

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing 2021 strategic plan



Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing proudly acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands across Victoria and pays its respects to all First Peoples. This is Aboriginal land; always was, always will be. We recognise and value the ongoing contribution of Aboriginal people and communities to Victorian life.

To receive this document in another format email Strategic Planning
<strategy@dffh.vic.gov.au>.

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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Except where otherwise indicated, the images in this document show models and illustrative settings only, and do not necessarily depict actual services, facilities or recipients of services.

This document may contain images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Image Credit Page 4 – Anne Papadakis

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ISBN 978-1-76096-511-2 (PDF/online/MS Word)

Available at the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing website:

<<https://www.vic.gov.au/departments/families-fairness-and-housing>>

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Secretary's message



I would like to begin by proudly acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands across this great state and paying my respects to all First Peoples. Wherever you are reading this from in Victoria, it is Aboriginal land; always was, always will be.

Our vision as the new Department of Families, Fairness and Housing is to empower communities to build a fairer and safer Victoria. We want a place free from disadvantage and discrimination where all people can build meaningful lives.

This strategic plan – our first since the department launched on 1 February 2021 – sets out our plan for delivering on the government's priorities and commitments across our portfolios. Our department oversees the portfolios of housing; child protection; disability, ageing and carers; prevention of family violence; women; veterans; youth; multicultural affairs; and equality. In delivering across these portfolios, we work every day to achieve a fairer, safer and more inclusive Victoria. We support people so they can feel empowered, safe and secure. We work hard each day to help Victorians thrive.

We are deeply committed to Aboriginal self-determination and to supporting Victoria's treaty process. We acknowledge that treaty will have wide implications for the way government departments and agencies do business with Aboriginal Victorians. This is likely to include a framework for transferring decision-making power and resources to support self-determining Aboriginal communities to take control of matters that affect their lives. We aim to create respectful and collaborative partnerships and develop policies and programs that respect Aboriginal self-determination and align with treaty aspirations. Culturally safe practices are also at the centre of our actions.

We want Victoria to be a fairer and more equitable society. We want all people to have access to the things they need to flourish.

As a foundation, we want all Victorians to have access to safe homes. This means having housing that is accessible, appropriate, affordable and meets peoples' needs. We are working towards achieving this with an unprecedented investment in social and affordable housing – the \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build.¹ It is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape the social and affordable housing landscape. It is an investment that benefits the whole community.

Bringing real change to our community means providing tailored support to all Victorians. This includes culturally diverse communities, Aboriginal people, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disability, women, seniors, carers, veterans, young people and children. Our focus is on building inclusive, engaged communities that contribute to a stronger Victoria. We want all voices to be heard and celebrated, and we will create more opportunities that make everyone feel valued. We will keep working to reduce inequality and discrimination and to promote accessibility and inclusion.

All children, young people and families have a right to be safe and supported. We are helping families to have respectful, strong relationships. We will keep focusing on intervening earlier while also offering intensive family support to help keep families together. This includes leading Victoria's commitment to end family violence, elder abuse and all forms of violence towards women and children. We have already made extraordinary progress in implementing recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, including increasing frontline service delivery, building new infrastructure, improving practice and changing legislation. But we know we must continue our work to build a system that supports the safety of people who experience family violence and sexual assault, and holds perpetrators to account. We will also continue delivering improved access to our specialist services and campaigns aimed at ending family violence.

We will keep striving for gender equality and increase women's economic participation and leadership in Victoria. We will do this by supporting programs and services and removing systemic barriers to ensure a level playing field for people of all genders.

We will keep supporting seniors across Victoria to thrive in their later years. And we will continue advocating for the needs of older people and value their contributions to our communities.

We also know how important it is to empower young people to fully take part in the social, economic and civic life of our state. We are committed to creating fairer access to opportunities and support. We want young people to know their value and that we are listening to what they have to say.

Our support for people in our community extends to our veterans. We will continue supporting Victorian veteran wellbeing, recognition and acknowledgement of service through initiatives that support their successful transition to, and involvement in, civilian life.

We will continue advocating for equality and inclusion for LGBTIQ+ communities. Whether that is by opening the Victorian Pride Centre, delivering Melbourne Pride 2021 or developing Victoria's first LGBTIQ+ strategy, we aim to improve the lives of all LGBTIQ+ Victorians.

We know how difficult the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic health emergency has been for all Victorians. Other catastrophic events such as the bushfires in early 2020 and the storms and floods in June 2021 have shone a light on those in our community who experience property loss or significant disruption. This is alongside psychological, physical and cultural trauma. We will continue to work across government, with our service partners and communities, to coordinate and deliver our relief services. This will help Victorian communities recover and start to rebuild their lives.

We will continue to work closely with Victorian communities. The strength, leadership and resilience of our communities and sector who have responded to the challenges of emergencies has proven how essential collaboration and connection is.

While our department works with people and communities to overcome challenges, we also have opportunities to make real change. We have a unique footprint – with offices across Victoria – where we will connect services and initiatives in places where people live and work. We will continue building initiatives that are person- and family-centred and that are joined in a way that maximises the impact for communities.

We will further our collaboration and connection with the community as we design and roll out our policies and services. This will allow us to deliver better, safer services that prioritise the people they support. We will keep working closely with our partners to respond to demand for these services and supports. This will ensure we are making the changes needed to support and sustain the community services sector.

Victorian people are vibrant and resilient, and we will support them as they move through their lives. I am proud to be the Secretary of this new department and to share our plan to make Victoria a fairer and safer place for everyone who calls it home.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sandy Pitcher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sandy" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Pitcher".

Secretary
Sandy Pitcher



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Our ministers

**The Department of Families,
Fairness and Housing supports
six ministers and nine portfolios.**

The Hon. Richard Wynne MP

Minister for Housing

The Hon. Luke Donnellan MP

Minister for Child Protection

Minister for Disability,
Ageing and Carers

The Hon. Ros Spence MP

Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Minister for Youth

Gabrielle Williams MP

Minister for Prevention
of Family Violence

Minister for Women

The Hon. Shaun Leane MP

Minister for Veterans

Martin Foley MP

Minister for Equality



Statement of support for Aboriginal self-determination



There have been significant steps to advance Aboriginal self-determination in Victoria through both the Treaty and formal Truth-telling process through the Yoo-rrook Commission. Victoria has also signed up to a National Agreement on Closing the Gap, with a strong theme around partnership and shared decision making.

As co-chair of the Department of Fairness, Families and Housing's Korin Korin Balit-Djak Aboriginal Governance Committee I write this statement to express the criticality of our individual and collective roles in delivering on the commitments and actions both within the department's agreements and strategies, and in system transformation.

Much has been done to nation-build Aboriginal Victoria, and we now have environments where we are managing our own resources, have enterprises, organisations with skilled administration and highly functioning service providers delivering across a broad spectrum of services to Aboriginal people throughout our state. Victoria's Aboriginal community-controlled sector can be seen as a contemporary expression of Aboriginal peoples' rights to self-government and self-determination.

For Aboriginal people, culture matters for self-determination and self-management. By culture we mean the shared values, meanings, ways of understanding the world, and beliefs of an Aboriginal nation that inform their everyday practice. Culture underpins the way people work together in our communities and organisations, and it flows through our governance arrangements in persistent and innovative ways. It is clearly relevant both as a dimension and object of our display of self-determination and self-management, and as an explanatory variable for differences in the operation and in achieving outcomes.

Self-determination will require us to build ourselves as First Peoples into a strong positional power, be representational and ensure that we pursue the self-determination rights of our peoples. Why do we do this? Because self-determination works and is the key lever to address Aboriginal vulnerability. Self-determination in our practice and service response is about helping our people make informed choices and decisions that affect their own lives.

Our work with the department commits us to three key principles: Aboriginal-led collective action, Aboriginal self-determination and systemic change.

Our collective efforts in building monitoring, evaluation and accountabilities into government agreements and strategies provides clarity of the work ahead. Most exciting is our work on system transformation, which is premised on government taking on greater responsibility in addressing systemic bias and institutional racism, and in giving greater control to Aboriginal people across the department's operations. Further, it commits Aboriginal voice to be in key decision-making roles and commits government to transfer proportional funding and resources across all the department's portfolios to enable greater self-determination.

We cannot look back on this period of time, read of our aspirations and commitments and then not ask ourselves: Did I do my part in furthering self-determination?

The journey is a shared one that I urge us all to work together to realise.

Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett Hon DLitt SW AO

Co-Chair of the Korin Korin Balit-Djak Aboriginal Governance Committee and CEO VACCA

Our vision

Empowering communities to build a fairer and safer Victoria

Our values

We are responsive

- We provide frank, impartial and timely advice to the Victorian Government.
- We provide high-quality services to the Victorian community.
- We identify and promote best practice.

Our behaviours

- We listen to people and communities and respond to their needs.
- We use person-centred approaches to service and program delivery.
- We promote a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

We have integrity

- We are honest, open and transparent in our dealings.
- We use powers responsibly.
- We report improper conduct.
- We avoid any real or apparent conflicts of interest.
- We strive to earn and sustain public trust.

- We are trustworthy, and we do what we say we will do.
- We stay true to our values when it is easy and when it is difficult.
- We value a broad range of evidence and knowledge systems.

We are impartial

- We make decisions and provide advice on merit and without bias, caprice, favouritism or self-interest.
- We act fairly by objectively considering all relevant facts and fair criteria.
- We implement Victorian Government policies and programs equitably.

- We consider data and evidence and community feedback in our advice.
- We check for unconscious bias and provide safe spaces for different perspectives.
- We consider all options, and once a decision is made we work as one.

