

Department of Families, Fairness
and Housing
2024–2028 strategic plan

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# Secretary’s message

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) is guided by a vision centred on safe and supported children and families, in stable homes and strong communities. We lead the Victorian public sector in promoting an equitable society that:

* champions inclusion
* dismantles barriers to participation
* nurtures equal opportunity for all.

We support Victorians by standing up for inclusion and equity, preventing harm and discrimination, and delivering social and housing support to Victorians who need it. Our *2024–2028 strategic plan* outlines how the department will continue supporting Victorians through new and emerging challenges and opportunities over the next four years. It also details what success looks like for our department and, in turn, for the communities we serve.

This plan reflects our unwavering commitment to enhancing the lives of Victorians. Much of our work centres on preventing harm, supporting families in times of challenge and responding during emergencies. We invest in statewide reforms and programs of work focused on prevention and early intervention to address challenges before they become crises. We work closely with communities to foster connection and resilience, ensuring each voice is heard and valued.

As champions of self-determination, a key area of focus for us is to prepare to transfer control and decision-making power to First Peoples. We commit ourselves to the truth-telling process through our continued efforts responding to the work of the Yoorrook Justice Commission. We will equip our staff to listen, act and hold ourselves accountable to the outcomes of the commission’s work.

As the state’s population continues to grow and age, demand for government support services will increase. We play an important role in leading policy by supporting an intersectional lens across government. We will promote integrated, effective and sustainable services through continued coordination with other government departments and knowledge sharing and advocacy with our key stakeholders.

I have been privileged to meet some of our 7,000 people from across the state and learn first-hand what a day in the life of staff in our operational roles looks like. Nearly a fifth of our people are based in regional areas, and more than half of our staff hold frontline service delivery roles. I am committed to fostering safe, fair and inclusive workplaces where our people reflect the communities we serve. Through diversity of thought, lived experience and cultural knowledge, we can better understand and meet the community’s needs.

Prioritising the health, safety and wellbeing of our people cultivates a positive and engaged working environment. We want our people to be able to do their best work, and to do it safely. The vision we seek to uphold for the state relies on the skills, knowledge and adaptability of our staff.

I’m privileged to lead this department, and our people, as we build a safe, supportive and strong community for everyone.

**Peta McCammon**

Secretary

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

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# Acknowledgement of First Peoples

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters on which we live, work and play. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the state. We pay respect to and recognise the contributions of their Elders past and present, and other First peoples, who have fought tirelessly for the rights of their communities. The sovereignty of First Peoples has never been ceded. Their strength and resilience as the world’s oldest living culture is enduring.

## Commitment to self-determination

We recognise that Aboriginal peoples continue to live with the intergenerational effects of dispossession, child removal and other discriminatory government policies. We acknowledge that the impacts of colonisation continue to influence the department’s systems and structures.

We are deeply committed to addressing these impacts by embedding cultural safety and self-determination principles in all we do. We support Victoria’s Treaty process. Aboriginal self-determination means different things to different people. But we know that the right for First Peoples to freely determine their political status, and to pursue social, cultural and economic development based on their values and ways of life, is enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We must listen to Aboriginal Victorians across the state when they tell us what they need for themselves, their families and their communities to thrive. We will hold ourselves accountable to their decisions on matters that affect their lives and communities. This includes through Victoria’s contributions to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

We acknowledge that Victoria’s Treaty process will have wide-ranging impacts for our work with Aboriginal peoples. Treaty will provide a framework for transferring decision-making power and resources to Traditional Owners. It will recognise the sovereignty of the First Peoples who have been practising their own law, lore and cultural authority since before the State of Victoria was formed. We commit to working proactively to support the aspirations of the First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria.

In this document, the term ‘Aboriginal’ is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

# About this plan

The strategic plan outlines our key focus areas and priority initiatives for 2024 to 2028. It fulfils the requirements of the Department of Treasury and Finance’s *Resource management framework 2022*. The plan is updated yearly. It informs our investments, outcomes measurement, reporting and other activities in the short and medium terms.

For our staff, the strategic plan sets out our roles and functions as a department. It includes the priorities we will deliver over the next four years. The plan has been developed based on our collective expertise. It should guide work across divisions, portfolios and areas to progress towards our vision.

For our stakeholders, the plan guides our approach to partnership and collaboration. It also identifies opportunities for us to work together. It highlights the major actions we are taking to strengthen the community and social services sector. These actions will enable our partner organisations to do their important work.

For Victorians, the strategic plan reaffirms our commitment to a vision of safe and supported children and families, in stable homes and strong communities. It acknowledges the most pressing opportunities and challenges we will need to respond to over the coming years to achieve this.

# Statement of direction

## Vision

Safe and supported children and families, in stable homes and strong communities.

## How we will achieve it

Standing up for inclusion and equality, preventing harm and discrimination, and delivering social and housing support to Victorians who need it.

## Outcomes

* Aboriginal voice, knowledge and cultural leadership drive Aboriginal policy, legislation and system reform.
* Children, young people and families are safe, strong and supported.
* Victorian communities are safe, fair, inclusive and resilient.
* All Victorians have stable, affordable and appropriate housing.
* Our social services system is integrated, effective, person-centred and sustainable

## Focus areas

### Advocating for self-determination

Systems are in place to support the transfer of control and decision‑making power to First Peoples.

### Fairness and equity for all

Government and sectors are equipped to reduce inequities and address discrimination in Victoria.

