



# Outcomes Framework 2022-2030

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

This document was written on the land of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation. Victoria Legal Aid acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands across Victoria and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We recognise their continuing connection to country, culture and identity and the importance of self-determination for creating better futures for First Nations people.

## ABOUT VICTORIA LEGAL AID

Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) is a statutory authority that serves the community by providing information, legal advice, and education with a focus on the prevention and early resolution of legal problems. We prioritise more intensive legal services, such as legal advice and representation, to those who need it the most. We recognise the intersections between legal and social issues in the way we do our work and advocate for change. We also work to address the barriers that prevent people from accessing the justice system by participating in systemic reforms and strategic advocacy.



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# Chairperson and CEO message

We are pleased to present Victoria Legal Aid's Outcomes Framework, an eight year view of the difference legal aid makes for our clients, communities, systems, and services we work with.

We are grateful for the work already done by sector partners to define legal assistance outcomes in Australia. This particularly includes the leadership of the community legal sector in developing outcomes and impact frameworks in [Victoria](#) and [Queensland](#) and the articulation of shared outcomes in the most recent National Legal Assistance [Strategic Framework and Partnership 2020–25](#). Long-term strategic plans including the Justice Strategic Plan 2021–31, and [A Just Future: A 10-Year plan for Community Legal Centres 2022–32](#), also express a common vision for improving access to justice for all Victorians.

Taking an outcomes and evidence-based approach to legal assistance service design and delivery will make our services more responsive to the needs and voices of legal aid clients. It will also allow us to build evidence of what works and what needs improving, to ensure our services are tailored, accessible, timely, inclusive, and effective at addressing and preventing legal problems. The outcomes approach follows the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [guidelines for people-centred legal and justice services](#), and the Victorian government's commitment to [outcomes and evidence reform](#) in public services.

Focusing our service design and delivery on legal needs and outcomes is essential for:

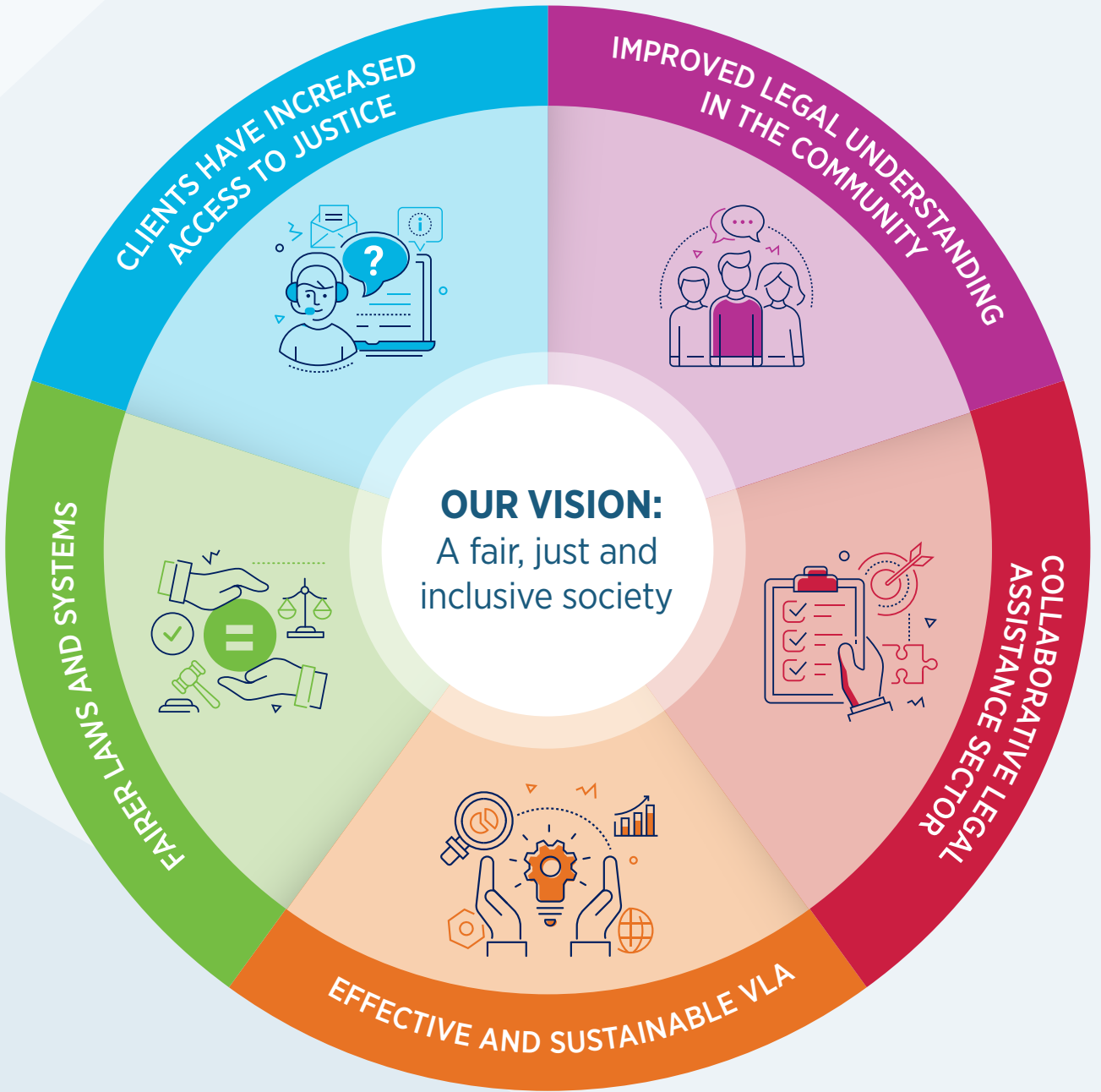
- Elevating clients' experience and voices
- Improving coordination across agencies towards shared goals to address systemic problems and legal needs
- Better targeting of effective services for clients and communities, and
- Making the most of the limited funding we receive.