Our values

Our behaviours

We show respect

- We show respect for colleagues, other public officials and members of the Victorian community.
 - We treat our colleagues, other public officials and members of the Victorian community fairly and objectively.
 - We ensure freedom from discrimination, harassment and bullying.
 - We use colleagues, other public officials and members of the Victorian community's views to improve outcomes on an ongoing basis.
- We are connected to community and we listen to their perspectives.
 - We create partnerships with local people and organisations.
 - We empower communities by building capacity and resilience.
 - We use humanising and strengths-based language.
 - We respect a diversity of perspectives.
 - We create safe spaces to seek out and hear the voices of people with lived experience.

We are accountable

- We work to clear objectives in a transparent manner.
 - We accept responsibility for our decisions and actions.
 - We seek to achieve the best use of resources.
 - We submit ourselves to appropriate scrutiny.
- We aim to make a tangible difference.
 - We aim to improve equality of opportunity and outcomes for Victorians.
 - We make best use of government resources.
 - We aim to provide support at the right time and in the right place for people who need it.

We lead

- We actively implement, promote and support these values.
- We celebrate success and learn from our experiences.
 - We remove barriers to participation whenever we can.
 - We demonstrate our values in our interactions.
 - We have a supportive and collaborative culture.

We respect human rights

- We respect and promote the human rights set out in the Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.
 - We make decisions and provide advice consistent with human rights.
 - We actively implement, promote and support human rights.
- We are inclusive.
 - Aboriginal people and communities determine how services will be delivered to them.
 - We work with Aboriginal communities, LGBTIQ+ communities, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, young people, older people, women, veterans and people with disability to end discrimination.
 - We promote gender equality and diversity in the workforce.

Our department

Our department works to create a more inclusive society, one in which people feel safe and can take part equally.

We do this every day by supporting people and communities to:

- have equitable access to opportunities
- overcome struggles and hardships
- recover from adversity.

We do this by taking steps to end issues like homelessness and family violence.

We work with people and communities to overcome challenges, create opportunities and build a fairer and safer Victoria, where everyone is valued.

We approach our work with the knowledge that collaboration and connection are essential to our success. This means with both the communities we serve and the people within our workforce.

We bring together our services and initiatives to support people at critical points in their lives and support all Victorians to get involved equally. This is how we make a difference.

This connection of service delivery, supports and initiatives benefits every Victorian. It is why we have brought these portfolios together into one department.

We develop, drive and deliver whole-of-government policy that has the wellbeing of all Victorians at its heart.

We drive key reform agendas across gender, equality, prevention of family violence, housing, children and inclusion.

We partner with sectors and listen to the voices of those with lived experience in these areas.

We respond to emergencies, including large-scale social and economic changes. We offer immediate and ongoing relief. We partner with communities to coordinate and tailor services for support and recovery.

We serve and support children and families, people experiencing family violence, housing and disability clients across the state, improving outcomes and creating a fairer and stronger Victoria. We work every day to keep individuals, children and families safe.

We are a complex department, with a wide reach across urban and regional areas. Our complexity is one of our strengths. It allows us to meet the different needs of our communities and gives us the ability to build our supports to meet people where they are.

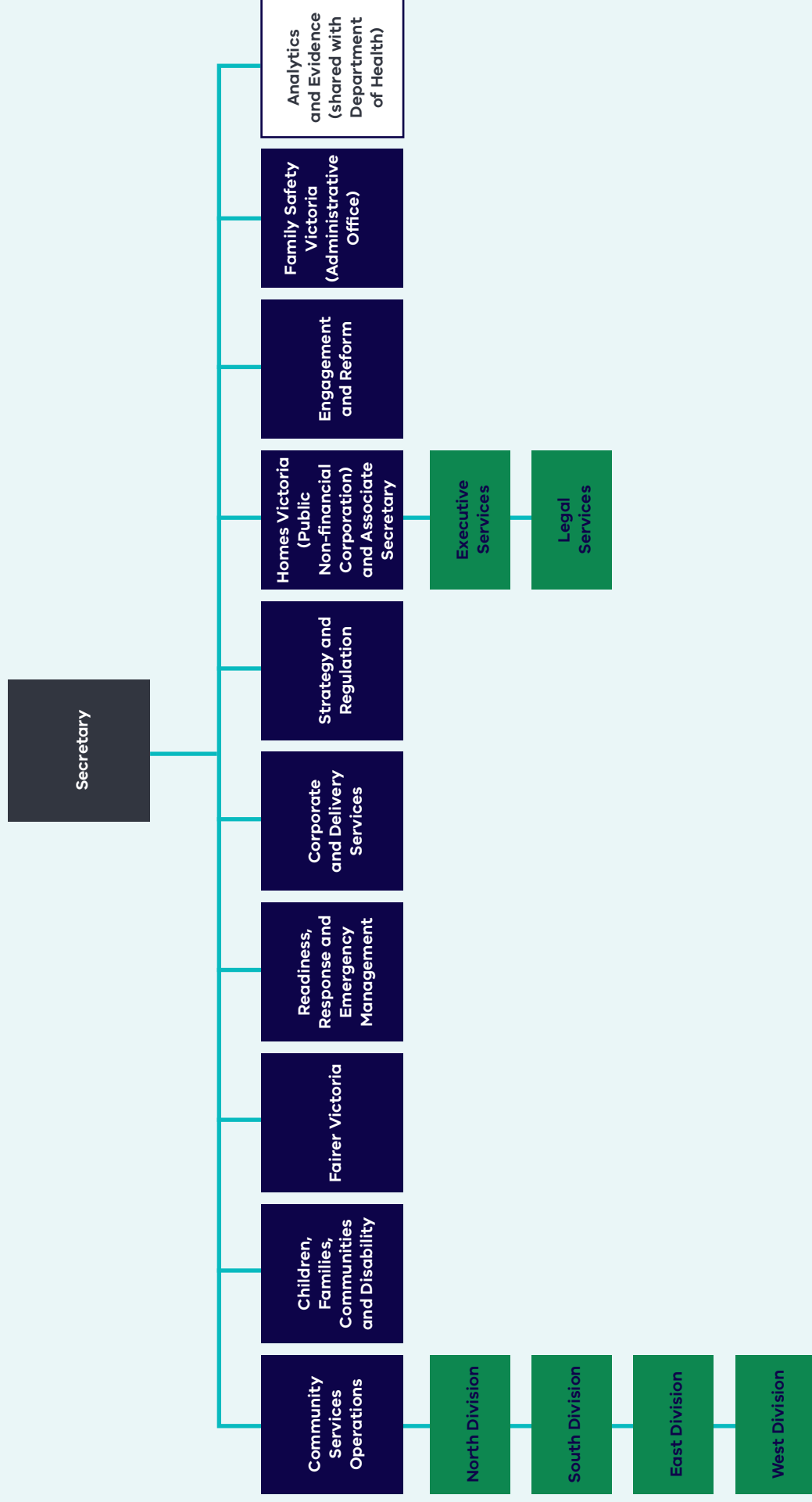
Our department funds agencies, delivers services directly and works with commissions, peak bodies and other community organisations to provide a range of advice and supports. We work across the Victorian Government and with other governments in Australia to give high-quality and informed advice. We also give clear and unbiased advice to our ministers to assist in effective decision making.

We strive to keep improving the quality and safety of our services and listen to the voices and experiences of those who use them. We also monitor, assure quality and regulate these initiatives to support safe, effective, person-centred, connected delivery.

We aim to use all parts of our organisation to improve outcomes and better the lives of the people, families, communities and clients we serve.

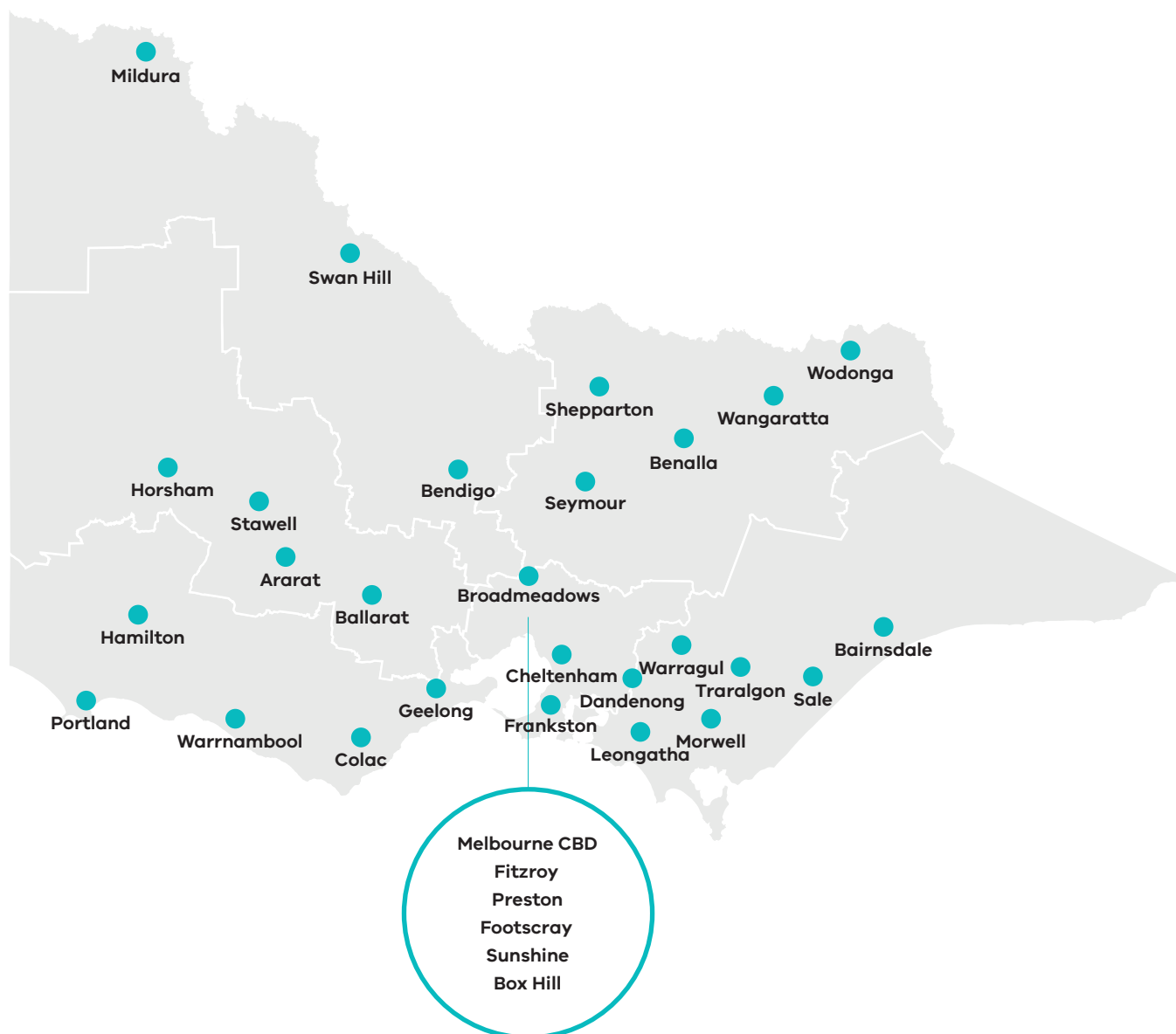
Together we strive to build a fairer and safer Victoria for all.

