

Annual Report 2024–25



**Children's
Court**
of Victoria

Letter to the Governor

Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC,
Governor of Victoria

Government House
Melbourne Vic 3004

Dear Governor,

In accordance with section 514 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* I have much pleasure in submitting the Children's Court of Victoria Annual Report for 2024 – 2025.

The report covers the Court's operations during the reporting period.

Yours sincerely

Judge Jack Vandersteen
President, Children's Court of Victoria.

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Report of the President and CEO

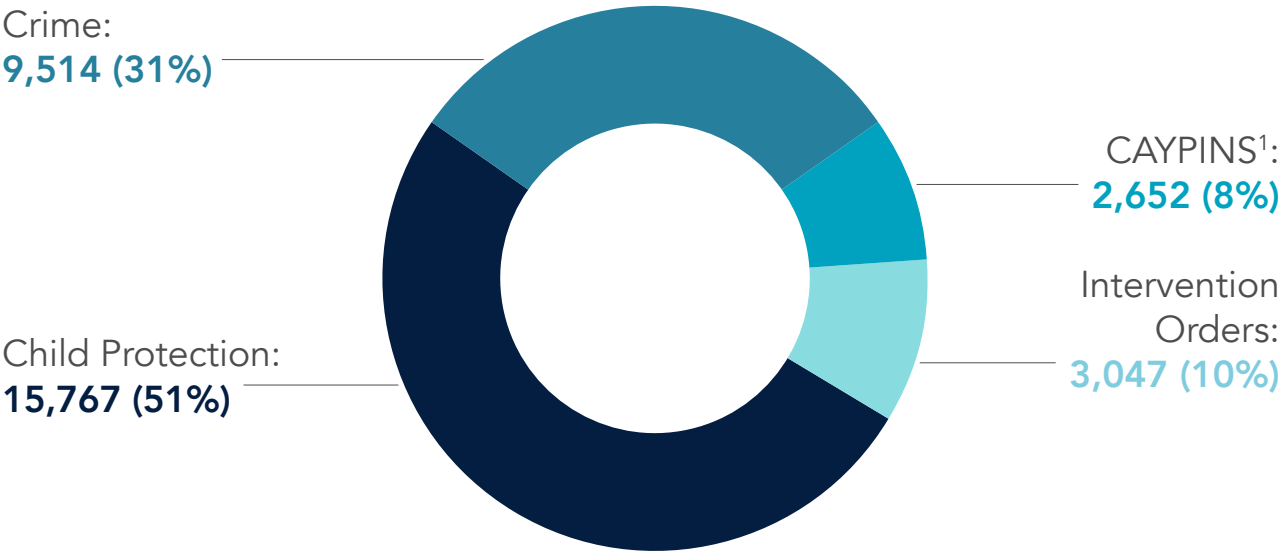
Report of the President and CEO

During the reporting period we have continued to focus our attention on the provision of fair, effective and efficient hearings through active case management. Since 6 January 2025, all metropolitan children’s crime and intervention order cases are now heard at the dedicated Children’s Court venues in Melbourne, Moorabbin, Broadmeadows and Dandenong. These changes promote accountability and timely outcomes and strengthen the rights, protections and special treatment of children and young people in the justice system, through:

- Improved case management practices, promoting consistency and accountability with cases listed together at the same court venue and heard before the same judicial officer
- Improved case processing times with a 16% decrease in pending cases
- Cases involving children and young people heard in dedicated Children’s Courts and not as part of the adult court system
- Children and young people not detained in adult custody cells for court appearances
- Increased access to the Children’s Koori Court across all of metropolitan Melbourne
- Improved consistency, engagement and accountability with children and young people now always required to attend the specialist Children’s Court closest to where they live, and not multiple different court locations.

THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

In the 2024–25 year the Children’s Court of Victoria finalised a total of **30,980** cases.