### Safe and resilient communities

Victorian communities are proactively kept safe and connected to prevent disadvantage.

### Responsive services that put people first

People’s complex and intersecting needs are met by services, when and where they need it.

### Modern departmental systems

We will continually improve ways of working to deliver high-quality, evidence-driven and sustainable programs and services.

### Sustainable and inclusive workforces

We will fund and employ diverse, skilled workforces in culturally safe workplaces, now and into the future.

## Guiding principles

Cultural safety, an intersectional lens, lived experience expertise, and client voice and agency.

# Statement of direction – at a glance

Figure 1: DFFH statement of direction



# Our department

The department’s vision is safe and supported children and families, in stable homes and strong communities. We aim to achieve this by standing up for inclusion and equity, preventing harm and discrimination, and delivering social and housing support to Victorians who need it.

We have a broad remit that spans from prevention to response, policy leadership to program and service delivery, and statewide initiatives to place-based, targeted measures. Our department’s complexity is a strength that allows us to meet the diverse needs of Victorians across the state.

We support ministers across 10 portfolios:

* Children
* Disability
* Ageing (delivered in partnership with the Department of Health)
* Carers and Volunteers
* Equality
* Housing
* Prevention of Family Violence
* Veterans
* Women
* Youth.

We are leaders in promoting an equitable society that champions inclusion, removes barriers to participation and fosters equal opportunity for all.

We prioritise intersectional approaches to eliminating all forms of inequity by:

* shepherding whole-of-government action plans
* celebrating diversity in Victorian communities
* advocating for better access to services and programs and protections against discrimination.

We work hard to prevent violence and harm and protect people from disadvantage. We are building new housing because everyone should have a home that keeps them safe. We also invest in early intervention and prevention to address challenges before they become crises. We work closely with communities to foster connection and resilience.

We deliver vital support to people at critical points in their lives. We ensure children and families are cared for and provide accommodation for Victorians who need it. We do this as providers and funders of:

* family and child protection services
* homelessness support
* family violence and sexual assault services and programs.

We support communities during and after large-scale emergencies. And we provide grants and concessions for Victorians when they need it most. As system stewards, we also fund and partner with the community sector to ensure high standards of care, safeguard the rights of clients and make supports easier to access and navigate.

We share our responsibility to serve Victorians with other departments. In particular, we recognise the intersections between social and housing services and the justice, health, education and other systems. To promote integrated, responsive and accessible government services and programs, we seek to continually improve our coordination, information-sharing and advocacy with our stakeholders.

In every part of our work, we are guided by principles of:

* Aboriginal self-determination and cultural safety
* intersectional approaches that prevent and respond to the multiple, compounding forms of disadvantage that Victorians may experience
* lived experience expertise from across communities
* the agency and voice of clients and service users.

## Our divisions

### Aboriginal Self-determination and Outcomes

The Aboriginal Self-determination and Outcomes division elevates Aboriginal leadership and practice expertise in the department. This division is central to:

* embedding cultural safety in workplaces, policy, programs, projects and service delivery
* building and maintaining strong community engagement and stakeholder relationships within the Aboriginal community.

The division drives Aboriginal self-determination by ensuring First Peoples’ voice, ways of knowing, being and doing is embedded into the department’s decision-making processes to drive policy, program design and implementation. The division is also leading our response to the Yoorrook Justice Commission and preparation for Treaty.

### Community Operations and Practice Leadership

The Community Operations and Practice Leadership division delivers vital services directly to the Victorian community. These services include child protection, housing, disability and emergency management. They are delivered through four geographical divisions, 17 areas and statewide services. This division stewards the broader funded community services sector through contract management and implementing operational policy and funding frameworks. This work is undertaken by actively responding to current and emerging place-based, population and community wellbeing issues across:

* child and family services
* family violence and sexual assault services
* homelessness
* community settings

It is also the responsibility of this division to prepare for, and respond to, local and statewide emergencies and critical incidents.

### Corporate and Delivery Services

The Corporate and Delivery Services division is an enabling division delivering centralised:

* finance and human resources services
* health, safety and wellbeing services
* management of industrial relations, legal and executive services
* information technology services
* procurement, contracting and business service functions to support the department to serve Victorians.

This division houses the Child Protection Litigation Office, which represents the Secretary in child protection applications, and provides legal advice and support for the most complex and sensitive child protection matters. This includes matters where the protection of a child is directly relevant to a Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal matter, the Federal Circuit Court and Family Court and in criminal and intervention order proceedings.

### Children and Families

The Children and Families division supports the Children’s portfolio with policy and strategic advice, program design and management, and reform delivery. This also includes funding:

* statutory child protection services
* family support and parenting services
* care services
* specialist support services including for young people leaving care
* initiatives supporting Aboriginal children and families.

The division aims to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people at risk of harm, abuse and neglect. It seeks to improve outcomes for all Victorians, particularly families and children from cohorts and communities experiencing disadvantage and vulnerability.

### Disability, Fairness and Emergency Management

Disability, Fairness and Emergency Management supports Victorians by standing up for inclusion and equity and preventing harm and discrimination. The division does this through the development and implementation of policies, programs and services that improve social, economic and wellbeing outcomes and drive improved community safety – including providing great specialist disability homes and more choices for people with a disability. The division focuses on people with disability, complex needs, seniors, carers, volunteers, veterans, youth, women and LGBTIQA+ Victorians, along with people and communities experiencing vulnerability. Together with internal and external partners, it supports all Victorians, including those most at risk before, during and after emergencies.