Our structure



Our footprint

We have staff in offices right across metropolitan and regional Victoria.



Our services



In 2019–20 our Secretary had **parental responsibility** for 12,727 children and young people in our child protection system⁵



In 2019–20 the **elder abuse** statewide helpline received 3,303 calls for support, information referral or advice⁸



In **2021–22** we are providing more than \$1.46 billion in service agreement funding to 920 agencies²



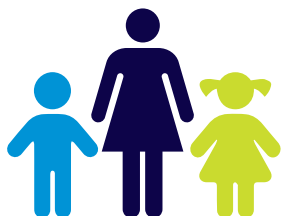
In 2019–20 we helped 115,168 clients to **address and prevent homelessness**, with almost half of these seeking support due to family violence⁶



In 2019–20 we helped in 40,451 **family services cases**⁹



We invest about **\$2.8 billion** per year in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)³



Since 2018 **The Orange Door** network has helped more than **140,000 Victorians**, including more than **55,000 children**⁷



We supported **community members affected by emergencies** with more than \$1.1 million in Personal Hardship Assistance Payments across 2020–21¹⁰



We give grants funding to more than 2,000 **multicultural community organisations**⁴

Our funded initiatives 2021–22

Victorian State Budget 2021–22 output initiatives

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (\$ million)¹¹

	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Child protection and family services					
Early intervention and diversion	..	15.6	25.9	16.5	12.3
Maintaining the foundations of the children and families system	..	263.9	243.0	249.5	247.4
Putting Families First	..	5.3	6.2	6.3	..
Reforming care services	..	53.4	13.2	16.5	18.6
Community participation					
Building better connected communities	..	1.8	0.4	0.4	0.4
Good Money	..	3.8	3.5	3.6	3.7
Public health and local place based delivery	..	152.9	..	..	..
Responding to community based healthcare demand	..	2.2	1.1	1.1	1.1
Disability services					
Changing Places	..	2.5	..	..	..
Support for regulators and complaints handling bodies	..	12.4	11.0	..	..
Family violence service delivery					
Central Information Point	..	12.9	..	..	..
Family Violence Graduate Program	..	0.5	0.7	..	..
Information sharing and family violence risk assessment and management reform	..	26.9	28.6	23.5	18.0
Intervening early to prevent family violence	..	1.2	1.2	..	..
Perpetrator accountability	..	12.8	1.7	1.8	1.8
Pets in refuges and crisis accommodation	..	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.2
Responses for children and young people impacted by family violence and sexual assault	..	14.1	9.7	10.0	10.3
Support for victim survivors of family violence and sexual assault	..	21.9	9.1	9.3	8.7
Housing assistance					
Critical additional responses for people experiencing homelessness placed in hotels during the coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic	19.5	11.5	(11.6)	(2.5)	..
Homelessness services	..	46.7	53.0	46.4	47.6
Paving the Way Forward: pathway to recovery at North Melbourne and Flemington housing estates	..	2.4	3.1	0.5	0.5
Tackling rough sleeping	..	5.9	8.1	10.2	2.0

	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
LGBTIQ+ equality policy and programs					
LGBTIQ+ Grants Program	..	1.0	..	..	..
Melbourne Pride 2021	..	1.0	..	..	..
Multicultural affairs policy and programs					
Enhanced engagement approach with CALD communities and complex families	23.8	..	..	..	..
Multicultural Festivals and Events Program	..	1.1	..	..	..
Multicultural seniors grants	..	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Recovery together: jobs and stimulus initiatives for Victoria's multicultural communities	..	4.4	0.1	..	..
Supporting improved settlement outcomes	..	4.5	1.4	1.4	1.4
Tackling racism in Victoria head-on	..	0.6	0.6	0.3	..
Office for Disability					
Building inclusive and safe communities for Victorians with disability	..	8.1	0.3	0.4	0.4
Seniors programs and participation					
Elder abuse primary prevention, health service response and early intervention	..	1.0	..	..	..
Support to veterans in Victoria					
Shrine of Remembrance	..	3.3	2.7	..	..
Supporting veterans	..	0.8	0.7	0.4	0.4
Women's policy					
Improving outcomes for women in Victoria: strengthening Victoria's economic recovery through women's participation	..	2.1	2.1	..	..
Youth					
Engaging and supporting at risk young people	..	9.2	9.2	..	..
Strengthening youth participation and connection	..	3.7	3.2	..	..
Total output initiatives	43.3	714.0	430.3	397.7	376.9

Source: Department of Treasury and Finance

Note: Table may not add due to rounding.

Victorian State Budget 2021–22 asset initiatives

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (\$ million)¹²

	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	TEI
Child protection and family services						
Maintaining the foundations of the children and families system	..	1.5	1.5	1.6	..	4.6
Total asset initiatives	..	1.5	1.5	1.6	..	4.6

Source: Department of Treasury and Finance

Our stories – High-Risk Accommodation Response

The High-Risk Accommodation Response (HRAR) is the department's primary program supporting accommodation where the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission is higher. This includes public housing estates.

As of August 2021¹³ this encompasses around 30,000 facilities and dwellings including:

- 57 high-rise public housing towers
- more than 1,400 other public housing locations
- 117 Supported Residential Services.

It also includes community housing residences, rooming houses, disability residential settings in collaboration with the Commonwealth and caravan parks with long-term residents.

We work with 24 community health providers across 31 local catchments to ensure public health measures are

always in place. These measures protect the safety and wellbeing of residents. We also work to ensure residents and facility managers get timely, culturally appropriate and accessible services. This includes health and social services, infection prevention control, cleaning, coronavirus (COVID-19) testing, food and essential supplies, and community engagement strategies.

Genuine community engagement is the core of the HRAR program. The program works with residents who are best placed to identify, communicate and manage the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission in their community.

The approach aims to support residents to make informed public health-related decisions. To do this, we provide public health and service information that is clear, accessible and culturally, linguistically and religiously appropriate.



Our communities

Our communities reflect the diversity and strengths of Victoria. This diversity is essential to the social and economic strength of our state.

LGBTIQ+



5.7% of Victorian adults identify as **LGBTIQ+**¹⁴

Women



Women make up more than **half of the Victorian population**¹⁵

CALD communities



About **half of all Victorians** were born overseas or had a parent born overseas¹⁶

People with disability

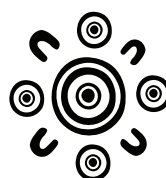


One in six Victorians live with disability¹⁷

Young people



There are more than 1.2 million people **aged 12 to 25** in Victoria¹⁸



More than 17,000 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in Victoria¹⁹

Veterans



About **500 new veterans** move to Victoria each year²⁰

Seniors



About **one-quarter of Victorians** will be aged over 60 by 2056²¹

Carers



Victoria has **more than 730,000** carers²²

Our stories – CALD Communities Taskforce

Set up in 2020, the CALD Communities Taskforce is working in partnership with Victoria's multicultural communities during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Through this taskforce we have worked with more than 326 community partners to offer immediate and ongoing relief to those most affected by the pandemic. This partnership helped deliver more than 304,016 culturally appropriate meals and 165,186 food kits to those in need.

It also placed more than 29,803 outreach calls and created more than 1,300 online activities with over 66,361 participants to help keep communities connected.²³

Through these community partnerships, we are working to build a stronger and better prepared sector that can continue to support diverse communities.



Our outcomes

This strategic plan describes what our department is doing and will continue to do to achieve our aims. The department's outcomes framework describes what we aim to achieve, and what we are doing to make progress.

Outcomes framework



Our outcome goal is:
Children, young people and families are safe, strong and supported

Victorian families, carers and individuals have supportive and respectful relationships and are safe from harm, fear and neglect in their homes. This includes:

- addressing the compounding effects of abuse and violence
- improving support and recovery for both victim-survivors and perpetrators
- ensuring the wellbeing of children and young people in care.

