	893	769	↓ 14%	112%	109%	↓ 2%

Planning and Environment list – initiated cases by enabling enactment

Applications by enabling enactment	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change
<i>Planning and Environment Act 1987</i>	1,490	1,284	↓ 14%
<i>Valuation of Land Act 1960</i>	77	78	↑ 1%
<i>Environment Protection Act 2017</i>	26	17	↓ 35%
<i>Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986</i>	18	29	↑ 61%
<i>Water Act 1989</i>	11	7	↓ 36%
<i>Local Government Act 1989</i>	6	3	↓ 50%
<i>Subdivision Act 1988</i>	6	4	↓ 33%
<i>Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990</i>	1	1	0%
<i>Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998</i>	1	1	0%

Planning and Environment list – initiated cases by case type



Planning and Environment list – initiated cases by estimated development cost

Applications by estimated development cost	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change
<\$15,000	302	242	↓ 20%
\$15,000 – \$100,000	63	89	↑ 41%
\$100,000 – \$1 million	418	358	↓ 14%
\$1m – \$5 million	336	254	↓ 24%
\$5m – \$20 million	114	90	↓ 21%
\$20 million +	87	67	↓ 23%
Non-monetary value	324	330	↑ 2%
Total	1,644	1,430	↓ 13%

Planning and Environment list – initiated cases by total estimated development cost

Applications by estimated development cost	2023–24	2024–25	% change
Approximate total value (\$ billion)	\$8.74	5.77	↓ 34%

Planning and Environment list – initiated cases by council (top 15)

Council	Initiated 2023–24	Initiated 2024–25	Initiated % change
Mornington Peninsula Shire Council	87	80	↓ 8%
Yarra City Council	100	79	↓ 21%
Port Phillip City Council	55	74	↑ 35%
Stonnington City Council	67	66	↓ 1%
Boroondara City Council	53	56	↑ 6%
Greater Geelong City Council	37	47	↑ 27%
Whitehorse City Council	52	42	↓ 19%
Monash City Council	53	35	↓ 34%
Yarra Ranges Shire Council	30	34	↑ 13%
Melbourne City Council	29	33	↑ 14%
Bayside City Council	40	32	↓ 20%
Darebin City Council	38	29	↓ 24%
Hobsons Bay City Council	30	28	↓ 7%
Manningham City Council	24	26	↑ 8%
Merri-Bek City Council	38	24	↓ 37%

CASE STUDY



Image by
Kathy Reid
Flickr

Navigating the rising tide: VCAT's role in flood and water-related planning disputes

As recent floods highlight vulnerabilities in Victoria's built environment, VCAT has seen a sharp rise in cases involving water and flood-related planning disputes.

In 2024–25, there was a significant increase in three types of water-related matters:

- Reviews of *Directions and Improvement Notices under the Water Act 1989*
- Planning permit disputes concerning flood risks
- The interpretation and application of evolving flood guidance documents.

With evolving guidance, increasing community scrutiny and new legislative reforms underway, VCAT will continue playing a pivotal role in how Victoria balances housing needs with flood resilience. Some relevant VCAT decisions are summarised here.

Scan here for
published VCAT
decisions



Landmark case: **Cummaudo Asset Pty Ltd v Minister for Water**

This case set a procedural precedent for dealing with unlicensed or altered irrigation dams. VCAT granted a conditional stay on compliance directions – balancing the applicant's irrigation needs with public safety by imposing conditions, such as mandatory dam break assessment and water level restrictions.

Planning scheme boundaries: what counts as flood risk?

In *A1 Holdings Vic Pty Ltd v Baw Baw Shire Council*, VCAT found that councils can't refuse planning permits based on flood risk unless a relevant planning overlay applies. General concerns or policy references aren't enough, highlighting the importance of clear planning controls.

Key theme: 'avoid' and 'minimise' over 'mitigate'

In the wake of the 2022 Maribyrnong River floods, Melbourne Water and other authorities have taken a stronger stance against developments in flood-prone areas. VCAT's decisions now reinforce the planning scheme's hierarchy of risk management, favouring avoidance and minimisation over mitigation strategies, such as evacuation.

Increasing complexity of matters going to hearing

While the majority of Planning and Environment list matters are resolved prior to hearing via Appropriate Dispute Resolution (ADR), the remaining matters tend to be highly complex and require longer hearing duration. In 2024–25, the increasing complexity is arising from a changing legislative landscape, particularly regarding who can lodge an application in relation to a planning decision. The downstream impact of this is that in the attempt to streamline planning decisions, VCAT often has a role in determining and explaining the legislative and regulatory regime changes that have occurred and why a party that may have previously been able to make an application for a planning review or participate in the process, can no longer do so.

Embracing Appropriate Dispute Resolution

The Planning and Environment Division embraces ADR and has done so since 2020. In 2024–25, 41 per cent of matters were resolved via ADR. To support this, VCAT has:

- Increased the number of accredited mediators. There are now more members than ever before to facilitate compulsory conferences
- Run intensive training sessions by senior VCAT members to upskill all members and build confidence in using ADR.

The following tables highlight the increasing use and success of ADR in Planning and Environment matters.

Total files conducted via compulsory conferences

↑ 12%

2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
435	666	756	714	551	911	830	969	959	1,072

Total files settled by compulsory conference

↑ 13%

2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
281	330	386	366	274	326	313	378	387	439

Total files settled by compulsory conference

↑ 1%

2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
65%	50%	51%	51%	50%	36%	38%	39%	40%	41%

The Specialist Case Management team plays a vital role in progressing planning matters at VCAT. Comprising skilled planners and planning lawyers, the team collaborates with members and registry staff to triage new cases, resolve issues early and ensure files are hearing-ready – supporting efficient processes and quality decision-making.

