



**Victorian
Public Sector
Commission**



Strategic plan 2023-2026

Our aspiration is a trusted and representative public sector workforce that delivers for all Victorians.

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Commissioner's message

Introduction to the strategic plan

Message from the Commissioner

I am pleased to share the Victorian Public Sector Commission's Strategic Plan 2023-26. Since joining the Commission in April 2023, I have been able to build on the excellent work of the Commission and its strong reputation in supporting our colleagues across the public sector.②

Our aspiration is a trusted and representative public sector workforce that delivers for all Victorians.

The Victorian Public Sector has a proud tradition of being forward-thinking, respectful, responsive and reliable. The Commission is committed to supporting the sector to continue these important ways of working, and to support the Victorian Public Sector to deliver the best outcomes for Victorians by:

- delivering high-quality services to meet the needs of the community, both today and into the future
- being trusted and recognised for its integrity
- being representative of the diverse community we serve
- being dynamic, considered and driven by evidence.

In 2023, Victoria has emerged from the coronavirus pandemic response. We now have a unique opportunity to reflect on all that was achieved and build on what we have learned. We can seize the step changes achieved in digital service provision and will work to ensure lessons learned about the value of public service and trust in those services are not wasted.

While the economic and workforce conditions are challenging, the Commission will play a central role in supporting departments and entities as they adapt and respond.



In delivering this three-year strategic plan, I acknowledge the work of our previous Commissioners and dedicated staff. Over the next three years we will continue to focus on making the VPSC a great place to work, recruiting and retaining great people.

This strategic plan builds on the priorities set in our previous strategy and maintains our core functions in accordance with the [Public Administration Act 2004 \(PAA\)](#).

To achieve our aspiration, we will focus on four key outcomes:

1. A values-based, innovative, effective and connected public sector
2. A public sector that is apolitical, accountable and trusted
3. A diverse, adaptable and high-performing workforce
4. A capable and credible Commission that supports the Victorian public sector.

I look forward to implementing the initiatives in this strategic plan alongside my colleagues here at the Commission, in Victorian Public Service Departments, Victoria Police and more broadly across the sector.

Brigid Monagle
Commissioner
Victorian Public Sector Commission

The Commissioner's Role

The Commissioner acts as an independent steward of the public sector, charged with building its effectiveness, efficiency and capability.^② The role provides counsel on difficult ethical and integrity issues to leaders and works with leadership across the sector to improve whole of government workforce policy and settings. The Commissioner has powers to issue binding codes of conduct and employment standards to the sector, and to make recommendations to agencies about adherence to them.^②

The Commissioner's role is established under the [Public Administration Act 2004](#) and is appointed for up to five years by the Governor in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister for Government Services. The Commissioner has statutory independence in



respect to several functions. For administrative and all other functions, the Commissioner reports to the Minister for Government Services. ②

The Commissioner is a member of the [Victorian Secretaries' Board \(VSB\)](#) which coordinates policy initiatives and promotes leadership and information exchange. VSB is chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and comprised of Secretaries of all other departments and the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police.②



Our objective

Our objectives and obligations under the Public Administration Act 2004

The Commission's objectives are set out in Section 38 of the [Public Administration Act 2004](#). They are to:

- strengthen the efficiency, effectiveness and capability of the public sector in order to meet existing and emerging needs and deliver high quality services
- maintain and advocate for public sector professionalism and integrity.

Further, the VPSC has specific obligations under the Act to:

- advocate for an apolitical and professional public sector
- issue and apply codes of conduct and employment standards
- monitor and report to public sector body heads on compliance with the public sector values, codes of conduct, employment principles and standards
- review employment related actions
- maintain a register of lobbyists and a register of instruments.

The actions to address these requirements, including measures of performance against them, are articulated each year in the VPSC Annual Plan.

In addition to the specific requirements under the Act, in addressing its broad objects, we hold a unique position to influence and shape the current and future workforce of the public sector. Working with our public sector partners, we collaborate to build and grow a highly capable, inclusive and diverse workforce where workforce mobility and flexibility is the norm. We provide innovative platforms to attract and retain people with strong capabilities, including in times of emergency and critical need.②③④

We provide guidance to support a strong, apolitical public sector that is responsive to the government of the day and ready to support the next. Our priorities evolve in line with government direction and external factors so that alongside other integrity agencies, risks can be identified and mitigated.②



Integrity is a continued area of focus as we provide stewardship to enable a public sector that is responsive, accountable, and trusted. Underpinned by the binding codes of conduct and employment standards, we continue to support the sector to understand its important role, and its responsibilities towards the Victorian community.^②



The public sector context

A summary of our challenges and opportunities

Challenges

Victoria's public sector delivers a wider range of services and supports that matter to the Victorian community. Our 354,800 strong public sector workforce represents around 10% of the total [Victorian workforce](#). It spans departments and public sector agencies to support delivery of health, education, transport, justice, emergency services and more.②③

