

# 02

## PLANNING FOR EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SECTOR SERVICES

Good planning is fundamental to achieving public sector goals and delivering services efficiently and effectively. Good planning helps agencies decide where to direct their operational resources and how to prioritise their services.

### USING STRATEGIC PLANS TO EFFECTIVELY ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES

Strategic planning is about working out a way to achieve something, and then determining a detailed approach. Strategic plans provide a 'road map' to achieving long-term goals.

We found that agencies did not always develop plans to achieve their goals, including both legislative objectives and goals set by government in policy and frameworks. Without plans it was not clear how these objectives would be achieved. In some cases, the lack of planning had clearly undermined progress.

*'The Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 prescribes an integrated, long-term approach to catchment management in Victoria. However, the existing statewide approach is fragmented and short term in focus, with no expectations regarding the quality of land and water resources needed to meet the Act's objectives... There is no long-term overarching strategy to support an integrated approach to catchment management in Victoria.'*

*Effectiveness of Catchment Management Authorities*

*'There is currently no overarching strategy or leadership for mental health and the justice system that focuses on improving outcomes for people with a mental illness. Where plans do exist, they are limited to agencies' own areas of responsibility, or only address parts of the justice system.'*

*Mental Health Strategies for the Justice System*

Encouragingly—other audits found examples of good strategic planning to support the achievement of government goals.

*'VicRoads has the most comprehensive strategy for managing the environmental impacts of the road system, and this is a model of what should exist on a portfolio-wide basis. The strategy has specific goals and actions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving air quality and minimising traffic noise impacts. VicRoads also regularly reports on progress and can demonstrate that it is improving the environmental performance of the road network.'*

*Managing the Environmental Impacts of Transport*



## UNDERSTANDING NEEDS AND PLANNING FOR EFFICIENT SERVICE DELIVERY

Delivering services in the right way, to the right people and within available resources takes sound operational planning. We found some agencies had a sophisticated understanding of service need, demand drivers and risks and used this knowledge to plan their operations within tightened financial circumstances.

'Victoria Legal Aid (VLA) has a structured planning framework...informed by a sound understanding of service demand and gaps, organisational risks and financial sustainability...VLA has demonstrated a thorough understanding of the drivers that influence the supply and demand for its services. It undertakes regular environmental scanning, which focuses on the impact that drivers may have across VLA and on specific program areas. In addition, VLA monitors the monthly impact of its internal policy changes that influence the amount of legal services that it is able to supply.'

*Access to Legal Aid*

We also found several opportunities for agencies to strengthen their operational planning for service delivery, by analysing data on how services are used, identifying opportunities to reduce duplication or share resources and gaining a better understanding of the needs of service users. Departments could support strong operational planning by collecting and sharing information on good practices by agencies within their portfolios.

'There is no system-wide planning for high-value imaging equipment. The department does not forecast future demand or coordinate the approach to managing demand for computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance (MR) imaging services at a time when demand is growing rapidly. Health services' planning for, and management of, imaging equipment over the medium to longer term is poor. Without informed planning at the department and health-service level, there is a risk that patients will not be able to access CT and MR scanners in close proximity to them, in a timely way, and without incurring additional costs.'

*Efficiency and Effectiveness of Hospital Services:  
High-value Equipment*

## SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Are our high-level goals supported by strategies and plans with clear actions and priorities?
2. Do our plans include targets and indicators to help measure our progress?
3. Do our plans comply with applicable legislation and clearly link to the relevant statutory and government policy and objectives?
4. Does our operational planning reflect an understanding of our capacity and the demand for our services? Is this understanding informed by a sound evidence base?
5. Do we refresh our operational plans based on periodic analysis of both good and poor performance across the system?