

The Orange Door: Follow-up

May 2025

Independent assurance report to Parliament
2024–25:16



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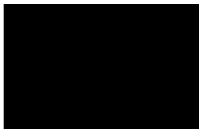
The Hon Shaun Leane MLC
President
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Melbourne

The Hon Maree Edwards MP
Speaker
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Melbourne

Dear Presiding Officers

Under the provisions of the *Audit Act 1994*, I transmit my report *The Orange Door: Follow-up*.

Yours faithfully



Dave Barry
Deputy of the Auditor-General
28 May 2025

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters throughout Victoria. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their continuing culture, and to Elders past and present.

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Support options

Our report discusses issues including family violence, which involves behaviour that is physically, emotionally or economically abusive, threatening, coercive or controlling. If you or someone you know is affected by family violence, support options are available, including from the services listed below. If you are in immediate danger contact Triple 000.

Family violence support

1800RESPECT 1800RESPECT is the national sexual assault and domestic violence hotline. It provides information, referral and counselling services to people experiencing or at risk of experiencing sexual assault or domestic or family violence. It is also available to family, friends and professionals.

Available: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Phone: 1800 737 732 (1800RESPECT)

www.1800respect.org.au

**The Men's
Referral Service**

The Men's Referral Service is the national counselling, information and referral service for men who use violence and abuse and seek to change their behaviour. It is also available to impacted family members, friends and colleagues, and professionals who work with men using violence. It is run by No to Violence, which also provides other services including emergency accommodation.

Available: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Phone: 1300 766 491

www.ntv.org.au/mrs

**The Orange
Door**

The Orange Door provides help for people experiencing family violence or who need assistance with the care and wellbeing of children and young people. The Orange Door is a free service. You do not need a referral or an appointment.

Available: 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday (closed public holidays)

www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/support-near-you

Safe Steps

Safe Steps provides a statewide, inclusive and confidential family and domestic violence crisis support service. It includes disability and crisis accommodation support.

Available: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Phone: 1800 015 188

www.safesteps.org.au

**Sexual Assault
Crisis Line**

Sexual Assault Crisis Line is Victoria's statewide after-hours confidential telephone crisis counselling service for people who have experienced both past and recent sexual assault.

Available: between 5 pm weeknights through to 9 am the next day and 24 hours a day on weekends and public holidays

Phone: 1800 806 292

www.sacl.com.au

Victims of Crime Helpline Victims of Crime Helpline is the official Victorian Government service offering free information and support for people affected by crime.

Available: 8 am to 7 pm Monday to Friday, and 8 am to 5 pm on weekends and public holidays
Phone: 1800 819 817
Text: 0427 767 891
www.victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au

Further support options

13YARN 13YARN is the first national crisis support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping. The service offers a confidential one-on-one yarning opportunity with a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander crisis supporter.

Available: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Phone: 13 92 76
www.13yarn.org.au

Kids Helpline Kids Helpline provides confidential and private counselling services specifically for children and young people between 5 and 25 years old.

Available: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Phone: 1800 551 800
www.kidshelpline.com.au

Lifeline Lifeline is a national charity providing all Australians experiencing emotional distress with access to crisis support and suicide prevention services.

Available: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Phone: 13 11 14
www.lifeline.org.au

Parentline Parentline is a phone service for parents and carers of children from birth to 18 years old. It offers confidential and anonymous counselling and support on parenting issues.

Available: 8 am to midnight every day
Phone: 13 22 89
services.dffh.vic.gov.au/parentline

Rainbow Door Rainbow Door is a free specialist LGBTIQ+ helpline. It provides information, support and referral to LGBTIQ+ Victorians, their friends and family. It supports people of all ages and identities with issues that may include suicidal thoughts, family and intimate partner violence (including elder abuse), alcohol and other drugs, relationship issues, sexual assault, social isolation, mental health and wellbeing.

Available: 10 am to 5 pm every day
Phone: 1800 729 367
www.rainbowdoor.org.au

Review snapshot

Did the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing implement the action plan it developed in response to the 9 recommendations of our 2020 audit report *Managing Support and Safety Hubs*?

Why we did this review

Family violence remains a significant social and public policy issue in Victoria. The demand for family violence services in Victoria continues to increase.

In our 2020 audit we looked at whether support and safety hubs, now known as The Orange Door, provided effective and efficient support for families and those affected by family violence.

We made 9 recommendations to the then Department of Health and Human Services, all of which were accepted. We conducted this review to see if what is now the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) implemented the action plan it developed in response to our recommendations.

Key background information



Source: VAGO.

What we concluded

The department has fully completed 4 of its 9 actions and partially completed 5. It completed 2 actions on time. The department told us that COVID-19, stakeholder engagement and staff reductions contributed to delays.

The Orange Door now operates statewide. The department has developed new guidance and training materials to strengthen integrated practice, Aboriginal cultural safety and its work with children and young people. It has improved the quality and availability of its data, and how it reports on risk, service timeliness and outcomes. It has developed a foundational performance monitoring framework and reports against some performance measures.

It still has outstanding work, including:

- implementing its plans to deliver the full service model including after-hours services and integration with related service systems
- updating and developing key documents related to integrated practice, demand management and performance monitoring
- rolling out a statewide tool for child wellbeing and risk assessments
- finishing its review of The Orange Door governance arrangements.

1.

Our key findings

What we examined

Our review followed one line of inquiry:

1. Has the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) implemented the action plan it developed in response to the 9 recommendations of our 2020 audit report *Managing Support and Safety Hubs*?

We discuss the 9 actions throughout this report. You can also find them in full in Section 2 and Appendix C.

The department

In February 2021, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing replaced the Department of Health and Human Services. Family Safety Victoria became a division of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing in November 2021. It was previously an agency under the Department of Health and Human Services. When we refer to 'the department', we mean whichever of the 2 departments was in place at the time.

Identifying what is working well

In our engagements we look for what is working well – not only areas for improvement.

Sharing positive outcomes allows other public agencies to learn from and adopt good practices. This is an important part of our commitment to better public services for Victorians.

Background information

Family violence

The Victorian *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* defines family violence as behaviour that is physically, emotionally or economically abusive, threatening, coercive or controlling.

Family violence includes intimate partner violence but can also occur in any family or family-like relationship, including between a person with a disability and their carer.

Family violence remains a significant social and public policy issue in Victoria. Family violence causes lasting physical and psychological harm and has wide-reaching impacts on individuals and society:

- In 2022–23, one woman was killed, on average, every 11 days by an intimate partner in Australia.
- In 2023, Victoria Police responded to 94,170 family violence incidents, equating to roughly one incident every 6 minutes. Family violence incidents reported to the police had increased by 38 per cent over the prior 10 years.
- In 2023–24, Victoria's family violence crisis service, Safe Steps, received 51,460 calls.
- In 2023–24, the Victorian Specialist Homelessness Sector supported 43,779 people experiencing insecure housing or homelessness due to family violence.

Support and safety hubs

In 2016, the Royal Commission into Family Violence made 227 recommendations to the Victorian Government aimed at improving prevention and response services in Victoria. One recommendation was to establish 17 support and safety hubs (hubs) across the state.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence recommended that the hubs be in accessible and safe locations that:

- are a visible contact point so people know where to go for support
- receive referrals from police and other professionals
- provide a single entry point into local family violence and child and family services
- perform risk and needs assessments
- refer clients to the services they need.

In 2017, the department released *Support and Safety Hubs: Statewide Concept* (the statewide concept document). It sets out the intent, scope, functions and role of hubs. It provides the vision for who the hubs are for, how people will access them and what they will do.

The Orange Door

The Orange Door is open across the state. It is made up of primary sites, complemented by smaller outposts and access points.