To succeed we will:

- reduce abuse and neglect of children and young people
- increase safe, respectful family relationships
- improve development and wellbeing for children and young people
- increase the stability of care services placements
- increase connections to culture, family and kinship systems for Aboriginal families, including for Aboriginal children in care*
- reduce over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in care services*
- increase safety for victim-survivors of family violence
- reduce family violence
- reduce family violence and abuse against Aboriginal women and children.*



Our outcome goal is:
Victorian communities¹ are safe, fair, inclusive and resilient

Victorians are socially involved in their community and participation helps their wellbeing. Communities foster social inclusion and participation, and diversity is celebrated and enabled. Victorians from intersectional communities can safely identify with their culture, express their identity and build support networks with people they trust. Communities are strong and resilient in times of emergency.

To succeed we will:

- increase social, economic and community inclusion and participation, including for women, people with disability, Aboriginal Victorians and other communities*
- decrease experiences of discrimination and racism
- increase safety where people live, work, learn and play
- increase wellbeing for Aboriginal Victorians, including safety to connect with and express culture*
- increase capacity for senior Victorians to age well
- increase supports for people with complex needs
- increase social capital and community connection
- increase community resilience
- improve social recovery following emergencies



Our outcome goal is:
All Victorians have stable, affordable and appropriate housing

Victorians have safe homes that provide emotional and physical sanctuary. Victorians have security of tenure in housing that is accessible, appropriate, affordable and tailored to them. This outcome includes supports to address and reduce housing insecurity and homelessness, to enable suitable housing for all.

To succeed we will:

- increase the supply and availability of affordable and high-quality housing
- improve the quality, environmental sustainability, appropriateness and accessibility of existing housing
- increase housing stability for people experiencing or at risk of rough sleeping, homelessness, and other insecure housing arrangements
- increase financial ability to access and maintain housing and utility services
- increase Aboriginal residents' connection to community, culture and place*
- increase the proportion of Aboriginal people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing*
- improve transitions to independent living arrangements²

¹ In addition to the Victorian community as a whole, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing works with a range of communities including women, culturally diverse people, LGBTIQ+ communities, and Aboriginal Victorians, as well as veterans, seniors, youth, people with disability, survivors of institutional care and abuse, victim-survivors of family violence, and more

* These indicators contribute to Closing the Gap targets

Effectively operating our system, and embedding Aboriginal self-determination, drives and underpins improved outcomes for all Victorians:



Our outcome goal is:

Aboriginal voice, knowledge and cultural leadership drive Aboriginal policy, legislation and system reform

Self-determination enables the wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians. Systems and structures that inhibit self-determination are actively addressed with the partnership and leadership of the Victorian Aboriginal community.

To succeed we will:

- increase the transfer of decision-making power and resources to Aboriginal organisations*
- increase use of Aboriginal knowledge and evidence in policy program and service planning, design, delivery and evaluation under Aboriginal leadership*

- improve flexible funding practices to empower Aboriginal organisations to meet the diverse needs of the community*
- increase investment in the Aboriginal workforce to support the Aboriginal community-controlled organisation sector to excel in practice, partnership, and service delivery*
- increase the cultural competence of the non-Aboriginal workforce across all service functions to embed practices and processes that respect Aboriginal ways of working, knowledge and evidence*
- increase protection and promotion of Aboriginal knowledge and Aboriginal intellectual property.*

Note: Self-determination indicators are subject to testing with Aboriginal communities.



Our outcome goal is:

Our systems are high performing and responsive, meeting the needs of all Victorians

Services are person centred, inclusive, and effective. The department connects with communities across the state and responds to their needs, preferences and circumstances. The system is known for:

- delivering services safely
- strong leadership and workplace cultures
- a skilled workforce
- broad-based risk management
- a culture of continuous improvement and evidence-informed practice.

To succeed we will:

- improve the quality, safety and effectiveness of service delivery
- increase responsiveness of services and systems to diversity and intersectionality, including equity of access
- increase the voice of clients, people with lived experience and diverse communities when we design, deliver and evaluate policies, programs and services
- improve organisational oversight, governance and financial management
- increase system resilience, responsiveness and agility, including effective use of technology
- improve workforce health, safety, wellbeing, capability and diversity
- increase measurement of departmental impact and use of data and evidence to inform decision making and policy design

2 Includes transitions from justice settings, supported residential and disability care, care services placements and other specialised accommodation.

* These indicators contribute to Closing the Gap targets

Headline outcome measures

Headline measures will give a snapshot of the context in which the department works. We have proposed an initial list for each outcome below. We will expand on this over time.



Children, young people and families are safe, strong and supported

- Rate of children and young people who were the subject of a child abuse or neglect substantiation
- Rate of entries to care
- Rate of family violence incidents



Victorian communities are safe, fair, inclusive and resilient

- Rate of reported crimes against the person
- Rate of participation in community activities over the reporting period
- Proportion of senior Victorians who report feeling valued by society
- Number of discrimination enquiries



All Victorians have stable, affordable and appropriate housing

- Proportion of people presenting with an identified need for accommodation who are provided with accommodation
- Number of social housing dwellings per 1,000 population
- Proportion of low-income Victorians accessing RentAssist



Aboriginal voice, knowledge and cultural leadership drive Aboriginal policy, legislation and system reform

- Proportion of governance structures that transfer decision-making and resource control to Aboriginal organisations. This relates to designing, implementing and evaluating policies, programs and services for Aboriginal people and communities (*subject to testing and iteration with community, for example, through Koorie Caucus, the First Peoples' Assembly or a future treaty representative body*)
- Number of long-term outcomes-based funding arrangements in place for Aboriginal organisations that meet Aboriginal community-defined need (*subject iteration and testing with community, for example, through Koorie Caucus, the First Peoples' Assembly or a future treaty representative body*)



Our systems are high performing and responsive, meeting the needs of all Victorians

- Timeliness of responding to or closing out of client complaints
- Proportion of organisations successfully completing a review against departmental standards



Our challenges

Victoria's people and communities are our greatest strength. Our diverse communities greatly contribute to the state and make Victoria one of the best places in the world to live.

Acknowledging the strength and value of our diversity does not mean we can overlook barriers. Many people in Victoria face longstanding barriers to safety, inclusion, wellbeing and participation because of discrimination and inequality.

Our department delivers services to many people. We have a broad focus on supporting children, young people, people with disability, carers, older people, families and communities experiencing challenges. We must shape our initiatives to meet the different types and frequency of our interactions.

Our aim is to create a fairer Victoria by:

- removing barriers to getting involved
- helping people and communities recover from hard times
- supporting people to safely contribute to society in a way they choose.

Sometimes our support is short term as people overcome emergencies or temporary hardships. For some people, we offer support for a much longer period.

As the world becomes more complex, so do the challenges people face. We can respond to these pressures by changing how we approach crisis and recovery. We can do this by helping people earlier to prevent a build-up of disadvantage. We can listen and then change the ways we work to better suit the needs of people and communities. We must continue to elevate the voice of Victorians going through multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage.



We understand that the diversity and complexity of people's lived experience means there can be multiple barriers to receiving inclusive and responsive services. This can also affect how people take part in the economy and community life. We must take an intersectional approach and work closely with our communities to create and roll out the most effective supports we can. We must design our policies and programs in partnership with the communities we serve. Our work benefits the whole community, but we must continue to create and build our connections to these groups.

There are also longstanding challenges we are working to address. Historical and intergenerational trauma continues to echo across Aboriginal communities. This is from the effects of colonisation including child removal, racism and cultural destruction.

In 2020, reports of racial abuse doubled from those in reported in 2019.²⁴ We must continue to take down racism and build inclusive and respectful communities, and services and initiatives to support them. The department also has a role in driving a positive vision for a fairer and safer Victoria. This includes through whole-of-government leadership in policy and programs that respond to diversity and are designed in partnership with communities.

Population change

Victoria's demographics change with population growth and decline. The uneven rate of growth and decline can be challenging when providing services. Victoria's population will continue to grow overtime²⁵, and demand for services will continue to grow with it.

Despite the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, international migration will still drive Victoria's population growth.²⁶ This will keep changing and enhancing the cultural and social diversity in our state. Some new Victorians, such as refugees and asylum seekers, may have complex needs. They may need extra support to recover from trauma caused by mistreatment or living in war zones.

Housing type and size needs to change to reflect demographic change. The large families of the 1960s and 1970s are less common. Individuals now make up a significant proportion of people requesting social housing. These people are more likely to have severe and multiple disadvantage and experiences of discrimination.

Our population is ageing, and the population groups experiencing homelessness are changing along with it. Women over the age of 55 make up the largest growing group within the homeless population.²⁷

The NDIS has changed the way we provide specialist disability supports. Around 105,000 Victorians with disability will be eligible for an NDIS plan.²⁸ All people with disability, regardless of whether they have a plan, rely on mainstream services being accessible and inclusive.

Our ongoing use of data analytics will help us track these changes. It will also help predict service demand and population needs outside the historical nine-to-five business model.

Geographical change

Many people who use our services live in rural and regional areas and the outer suburban growth corridors of Victoria. These locations face unique challenges – economic growth in some areas, decline in others. In these areas, it can be difficult to shift services and other infrastructure quickly. It can be a challenge to respond to the fast-changing community needs.

We will build on the lessons from our response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and continue to trial new ways of working. Emerging digital technologies will allow us to reach out and deliver services and programs in new ways, while ensuring we do not leave those on the other side of the digital divide behind.



Preparing, responding and recovering

Some individuals, families and communities in Victoria face greater challenges now than ever before. Poverty, disadvantage and trauma have left some exposed to greater hardship when large-scale social and economic emergencies occur. Ongoing pressures on our communities and services include:

- the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- the effects of climate change
- the increasing intensity and frequency of bushfires, storms and other large-scale events.



This pressure is particularly true for people in insecure work, especially:

- women and young people
- those isolated from family and friends
- people with disability
- people with unpaid caring responsibilities
- families at increased risk of violence
- older people
- newly arrived migrants
- temporary and provisional visa holders.

