

## Part 1: Policy context

### 1.1 Growing Victoria Together

In November 2001, the Victorian Government released *Growing Victoria Together* – a statement about the State’s priorities for the next 10 years. This vision was refreshed in March 2005 to reflect emerging community needs and concerns.

#### Ten goals to guide Victoria’s future

The government has identified ten shared goals that will be a focus for priority setting, including legislation and budget spending, over the next decade.

The government’s vision is that by 2010 Victoria will have further strengthened its performance in the following ten areas:

#### Thriving economy

1. More quality jobs and thriving, innovative industries across Victoria
2. Growing and linking all of Victoria

#### Quality health and education

3. High quality, accessible health and community services
4. High quality education and training for lifelong learning

#### Healthy environment

5. Protecting the environment for future generations
6. Efficient use of natural resources

#### Caring communities

7. Building friendly, confident and safe communities
8. A fairer society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity

#### Vibrant democracy

9. Greater public participation and more accountable government
10. Sound financial management

These shared goals provide a whole-of-government focus on the issues important to Victorians and are intended to guide government priority setting over the next decade.

#### Primary goals and progress measures for human services

For the human services portfolios, the primary goals from *Growing Victoria Together* and related measures of progress are:

##### High quality, accessible health and community services

Progress measures:

- The health of Victorians will improve.
- The wellbeing of young children will improve.
- Waiting times (emergency, elective and dental) will be reduced.

- Levels of confidence in health and community services will increase.

### **Building friendly, confident and safe communities**

Progress measure:

- More Victorians will be able to get help from friends, family or neighbours when they need it.

### **A fairer society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity**

Progress measure:

- Disadvantage in health, education, and housing among communities will be reduced.

### **Protecting the environment for future generations**

Progress measure:

- The quality of air and drinking water will improve.

### **Greater participation and more accountable government**

Progress measure:

- More Victorians from all backgrounds will have the opportunity to have a say on issues that matter to them.

### **Related goals for human services**

A number of other Growing Victoria Together goals are also significant for human services because they describe areas where the department's involvement in local and regional activity is important, such as education and jobs, or because they reflect the importance of good governance and efficient operation of services which account for a significant proportion of the State's budget.

These related goals are:

- sound financial management
- more quality jobs and thriving innovative industries across Victoria
- growing and linking all of Victoria
- high quality education and training for lifelong learning
- efficient use of natural resources.

For more information about *Growing Victoria Together* go to [www.growingvictoria.vic.gov.au](http://www.growingvictoria.vic.gov.au)

## 1.2 A Fairer Victoria

In 2005 the Victorian Government released *A Fairer Victoria – an action plan to address disadvantage*. In June 2006 the government released *A Fairer Victoria: progress and next steps*, which provides a further \$851.6 million to strengthen communities and create new opportunities for all Victorians.

This statement focuses on consolidating and building on achievements and picking up on new policy options to address the needs of children, outer suburbs, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and the homeless.

*A Fairer Victoria: progress report and next steps* follows the same policy framework to address disadvantage through these elements and strategies:

- Access to universal services
  - Giving children the best start in life.
  - Getting young people back on track.
  - Responding to family violence more effectively.
  - Helping older Victorians stay independent.
- Reducing barriers to opportunity
  - Providing fairer access to services.
  - Making services more affordable.
  - Boosting access to affordable housing.
  - Improving access to justice.
- Support for disadvantaged groups
  - Building a new partnership with Indigenous Victorians.
  - Creating new opportunities for people living with a disability.
  - Increasing support for mental health services.
- Support for disadvantaged places
  - Building stronger communities.
- Making it easier to work with government
  - Changing the way we work with communities.
  - Developing better ways of working together at a regional and local level.

The department has lead implementation responsibility for a number of strategies, including giving children the best start in life, helping older Victorians stay independent, boosting access to affordable housing, creating new opportunities for people living with a disability and increasing support for mental health services.

The department is also committed to working with other agencies to jointly implement A Fairer Victoria strategies related to responding to family violence more effectively, getting young people back on track, providing fairer access to services, building a new partnership with Indigenous Victorians and building stronger communities.

For more information about *A Fairer Victoria together* go to [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/dhsplan/strategies](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/dhsplan/strategies)

### 1.3 Governments working together: Third wave of national reform

The Victorian Government has taken a leadership role in driving national economic reform with the launch of the *Third wave of national reform*. This paper sets out the path to securing Australian prosperity for future generations. This third wave follows earlier reform initiatives: the deregulation of the Australian economy in the 1980s and the National Competition Policy reforms of the 1990s.

Investment in people and human capital is an essential part of this vision. In particular, the Premier of Victoria has indicated that 'the most effective way to boost productivity and participation is to develop our human capital. Improving health, learning and work outcomes is how we build a healthy, skilled and motivated society, and a high-income economy that is among the world's best'.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Reform Initiative working group, chaired by Victoria, has developed a shared vision for long-term human capital reforms.

In February 2006, COAG announced the National Reform Agenda. All Australian Governments have agreed to invest in this long-term reform agenda, to secure the Australian economy for future generations.

The government expects the Department of Human Services to play a key role in implementing these reforms in Victoria.

Priority areas for concerted State and Commonwealth cooperation and funding include:

- human capital enhancement to lift workforce participation and productivity
- better health for all Australians
- mental health
- workforce development, including the sustainability of medical and other health workforce supply
- emergency (pandemic, environmental and counter-terrorism) preparedness
- a national approach to E-health (electronic health information management).