We extend our thanks to court users and support services including Aboriginal community and legal services, legal organisations and practitioners, and community and government organisations. To the judicial officers of the Children’s Court and of the Magistrates’ Court, and to our staff, thank you for your dedication and commitment to the important work of the Court.

Judge Jack Vandersteen
President of the Children’s Court of Victoria

Simon McDonald
Chief Executive Officer

1. CAYPINS stands for ‘Children and Young Persons Infringement Notice System’. A CAYPINS infringement is dealt with by a registrar who can make various orders, including an order for payment of all or part of a fine or penalty issued by an agency including Victoria Police and the Department of Transport.

Child Protection

Marram-Ngala Ganbu – Koori Family Hearing Day

Marram-Ngala Ganbu (“MNG” meaning “we are one” in Woiwurrung language) is a Koori Family Hearing Day that provides a more effective, culturally appropriate, and just response for Koori families through a court process that enables greater participation by family members and culturally aware decision-making.

The program demonstrates a deep commitment to Aboriginal self-determination through changes to the traditional court set-up and functioning, as well as other innovative approaches to enable the Court to be more welcoming and culturally safe for Koori families. MNG sits one day per week at Broadmeadows Children’s Court and one day per fortnight at Shepparton Children’s Court. During the reporting period MNG teams have continued their active engagement with local services, working closely together to ensure that Aboriginal families receive strong support throughout the court process.

Family Drug Treatment Court

Operating at Broadmeadows and Shepparton Children’s Court, the Family Drug Treatment Court (FDTC) provides a 12-month collaborative program for parents to address their drug and alcohol use and achieve a safe and sustainable reunification with their children.

Children’s Court Clinic

The Children’s Court Clinic is a statewide service which conducts psychological or psychiatric assessments of children and/or family members and provides assessment reports to the Children’s Court of Victoria.

During the reporting period:

- **20** reports were submitted to the Criminal Division
- **183** reports were submitted to the Family Division.

Court Support Coordinators

Court Support Coordinators (CSCs) play a vital role in assisting court users to navigate the court process.

CSCs provide:

- Information about court processes and procedures and support for self-represented litigants
- Referrals to community services
- Assistance with joining and participating in online hearings
- Support in responding to family violence risks.

During the reporting period CSC’s provided **7,099** instances of support.

Child Protection Cases

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Primary applications filed	3,991	4,227	4,664
Secondary applications filed	12,482	11,844	11,479

CHILD PROTECTION CASES – STATEWIDE TOTAL

Total number of primary and secondary applications initiated, finalised, and pending by region.

Court Region	2023-24			2024-25		
	Initiated	Finalised	Pending	Initiated	Finalised	Pending
Barwon South-West	1,237	956	320	1,413	1,232	329
Gippsland	1,600	1,185	451	1,472	1,438	398
Grampians	908	779	224	869	769	270
Hume	1,472	1,082	530	1,428	1,330	438
Loddon Mallee	1,468	1,261	427	1,583	1,436	483
Broadmeadows	1,705	1,388	726	1,678	1,854	484
Dandenong	1,984	1,476	643	2,098	1,845	714
Melbourne	4,318	5,086	1,826	4,336	4,586	1,836
Moorabbin	1,379	1,171	504	1,266	1,277	446
Statewide	16,071	14,384	5,651	16,143	15,767	5,398

Intervention Orders

Family Violence

FINALISED APPLICATIONS FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION ORDERS

<i>Family Violence Protection Act 2008</i>	2023-24	2024-25
Intervention order made	720	575
Application refused	21	11
Application struck out	157	175
Application revoked	8	1
Application withdrawn	934	1,063
Application withdrawn with undertaking	40	0
TOTAL	1,880	1,825

Personal Safety Intervention Orders

<i>Personal Safety Intervention Orders Act 2010</i>	2023-24	2024-25
Intervention order made	495	366
Application refused	13	10
Application struck out	164	158
Application withdrawn	546	597
Application withdrawn with undertaking	52	0
TOTAL	1,270	1,131

Crime

Weekend Online Remand Court

The Children’s Court’s Weekend Online Remand Court (WORC) hears statewide bail and remand matters from 3pm until 9pm on all non-sitting days other than Christmas Day. Cases in the WORC are heard by a specialist Children’s Court magistrate and young people have access to Koori Court officers as well as specialist children’s lawyers and Youth Justice.