Stakeholder engagement

The Planning and Environment Division interacts with many repeat stakeholders, including representatives from government departments, local councils and legal professionals. To support increasing the knowledge base and capability of those working in environment and planning, VCAT regularly updates the [Planning and Environment Resource Hub](#).

The hub features practical insights, such as 'how to effectively draft consent orders in a planning and environment case' as well as what to expect from practice day hearings.

We also run regular advocacy training for new advocates in the regions and metropolitan Melbourne. For more information, refer to the feature on page 93.



Member
Michael Deidun

Building confidence and capability in hearing appearances

VCAT continues to strengthen sector capability through targeted outreach and training programs for advocates, expert witnesses and local government planners – helping to improve the quality, clarity and confidence of people appearing before VCAT hearings.

Moot Court program

The Moot Court program, delivered annually by VCAT members in partnership with the Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association (VPELA), gives early-career advocates and expert witnesses a unique opportunity to develop and refine their skills in a simulated VCAT hearing environment. VCAT members volunteer their time to preside over mock hearings, using real (de-identified) past cases to offer participants hands-on experience and structured feedback.

“We’re helping the next generation understand what matters to VCAT and how to succeed. I appreciated every bit of feedback I received early in my career, and now I’m playing a role to help the next generation,” says VCAT member Michael Deidun.

Participants prepare either submissions or expert evidence and are coached through oral presentation techniques, real-time problem-solving and effective use of hearing room technology. Each mock hearing concludes with feedback from both VCAT members and senior barristers.

“The better the material we receive, the more informed our decision-making. It’s already having an impact. We’re seeing young advocates come through this program and perform extremely well in real hearings.”

Expanding access and confidence through regional advocacy

To ensure planners across Victoria have access to the same high-quality professional development opportunities as their metropolitan peers, VCAT members are also participating in a Regional Advocacy Seminar Series, co-delivered with VPELA.

These sessions are designed primarily for local government planners and focus on practical advice about preparing for and participating in VCAT hearings and Planning Panels Victoria processes.

“These sessions cover what to expect at a hearing, what to include in submissions and how to navigate the process, from the lodgement of the application, to mediation through to the final hearing,” says VCAT Member Michael Deidun.

Workshops have been held in Cowes and Bendigo, with more scheduled in Colac and Wangaratta in September 2025. Sessions are followed by informal networking, encouraging participants to ask questions of VCAT members, which can help demystify the process and build trust.

As local government plays a critical role in nearly all planning hearings, this work also supports early resolution and procedural efficiency by helping councils better prepare and streamline the pre-hearing process.

Both programs reflect VCAT’s commitment to engaging proactively with the sector, improving hearing quality and access and investing in future generations of advocates and planners.