Measuring outcomes in the legal assistance sector needs to be staged, feasible, and appropriately resourced. We recognise that we face challenges in improving the quality and consistency of data collection and using data effectively, as identified in the [Victoria Law Foundation's review](#) in 2020. We also recognise that client and system change outcomes rely on many variables and the actions of many agencies.

We will continue to work closely with legal assistance sector partners and government as we invest in strengthening our approach to outcomes and evidence-based services over the coming years.

**Bill Jaboor, Chairperson**  
**Louise Glanville, Chief Executive Officer**





# Victoria Legal Aid Outcomes Framework

Our vision is for a fair, just and inclusive society, where people can get help with their legal problems and have a stronger voice in how laws and legal processes affect them.

Our purpose is to make a difference for clients and the community through the provision of effective help to address legal problems, supporting the coordination of a strong and dynamic legal assistance sector and working with partners to create fairer laws and systems.

Aligning with our vision and purpose, our Outcomes Framework articulates our aims to:

- increase access to justice for our clients,
- improve legal understanding in the community,
- support our partners in the legal assistance sector, and
- influence justice and other services to make laws and systems fairer for people.

By embedding our Outcomes Framework across the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of our programs and services, we can deliver effective services that meet the needs of our clients and the community.

## Purpose of our Outcomes Framework

The Victoria Legal Aid Outcomes Framework defines the intended outcomes of our work: the difference that we want our services to make for our clients and the Victorian community.

The framework will guide our services, programs, and strategies over the next eight years, from 2022-2030. The framework helps us link what our clients need, what we do (our services and programs), and what we want to achieve – positive outcomes for people seeking help with their legal and related problems.

The Outcomes Framework supports us to:

- **Focus** on the outcomes that matter most to people seeking help with legal and related issues.
- **Build and use evidence** about what we are achieving, so we can do more of what works, and improve our services and advocacy in response to our clients.
- **Collaborate with our sector partners** to work towards common outcomes and have a sustainable impact in improving access to justice.