Youth Diversion Program

The Children’s Court Youth Diversion (CCYD) program provides an opportunity for eligible children to:

- address harm caused by their offending by taking responsibility and completing a diversion activity
- address the underlying cause of their offending
- receive assistance to engage with support services
- have the charges dismissed, with a non-disclosable criminal record, on successful completion of the diversion activity
- avoid the stigma associated with a criminal record and its impact on future life opportunities.

Data relating to youth diversion is published by Youth Justice and will be annexed to this report when available.

Children’s Koori Court

The Children’s Koori Court is a sentencing court for young Aboriginal people who plead guilty to a criminal offence (other than a sexual offence). The Children’s Koori Court sits at 12 locations across the State.

The Elders and Respected Persons (ERPs) play a significant role in the Children’s Koori Court hearings. They provide cultural advice to Koori Court magistrates while helping participants acknowledge the underlying issues contributing to their offending and its impact on the community. This extends to engaging and communicating with young people to ensure they do not have to tell their story multiple times, leading to better justice outcomes for the Koori community.

Koori Court Officers play a critical role in the operation of the Children’s Koori Court by:

- working with the Koori community to help with understanding the court process
- providing non-legal support and advice
- supporting judicial officers with access to information to support culturally appropriate outcomes.

Since January 2025, the centralisation of criminal matters in metropolitan Melbourne has increased access to the Children’s Koori Court.

CHILDREN’S KOORI COURT SITTINGS 2024-2025

Location	Number of young people	Matters finalised
Bairnsdale	0	0
Dandenong	4	22
Geelong	10	11
Hamilton	1	1
Heidelberg	3	20
Latrobe Valley	2	0
Melbourne	23	94
Mildura	2	4
Portland	3	1
Shepparton	5	1
Swan Hill	7	2
Warrnambool	0	0
TOTAL	60	156

Crime Case Data

CRIME INITIATIONS FINALISATIONS AND PENDING CASES

	2023-24	2024-25	%
Initiations			
Metro crime	5,292	6,259	18%
Regional crime	1,974	2,346	19%
TOTAL	7,266	8,605	18%
Finalisations			
Metro crime	5,881	7,101	21%
Regional crime	2,159	2,413	12%
TOTAL	8,040	9,514	18%
% FINALISED WITHIN 6 MONTHS	82%	85%	
Pending			
Metro	1,739	1,455	-16%
Regional	709	858	21%
TOTAL	2,448	2,313	-6%

METROPOLITAN INITIATIONS FINALISATIONS AND PENDING CASES

Criminal matters	2023-24	2024-25	%
Initiations	5,292	6,259	18%
Finalisations	5,881	7,101	21%
% FINALISED WITHIN 6 MONTHS	82%	85%	
Pending	1,739	1,455	-16%

Projects

Wyndham Children's Court

The Children's Court of Victoria received funding to commence operations at the new Wyndham Law Courts through the May 2025-26 Victorian State Budget.

Working in partnership with Court Services Victoria, the new Wyndham Children's Court is scheduled to commence operations in November 2025. This initiative will strengthen access to local justice services in the western metropolitan region and improve outcomes for children, families, and young offenders.

The Court will hear matters in both the Family and Criminal Divisions, including child protection and intervention order cases and bail and remand hearings. The funding commitment included a staged implementation of specialist Children's Court programs including Marram-Ngala Ganbu (Koori Family Hearing Day) and the Children's Koori Court.

The dedicated Court means that children, young people and families do not have to navigate through or share spaces with those in the adult court system, improving the court experience for our most vulnerable court users.