We know Victorians enjoy better long-term wellbeing in vibrant, inclusive and cohesive communities. In such communities people support one another, are empathetic and respectful, and can adapt to change.

We will form partnerships with these communities as we work to support them through these challenges. We will also use and trial new ways to address complex issues. This will include:

- local initiatives
- better integrating programs across service systems
- earlier intervention
- better connection to and accessibility of services.

We will reflect on our ways of working and business practices and make them more person- and family-centred and easier to navigate.

We will continue to improve our emergency management responses as we plan for future large-scale emergencies. This will help deliver service continuity and have relief and early social recovery responses ready. We will learn from what our communities and people tell us about what works best for them.

Our stories – Emergency management response to a severe storm event

Victoria had a severe storm event from 9 to 11 June 2021. Our Readiness, Response and Emergency Management Branch and Operations Division activated emergency management operations with the Department of Health. These operations directly supported affected communities across the state. Yarra Ranges experienced the most extensive physical damage, including destroyed houses, trees blocking roads, fallen powerlines and power and phone outages. In addition to damaged property, the impacts of the storms on the mental health and wellbeing of the broader community was significant.

Our Emergency Management staff in East Division and more than 60 operations surge staff from across the state worked closely with local councils and emergency and community services to help people affected by the storms. The department provided 278 emergency relief Personal Hardship Assistance Payments

totalling \$307,160 across the eastern metropolitan region. These payments helped meet immediate food, material aid, accommodation and other relief needs in Yarra Ranges. The department gave out 653 payments totalling \$727,360 across the state.²⁹

Local Community Hubs provided a safe and warm gathering place for communities to receive assistance, information, support, counselling and access to food, power, showers and the internet. Staff at the Community Hubs gave locals the opportunity to work through their psychosocial support needs and identify referral options. Staff conducted daily welfare checks by phone (and some in person) to 418 people. The department is coordinating a broad and dedicated social recovery program to ensure support is there to help the community with ongoing recovery efforts.





Our opportunities

We oversee complex systems, services and programs with partners that include:

- commissions
- community services
- peak organisations
- community groups
- our own staff
- central and local service delivery.

We are all joined by the aim of trying to create a fairer, safer and more inclusive society.

We allocate more than \$1.46 billion to agencies for service delivery each year.³⁰ We monitor about 920 service agreements with community sector organisations.³¹ We invest about \$2.8 billion per year in the NDIS.³² We also provide grants to around 2,000 different multicultural community organisations, representing more than 220 multicultural and multifaith communities.³³

One of our key strengths is engaging and partnering with the communities we work with and for, including diverse communities. One of our greatest assets is the extensive network of frontline staff and offices that reach across the state. Our staff enjoy close working relationships with communities, community organisations, local government and service delivery agencies. Our local footprint allows us to engage with communities and respond to their changing needs.

This new department will use its network of staff across the state to inform program development and service delivery models and to plan for unexpected events. We will use local and operational information to solve problems, transform systems and deliver higher quality, more connected, safe and responsive services.

We will use our footprint to co-design and deliver integrated supports within communities. To do this, we will use place-based approaches and community planning that connects services in locations and wraps services around people and families.

We will work to remove the siloes that affect the accessibility of services, and that can leave gaps for people to fall through.

Our focus areas



Children, young people and families are safe, strong and supported

We can achieve our outcome goal by:

- working every day to keep children and young people safe
- intervening earlier to help keep families together, when it is safe to do so
- leading Victoria's commitment to end family violence and all forms of violence towards women, children, young people and older people.

All children and young people have a right to grow up safe and supported, whether their families are biological or chosen. But some families experience more challenges than others and need extra support.

We understand that family violence is a significant factor in the lives of many people who need our services. In turn, family violence can contribute to a range of other issues such as:

- homelessness
- children and young people being unsafe at home
- trauma
- physical and emotional injuries
- premature death.

We must link supports and services together at the same time as addressing the causes of family violence, sexual assault, trauma and poverty faced by some children, young people, women, people with disability and older people.

To achieve these goals, the department aims to:

- prevent gendered violence
- get support earlier to families that might be struggling
- deliver more easily accessible and multidisciplinary services
- work harder to keep families together when it is safe to do so
- build up family violence services to better support and respond earlier to the complex needs of adult and child victim survivors
- put children into care services only as the last resort to keep them safe
- break the cycle by supporting young people in care services better and helping them move to independent living as an adult
- prioritise safe, affordable housing for people experiencing family violence
- hold perpetrators to account and support them to take responsibility for ending their violent behaviours.

Safe and supported children and young people

We will continue to work with children, young people and families, communities and services through the *Roadmap for Reform: pathways to support for children and families priority setting plan 2021–2024*.

As part of a \$1.2 billion investment in children, young people and families through the 2021–22 Victorian State Budget, the child and family service system will provide early support. The system will offer more tailored, targeted and therapeutic care options.³⁴

A \$70 million investment in early intervention programs and targeted specialist support for 500 extra families will see a dedicated focus on early intervention. This will promote strength and stability for at-risk families.³⁵



We will embed family services specialists into schools and early years services. These staff will support struggling families as early as possible.

We will continue to deliver new evidence-based family services to families where children and young people are at risk of entry to care services. We will prioritise reunifying children and young people with their families. This includes setting up stronger partnerships between Child Protection and service providers.

A \$20 million investment in family group conferencing will better protect children and young people involved with Child Protection. It will bring family members together to activate support for a child or young person to stay at home safely.³⁶

Putting Families First involves an \$18 million trial of multidisciplinary case management teams. The program will work directly with 200 families facing the most complex challenges to give practical, personalised and targeted support.³⁷

Funding of \$31.5 million will help change the way we deliver services to at-risk Aboriginal families. This funding will support our commitment to Aboriginal self-determination by helping more Aboriginal children and young people receive case management and support from Aboriginal organisations. We will also strengthen support provided to kinship, foster and permanent carers through the \$101.8 million Reforming Care Services package.³⁸

Child Protection has an important role in keeping children and young people safe and protecting them from abuse and neglect. Child Protection will investigate situations when there are significant concerns for the safety and wellbeing of a child or young person. This is in addition to receiving reports, providing advice and referring families to services.

Child Protection will work with families so children and young people can stay safely at home. We will arrange alternative care if staying at home is not possible. Our Secretary has parental responsibility for 12,727 children in our child protection system.³⁹

To support service delivery, we will recruit 280 new frontline child protection practitioners. This includes 34 child protection navigators who will connect struggling families to intensive family support.⁴⁰

We are reforming residential care services to deliver a new model of therapeutic care for children and young people who cannot stay at home. We will set up 25 new two- and three-bed residential care facilities for better placement matching. We will also improve the quality and safety of residential care. This reform will trial a Care Hub, which delivers wraparound support for children and young people entering care for the first time. This will give kids a greater sense of security and reunite families earlier. On top of this, we are expanding the Keep Embracing Your Success (KEYS) model of residential care (including an Aboriginal-specific KEYS program). This model supports children and young people with mental health issues and complex needs to move back home or into adulthood.

A new pilot, Frontline Victoria, will also create a fast-tracked path to support practice development, leadership and movement into roles within the children and families services system.

These programs will support young Victorians and their families and will provide more than 1,045 Victorians with a secure job.⁴¹

In an Australian first, the Victorian Government fully funded Home Stretch for all young people leaving foster, kinship and residential care. The Victorian State Budget 2020–21 provided \$75 million over four years to ensure all Victorian care leavers are provided with support as they transition to adulthood. This includes \$10.3 million over four years and ongoing funding for the Better Futures program, which provides young people with a range of tailored education, employment, housing, health, wellbeing and community supports to help them to prepare for life after care. In the 2021–22 Victorian State Budget, the Victorian Government invested a further \$38.96 million over the four years and \$13.8 million ongoing so that young people subject to permanent care orders can be supported via Better Futures from 15 years and nine months and Home Stretch from 18 years up until their 21st birthday.⁴²



Visit our website <<https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/families-and-children>> for more information about these initiatives.

Ending family violence and all forms of violence against women

The Victorian Government has implemented more than two-thirds of the 227 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.⁴³ But we know there is still more to do to make Victorian communities safer for everyone.

Family violence is complex and difficult to shift. It will require a long-term focus to support families in crisis and to prevent violence from occurring.

Bushfires at the beginning of 2020 and the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic have put families under increased pressure and financial stress. We know that this can increase the likelihood of family violence.

Despite these challenges, it is important that we keep building up support services while also addressing the root causes of family violence.

The 2021–22 Victorian State Budget delivered \$354 million over four years for critical services to victim survivors of family violence and sexual assault. These funds will ensure perpetrators are kept in view and held accountable. This includes investment in advancing gender equality and preventing family violence. The Victorian Government has now invested \$3.5 billion to improve responses to family violence.⁴⁴

The government released the *Family Violence Reform Rolling Action Plan 2020–2023* at the end of 2020. The plan sets out the activities for the next three years to progress the reform.

Key initiatives led by Family Safety Victoria include continuing to roll out The Orange Door networks across Victoria, with another six to open in 2021. We expect statewide coverage by the end of 2022. The Orange Door network provides support for adults, young people and children experiencing family violence and families who need support with their children.

The Big Housing Build will deliver safe homes for up to 1,000 victim survivors of family violence.⁴⁵ We will build more than 780 new social housing dwellings across 25 locations in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria. These will give women and families more housing options.

We will build new Aboriginal family violence refuges in Warrnambool, Horsham and Shepparton. This is part of the family violence refuge redevelopment program. This program will see the communal refuge model phased out to make way for the core and cluster accommodation model, which:

- promotes safety
- is accessible to people with disabilities
- provides private units
- enables connections with the community, work and school.

