

strategy³⁰

Our Strategic Plan for 2026–30

*Fairness, Care,
Courage, Inclusion*



Acknowledgement of Country

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

Terminology

The term 'First Peoples' is used throughout the Strategy when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, aligning with the Victorian Statewide Treaty and First Peoples' Assembly. Other references, including 'Aboriginal', may be used when referring to an organisation or inquiry.

Artwork: Kinaway tar-wan by Bitja (Dixon Patten Jnr)





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Introducing Strategy 30

We are proud to present our strategic plan – Strategy 30 – which sets our direction and priorities until 2030. It builds on the foundations of Strategy 26, strengthening our commitment to fairness, inclusion and access to justice, with a clearer focus on where we can make the greatest difference.

We work in a complex and changing environment.

Our organisation has also grown significantly since the last strategy was developed, and we are helping more people than ever right across Victoria. However, demand for legal assistance continues to increase, and the needs of the people we support are becoming more complex.

At the same time, funding is tight, the economic outlook is challenging, and the justice system continues to change. This means we have to make careful choices about where we focus our resources and efforts. There are also broader shifts shaping our work, including progress in First Peoples justice and self-determination, rapid developments in technology and rising expectations of government services.

This strategy responds by focusing effort where it matters most – providing early help where we can, targeting assistance to those with the greatest need, and continuing to advocate for fairer laws and systems. It ensures we remain independent and responsive, focused on practical outcomes for clients, and working closely with partners across the legal assistance, justice and related sectors to achieve common goals.

Our people are central to our work. We recognise the dedication they bring, and we are committed to supporting their wellbeing and development.

We look forward to delivering this strategy with clarity and focus, and to continuing our work towards a fairer and more inclusive Victoria.



Llewellyn Prain
Chair

1 July 2026



Toby Hemming
Chief Executive Officer



Who we are

Victoria Legal Aid is a cornerstone of Victoria's justice system, delivering essential legal services to the community.

We provide legal advice, dispute resolution, representation, information and advocacy services to hundreds of thousands of Victorians each year for criminal, civil, family violence, child protection and family law problems. We ensure people have access to legal services close to where they live, across metropolitan, suburban and regional locations.

Through non-legal, early intervention and dispute resolution services, we support people to understand their rights, participate in decision-making and resolve matters. We work closely with partners to influence policies and challenge unfair laws and practices to make our society fairer for everyone.

By coordinating legal assistance and information, resolving issues early and supporting people through court processes when necessary, we help prevent problems escalating and reduce harm. We target our efforts and limited resources to help those with the greatest need.

Vision

Fair and inclusive justice where people have access to help, and laws and systems work for everyone.

Purpose

To help Victorians resolve legal problems and protect their rights, and to work with partners to improve laws and systems so they are fairer and more accessible.

Values

Our values are central to how we make decisions and deliver services. They guide our everyday actions, influence how we respond to legal need, and shape the way we work with clients, partners and each other.

Fairness

We are committed to fairness in society and facilitating fair and equitable access to legal and related support.

Care

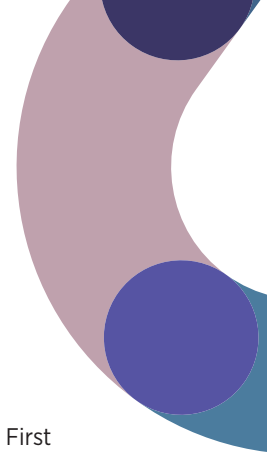
We care about our clients and the community, and we approach our work with an awareness of the effects that trauma and discrimination can have. We treat each other with kindness and respect.

Courage

We approach our work with strength and confidence. We are guided by our values and what matters most to our clients and society.

Inclusion

We provide an inclusive environment for clients, staff and partners.



About this strategy

Strengthening practice to uphold justice

Through Strategy 30, we will continue our reconciliation journey and turn our focus to truth-telling and Treaty. We will be guided by First Peoples leadership and representative bodies, including Gellung Warl. By doing so, we will better understand First Peoples self-determination for the legal assistance sector and embed key enablers across our practice, systems and operations.

We will advance cultural safety by providing culturally safe environments for staff and clients and ensure culturally safe practices are embedded across the organisation. Strong governance, elevated First Peoples leadership and clear accountability are critical to sustaining this work.

We are also committed to genuine engagement, consultation and partnership with First Peoples communities, organisations and representative bodies. We acknowledge the leadership and expertise of First Peoples legal and support services, and recognise that they are central to achieving better justice outcomes.

As a statutory authority serving many First Peoples clients, we have a responsibility to strengthen cultural capability across the organisation, ensuring our services and practices are culturally safe, accessible and responsive.

Commissions, reviews, inquests and inquiries into First Peoples' interactions with the justice system identify critical improvements needed to reduce structural inequities and First Peoples' overrepresentation in the justice system. They call for sustained, system-wide change and increased accountability from government and mainstream organisations to reduce overrepresentation and support self-determination.

Improving outcomes for First Peoples staff and clients is everyone's responsibility. Each of us is accountable for taking meaningful action and contributing to positive change.



Putting clients at the centre of our approach

We strive for a client-centred approach across all activities. For us, client-centred service delivery ensures the service we provide reflects the client's individual needs, circumstances and capabilities, ensuring they receive the right support to understand their rights, options and consequences so they can make informed decisions.