Our four-year strategies (Strategy 26 and Strategy 30) set the priority actions for us to achieve the outcomes, and in turn guide our service design and planning. We will measure our outcomes in regular data collection, reporting, and research and evaluations, to build evidence of the impact of legal assistance services for people in Victoria.

## What are outcomes?

Outcomes are the difference that we make for our clients, communities, systems, and services as a result of our work.

Our Outcomes Framework focuses on the difference our work makes for our clients and for the wider Victorian community, along with the changes we want to influence in the legal assistance and justice systems and our own organisation that will contribute to improved access to justice.

Our Outcomes Framework sets out that through our work we want people to:

- **Equitably access** our services, with the right services at the right time and place
- **Experience** safe, accessible, inclusive, and respectful services that meet people's diverse needs and capabilities
- **Have their voices heard** in the design and delivery of services, and in system reforms
- Improve their **ability to identify and understand legal problems** and to **seek help**, and ultimately, to
- **Address and prevent legal problems.**

Our services are targeted to people facing disadvantage who have the greatest legal need. We tailor our services to people's diverse needs and capabilities and recognise that many people and communities experience barriers in accessing justice due to disadvantage and discrimination for their gender, sexuality, age, disability, mental health, First Nations identity, where they live, their cultures, languages spoken, citizenship status, experiences of trauma and violence, and socio-economic status. In the design, delivery, and evaluation of our services, we are committed to addressing these barriers and prioritising outcomes for these groups.



# Outcomes Framework

Based on our organisational mandate and commitments, the outcomes of Victoria Legal Aid's work focus on five key stakeholder groups: clients, the Victorian community, the legal assistance sector, laws and systems and our own organisation.

01



## Clients have increased access to justice

- 1.1 Clients are assisted to address or prevent legal problems
- 1.2 Clients equitably access timely legal and related services, including early intervention and preventative services, that meet their needs and capabilities
- 1.3 First Nations clients experience culturally safe legal services and increased access to justice
- 1.4 Clients experience culturally safe, accessible, inclusive, and respectful services
- 1.5 Clients have a strong voice in services and systems affecting them

02



## Improved legal understanding in the community

- 2.1 Community members have improved understanding and capability to address or prevent legal problems
- 2.2 Community members access reliable, timely and targeted legal information that meets their needs and capabilities

03



## Collaborative legal assistance sector

- 3.1 The legal assistance sector works together to deliver coordinated and responsive services and advocacy
- 3.2 VLA effectively supports self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services
- 3.3 The legal assistance sector shares and uses evidence to design and deliver services

04



## Fairer laws and systems

- 4.1 Laws and policies address systemic injustices and improve equality for clients and communities
- 4.2 Changes in practices by government, courts, tribunals, police, corrections, and service providers to be people-centred and embed self-determination

05



## Effective and sustainable Victoria Legal Aid

- 5.1 VLA services and advocacy are shaped by people with lived experience
- 5.2 VLA practices are culturally safe and embed First Nations peoples' self-determination
- 5.3 VLA is a safe, inclusive, and equitable organisation, with diverse and skilled staff
- 5.4 VLA is equipped with sustainable resources and technology, that reduce our environmental impact and enable us to deliver services
- 5.5 VLA's data capabilities are strengthened to support outcomes – and evidence-based services



# Victoria Legal Aid Outcomes 2022–2030

## Client and community outcomes

Our client and community outcomes are about improving access to justice and supporting people to develop stronger legal capability and a voice in legal problems they face. The outcomes include how people equitably access and experience our legal and related services and information across Victoria, and how this assists them to prevent or minimise the impact of legal problems, or to resolve them and move forward with their lives.

01



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### Improved community legal understanding

- 2.1 Community members have improved understanding and capability to address or prevent legal problems
- 2.2 Community members access reliable, timely and targeted legal information that meets their needs and capabilities



## Sector and system outcomes

The sector and system outcomes are about improving our capability and practices, and how we support and work together with community legal centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services, and private practitioners. They include our work to elevate the voices of people who have experienced legal and justice services and advocate jointly with the sector to improve and reform laws and systems, so they are more people-centred, culturally safe, support First Nations peoples' self-determination, address systemic injustices, and improve equality for clients and the Victorian community.

