

Aboriginal Services Plan

January 2004



Department of Human Services Aboriginal Services Plan

January 2004

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Foreword

The Victorian Government, through its policy for Aboriginal people, Reconciliation and Respect, is committed to addressing the social and economic disadvantage of Aboriginal people. The government gives special priority to Reconciliation based on ensuring a positive future for Aboriginal people through building a new understanding between the original inhabitants of our land and the wider Victorian community.

The Department of Human Services has an important role to play in achieving this vision of Reconciliation and in addressing the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people.

I strongly support the priority areas and outcome targets articulated in the Aboriginal Service Plan. It is critically important that we address the disadvantage that leads to shortened life span, chronic disease and the disintegration of families as children become involved in the child protection system and youth become involved in the juvenile justice system.

This can only occur if every department program and region gives priority to working in partnership with Aboriginal organisations and communities to provide quality, culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal people.

This Aboriginal Services Plan establishes a framework for meaningful consultation, formal partnerships, clear outcomes, purposeful planning and measurement of progress. Implementation of the plan will increase the capacity of both the department and Aboriginal organisations to plan and deliver services that improve outcomes.

I commend those who developed this plan, particularly the representatives of Aboriginal organisations and communities who gave freely of their time and views, and urge all those involved in the planning and delivery of human services to give priority to its implementation.



Hon Bronwyn Pike MP
Minister for Health

Partnership for implementation

The development and adoption of the Aboriginal Services Plan represents a significant milestone for the Department of Human Services in that it aims to turn a commitment to providing quality services for Aboriginal people into concrete actions specifically intended to improve health and well-being outcomes.

This plan requires the Department of Human Services to:

- engage in ongoing and regular consultation with Aboriginal people
- establish clear measurable outcomes and report on the progress made to achieve these outcomes
- develop divisional and regional plans with concrete actions, timelines and performance measures

fund and provide culturally appropriate, quality services to address priority needs and issues

- collaborate with other sectors and organisations to encourage a concerted and coordinated approach to Aboriginal issues.

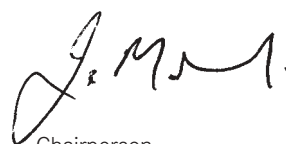
Most importantly, however, it recognises that improved outcomes can only be achieved if effective and respectful partnerships are established with Aboriginal people, communities and organisations. These partnerships must ensure that Aboriginal people are actively involved with the department and with the mainstream human services sector in the planning, development and delivery of health, housing and community services.

It is expected that this process and partnership will be mirrored at regional level as Department of Human Services regional directors and representatives of Aboriginal communities and organisations agree their own partnership arrangements to support the implementation of the plan and the achievements of its targets within their own areas.

In signing this statement we agree to maintain an ongoing relationship to support the implementation of this plan and the monitoring and review of its implementation and outcomes.



Secretary
Department of Human Services



Chairperson
Victorian Aboriginal Community
Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)



Chairperson
Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria
(AHBV)



Chairperson
Victorian Aboriginal Education Association
Incorporated (VAEAI)



Victorian Commissioner
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Commission (ATSIC)



Chairperson
Victorian Aboriginal Community Services
Association Limited (VACSAL)

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Preamble

The Government of Victoria recognises Aboriginal people as the original inhabitants of the land, living here for at least 50,000 years. Aboriginal people referred to in this document include Torres Strait Islander people. The Victorian Aboriginal community is made up of a number of communities, extended family networks or clans. A significant number of people within the Aboriginal community have also moved here from interstate with many maintaining strong family links to other parts of Australia.

Up until the 1960s and 1970s, legislation curtailed Aboriginal people's freedom of movement, dictated where they could live, with whom they might associate or marry, the care of children, living conditions and wages. The 1967 referendum saw an overwhelming majority of Australians vote to enable the Commonwealth Government to make laws specifically relating to Aboriginal people.

The past 30 years have seen the emergence of many Aboriginal community organisations, run by and for Aboriginal people throughout Victoria. These organisations have taken responsibility for representing the interests of Aboriginal people, advocating on their behalf and providing services. The future challenge is to support these community organisations and ensure the responsiveness of all services in addressing the disadvantages faced by Victorian Aboriginal communities.

Victoria's Aboriginal population continues to have lower school participation rates, higher rates of unemployment and police custody, be less likely to own or be buying a home, and be more likely to be admitted to hospital (ANIA, 1995). Disadvantage in one area increases the likelihood of disadvantage in others.

The Department of Human Services is the successor to a number of government departments. In following former government policies, those departments were responsible for a range of harmful practices. Major challenges for the Department of Human Services are to:

- recognise the effects of those past practices
- acknowledge that current practices need improvement
- listen to Aboriginal people
- work collaboratively for a better future.

The Department of Human Services is aware of the challenge to recognise and respect the importance of the philosophy of 'Community Control'. This is important in the context of service improvement for Aboriginal communities, particularly in relation to mainstream services. Without seeking to define 'Community Control' for this document, the Department of Human Services recognises VACCHO's definition of 'Community Control' that states:

"Each Aboriginal Community needs its own community based, locally owned, culturally appropriate and adequately resourced, primary health care facility. That is our right."

The department must, therefore, develop a coherent and consistent approach to the broad range of factors and issues that adversely affect Aboriginal health and wellbeing.

Commitments to Aboriginal people

Victorian Government

The Victorian Government's policy for Aboriginal people, Reconciliation and Respect, addresses Aboriginal social and economic disadvantage and progresses reconciliation. The Victorian Government's vision for reconciliation is to create a society that:

- is proud of its Aboriginal heritage
- addresses the dispossession and disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people
- heals the hurt of past injustice
- commits to build a positive future.