The Orange Door is a unique service model that brings together specialist practitioners from family violence services, Aboriginal services, family services and services for adults using family violence. Fifty-one community services organisations operate across The Orange Door network.

The Orange Door is for adults, children and young people who are experiencing, using or at risk of using family violence. The Orange Door is also for families who require support with the development and wellbeing needs of their children and young people.

Practitioners work in integrated teams to assess and respond to the needs of clients. If appropriate, practitioners connect individuals or families to services for tailored support.

Integrated practice

Integrated practice at The Orange Door is a person-centred approach to family violence and child wellbeing where different kinds of practitioners work together to:

- keep people safe from violence
- nurture the stability, development and wellbeing of infants, children and young people
- hold adults who use family violence accountable by engaging them and/or keeping them in view across the service system.

In 2023–24, The Orange Door did 176,012 client assessments. Of these, 99,722 were for children. Most referrals to The Orange Door were from police. People and families who need support can also be referred, or refer themselves, via phone, email or by attending in person.

System context

The Orange Door operates under Victoria's whole-of-government Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM framework).

The MARAM framework

The MARAM framework is a document that sets out the ways different services and workforces are responsible for identifying, assessing and managing risk of family violence. It gives professionals information and resources they need to keep victim survivors safe, and to keep perpetrators in view and hold them accountable for their actions.

The Orange Door practitioners must assess child wellbeing and risk in line with the Best Interests Case Practice Model. The model informs and supports professional practice in family services, child protection, and placement and support services. It aims to achieve successful outcomes for children and their families.

Our 2020 audit *Managing Support and Safety Hubs*

In our 2020 audit we looked at whether The Orange Door provided effective and efficient support for children and families and those affected by family violence. There were 5 primary sites at the time of our audit. We found that they were not yet realising their full potential to improve the lives of people affected by family violence and families needing support.

We found that ...	This meant that ...
the department did not plan the first 5 primary sites in enough detail.	the primary sites were not fully ready to help people when they opened and for some time after that.
primary sites were improving the way partner agencies work together, but their service coordination was not yet consistently effective or efficient.	the primary sites were not yet realising their full potential to help people.
there were gaps in the department's performance monitoring, evaluation and governance.	the department could not measure or address inconsistent service experiences or demonstrate that the primary sites were improving outcomes for families.

We made 9 recommendations to the department. It accepted all of them. The department developed an action plan in response to our recommendations. For our report *Responses to Performance Engagement Recommendations: Annual Status Update 2024*, the department told us that by June 2023 it had implemented all 9 recommendations.

The Orange Door governance review

In 2024, the department engaged a consultancy to review governance and accountability arrangements for The Orange Door. We refer to this as the department's governance review.

The department has advised us that it is committed to implementing the improvement opportunities identified through the governance review, in collaboration with partner agencies.

What we found

This section focuses on our key findings, which fall into 4 areas:

1. Victorians can access The Orange Door across the state. The department is still working to deliver all elements of the full model set out in the statewide concept document.
2. The department has provided The Orange Door practitioners with guidance and training on integrated practice. But it still needs to update its interim integrated practice framework.
3. The department is providing The Orange Door staff with support for cultural safety and child wellbeing. But The Orange Door's approach to child wellbeing risk assessment is still inconsistent.
4. The department has improved The Orange Door's data system but has further work to do on strategically managing statewide demand, performance and governance.

Consultation with agencies

When reaching our conclusions, we consulted with the department and considered its views.

You can read its full response in Appendix A.

Key finding 1: Victorians can access The Orange Door across the state. The department is still working to deliver all elements of the full model set out in the statewide concept document

The statewide rollout of The Orange Door

The Orange Door is now open across the state.

Nothing came to our attention to suggest that the department did not develop detailed plans to open the remaining services areas, covering priorities, sequencing, resourcing and risk management.

The department told us it updated project plans as needed to accommodate delays to its target and actual opening date for each area, including delays caused by COVID-19.

Primary sites

Primary sites, previously known as hubs, are the central access points for The Orange Door. There are 18 primary sites across Victoria – one in each of the department's 17 areas, with 2 in Wimmera South West. Partner agencies are responsible for each primary site as well as the access points and outposts in their area.

Access points

Access points are locations branded as The Orange Door with at least one permanent multidisciplinary team supporting clients.

Outposts

Outposts operate from a location hosted by a partner agency or community service organisation and usually have fewer staff. Clients can visit outposts by appointment only.

The full model set out in the statewide concept document

The Orange Door model continues to mature in the context of significant reform to the family violence service system.

The department has not yet delivered all elements of the full model set out in the statewide concept document. This means that The Orange Door service is:

- not yet available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- not yet fully integrated with other service systems such as housing, financial aid and legal aid
- relying in part on initial, out-of-date service model documents designed for an earlier stage of the reform
- still maturing its departmental system management functions.

The department has developed high-level plans for transitioning The Orange Door from its current foundational model to the full model. But it does not have timeframes for completing this work.

Status of action 1

Action 1 is complete.

Key finding 2: The department has provided The Orange Door practitioners with guidance and training on integrated practice. But it still needs to update its interim integrated practice framework

The interim integrated practice framework and integrated practice guidance

The department commissioned a group of sector experts to prepare a report on integrated practice specific to The Orange Door. The report was intended to provide the foundation of an updated integrated practice framework. The report was delivered behind schedule. This has contributed to the department having not yet updated the *Support and Safety Hubs Interim integrated practice framework* (interim integrated practice framework).

At the same time, the department developed operational guidance materials for The Orange Door staff to support integrated service delivery. Some of the guidance material contains information that is out of date. Most of it was produced after the due date.

A 2023 department-led survey of The Orange Door staff revealed that integrated practice is well understood by practitioners. But the governance review found that integrated practice is less understood by senior leaders in The Orange Door.

Integrated practice training and support

The department worked with sector stakeholders to update The Orange Door's induction program. It now includes a stronger focus on integrated practice supported by positive examples.

Practitioners are required to complete the induction training within the first 6 months of employment, but the department does not effectively monitor attendance.

Practitioners receive regular supervision, including case consultations, to support coordinated and integrated service delivery for clients.

Status of actions 2 and 3

Action 2 is partially complete and action 3 is complete.

Key finding 3: The department is providing The Orange Door staff with support for cultural safety and child wellbeing. But The Orange Door's approach to child wellbeing risk assessment is still inconsistent

Aboriginal cultural safety

The department funded 10 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to develop and deliver cultural safety assessments, action plans and training across The Orange Door network.

The Aboriginal cultural safety training is mandatory for all staff at The Orange Door. But the department does not keep attendance records centrally and it is unclear if all current staff have completed the training.

Safety of children and young people

The department has developed guidance materials and funded new specialist staff at The Orange Door to improve practitioners' skills in working with children and assessing their wellbeing.

Implementation of a new child wellbeing and risk assessment tool has been delayed. It is expected to be rolled out in 2025 and will be legislated for use, including in The Orange Door. In the meantime, The Orange Door practitioners use a variety of tools to assess child wellbeing and risk.

Status of actions 4 and 5

Action 4 is complete and action 5 is partially complete.

Key finding 4: The department has improved The Orange Door's data system but has further work to do on strategically managing statewide demand, performance and governance

Demand management

The department has improved its active monitoring and reporting on service demand for The Orange Door. It has updated its client relationship management system to enable it to better measure and report on timeliness and demand.

But it has not updated its demand management strategy or developed an overarching framework to strategically manage demand statewide.

Performance monitoring

The department worked with stakeholders to develop a foundational performance monitoring framework. But this framework does not align with government outcomes measurement and reporting requirements.

The performance monitoring framework has 24 measures. The department has not reported against the performance monitoring framework in full. It reports against 18 of the measures across a range of forums and timelines.