**O3**



### **Collaborative legal assistance sector**

- 3.1** The legal assistance sector works together to deliver coordinated and responsive services and advocacy

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- 3.2** VLA effectively supports self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services

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- 3.3** The legal assistance sector shares and uses evidence to design and deliver services

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**O4**



### **Fairer laws and systems**

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## O5



### Effective and sustainable Victoria Legal Aid

- 5.1** VLA services and advocacy are shaped by people with lived experience

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- 5.2** VLA practices are culturally safe and embed First Nations peoples' self-determination

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- 5.3** VLA is a safe, inclusive, and equitable organisation, with diverse and skilled staff

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- 5.4** VLA is equipped with sustainable resources and technology, that reduce our environmental impact and enable us to deliver services

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- 5.5** VLA's data capabilities are strengthened to support outcomes- and evidence-based services



## Who do the outcomes relate to?

The outcomes in the framework are organised by the main groups of people and organisations we work with: our **clients** and the **community, legal assistance sector** partners including community legal centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services, and private legal practitioners, and the other organisations working in **laws and systems** including courts, tribunals, corrections, police, government, as well as a range of service providers in the community sector (Figure 1). The framework also includes outcomes for **VLA**, expressing our commitments to be an effective and sustainable legal aid organisation. The outcomes for these five groups are interlinked. Strengthening our services and coordination with partners, and influencing changes across the justice and related systems, will contribute to just and equitable outcomes for clients and the wider community.

## Where are the outcomes from?

The outcomes in this framework are based on our statutory objectives and commitments and are aligned with relevant strategies and outcomes in our sector. The Outcomes Framework is also based on existing outcomes defined in our programs across our practice areas – Criminal Law, Family, Youth and Children’s Law, Civil Justice and Access and Equity, and in our organisational strategies and plans. See the section on Outcomes in our sector for more information.

The Outcomes Framework was developed with input from a working group of staff across VLA, and key sector partners who provided advice and review. The draft outcomes were shared with staff and sector partners during the consultation process for our Strategy 26, and the feedback was used to finalise the framework.