The vision is inclusive of the government's Aboriginal affairs policy commitment to:

- respect Aboriginal views and culture
- work in partnership with Aboriginal people
- establish a whole-of-government approach to Aboriginal affairs.

Department of Human Services

The Department of Human Services is committed to improving the cultural, spiritual and emotional health, social and economic wellbeing of Aboriginal people in Victoria by:

- incorporating Aboriginal needs, issues and positive outcomes in all planning through consultation with key stakeholders and Aboriginal communities
- providing a holistic, coordinated approach to improving the responsiveness and accessibility of its services for the Aboriginal community in Victoria
- addressing the disproportionate number of Aboriginal people in institutions and state care, especially within the juvenile justice, child protection and alternative care systems
- assisting Aboriginal organisations to develop Indigenous models of practice that enhance the lives of Victorian Aboriginal people
- empowering Aboriginal communities to collaborate as partners
- providing support to build the capacity of Aboriginal managed community and health services across Victoria
- recognising the impact of past policies on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities
- increasing the understanding of Aboriginal identity and experience within the portfolio and in the broader community
- implementing recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families
- increasing the number of Aboriginal people employed within the portfolio
- increasing the number of Aboriginal people in decision making positions
- eliminating systemic racism in the workplace.

Background information

Development of the department's Aboriginal Services Plan

The Department of Human Services' Aboriginal Services Plan is a three-year plan with an annual reporting cycle.

The plan builds on and strengthens Koori Services Improvement Strategy (KSIS) activities at regional and program levels. KSIS has resulted in increased focus throughout the department on improving accessibility and providing more appropriate services. Some regions of the department have been particularly active in developing action plans and strong links with local Aboriginal communities. In addition many program areas have developed strategies and programs to address Aboriginal issues. However, there is no overall strategic direction for the department's activities.

Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV) was pivotal to the development of KSIS and following the relocation of AAV to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, responsibility for an overall Human Services Aboriginal Policy was transferred to the Department of Human Services, Policy and Strategic Projects Division.

Consistent with the whole-of-government approach, the department will work collaboratively with other state and commonwealth departments and with AAV to ensure that policy and programs relevant to Aboriginal people are coordinated.

The Aboriginal Services Plan integrates KSIS, provides health direction, supports the commitments of the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement and provides leadership in all areas of the department's activities.

It establishes a whole-of-department approach focusing on:

- reconciliation
- respecting diversity
- partnerships
- improved outcomes
- identifying departmental priority areas for action
- providing leadership in all areas of the department.

The department's recent activities are indicative of a substantial effort to provide improved services. However, the government's commitment to reconciliation and respect, and integrated policy development, requires a greater emphasis on respectful partnerships with communities in both planning and implementation at central and regional levels. The development of this plan has been undertaken in consultation with Aboriginal people, representatives of Aboriginal communities, peak Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSIC) Commissioners. A Statement of Intent document was developed to assist the discussion process and was the precursor to this plan.

Role of mainstream service providers

Improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal individuals, families and communities must be seen as a core responsibility of mainstream service providers in partnership with the Department of Human Services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. This must be a high priority for the health, housing and community services sectors.

Aboriginal people need better access to appropriate, comprehensive mainstream service organisations, and these organisations must acknowledge, recognise, respect and understand Aboriginal culture, traditions and cultural practices, and respond to Aboriginal people in a sensitive and respectful manner.

The following considerations should assist the department and mainstream agencies to review their service delivery to Aboriginal people, acknowledging Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, to develop strategies to improve its appropriateness and accessibility:

- Aboriginal people and communities' participation in determining their human service priorities will ensure a strong basis for successful programs and services to maintain and improve health and wellbeing.
- A culturally competent workforce that understands Aboriginal history, traditions and contemporary issues, and has skills in cross cultural communication, will be best placed to provide accessible and appropriate services.
- Increased Aboriginal employment within the health, housing and community services sectors will be an important contributor to improved services.
- Formal protocols with local Aboriginal communities with regular review and updating will assist in the delivery of culturally appropriate services.
- Improving Aboriginal health and wellbeing requires consideration of the broad range of factors and issues adversely affecting the Aboriginal population. So linkages to other service providers and sectors within the community or region are essential to ensure a holistic approach to service provision.
- Involvement with the department's regional planning for Aboriginal services and with Aboriginal advisory structures will ensure that mainstream services are informed about Aboriginal issues and priorities, and contribute to service solutions.
- Undertaking, as part of the annual planning process, a cultural competence audit that focuses on both client services and organizational management processes.
- Service providers must establish targets, performance indicators and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation if service delivery for Aboriginal people is to improve.

(Note: This material is based on the *Draft Cultural Respect National Framework 2002-2007* prepared by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council Standing Committee for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health)

Government policies and context

The Department of Human Services Aboriginal Services Plan builds upon a number of inquiries and key publications at national, state and departmental levels.

At national level, these include:

- Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991)
- National Commitment to Improved Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (1992)
- National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (1997)
- MOU/ Bilateral Agreement on Housing
- [“Trilateral”] Framework Agreement on Aboriginal Health (2002)
- Final Report of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (2000)
- COAG Communiqué–Aboriginal Reconciliation (November 2000).

At Victorian Government level relevant plans and agreements are:

- Reconciliation and Respect (September 1999)
- Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement (June 2000)
- Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Strategy (May 2002)
- Wur-cum barra [Victorian Public Sector–Indigenous Employment Strategy] (June 2002).