The department has not updated the performance monitoring framework to include outcomes-focused measures or new data used by decision-makers.

Data quality and availability

The department regularly makes updates to its client relationship management system.

The department has developed new indicators for measuring service timeliness and outcomes in the client relationship management system. Real-time data is available for the statewide network and for local areas.

Risk management and governance

Family Safety Victoria operated its quality, risk and audit committee until October 2023. The committee provided guidance on governance and assurance activities, risk, control and compliance frameworks and audit activities but did not report through to the department.

The department communicated the process for managing and escalating risks to The Orange Door staff.

There is no dedicated governance group for The Orange Door. Local governance group members told the department's governance review that they do not have a consistent understanding of their roles and responsibilities across the network.

The department intends to review governance arrangements for The Orange Door, taking into account the findings of its governance review.

Status of actions 6, 7, 8 and 9

Actions 6, 7 and 9 are partially complete and action 8 is complete.

2.

Status of actions

Status of committed actions

In our 2020 audit report we made 9 recommendations to the department. The department accepted all 9 recommendations and developed an action plan to address them.

Recommendations to the department	The department's committed actions	Status of actions
1 The department completes detailed plans outlining how it will open remaining hubs and transition them from the foundational to the full model of operations. These plans should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> map the interdependencies between all hub-related projects and sequence them set realistic milestones for completion of each project include detail on how it will complete projects establish and apply criteria for prioritising projects for delivery. 	Family Safety Victoria will revise its project plans to provide more detail about how The Orange Door will open in the remaining areas, including confirming project prioritisation processes, setting realistic milestones and relating these to critical independencies and resource requirements to ensure completion of projects (due December 2020).	Completed iteratively
	Family Safety Victoria will develop a detailed plan outlining the transition from foundational service model to the full service model as outlined in the <i>Support and Safety Hubs: Statewide Concept</i> (due December 2021).	Completed in February 2021
2 The department improves statewide consistency of hub operations and practice by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> refining and finalising the Integrated Practice Framework so that it includes the practical detail needed to support practitioners on how to implement it developing and communicating minimum standards for providing coordinated services to clients including how and when practitioners should share information and assessing hubs' compliance with these. 	Family Safety Victoria will update the current Integrated Practice Framework, including clear guidance on minimum expectations to support coordinated service delivery. This framework will include a suite of practice guidance to support service delivery, completed in collaboration with the sector (due December 2021).	Partially completed in August 2024
	Family Safety Victoria will work with the sector to coordinate the implementation of the Integrated Practice Framework ensuring it is aligned with the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM framework) and information sharing legislation (due December 2021).	Not completed
3 The department draws on the experiences of the open hubs [and] works with hub partners to develop and run comprehensive training on coordinating service responses for clients, supplemented by other activities, such as supervision, to further develop this capability.	Family Safety Victoria will work with the sector to develop and deliver practice development support and training activities which will be informed by positive examples of integrated practice (due December 2020).	Completed in January 2023
4 The department works with local Aboriginal services and community representatives to roll out mandatory cultural safety training that is specific to hub functions and operations, for all hub staff.	Family Safety Victoria will work with Aboriginal Services and Aboriginal Advisory Groups to support the delivery of cultural safety training and development opportunities for the staff at The Orange Door (due December 2020).	Completed in January 2024

Recommendations to the department	The department's committed actions	Status of actions
<p>5 The department works with hubs to strengthen their support for children, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasing the focus on children experiencing wellbeing issues, including developing a single tool for use across all hubs that ensures hubs consistently assess and document child wellbeing risk whether in a family violence or other context, and is aligned with the Best Interests Case Practice Model integrating the knowledge, advice and support of community-based child protection into child-related assessments and decisions in hubs. 	<p>Family Safety Victoria will work with the department to deliver a consistent approach to child wellbeing risk assessments, aligned with the Best Interests Case Practice Model, currently being reviewed. The approach will be developed in consultation with the sector (due June 2021).</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will update guidance on the role of community-based Child Protection and ensure this is embedded into Orange Door child-related assessments and decisions (due September 2020).</p>	<p>Partially completed in November 2023</p> <p>Partially completed in September 2020</p>
<p>6 The department improves monitoring and reporting on demand in hubs by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> setting measures and targets for service backlog and timeliness, and including performance against these in regular service delivery reports updating the client relationship management system so that it can track when clients are awaiting a response because of capacity issues at external services. 	<p>Family Safety Victoria will improve its active monitoring and reporting on demand in The Orange Door including setting measures for service timeliness and backlog (due December 2020).</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will update the Demand Management Plan for The Orange Door reflecting strategies and initiatives we have introduced to manage demand and will include measures and targets for service timeliness and backlog (due December 2020).</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will develop and implement a Statewide Demand Management Framework to provide a better understanding of service system capacity and demand (due June 2021).</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will update the Client Relationship Management system to provide information so that it can clearly identify when clients are awaiting a response from external services (due June 2021).</p>	<p>Completed in June 2021</p> <p>Not completed</p> <p>Not completed</p> <p>Completed by June 2021</p>
<p>7 The department finalises a performance monitoring framework for hubs that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> indicators, measures and targets for the quality, timeliness and outcomes of services in hubs mechanisms to capture and aggregate information about pathways for clients who the hub refers to external services and outcomes for hub clients a definition of coordinated and integrated practice and methods to measure it. 	<p>Family Safety Victoria will finalise a more comprehensive Performance Monitoring Framework for The Orange Door partnership, with robust metrics developed in partnership with the sector. This will align with outcomes measurement and reporting requirements across government (due June 2021).</p>	<p>Partially completed in September 2022</p>
<p>8 The department improves the client relationship management system to allow collection of data on the quality, timeliness and outcomes of hub performance.</p>	<p>Family Safety Victoria will improve the Client Relationship Management system to provide high-quality regular data on performance including quality, timeliness and outcomes related data (due June 2022).</p>	<p>Completed by June 2022</p>

Recommendations to the department	The department's committed actions	Status of actions
<p>9 The department clarifies and formalises governance arrangements so that it is clear how:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Department of Health and Human Services oversees Family Safety Victoria's performance in delivering and supporting the hubs, including risks associated with the hubs reform Family Safety Victoria holds itself to account for the hubs reform, including the management of the reform's risks and performance local hub governance bodies escalate risks and issues to the statewide level. 	<p>Family Safety Victoria have established an internal Quality, Risk and Audit Committee to monitor and improve our performance that reports through to the department. With its oversight, Family Safety Victoria will communicate the process for managing risk including how to escalate area-level operational risks and issues (due September 2020).</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will work with the department to clarify and formalise clear governance arrangements in relation to the performance of the Hubs (due September 2020).</p>	<p>Completed in June 2021</p> <p>Partially completed in December 2021</p>

3.

Establishing The Orange Door

The Orange Door operates across the state. The department developed plans to manage activities and risks during the rollout. Delays, including those caused by COVID-19, were addressed.

The department has developed high-level plans to deliver all elements of the full model set out in the statewide concept document, including aspects of the service model, after-hours services, system management and further integration with related service systems. The department has not resourced this work and does not have a date it will be complete by.

The department completed action 1 on time and in full.

Covered in this section:

- The statewide rollout of The Orange Door (action 1)
- The full model set out in the statewide concept document

Victorians can access The Orange Door across the state

Action 1

In response to recommendation 1 of our audit, the department committed to:

- revise its project plans to provide more detail about how The Orange Door will open in the remaining areas, including confirming project prioritisation processes, setting realistic milestones and relating these to critical independencies and resource requirements to ensure completion of projects (due December 2020)
- develop a detailed plan outlining the transition from the foundational service model to the full service model as outlined in the *Support and Safety Hubs: Statewide Concept* (due December 2021).