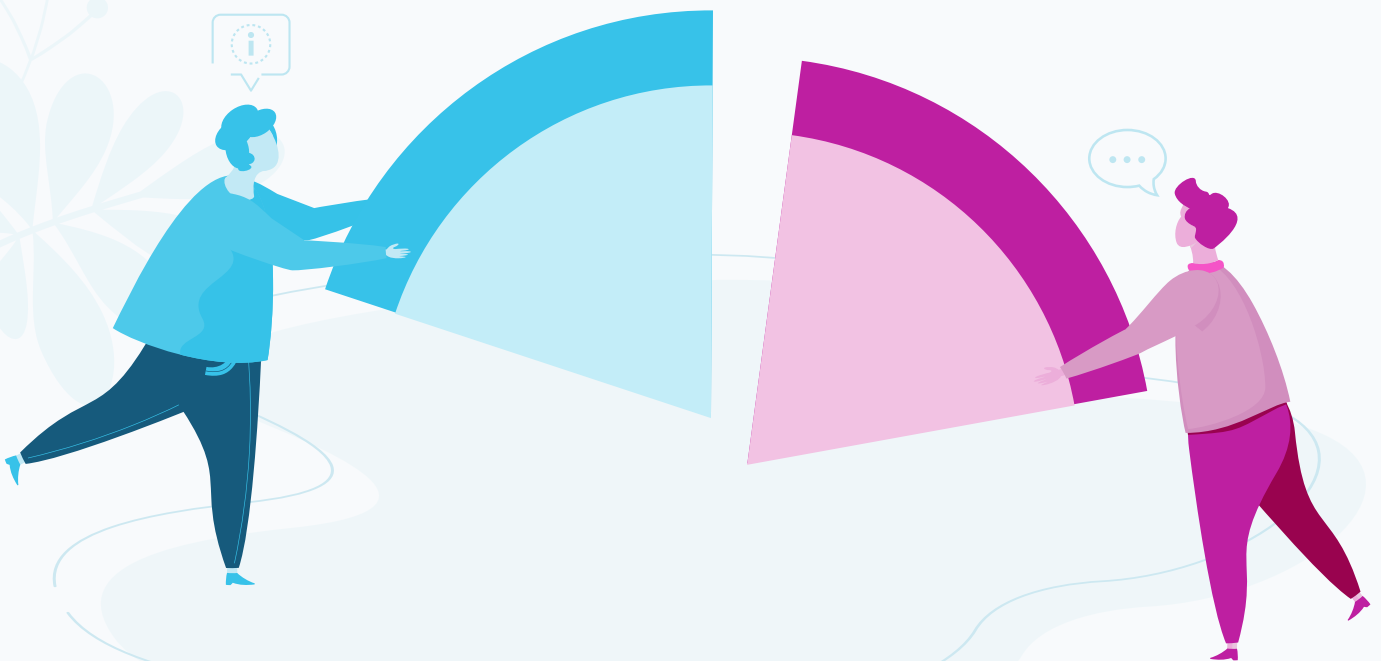


Figure 1 - who do the outcomes relate to?



## Who do we help?

Victoria Legal Aid helps people with their legal problems. We provide free legal information and education to all Victorians, with a focus on prevention and early resolution of legal problems. We prioritise more intensive legal services such as legal advice and representation for people who need them most, based on their financial situation, the nature and seriousness of their problem and their individual circumstances<sup>1</sup>. We recognise the connections between legal and social issues in the way we do our work, and we conduct strategic litigation and advocate to change policies and processes to remedy legal problems for individuals and the broader community.

Our clients include people in Victoria experiencing disadvantage and legal and related problems. Our services for clients include [legal services and advice](#), information, and education, as well as related services such as [family dispute resolution](#), and non-legal advocacy and support to self-advocate, including [independent mental health advocacy](#) and [independent family advocacy and support](#).

Our community legal information services are available to all Victorians, and include our [Find legal answers](#), [Legal Help chat](#) and [phone line](#), [community education](#) and [resources](#), and [public law library](#).

We also work on [law reform and strategic advocacy](#) to transform the justice system and make contributions on a broad range of social justice issues. We listen to our clients and the community and work closely with our partners in the legal assistance and community sectors to do so; pursuing changes in laws, policies, and practices of organisations in the justice and related systems, to benefit people affected by systemic issues, and improve access to justice.



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<sup>1</sup> More information about our services and who is eligible for help is available on our website: [Victoria Legal Aid | Helping Victorians with their legal problems](#).

# Using the outcomes framework

The outcomes guide our strategy, planning, service design, reporting and evaluation.

## Strategic planning

The outcomes are a long-term view that guides our four-year strategies, annual corporate plans, and directorate, regional, and program plans (Figure 2).

## Service design

The outcomes shape our service design; opening new ways of thinking about how different service models can best achieve client and community outcomes, and to align and coordinate efforts on shared sector outcomes for access to justice and system reform.

