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Herald Sun

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Win for court victims

WRONG-WAY magistrate Richard Pithouse is likely to be the first subject to come under the scrutiny of a new independent panel set up to investigate the judiciary.

The move could see the magistrate investigated and potentially removed from office after several complaints about his courtroom behaviour and judgments.

Attorney-General Robert Clark, who in opposition urged for an urgent inquiry into Mr Pithouse, last week met a sexual assault victim, "Emma", who attempted suicide after Mr Pithouse rejected her victim-impact statement when he arrived late to court because he went to Ararat instead of Ballarat.

Mr Clark hinted Mr Pithouse could be investigated by a new body that looks into magistrates and judges.

SUE HEWITT

"The Baillieu Government is committed to establishing a Judicial Complaints Commission so that, in future, complaints such as those about Magistrate Pithouse could be made to a body that would thoroughly and independently investigate them," Mr Clark said.

"I am very concerned about the distress that Emma suffered. It shows the importance of changing the law."

Lawyer Lisa Treeby, of Arnold Thomas & Becker, said Mr Clark had "lent a sympathetic ear to (Emma's) plight".

"He seemed particularly concerned ... regarding her victim impact statement, which was ignored by Magistrate Pithouse in sentencing the perpetrators who had subjected her to months of sexual assault," she said.



Pictures: CHRIS SCOTT

Mali has a birthday ball



EVERYONE is invited to celebrate with Melbourne's favourite birthday girl today.

Elephant Mali turns one and will have continuing celebrations at the Melbourne Zoo.

Her party is bound to include her best friend, boy elephant Ongard who is only four months old.

Mali will show Ongard how to celebrate in style.

Her birthday cake will include her favourite treat — dates.