The branches in this division include:

* Disability Homes Victoria
* Disability Reform and Complex Needs
* Emergency Management
* Policy and Delivery, Fairness
* Policy and Systems, Fairness.

### Family Safety Victoria

Family Safety Victoria has primary responsibility for the Prevention of Family Violence portfolio. The division is responsible for strategic policy, statewide reforms and system stewardship for family and sexual violence prevention and response. The division brings individuals, communities and organisations together to create new and coordinated ways to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence, and better support families. Family Safety Victoria works collaboratively to ensure the family and sexual violence system is inclusive and culturally safe and underpinned by the voices of victim-survivors including children and young people.

### Homes Victoria

Homes Victoria is responsible for the Housing portfolio and works towards supporting all Victorians to have access to safe, secure and affordable housing. As the state’s building authority for social and affordable housing, Homes Victoria is also accountable for its asset base, as well as for housing and homelessness policy and program support. Homes Victoria acts as the steward for the social housing and homelessness systems, working in partnership with operations and sectors.

Homes Victoria is established under the *Housing Act 1983* and is treated as a Public Non-Financial Corporation.

### System Reform, Workforce and Engagement

The System Reform and Workforce and Engagement division drives whole-of-system reform across the department’s areas of portfolio responsibility and delivers an extensive range of communication activities on behalf of the department.

The division leads work on:

* community sector workforce development
* strategic and regulatory reform
* performance, evidence and analytics
* evaluation
* public engagement.

The division works closely with program and operational areas, other departments and sector and industry partners to improve outcomes for all Victorians. The division is also responsible for budget strategy, strategic planning and reporting across the department as well as delivering progressive and best practice external and internal communications, media, community engagement, emergency management and digital and media services.

## Our people

Our vision for the state relies on the skills and expertise, responsiveness and capability of our people. As a department, we are a team of more than 7,000 staff across Victoria. Nearly a fifth of our people are based in regional areas, while over half of our staff work at the frontline of service delivery. We aim to have skilled workforces wherever we are most needed. We want to lead the way in attraction, retention and wellbeing.

We are committed to fostering safer, fairer and more inclusive workplaces. This will ensure our people are engaged, high-performing and feel valued during all stages of their careers at the department. We are also committed to ensuring our people reflect the communities we serve, guided by the:

* *Aboriginal workforce strategy 2021–2026*
* *Aboriginal cultural safety framework*
* *Diversity and inclusion framework 2022–2027*
* *Gender equality action plan 2022–2025*
* disability action plans.

We value the diversity of thought and lived experience expertise that people may bring to the workplace because of their:

* age
* caring responsibilities
* cultural background
* disability
* race or ethnicity
* gender
* religion
* sexual orientation
* socioeconomic background
* other experiences.

Their rich and varied perspectives help us to better understand and meet the complex and intersecting needs of individuals, children and families, and communities.

## Our stakeholders

We work closely with a wide variety of stakeholders to achieve our vision, including:

* funded service and program providers and community organisations
* Aboriginal organisations, Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal leaders, and Aboriginal staff
* local, state and Commonwealth government agencies
* peak bodies and advocates in the housing, social services and community sectors
* people with lived and living experience, including service users
* advisory groups that we support and facilitate.

We support the following portfolio entities:

* Respect Victoria (family violence prevention agency)
* Queen Victoria Women’s Centre Trust
* Shrine of Remembrance Trustees
* Victorian Veterans Council

We also work closely and alongside the:

* Commission for Children and Young People
* Disability Services Commissioner
* Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner
* Commissioner for LGBTIQA+ Communities
* Victorian Disability Worker Commission

## Our footprint

The department has four operational divisions spanning the state – North, South, East and West (Figures 2 and 3).

The divisions include the following areas and office locations:

### North Division

| Areas | Office locations  |
| --- | --- |
| Mallee  | * Mildura
* Swan Hill
 |
| Loddon  | * Bendigo
 |
| Hume Merri-bek  | * Broadmeadows (Housing only)
 |
| North Eastern Melbourne  | * Collingwood (Housing only)
* Fitzroy
* Fitzroy (Housing only)
* Preston
* Richmond (Housing only)
 |

### South Division

| Areas | Office locations  |
| --- | --- |
| Outer Gippsland | * Bairnsdale
* Sale
 |
| Inner Gippsland | * Leongatha
* Morwell
* Warragul
 |
| Southern Melbourne  | * Dandenong
 |
| Bayside Peninsula | * Cheltenham
* Frankston
* Prahran (Housing only)
* South Melbourne (Housing only)
 |

### East Division

| Areas | Office locations  |
| --- | --- |
| Ovens Murray | * Benalla
* Wangaratta
* Wodonga
 |
| Goulburn  | * Seymour
* Shepparton
 |
| Outer Eastern Melbourne | * Ringwood (Housing only)
 |
| Inner Eastern Melbourne | * Box Hill
 |

### West Division

| Areas | Office locations  |
| --- | --- |
| Wimmera South West  | * Hamilton
* Horsham
* Portland
* Stawell Office
* Warrnambool
 |
| Barwon  | * Colac
* Geelong
 |
| Central Highlands | * Ballarat
 |
| Western Melbourne  | * Ascot Vale
* Carlton
* Footscray
* North Melbourne (Housing only)
 |
| Brimbank Melton  | * Sunshine
 |

The divisions oversee the funding and delivery of services through the above portfolios. These divisions aim to ensure all Victorians in metropolitan, regional and rural areas have access to the help they need, wherever they need it.

