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**VICTORIAN**  
**ombudsman**



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**The Victorian Ombudsman pays respect to First Nations custodians of Country throughout Victoria. This respect is extended to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge their sovereignty was never ceded.**

# Letter to the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly

To

**The Honourable the President of the Legislative Council**

and

**The Honourable the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly**

Dear Presiding Officers,

I am pleased to transmit, in accordance with section 24B of the *Ombudsman Act 1973* (Vic):  
The Victorian Ombudsman's Annual Plan for the 2021-22 year.



Deborah Glass  
**Ombudsman**

30 June 2021

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# Foreword

I am pleased to present to Parliament my annual plan for the year 2021-22. I present it alongside my Strategic Framework 2020-24, which outlines my vision for the office for the remainder of my term, as well as my Strategic Plan 2021-24, which sets out my key objectives for achieving that vision in the next three years.

The vision is one of ensuring fairness for all Victorians in their dealings with the public sector and improving public administration. Fundamentally we seek to achieve it through our work resolving complaints, independently investigating serious and systemic matters, enhancing accountability and protecting human rights. The annual plan sets out the specific actions my office will take next year to contribute towards this vision. It was developed in consultation with the Integrity and Oversight Committee, who I thank for their interest and insights.

**“ The impact of COVID-19 has highlighted not only our continued relevance to the community but also the need for flexibility in all our work, and the range of actions reflects this. ”**

While my vision for fairness has remained unchanged during my years in the role, the means by which we seek to achieve it changes based on many factors, including developments inside and outside the integrity landscape, and the funding available to me.

A key theme in the plan is increasing the accessibility of the office, dealing with more complaints in different ways, to deliver more fairness to more people. The actions range from traditional methods of engagement such as increasing our call centre contact hours, working with third parties such as community legal centres, to using social media and modern technology to expand our reach. The impact of COVID-19 has highlighted not only our continued relevance to the community but also the need for flexibility in all our work, and the range of actions reflects this.

Collaboration is another theme. We intend to work with IBAC and other integrity agencies on our shared education and prevention function, and with the public sector to improve the way they deal with their complaints. All of these contribute to a shared goal of improved public administration.

New initiatives inevitably require funding, and I have received a modest increase; for the first time, on an ongoing basis. While the increase falls short of what I requested, not allowing me to both implement my new legislative mandate and continue with the existing work, I am in discussion with the Treasurer about how the gap can be bridged sufficiently to make a start. My plan therefore includes a staged implementation of these functions, which include alternative dispute resolution, and reviewing the complaints handling practices of agencies – both useful tools in an Ombudsman’s toolkit.

It is an ambitious plan, but my staff and I are excited about it, and look forward to achieving it in the public interest.

Deborah Glass  
**Ombudsman**



# Strategic Framework 2020-24

## Strategic Framework 2020-24

### Ensure Fairness

ensuring fairness through independent and impartial complaint resolution and encouraging fair and reasonable decision making within the public sector

### Our Vision

ensure fairness for Victorians in their public dealings with the public sector and improve public administration

### Enhance integrity and accountability

enhancing accountability by independently investigating serious matters and reporting on improper conduct and poor administration

### Protect Human Rights

protecting human rights by investigating whether an action or decision is incompatible with human rights and making it easier for vulnerable people to complain

### Support innovation and improvements

supporting innovation and continuous improvement methods to assist public organisations to learn from complaints and investigations and by investigating systemic issues and identifying solutions

### Our Values

Responsiveness | Integrity | Impartiality | Accountability | Respect | Leadership | Human Rights

## Relevance

More people access and value our services

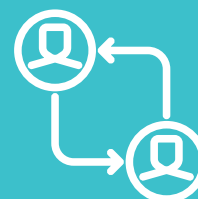


### Strategies

1. Increase community awareness of and trust in the Victorian Ombudsman
2. Prioritise social justice and human rights related issues
3. Improve accessibility to people through tailored approaches, targeting regional communities, vulnerable communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and young people
4. Utilise new technologies to maximise the Victorian Ombudsman's accessibility efforts

