



# Media release

## **The Hon Robert Clark MP**

Attorney-General

Minister for Finance

Minister for Industrial Relations

Wednesday 19 February 2014

## **New law to strengthen role of honorary justices**

- **New legislation reforms the law governing the role of Bail Justices and Justices of the Peace**
- **The reforms will strengthen the standing and independence of honorary justices that were undermined by the previous Labor Government**
- **Victorian Coalition Government building a better justice system for Victoria**

The Victorian Coalition Government has introduced legislation to Parliament today that will restore the standing, community recognition and independence of Victoria's honorary justices.

Attorney-General Robert Clark said the Honorary Justices Bill 2014 would for the first time consolidate the law relating to Bail Justices and Justices of the Peace into a single Act.

"The previous Labor government undermined the long standing independence and community recognition of honorary justices, and even threatened to abolish Justices of the Peace altogether," Mr Clark said.

"Since being elected, the Victorian Coalition Government has worked with honorary justice associations to rebuild the respect for, and standing of, honorary justices that was so badly damaged under Labor. This Bill now gives legislative backing and protection for the role and work of honorary justices.

"The reforms in the Bill follow extensive consultation with honorary justice associations and other stakeholders, including a public consultation paper and a series of stakeholder workshops."

The reforms introduced by the Bill include:

- a legislative protection against arbitrary dismissal;
- the right of long-serving honorary justices to use the title 'JP (Retired)' or 'BJ (Retired)' after ceasing active service;
- a requirement for all persons who accept appointment as an honorary justice to make themselves available on a reasonable basis to perform their duties; and
- allowing bail justices to be appointed up to the age of 70 and re-appointed until the age of 75.

Department of Justice statistics indicate that Justices of the Peace witness several million documents per year.

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“Justices of the Peace provide a document witnessing service at approximately 64 signing stations across Victoria. Many signing stations are located at police stations, which frees up valuable time for members of Victoria Police to focus on protecting the community,” Mr Clark said.

Mr Clark thanked the Royal Victorian Association of Honorary Justices, including current President Glenda Frost and immediate past-President Linda Rainsford, and all other honorary justice groups, for their input into the development of these reforms and for their long-standing commitment to serving the community.

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