

Part 2: The Department of Human Services

2.1 The department's responsibilities and service partners

Mission and objectives

The mission of the Department of Human Services is to enhance and protect the health and wellbeing of all Victorians, emphasising vulnerable groups and those most in need.

The objectives of the department are focused on:

Building system capacity

1. Building sustainable, well managed and efficient human services

Delivering services Victorians expect

2. Providing timely and accessible human services
3. Improving human service safety and quality

Shifting our focus

4. Promoting least intrusive human service options
5. Strengthening the capacity of individuals, families and communities

Making a long-term difference

6. Reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing

Responsibilities

The department covers the responsibilities of the Ministers for Health, Children, Community Services, Aged Care and Housing.

The department is Victoria's largest government agency. It directly employs more than 11,000 people and funds organisations such as hospitals, aged care facilities, ambulance services and community service organisations that collectively employ more than 80,000 people. In 2006–07, the department has an output budget of approximately \$11.68 billion, which is approximately 38 per cent of total expenditure by Victorian Government departments.

The principal responsibilities of the department include funding and/or delivering:

- high quality and efficient health care services through the public hospital system, community health services and ambulance services
- residential and rehabilitation care for older persons, along with support and assistance to enable them to remain living independently in their own homes
- a range of accommodation and support services aimed at enhancing the quality of life of people with disabilities
- accommodation and support for people experiencing homelessness
- secure, affordable and appropriate housing and support to low income Victorians
- a wide range of community services for Victorian children and their families, such as kindergartens, early intervention and family support services

- Victoria's statutory responsibilities to vulnerable children and young people in relation to child protection and juvenile justice
- health promotion and protection through emergency management, public health and related preventive services, education and regulation
- a range of alcohol and drug prevention and treatment services
- concessions to low-income groups to improve the affordability of essential services.

Service delivery and coordination

The department coordinates the delivery of its services through eight regions, where 77 per cent of the department's staff are located. Regions are responsible for:

- managing the range of human services provided in their region*, including directly delivered services such as child protection, juvenile justice, disability and public housing
- developing and maintaining effective partnerships with local government, community service organisations and the community
- providing a range of emergency management activities, including overall recovery coordination and specific response and recovery services to local communities
- working collaboratively with other departments, local government and community organisations to support and develop services that best meet the needs of individuals, families and local communities.

**Acute health services, including public hospital services, within metropolitan Melbourne are delivered by metropolitan health services and coordinated by Metropolitan Health and Aged Care Services Division.*

2.2 A vision for a high performing human services system

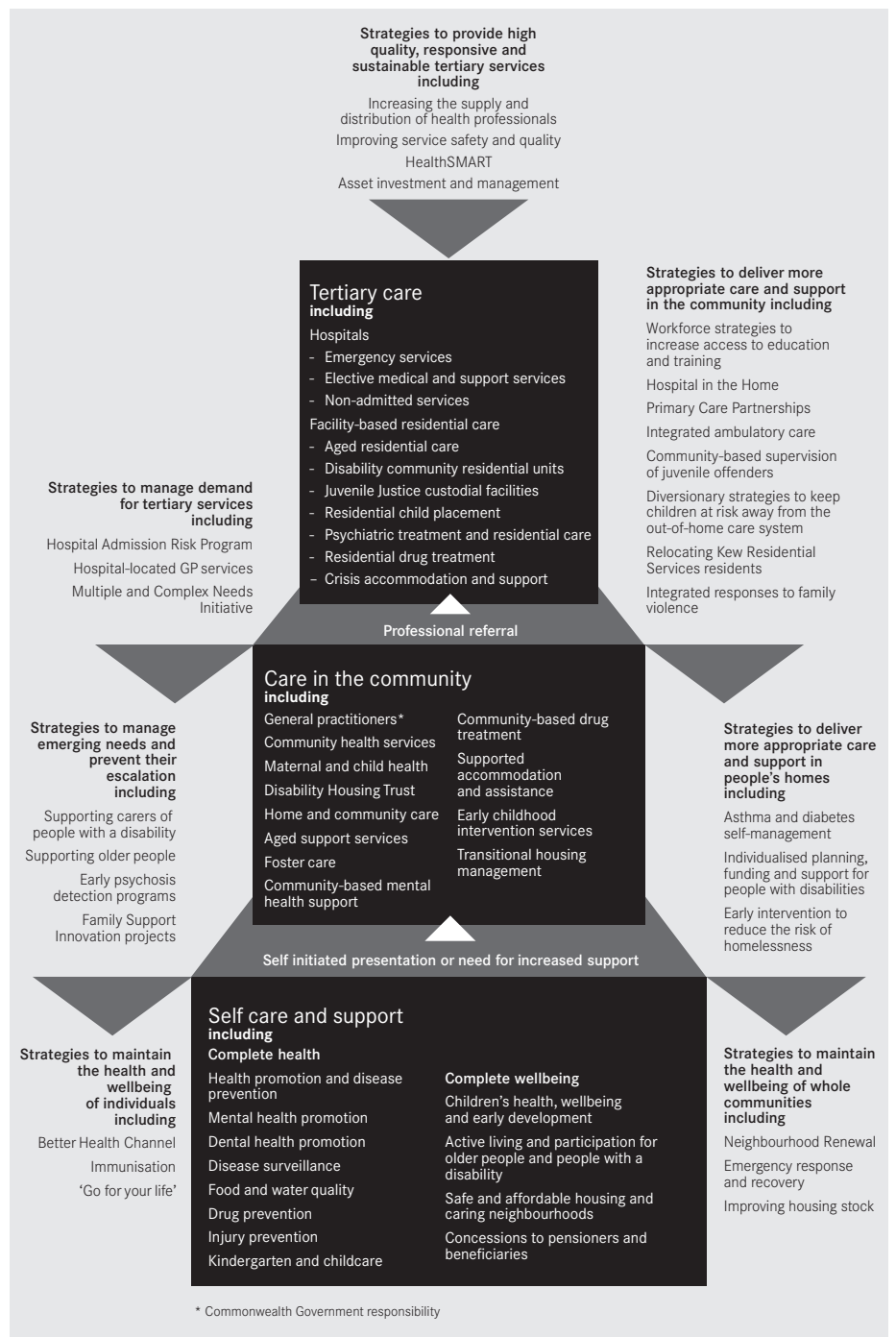
The Department of Human Services' work is directed toward the creation of a human services system delivering responsive, high quality and sustainable services.