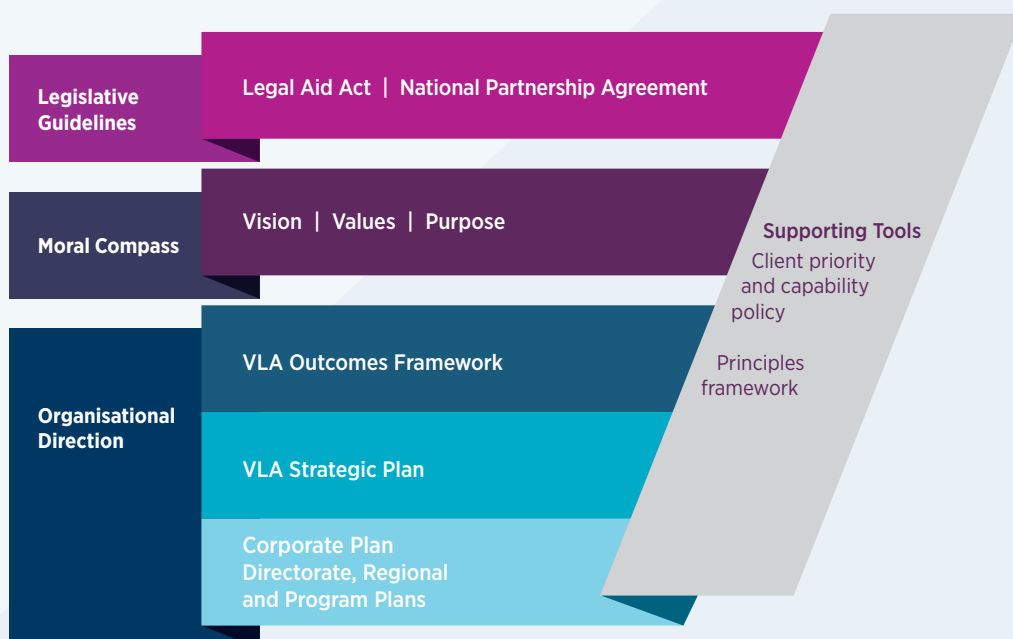
## Evaluation, research, and reporting

To strengthen our understanding of outcomes, we are continuing to invest in our client engagement and leadership, such as our client satisfaction surveys, and working with people with lived experience in service design, evaluation and research.

We update our Research and Evaluation Agenda every four years, to prioritise areas where we will conduct evaluations and research on innovative service approaches, and build evidence for how legal services contribute to resolving and preventing legal problems.

We are also updating our regular corporate performance reporting to link to the Outcomes Framework, and investing in improvements in our collection and use of service data, through our Data and Digital Information Strategy.

**Figure 2 - Our planning guidelines**



# Outcomes in our sector

The outcomes in this framework are based on our statutory objectives and commitments and aligned with relevant outcomes in the legal assistance sector including the:

- *Legal Aid Act 1978 (Vic)*
- National Strategic Framework for Legal Assistance
- National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) Agreement 2020–25
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Framework and Good Practice Principles for People-Centred Justice
- OECD criteria for people centred-design and delivery of legal and justice services
- Victorian Community Legal Sector Outcomes Measurement Framework
- A Just Future: A 10-Year Plan for Community Legal Centres
- Victorian Justice Strategic Plan 2021–31
- Ending Family Violence: Victoria's 10 Year Plan for Change and family violence legal assistance

The Outcomes Framework is also based on existing outcomes defined in our programs across our practice areas in Family, Youth and Children's Law, Civil Justice and Access and Equity, Criminal Law, and in our organisational strategies and plans, including:

- Aboriginal Services Strategy 2020–25
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Learning Strategy 2020–25
- Client-First Strategy 2020–23
- Client Priority and Capability policy
- Community Legal Information Strategy 2021–24
- Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2020–23
- Disability Action Plan 2022–25
- Equitable Briefing Strategy
- Gender Equality Action Plan 2022–25
- Inclusion Framework
- Principles framework
- Reconciliation Action Plan 2019–22

Under the *Legal Aid Act 1978 (Vic)* the objectives of VLA are:

- To provide legal aid in the most effective, efficient and economic manner;
- To manage its resources to make legal aid available at a reasonable cost to the community and on an equitable basis throughout the state;
  - To ensure the coordination of the provision of legal aid so that it responds to the legal and related needs of the community
  - To ensure the coordination of the provision of legal assistance information so that the information responds to the legal and related needs of the community, including by being: (i) accessible, (ii) current, (iii) high quality, and (iv) of sufficient breadth;
- To provide to the community improved access to justice and legal remedies
- To pursue innovative means of providing legal aid directed at minimising the need for individual legal services in the community.





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