**Primary sites,
access points
and outposts**

The Orange Door is in place and operating. It consists of:

- 18 primary sites
- 19 access points
- 28 outposts.

Access points and outposts increase the opportunity for people in more locations to get help they need, close to home.

Figure 1: The Orange Door network



Note: Figure 1 shows the approximate locations of primary sites and access points. WSW is an abbreviation of Wimmera South West, one of the department's 17 areas. There are 18 primary sites across Victoria – one in each of the department's 17 areas, with 2 in Wimmera South West – South West (WSW) and Wimmera (WSW).

Source: VAGO, based on information from the department.

An Australia-first service response

The Orange Door network is the first of its kind in Australia.

It provides visible and accessible entry points for Victorians experiencing family violence or seeking support with the development and wellbeing needs of children.

Individuals and families receive support from an integrated team of practitioners and are connected on to broader service systems.

Fifty-one community service organisations, or partner agencies, operate across The Orange Door network.

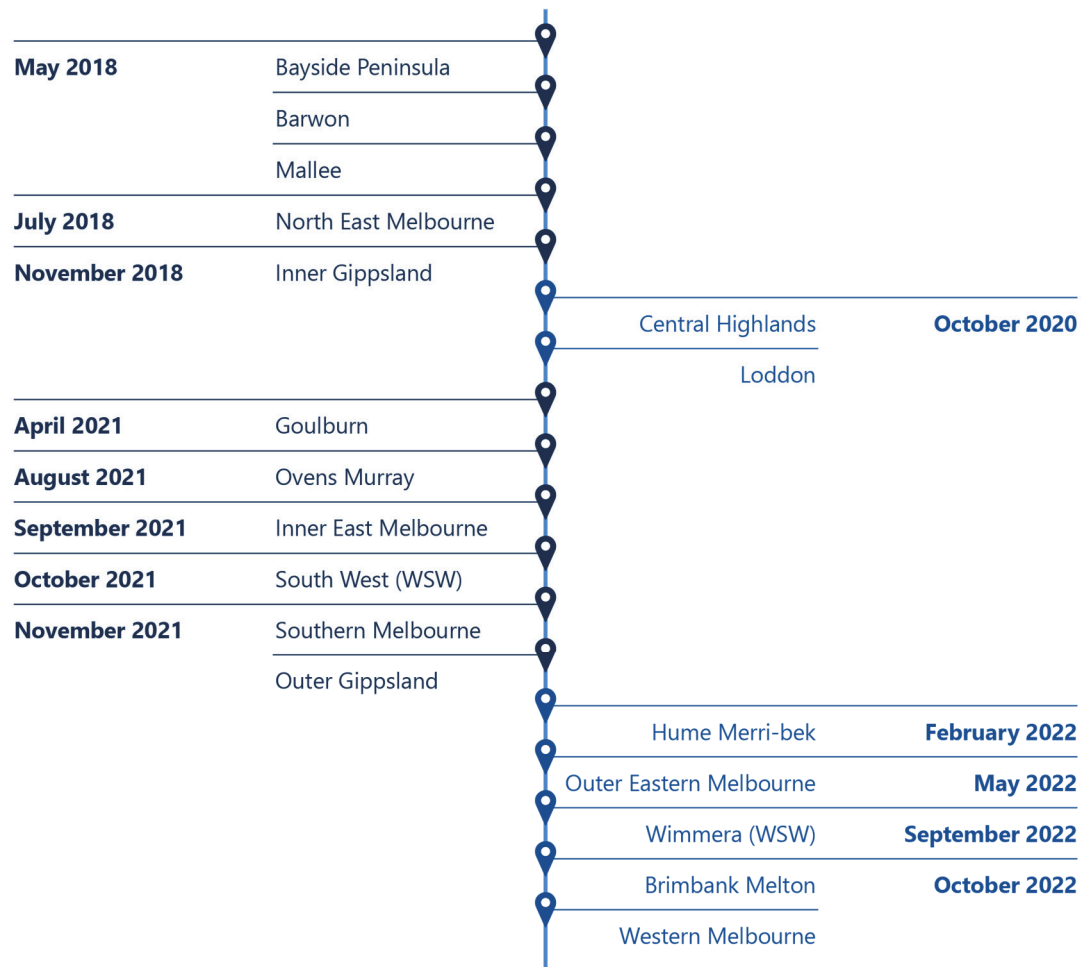
In each area, partner agencies hold a service agreement with the department. This sets out partner agency responsibilities for service delivery in the area.

Several leadership groups in each area oversee service delivery. Hub leadership groups and operations leadership groups were in place during our 2020 audit and are still in each area. Local leadership teams and Aboriginal advisory groups have been put in place since our audit.

The ...	are made up of ...	and are responsible for ...
hub leadership groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">senior members of partner agencies in the areathe hub managerrepresentatives from the department and Victoria Police	strategic leadership, monitoring risks and issues and leading integrated practice to ensure streamlined service delivery across The Orange Door network.
operations leadership groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">operational representatives from each partner agency and Aboriginal service in the arearepresentatives from the department	ensuring service operations are consistent, coordinated and efficient. They also oversee demand management, data analysis and client pathways.
local leadership teams	team leaders and practice leaders	providing advice on practice decisions.
Aboriginal advisory groups	members of Aboriginal services and local communities	providing advice on culturally safe practice and self-determination.

Our 2020 audit focused on the 5 primary sites of The Orange Door that opened in 2018. The department opened the remaining 13 primary sites between October 2020 and October 2022.

Figure 2: The rollout of The Orange Door primary sites



Note: WSW is an abbreviation of Wimmera South West, one of the department's 17 areas. There are 18 primary sites across Victoria – one in each of the department's 17 areas, with 2 in Wimmera South West – South West (WSW) and Wimmera (WSW). Source: VAGO, based on information from the department.

Planning and risk management are critical aspects of good project management.

Nothing came to our attention to suggest that planning for the opening of these primary sites did not include adequate:

- priorities
- activity sequencing
- resourcing
- risk management.

The department put oversight and approval processes in place to:

- ensure that prerequisite activities for service delivery were met
- manage risks, including those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 delays led the department to revise its target and actual dates for opening the primary sites, but all sites were opened by 2022 as intended.

Rolling out the primary sites The primary planning resource for rolling out The Orange Door in each area was called an implementation schedule. An implementation manager in each area was responsible for maintaining each implementation schedule. A hub establishment group in each area monitored the overall progress of the rollout including issues and risks.

The department improved implementation schedules as the rollout progressed. From the second half of 2021, partner agencies used updated schedules that integrated infrastructure activities into the overall planning. After this change, 11 work packages were progressed for each area to adequately prepare for services to begin.

The Minister for Prevention of Family Violence signed off on services opening in each area based on the department’s confirmation that the prerequisites had been met or that alternative plans were in place.

The department is still working to deliver all elements of the full model set out in the statewide concept document

The statewide concept document	The statewide concept document says that The Orange Door model will evolve over time, informed by emerging needs, evidence and learnings as sites progressively open. The Orange Door has already matured in the context of significant reform to the family violence service system.	
	But The Orange Door is still operating in the foundational model. The department has not yet delivered all elements of the full model set out in the statewide concept document.	
	The Orange Door is ...	which means ...
	not yet available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week	clients only receive The Orange Door services on weekdays and must connect with other local and statewide services after hours. Agreements are in place between The Orange Door and local and statewide after-hours providers for this.
	not yet fully integrated with other service systems such as housing, mental health, financial assistance and legal assistance	clients need to be referred to other specialist services and may need to retell their story.
	relying in part on initial service model documents designed for an earlier stage of the reform and which are now out of date	practitioners may lack clarity on service delivery expectations.
	still maturing its departmental system management functions	decision-makers cannot yet be fully strategic in the way they use evidence to forecast demand, improve outcomes, understand client pathways and make further service model improvements.