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Figure 2: DFFH divisions and areas in Victoria



Figure 3: DFFH metropolitan Melbourne divisions and areas

# Our current environment

Over the next four years (2024–2028), DFFH will continue supporting Victorians through new and emerging challenges and opportunities.

In 2022 we established a new division focusing on Aboriginal self-determination and outcomes. This division aims to elevate First Peoples’ leadership and ensure cultural safety is embedded in our workplaces, policies, programs, projects and services. This division leads us to centralise Aboriginal voice and ways of knowing, being and doing in our decision making policy and program design and policy and program implementation.

Significantly, this embedding of Aboriginal self-determination will be shaped by the outcomes of the Yoorrook Justice Commission. This commission is Victoria’s formal truth-telling inquiry and the first of its kind in Australia. The commission will continue until June 2025. It may propose changes to laws, institutions and systems, which may be taken up through Treaty negotiations. We are mindful not to pre-empt the outcomes of the commission or the Treaty process. But we recognise the importance of genuine transferring of decision-making power back into the hands of First Peoples. Our reform approaches need to be bold. They need to focus more on system transformation and less on piecemeal change to the existing system.

Demand for government support will increase in the coming years as:

* Victoria’s population grows and ages
* cost-of-living pressures rise
* large-scale emergency events become more frequent and severe due to climate change.

We also recognise that individuals, children, families and communities may not be affected by these trends in the same way. Many Victorians already experience multiple, intersecting forms of disadvantage. These may persist or become worse if they cannot access culturally appropriate, timely and tailored support. Population needs also vary across the state, with many communities facing local challenges that require place-based approaches. We will look to:

* prevent and reduce widening inequities
* listen to evolving community expectations and needs
* stop early signs of hardship.

We also recognise the influential role in policy leadership that we can play by supporting an intersectional lens across government and equipping all departments to meet Victorians’ diverse needs.

Our role as the steward of Victoria’s housing and social services systems will also be front of mind in the medium to long term. This will ensure we can meet increased demand for homes and support and maintain service continuity in sectors undergoing significant reform.

As economic, social and environmental challenges persist, housing and community sector providers must stay well supported to deliver the care Victorians need, in the right way, at the right time and in the right place. A significant part of these efforts will focus on ensuring we can:

* attract, train, retain and equip the workforces that deliver vital programs and services
* create inclusive organisational cultures that make us an employer of choice
* support our funded agencies to do the same.

We cannot meet future demand for government supports without staff who are empowered to deliver outcomes for Victorians across the state.

Our department plays a unique and vital role in the lives of many individuals, families and communities, often during times of crisis or disadvantage. We are committed to fostering strong families, neighbourhoods and support networks that prevent harm before it occurs. We strive to help Victorians when and where they need us most. To achieve this, our current environment will require us to:

* coordinate more effectively both within and outside of our department
* develop new partnerships and models for collaboration with our communities
* ensure our technologies and processes stay efficient and fit for purpose.

We are committed to reflecting on our progress since our department was established in 2021. We will engage in continuous learning to continue to serve Victorians as the state’s outlook changes.

# How we will achieve our objectives

## Advocating for self-determination

Systems are in place to support the transfer of control and decision-making power to First Peoples

Embedding self-determination in all the work we do will require new processes, cultures and systems in our department. First Peoples will exercise their right to decide what those should be. Meanwhile, our responsibility is to equip our staff to listen, act and hold ourselves accountable to the outcomes of the Yoorrook Justice Commission and Treaty negotiations. To increase our readiness to make the changes that Aboriginal Victorians will ask of us, we must:

* increase our cultural safety and awareness
* improve reporting, monitoring and evaluation of actions to support Aboriginal self-determination and closing the gap while reducing the burden on organisations
* strengthen data sovereignty practices across our department.

Over the next four years, we will continue to respond to the Yoorrook Justice Commission’s inquiries and support whole-of-government responses to the commission’s findings. We commit to implementing the commission’s recommendations when it concludes in June 2025.

We will also:

* implement Treaty negotiation outcomes including by:
	+ developing policies and legislative amendments
	+ conducting capacity- and capability-building activities and change management processes
* partner with Aboriginal communities to support data sovereignty at our department and across government
* strengthen Aboriginal governance to promote accountability for outcomes
* implement funding reform to better support Aboriginal organisations
* empower Aboriginal decision making to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care services, including by:
	+ continuing to implement Wungurilwil Gapgapduir and its nation-leading initiatives, including ongoing funding for care and case management of Aboriginal children in care by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
	+ implementing legislative changes to expand the role of Aboriginal agencies and introduce binding principles for all decision-makers in the system
	+ expanding the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care program to support 774 more children by 2027
	+ engaging with Aboriginal stakeholders to design and progress towards an Aboriginal-led, end-to-end child and family services system
* elevate Aboriginal self-determination in housing and homelessness, family and sexual violence and other service systems, including by implementing the *Dhelk Dja three-year action plan 2023–2025*
* progress implementation of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety framework* across funded agencies, working alongside Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.

## Fairness and equity for all

Government and sectors are equipped to reduce inequities and address discrimination in Victoria

Inequity is deeply entrenched in our society based on factors such as:

* gender and gender identity
* race and ethnicity
* culture and religion
* age
* place
* sexual orientation
* sex characteristics
* disability.