Two strategies particularly relevant to the department are:

1. *Achieving Improved Aboriginal Health Outcomes – An Approach to Reform (1996)* (also known as the Koori Health Reform Strategy) resulted in a partnership agreement between VACCHO, and the department. It commits both organisations to work in partnership, to respect community input and to ensure that mainstream agencies meet their responsibilities to Aboriginal people in a culturally responsible and appropriate manner. It recognizes the need for Aboriginal people to be involved in all stages of the health process from assessing community needs, planning of services and monitoring outcomes and for service providers to be assisted to improve their effectiveness.
2. The *Koori Services Improvement Strategy (KSIS) (1998)* provided a set of principles and objectives to direct the department’s programs and regions in assessing, and if required, redeveloping policy, programs and services in partnership with the Aboriginal community. The strategy, driven by regional committees, aimed to improve the effectiveness of systems, planning and funding, and the provision of services and programs. Central to KSIS was the establishment of statewide, regional and local reference groups to assist in the development of, and provide feedback on the implementation of, agreed Regional Aboriginal Services Action Plans.

Goals of the Aboriginal Services Plan

Outcomes

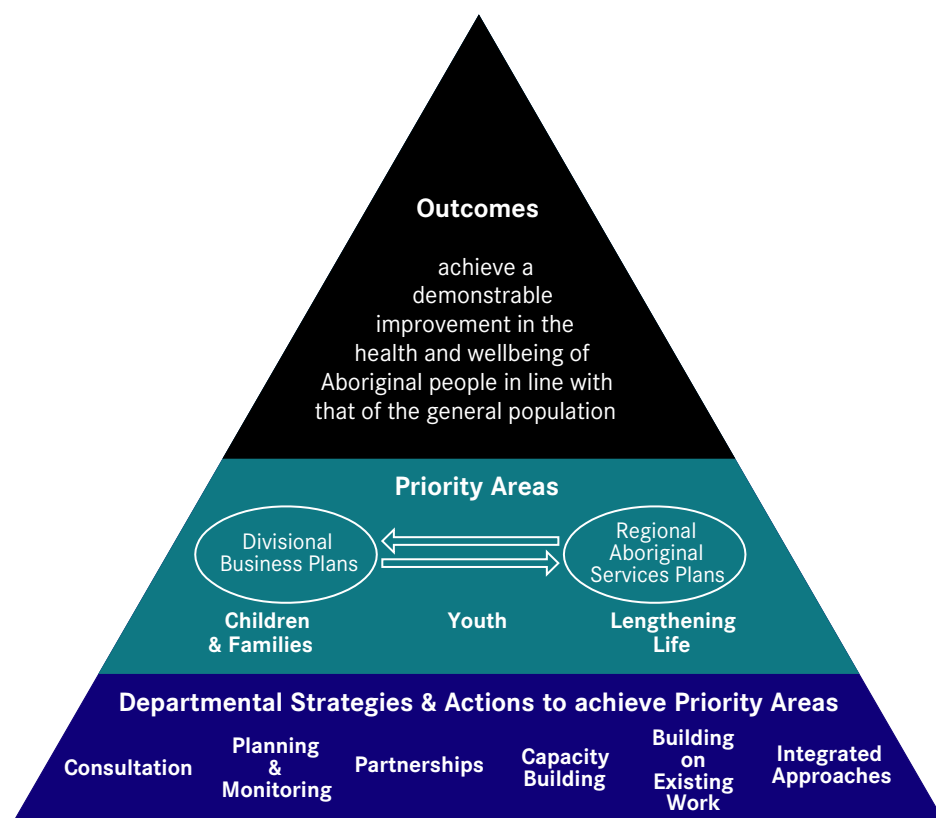
The overall aim of the Aboriginal Services Plan is to focus the resources of the department to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people. In developing the plan, the department stated the intent to *'talk with, listen and learn from the Aboriginal community about the best way in which we can work together to achieving shared goals. We need to act to improve the lives of children, families and young people and to improve the health and wellbeing of all Aboriginal Victorians'*¹.

The intended outcome of the Aboriginal Services Plan is:

To achieve a demonstrable improvement in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in Victoria in line with that of the general population by:

1. understanding the factors contributing to the disparity in health and wellbeing
2. maximising the use of primary and preventative services
3. minimising the representation of Aboriginal people in identified secondary and tertiary services.

The department will focus its activities on the priority areas of children and families, young people and lengthening life. Progress will be demonstrated by measuring against national indicators relating to each of these priority areas. These are detailed in the section on 'Reporting and Monitoring'.



¹ Department of Human Services 'Towards an Aboriginal Services Plan – A Statement of Intent', July 2001, Page 18.

At a December 2001 meeting with the interim Aboriginal Human Services Forum, the following specific goals were developed as the means of achieving this outcome and the basis of the department's Aboriginal Services Plan:

1. Develop structures for ongoing consultations with Aboriginal organisations.
2. Establish planning, monitoring and evaluation arrangements within the Department of Human Services and between the department, communities and mainstream agencies.
3. Ensure that community aspirations, needs and priorities are reflected in all regional and divisional plans and that these plans have clear outcomes, performance indicators and timelines.
4. Establish broad parameters and protocols to guide the relationships that the department and funded agencies establish with Aboriginal communities, peak bodies and statewide agencies, in regions and centrally.
5. Build capacity in Aboriginal organisations to develop quality services and partnerships to meet community needs.
6. Recognise and maintain existing plans, agreements and protocols as a central framework.
7. Strengthen working links between the Department of Human Services and other government departments, local government and Commonwealth Government to support an integrated approach to Aboriginal policy and program development.

Goals and associated strategies

Goal 1 Consultation

Develop structures for ongoing consultations with Aboriginal organisations.