Our workforce is responding to a range of challenges:

- Workforce shortages are apparent across healthcare, early childhood education, schools, social services and public infrastructure. There is a growing list of hard-to-fill roles that require dedicated focus.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and climate related emergency events such as flood and fire have placed pressure on the public sector workforce and changed the way we work. Capacity to mobilise a strong surge workforce, retention of workforces at risk of burnout and a competitive employment market, all pose issues.
- Victoria is experiencing a tight fiscal environment and budget constraints. This will likely result in a future reduction of the size and scope of the public sector. At the same time, community expectations for service delivery are unlikely to diminish.
- Public trust in government institutions is also in decline. In 2023, trust in government across Australia was eight points down on the previous year, based on the [Edelman Trust Barometer](#).

Opportunities

The Commission sees an opportunity to strategically support public sector agencies.

The Commission can:



- lead from the centre implementing whole-of-Victorian government workforce initiatives to attract, retain, deploy and support a diverse, inclusive and high-performing workforce
- use our data, insights and research to support evidence-based policies, programs and initiatives
- maintain trust in the institutions of government, by supporting public sector agencies to meet their integrity obligations and prevent integrity breaches from arising in the first place
- support more strategic workforce management, including developing surge and mobility operating models to meet current and future needs
- convene public sector working groups to tackle emerging workforce, governance, service delivery and public sector administration challenges
- provide a range of centralised support, resources and guidance that can be adapted across the sector.



Strategic direction

Our strategy is focused on 4 key outcomes

The Commission's strategic directions provide a grounding framework from which to respond to the challenges facing the public sector.

Our aspiration is **a trusted and representative public sector workforce that delivers for all Victorians.**

Key outcomes

To achieve our aspiration, we will focus on four key outcomes:

A values-based, innovative, effective and connected public sector

- be stewards and champions of the public sector, driving innovation and promoting the value of its role
- lead innovative public sector workforce policy, programs and advice to drive better practice and delivery, including during a crisis
- provide evidence-based data and insights to support a stronger, safer and more sustainable workforce for better delivery
- identify, develop and share good practice to build capability and support better ways of working across government.

A public sector that is apolitical, accountable and trusted

- strengthen the integrity culture and capability across the public sector in accordance with legislative requirements
- lead work across public sector organisations and other integrity agencies to identify and prevent integrity risks

- advocate for reforms to support a progressive, impartial, apolitical public sector.

A diverse, adaptable and high-performing workforce

- support safe and diverse workplaces, inclusive cultures and high-quality leadership
- identify, plan for and respond to critical capability needs
- enable mobile, hybrid and flexible work practices to support professional development and meet priority delivery needs.

A capable and credible VPSC that supports the Victorian public sector to deliver

- cultivate capability, expertise and whole of government perspective to deliver value where it's needed most
- collaborate to maximise our impact
- live the values and walk the talk.



A values-based, innovative, effective and connected public sector

Outcome 1

Victoria's operating environment requires a responsive and adaptive public sector workforce.② The VPSC has a unique position in working across the sector, driving, gathering and promoting the best thinking, workforce policy and practice. We have a key role in promoting the value of the public sector and the role public servants play.

Our workforce must have the capabilities and capacity to flexibly move to where it is most needed. The right people with the right skillsets in the right place and critically, at the right time.②

This kind of workforce mobility requires consideration of a new operating model. One that supports a workforce that can be strategically deployed in line with new and shifting priorities, while also supporting employee's professional development, connectedness and wellbeing. This is a complex space, underpinned by occupational health and safety considerations, interoperable systems and processes, common standards and industrial relations settings. To work effectively these should operate consistently across departments and agencies.②

The Commission is leading whole-of-Victorian government (WoVG) delivery on key aspects of workforce and mobility policy, working closely with the Victorian Secretaries Board and partners such as Digital Victoria, Jobs Victoria, Industrial Relations Victoria, WorkSafe and Emergency Management Victoria.②②

Access to timely, trusted data and analysis provides the public sector with a valuable evidence base to develop measures to drive its performance. We collect comprehensive data about the Victorian public sector workforce and administer the [People Matter Survey](#) to measure employee engagement and wellbeing. These rich datasets offer insights into our workforce, providing evidence to inform continuous improvement in

workforce management.②

The Commission holds a unique position to conduct research and disseminate best practice to add value to the broader public sector.

Be stewards and champions of the public sector, driving innovation and promoting the value of its role

- Drive improvement and innovation across the sector, by inspiring and challenging senior leaders to think differently.
- Use our central role to convene, gather and share the best thinking and practice from across the sector, academia and other jurisdictions.
- Champion the role of the public service, both internally to inspire existing staff and to promote the value of the sector to the community.