CASE STUDY



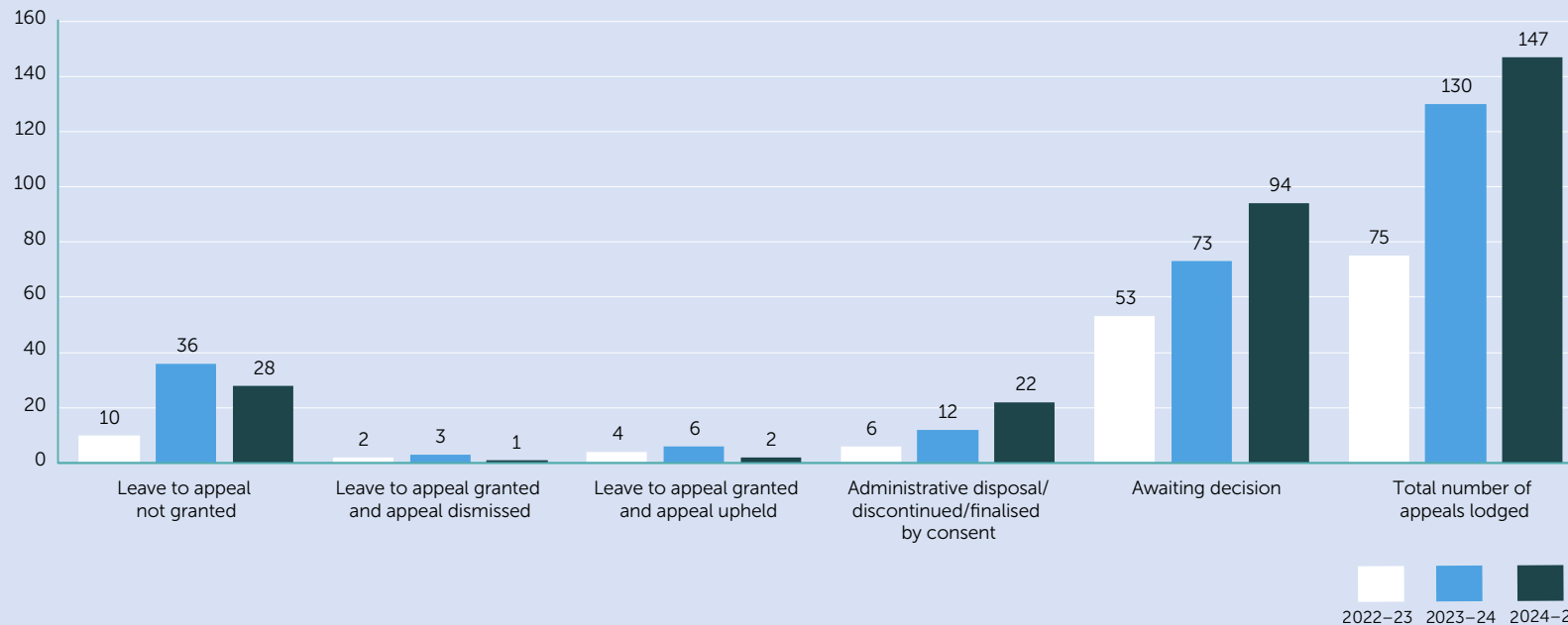
Moot Court
November 2024

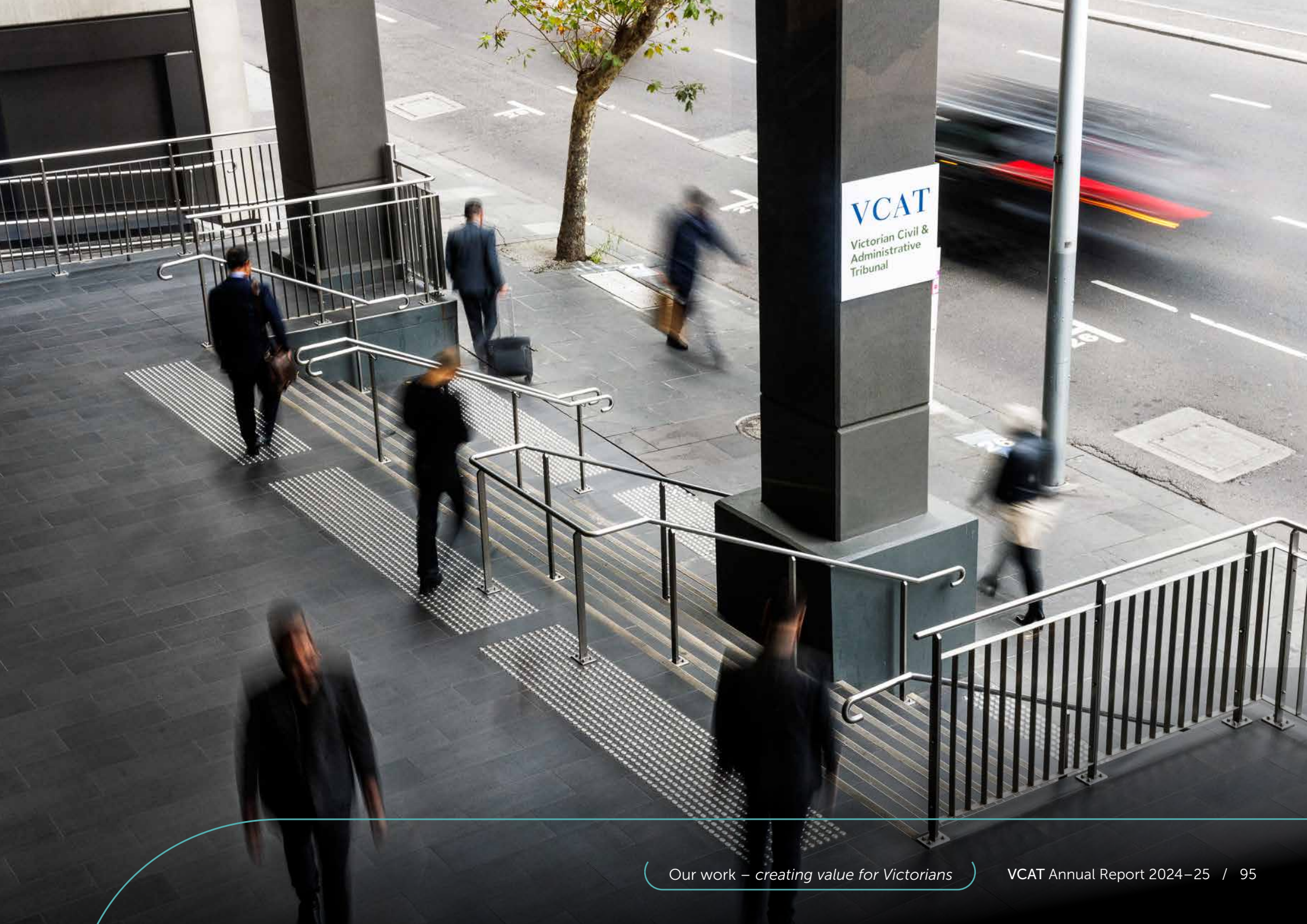
Appeals

VCAT decisions can only be appealed on questions of law under section 148 of the *Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998*.

This means that only where a party believes the judge or member made a legal error, can users seek permission from the Supreme Court of Victoria to appeal a decision. This limit on appeals helps give certainty to users when we determine their disputes. The Supreme Court’s Trial Division hears appeals against orders made by a VCAT member or Deputy President. The Court of Appeal hears appeals against decisions by the VCAT President or a Vice President.

Appeals to the Supreme Court of Victoria





VCAT
Victorian Civil &
Administrative
Tribunal

Our organisation – *enablers for excellence*

Delivering services for
Victorians in places and
ways that are accessible
and that represent value
for money

VCAT is transforming our organisation to better service the needs of Victorians involved in disputes. Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria (RDRV) represents a new way of working and is one part of the broader transformation that is underway across VCAT. From digitising services and enhancing case management, to redesigning processes and improving support for our users, staff and members, we're investing in many ways to make VCAT more accessible and efficient. This work builds on the strengths of our people and systems, and we want to acknowledge the dedication of teams across VCAT who continue to drive improvement every day.



