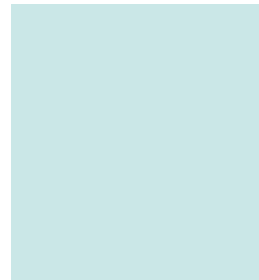
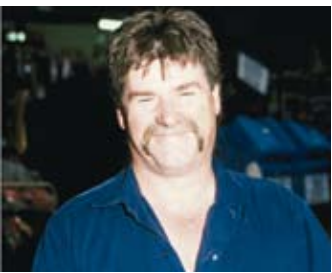


Directional Statement 2006

The story.
The future.



Contents

03	Secretary's Foreword
04	About DVC
05	Key Concepts
05	Meeting Government's Priorities
05	DVC's Focus on Place and People
07	The Changing Relationship with Local Government
08	Directions
10	What Communities Can Expect from DVC
10	DVC Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries
11	Key Contacts

Secretary's Foreword

Almost four years on from the establishment of the Department for Victorian Communities there is a rapidly growing body of evidence to support the value of building stronger communities.

The recent Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Outer Suburban Growth Areas found that better urban design alone will not be enough to build successful new communities in areas going through rapid growth and demographic change. The inquiry noted that solutions to many of the complex problems that new communities face also require community input.

Similarly, the Victorian Government's \$1.6 billion investment through *A Fairer Victoria* to reduce disadvantage and create opportunity has been based on the fact that greater community involvement in the way services are planned and delivered creates better services.

At the national level, the most recent Council of Australian Governments meeting endorsed Victoria's argument that future economic growth will depend largely on increasing workforce participation. This highlights the importance of influencing the factors that build "human capital", many of which are shaped by the nature of local interventions and community attitudes.

Finally, there is an increasing volume of research to show that outcomes, in areas such as employment, education and justice, are associated with the characteristics of strong communities. These characteristics include volunteering and opportunities for community participation.

DVC's specific goal is to create active, confident and resilient communities.

The achievement of this goal lies in increasing community participation in identifying, planning and deciding on local solutions to local problems.

Reorientating activities and processes to ensure community participation requires new skills and attitudes within the public service.

It also requires new ways of working internally within government, often described as the need for joined-up government.

But joining-up internally within government alone will not be sufficient.

What is also required is joining-up externally; forming partnerships with other levels of government, organisations and service providers already working within communities.

Building active, confident and resilient communities is a substantial undertaking.

This document shows how we are working towards that goal.



Yehudi Blacher
September 2006

About DVC

The Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) was created in 2002.

The portfolios that comprise the department create an opportunity to build stronger communities through a more integrated approach to planning, funding and delivering services at the local level.

DVC provides a range of services that support local communities to become better places to live in.

DVC also supports local-level cooperation to improve the planning and delivery of services to local communities.



DVC is also responsible for the services of the Public Record Office Victoria, the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and Government and Community Information.

Organisational Values

DVC's work is underpinned by the following values:

Communities first – Taking the time to listen properly and actively invite the views of others – planning and engaging people before doing.

People and place – Highlighting the importance of people and place, understanding and appreciating difference – between people and between local areas.

Doing government differently – Acting as a broker for communities and serving as a catalyst for change; being responsive, approachable and flexible.

Goal

DVC's goal is to build active, confident and resilient communities.

Objectives

Communities that shape their future

– Helping communities respond to new challenges by working together with government, community agencies and businesses.

Communities that encourage participation

– Creating opportunities for increased participation and volunteering in community activities – including social, recreational, sporting, cultural, learning, economic and civic activities.

Communities that embrace diversity

– Supporting and advocating for Indigenous communities, young Victorians, women, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, senior Victorians and people with disabilities.

Communities that gain lasting benefits from major sporting events

– Ensuring that major sporting events provide lasting economic, social and environmental benefits for all Victorians.

Government that is easier to work with

– Working with others across government to develop new approaches that make government more understanding, flexible and responsive.

Key Concepts

What is a community?

In its broadest sense, communities are formed by groups of Victorians who share a common sense of belonging. This can include:

- People who live in the same place, such as a neighbourhood, suburb or town;
- People of a similar age, culture or lifestyle; and
- People with common interests, such as sporting activities, type of work or environment.