Lead innovative public sector workforce policy, programs and advice to drive better practice and delivery, including during a crisis

- Support the WoVG Occupational Health and Safety response to workforce mental health and injury.
- Provide stewardship of WoVG workforce policy and processes across departments and agencies, including in support of Common Corporate Platforms and other relevant platform deployment.
- Develop and test WoVG emergency response policy settings to support ongoing emergency management priorities.

Provide evidence-based data and insights to support a stronger, safer and more sustainable workforce for better delivery

- Continue to deliver [State of Public Sector](#) and [People Matter Survey](#) to support visibility and transparency about emerging public sector workforce issues and



trends, and accountability for sector performance and wellbeing.

- Collect data, undertake research and analysis and deliver informed advice on (and support improvements with regards to) leadership, culture, wellbeing, integrity, diversity and inclusion and other public sector administration issues.
- Develop partnership with WorkSafe and departments/agencies to identify insights and improvement opportunities across workforce health and wellbeing.
- Design and implement a new data repository to centrally store the rich data sources the Commission holds, which in turn will allow for better reporting, data sharing and analysis.

Identify, develop and share good practice to build capability and support better ways of working across government

- Continue to identify opportunities for new forums and connections across the public sector.
- Improve diversity on Boards through support for aspiring Board members.
- Embed new and consistent approaches to workforce management, employment standards, platforms, data collection, connection to capability development.
- Build the impact and reach of the [Innovation Network](#) to support collaboration across government, peer to peer learning and connection for professional development and networks.



A public sector that is apolitical, accountable and trusted

Outcome 2

Trust in government underpins effective democracy. There is a strong level of public interest in integrity issues following a series of state and national investigations and reports into integrity failings by parts of the public sector. Integrity in government was reported as one of the top three issues of most importance to the public in a pre-2022 Victorian election poll. It follows that integrity failings are a direct contributor to the erosion of trust in government, and to poor performance by the public sector.

VPSC's role in setting, maintaining and monitoring integrity expectations and performance of the Victorian public sector is as important as it has ever been.②

We are responsible for delivering a series of core legislative functions that aim to strengthen the integrity culture of the public sector. As part of this, we will review and if required reissue core guidance, including on [conflicts of interest](#) and managing and recording offers of [gifts, benefits and hospitality](#), and address any pressing issues associated with the [codes of conduct](#) or employment standards.②

Prevention is better than cure – avoidance of integrity breaches is better for maintaining or building public trust, and it costs significantly less than responding to issues after they have occurred. Working collaboratively with our partners in integrity areas across the sector, we will draw on data and intelligence to better understand where integrity risks lie, so that we can target interventions early, and prevent integrity issues before they arise. We will develop and refine a monitoring framework to support and guide this work, so we can properly monitor the sector's compliance with the code and employment standards, and the public sector values and principles which these are derived from.②②

We will advocate for reforms that will set Victoria up better to meet the community's expectations around public sector integrity. To complement this, we will act on reports, reviews and recommendations undertaken by the Commission or other agencies across Victoria's integrity system. We will also inform our work and advocacy by keeping

abreast of research, reviews and recommendations in other Australian jurisdictions, so we ensure Victoria is ideally placed to be the apolitical, accountable and trusted public sector the community deserves.②

Strengthen the integrity culture and capability across the public sector in accordance with legislative requirements

- Develop and maintain guidance, training and tools around core integrity policies and processes to enable public sector agencies to embed integrity into day-to-day practice.
- Perform legislative functions including reviews of action and maintenance of the lobbyist register.
- Support and maintain a range of key executive employment functions.

Lead work across public sector organisations and other integrity agencies to identify and prevent integrity risks

- Collect and analyse data and intelligence to identify integrity risks, consistent with the legislative obligation to monitor compliance with the codes and standards, and the values and principles in the PAA.
- Identify and share information about good practice in integrity, and gaps including (over time) holding public sector agencies to account for improvement.
- Drawing on data and intelligence, work proactively with public sector organisations to target interventions at an early stage to prevent integrity risks before they arise.



Advocate for reforms to support a progressive, impartial, apolitical public sector

- Advocate for improvements to integrity legislation and systems, including reforms to the PAA.
- Respond to known and future recommendations arising from external integrity reviews (e.g., from IBAC, Ombudsman Victoria and VAGO).