Artist's impression of
new VCAT headquarters
at 308 La Trobe Street.
Supplied by Charter Hall.

Preparing for the relocation to new headquarters

In early 2026, VCAT's head office will move from 55 King Street to 308 La Trobe Street, Melbourne. This is not just a physical move, but a shift to new ways of working, with a focus on:

- Improved co-location and collaboration
- Enhanced accessibility and comfort for people coming to VCAT
- Better user and staff experience.

A cross-functional working group has been established to ensure operational readiness, involving operations, listings, security, technology and user experience. The team is focused on change management and ensuring staff are supported and well-orientated during the transition. This is particularly important given the broader organisational changes afoot and resource pressures.

Supporting inclusion and cultural safety for the community

Koori Support team

VCAT's community access service includes regional services, front counter and phone support, family violence support, our Disability Liaison Service and Koori Support. The team is working on service design and delivery models for the new headquarters, particularly ensuring safety and support for vulnerable people coming to VCAT. To support this, we are working to improve our data capture on people who need extra support to better tailor our services and measure our impact.

Given most of the work of the VCAT Koori Support team occurs pre and post hearing, these figures amount to more than 5,000 contacts with First Nations parties and organisations during 2024–25, aimed at providing a culturally safe and supportive experience for community with a focus upon self-determination.

This year marked a significant milestone with VCAT's inaugural Koori Hearing Day – an historic event supporting cultural safety and self-determination for First Nations people. This was the culmination of collaborative effort from the VCAT Koori Support team, VCAT members and registry staff in the Human Rights Division and State Trustees.

1,289

cases supported
involving at
least one First
Nations party

1,903

hearings supported
involving at
least one First
Nations party



All matters within this pilot were listed within a Koori Hearing Room, heard by First Nations Member, Michelle Gardner. This allowed for the VCAT Koori Support team and State Trustees First Nations Support worker to be present in person for all hearings, enabling a culturally safe and supportive space for community.

This day showcased the volume of pre-hearing work completed by the VCAT Koori Support team in partnership with key stakeholders.

The team was also active during **NAIDOC Week 2025**, hosting a morning tea at VCAT and participating in events with State Trustees and Court Services Victoria's Dhumba Murmuk Djerring unit. The 2025 theme, The Next Generation: Strength, Vision and Legacy, celebrates not only the achievements of the past, but the bright future ahead, empowered by the strength of our young leaders, the vision of our communities and the legacy of our ancestors.

VCAT's Kym Williams shared insights on the importance of collaboration at a State Trustees event attended by more than 200 people and via live stream across State Trustees venues in Footscray, Dandenong and Bendigo.

In June, the VCAT Koori Support team was joined by President Justice Ted Woodward, VCAT members and senior management in the final leg of the **Walk for Truth** hosted by the **Yoorook Justice Commission**. The walk began on 25 May on Gunditjmara Country (Portland) and finished at Parliament House on 18 June.

The Koori Support team attended three Sisters Day Out events held in Broadmeadows, Orbost and Werribee, hosted by Djirra, which provides support for Aboriginal women and families, currently or having previously experienced family violence. The team also attended the Council of Australasian Tribunals conference and presented in a VCAT member Twilight Highlight session to share information about the Koori support available to people coming to VCAT.



"The [Koori Support team] gave us strength in what we wanted to do which was go ahead with this matter. We couldn't have done it without them. It has given my son so much confidence, to fight for what is right..."

VCAT user

Family violence support

In 2024–25, the Family Violence Support team managed **2,360** inquiries, with many of these related to residential tenancy disputes.

The team provides end-to-end, trauma-informed support to people affected by family or personal violence throughout their journey at VCAT. This includes safety planning, anonymisation of records, emotional support and referral coordination.

While 80 per cent of this work takes place within the Residential Tenancies list, the team also supports parties in guardianship matters and other VCAT jurisdictions.

Support is primarily provided to those experiencing violence, but also extends to respondents, particularly in relation to participation in safety planning arrangements and referrals to community agencies and services, such as behaviour change programs.

Disability Liaison team

Responding to **3,456*** referrals and inquiries, the Disability Liaison team supports people with additional accessibility needs through every stage of their VCAT experience – from orientation and pre-visits to adaptive technology access, hearing adjustments and post-hearing support.

The team ensures each party is heard and safe, navigating complexity with compassion and precision.

Continued commitment to accessible justice

Across VCAT, the Community Access Services teams are deepening collaboration, strengthening relationships with community partners and exploring new ways to improve service delivery. The support service teams respond to counter enquiries, provide support and help to VCAT users in community-based venues and regions and answer phone enquiries. They work to ensure VCAT is accessible, inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of the Victorian community.

“This is a scary process, but I have felt supported through it with your kindness and am truly grateful.”

VCAT user

“It’s a bit overwhelming for us but we are so grateful for your help to ease the anxiety.”

VCAT user

* This figure captures formal referrals and general enquiries received via the Disability inbox and recently, RDRV referrals via system and resolution coordinator referrals.

Improving the way we work to deliver better outcomes

We have begun significant reform to better integrate listings with end-to-end case management, rather than operating in isolation. Key areas of focus include:

- Reducing inefficiencies and list cancellations
- Eliminating manual rostering systems
- Improving demand forecasting and member allocation.

We are also undertaking work to define a hearing modality strategy (in-person, hybrid and online). This will ensure that VCAT is being strategic about applying guidance around the type of hearing modality most appropriate and making better use of available space and technology. Importantly, this will improve access to justice for people using VCAT from regional and rural areas.