We know our department cannot stamp out all forms of discrimination alone. However, our relationships with communities and other government stakeholders make us uniquely placed to lead and influence cultural and institutional change in different settings. We play a critical role in:

* championing equity
* promoting belonging and inclusion
* shepherding whole-of-government actions to celebrate, support and empower Victoria’s diverse communities.

Over the next four years, we will work alongside our priority communities to ensure our programs and services are non-discriminatory and reflect their needs. We will also continue to provide leadership, advice and support across government to advocate for specific cohorts that experience inequity. We will drive intersectional approaches to policies, services and programs.

We will share our expertise to support departments and agencies to deliver accessible communications and embed inclusion principles into major reforms.

We will also:

* strengthen intergovernmental advocacy to influence the national policy agenda on disability inclusion, gender equality, LGBTIQA+ inclusion, veterans affairs, aged care, family violence and equitable access to social services and programs
* coordinate and deliver actions under whole-of-government strategies to promote equitable outcomes and access to safe and inclusive services for all Victorians, including:
	+ *Our promise, your future: youth strategy 2022–27*
	+ *Pride in our future: LGBTIQA+ strategy 2022–32*
	+ *Inclusive Victoria: state disability plan 2022–26*
	+ *Ageing well action plan 2022–26*
	+ *Our equal state: Victoria’s gender equality strategy and action plan 2023–27*
	+ Strong Foundations: Building on Victoria’s work to end family violence and the third Rolling Action Plan under the 10-year plan(to be released in 2024)
* lead and support legislative reforms to support and protect the rights of people with disability, LGBTIQA+ people, older adults and other people with complex needs
* equip government stakeholders to better support youth participation and engage the youth sector
* deliver critical supports for Victorian LGBTIQA+ groups and organisations to empower their communities through all life stages - from events celebrating LGBTIQA+ identities, culture and history, to funding critical services delivered by and for LGBTIQA+ communities.

## Safe and resilient communities

Victorian communities are proactively kept safe and connected to prevent disadvantage

All Victorians deserve to be safe in their homes, feel supported by their intimate partners, families and carers, and have opportunities to be active and engaged in their local communities. We know that inclusive, connected and empowered communities that are free from violence are also stronger during emergencies. Victorians with the right supports around them will be better equipped to bounce back when times are tough. We can support our communities to thrive now and in the future by:

* helping families to stay together
* ensuring access to stable housing
* encouraging social participation and respectful relationships.

Over the next four years, we will focus on building the foundations of safe and resilient communities through investments in housing and community infrastructure. We will prioritise primary prevention and early intervention approaches to stop disadvantage and violence from occurring, worsening, or becoming entrenched. We will also use tailored, culturally specific, or place-based initiatives to support children, young people and families at risk of harm or hardship. We will strengthen connectedness within communities.

Specifically, we will:

* continue to increase the supply and quality of housing options for Victorians, including by progressing the $5.3 billion Big Housing Build and other large capital programs
* improve the public housing system to ensure quality customer service and safe, modern homes
* renew, replace and grow specialist disability accommodation
* begin delivering Australia’s biggest ever urban renewal project – retiring and developing Melbourne’s 44 ageing public housing estates
* improve tailored housing support to people and families at risk of homelessness, including by:
	+ delivering the Housing First for Young People Leaving Residential Care initiative
	+ strengthening support and short-term accommodation that enables victim-survivors of family violence to stay at home safely or find suitable housing.
* deliver upgrades to scout halls, facilities for ex-service organisation spaces and other community infrastructure
* continue leading the state’s 10-year agenda to build a Victoria free from family violence, including by designing and delivering coordinated primary prevention initiatives and measures to keep people who use violence in view, engaged and responsible for stopping their violence
* deliver evidence-informed early help family services and family preservation and reunification services
* deliver cost-of-living relief, including through setting up food relief hubs in Morwell and Ballarat, the Digital Seniors Card and Veterans Card, free pads and tampon machines in public sites, and the Energy Bill Relief Fund
* deliver mentoring, employment and education, alcohol and other drugs outreach, housing support, diversion and family therapy programs for young Victorians at risk of disengagement, homelessness or contact with the justice system
* modernise our emergency management arrangements to ensure people most at risk are well supported before, during and after emergencies
* implement a Pride in Ageing program to address the needs of ageing LGBTIQA+ Victorians and better support their connections to communities.

## Responsive services that put people first

People’s complex and intersecting needs are met by services, when and where they need it

When individuals, children or families need child protection, family violence or sexual assault, disability, housing, family services or emergency recovery support, we aim to respond with services that are trauma-informed, culturally safe, accessible and responsive.

To achieve this, we will continue to:

* improve the consistency and quality of our services
* listen to, act on and elevate the voices and experiences of clients
* strengthen oversight and regulation to protect service users.

We will also continue to prioritise our statutory duties to protect children and young people in Victoria.