**Plan for
delivering the
full model**

In 2021, the department developed 2 plans to transition the network from the foundational model to the full model in line with the statewide concept document. The department sought feedback from stakeholders when it developed these plans.

In June 2023, the department released its Plan to deliver the Statewide Concept for The Orange Door. The plan includes a gap analysis and feasibility assessment of the elements and features described in the statewide concept document that are yet to be realised.

It sets out the remaining individual activities that the department intended to complete by mid-2025. The department told us it will not meet the timeframes because they were indicative and depended on resourcing.

The plan also outlines 4 major projects that need to be resourced and completed. The department has not started these projects. It also does not have a date it will complete the outstanding work that will transition The Orange Door from its current foundational model to the full model.

4.

Supporting practitioners with integrated practice

The department has produced guidance and updated practitioner induction training to strengthen integrated practice in The Orange Door.

But it has not updated its interim integrated practice framework as intended. The department told us it plans to do this in 2025.

Further work is needed to make sure guidance materials are up to date and that staff complete required training.

The department completed action 2 in part and action 3 in full – both several years later than planned. This was primarily due to the need to prioritise resources in the context of COVID-19 and the staged rollout of The Orange Door.

Covered in this section:

- The interim integrated practice framework and integrated practice guidance (action 2)
- Integrated practice training and support (action 3)

The department has given practitioners guidance on integrated practice, but it has not updated the integrated practice framework

Action 2

In response to recommendation 2 of our audit, the department committed to:

- update the current Integrated Practice Framework, including clear guidance on minimum expectations to support coordinated service delivery. This framework will include a suite of practice guidance to support service delivery, completed in collaboration with the sector (due December 2021)
- work with the sector to coordinate the implementation of the Integrated Practice Framework ensuring it is aligned with the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM framework) and information sharing legislation (due December 2021).

Integrated practice in The Orange Door

Integrated practice brings services together as a partnership so that individuals and families do not have to go to multiple services or to retell their story multiple times to have their needs met.

The Orange Door practice guidance document 'Statewide Workflow: A client's journey' sets minimum expectations to support coordinated service delivery, alongside the partnership and service agreements the department holds with its partner agencies.

The department told us the core elements of integrated practice, such as common client goals and a person-centred approach, are also embedded in all other relevant guidance materials.

In 2023, the department surveyed staff at The Orange Door who work directly with clients or client information. Of these staff:

- 89 per cent said they understand what integrated practice means in The Orange Door
- 73 per cent said they feel confident working in an integrated practice environment.

But the department's governance review found that senior leadership of partner agencies and hub leadership group members are less clear on:

- what integrated practice means
- how staff should enact it
- how leadership can support it.

The department told us that stakeholders from its 51 partner agencies have differing views on what integrated practice could or should look like. These views range from collaborative practice in discipline-specific teams, to interdisciplinary practice where workers of different disciplines work together on shared goals.

Practice guidance relating to integrated practice

Between 2020 and 2024, the department developed a suite of practice guidance to support service delivery.

The department told us that 13 statewide operational guidance documents and 3 interim statewide practice direction documents relate to action 2. Most of the guidance was published after the December 2021 due date.

The department said this practice guidance promotes client-focused service delivery and makes practice more consistent across Victoria. It developed the guidance in collaboration with practitioners. It is available to staff through a staff-only intranet page.

Operations leadership groups and local leadership teams make sure practice aligns to the guidance.

We reviewed a sample of The Orange Door guidance materials. Nothing came to our attention to suggest that the guidance materials do not align to the MARAM framework where relevant. But some documents linked to other outdated guidance materials and information.

Interim integrated practice framework

The interim integrated practice framework is a foundational document for The Orange Door. It:

- provides the overarching principles of coordinated service delivery in The Orange Door
- underpins performance expectations for all 51 partner agencies.

The department has not updated the interim integrated practice framework. It told us the depth of system reform required to implement The Orange Door service model meant it needed to prioritise developing practice guidance over updating the interim integrated practice framework.

We reviewed the interim integrated practice framework at a high level and found several instances of outdated information. For example, the interim integrated practice framework directs practitioners to use the interim comprehensive risk assessment tool, which predates the

introduction of the MARAM framework. The department is aware of this issue. It encourages staff to refer to the intranet for practice guidance on integrated practice.

The department told us it intends to update the interim integrated practice framework in 2025.

Integrated Practice Project

The department commissioned a group of sector experts to undertake the Integrated Practice Project (the project). The project aimed to guide the revising of the interim integrated practice framework by:

- establishing an evidence base for best practice
- identifying promising examples of this at The Orange Door.

The project involved extensive stakeholder consultation. It was scheduled to end by 30 June 2022 but was delayed. The final report was provided to the department in late 2023.

The department told us the new practice guidance made the report less useful. It also said delays to the project contributed to the interim integrated practice framework not being updated.

The department has provided practitioners with integrated practice training and support

Action 3

In response to recommendation 3 of our audit, the department committed to work with the sector to develop and deliver practice development support and training activities which will be informed by positive examples of integrated practice (due December 2020).

Induction training refresh

Training and supporting The Orange Door staff to understand and embed integrated practice helps ensure Victorians will receive consistent and high-quality services wherever they live.

From 2021 to 2023, the department made interim revisions to The Orange Door induction training program to strengthen understandings of integrated practice at The Orange Door. It consulted with sector stakeholders to do this.

In December 2022, the department approved a refreshed induction training package to commence in January 2023 after work with sector stakeholders to revise training content. Changes to the induction package included:

- substantive revisions to course modules in stages 2 and 3 to strengthen understandings of integrated practice within The Orange Door service context
- new modules for practitioners and a longer timeframe of completion to add more flexibility for practitioners and time to embed learning between stages
- alternative programs for client support officers and administration officers, and staff in leadership roles.

The revised training content was rolled out across 2023 and 2024. The current version was first delivered in full in late 2024. The department told us that:

- COVID-19 caused the delays
 - the staged rollout of primary sites required a localised approach to training
 - it expanded the scope of project because it identified new workforce needs.
-

Induction training content

The induction training is structured into 4 stages:

- Stage 1: Introduction to The Orange Door
- Stage 2: Foundations for working in The Orange Door
- Stage 3: Skilled and safe practice (with a particular focus on integrated practice)
- Stage 4: Strengthening skills practice.

We reviewed the induction training content at a high level and with a focus on Stages 2 and 3. We found nothing to suggest that it is insufficient to support staff to understand integrated practice. Stages 2 and 3 of the induction training are informed by examples of integrated practice in line with the definition.

There is also:

- compulsory statewide training on the MARAM framework led by the department for all prescribed workforces. Practitioners may have completed this prior to starting at The Orange Door.
 - compulsory Aboriginal cultural safety training as part of the Strengthening Cultural Safety in The Orange Door project. We discuss Aboriginal cultural safety in Section 5.
-

Delivery of training

All staff at The Orange Door must complete the induction training in the first 6 months of employment.

Enrolment in the induction training is managed via a learning management system that the department told us is updated daily. Partner agencies are required as part of their service agreements to ensure that staff attend training. Partner agencies can use reports from the system to do this.

The department does not have accurate or reliable data on whether all current staff have completed induction training. The department told us it is working to address this issue.

Other supports for integrated practice

Integrated practice at The Orange Door is also supported by:

- integrated practice leaders who are employed by partner agencies to promote and support integrated clinical practice and decision-making
 - staff supervision that includes case consultations by the team leader or practice leaders.
-

5.