Putting a client-centred approach into practice at Victoria Legal Aid includes:

- listening to and involving people with lived experience in the design of our services, policies and practices
- recognising clients as individuals first, and considering their intersecting needs and contexts to understand what they need to experience safe, trauma-informed, respectful and supportive services
- making service choices that ensure clients receive a service that is appropriate to their needs and circumstances, consistent with our guidelines and eligibility settings

- ensuring clients are informed, involved and consulted throughout their matter, including around decisions and actions affecting them
- recognising that all our actions collectively contribute to shaping how clients experience our service, and that client-centred services require a supported, well-resourced and reflective workforce.



Working in partnership

We deliver legal aid services to the Victorian community in partnership with private practitioners, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and community legal centres. This service delivery approach is called the mixed model.

Our partners, alongside our staff, play a crucial role in making the justice system accessible to as many Victorians as possible across the state.

We pay private solicitors and barristers on our approved panels to deliver legal representation in many serious criminal cases, as well as in family law, family violence, child protection and civil law matters. We also administer funding for community legal centres, which deliver essential localised and specialist advice to the community.

Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, including the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and Djirra, are critical to the mixed model. Their leadership and services are grounded in self-determination and cultural authority. Their role is crucial for delivering Aboriginal-led legal services for First Peoples.

The mixed model helps manage conflicts of interest and gives clients more choice in finding a legal practitioner who meets their individual needs.

Strategic priority areas



Supported clients
and informed
communities



Strong
partnerships
to extend impact



Fair and
equitable systems



Well-supported
people and effective,
sustainable systems



Supported clients and informed communities

We will deliver high quality, client-centred and accessible legal and related services across Victoria. Our services will be shaped by lived experience expertise, operational experience and evidence. They will be directed to those who need it most, ensuring they are effective and inclusive, and deliver meaningful outcomes.

Strategic priorities

1. **Deliver** targeted and effective services that are grounded in professional, inclusive and client-centred practice, while supporting sustainable workloads for staff.
2. **Ensure** equitable access to services across Victoria through consistent service standards and extended service reach through the mixed model.
3. **Refine** our services using client and lived experience expertise, supported by evidence and organisational experience, to ensure our services respond to need and achieve meaningful outcomes for clients.
4. **Improve** intake, triage and referral pathways so people receive clear advice and are directed to the right service at the right time.
5. **Streamline** access to clear, accurate and reliable legal information and tools that help people across Victoria identify and resolve legal issues early and take action before problems escalate.



Strong partnerships to extend impact

We will strengthen partnerships across the legal assistance sector and the justice and human services systems to ensure people get timely and effective help, extend our impact, and improve service coordination. Through clearer roles, aligned processes, joint advocacy and shared evidence, we will strengthen the mixed model and make it easier for people to navigate the system.

Strategic priorities

1. **Strengthen** partnerships with private practitioners and make it easier to work with us by reducing the administrative burden on them and improving communication, engagement, transparency and support.
2. **Collaborate** with community legal centres and the broader justice sector to share evidence, secure resources, deliver services that respond to legal need, coordinate planning and strengthen collective advocacy.
3. **Lead** cross-sector partnerships to create clear, connected referral pathways, ensuring timely support for people with legal needs.
4. **Deepen** relationships with First Peoples communities and organisations such as the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and Djirra to further enable self-determination in the justice system, and take shared accountability for implementing Yoorrook Justice Commission recommendations.



Fair and equitable systems

We will use our expertise and evidence to influence laws, policies and system settings so legal and related problems are resolved fairly, effectively and, where possible, early. We will target our services and focus our advocacy areas to reduce unfairness for clients and pressures on the justice system. By doing this, and by partnering with First Peoples organisations and building shared evidence across the sector, we will help create fairer and more effective laws and systems.

Strategic priorities

1. **Focus** advocacy efforts where evidence shows we can most improve fairness, minimise legal need and improve system outcomes.
2. **Advocate** with system partners for sustainable, long-term funding that improves access to justice and provides greater stability for legal assistance services.
3. **Strengthen** partnerships with Aboriginal legal services and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to promote culturally safe laws, policies and practices.
4. **Coordinate** activities with system partners to share insights, align reform priorities and advocate for the changes that are most likely to improve client outcomes and reduce pressure across systems.



Well-supported people and effective, sustainable systems

We will support our staff and sector partners to deliver high quality services, while building a sustainable workforce across Victoria. This includes promoting wellbeing, building skills and fostering inclusive, supportive and culturally capable workplaces. We will take an intersectional approach to understand and meet the needs of our diverse workforce.

We will also improve our systems, technology and data capability to support efficient, high-quality services, and pursue funding that supports the long-term sustainability of our organisation and the sector.

Strategic priorities

1. **Support** our workforce through inclusive and culturally safe work practices, psychologically safe working environments and ongoing education and professional development.
2. **Embed** accountability across all parts of the organisation for strengthening First Peoples cultural capability.
3. **Support** sustainable workloads, including by strengthening workforce planning, improving how we prioritise and allocate work, and securing funding to meet growing demand, including for our service partners.
4. **Improve** processes and work practices and implement technologies that support staff and practice partners to deliver high-quality services.
5. **Improve** data quality, collection and use to inform evidence-led service planning, and how we track and report on our outcomes.



