

"Major Reform of Services for Vulnerable Victorians" says the State Government ([LINK](#))

"Can we believe this, given the number of so called reforms over the years?"

The Department of Human Services is embarking on major reform to deliver more integrated, family-centred services for vulnerable Victorians.

This follows last years announcement of a new approach to case management and service delivery, which is being trialled in Dandenong and Geelong and the South West Coast.

A comprehensive review of the department has taken place and we have proposed how the department will restructure to improve the quality of its services to make a real difference for Victorians.

Last year alone, the department managed 55,000 child protection reports, provided 31,000 clients with disability aids and equipment and supported 39,000 homeless people.

Victorias population is projected to increase significantly over the next 20 years. Demand for community services is very high already and is expected to increase.

To meet these demands, we are proposing major changes to the departments structure that will help us to provide more responsive, family-centred services for vulnerable Victorians.

The key changes are:

- The departments regional operations will be organised into 17 local areas, putting more focus on the frontline and providing improved services when and where people need them. The 17 local areas will be based on geographic catchments reflecting trends in population growth and service demand across the state.
- The 17 local areas will be supported by four regional divisions (North, South, East and West).
- The areas will manage service delivery with government and non-government organisations in a more integrated way, along functional rather than program lines.
- The areas will have greater decision-making power over local services and the ability to allocate resources depending on the needs of that area. Some of the local areas will have for the first time a senior manager to drive better, and more coordinated services at the local level, integrated across housing, disability and family services.
- The areas will have a greater focus on achieving lasting outcomes for people through early intervention and building opportunities for social and economic participation.
- The departments central office will be consolidated to remove program silos, reduce duplication and increase efficiency. There will be three central office

groups: Policy and Strategy; Service Design and Implementation; and Corporate Services.

- The three groups will replace the current seven divisions in central office.
- This arrangement reorganises central office along functional rather than program lines, by integrating policy, program management and corporate functions across the department.
- The creation of two Deputy Secretary roles to respectively oversee a Community and Executive Services portfolio and a Housing, Youth and Women portfolio.
- These roles will have primary responsibility for providing high quality and responsive policy advice to the Secretary and Ministers.

A comprehensive consultation process with the departments staff has begun, with implementation of these important changes happening over the next 1218 months.

This restructure is just part of our broader service reform program, which will build a strong and responsive human services system one that is set up to achieve the best possible outcomes for our most vulnerable people.

Gill Callister, DHS Secretary says ([LINK](#)):

This year we are focused on improving client outcomes through service delivery reform and developing a sustainable workforce that can meet the challenges of the future.

I have been looking at the way the department is organised and thinking about how it needs to change for the future to be able to provide more joined up and responsive services for our clients.

Over the past months, two leading experts have guided a comprehensive review of the department and have recommended a number of ways it can build on its strengths to make a real difference for Victorians.

I am pleased to be able to share with you some high level detail of our plan to deliver more integrated, family-centred services for our clients.

The restructure is part of our broader service reform agenda, which will build a strong and responsive human services system one that is set up to achieve the best possible outcomes for our most vulnerable people.

The departments new structure and planned reform also focus on business excellence and continuous improvement for how we fund and collaboratively deliver services. Investment in our integrated workforce will support our future direction.

'Human Services: the case for change' sets out our vision for improving the way we deliver services. It was launched at the end of last year by the Minister for Community Services. The case for change outlines the challenges we face in moving from a system that is prescriptive and fragmented, to a system that can deliver long-term solutions to

help people move permanently out of disadvantage.

As part of our service delivery reform, we are also working with our community sector partners to develop a new joined up model of case management. The new model, along with a new client-directed case planning tool, will be tested this year in the Southern Metropolitan Region and Barwon South-West Region.

On 1 February 2012 Fair Work Australia handed down a decision on the Equal Remuneration Case that will significantly increase wages for workers in the social and community services sector. This decision was both historic and an important step for achieving equal pay.

The department values the vital work performed by sector workers and the Victorian Government has made a financial commitment of \$200 million over four years to support the outcome of this case.

The Pay Equity Implementation Reference Group, which includes representation from the Department of Human Services, the peaks and sector organisations, is working to implement the decision by Fair Work Australia.

At least 25,000 people work in the community services industry in Victoria, making it one of the largest workforces in the public sector. This workforce is our greatest asset, and over the next 10 years we will need to leverage sector knowledge and experience more effectively as thousands of new staff are recruited, some of whom may have different qualifications, experiences and demographics to those in the existing workforce. The departments Community Services Workforce and Education Strategy will chart a course through this challenging period.

We can continue to improve our services if we listen to our clients experiences of them. A new research project will record the experiences of a group of young people in out-of-home care over a four year period. The evidence promises to be invaluable for policy-makers and service providers in Victoria and across the country.

LISA Comment: When governments can't fix public service problems, which is frequently the case, they attempt reform, call-in overseas help or privatise/CSO the service.

The New South Wales government called-in a UK police team to solve its police corruption problems. The Victorian government called-in a UK team to solve problems with the Hume Freeway.

Many years ago, the Victorian government called-in a UK government (Home Office) communications team to review its then antiquated police radio communications. The Johnson Report subsequently ended up in the state government's too hard basket, and the state police suffered antiquated radio communications for years.

Similarly, Lord Rix of UK MENCAP was invited to come to Victoria to do a brief overview of the state's services for people with a disability. He was not impressed, and suggested he be invited to do a major reform. The offer was not taken-up by the then state government.

Disability services has been a revolving door of disaster ever since, with government money being poured into this and that review/reform - all of which achieved little. It being almost impossible to change the captive market public service entrenched attitude from 'reactive' to 'proactive' - to provide consistent proactive services within the direction, intention and spirit of recognised care policies standards and values.

Business and people suffered the Telecom, public service, captive market restrictive practices with little or no customer service, for years. It took John Howard's full control of both houses of federal government to break the Telecom strangle hold. The present system may not be perfect, but there is incentive to move forward and customers have choice of service provider,

People with a disability and their families are unlikely to get any real relief from the strangle hold of captive market, no choice, services, without NDIS ISPs - where the consumer holds the purse strings.

Nevertheless, it will be interesting to discover how and where the proposed reform will solve the 'quality of life care' problems frequently reported by the OPA, the ODSC, the Auditor General and the media - problems created as a direct result of the department's overall 'reactive management and staff lore'. In contrast with proactive management ensuring real and meaningful customer service, and services consistently within the direction, intention and spirit of departmental care policies standards and values.

Extra 1: [Community Attitudes to People with Disabilities](#)

Extra 2: [Dental Care Poor in Victoria](#)

Extra 3: [The Challenging Behaviour Foundation](#) -UK

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