A diverse, adaptable and high-performing workforce

Outcome 3

We carry stewardship of the public sector workforce at a time of particular challenge as it strives to bolster the economic and social wellbeing and health of the state.②②

Data tells us that executive and leaders are struggling with the sustained demands of the current environment while looking after their own wellbeing. They are also looking for more opportunities for connection and relationship building.② New ways of working (e.g. hybrid, mobile, self-determination, cultural inclusion) require different leadership skillsets from those traditionally valued by bureaucracy.②

We are focused on building capable, engaged and high performing workforces with positive cultures while simultaneously improving diversity and inclusion. This is to shape a public sector that is representative of the Victorian communities it serves.②

Our work strengthening the Aboriginal workforce and leadership②capacity is particularly critical, as it supports the broader government commitments and agenda in relation to self-determination, Treaty and truth-telling.②

We recognise that a diverse workforce contributes to better decisions, greater innovation and improved service delivery. The strategic work program therefore focuses on meeting government commitments and targets under key workforce strategies, while also increasing inclusion, cultural safety and feelings of belonging.②

All these aspects are critical for building the reputation of the Victorian public sector as a good place to work, enabling us to attract and retain a high-performing, diverse and inclusive workforce.

Support safe and diverse workplaces, inclusive cultures and high-quality leadership

- Continue to maintain the boards recruitment platform *Join a Public Board*, improve board reporting capability and invest into improved user experience and accessibility.
- Develop and support capable, confident and connected public sector leaders, through developing common programs and peer-to-peer opportunities across the VPS.
- Attract, develop and sustain a diverse and representative public sector workforce, including through refresh of the Barring Djinang Aboriginal Employment Strategy and supporting diversity and inclusion for people with disability and other diverse communities and hold agencies to account for performance and support for diversity.

Identify, plan for and respond to critical capability needs

- Provide common, core learning and development to build foundational public sector capability.
- Create career pathways (including Grads) for the public sector of the future, with a focus on improving diversity and representation of First Peoples.
- Identify and support pipeline for critical capability needs (e.g. supporting professions in government and support for improved recruitment of hard to fill roles).

Enable mobile, hybrid and flexible work practices to support professional development and meet



priority delivery needs

- Lead the evolution of public sector recruitment through leveraging the Jobs and Skills Exchange (JSE) as a critical enabler of workforce and mobility.
- Continue to adapt and improve recruitment platforms and associated systems to deliver against workforce management requirements.
- Continue to test and build new operating models for workforce transition and mobility that support government priorities.



A capable and credible VPSC that supports the Victorian public sector to deliver

Outcome 4

To deliver these strategic outcomes, the Commission must itself be an organisation that models the policy, principles and behaviours that it espouses for the sector.^②

In this environment of ongoing change, the Commission will continue to evolve its organisation and internal culture to support government priorities, uphold integrity and deliver to the needs of the community it serves.

Cultivate capability, expertise and whole of government perspective to deliver value where it's needed most

- Continue to evolve our organisation and roles to invest where there is the greatest impact, leveraging our role as a central agency.

Collaborate to maximise our impact

- Maintain and build networks across government at all levels, to compound efforts and provide insight into critical priorities that focus the Commission's agenda.
- Leverage the Commission's relationships to share work existing, underway and planned for whole of government benefit.



Live the values and walk the talk

- Improve effectiveness and efficiency of internal policy and processes to role model good practice into the public sector.
- Embed a focus on culture and performance across the organisation.



The way we work

Our guiding principles

Our guiding principles

If we are to deliver what we need to for the public sector, we need to be a great organisation ourselves. We want to be known for having a strong and well supported team with a smart, positive, can-do culture, focused on excellence in service delivery.^②

As the custodians of the codes of conduct we understand that the way we work is integral to our reputation and our impact.^②

We are committed to working in the following ways:

- We are outward focused – responding to and anticipating the needs of Victoria’s 1,854 public sector employers and 354,800 strong public sector workforce.
- We care about our workforce – their wellbeing and development.
- We are collaborative – building trusted relationships, sharing information and expertise, and working with our public sector partners to achieve common goals.
- We are innovative and solution focused – we explore new possibilities and ways of working to deliver better outcomes.
- We are intelligence-led – providing evidence-based insights and advice that supports the public sector to deliver for all Victorians.
- We make the best use of government resources – to deliver sustainable and effective outcomes.
- We are inclusive – and work to promote equity of opportunity for all.
- We create safe spaces – to seek out and hear the voices of people with lived experience.
- We respect – the valuable contribution First Nations voices and leadership provide to the public sector.



Our impact

Through our work we will contribute to performance, integrity and people

Performance

- A high-performing public sector that delivers Victorians the services and leadership needed by the community.
- Tailored policies and programs that support innovation, development, and enable the public sector to thrive during disruption caused by crisis or emergencies.
- A workforce committed to building and sharing professional insights, data, knowledge and research.
- A stronger focus on workplace safety and wellbeing, including better tools to promote it.

Integrity

- A strong integrity culture across the public sector.
- A public sector that has increased understanding and capability to meet its integrity obligations.
- A trusted and respected public sector that is known to provide frank and fearless advice.

People

- A capable public sector workforce, to meet current and future needs.
- A diverse public sector workforce that represents the community it serves.
- A public sector that demonstrates strong leadership at all levels.