In the coming months, our strategic priority is to align listings with divisional workflows and digital case management systems to support sustainable reform and a paperless environment at our new headquarters.



Intake Officer
Justin Pryzchodzki

Rapid delivery of the Rental Dispute Resolution Victoria digital platform

In just five months (August to December 2024), VCAT's in-house digital program delivery team designed, built and implemented changes to VCAT's case management system and myVCAT portal to support the RDRV pilot. New functionality supported early resolution services, online case management and a new digital analytics platform to securely store and access data. The portal transitioned to RDRV branding on 23 June 2025, supported by an accessible public-facing website, which was designed in consultation with stakeholders including Consumer Affairs Victoria.

This cross-functional, user-led delivery approach exemplifies VCAT's agility and enterprise responsiveness.

Looking ahead

We plan to continue transitioning guardianship and the remaining residential tenancies cases over the next financial year. Once these two phases are completed, more than 90 per cent of VCAT's new applications will be using the digital case management system.

CASE STUDY



Digital evidence upload to improve efficiency

In 2024–25, VCAT’s staff, members and digital implementation team worked together to rapidly prototype and introduce a Digital Evidence Upload tool, a streamlined, user-friendly way for parties to submit evidence.

The benefits for VCAT users and staff include:

- No reliance on email attachments – reducing security risks and simplifying the upload process
- Review before submission – giving parties confidence in what they’re providing
- Smart tagging and auto-filing – ensuring documents are stored correctly without manual sorting
- No manual handling post-upload – saving significant administrative effort and reducing human error
- Elimination of duplication – as documents flow directly from parties to the VCAT system.

This solution was designed, built and implemented in just four weeks – a testament to agile collaboration across technology, operations and VCAT members. It has directly improved efficiency for VCAT staff and made digital evidence submission more seamless for our users.

Following its success in residential tenancies matters, the tool is now being assessed for rollout across other VCAT lists.

**Program Director,
Service Transformation**
Kranthi Nugur

Digital infrastructure enhancements

VCAT will soon implement new internet-based calls and hearing capabilities, improving the integration between call and video conference systems with our telephony platform and our new digital case management system. The benefits will include transcription of calls and hearings, caller identification and improved tracking of user interactions.

VCAT is also provisioning a new data analytics platform, which will support improved performance monitoring and strengthened data and insights capability.

Human-centred design and stakeholder engagement

VCAT's user experience-led design of the RDRV website was done in collaboration with vulnerable users and tenant advocates providing a single platform for entry for renters and rental providers. The design of the RDRV service continues to evolve with the input of stakeholders and users.

In 2024–25, VCAT received a Good Design Award from Good Design Australia for the research and co-design project that centred the voices of people with accessibility needs and those vulnerable to exclusion in the design of VCAT's new headquarters.



Scan to learn more about the project

Working with government stakeholders on key reforms

This year, we continued to foster stronger working relationships with agencies that we work with in terms of legislative reform. This includes the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Department of Government Services. We also regularly meet with key stakeholder and user groups.



Participants in the research and co-design project, 2024

Optimising our corporate services

To support the implementation of the VCAT Improvement Plan, we established the strategic Enterprise Project Management Office function within VCAT. The purpose of this is to ensure our various transformation activities are supported, with robust governance and programmatic management so we can achieve our strategic objectives under *Towards Excellence*.

Maturing our risk management approach

We have also reviewed and redeveloped our approach to risk management, including developing a strategic and operational risk register with robust oversight by the VCAT Risk Committee. We are working to build capability in risk identification, assessment and management culture at VCAT.

Improving data-led modelling

As we transition to a fully digitised case management system and improve our data capture and performance metrics, VCAT will be better positioned to enhance our ability to forecast resource modelling required to manage caseloads. During 2024–25, we focused on improving performance insights to aid daily caseload performance, as well the introduction of new metrics relevant to our new services.

Looking ahead, the combined benefits of our Operating Model Improvement Program (OMIP) and case efficiency efforts will mean that we are extracting more from our existing resources, as well as identifying where strategic funding requests are needed and can be evidence-based on data and strong financial modelling.

Expanding our regional and suburban operations

A major strategic focus this year has been re-establishing and expanding in-person hearing services across regional Victoria.

The work included reengaging with regional Magistrates' Courts, optimising the use of community-based venues (CBVs) in Frankston, Oakleigh and Bundoora, and returning to regional circuits based on demand rather than routine scheduling. In 2024–25, average room usage at CBVs grew from 89 per month in 2023–24 to 167 per month in 2024–25, an 88 per cent increase.

From October to December 2024, VCAT resumed sittings at multiple suburban and regional Magistrates' Court venues, including Warrnambool, Shepparton, Wangaratta, Wodonga, Sale, Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Sunshine and Dromana. This initial expansion averaged 15 room bookings per month.

From February 2025, additional venues were introduced in Seymour, Korumburra, Mildura and Echuca, which lifted monthly Magistrate's Court venue use to an average of 51 days per month.



Koori Engagement Officer
Tracey Winmar

Our focus has been on using a data-led, cost-efficient model that better aligns hearings with need. Regional engagement also included reconnecting with community legal centres, especially for rental matters, enhancing on-the-ground support. For more information about VCAT's collaboration with the Peninsula Community Legal Centre refer to page 61.

Our Regional Service Support team has expanded, with the addition of managers to our community-based venues and ensures we are making the best use of the available infrastructure.