Over the next four years, we will:

* strengthen information sharing and coordination between systems to improve service experience and outcomes for people who access multiple government services, including by:
	+ supporting the progression of Better, Connected Care across government, and statewide implementation of the Child Link Register
	+ continuing to embed the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) Framework and the Family Violence Information Sharing reform
	+ strengthening coordination across the family, sexual violence and broader service systems
* strengthen accountability and oversight to keep service users safe from harm, including by implementing the independent Social Services Regulator by 1 July 2024
* improve and expand supports for service users, including by:
	+ reforming the homelessness response to ensure homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring, and that supports are flexible, tailored and culturally safe
	+ increasing therapeutic supports in all residential care homes and modernising home-based care
	+ delivering tailored supports to young people transitioning from care services, including through Better Futures and Home Stretch
	+ refining program and service design so victim-survivors of family violence and sexual assault receive person-centred support where, when and how they need it
	+ delivering specialist forensic disability support and treatment including facilitating safe, community ‑based housing for people with cognitive disability leaving the justice system or at risk of reoffending
	+ supporting coordination and assertive outreach for people with complex needs experiencing significant service gaps who are at risk of harm to themselves or others
	+ considering responses to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Review and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, to improve outcomes for Victorians with disability
* design and implement a redress scheme and Civil Claims Restorative Engagement Program to provide redress and formal acknowledgment of harm caused and lifelong impacts of abuse in institutional care in Victoria.

## Modern departmental systems

We will continually improve ways of working to deliver high-quality, evidence-based and sustainable programs and services

It is important for our department to ensure we have the right processes, systems and cultures in place to achieve the best possible outcomes. To meet the new risks and opportunities ahead of us, we recognise that we should always be improving how we:

* collaborate with partners
* share knowledge
* deliver programs and services
* demonstrate accountability to stakeholders
* engage communities
* plan for the future.

As the stewards of a broader social and housing services system, we must also support our funded agencies to consider their own practices and ways of working. Our staff and the community services sector cannot meet evolving community needs without:

* robust governance and integrity functions
* effective data management and information-sharing within the department and across government and the sector
* research and evaluation support
* sustainable, effective service delivery models.

Over the next four years, we will:

* strengthen accountability and integrity functions, including by reviewing our complaints and feedback processes to ensure they are fit for purpose, client-focused, contemporary, efficient and effective
* improve our use of digital technologies, including by:
	+ designing a modern, integrated client and case management system for community and family services
	+ adopting new tools to improve how we prevent and respond to family violence
	+ enhancing the corporate systems that underpin all our people, process and financial management
* improve our use of data insights and promote evidence-based program and service design, including by:
	+ expanding the Menu of Evidence to continue providing searchable and independent information on evidence-based practices and programs that support children, young people, families and carers experiencing vulnerability
	+ evaluating programs including Better Futures, Home Stretch and the Family Group Conferencing pilot
	+ strengthening data collection, analysis and reporting through the MARAM and Family Violence Information Sharing schemes, to inform family and sexual violence responses
	+ developing and reporting on datasets to measure outcomes against strategies such as the youth strategy
* elevate lived experience expertise and client voice in the design of programs and services, and through advisory committees and engagement with commissioners
* strengthen the cybersecurity capabilities and posture of both DFFH and our service delivery partners
* implement annual surveys and related actions to promote a positive risk culture.

## Sustainable and inclusive workforces

We will fund and employ diverse, skilled workforces in culturally safe workplaces, now and into the future

We must strengthen the capability of our workforces to do our best work. We must remove barriers to attracting a rich diversity of people to work for the department. As an employer, this means:

* empowering our staff by widening and deepening their expertise and skills
* supporting them to move between roles and sectors when organisational and community needs evolve
* enabling them to maintain their health and wellbeing on the job.

Also, to support the workforces employed by the agencies we fund, we will continue working closely with our sector partners on strategies to enable fulfilling and sustained careers in the community services.

Over the next four years, we will implement our *Workforce strategy 2023–27*. This will create sustainable growth in our departmental and funded workforces by increasing the supply of new workers, improving retention and wellbeing, and enabling workforce capability and productivity.

In partnership with community sector partners, we will deliver initiatives across DFFH and the funded sector, including by:

* delivering priority workforce programs that address critical workforce challenges such as Switch to Social Work, Community Services Scholarships and Family Violence Graduate and Traineeship programs
* working with the Aboriginal Workforce Fund Steering Committee to support Aboriginal organisations
* growing specialist and whole-of-system family violence capability through the Family violence rolling action plan 2023–26
* creating the Community and Social Services Graduate Program as an attractive, structured and supported early career program for social services workforces
* implementing the Community Services Fair Jobs Code and supporting community services to promote safe, secure and rewarding jobs
* promoting community services careers through the Jobs that Matter campaign and targeted campaigns for key sub-sectors.

To elevate lived experience expertise, strengthen the capability and diversity of our staff and promote cultural and psychological safety in the workplace, we will also:

* take action to promote diversity, inclusion and belonging in our workforces, including through:
	+ the *Aboriginal workforce strategy 2021–27*
	+ the *Diversity and inclusion framework 2022–27*
	+ the *Gender equality action plan 2022–25*
	+ a disability action plan
	+ the *Public sector veteran employment strategy*
* develop a health, safety and wellbeing strategy to:
	+ promote mentally healthy and safe workplaces
	+ comply with occupational health and safety legislation
	+ support injury prevention
	+ promote positive returns to work
* develop strategies to support and retain DFFH’s frontline workforces through professional development, wellbeing services and leadership development, including:
	+ new starter induction programs for staff working in child protection, housing and disability services
	+ practice development programs targeted to classification and role, career development and practice leadership programs
	+ wellbeing services, including supports for strengthening workplace culture.

# Our outcomes framework

The department’s outcomes framework describes what we aim to achieve, and what we are doing to make progress.