As is the case in most developed countries, human services in Victoria have traditionally been fragmented along professional lines and oriented towards higher intensity, facility-based care. This has created an imbalance in the system toward intervening only after health and wellbeing problems have become more serious or complex. This tends to reinforce the reliance on more intrusive and higher cost forms of care and support, which may not be the most appropriate or chosen form of assistance to those patients and clients whose needs could be met at earlier stages, or in more home or community-based settings.

The vision for the human service system set out in Figure 2.1 seeks to reorient service delivery around strong community-based health and wellbeing support services, underpinned by the self-management of health and wellbeing needs, while ensuring that tertiary services are high quality, are accessible in a timely way and are linked with community-based services at the critical stages of entry to or exit from tertiary level care.

Advances in technology and knowledge will assist this transformation of service systems by allowing for greater service flexibility and information exchange, primarily involving the community or home-based delivery of care previously only available in tertiary facilities. A greater role is also envisaged for Victorian communities, families and individuals in maintaining and enhancing their own health and wellbeing.

Figure 2.1:
High performing
human services
system



Achieving a high performing human services system

Directing work toward the vision of a high performing human services system are the department's mission, objectives and outcomes. Figure 2.2 illustrates the relationship between the department's objectives, the longer-term outcomes it is working to achieve and how these address the challenges facing the department.

Figure 2.2:
Relationship between
the department's
objectives, outcomes
and challenges

Mission			
Protect and enhance the health and wellbeing of all Victorians, emphasising vulnerable groups and those most in need			
	Objectives	Outcomes	Challenge addressed
Building system capability	Building sustainable, well managed and efficient human services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable human services Good governance of human services Strong relationships with human service partners A skilled and high performing workforce across Victoria 	Improving service viability and productivity
Delivering services Victorians expect	Providing timely and accessible human services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services better able to manage increasing and changing demand More capacity in high demand human services Improved continuity of care Enhanced preparedness for emergencies 	Managing demand for services
	Improving human service safety and quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better human service quality Safer human services Improved occupational health and safety 	Improving service viability and productivity
Shifting our focus	Promoting least intrusive human service options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A higher proportion of home- and community-based human services Improved outcomes through prevention, screening and early intervention 	Acting sooner and more effectively
	Strengthening the capacity of individuals, families and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy and thriving children More people living independently Engaged communities 	
Making a long-term difference	Reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthier and stronger Aboriginal families and communities Reduced disadvantage Lower rates of homelessness 	Addressing disadvantage

For more information about the department's objectives, outcomes and challenges go to www.dhs.vic.gov.au/dhsplan