A key challenge is venue and resource constraints, which we work to overcome through adaptive scheduling and close stakeholder engagement. We are also working with Victoria Legal Aid to accommodate its new remote duty lawyer service model as more in-person hearings take place.

Looking ahead, we are expanding our reach further, including exploring other non-VCAT venues and potential drop-in virtual hearing access points.

Preparing to open new VCAT service in Wyndham

From 17 November 2025, VCAT will begin hearing matters in the Wyndham Law Courts, delivering in-person services to support people in one of Victoria's fastest-growing communities.

A dedicated VCAT service counter and dedicated hearing rooms will be located at the new venue, assisting with VCAT matters, RDRV enquiries and referring people to appropriate services as needed, including through the onsite Community Connection Point.



Image by Ben Wrigley

Our people – *building a high- performance culture*

Building the skills
and capability of
our people to excel
in what they do

Our people are our greatest strength. Their diverse skills, experiences and perspectives shape the quality of our service and drive our performance.

VCAT is powered by a team of more than 500 people working together to deliver fair, accessible and timely justice for Victorians. This includes more than 200 members who are independent decision-makers and whose professional backgrounds span law, planning, healthcare, engineering and science. We also have approximately 300 dedicated staff who help Victorians navigate their matters, provide case management services and support to VCAT members, and keep the business of VCAT operating smoothly.

We're committed to investing in our workforce through continuous learning and creating new roles and structures to reduce barriers to productivity and career progression. We are building a culture of respect, professionalism and performance. Our goal is to make VCAT the best place to work, so our people are enabled to deliver excellence to the Victorian community in resolving disputes.



Intake Officer
Gloria Cotesta

Building staff capability to improve service delivery

VCAT is investing in the capability of our people to improve the experience of those who use our services. Many staff are now accredited mediators, enabling earlier resolution of matters and reducing the need for formal hearings. We are also building capability in inclusive practice through training in Koori cultural awareness, inclusive language, gender impact assessment and trauma-informed approaches.

In 2024–25, VCAT staff completed learning activities across a range of areas, including induction, communication, leadership, recruitment, change management and performance development. VCAT is also supporting innovation and continuous improvement through the Operating Model Improvement Program (OMIP). Staff are empowered to identify counterproductive practices and design workflows that are user-centric, efficient and accessible.

Member leader development

In 2024–25, VCAT began work to clearly define the roles of our member leaders, including the President, Heads of Division, Deputy Heads and members. This work is about clarifying role accountabilities, leadership responsibilities and relationships between roles.

The role design work will also support the introduction of a new division and list structure, helping VCAT run more efficiently and with a strong focus on performance. The project is underway and will support better governance, clearer expectations and alignment with how VCAT will operate into the future.

Our team environment



Quality of service delivery

85%
VPS 79%

88% believe their team provides **high-quality advice and service**

81% agree their team **uses resources well**

85% believe their team **acts fairly without bias**

85% agree their team has **clear lines of responsibility**



Innovation

78%
VPS 71%

71% believe **creativity is encouraged**

81% agree their team is **quick to respond to opportunities to do things better**

81% believe their team **acts fairly without bias**



Team support

85%
VPS 81%

76% believe **conflicts of interest are managed appropriately**

84% agree their team is **honest, open and transparent**

94% agree their team members **treat each other with respect**

89% believe their team **works well together**

83% agree their team is **politically impartial**



Safe to speak up

80%
VPS 74%

79% feel **safe to call out inappropriate behaviour**

80% are **able to bring up problems and tough issues**

People matter survey

In April and May 2025, VCAT’s public sector workforce participated in the Victorian public sector’s (VPS) independent employee opinion survey, People matter. The survey is designed to:

- Build positive workplace cultures consistent with the public sector values
- Improve the working environment for their employees.

VCAT’s results illustrate that our culture is very much aligned to our *Towards Excellence* ambition of building a high-performance culture among our people so we can excel in our service to the Victorian community.

Defining our Culture Statement

VCAT is committed to building a more constructive, values-driven workplace culture. Historically, elements of the organisation's culture have limited collaboration, innovation and psychological safety. In response, VCAT is undertaking a comprehensive cultural reform to foster a more inclusive and empowering environment.

Key initiatives include leadership development, psychological safety training, capability building and embedding continuous feedback and recognition practices. These efforts reflect VCAT's commitment to values-based leadership, high performance and meaningful staff engagement. By embedding constructive behaviours into everyday practice, VCAT aims to embrace a culture that enables us to achieve our *Towards Excellence* ambitions.

Financial report

VCAT's 2024–25 accounts are audited by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) as part of Court Services Victoria (CSV) accounts. Financial transactions are recorded and audited for compliance with the reporting guidelines set by the Department of Treasury and Finance for Victorian Government agencies and are compliant with the Australian Accounting Standards.

VCAT's 2024–25 accounts are published in the consolidated CSV Annual Report 2023–24.

To view the CSV Annual Report, visit courts.vic.gov.au.

Due to a difference in legislated reporting timeframes, at the time of preparing this report, VAGO was yet to form an audit opinion on the CSV accounts. The finance information presented below remains subject to VAGO audit.