- Strategy 1.1** The Department of Human Services to formally establish an Aboriginal Human Services Forum (AHSF) chaired by the Secretary and comprising representation of peak Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, an Aboriginal representative from each departmental region, and representation from divisions and regions, with an agreed advisory role and specific tasks and responsibilities.
- Strategy 1.2** Each regional director to formally establish a Regional Aboriginal Services Reference Group and/or Local Aboriginal Human Services Advisory Committees with agreed roles and responsibilities.
- Strategy 1.3** Each region to employ an Aboriginal liaison person to support the Regional Aboriginal Services Reference Group/Local Aboriginal Human Services Advisory Committees, liaise with the community and assist in the development of a Regional Aboriginal Services Plan.

Goal 2 Planning and monitoring

Establish planning, monitoring and evaluation arrangements within the department and between the department, Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and mainstream agencies.

- Strategy 2.1** Regional Aboriginal Services Plans to be developed or reviewed for each of the department's regions establishing, through consultation with Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and service providers, priority needs and issues, desired outcomes, specific actions and review mechanisms.
- Strategy 2.2** Through reference to Regional Aboriginal Services Plans and consultation with peak Aboriginal Community Controlled organisations, each division to ensure that their business plan includes measures to address priority needs and issues for Aboriginal people with specific actions, timelines, resourcing and outcome measures.
- Strategy 2.3** The expectations of mainstream service providers in their consultation with and service provision for Aboriginal people to be clearly defined and endorsed by the Aboriginal Human Services Forum and the Regional Aboriginal Services Reference Groups (Local Aboriginal Human Services Advisory Committees) and incorporated in funding and service agreements.
- Strategy 2.4** Funding from all departmental sources to an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation to be combined into one contract with clear outcomes and targets, and with integrated contract negotiations across program areas.
- Strategy 2.5** The department's Policy and Strategic Projects Division to establish and support mechanisms to coordinate the funding and program efforts of divisions, to ensure that measurable outcomes and review mechanisms are established and to support a holistic rather than a piecemeal approach to addressing Aboriginal issues. A senior departmental policy group will advise and support implementation.
- Strategy 2.6** The department's divisions and regions to work with Aboriginal communities to ensure that services delivered by the department and its funded agencies, are culturally appropriate and accessible to Aboriginal people.
- Strategy 2.7** Annual review reports to be developed by each division and region on progress made towards achieving agreed targets and performance indicators as established in regional Aboriginal Services Plans and divisional business plans. The Director, Policy Projects, to collate these reports into a single report to the department's Executive and the Aboriginal Human Services Forum.

Goal 3 Addressing priority areas

Ensure that Aboriginal community aspirations, needs and priorities are reflected in all regional and divisional plans and that these plans have clear outcomes, performance indicators and timelines.

Strategy 3.1 Through consultation with Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, each regional Aboriginal Services Plan and divisional business plan to establish annual priorities with clearly articulated targets and outcomes, and ensure that these are reflected in program development, resource allocation, funding and service agreements, and evaluation processes.

Strategy 3.2 All regional and divisional plans to include specific actions to address the priority areas identified in the consultation process that occurred in the development of this plan. These are children and families, young people and lengthening life.

It is noted that the department already has a range of reviews and programs either underway or planned that focus on these priority areas. It is essential, however, that these efforts be brought together with clear targets and outcome measures to ensure an integrated and holistic effort to address these issues.

In developing integrated activity to address these priority areas, the department must be mindful of the specific needs and issues for Aboriginal men and women so that responses are culturally and gender appropriate.

Particular consideration should be given to strengthening the involvement and capacity of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, encouraging linkages between programs and services to provide a more holistic approach as well as a focus on preventative action through early intervention and prevention. Mainstream agencies will also be required to provide culturally sensitive services.

This holistic approach to address priority areas will be supported by a departmental policy group.

Some examples of the work already underway in relation to these priority areas are:

3.2.1 Children and families

The department has committed to:

- run a pilot Best Start project specifically for young Aboriginal children
- employ a statewide coordinator and regional positions to support the development of the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Strategy through community participation and the establishment of Indigenous Family Violence Action Groups
- facilitate Aboriginal community consultations and program reviews, and participate in developments to address family violence in Aboriginal communities
- review child protection and care services in all regions through the work of the Child Protection and Care Aboriginal Services Network. This will be led by the Indigenous Initiatives Unit of the Child Protection and Juvenile Justice Branch of the Community Care Division in conjunction with local Aboriginal communities, with the

aim of improving the cultural appropriateness of services and addressing over-representation of Aboriginal children and families in these services.

- implement the 2002 Protocol between the department's Child Protection Service and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency. This will involve the development of Memoranda of Understanding between the regional Child Protection Service, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and the local Aboriginal Cooperatives.
- continue implementation of the Koori Maternity Enhancement Program.

3.2.2 Young people

The department has committed to:

- implement the commitments outlined in *A Balanced Approach to Juvenile Justice (August 2002)* Ministerial Statement to enhance and expand diversionary programs, employ Aboriginal support workers in all three juvenile justice centres, and provide specialists post-release support services
- review the existing Koori Juvenile Justice Program, which provides support to young people on community based orders, to increase its effectiveness in preventing re-offending and progression to custodial sentences
- work with the Department of Education and the Office of Youth Affairs to increase the engagement of young Aboriginal people with education
- target youth alcohol and drug services to the prevention of substance abuse within Aboriginal communities
- maintain a focus on the health and wellbeing of young Aboriginal people through health and mental health programs.

3.2.3 Lengthening life

The department has committed to improving access to services for Aboriginal people by:

- expanding existing services and examining the case for new services
- improving access to mainstream services and linkages between Aboriginal medical services and other services
- improving patient transport services
- focussing on key health issues such as:
 - preventative action, through health promotion and early detection of diseases
 - chronic diseases
 - substance abuse issues
 - mental health and social and emotional wellbeing issues
 - immunisation for adults
 - respiratory illnesses
 - dental care
 - sexual health
 - quality use of medicines

- using the Primary Care Partnerships (PCP) Strategy and Community Health Plans to encourage the development of services in partnership with Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and attention to the health needs of Aboriginal people. Seven PCP's have developed such strategies and a Koori Liaison Worker has been employed to support the process.