What are strong communities?

Strong communities typically have a mixture of assets, including physical infrastructure and the capabilities and skills of the local community.

Strong communities also have governance networks able to maximise the use of those assets and that can be mobilised to attract new resources.

Why care about strong communities?

Strong communities improve the wellbeing of Victorians in very practical ways.

Research shows that key elements of strong communities – including opportunities to participate and volunteer – are linked to important social outcomes.

These outcomes include higher levels of school completion, increased rates of employment and reduced contact with the criminal justice system.

Key elements of strong community, including volunteering and having opportunities to participate, protect people against disadvantage.

Successful community strengthening strategies can also contribute to the creation of stronger civic institutions, improved wellbeing and increased social and economic opportunities.

What do community strengthening actions involve?

Community strengthening is a sustained effort to increase participation and partnerships among members of a community to achieve common objectives.

It involves local people, community organisations, government, business and philanthropic organisations working together to achieve agreed social, economic and environmental outcomes.

Meeting Government's Priorities

DVC's objectives are aligned with the Victorian Government's long-term vision for the state, *Growing Victoria Together*, in the following specific areas:

- Building friendly, confident and safe communities.
- A fairer society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity.
- Greater public participation and more accountable government.

DVC has also taken a lead role in the development and implementation of the Victorian Government's recent major policy statements *A Fairer Victoria* (2005) and *A Fairer Victoria – Progress and Next Steps* (2006).

These two statements outline a total of \$1.6 billion dollars of investment in new programs and improved services aimed at reducing disadvantage and creating opportunity in Victoria.

DVC has responsibility for a number of specific major initiatives.

Many of the underlying principles of building stronger communities – including greater community involvement in planning and decision-making – are reflected in the 14 strategy areas of *A Fairer Victoria*.

This reflects a growing interest in:

- The ability of community networks to deliver important social outcomes; and
- The need for government services to respond in a more coordinated way to the needs of specific places.

DVC's Focus on Place and People

In targeting our activities, DVC works with communities defined by both identity and location. We refer to this as a focus on place and people.

Focus on Place

DVC's place-based approach has complementary top-down and bottom-up elements.

The top-down element involves identifying where DVC and other partners can provide a strategic and coordinated approach to investment that responds to community needs and priorities.

This demands a shift from multiple portfolio responses to a more joined-up response from government to the needs of a local area.

This often requires new governance structures that can ensure integration of effort.

The bottom-up element focuses on community strengthening activities in which the community is engaged with, and encouraged to, participate in planning and prioritising the needs of their community.

Both these elements are strongly represented in DVC's Community Renewal and Community Building Initiative, which involve local communities in planning and decision-making.

Local Teams that cover the five regional and three metropolitan areas of Victoria support DVC's place-based approach. These teams:

- Help individuals and organisations access government funding and support;
- Work with individuals and community organisations to create solutions by bringing together resources from across government;
- Help orientate funding programs and government investments towards the needs of the local projects, rather than being restricted by bureaucratic silos;
- Focus on building networks that can support participation and create sustainable collaborations and partnerships; and
- Aim to be public service 'door openers', rather than 'gatekeepers'.

The Changing Relationship With Local Government

Focus on People

DVC's work with Indigenous and multicultural communities, young Victorians, women, senior Victorians and people with disabilities – has both statewide and local elements.

At all levels, this work includes:

- Reducing the barriers that prevent access to opportunity and access to services;
- Increasing levels of participation in community activities; and
- Increasing the voice of local communities.

Examples of statewide actions include providing young people with access to information and opportunities wherever they live in Victoria through the Youth Central website.

DVC's work also has a strong local focus. The Refugee Support Program provides targeted support services in areas with high refugee populations and the Workforce Participation Partnerships program brings together a range of organisations to target communities and areas with high levels of unemployment.

Local government is the level of government closest to the community and it is a major provider of important local community services.

Victoria's 79 local councils also have an important role in new community strengthening activities that bring together different groups of people and organisations to solve local problems.

DVC has therefore led and supported initiatives to improve engagement between state and local government.