## Impact

Victorian public organisations deal fairly with people



### Strategies

5. Engage with public organisations to promote good complaint handling, prevent maladministration and improper conduct
6. Review complaint practices and procedures and conduct alternative dispute resolution
7. Identify improvement opportunities translatable to public organisations, not only the investigation subjects
8. Better engagement between public organisations, the public, and the Victorian Ombudsman due to quality of decision-making; leading to fewer complaints
9. Engage with public organisations to ensure systemic change from Victorian Ombudsman investigations, enquiries and procedure reviews



# A Fairer Victoria For Everyone

## Quality

Victorian Ombudsman staff are recognised for their integrity, values and skills



### Strategies

10. Embed our values into our ways of working, and utilise our KPIs and quality assurance to aim for high performance and to guide our training
11. Continue to evolve our operations utilising advances in technology, prioritising people, performance and engagement
12. Publicise our decisions and our work to maintain our profile as a key member of Victoria's integrity system
13. Ensure capability building for future needs

## Innovation



Sustainable Victorian Ombudsman, lean internally and efficient externally



### Strategies

14. Evidence-based budget bids and engagement with key stakeholders
15. Contemporary service delivery model that is quick and easy to use
16. Our operations reflect environmental and sustainability considerations

# Victorian Ombudsman Annual Plan 2021-22



Objective 1	Objective 2
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Relevance</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>More people access and value our services</b></p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Impact</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Victorian public organisations deal fairly with people</b></p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>
<p>Pilot expanded Victorian Ombudsman contact hours to 7am-7pm</p>	<p>Develop business intelligence capability to assist public organisations learn from their complaints</p>
<p>Expand Victorian Ombudsman contact methods to include SMS and webchat</p>	<p>Conduct at least one joint investigation or project with IBAC</p>
<p>Pilot a partnership with a metro and a regional Community Legal Centre (CLC)</p>	<p>Increase the number of public education workshops, including at least one Victorian Ombudsman-led initiative with other integrity agencies</p>
<p>Conduct outreach programs targeting regional communities, vulnerable communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and young people</p>	<p>Conduct quarterly workshops for public organisations on emerging issues</p>
<p>Conduct a social justice/human rights-focused investigation</p>	<p>Enhance efficiencies in enquiries and investigations by improving Ombudsman liaisons with public organisations</p>
<p>Expand community awareness (especially of young people) of the Victorian Ombudsman's role through increased use of social media channels</p>	<p>Commence at least two systemic investigations into issues of public concern</p>
<p>Implement the complaint practices and procedures review function and conduct reviews of complaint practices and procedures in at least one department and one public body</p>	
<p>Implement the alternative dispute resolution function</p>	
<p>Conduct a follow-up community awareness survey</p>	

\* A 'warm handover' allows complaints to be transferred directly to another department/agency without requiring the complainant to take further steps

\*\* Under a digital-first approach, VO will reduce its environmental impact by minimising hard-copy printing.

\*\*\* Under a smart space utilisation approach, VO will enable desk-sharing (subject to Public Health COVID advice).

# A Fairer Victoria For Everyone

Objective 3	Objective 4
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Quality</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Victorian Ombudsman staff are recognised for their integrity, values and skills</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Innovation</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sustainable Victorian Ombudsman, lean internally and efficient externally</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>
<p>Implement a capability framework focusing on people and their development, particularly at leadership and management levels</p>	<p>Deliver on process and system efficiencies through case management system automation, including complaint correspondence integration</p>
<p>Identify key workforce gaps and address them through targeting recruitment and training</p>	<p>Pilot a 'warm handover'* of premature complaints to a department/agency</p>
<p>Develop a Diversity and Inclusion Plan and an Accessibility Action Plan</p>	<p>Develop a website-driven 'warm handover' for non-jurisdictional complaints</p>
<p>Embed 6-monthly administrative decision-making and human rights training for staff</p>	<p>Deliver on process and system efficiencies through the new finance system implementation</p>
<p>Develop real-time Victorian Ombudsman performance metrics to be displayed on the website</p>	<p>Enhance the Victorian Ombudsman's social responsibility through a digital-first approach** and smart space utilisation***</p>
<p>Develop Innovate RAP and have it approved by Reconciliation Australia</p>	



# Consulting on our work program

The consultation with the Integrity and Oversight Committee (IOC) provides transparency in the directions and actions we plan to undertake whilst providing the opportunity for considered feedback.

The feedback received was reviewed to provide greater alignment to the overall actions within this plan.

All feedback from the IOC was incorporated in the Annual Plan 2021-22.



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