Goal 4 Partnerships

Establish broad parameters and protocols to guide the relationships that the department and funded agencies establish with Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal Community Controlled peak bodies and statewide agencies, both regionally and centrally.

- Strategy 4.1** All service agreements with mainstream providers to include requirements for consultation and negotiation with local Aboriginal communities and peak Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in the development and delivery of services and, where appropriate, Aboriginal representation on boards of management.
- Strategy 4.2** Protocols and partnership agreements between the department, its funded agencies and Aboriginal communities to be developed and clearly define the relationship between the partners, and the roles and responsibilities of each.
- Strategy 4.3** Cultural training programs and activities to be developed in partnership with peak Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and accessed by departmental staff and mainstream providers.

Goal 5 Capacity building

Build capacity in Aboriginal organisations to develop quality services and partnerships to meet community needs.

- Strategy 5.1** Departmental regional and divisional offices to offer regular in-service and on and off the job training opportunities to staff from local Aboriginal community organisations, to develop expertise in Aboriginal workers, and increase understanding of Aboriginal aspirations and cultural issues by departmental staff.
- Strategy 5.2** To identify and provide the available resources and support that Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and communities need to monitor their activities and be effective partners with the department.
- Strategy 5.3** The department will support the viability and sustainability of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations funded by the department and their ability to provide efficient and good quality services. In particular:
- Identify factors impacting adversely on the viability and sustainability of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and the quality of services they provide; including industry structural factors, demand growth for services and the applicability and cultural relevance of current service models.

- Identify associated risks, costs and timeframes in relation to achievement of viable and sustainable Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- Identify potential additional sources of departmental funds, such as mainstream program funding, to enhance the Indigenous specific funding base of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- Identify measurable service gaps for Indigenous people in Victoria.

Strategy 5.4 To develop an overarching protocol agreement with peak bodies such as the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations Inc. (VACCHO), the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VACSAL), the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc (VAEAI), the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria (AHBV) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

The protocol agreement will build on existing arrangements with divisions, provide clear and consistent pathways for consultation and input into policy and program developments, and assist these organisations to strengthen their own policy capacities.

Strategy 5.5 Each region to develop agreed processes to strengthen the capacity of Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, mainstream service providers and departmental staff, to plan and deliver services to Aboriginal families and their children.

Strategy 5.6 The department to distribute clear, comprehensive and culturally appropriate information to Aboriginal organisations and communities about programs, services and processes of the department and its funded agencies.

Goal 6 Building on existing work

Recognise and maintain existing plans, agreements and protocols as a central framework.

Strategy 6.1 The department to continue to recognise the principles and implement the strategies and objectives outlined in *Achieving Improved Aboriginal Health Outcomes, An Approach to Reform (Department of Human Services 1996)*, and, to maintain its commitment to the Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement through active participation in the implementation of the statewide Action Plan.

Strategy 6.2 The department to work in partnership with the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria (AHBV) to achieve shared goals and outcomes to benefit Aboriginal people.

This will include:

- accessible, affordable, appropriate and secure housing for the Victorian Aboriginal community
- mechanisms to increase the level of home ownership for Aboriginal people in Victoria

- the development of firm targets and a minimum set of performance indicators
- the implementation of the AHBV Strategic Plan which will lead to the handover of ownership and management of the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program to the AHBV.

Strategy 6.3 The department to implement its responsibilities under the Wur-cum burra Employment Strategy by developing a departmental Aboriginal Recruitment and Career Development Strategy which contains set targets for Aboriginal employment in the department and its funded agencies.

Goal 7 Integrated approaches

Strengthen working links between the Department of Human Services and other government departments, local government and the Commonwealth Government to support an integrated approach to Aboriginal policy and program development.

Strategy 7.1 The department to convene an annual consultative and coordination meeting bringing together the Aboriginal Human Services Forum with members of the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Coordination Committee (VAACC), commonwealth agencies, local government and senior departmental regional and divisional staff:

- to provide opportunities for coordination between commonwealth, state and local government and peak organisations
- to establish links with broader Government programs and initiatives aimed at addressing Aboriginal disadvantage.

Strategy 7.2 The department to commence negotiations with the Commonwealth Government with the aim of developing more rational and coordinated funding arrangements with Aboriginal communities and organisations.

Implementation of the department's Aboriginal Services Plan

The goals and strategies outlined in the Aboriginal Services Plan place many expectations on program areas and regions, and the magnitude of the issues for Aboriginal people in Victoria demand urgent implementation action. This section therefore contains an Implementation Plan for the department that outlines the priority actions required to implement the strategies contained in the plan. It also assigns responsibility and establishes timelines. This will be used to develop a monitoring and reporting regime.

The Implementation Plan contains the first actions and milestones necessary to commence the implementation of the plan in 2002-2003. An Implementation Plan will be prepared annually to maintain momentum.