The department will continue to roll out *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way* – the Aboriginal family violence strategy. This includes delivering the \$18.2 million Dhelk Dja Family Violence Fund to support more than 45 Aboriginal-led initiatives.⁴⁶ This will enable Victorian Aboriginal organisations to deliver culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal victim survivors and people who use violence.

We are committed to keeping perpetrators engaged, in view and accountable by providing:

- men's behaviour change programs
- perpetrator brokerage
- culturally safe responses for Aboriginal people using violence
- accommodation-based services that will strengthen the web of accountability and support behaviour change.

Victoria will continue rolling out the Central Information Point (CIP). The CIP brings together risk information about perpetrators of family violence held by government agencies into a single report. This will help practitioners assess and manage family violence risk and better support victim survivors. Also, we are investing \$97 million to expand the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM), the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and Child Information Sharing Scheme.⁴⁷ These will now include more than 370,000 workers across the health and education workforces to help keep more victim survivors safe.

We have allocated \$44.1 million over four years to expand responses for children and young people affected by family violence and sexual assault.⁴⁸ This will see a rise in sexually abusive behaviour treatment services.

We will continue to support women's safety as part of a refreshed *Safe and Strong: a Victorian gender equality strategy*. We are also providing \$2.3 million to help prevent sexual violence and coercive control.

Respect Victoria will deliver a \$9.7 million portfolio of campaigns for all Victorians including:

- culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) Victorians
- people with disability
- people who identify as LGBTIQ+
- Aboriginal Victorians.

We will also develop a whole-of-government policy framework for women's safety in public spaces, with a particular focus on public transport.

Visit Family Safety Victoria's website
<<https://www.vic.gov.au/family-safety-victoria>>
for more information about these initiatives,
including Family Safety Victoria's corporate plan.

Ending elder abuse

Elder abuse is a form of family violence recognised by the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Although awareness of elder abuse is increasing, it is still a serious public health and human rights issue that is highly under-reported. Elder abuse is usually perpetrated by an adult child towards a parent but can include intimate partner violence and intergenerational family violence.

The Orange Door networks are working in with:

- a statewide elder abuse helpline
- targeted support to raise awareness in our multicultural communities
- elder abuse prevention training for professionals
- an elder abuse family counselling and mediation service.

The 2021–22 Victorian State Budget gives funding to continue trialling an integrated model of care for suspected elder abuse and the Elder Abuse Prevention Networks. The budget commitment includes evaluating these initiatives.⁴⁹

We are working with partners to:

- build our evidence base for improving and strengthening the system
- design and deliver elder abuse prevention and response activities that reflect best practice and the voice and preferences of older people.

These partners include:

- the Ambassador for Elder Abuse Prevention
- other government departments
- peak bodies
- service providers.

We also advocate and work with the Commonwealth on opportunities to address elder abuse on a national scale.

Refer to the Family violence reform rolling action plan 2020–2023 <<https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-reform-rolling-action-plan-2020-2023>>
for more information about these initiatives.

Delivering quality housing services

Public housing is an important option for people who need an affordable place to live. In response, the department applies the social landlord approach to our tenancy management. This approach favours low-income earners with a recent experience of homelessness or family violence or who have other special needs.

In addition to our public housing role, the department manages the Victorian Housing Register as a single pathway into social housing. We also operate RentAssist bond loans for those entering the private market who are on low incomes.

To better meet the needs of those seeking the department's assistance, in 2020–21 we initiated a refresh of the Housing Operating Model. This model forms the basis on which we deliver services. This work will continue to roll out in 2021–22.

There are two aims of this work. This first focus is on improving the client experience, ensuring people receive a consistent level of service wherever they live in the state. The second aim is to best support our housing staff in their work.

For clients, one of the key initiatives is access to digital platforms so they can view and update the details of the services we provide to them. For example, clients can now:

- get their mail online
- view their information 24/7
- update their phone numbers and other contacts details online
- pay online rather than having to go to the post office each fortnight, if they are able to use direct debit services.

For staff, updating the Housing Operating Model is about ensuring they:

- are well supported in their skill development and wellbeing
- have access to modern technology when they are undertaking activities such as home visits
- are valued and supported in their roles, recognising the important work they do.





Victorian communities are safe, fair, inclusive and resilient

We can achieve our outcome goal by:

- striving for a more accessible and inclusive Victoria for people with disability
- addressing inequality and promoting inclusion for LGBTIQ+ communities
- striving for gender equality and increasing women's economic participation in Victoria
- partnering with multicultural communities to foster an inclusive, engaged and harmonious multicultural community in Victoria
- providing veterans with the support they need to transition to civilian life
- empowering young people to fully take part in the social, economic and civic life of our state
- ensuring we are prepared, responsive and adaptive in crises and emergencies
- respecting and valuing senior Victorians and supporting them to age well
- elevating the voice of Victorians experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage
- providing opportunities for Victorians to connect with one another and to expand their personal networks
- ensuring carers have the support they need to continue their important work.



To make Victoria safer and more equal, all people need to be able to have a say, feel valued and fully take part in society. This is regardless of sex, gender, sexuality, race, class, age or disability. The department works to address structural barriers to getting involved, including racism, ableism, ageism and other forms of discrimination. This is in line with our responsibilities under the Victorian *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

This does not just mean leading the nation on gender equality. It includes helping veterans find their place in society and decreasing their risk of suicide and self-harm. It means helping seniors feel valued and giving young people a voice.

It means working to end violence against older people and people with disability. It means valuing the contribution carers make to society every day by looking after people in need of care.

This is work that needs to occur in all metropolitan, regional and rural areas of Victoria. We will connect and collaborate with community groups to ensure we are elevating our diverse group of voices. We will listen to how these groups can be best assisted, respected and celebrated.

Accessibility and inclusion for people with disability

We are working towards a new state disability plan for 2021–2025. The new plan will build on the progress we have already made towards accessibility and inclusion.

The 2021–2025 plan will incorporate lessons from the response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This includes recognising the specific needs of people with disability in emergency planning, responses and communications.

The \$6.1 million Disability Liaison Officers program, set up during the pandemic, will continue. This workforce helps Victorians living with disability and their carers to navigate the health system and get medical help and other supports they need, when they need it.⁵⁰

We will keep engaging with the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability to:

- advocate for sector-wide improvements
- promote effective policies, programs and actions taken to build a more inclusive Victoria
- help deliver a successful NDIS
- increase the social and economic participation of people with disability.

We will continue to support the critical role of Victoria's disability advocacy sector in championing the voice and rights of people with disability. This includes another \$1.7 million in the 2021–22 Victorian State Budget.⁵¹

We will continue to work with people with disability, advocates, peaks and the sector to inform our role as a steward of the NDIS. We are reviewing the *Disability Act 2006* following the full rollout of the NDIS and will keep promoting inclusion, participation and the rights of people with disability. It is important that Victorian legislation is modern and fit-for-purpose for the more than 1.1 million Victorians with disability.⁵²



Our department will also develop and roll out a forensic disability service plan. The plan will improve the way we work with people with cognitive impairment who are involved, or at risk of involvement in, the criminal justice system. This plan will help people get the support and treatment they need, when they need it, and keep them and the wider Victorian community safe.

Caring for the carers

Carers make an invaluable contribution to our community. They give their time to care for a family member, partner or friend who needs them.

To better support carers, the Victorian Government committed \$42 million in the 2019–20 Victorian State Budget to support an extra 100,000 hours of respite for 5,000 carers a year. Innovative programs to support the health and wellbeing of carers are being delivered with over \$6.56 million over four-years through two grants programs: Supporting Carers Locally and Statewide Partnership Grants. Carer card benefits have been expanded and include concession fares on public transport, free weekend travel and free travel during Carers Week.⁵³

The Victorian carer strategy *Strong carers, stronger children* is also offering more support to our carers.

We are listening to the voice of carers. More than 1,700 carers shared their experiences and insights through the *Strong carers, stronger children* carer census.⁵⁴ They told us what matters most in providing safe, secure and support for children in care. These contributions are invaluable. They highlight the importance of collaborating with and connecting people across our services and programs.

We are responding to the voices of children in care, and carers, by increasing the support provided to kinship, foster and permanent carers with \$101.8 million for care services (2021–22).⁵⁵

Championing LGBTIQ+ equality

In July 2021 we opened the Victorian Pride Centre. The Pride Centre celebrates, builds and protects equality, diversity and inclusion. It supports work that will continue to benefit the whole community.

We are developing Victoria's first LGBTIQ+ strategy, which will set a long-term vision for improving the lives of LGBTIQ+ Victorians. The strategy will:

- support work across government to update Victorian legislation that discriminates against LGBTIQ+ Victorians
- support LGBTIQ+ inclusive and accessible services
- promote inclusion across our society.

We will continue to celebrate the diversity of LGBTIQ+ communities through Melbourne Pride 2021. This large-scale event will acknowledge the 40-year anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

Achieving gender equality

In 2021 we are rolling out the landmark *Gender Equality Act 2020* to improve gender equality. One feature of the new law will address the gender pay gap in more than 300 Victorian public sector organisations.

We have also set up the Office of the Gender Equality Commissioner to improve gender equality. The office will progress our work to support defined entities to meet their obligations under the law.

Over the next two years, we will continue to fund economic participation programs for women affected by structural barriers to employment and financial security. We will also deliver programs to:

- increase the number of women in leadership roles
- support women in the arts
- drive cultural change against restrictive gender norms.

Tackling racism and celebrating diverse communities

We have set up the Anti-Racism Taskforce to help develop an anti-racism strategy for the state. The strategy will focus on empowering communities to inform government decisions and reduce systemic barriers to participation.