The Court is a fit-for-purpose facility with a range of innovative features including:

- Three courtrooms specifically designed for Children's Court hearings
- Secure, child focused waiting room for children in emergency care
- Dedicated space for legal services, prosecutors and protective intervenors
- Separate entrance, waiting area and remote hearing facilities for vulnerable court users
- Carefully designed public waiting areas
- Custody cells which ensure separation of young people from adult offenders

The Court features the artwork of Kobi Sainty, an Aboriginal artist, and proud Bunurong man, to help create a more culturally safe and welcoming environment for First Nations clients and their families attending Court. The Children's Court is working closely with community and justice stakeholders to ensure the new Court delivers a co-ordinated and responsive service for court users and to build community understanding about the new Court and its services.

Melbourne Children's Court Ground Floor Project

The Melbourne Children's Court Ground Floor Project aims to improve the court user experience by creating a more functional and therapeutic environment and to accommodate the broad range of services at Court.

Refurbishment works commenced in February 2025 and include the following enhancements:

- New offices for supporting agencies, flexible bookable rooms and a large meeting room with audio visual capabilities
- Managed access to a secure waiting area to support vulnerable clients
- Expansion of the ground floor reception to include an additional accessible counter
- New waiting areas designed to improve the court user experience and wayfinding improvements
- Addition of materials such as timber and soft furnishings, and enhancements to ceilings and lighting to create a more comforting, light-filled and open environment.

Works are forecast to be completed in September 2025. The Children's Court looks forward to opening the newly renovated spaces and to enhance the experience of our court users and stakeholders with improved facilities.

About the Court

Our Judiciary

PRESIDENT

Judge Jack Vandersteen

MAGISTRATES

Magistrate Billings

Magistrate Cain

Magistrate Contini

Magistrate Dale

Magistrate Dotchin

Magistrate Foster-Jones

Magistrate Fleming

Magistrate Gibson

Magistrate Hamilton

Magistrate Hawkins

Magistrate Hubble

Magistrate Langdon (to 27/06/2025)

Magistrate Macpherson

Magistrate O'Donnell

Magistrate Parkinson (to 30/04/2025)

Magistrate Pillai

Magistrate Raponi

Magistrate Smith

Magistrate Stead

Magistrate Whittle

Magistrate Zemljak

RESERVE MAGISTRATES

Reserve Magistrate Harding

Reserve Magistrate Ehrlich

Reserve Magistrate Lamble

Reserve Magistrate Rozencwajg

JUDICIAL REGISTRARS

Judicial Registrar Benson

Court Locations

The Children's Court of Victoria sits at:

- the specialist Children's Courts at Melbourne, Broadmeadows, Dandenong and Moorabbin; and
- regional locations at which the Magistrates' Court is held.

MELBOURNE

METROPOLITAN REGION:

Child protection, criminal and intervention order matters: Melbourne Children's Court (headquarters court), Broadmeadows, Dandenong, Moorabbin.

LODDON MALLEE

REGION:

Bendigo (headquarters court), Castlemaine, Echuca, Kerang, Kyneton, Maryborough, Mildura, Ouyen, Robinvale, Swan Hill.

GIPPSLAND REGION:

Latrobe Valley (Morwell) (headquarters court), Bairnsdale, Korumburra, Moe, Omeo, Orbost, Sale, Wonthaggi.