VCAT finances (\$ million)	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
How much Parliament appropriates for VCAT costs	\$39.527	\$42.796	\$45.065	\$49.757	\$38.190
Fees retained as appropriations	\$7.889	\$8.021	\$7.961	\$7.008	\$6.494
Funds from Consumer Affairs Victoria and Victorian Legal Services Board (in trust, for dispute services)	\$20.589	\$19.640	\$23.779	\$28.553	\$60.616

Appendices

Enabling legislation as at 30 June 2025

Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006

Accident Compensation Act 1985

Accident Towing Services Act 2007

Accident Towing Services Regulations 2019

Adoption Act 1984

Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1992

Architects Act 1991

Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008

Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012

Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012

Back to Work Act 2015

Biological Control Act 1986

Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1996

Building Act 1993

Bus Safety Act 2009

Business Franchise (Petroleum Products) Act 1979

Business Licensing Authority Act 1998

Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994

Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003

Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices

Prohibition Act 2021

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005

Children's Services Act 1996

Child Employment Act 2003

Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005

Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021

Climate Change Act 2017

Commercial Passenger Vehicle Industry Act 2017

Company Titles (Home Units) Act 2013

Congestion Levy Act 2005

Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987

Conveyancers Act 2006

Co-operatives National Law Application Act 2013

Country Fire Authority Act 1958

Credit Act 1984

Dairy Act 2000
Dangerous Goods Act 1985
Development Victoria Act 2003
Disability Act 2006
Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018
Domestic Animals Act 1994
Domestic Building Contracts Act 1995
Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981
Duties Act 2000
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
Education and Training Reform Act 2006
Electoral Act 2002
Electricity Safety Act 1998
Emergency Management Act 1986
Emergency Services Superannuation Act 1986
Environment Protection Act 2017
Equal Opportunity Act 2010
Equipment (Public Safety) Act 1994
Essential Services Commission Act 2001
Estate Agents Act 1980
Firearms Act 1996
Fire Rescue Victoria Act 1958
Fire Rescue Victoria (Firefighters Registration Board) Regulations 2022
First Home Owner Grant Act 2000
Fisheries Act 1995

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988
Freedom of Information Act 1982
Fundraising Act 1998
Gambling Regulation Act 2003
Gambling Taxation Act 2023
Gas Safety Act 1997
Gender Equality Act 2020
Guardianship and Administration Act 2019
Health Complaints Act 2016
Health Practitioner Regulation National Law
Health Records Act 2001
Health Services Act 1988
Heavy Vehicle National Law Application Act 2013
Heritage Act 2017
Housing Act 1983
Instruments Act 1958
Labour Hire Licensing Act 2018
Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986
Land Tax Act 2005
Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014
Liquor Control Reform Act 1998
Livestock Disease Control Act 1994
Local Government Act 1989
Local Government Act 2020
Long Service Benefits Portability Act 2018
Marine Safety Act 2010

Major Events Act 2009
Major Transport Projects Facilitation Act 2009
Meat Industry Act 1993
Medical Treatment Planning and Decisions Act 2016
Melbourne Strategic Assessment
(Environment Mitigation Levy) Act 2020
Mental Health Act 2014
Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990
Motor Car Traders Act 1986
National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005
Non-Emergency Patient Transport and First Aid Services Act 2003
Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017
Open Courts Act 2013
Owner Drivers and Forestry Contractors Act 2005
Owners Corporations Act 2006
Parliamentary Salaries, Allowances and Superannuation Act 1968
Payroll Tax Act 2007
Petroleum Act 1998
Pharmacy Regulation Act 2010
Pipelines Act 2005
Planning and Environment Act 1987
Plant Biosecurity Act 2010
Port Management Act 1995
Powers of Attorney Act 2014
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986

Privacy Act 1988
Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
Private Security Act 2004
Professional Boxing and Combat Sports Act 1985
Professional Engineers Registration Act 2019
Property Law Act 1958
Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008
Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001
Racing Act 1958
Radiation Act 2005
Rail Safety National Law Application Act 2013
Relationships Act 2008
Residential Tenancies Act 1997
Retail Leases Act 2003
Retirement Villages (Contractual Arrangements) Regulations 2017
Retirement Villages Act 1986
Road Management (General) Regulations 2016
Road Management Act 2004
Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulations 2021
Road Safety Act 1986
Rooming House Operators Act 2016
Sale of Land Act 1962
Seafood Safety Act 2003
Second-Hand Dealers and Pawnbrokers Act 1989
Sentencing Act 1991

Service Victoria Act 2018
Sex Work Act 1994
Small Business Commission Act 2017
Social Services Regulation Act 2021
State Employees Retirement Benefits Act 1979
State Superannuation Act 1988
Subdivision Act 1988
Superannuation (Portability) Act 1989
Supported Residential Services (Private Proprietors) Act 2010
Surveying Act 2004
Taxation Administration Act 1997
Therapeutic Goods (Victoria) Act 2010
Tourist and Heritage Railways Act 2010
Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010
Transport (Compliance and Miscellaneous) Act 1983
Transport Accident Act 1986
Transport (Safety Schemes Compliance and Enforcement) Act 2014
Transport Superannuation Act 1988
Trustee Companies Act 1984
Unclaimed Money Act 2008
Valuation of Land Act 1960
Veterinary Practice Act 1997
Vexatious Proceedings Act 2014
Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1996
Victoria State Emergency Service Act 2005

Victoria State Emergency Service Regulations 2017
Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 1998
Victorian Energy Efficiency Target Act 2007
Victorian Plantations Corporation Act 1993
Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017
Water Act 1989
Wildlife Act 1975
Windfall Gains Tax Act 2021
Worker Screening Act 2020
Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013
Zero and Low Emission Vehicle Distance-based Charge Act 2021

VCAT member directory

List of VCAT members for period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025