More than \$8 million will help deliver critical programs that support newly arrived refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers and other in multicultural communities across Victoria.⁵⁶ These programs will ensure all members of our community have access to the services and supports they need.

We continue to celebrate and support diverse communities with grants for multicultural festivals and events. We also support multicultural seniors' groups to stay connected. We continue to invest in multicultural community facilities and infrastructure including through the Multicultural Community Infrastructure Fund. The fund builds cultural connections, helps create jobs and spurs on the economy.

We also continue to roll out the Victorian *African communities action plan*. The 10-year plan was co-designed with Victoria's African communities.

The work of translating and interpreting services is more important than ever, as highlighted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Making sure every Victorian understands what they can do to reduce their risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) is key to slowing its spread. Reforms are underway to support a high-quality and sustainable language service sector in Victoria. Reforms will see ongoing funding for better pay for interpreters and a smoother approach to whole-of-government purchasing of language services.

Veterans

We will continue to support Victorian veteran wellbeing, recognition and acknowledgement of service. New initiatives will support veterans' successful transition to, and involvement in, civilian life. This includes \$1.3 million over four years to help veterans find a new career within the Victorian Government.⁵⁷ We have supported more than 700 veterans in this program since 2017.⁵⁸

Nearly \$6 million is being used to restore and upgrade the Shrine of Remembrance.⁵⁹ This will ensure we continue to recognise the contributions of veterans to our state and our country.

Celebrating seniors and supporting them to age well

We are delivering policies and programs to support seniors to age well and increase their social and community participation.

We are developing an Ageing Well initiative in partnership with the Senior Victorians Advisory Group. The Senior Victorians Advisory Group is chaired by the Commissioner for Senior Victorians and includes seniors representatives and community organisations. Together, we are identifying opportunities to link up programs and services to better address seniors' needs, including through digital inclusion.

We are also delivering the annual Victorian Seniors Festival to celebrate the contribution of seniors and promote and encourage their participation in community life.





Empowering young people

We are leading a new whole-of-government youth strategy to give young people a stronger voice in decision making across all portfolios. The strategy will empower young people to fully take part in Victoria's society and economy. A new youth outcomes framework will underpin the strategy, measuring the impact and success of what we do. It will also highlight areas needing more attention and cross-portfolio teamwork.

We partner with the youth sector and local governments to deliver a range of statewide and place-based programs. The programs work to:

- strengthen young people's health and wellbeing
- improve education, training, skills development and career pathways
- maximise participation in the community.

This includes \$14.33 million to continue the innovative, community-led work of six Community Support Groups that work with vulnerable young people and their families.⁶⁰

We are continuing to invest in infrastructure projects that meet the needs of local communities now and into the future. This includes delivering more than 20 Scout Hall upgrades and new builds across the state. The upgrades are supported by a \$5.5 million Victorian Government contribution matched by Scouts Victoria and local community partners. This brings the total investment in scouting infrastructure to \$11 million over four years.⁶¹

Young people continue to hold leadership positions that influence the government's reform priorities and decision making. This includes the Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group and the Victorian Youth Congress.

Relief and social recovery during and after emergencies

Over the next two years, we will work with communities, across government and with other service partners to support Victoria's recovery from emergencies and natural disasters. We know from climate change forecasts, emergencies such as bushfires, floods, extreme weather and pandemics will occur more often.

When a large-scale emergency strikes a community, it is the people who make up that community who are hardest hit. The basic functions of everyday life can be severely affected, including:

- the roof over their heads
- a person's sense of belonging and connection to their community
- access to essential services such as psychological supports.

People's health, safety and wellbeing can suffer greatly during and after a large disaster or emergency.

Relief and social recovery services aim to ensure people are safe, stable and secure. During natural disasters and emergencies, the department coordinates support to ensure people have emergency shelter and can access targeted psychological support. Victoria's Personal Hardship Assistance Program helps with financial support.

As part of social recovery, we support people and families to regain control and lead on the recovery decisions and processes that will reshape and rebuild their lives. We support people to rebuild their sense of belonging and connection to their community. This includes their economic and social participation so people can lead lives that are meaningful to them.

After the immediate emergency had passed, social recovery initiatives support Victorians to recover over time. This includes specific approaches for those who experience emergencies in different ways such as youth, families and seniors. We help them come to terms with the trauma associated with the emergency.

Social recovery supports link local residents to assistance such as information and advice, mental health support or financial counselling.

We recognise that many have found the coronavirus (COVID-19) health emergency challenging. For some, it is an extremely difficult experience. This includes for families and older people who are isolating with perpetrators of family violence and experiencing increased violence, as well as young people with mental health issues.

Those worst affected included people with casual or insecure employment, young people, women working in care services, and people from CALD communities in low-wage employment who lost jobs or had hours reduced.

People living in public housing estates with high numbers of people living in close contact, and with limited means, are at greater risk from coronavirus (COVID-19).



CALD communities need tailored and accessible communication approaches to engage with public health advice. To address this the Victorian Government invested \$12.1 million in the CALD Communities Taskforce, which includes \$5 million for accessible communications during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, through the Victorian State Budget 2020-21.⁶²

The Victorian Government will continue coronavirus (COVID-19) prevention, preparedness, response and recovery efforts. We will respond to any outbreaks in high-risk accommodation including:

- disability residential settings in collaboration with the Commonwealth
- high- and low-rise public housing
- some community housing.

The response works to ensure the right public health measures are in place to protect the safety and wellbeing of residents. It ensures adequate, culturally appropriate and accessible services are available to residents and proprietors. This includes health and social services, food and essential supplies and community engagement strategies. We also offer:

- mobile coronavirus (COVID-19) testing to residents of high-rise towers
- personal protective equipment advice via health concierges
- enhanced cleaning regimes for public housing.

The response is supporting almost 30,000 facilities and dwellings including:⁶³

- 57 high-rise public housing towers
- more than 1,400 other types of public housing
- 117 Supported Residential Services.

This targeted response also encourages residents in high-risk accommodation to get a coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine. It better links vulnerable people to broader health and social supports, including social recovery.



During recovery from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic we will coordinate initiatives that promote the economic security and health and wellbeing of:

- Aboriginal people
- women
- young people
- veterans
- LGBTIQ+ communities
- people with disability
- multicultural communities.

We will also support the community services sector through the rest of the coronavirus (COVID-19) health emergency. We will ensure lessons from this period are well embedded in future responses.

Over the next two years, we will modernise, strengthen and embed the emergency management framework within the department. We will work with communities and partners to:

- help prepare for emergencies
- provide relief services during these events
- coordinate social recovery in a way that is collaborative and respectful.

This will include using new approaches like the person-centred housing model rolling out in the North Melbourne and Flemington public housing estates. The community action plan introduced into the North Richmond and South Melbourne public housing estates is another example. These initiatives will improve community safety and security.

Our work will also include:

- continuing services and supports for temporary visa holders, including asylum seekers and refugees
- working with the Food Relief Taskforce established by the Victorian Government to strengthen Victoria's community food relief system so those who need help can get it
- providing opportunities for Victorians to reconnect with one another, building on community social infrastructure like neighbourhood houses, Men's Sheds and Universities of the Third Age
- delivering a Victorian volunteer strategy to strengthen volunteering in Victoria and the communities it supports.

We will also work across government alongside Jobs Victoria to include social procurement and other employment approaches for people in need.

Through the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic we have seen the positive impact community leaders and organisations have made to highlight the strength and resilience of local communities. This is a testament to the character of Victorians.

We have also seen communities build relationships and trust with the department. We are committed to sustaining these relationships and continuing our collaborative approach. This will see benefits and improvements beyond current emergencies such as the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Visit our website <<https://www.vic.gov.au/departments-families-fairness-and-housing>> for more information about these initiatives.





All Victorians have stable, affordable and appropriate housing

We can achieve our outcome goal by:

- delivering more social housing
- having person-centred, safe and sustainable public housing
- increasing access to affordable housing for low- and moderate-income Victorians
- providing early support to sustain tenancies to prevent people falling into homelessness
- providing accommodation for people with complex needs who need support and treatment to move towards living safely in the community
- providing high-quality and accessible homes for people with disability
- creating communities that are diverse, inclusive, thriving and that offer life opportunities for Victorians.

One of the most important foundations for a healthy life is a stable and safe home. But not everyone has a safe and secure place to live. Some people face housing stress and instability or are experiencing homelessness. We know that once someone has a safe and secure home, other concerns such as mental illness, trauma, family violence and even finding a job can improve. We also know that homelessness and sleeping rough can worsen mental health problems, trauma and poor health, as well as expose people to violence.

In response, the Victorian Government has invested \$5.3 billion in the Big Housing Build. This social housing initiative will construct more than 12,000 new homes throughout metro and regional Victoria. The state's social housing supply will increase by 10 per cent in four years.⁶⁴ The Director of Housing is now known as Homes Victoria, a public non-financial corporation.

This rebranded entity works across government, industry and the social housing sector. Homes Victoria will deliver this program of housing growth and manage existing public housing.

Homes Victoria is changing the housing landscape, providing more affordable housing options for Victorians who need them. This includes ensuring a range of different housing types and models are available in urban and regional areas.

We aim to address the gap between private rental rates and community housing rates so people can afford a private rental or local housing close to where they work. Nurses, teachers and other critical workers may work in suburbs they cannot afford to live in. This forces them to travel hours to get to work and adds to labour shortages in those areas.

Homes Victoria will build 2,900 more affordable and low-cost homes.⁶⁵ These will help low-to-moderate income earners live closer to where they work and provide options for private rental. All new homes will meet seven-star energy efficiency standards. They will include a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom homes, responding to changing household sizes in Victoria.

Aboriginal people have higher rates of homelessness in Victoria than anywhere in Australia. To address this, the Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Framework – *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort* (Every Aboriginal person has a home) – will put in place the building blocks of a new approach to achieve safe and secure housing for Aboriginal Victorians.