This section also contains an implementation flowchart which details:

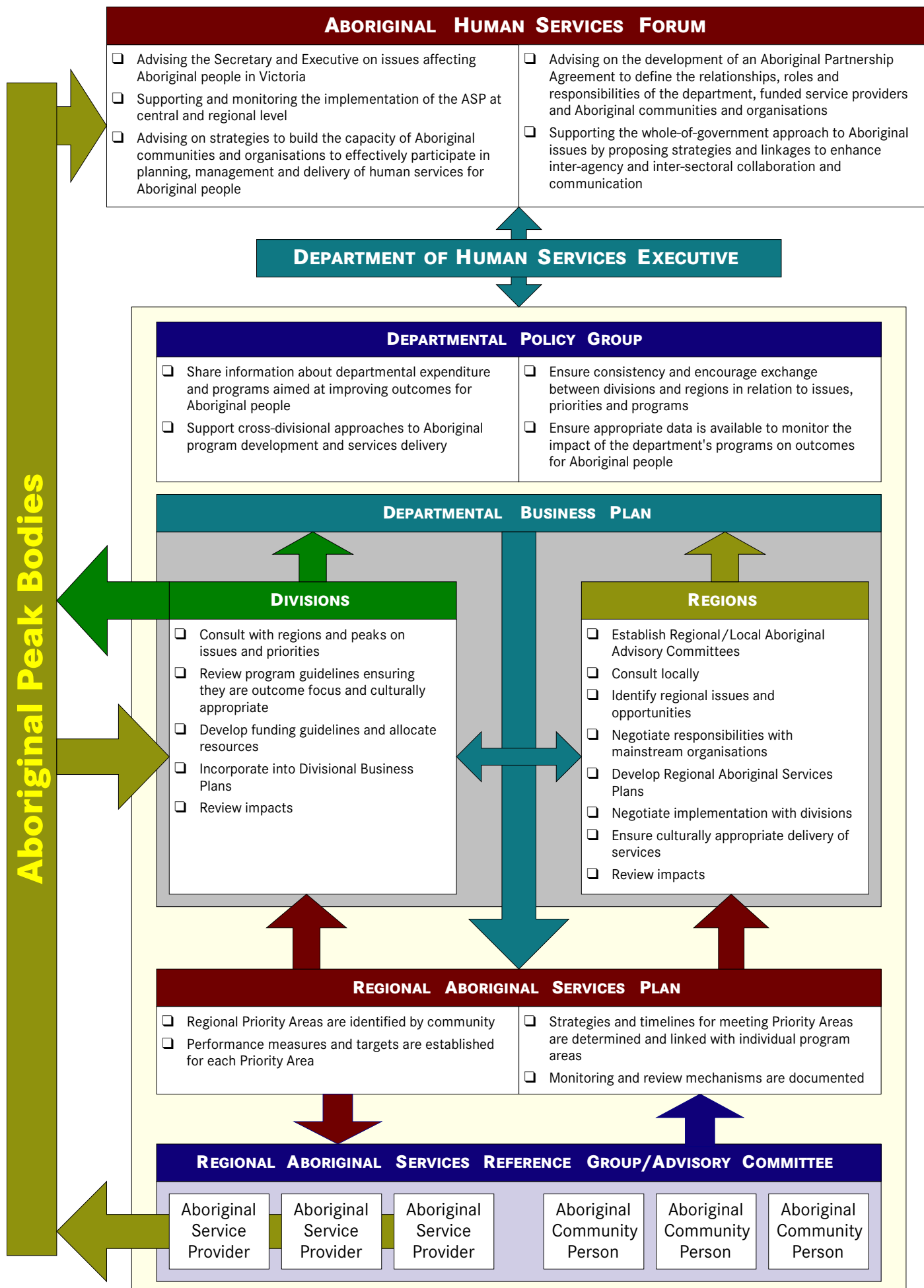
- pathways for consultation and advice
- the roles of departmental divisions and regions in planning, funding and delivery of programs for and with Aboriginal people
- the roles and inter-relationship of the various planning, advisory and monitoring structures proposed in the department's Aboriginal Services Plan
- the expectations and inter-relationship of regional Aboriginal Services Plans, divisional business plans and the departmental business plan.

Department of Human Services Implementation Plan 2002-2003

Goal	Strategy	Milestones	Timelines	Dept. Responsibility
Consultation	1.1 Establishing the Aboriginal Human Services Forum	• Agree membership, terms of reference and operating arrangements	Commence by Aug 02	Director, Policy Projects
	1.2 Establishing Regional Aboriginal Services Reference Groups/Advisory Committees	• Agree terms of reference with local communities and agencies	Commence by Sep 02	Regional Directors
	1.3 Employing Regional Aboriginal Liaison/Services Support Staff	• Confirm roles and responsibilities, and establish support network	Commence by Sep 02	Regional Directors
Planning and monitoring	2.1 Developing Regional Aboriginal Services Plans	• Develop a Department of Human Services Aboriginal Services Planning Framework • Agree and develop of regional plans	Complete by Mar 04	Regional Directors Director, Policy Projects
	2.2 Including priority issues for Aboriginal people in divisional business plans	• Include in departmental Aboriginal Services Planning Framework and divisional plans	Commence by Jun 04	Executive Directors Director, Policy Projects
	2.3 Defining the roles of mainstream service providers	• Develop and consult on a generic Role Statement for inclusion in funding and service agreements	Complete by Mar 05	Director, Policy Projects Director, Business Development Branch
	2.4 Creating a single consolidated funding and service agreement contract and negotiations	• Develop and pilot a model consolidated funding and service agreement	Commence by Jul 03	Branch Directors Regional Directors
	2.5 Coordinating departmental funding and program priorities	• Establish a senior departmental policy group to advise on and support implementation of the plan	Commence by Mar 04	Director, Policy Projects Under Secretary, Policy and Strategic Projects
Addressing priority areas	2.6 Confirming the cultural appropriateness and accessibility of departmental and funded services	• Establish a central register of Aboriginal programs and initiatives • Establish a review process to assess the cultural appropriateness and accessibility	Complete by Dec 02 Commence by Jul 04	Director, Policy Projects Regional Directors Branch Directors
	2.7 Compiling an annual report on Aboriginal Human Services targets, programs and outcomes	• Develop a reporting framework	First report Dec 04	Regional Directors Branch Directors Director, Policy Projects
	3.1 Through consultation developing priorities and targets, and reflecting these in regional and divisional plans and funding and service agreements	• Include in departmental Aboriginal Services Planning Framework	Jun 04	Regional Directors Branch Directors
	3.2 Developing specific actions and measurable targets for identified priority areas	• Develop agreed priority actions and outcome measures for priority areas, and reflect these in regional and divisional plans • Include in generic "Role Statement"	Jun 04	Regional Directors Branch Directors
Partnerships	4.1 Including consultation with Aboriginal communities and peak bodies in funding and services agreement processes		Mar 05	Regional Directors