Providing safe services for clients

The department funds the delivery of local site assessments, action plans and training to improve Aboriginal cultural safety at The Orange Door.

This means the department has completed action 4 but did this more than 3 years later than planned due to COVID-19 and staff recruitment and retention issues.

The department has produced guidance and introduced new positions to support practitioners to work with children and young people. This includes guidance explaining the role of community-based Child Protection at The Orange Door. But The Orange Door still lacks a consistent approach to child wellbeing and risk assessments. The department has plans in place to address this.

This means the department completed action 5 in part, on time. The child wellbeing and risk assessment tool has been delayed because of changes to the project scope, stakeholder engagement and internal resourcing pressures.

Covered in this section:

- Aboriginal cultural safety (action 4)
- Safety of children and young people (action 5)

The department is supporting The Orange Door staff to improve Aboriginal cultural safety

Action 4

In response to recommendation 4 of our audit, the department committed to work with Aboriginal Services and Aboriginal Advisory Groups to support the delivery of cultural safety training and development opportunities for the staff at The Orange Door (due December 2020).

Cultural safety at The Orange Door

In 2023–24, 9 per cent of people who used The Orange Door services identified as Aboriginal.

Aboriginal women are significantly more likely to experience family violence than non-Aboriginal women. They are also more likely to be killed or injured from that violence.

Overcoming barriers to reporting family violence is also more challenging. This is in part because family violence is a known driver for Aboriginal children encountering the Child Protection system and entering out-of-home care.

In 2016, the Royal Commission into Family Violence released its final report. It recommended that all mainstream family violence services be required to conduct cultural safety reviews and action plans.

The Strengthening Cultural Safety in The Orange Door project

In October 2021, the department funded an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation to deliver the Strengthening Cultural Safety in The Orange Door project.

The Strengthening Cultural Safety in The Orange Door project aims to increase cultural safety for Aboriginal staff and clients by embedding locally informed approaches to cultural safety in each of the 18 primary sites of The Orange Door.

In August 2022, the department funded 10 Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to recruit cultural safety project leads in each area. Some of these organisations experienced challenges recruiting staff and keeping positions filled because of the high cultural load placed on Aboriginal staff members during COVID-19. By January 2023, 12 project leads had started and the remaining positions were filled by 2024.

The project leads work with local Aboriginal governance groups to embed a targeted and reflective approach to cultural safety in their local network by:

- delivering cultural safety training that reflects the history and knowledge of their local Aboriginal communities.
- implementing cultural safety assessment and action planning processes.

Each of these project components is discussed below.

Delivery of cultural safety training

Cultural safety training is mandatory for all staff at The Orange Door. The cultural safety training consists of 4 modules. Project leads shape each module to reflect the local Aboriginal communities with guidance from Aboriginal governance groups in their area.

The project leads work with local area staff to deliver the training.

Staff in all areas of The Orange Door had access to the training by 2024. This is more than 3 years later than planned due to delays caused by COVID-19 and challenges in recruitment and retention of staff.

Partner agencies are responsible for ensuring that staff complete training. The project leads and partner agencies determine how attendance records are managed in each area.

The department does not have data to know whether all current staff have completed the training. The department has not required training attendance to be routinely reported.

If The Orange Door staff have not completed cultural safety training, there is a risk that Aboriginal Victorians have different service experiences at The Orange Door depending on where they live.

Delivery of cultural safety assessments and plans

Cultural safety assessments help identify new, local ways to improve cultural safety in each area of The Orange Door.

Project leads undertake the assessments in each area. They work with area partnerships to develop and implement an action plan in response to the results of the assessment.

In 2024, all project leads started a cultural safety assessment in partnership with local governance groups, but not all assessments were completed. Some project leads also completed an assessment and action plan in 2023.

Sustainability of the project

The Strengthening Cultural Safety in The Orange Door project is funded until 30 June 2025. The department intends to procure an Aboriginal consultancy to conduct an evaluation of the project. It has asked that the consultancy make recommendations to address the sustainability of the project into the future.

The department is supporting The Orange Door practitioners to support child wellbeing, but child wellbeing risk assessments are still inconsistent

Action 5

In response to recommendation 5 of our audit, the department committed to:

- deliver a consistent approach to child wellbeing risk assessments, aligned with the Best Interests Case Practice Model that was being reviewed at the time of our audit. It committed to developing the approach in consultation with the sector (due June 2021)
- update guidance on the role of community-based Child Protection and ensure this is embedded into The Orange Door child-related assessments and decisions (due September 2020).

Child wellbeing at The Orange Door

In November 2024, 43 per cent of people who received a service response from The Orange Door were children and young people.

Since our 2020 audit, the department has provided supports to practitioners at The Orange Door to work with children and young people and to assess children and young peoples' wellbeing and family violence-related risks, including:

- new child-focused practice positions
- practice resources for practitioners
- a range of practice uplift activities specific to The Orange Door to strengthen practitioners' capability
- guidance on the role of community-based Child Protection.

Each of these is discussed below.

Child-focused practice positions The department introduced new child-focused practitioners into The Orange Door service model.

In ...	the department introduced ...	They are responsible for ...
September 2020	positions called advanced child protection practitioners – community based.	<p>working with The Orange Door intake and assessment teams to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • screen children for risk of harm based on information gathered through referral and agency databases • notify and liaise with Child Protection in relation to open child protection cases • refer complex cases to the senior child protection practitioner – community based for a further risk-based consultation • support allocations to core services such as integrated family services for case management.
April 2021	children and young persons practice leads into all sites across the network to support practice uplift.	<p>ensuring that practitioners have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to a specialised colleague when working with children • support when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – assessing child wellbeing and/or risk – managing complex cases.

New practice resources

To support The Orange Door staff to deliver a consistent approach to engagement with children and young people and perform child wellbeing risk assessments, the department:

- held 3 sector-wide webinars on working with children at different developmental stages, with a focus on cumulative harm and the impact of neglect and poor parenting
- delivered an online forum on the theme of engaging safely and meaningfully with children
- released 8 practice guides in November 2023, aimed at improving practitioner confidence in engaging with children and supporting understanding of legislative responsibilities
- delivered practice uplift sessions in each of The Orange Door sites to strengthen the capacity to respond to children and young people
- released Practice Resource – Child and Young Person Wellbeing Assessments in August 2024, aimed at supporting practitioners to assess child wellbeing and safety in line with the Best Interests Case Practice Model.

Differing child wellbeing risk assessments

Child wellbeing and risk assessments help practitioners identify a child’s exposure to harm and abuse. They help to ensure that decisions made in relation to children prioritise their safety and wellbeing.

The department does not have a single tool to assess the wellbeing of children and young people that is mandated or consistently used across The Orange Door.

Practitioners continue to use a variety of tools that are:

- in line with the Best Interests Case Practice Model
- endorsed at a statewide level by the department or local level by the child and family alliances.

This means clients could be assessed differently depending on which site they attend.

The draft statewide tool

In July 2023 the department developed the Child and Young People Assessment: Draft Statewide Child Wellbeing Risk Assessment Tool (the tool) with practice guidance to standardise child wellbeing assessments performed at The Orange Door. The department developed the tool with input from The Orange Door staff and sector partners.

The department trialled the tool in 6 areas between August and September 2023. It made the tool available for ongoing use in those areas in late 2023.

The department did not update the tool after the trial or require practitioners to use it. The department told us that this was because the department had commenced on a different statewide approach to assessments based on the MARAM framework, including a tool that would be mandated for use by all practitioners across the family violence sector.

The Child and Young Person MARAM Practice Guide Project

The Child and Young Person MARAM Practice Guide Project will deliver new guidance materials for MARAM framework-prescribed workforces, including:

- a new risk and wellbeing assessment tool for children and young people victim survivors
- new practice guidance materials that will include information on identifying and responding to young people using family violence in the home and in intimate partner/dating relationships.