We will target 10 per cent of Victoria's social housing boost to meet the needs of Aboriginal Victorians. Around 2,000 new homes will be available for people living with mental illness.⁶⁶ "We are also continuing to provide crisis, emergency and other appropriate accommodation options for people experiencing family violence.

Homes Victoria is leading a large-scale program to renew, rebuild and upgrade homes to become safer, more liveable and more accessible.

All the new homes built as part of the Big Housing Build will aim for a minimum silver rating from Liveable Homes Australia. This will ensure Victoria's social housing portfolio provides high-quality homes that meet the needs of people with disability. Investment in forensic disability residential services will allow people with cognitive impairment in the criminal justice system get the support they need.



Social housing investment is also a means to create job and business opportunities our communities. Using our buying power for social good, we have set ambitious targets to employ and support jobseekers including:

- women
- Aboriginal Victorians
- CALD communities
- LGBTIQ+ people
- public and community housing tenants.

We will work hand in hand with industry to realise job and spending targets. This will help create a more equal, diverse and inclusive property and construction industry.

We do not just build housing. We also build communities. We have place-based teams working in partnership with local residents, other government agencies and service providers to help build more connected communities. This will help bring community health and other services together.

Visit Homes Victoria's website

**<<https://www.vic.gov.au/homes-victoria>>
for more information about these initiatives,
including Homes Victoria's corporate plan.**



Aboriginal voice, knowledge and cultural leadership drive Aboriginal policy, legislation and system reform

Self-determination enables the wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians. This applies across all aspects of their lives. We will actively address the systems and structures that inhibit self-determination with the partnership and leadership of the Victorian Aboriginal community.

We will empower Aboriginal people and communities by supporting self-determination.

Self-determination is a cornerstone of everything the department does. We are committed to empowering Aboriginal people by elevating the worldview of First Peoples. We will embed culturally safe practices in the way we work together with communities and organisations.

This means providing a stronger focus on improving the lives Aboriginal Victorians, in particular people going through challenges.

We will apply innovative local solutions that address service design challenges, including making services culturally safer.

A major focus will be to deliver the *Korin Korin Balit-Djak* system transformation. This includes using the three guiding principles of:

- Aboriginal-led collective action
- Aboriginal self-determination
- systemic change.

We will help create leadership arrangements and treaty outcomes that enable a stronger voice for Aboriginal communities. We will support Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to influence funding decisions and requirements for service delivery that maximise self-determination.

We need a bigger and more skilled Aboriginal workforce in service delivery, management and leadership roles across the Victorian service system.

It is important that an Aboriginal-led approach to capturing and sharing knowledge, learning, data and evidence is in place. This will drive service investment, innovation and ongoing improvement.

We will base our program design, implementation and evaluation on the best available Aboriginal evidence approaches and methods. We will partner with communities to get this right.

We are also partnering with the Aboriginal community to deliver *Wungurilwil Gapgapduir Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement strategic action plan*. This will improve outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people, addressing their over-representation in the child protection and out-of-home care systems.

We are working with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to transfer statutory care of Aboriginal children to Aboriginal people and families. This will allow Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to carry out child protection investigations.

We acknowledge that Victoria's treaty process will provide a framework for the transfer of decision-making power and resources and commit to actively supporting this work in line with the aspirations of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

We will also support the work of the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission to investigate historical and ongoing injustices committed against Aboriginal Victorians since colonisation.

We are working with the Commonwealth Government and Aboriginal Victorians to implement the new *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*. This work aims to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal people and ensure they achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.

We will help develop and deliver the Aboriginal research and evaluation framework. Aboriginal people will lead and govern the framework's research, monitoring and evaluation.

We are also working with Aboriginal communities to prevent family violence. *Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – strong culture, strong peoples, strong families 2018–2028* is an Aboriginal-led agreement. It commits Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal services and the Victorian Government to work together to ensure Aboriginal people, families and communities are stronger, safe and living free from family violence.

The Aboriginal people in our department are key to this work. We will continue to work with and be guided by them. We will continue our commitment to our cultural safety framework to support Aboriginal staff to be safe within the workplace. This will mean Aboriginal clients and communities can access culturally safe and responsive services.

Visit our website <[https://www.vic.gov.au/departments-families-fairness-and-housing](https://www.vic.gov.au/departments/families-fairness-and-housing)> for more information about these initiatives.





Our systems are high performing and responsive, meeting the needs of all Victorians

We can achieve our outcome goal by:

- establishing inclusive and accessible, person- and family-centred service design and delivery
- designing our policies and programs in partnership with the communities affected by them
- using contemporary, customer-focused digital technologies to better connect people, communities and service systems
- taking a system-wide approach to integrating services and reform regulations, ensuring all Victorians can access safe and effective services
- using best-practice approaches to data and predictive analytics, and forecasting
- supporting a modern, diverse and skilled workforce in the department and in service-delivery agencies
- improving performance monitoring and service delivery to get the best results for people using our services
- building an evidence base about what works for children, families and individuals with complex needs
- seeking, listening to and acting on what clients tell us matters in making services better and safer.

As a new department, we have an opportunity to build on and learn from our response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and to prepare for future events.

To achieve these aims we will need a skilled, diverse and capable workforce both in the department and across service delivery agencies. We need digital solutions that allow us to rapidly adjust as new needs emerge and to connect with people and communities wherever they are located.

We aim for ongoing improvement and more community involvement when coming up with solutions. Therefore, we will need innovative and collaborative online platforms. We will need to be able to provide communities with up-to-date, customer-focused and accessible information.

This will allow the department to continue to work flexibly and be able to respond to future challenges in improved ways. It will also help us collaborate more effectively with communities and our partners, and to stay on top of community expectations and changes.

These solutions will also allow people needing our support to flexibly self-serve where they can, and to access current information in a fast-changing environment.

Data

The experiences people have when they have contact with our services are one of the most important sources of information about the quality and safety of those services. The data we collect is vital for:

- keeping us accountable
- assessing outcomes
- developing and designing better, safer services and future initiatives.

Data is a significant asset for the department, allowing us to:

- analyse and better understand the needs of our service users
- design programs and other initiatives that meet people's needs
- assess what Victorians might need in the future.

Our data is highly sensitive; it can be misused. Data security is essential to our ongoing work.

We will work to improve our data collection to ensure it is appropriate, inclusive and collaborative. We will use new techniques and modern demand models to help us improve outcomes for people and communities. This will also keep it safe and secure.

Making a difference

To achieve results, we need high-performing service systems that can grow to meet the community's changing needs. We have a duty to keep the people who use our services safe from preventable harm when delivering positive outcomes for all Victorians.

We will need to improve the way we oversee and manage service systems to ensure ongoing safety and performance. We will make sure we are monitoring, evaluating and improving to deliver safe, effective, person-centred services for everybody, every time.

We will also need to build the evidence base of what works by more effectively evaluating our programs.

We will strengthen local partnerships to enable collective, collaborative and focused action to drive better outcomes for and with clients and communities.

Technology

We will develop a new business technology strategy while continuing to deliver other improvements across the department.

In line with the whole-of-government digital strategy, technology improvements will be customer-focused, solve the right problem and build on the standard. We will develop initiatives in partnership with our business units. We will aim to connect different areas of the department, people and digital technologies. Innovation will be purposeful.

We have improved the digital infrastructure for the Personal Hardship Assistance Program and the Emergency Management Learning Management System. These changes mean we can mobilise our staff and provide access to help faster in emergency situations.

Current initiatives will connect case management for child protection and family violence service users. We are also updating technologies for managing the housing wait list. This will mean people can check the status of their housing application faster under the Victorian Housing Register.

Workforce

Our workforce, both in the department and in our service delivery agencies, is our biggest asset. Without our people, we would not be able to meet the complex needs of our communities. We rely on our people during times of emergency. In large-scale emergencies such as pandemics, bushfires and floods we must get staff to affected towns and suburbs quickly.

To continue to deliver effective services and programs to our communities, we need a skilled workforce that can be where they are most needed. We also need a workforce that reflects the diversity of Victoria's population.

To support child and family sector growth we will develop a new master's qualification with supported placements in community service organisations through the Frontline Victoria pilot.

The *Child protection workforce strategy 2021–2024* will focus on attracting new child protection practitioners over the next 12 to 18 months. It will also support existing Child Protection practitioners to stay. Key focus areas of the strategy include:

- advancing Aboriginal self-determination
- refreshing the Child Protection Professional Development and Wellbeing program and delivery of local wellbeing and development initiatives
- rolling out a statewide approach to hard-to-recruit areas
- ongoing partnerships with leading tertiary providers (TAFEs and universities).

We will refresh the housing operating model and housing capability framework. This will improve our ability to deliver culturally appropriate housing services that meet our clients' needs.

We will roll out *Strengthening the Foundations: first rolling action plan 2019–22* of the *Building from strength: 10-year industry plan for family violence prevention and response*. This will help to increase the skills and capacity of the family violence workforce.

Employing and keeping the best people in community services and child protection is also a focus for our work with the community services sector.

We will continue to work with our partners at the Commonwealth level and across broader Victorian Government jobs and training initiatives to build the NDIS workforce. This workforce will have the size, capability and quality to deliver the best NDIS outcomes for Victorians with disability.

Visit our website <<https://www.vic.gov.au/department-families-fairness-and-housing>> for more information about these initiatives.

Our results

The department is accountable for public funding via the Victorian State Budget process. We report progress and results across the department's portfolios for funding received each year in the Victorian State Budget.

You can find more detailed financial information and results in the department's annual report <https://www.vic.gov.au/departments-families-fairness-and-housing>.



Endnotes

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