Capacity building	4.2 Defining relationships, roles and responsibilities in protocols and partnership agreements	• Develop a specific “Aboriginal Partnership Agreement”	Complete by Mar 05	Director, Strategic Projects Program Director
	4.3 Accessing of cultural awareness training programs and activities by all departmental and mainstream service provider staff	• Include Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training as an on-going part of the department’s Training Calendar	Commence by Nov 04	Executive Director, Operations
	5.1 Developing in-service and on/off the job training within the department for staff of Aboriginal community organisations	• Include job training opportunities for staff of Aboriginal organisations in the agency’s departmental Aboriginal Recruitment and Career Development Strategy	Commence by Feb 05	Executive Director, Operations
	5.2 Identifying and providing resources to build capacity in Aboriginal organisations and communities	• Establish best practice models • Work in partnership with Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Aboriginal organisations (regionally and centrally) to identify and address gaps	Commence by Nov 04	Regional Directors Branch Directors Director, Policy Projects
	5.3 Support the viability and sustainability of departmental funded Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations	• Identify factors impacting on the sustainability and viability of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations	Completed by Jun 04	Director, Policy Projects
	5.4 Developing an overarching protocol agreement with Aboriginal peak bodies	• Include in the Aboriginal Partnership Agreement (see 4.2)	Completed by Mar 05	Regional Directors Director, Policy Projects
	5.5 Developing agreed processes to strengthen and involve Aboriginal services in planning and delivery of services to Aboriginal families and their children	• Identify best practice models and include in funding and service agreements and regional plans	Complete by Jun 04	Regional Directors Branch Directors
	5.6 Distributing clear, comprehensive, culturally appropriate information to Aboriginal organisations and communities about departmental programs, services and processes	• Develop an Aboriginal communication strategy, including mechanisms to disseminate information to Aboriginal organisations	Complete by Jun 04	Branch Directors Director, Policy Projects
	6.1 Recognizing the principles, strategies and goals in <i>Achieving Improved Aboriginal Health Outcomes, An Approach to Reform and implementing the statewide Action Plan for the Aboriginal Justice Agreement</i>	• Include in divisional business plans and regional plans	Ongoing	Regional Directors Branch Directors
	6.2 Working in partnership with the Aboriginal Housing Board of Victoria to achieve agreed goals	• Continue to support the AHBV to implement their strategic plan	2002 – 2005	Executive Director, Housing
Building on existing work	6.3 Developing a departmental Aboriginal Recruitment and Career Development Strategy containing set targets	• Finalise and sign off the department’s Aboriginal Recruitment and Career Development Strategy	Complete by Dec 03	Executive Director, Operations
	7.1 Facilitating an annual meeting with AHSF, VAAC, commonwealth agencies, local government, branch directors and regional directors	• Establish Terms of Reference and schedule a meeting in consultation with AHSF	Commence by Mar 05	Director, Policy Projects
	7.2 Working with the commonwealth to develop a coordinated inter-government funding platform for Aboriginal communities and organisations	• Initiate discussions with relevant Commonwealth Government departments and VACKH	Commence by Jun 04	Branch Directors Director, Policy Projects
Integrated approaches				

ASP Implementation Flowchart



Reporting and monitoring

The department's Aboriginal Services Plan is a three-year plan with an annual reporting cycle.

For each goal, therefore, there is a range of strategies outlined to ensure that specific targets and performance indicators are established, that these are regularly reported on and that progress is monitored. The plan requires each region to develop an Aboriginal Services Plan and each division to include specific measures to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people in their annual business plan.

The Aboriginal Services Plan also establishes priority areas that require concerted action across programs and regions. In each of these priority action areas specific targets and performance measures are to be developed that will be included in departmental plans and agency funding and service agreements. Progress will be measured against key indicators that are drawn from the national reporting framework as outlined in Table 1.

Importantly, the Aboriginal Services Plan requires the development of formalised consultation and partnership arrangements to ensure that Aboriginal communities and organisations are consistently involved in planning, program development and review processes.

The Aboriginal Human Services Forum is pivotal to the accountability process receiving reports from regions and divisions, reviewing targets and monitoring progress. It will also oversee the development and implementation of formal protocols to guide ongoing working relationships between the department, funded organisations and Aboriginal organisations, both centrally and locally.

At regional level, Regional Aboriginal Services Reference Groups or Local Aboriginal Human Services Advisory Committees will be active partners in regional planning. They will assist in the development of regional Aboriginal Services Plans and will participate in the development of annual reports to monitor progress and achievement against performance indicators.

Within the department a policy group will be established at senior level to encourage an integrated approach to program development and service delivery aimed at improving outcomes for Aboriginal people. This policy group will also ensure that targets are set and data is collected so that progress can be measured and reported on.

Each year material from divisions and regions will be brought together into a consolidated report that will review progress in implementing the Aboriginal Services Plan, report on progress in meeting program priorities and targets established in regional and divisional plans, and report on the impact of these activities in improving outcomes for Aboriginal people. This report will be presented to portfolio Ministers, the Aboriginal Human Services Forum and the departmental executive for their review and comment.