## Outcome 1: 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

| Headline measures | Indicators |
| --- | --- |
| * Increased proportion of governance structures that transfer decision-making and resource control to Aboriginal organisations
* Number of long-term outcomes-based funding arrangements in place for Aboriginal organisations that meet Aboriginal community-defined need.
 | * increase the transfer of decision-making power and resources to Aboriginal organisations[[1]](#footnote-2)
* increase the use of Aboriginal knowledge and evidence in policy, program and service planning, design, delivery and evaluation, under Aboriginal leadership1
* increase investment in the Aboriginal workforce to support the Aboriginal community-controlled organisation sector to excel in practice, partnership, and service delivery1
* 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 evidence1
* improve flexible funding practices to empower Aboriginal organisations to meet the diverse needs of the community1
* increase the protection and promotion of Aboriginal knowledge and Aboriginal intellectual property.1
 |

## Outcome 2: 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, and ensuring the wellbeing of children and young people in care.

| Headline measures | Indicators |
| --- | --- |
| * Rate of child protection substantiations[[2]](#footnote-3)
* Proportion of Aboriginal children in care on protection orders, whose case is managed by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
* Rate of family violence incidents per 1,000 population
* Rate of family violence incidents against an Aboriginal affected family member per 1,000 population
* Rate of entry into care.
 | * 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 community, culture and place, and 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[[3]](#footnote-4)
* reduce the incidence and impact of family violence affecting Aboriginal families
* increase the safety for victim-survivors of family violence
 |

## Outcome 3: Victorian communities are safe, fair, inclusive and resilient

Victorians are socially involved in their community and this participation contributes to 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

| Headline measures | Indicators |
| --- | --- |
| * Rate of reported crimes against the person per 10,000 population[[4]](#footnote-5)
* Rate of participation in community activities over the reporting period[[5]](#footnote-6)
* Proportion of Victorian seniors who feel valued in society
* Number of discrimination enquiries
* Gender difference in labour force participation
* Ratio of female to male underemployment
* Proportion of 15-24 year-olds in employment, education or training
* Rate of sexual violence reports per 100,000 population
 | * increase economic inclusion and participation
* increase community participation, inclusion and connectedness
* decrease experiences of discrimination
* increase safety where people live, work, learn and play
* increase wellbeing for Aboriginal Victorians, including safety to connect with and express culture[[6]](#footnote-7)
* increase capacity for senior Victorians to age well
* improve supports for people with complex needs
* increase community resilience
* improve social recovery following emergencies
* reduce sexual violence.
 |

## Outcome 4: 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 appropriate to their needs, including that it is accessible, high quality, affordable and tailored to them. This outcome includes supports to address and reduce housing insecurity and homelessness to enable suitable housing for all.

| Headline measures | Indicators |
| --- | --- |
| * Number of social housing dwellings per 1,000 population
* Proportion of specialist homelessness services clients with an identified need for accommodation who are provided with accommodation
* Average waiting time to provide a home to a person needing priority assistance
* Proportion of low-income Victorians accessing RentAssist
* Value of housing managed by Aboriginal housing providers
* Proportion of rental homes affordable to low income and moderate income Victorians
 | * increase the supply and availability of affordable, appropriate and accessible housing
* improve the environmental sustainability of social 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 the proportion of Aboriginal people in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing[[7]](#footnote-8)
* improve transitions to independent living arrangements[[8]](#footnote-9)
 |

## Outcome 5: Our social services system is integrated, effective, person-centred and sustainable

The social services system is joined up and provides safe, effective and appropriate services that respond to the needs, preferences and circumstances of Victorians. Our corporate functions and IT systems facilitate efficient service delivery, administration and oversight, and our workforce is sustainable and highly skilled.

We nurture strong partnerships with funded agencies, and we deploy data and evidence to continuously improve.

| Headline measures | Indicators |
| --- | --- |
| * Timeliness of responding to/closing out feedback matters
* Performance of services in reviews against departmental standards
 | * improve the quality, safety and effectiveness of service delivery
* increase responsiveness of services to diversity and intersectionality
* improve access to services
* increase the voice of clients, people with lived experience and diverse communities in the design, delivery and evaluation of policies and services
* increase effective organisational oversight and financial management
* increase system agility, responsiveness and resilience
* increase effectiveness, appropriateness and integration of technology, IT systems and information management
* improve workforce health, safety, wellbeing, capability and diversity
* increase use of evidence, evaluation, outcome measurement and data to inform planning, investment, practice and policy design.
 |

# Performance and financial reporting

The Victorian State Budget contains detailed information on the department’s objectives, outputs and performance against key performance indicators. This is an important accountability tool for the funding we receive to deliver services and operations.

The department’s performance and workforce profile is reported in the [annual report](https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/annual-report) https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/annual-report.

The 2024–25 Victorian State Budget Paper 3 (BP3) sets out the department’s output groups and their budgeted costs. Tables 1 to 3 outline the department’s total output, initiative and asset funding.

Table 1: DFFH output funding 2024–25 ($ million)

| Output | 2024–25 |
| --- | --- |
| Child Protection and Family Services  | $2,124.9 |
| Family Violence Service Delivery | $748.1 |
| Primary Prevention of Family Violence | $30.1 |
| Community Participation | $64.7 |
| Disability Services | $440.7 |
| Office for Disability | $11.7 |
| Seniors Programs and Participation | $60.8 |
| Support to veterans in Victoria | $14.4 |
| LGBTIQA+ equality policy and programs | $11.1 |
| Women’s policy | $18.4 |
| Youth | $30.5 |
| Concessions to Pensioners and Beneficiaries | $784.4 |
| Housing Assistance | $634.3 |
| Total | $4,974.1 |

Notes:

Table may not add due to rounding.