For more information about governments working together go to [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/dhsplan/strategies](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/dhsplan/strategies)

## 1.4 Healthy Futures: Victoria's Life Sciences Strategy

The Victorian Government is also committed to maintaining Victoria's leadership in life sciences. The government's Life Sciences Statement, *Healthy Futures: Delivering better health, research and jobs for Victorians*, takes the next steps to build on Victoria's excellence in medical research.

The government's long-term goal is to create a life sciences industry that is a world leader in translating scientific research into practical benefits that will improve the health and lives of Victorians and the global community.

The department has a key role alongside the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development, in promoting the life sciences and medical research industries, given its ownership and funding of public hospitals, funding of health promotion and disease prevention, and leadership and advisory roles in ethics and regulation of health care in Victoria.

Major projects managed by the department under this strategy include:

- new medical schools and more medical training, especially in regional areas
- a new cancer agency and comprehensive cancer system for Victoria
- centralised and streamlined ethics assessment and approval
- more infrastructure support for medical research facilities.

For more information about Healthy futures go to [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/dhsplan/strategies](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/dhsplan/strategies)

## 1.5 Multiple and Complex Needs Initiative

The Multiple and Complex Needs (MACN) Initiative is a priority initiative of the Department of Human Services in collaboration with the Department of Justice. The initiative has established a new model of service planning and delivery for those individuals whose multiple and complex needs challenge existing legislative frameworks and service systems.

The *Human Services (Complex Needs) Act 2003* underpins the MACN Initiative. This legislative framework facilitates the delivery of coordinated welfare, health, mental health, disability, drug and alcohol treatment and housing and support services to people deemed to be eligible under the Act. (A copy of the Act is located on the department's website at <http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/complexclients>).

The MACN Initiative promotes collaborative cross-program planning and support at the local level to improve individual outcomes, wherever possible. In addition, it provides a specialist intervention for up to 50 new referrals each year that aims to:

- pursue planned and consistent therapeutic goals for each person
- provide a platform for long term engagement in the service system
- stabilise housing, health, social connection and safety issues.

The MACN Initiative is complementary to, and does not replace, existing services or systems of support for individuals with multiple and complex needs.

The MACN Initiative requires existing service providers to respond to the needs of people within the target group in accordance with the guiding principles of the Act.

The Act specifies eligibility criteria that are intentionally **broader** than current program guidelines as it is recognised that people within this target group require a more flexible and coordinated cross-sector service response.

While in many cases people eligible under the Act will already be eligible for services under existing program guidelines, there will be circumstances where they would normally be ineligible for existing program services.

The department advises that, in such circumstances, service providers will be authorised to utilise current program funding to provide services to persons eligible under the Act.

The department acknowledges that decisions about appropriateness and priority for service will need to be negotiated on a case by case basis.

Access to the MACN Initiative is via consultation with the MACN Regional Coordinator appointed in each region. For further information please contact Jenny McKeagney, A/Manager MACN Initiative, on (03) 9096 8477 or by email at [jenny.mckeagney@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:jenny.mckeagney@dhs.vic.gov.au)

## 1.6 Working with Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations

Health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians are significantly below those for the non-Indigenous population. Both 'mainstream' and Aboriginal Community Controlled services have important roles in addressing this disadvantage. As part of ensuring that mainstream services are accessible to and appropriate for Aboriginal people, funded organisations are strongly encouraged to establish links with relevant Aboriginal organisations. Effective partnerships with these organisations assist service planning, provision and monitoring that is inclusive of the needs of Aboriginal people.

Funded organisations requiring advice on contact details for relevant Aboriginal organisations should seek information from their Department of Human Services Program and Service Advisor (PASA).

## 1.7 Department of Human Services Language services policy

The Language services policy outlines the requirements for departmental services and funded organisations to enable people with a low level of English proficiency, or who use Auslan as their first language, to access professional interpreting and translating services when making significant life decisions or where essential information is being communicated.

The policy assists in the identification of critical points for language services provision. Generally these critical points relate to client critical information, decision making and/or service risk management.

Topics covered in the *Language services policy* include:

- What are language services?
- minimum requirements for Department of Human Services programs and funded organisations
- helpful resources for language services.

An electronic copy of the Language services policy can be downloaded at [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/lanservices.htm](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/lanservices.htm)

## 1.8 Department of Human Services Cultural diversity guide

The delivery of culturally responsive, equitable services is a core quality expectation of Department of Human Services programs and funded organisations, underpinned by key government legislation, program standards and guidelines. The *Cultural diversity guide* has been developed to assist service providers by identifying a range of available strategies to improve cultural responsiveness and levers to effect change, recognising that there are many different pathways to equitable, high quality service provision.

The guide includes examples of good practice that already occur across the human services system. Furthermore, the guide supports the human services system to meet its whole-of-government reporting obligations on responsiveness to cultural diversity.

Topics covered in the *Cultural diversity guide* include:

- understanding clients and their needs
- partnerships with multicultural and ethno-specific organisations
- a culturally diverse workforce
- using language services to best effect
- encouraging participation in decision making
- promoting the benefits of a multicultural Victoria
- where to go for further information.

An electronic copy of the *Cultural diversity guide* can be downloaded at [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/cultdivguide.htm](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/multicultural/cultdivguide.htm)