President

Justice Ted Woodward

Vice Presidents

Judge Sharon Burchell

Judge Elizabeth Brimer

Justice Clyde Croft

Judge Sandra Davis

Judge Caitlin English

Judge Suzanne Kirton

Judge Peter Lauritsen

Judge Michael Macnamara

Samantha Marks*

Judge Jeanette Morrish

Judge Anna Robertson

Judge My Anh Tran

Judge Michael Wise

Deputy Presidents

Teresa Bisucci

Carol Daicic

Julia Lever-Davidson

Ian Lulham

Ian Proctor

Eric Riegler

Lindsay Warren

Richard Wilson

Senior Members – Non-sessional

Margaret Baird

Susan Burdon-Smith

Domenico Calabro

Kylea Campana

Sam Cimino

Anna Dea

Picha Djohan

Leneen Forde

Alison Glynn

Brendan Hoysted

Justine Jacono

Louise Johnson

Kim Knights

Philip Martin*

Anne Moon

Stella Moraitis

Holly Nash

Rachel Naylor

Genevieve Nihill AM

Tania Petranis

Ian Potts

Charles Powles

Charlene Price

Bill Sibonis

Anita Smith

Jonathan Smithers

Reynah Tang AM

Andrea Treble

Silvana Wilson

Senior Members – Sessional

Catherine Aird

John Bennett

John Billings

Geoffrey Code

Chris Edquist

Mark Farrelly

Michael Levine

Jacqueline Preuss

Bernadette Steele

Elisabeth Wentworth

Rebecca Wilson

Members – Non-sessional

Jillian Bartlett

Claire Bennett

Rohan Bennett

Michael Bevan

Deirdre Bignell

Tracey Bilston-McGillen

Kerrie Birtwistle

Gregory Brock

Danica Buljan

Louise Bygrave

Seuna Byrne

Mary Cameron

Neill Campbell

Megan Carew

Jeremy Cass

Robert Chamberlain

Simon Cohen

Richard Curie

Donna D'Alessandro

Robert Daly

Michael Deidun

Nicole Feeney

Natalie Fleming

Sydney Fry

Danielle Galvin

Peter Gaschk

Filip Gelev

Renee Gorenstein

Martin Guthrie

Christopher Harty

Brook Hely

Adrian Hoel

Di Hubble

Barry Josephs

Andrew Kincaid

Jessica Klingender

Rebecca Leshinsky

Clare Lethlean

Susanne Liden

Don Lucas

Nicole Maher

Felicity Marks

Sarah McDonald

Michael Nelthorpe*

Sam Pandya

Katherine Paterson

Judith Perlstein
Sarah Porritt
Cassandra Rea
Julia Reid
Linda Rowland
Michael Ryall
Ian Scott
Alison Slattery
Jodie Stroud
Jane Tait
Cassandra Tanner
Mary-Anne Taranto
Joel Templar
Christopher Thwaites*
Stuart Webb
Susan Whitney
Shiran Wickramasinghe
Nick Wimbush
Tania Wolff

**Members –
Sessional**

Benjamin Adcock
Vanessa Aitken
Dianne Anderson
Natalie Angliss
Mary Archibald PSM
Stephen Axford
Mary Ayoub
Liam Baggoley

Leonie Baker
Pamela Barry
Danielle Baxter
Philip Bender
Elizabeth Benzsz*
Bryony Berridge
Wendy Boddison
Venetia Bombas
Siobhan Boyd-Squires
Melissa Bray
Emma Bridge
Robert Buchanan
Marietta Bylhouwer
Louis Cali
Melainie Cameron*
Rebecca Cameron
Stephanie Campbell
Gregary Chase
John Clampett
Gregory Clugston
Vicki Cogley
Peter Cole
Maria Collins
Domenico Condello
Rea Condoleon
Dalia Cook
Lara Crocker
Liem Dang
Frank Dawson
Dr Clare Delany*

Geoffrey Dick
Suzanne Dick
Barry Draper
Annette Eastman
Michael El Moussalli
Jennifer Ellis
Alison Elmes
Anthony Fernon
Patrice Fitzgerald
Michelle Gardner
John Gleeson
Donna Goldsmith
Megan Goulding
Raymond Gymer
Paul Gysslink
Nicholas Hadjigeorgiou
Mary Hally
Diana Harding KC*
Christopher Hart
John Hatzis
Jason Heidrich
Adrian Ho
Jennife Holdstock
Anthony Horan
Alan Johnston
Colin Jones
Ann Keddie
David Kim
Amanda Kimpton
Kristianne Lynch

Owen Mahoney
Carolyn Manning
Robyn Mason
Ann Mayo
Jason McCormick
Patricia McKeown*
Colin McIntosh
Peter McNeill
Roderick McRae
Kate Metcalf
Gino Mitrione
Patricia Molloy
Dennis Nadan
Lorina Nervegna
Elissa O'Brien
Michelle Owens
Rodney Page
Kate Partenio
Ros Pearson
Annette Peart
Christopher Perera
Yi-Lee Phang
Robert Phillips
George Ploumidis
Marian Power
Mark Prince
Erin Rankins
Sharon Reneaux
Maja Ristovic
Nastassja Sargsyan

Gerard Schembri
Roman Serebrianik
John Sharkie
Susan Shedd
David Southgate
Rowan Story
Angela Sungaila
Michael Sweeney
Michelle Taylor-Sands
Annemarie Tilley
Vivienne Topp
Christopher Torr
Dina Trezise
Shivani Ummat
Denise Van Vugt
Shajan Velaedan
John Vestakis
Jill Walsh*
Laurie Warfe
John Waterhouse
Tracy Watson
Serene Watterson
Phil West
Angela Williams
Brett Williams
Samuel Zheng*
Edward de Zilwa