These materials will be required to be used by all workforces prescribed by regulation under the MARAM framework. This will mean a single, consistent tool will be used for child wellbeing risk assessments across the state.

This project started in 2022 and was due to be completed in 2023. But it was delayed because of scope changes and stakeholder engagement and internal resourcing pressures. The department told us the project will be finalised in 2025.

The department then intends to:

- provide new training for staff at The Orange Door based on the tool and guidance materials
 - develop a bespoke tool for The Orange Door client relationship management system.
-

Guidance on the role of community-based Child Protection

Since our 2020 audit, the department has introduced new practitioner roles into its family violence service model in positions called advanced child protection practitioner – community based.

This means there are now 3 community-based Child Protection positions across all areas of The Orange Door:

- advanced child protection practitioner – community based
- senior child protection practitioner – community based
- child protection team manager – community based.

These positions support The Orange Door practitioners and the broader Child Protection workforce to provide earlier and more effective intervention for vulnerable children, young people and their families.

In September 2020, the department issued new guidance called The Role of Child Protection in The Orange Door to support the introduction of the new practitioners into the network.

In 2024, the department also issued new operational guidance on how to assess child wellbeing and risk at The Orange Door. It outlines when a consultation should occur with Child Protection. In cases where children or young people have identified as Aboriginal, related operational guidance instructs practitioners to engage with the Aboriginal practice lead or their delegate.

6.

Managing the system

The department has improved its data quality and availability as well as its monitoring and reporting on service timeliness and outcomes. It communicated the process for risk management in line with its action plan. It also developed a foundational performance monitoring framework.

But the department did not update its demand management strategy or develop a statewide demand management framework as intended. It did not report against its performance monitoring framework in full or update it to include outcome measures or newly available data.

The department completed action 6 in part, 6 months later than planned. It completed action 7 in part, 15 months later than planned due to extensive stakeholder consultation and COVID-19. It completed action 8 in full and on time. It completed action 9 in part, 9 months later than planned due to limited resourcing.

Covered in this section:

- Demand management (action 6)
- Performance monitoring (action 7)
- Data quality and availability (action 8)
- Risk management and governance (action 9)

The department has a demand management plan for practitioners but needs to update it and has not developed an overarching framework to strategically manage demand statewide

Action 6

In response to recommendation 6 of our audit, the department committed to:

- improve its active monitoring and reporting on demand at The Orange Door, including setting measures for service timeliness and backlog (due December 2020)
- update the Demand Management Plan for The Orange Door reflecting strategies and initiatives we have introduced to manage demand and will include measures and targets for service timeliness and backlog (due December 2020)
- develop and implement a Statewide Demand Management Framework to provide a better understanding of service system capacity and demand (due June 2021)
- update the Client Relationship Management system to provide information so that it can clearly identify when clients are awaiting a response from external services (due June 2021).

The Orange Door provides a short-term service

The Orange Door accepts every referral. This means demand for its services is not within the control of the department.

The Orange Door service model does not manage cases on a long-term or ongoing basis. Any case open for more than 21 days must go through a mandatory case consultation that focuses on identifying why the case remains open and what actions are needed to close it.

The department told us that staff are aware of this requirement.

Demand reporting

In July 2022, the department activated a dashboard that shows real-time client data from The Orange Door client relationship management system. This includes data on its measures for service timeliness. It also includes data on clients awaiting a response from external services.

The dashboard can also show historical data and trends using a range of data filters.

The department produces monthly internal reports using this data.

Demand management strategies

The department has not updated its Demand Management in The Orange Door (the demand management strategy) since it published the document in January 2020 during our previous audit. It told us this was because of resourcing constraints.

The department did, however, publish The Orange Door (TOD) COVID Pandemic Demand Management Plan (the COVID demand plan) in 2022.

It did this because during the pandemic:

- more people needed The Orange Door's services
- it was harder to fill vacant positions
- clients presented with more complex needs, so practitioners required more time to work with them.

The Orange Door still uses the demand management strategy and the COVID demand plan, although both need to be updated. The department is reviewing the COVID demand plan in response to a 2023 recommendation made by the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

In the absence of a single, fit-for-purpose demand management strategy or plan, there is a risk that practitioners address demand differently in each area. Decision-makers may be unaware of the impact of varied practices on demand, both locally and statewide.

Statewide demand management framework

The department has not produced a statewide demand management framework. It told us this was because of resourcing constraints.

A statewide demand management framework would help to ensure that the department's decision-makers are collecting and using comprehensive information to strategically plan service capacity across the state.

The department told us it will progress this work throughout 2025.

The department has produced a performance monitoring framework for The Orange Door but does not report against it in full and needs to update it

Action 7

In response to recommendation 7 of our audit, the department committed to finalise a more comprehensive Performance Monitoring Framework for The Orange Door partnership, with robust metrics developed in partnership with the sector. It would align with outcomes measurement and reporting requirements across government (due June 2021).

Performance monitoring framework

Decision-makers need to regularly review data and trends on a comprehensive suite of agreed performance metrics to assess how well The Orange Door is working for Victorians.

In September 2022, the department finalised The Orange Door Network Performance Framework – Performance expectations, indicators and measures (the performance framework).

The performance framework was developed with extensive input from sector stakeholders. Due to COVID-19 and the extent of engagement with stakeholders, this action was delivered 15 months later than planned.

The performance framework is underpinned by a program logic and made up of:

- 12 performance expectations
- 15 indicators
- 24 measures.

The department periodically reports on 18 of the 24 measures in various internal reports and reports shared with The Orange Door area leadership groups. It does not report on the performance framework in full.

Outcomes measurement and other measures

The expectations, indicators and measures set out in the performance framework are grouped in 5 domains taken from the *Community services quality governance framework*, which is centred on 'safe, effective, connected and person-centred community services'.

The performance framework does not align to relevant whole-of-government outcome measurement frameworks, such as the *Family Violence Outcomes Framework*. The department told us the performance framework adheres to government reporting requirements.

When the performance framework was finalised, the department considered it to be foundational and proposed a staged approach to developing it further, including moving to more outcome-focused measures.

New timeliness and outcomes measures that have been developed by the department have not been incorporated into the performance framework.

There are also family violence service delivery performance measures related to The Orange Door in the department's annual performance statement that have not been incorporated into the performance framework.

The department intends to update the performance framework when resourcing allows. There is no timeline for this work.

The department has improved the quality and availability of The Orange Door data

Action 8

In response to recommendation 8 of our audit, the department committed to improve its Client Relationship Management system to provide high-quality regular data on performance including quality, timeliness and outcomes related data (due June 2022).

Improvements to data quality

Collecting robust and comprehensive data about the way a service operates equips decision-makers with the information they need to improve client experiences and respond to issues as they emerge.

Since our audit, the department has made numerous updates to The Orange Door's client relationship management system. Many of these updates support it to generate higher-quality, reliable data about how The Orange Door delivers services.

This means there is more robust and accurate data for monitoring and reporting on the client journey, including the timeliness and outcomes of services.

The department told us that improvements to data quality have also strengthened other activities, such as regular case file audits.

Working well: Client relationship management system updates

Updates to the client relationship management system are developed with the support of a dedicated working group that includes practitioners of The Orange Door. System-wide updates are released every 3 to 6 months.

Data capture has been standardised and improved in a variety of client relationship management system pages by changing some fields to be mandatory and, where appropriate, providing drop-down lists for entries. This makes reporting more reliable.

It also provides a more consistent user experience for practitioners and improves workflows by supporting practitioners to better record and access information to support client safety and decision-making. It also supports service quality activities, such as case file audits and practitioner supervision.