GRAMPIANS REGION:

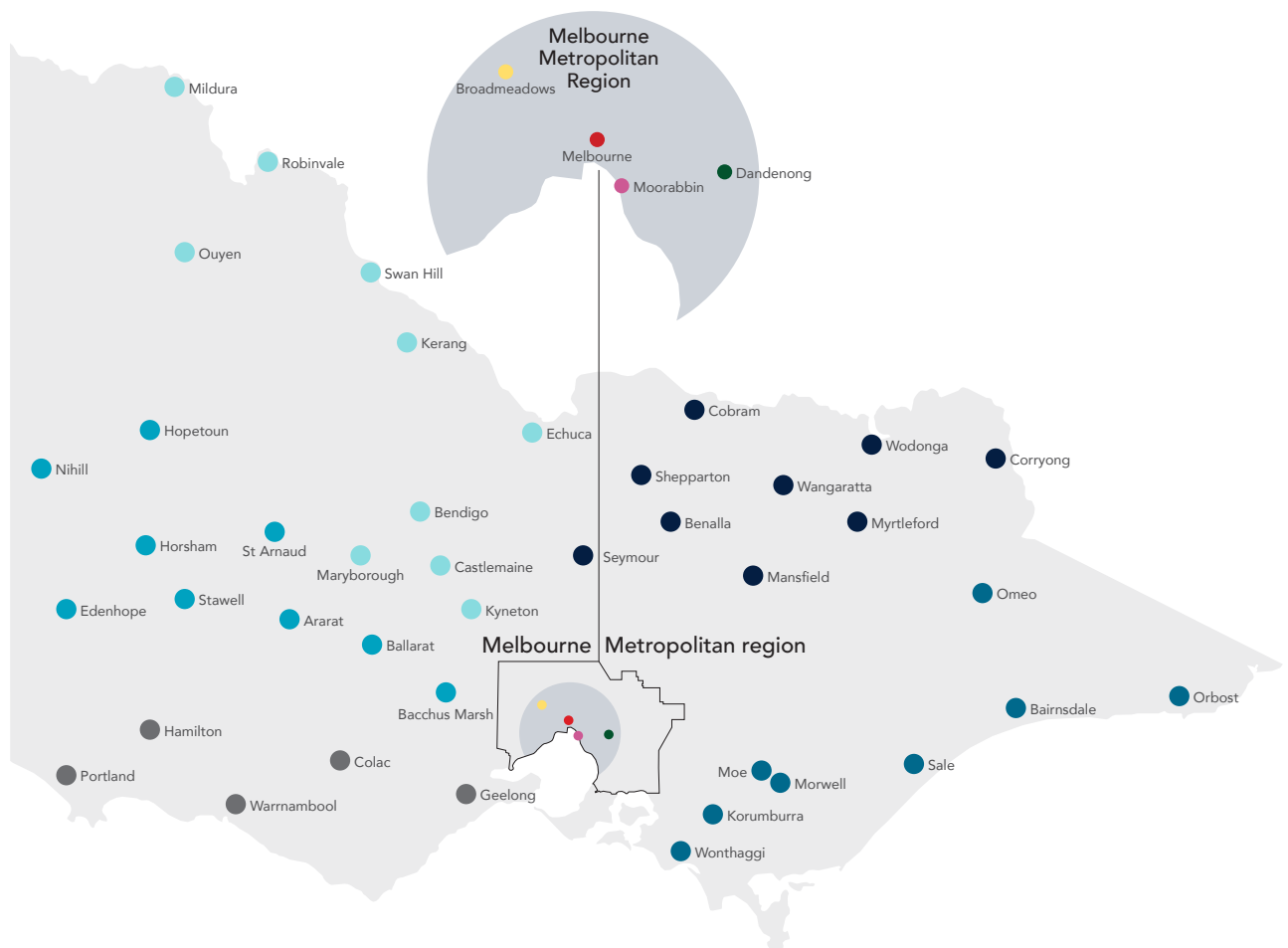
Ballarat (headquarters court), Ararat, Bacchus Marsh, Edenhope, Hopetoun, Horsham, Nhill, St Arnaud, Stawell.

BARWON SOUTH WEST REGION:

Geelong (headquarters court), Colac, Hamilton, Portland, Warrnambool.

HUME REGION:

Shepparton (headquarters court), Benalla, Cobram, Corryong, Mansfield, Myrtleford, Seymour, Wangaratta and Wodonga.





**Children's
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of Victoria