DVC provides support to Regional Management Forums comprising senior area representatives from each Victorian department as well as the CEOs of each local council in that area.

In addition, a new Intergovernmental Agreement will ensure greater clarity in the allocation of funding when services and responsibilities are transferred between local, state and federal levels of government.

New funding provided by DVC helps local councils do the comprehensive Community Planning that their service delivery requires. DVC has also helped drive a substantial reduction in the size and complexity of that planning.

DVC has sponsored Research and Consultation to identify the barriers preventing councils from working more closely with local communities and the reforms needed to overcome those barriers.

DVC also provides funding to help support and develop key local community institutions including Libraries and Neighbourhood Houses.

Directions

The Department is focusing on four strategic directions:

1. Engaging with communities to build networks

We believe in bringing together community representatives to build networks that can help marshal the resources needed to create practical solutions to specific issues.

Community networks have been shown to contribute to key social outcomes, including improved education achievement levels, increased economic participation and reduced contact with the criminal justice system.

A key element of DVC's work is therefore to create opportunities for local community participation and for greater community involvement in planning and decision-making.

One example of this work is DVC's new Indigenous Community Engagement and Representation initiative.

With the abolition of ATSIC, many Indigenous communities now lack representation and access to the formal structures that can involve them in the planning and shaping of community services.

The initiative is introducing new community representation and engagement arrangements to build Indigenous community capacity at both a local and regional level.

Local Indigenous Networks will be established in 38 Indigenous communities across Victoria.

At a local level these networks will help Indigenous communities identify local priorities and develop community plans.

At a regional level these networks will offer Indigenous Victorians direct input into forums that shape the delivery of important community services.

2. Creating partnerships that target place

We support partnerships that help plan, coordinate and develop services focusing on the needs of particular places.

There is a growing recognition of the importance of joining-up the range of services provided by different government departments, different levels of government, agencies and service providers.

A number of DVC initiatives therefore prioritise bringing together the range of services delivered into areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage.

This type of coordination reduces service duplication, identifies gaps in services and increases opportunities for collaboration.

One example of this work has been the Frankston Partnership formed by DVC, Frankston Council and the Brotherhood of St Laurence. The partnership aims to improve the services that support young people in Frankston at important transition periods. These include the transitions from primary to secondary school, and from secondary school to further education, employment or training.

Another example is DVC's Community Renewal initiative targeting areas of high socioeconomic disadvantage.

Community Renewal encourages local communities to become involved in identifying the needs of their community and in making decisions about how new and existing resources and services should be directed to meet those needs.

3. Leveraging funding for community initiatives

We offer grants programs that can respond to local needs, encourage the development of shared approaches and help communities leverage funds from other sources.

Through the Community Support Fund, DVC is a significant investor in local communities.

This investment is targeted towards communities with high needs and into projects that bring together a range of organisations working together on common problems.

Another aspect of DVC's grant programs has been investment in important social infrastructure, including local swimming pools and flexible-use community centres.

The value of DVC's grants is substantially increased by the additional funding leveraged from our investments.

A recent analysis of DVC's Better Pools program, which helps local councils renovate or rebuild local aquatic centres, shows that every dollar provided by DVC funding attracts more than three dollars in extra investment.

Another important aspect of the department's work has been our role in building partnerships that bring the resources of the private sector into community building projects.

These partnerships are exemplified in the private sector resources that the department has helped generate to support no interest loan schemes and saving incentive programs that are linked with financial management training.

Partnership approaches are also embedded in new youth foundations that involve young people in making decisions about the allocation of funding in their local community.

4. Leading policy development

We use innovative research, new internal structures and whole-of-government responses that lead to new programs, improved services and better outcomes for communities.

DVC has pioneered the development of research tools, including Indicators of Community Strength that allow key elements of strong communities to be measured.

These research tools have also allowed a number of local governments and Victorian Government agencies to assess the needs of specific local areas and the impact of their work.

DVC has helped lead significant whole-of-government actions including the reform of family violence services.

The objective of the reform is to ensure an integrated service response for women and children experiencing family violence.

DVC has worked closely with Victoria Police, Department of Human Services, Department of Justice and service sector representatives in the implementation of the reform.