Following the receipt and review of this annual report on the implementation of the Aboriginal Services Plan, priority areas will be reviewed and directions for the forthcoming year will be established.

At the conclusion of this three-year Aboriginal Services Plan, a major review of progress and impacts will be undertaken in consultation with the Aboriginal Human Services Forum and Regional Aboriginal Services Reference Groups/Advisory Committees.

Table 1 Key indicators and outcomes**Children and families**

Indicator	Outcome
Rate of stillbirths	Decreased rate of stillbirths
Infant mortality rate	Decreased rate of infant mortality
Rate of low birth weight babies	Decreased rate of low birth weight babies
Immunisation rate	Increased immunisation
Rates of infectious diseases	Decreased rates of infectious diseases
Rate of child admissions to hospitals	Decreased rate of avoidable admissions
Percentage of children with hearing loss	Decreased rate of children with hearing loss
Preschool attendance	Increased enrolments
Maternal and Child Health Services	Increased enrolments
Rate of compliance with ACPP	Increased compliance with ACPP *
Rate of children in out of home care	Decreased rate of children in out of home care
Rate of child protection substantiations	Decreased rate of child protection substantiations
Rate of children on care and protection orders	Decreased rate of children on care and protection orders
Disability Services – Early Interventions	Increased use of appropriate services
Number of SAAP clients	Decreased number of SAAP clients and an increase in the use of other appropriate services

Youth

Indicator	Outcome
Rate of teenage mothers	Decreased rate of teenage mothers
Rate of non-custodial sentences	Increased rate of participation in alternative options
Rate of custodial sentences in juvenile justice system	Decreased rate of custodial sentences
Rate of hospital admissions for accidents and injuries	Decreased rate of hospital admissions for accidents and injuries

Lengthening life

Indicator	Outcome
Life expectancy	Increased life expectancy rates
Awareness of risk factors and health issues	Increased participation in health promotion activities
Rate of diabetes, renal failure, cardiac disease and respiratory disease	Increased early detection rates and a decrease in the actual rates of illness or death from these diseases
Access to appropriate services	Increased use of mainstream and other services
Number of people on housing property waiting lists	Decreased waiting times
Number of people living in properties	Increase in the number of people living in properties
Rate of accident and unintentional injury	Decrease in the rate of accidents and unintentional injury
Number of people receiving HACC services	Increased usage of HACC services

*ACPP – Aboriginal Child Placement Principle

Note: There is current development work being undertaken nationally to define indicators in the areas of: suicide, sexual health, family violence, and alcohol and drugs – detoxification and rehabilitation.

Appendix 1

Departmental responsibilities and structure

The Department of Human Services comprises the portfolio areas of health, senior Victorians, housing, community services and disability and is responsible to the Minister for Health, the Minister for Community Services and Housing, and the Minister for Senior Victorians.

The specific responsibilities of the department include the funding and direct delivery of:

- public hospitals, primary health services, bush nursing services and ambulance services
- aged care services, including residential and home and community care
- Disability services
- early childhood services, family and individual support, child protection and care, and juvenile justice services
- secure, affordable and appropriate housing, and support services for people who experience, or are at risk of homelessness
- concessions to low income groups to improve the affordability of essential and key services
- health promotion and prevention of illness, disability and distress through education, regulation, early intervention and other services
- specialist community-based and inpatient mental health services
- drug and alcohol services.

Departmental organisation and operational structure

The department is made up of eight central divisions and nine regions. The eight divisions are:

1. Policy and Strategic Projects

- Inter-Governmental Relations
- Policy Projects including human services policy for Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and for women
- Nurse Policy
- Workforce and Service Planning
- Strategic Projects to address emerging, significant issues to human services

2. Metropolitan Health and Aged Care Services

- Health and aged care services in metropolitan Melbourne
- Statewide policy and program direction responsibility for the specific program areas of acute, sub-acute, ambulance and mental health services

3. Regional and Rural Health and Aged Care Services

- Health and aged care services in rural and regional Victoria
- Statewide policy and program responsibility for aged and home care, primary health, dental health, public health and drug and alcohol services

4. Operations

- Regional Operations
- Portfolio Services
- Human Resources

5. Housing and Community Building

- A range of housing assistance programs including direct tenure public rental housing, community-managed housing, financial assistance to people in the private rental sector and home ownership assistance
- Supported accommodation and assistance for homeless people and people at risk of homelessness
- Neighbourhood renewal and support to a range of government community building initiatives

6. Community Care

- Early childhood services which include preschool, child care, maternal and child health, and early intervention services
- Protection and Placement which includes child protection, placement and support and adoption services
- Juvenile Justice which includes both custodial and community-based services
- Family and Community Support which includes support services for families and youth, counselling services and neighbourhood houses
- Concessions to pensioners and beneficiaries

7. Disability Services

- Community-based accommodation, congregate residential care and respite care
- Case management and brokerage, and specialist behavioural services
- Equipment services
- Information/advocacy services and community access

8. Financial and Corporate Services

- Program Effectiveness Review
- Budget and Corporate Planning
- Information Services
- Corporate services including finance, administration and capital management
- Industrial Relations

The department's nine regions comprise four metropolitan and five rural regions:

Metropolitan Regions

- Eastern Metropolitan centred in Box Hill
- Northern Metropolitan centred in Fitzroy
- Southern Metropolitan centred in Dandenong
- Western Metropolitan centred in Footscray

Rural Regions

- Barwon-South Western centred in Geelong
- Gippsland centred in Traralgon
- Grampians centred in Ballarat
- Hume centred in Wangaratta
- Loddon Mallee centred in Bendigo