Data source: BP3, p. 116.

Table 2: DFFH total output initiatives, 2023–24 to 2027–28 ($ million)

| Output initiative | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | 2027-28 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Total output initiatives | 190.6 | 507.4 | 214.0 | 94.9 | 89.8 |

Table 2.1: DFFH output initiatives – Child Protection and Family Services,
2023–24 to 2027–28 ($ million)

| Output initiative | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | 2027-28 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Civil claims costs for historical institutional child abuse and care leavers | 21.8 | 88.3 | 1.3 |  |  |
| Commission for Children and Young People |  | 2.2 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 2.3 |
| Delivering child protection and care services |  | 95.5 | 13.3 | 9.5 | 9.8 |
| Improving outcomes for children and young people in home-based care |  | 11.6 | 8.6 | 8.9 | 9.3 |
| Strong Families, Safe Children |  | 132.5 | 65.1 |  |  |
| Victorian Redress for historical abuse and neglect in institutional care | 165.0 |  |  |  |  |
| Victorian Social Investment Model |   | 1.0 |  |  |  |

Table 2.2: DFFH’s output initiatives – Community Participation, 2023–24 to
2027–28 ($ million)

| Output initiative | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | 2027-28 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strengthening food security across Victoria |  | 3.5 |  |  |  |

Table 2.3: DFFH’s output initiatives – Concessions to Pensioners and Beneficiaries, 2023–24 to 2027–28 ($ million)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Output initiative | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | 2027-28 |
| Personal Hardship Assistance Program | 0.3 |  |  |  |  |
| Psychosocial and mental health and wellbeing support | 0.5 |  |  |  |  |
| Personal Hardship Assistance Program | 0.3 | 0.5 |  |  |  |

Table 2.4: DFFH’s output initiatives – Disability Services, 2023–24 to 2027–28 ($ million)

| Output initiative | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | 2027-28 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Continuing support for Victorians with disability |  | 24.0 |  |  |  |
| Disability and Social Services Regulation |  | 21.6 | 5.7 | 5.9 | 6.1 |

Table 2.5: DFFH’s output initiatives – Family Violence Service Delivery, 2023–24 to 2027–28 ($ million)

| Output initiative | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | 2027-28 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Driving down family and sexual violence |  | 10.4 | 10.1 | 10.4 | 10.7 |
| Family violence victim survivors supports |  | 35.8 | 36.2 |  |  |
| Safer families: Central Information Point service |  | 12.0 | 12.3 |  |  |

Table 2.6: DFFH’s output initiatives – Housing Assistance, 2023–24 to 2027–28
($ million)

| Output initiative | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | 2027-28 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Breaking the cycle of homelessness |  | 42.3 | 49.9 | 54.6 | 50.1 |
| Modernising the delivery of public housing maintenance | 2.0 | 13.0 | 2.3 | 0.7 | 0.7 |
| Social housing community support |  | 1.1 |  |  |  |
| Temporary Accommodation Program | 0.2 |  |  |  |  |

Table 2.7: DFFH’s output initiatives – LGBTIQA+ Equality Policy and Programs, 2023–24 to 2027–28 ($ million)

| Output initiative | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | 2027-28 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Equality for LGBTIQA+ communities | 0.5 | 0.8 | 0.8 | 0.9 |  |

Table 2.8: DFFH’s output initiatives – Support to Veterans in Victoria, 2023–24 to 2027–28
($ million)

| Output initiative | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | 2027-28 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Community recognition, assisting veteran community organisations and supporting wellbeing for Victoria’s veterans |  | 1.9 | 2.0 | 1.0 |  |

Table 2.9: DFFH’s output initiatives – Women’s Policy, 2023–24 to 2027–28
($ million)

| Output initiative | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | 2027-28 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Women’s leadership and recognition |  | 1.8 |  |  |  |
| Queen Victoria Women's Centre |  | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.5 |

Table 2.10: DFFH’s output initiatives – Youth, 2023–24 to 2027–28 ($ million)

| Output initiative | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | 2027-28 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Supporting representation and participation of First Nations young people |  | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.4 | 0.4 |
| Innovative support to re-engage young people |  | 3.6 |  |  |  |

Notes:

Tables may not add due to rounding.

Data sources: BP3, p. 36.

Table 3: DFFH Asset Initiatives – Family Violence Service Delivery, 2023–24 to 2027–28
($ million)

| Asset initiative | 2023–24 | 2024–25 | 2025–26 | 2026–27 | 2027-28 | TEI |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Family violence victim survivors supports |  | 1.1 | 1.3 | 0.9 | 0.7 | 4.0 |
| Total asset initiatives |  | 1.1 | 1.3 | 0.9 | 0.7 | 4.0 |

Notes:

Table may not add due to rounding.

Data source: BP3, p. 43.

1. These indicators contribute to Closing the Gap targets. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Rate of children and young people who were the subject of a child abuse and neglect substantiation per 1,000 population. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. These indicators contribute to Closing the Gap targets. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. While DFFH is not directly responsible for community safety, it is an important measure to monitor as it can identify risks and support needs. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Data not currently available. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. These indicators contribute to Closing the Gap targets. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. These indicators contribute to Closing the Gap targets. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Includes transitions from justice settings, supported residential and disability care, care services placements and other specialised accommodation. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)