One example of the impact of this work is that the number of intervention orders applied for by Victoria Police in 2004–05 increased 81 per cent from the previous year and the number of charges laid in response to family violence matters increased 73 per cent.

What Communities Can Expect From DVC

- DVC's eight Local Teams provide an initial point of contact for many community strengthening projects.

The Teams can also help to involve or coordinate the actions of other government departments where needed.

More specialised advice and support is also available through the expertise of our portfolio areas.

- DVC offers a range of flexible grants that support community strengthening activities.

Many of these grants are specifically designed to encourage the involvement of other project partners.
- DVC provides access to research tools and evidence that can be used to support new community building proposals.
- DVC offers leadership and support in developing new approaches that cross traditional bureaucratic boundaries.
- DVC provides information about Victorian Government services, access to public records, and personal information and services related to births, deaths and marriages.
- DVC plays a brokering role that can connect community strengthening projects with the skills and resources of the private sector to help increase project sustainability.

DVC Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries

DVC provides advice and support to the Victorian Government and the following Ministers:

- **John Thwaites**, Minister for Victorian Communities.
- **Jacinta Allan**, Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs.
- **Steve Bracks**, Premier of Victoria, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Minister responsible for Veterans' Affairs.
- **Candy Broad**, Minister for Local Government, Minister coordinating the new approach to family violence.
- **Mary Delahunty**, Minister for Women's Affairs
- **Sherryl Garbutt**, Minister for Community Services.
- **Gavin Jennings**, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister responsible for Senior Victorians.
- **Justin Madden**, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Commonwealth Games.
- **John Pandazopoulos**, Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs.

DVC also supports:

- **Kaye Darveniza**, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, including Multicultural Affairs.
- **Hong Lim**, Parliamentary Secretary for Victorian Communities, Parliamentary Secretary for Volunteers.
- **Mary Gillett**, Parliamentary Secretary for the Commonwealth Games, Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Affairs.
- **Bruce Mildenhall**, Parliamentary Secretary for Veterans and Ex-service Communities.

Key Contacts

Department for Victorian Communities – Metropolitan Melbourne

1 Spring Street
Melbourne 3000
Telephone: (03) 9208 3333
Facsimile: (03) 9208 3680

Department for Victorian Communities – Barwon-South Western

6-8 Moorabool Street
Geelong 3220
Telephone: 5215 6000
Facsimile: 5215 6099

Department for Victorian Communities – Grampians

48 Sturt Street
Ballarat 3350
Telephone: 5320 5922
Facsimile: 5320 5929

Department for Victorian Communities – Loddon Mallee

47-51 Queen Street
Bendigo 3550
Telephone: 5410 5200
Facsimile: 5410 5299

Department for Victorian Communities – Hume

1st Floor
90-100 Ovens St
Wangaratta 3677
Telephone: 5722 7100
Facsimile: 5722 7109

Department for Victorian Communities – Gippsland

33 Breed Street
Traralgon 3844
Telephone: 5174 7308
Facsimile: 5175 0324

Public Record Office Victoria

99 Shiel Street
North Melbourne 3051
Telephone: (03) 9348 5600
Facsimile: (03) 9348 5656

Ballarat Archives Centre

Level 1,
State Public Offices
Cnr Doveton & Mair Streets
Ballarat 3350
Telephone: 5333 6611

Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages

595 Collins Street
Melbourne 3000
Telephone: 1300 369 367
Facsimile: (03) 9613 5880

Government and Community Information

356 Collins Street
Melbourne 3000
Telephone: 1300 366 356

For Further Information

DVC Website: www.dvc.vic.gov.au

Grants Website: www.grants.dvc.vic.gov.au

Grants Information Line:
Telephone 1300 366 356

Published by the Victorian Government
Department for Victorian Communities
1 Spring Street Melbourne Victoria 3000

Authorised by: Yehudi Blacher
Level 12, 1 Spring Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000

Printed by: Work and Turner

September 2006

Also published on www.dvc.vic.gov.au

Copyright © State of Victoria 2006

This publication is copyright. No part may
be reproduced by any process except
in accordance with the provisions of the
Copyright Act 1968.

ISBN: 0 9775336 3 8