Service timeliness and outcomes data

In July 2021, the department activated measures in its client relationship management system to track the timeliness of the client journey. These measures are the time from:

- referral to assigning to a practitioner
- assigning to a practitioner to case closure
- referral to case closure.

The department updated the client relationship management system to capture client outcome data via a case closure field that is mandatory for practitioners to complete when closing a client's case. The department has also made enhancements to the client relationship management system to allow outcomes of referrals from The Orange Door to be recorded.

The department has communicated the process for managing risks to The Orange Door staff and plans to review its governance arrangements

Action 9

In response to recommendation 9 of our audit, Family Safety Victoria told us it:

- had established an internal Quality, Risk and Audit Committee to monitor and improve [its] performance that reports through to the Department of Health and Human Services. It told us that with [the committee's] oversight, it would communicate the process for managing risk, including how to escalate area-level operational risks and issues (due September 2020)
- would work with the department to clarify and formalise clear governance arrangements in relation to the performance of the hubs (due September 2020).

Risk management

The Orange Door supports Victorians in times of increased vulnerability. It is important that the workforce is equipped to identify and manage risks.

In December 2019, Family Safety Victoria established a quality, risk and audit committee. This body monitored quality, risk and audit activities for Family Safety Victoria, including for The Orange Door. It reported to executives of Family Safety Victoria but not directly to the department. It operated until October 2023.

The department communicated the process for managing risks to partner agencies, including how to escalate area-level operational risks and issues. It did this via its Procedure for Risk and Issue Management Family Safety Victoria Operations.

The procedure comprehensively sets out roles and responsibilities for individuals and leadership/governance groups at the time with respect to risk management.

The procedure took effect on 1 July 2021, which was 9 months later than planned.

Governance

A complex system of parties oversees and operates The Orange Door at a local and state level. It is essential that these parties understand their roles, responsibilities and relationships with each other to provide safe and consistent services for Victorians.

The Family Violence Reform Board replaced previous governance bodies to ensure that deputy secretary and executive director levels of the department and other government agencies had oversight of family violence reforms, including The Orange Door. The Orange Door was a standing agenda item at the meetings of this board during the rollout of the network.

The department brings matters relating to The Orange Door to the Family Violence Reform Board on an as-needed basis, rather than as a standing agenda item. There is no statewide governance group specific to The Orange Door.

At a local level, hub leadership groups and operational leadership groups provide local strategic leadership, risk management and operational oversight in each area. These groups were in place during our audit and continue. Local leadership teams were introduced after our audit. There are terms of reference for each of these groups.

But a survey conducted as part of the department's governance review identified that less than half of governance group members surveyed fully understood their group's roles and responsibilities.

The department told us that it is committed to implementing governance improvement opportunities identified through the governance review, in collaboration with partner agencies.

7.

Appendices

There are 3 appendices covering responses from reviewed agencies and information about how we perform our work.

Appendix A: Submissions and comments

Appendix B: Abbreviations, acronyms and glossary

Appendix C: Review scope and method

Appendix A:

Submissions and comments

We have consulted with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, and we considered its views when reaching our review conclusions. As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, we gave a draft copy of this report to the department and asked for its submission and comments.

Responsibility for the accuracy, fairness and balance of those comments rests solely with the department agency head.

Responses received

Agency	Page
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	A-2



Secretary

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
Telephone: 1300 475 170
GPO Box 1774
Melbourne Victoria 3001
www.dffh.vic.gov.au

BAC-EOB-903

Mr. Andrew Greaves
Auditor-General
Victorian Auditor-General's Office
Level 31 / 35 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear Mr. Greaves

Thank you for your letter dated 31 March 2025 providing the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) with the opportunity to comment on the proposed Independent assurance report to Parliament – The Orange Door: follow-up.

The department has reviewed the report and the acquittal table and has no further comments.

The department remains committed to keeping women, children and families safe. The Orange Door network provides access to supports and services for people experiencing family violence and those who need assistance with the care and wellbeing of children and young people. We are focused on continuing to strengthen the service system response.

The department continues to progress key priorities highlighted in the report, including, updating key documents, evolving aspects of the service model, expanding on current risk assessments and strengthening performance and governance arrangements.

Thank you for the engagement and the collaborative manner in which your team worked with the department throughout the audit process. We look forward to continuing to improve The Orange Door service model and to promoting the safety and wellbeing of Victorians.

Yours sincerely



Peta McCammon
Secretary
10/04/2025



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Appendix B:

Abbreviations, acronyms and glossary

Abbreviations We use the following abbreviations in this report:

Abbreviation	Full spelling
COVID demand plan	The Orange Door (TOD) COVID Pandemic Demand Management Plan
demand management strategy	Demand Management in The Orange Door
the department	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing or Department of Health and Human Services, whichever was in place at the time
hubs	support and safety hubs
interim integrated practice framework	<i>Support and Safety Hubs Interim integrated practice framework</i>
performance framework	The Orange Door Network Performance Framework – Performance expectations, indicators and measures
the project	Integrated Practice Project
the tool	Child and Young People Assessment: Draft Statewide Child Wellbeing Risk Assessment Tool

Acronyms We use the following acronyms in this report:

Acronym	Full spelling
MARAM framework	Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework
VAGO	Victorian Auditor-General's Office

Glossary The following terms are included in or relevant to this report.

Term	Explanation
Integrated practice	<p>Integrated practice at The Orange Door is defined by the department as:</p> <p>‘An interdisciplinary response is person-centred and requires the practitioners to work collaboratively to achieve the following common client goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adults, infants, children and young people are safe from violence• Infants, children and young people are safe, their stability, development and wellbeing is being nurtured; and• Adults who use family violence are held accountable by engaging them and/or keeping them in view across the service system’.
Level of assurance	<p>This is a measure of the confidence we have in our conclusions. The quality and quantity of evidence we obtain affects our level of assurance.</p> <p>We design our work programs with the information needs of our report users in mind. We consider if we need to provide them with reasonable assurance or if a lower level of assurance may be appropriate.</p>

Term	Explanation
Limited assurance	<p>We obtain less assurance when we rely primarily on an agency's representations and other evidence generated by that agency. However, we aim to have enough confidence in our conclusion for it to be meaningful. We call these types of engagements assurance reviews and typically express our opinions in negative terms. For example, 'nothing has come to our attention to indicate there is a problem.'</p> <p>See our assurance services fact sheet for more information.</p>
Partner agencies	<p>Community service organisations that partner with the Victorian Government to deliver services at The Orange Door.</p>
Reasonable assurance	<p>We achieve reasonable assurance by obtaining and verifying direct evidence from a variety of internal and external sources about an agency's performance. This enables us to draw a conclusion against an objective with a high level of assurance. We call these performance audits.</p> <p>See our assurance services fact sheet for more information.</p>

Appendix C:

Review scope and method

Scope of this review

Who we examined

We examined the following agency:

Agency	Its key responsibilities
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department)	The department offers programs to help Victorians create safe and caring homes and communities for all families and children. This includes responsibility for family violence prevention and response.

Our review objective

To determine if the department has implemented the action plan it developed in response to the 9 recommendations of the 2020 audit *Managing Support and Safety Hubs*.

What we examined

In our 2020 audit *Managing Support and Safety Hubs*, we looked at whether hubs provide effective and efficient support for families and those affected by family violence. Family Safety Victoria opened the first 5 hubs in 2018. These were the focus of our audit.

We found that hubs were not meeting their full potential to help people because their service coordination was not yet consistently effective or efficient.

In our audit report, we made 9 recommendations to the department. The recommendations centred on improving the hubs' performance, including more detailed planning, additional guidance and training, a stronger focus on children and better performance monitoring. The report noted that the department planned to develop the model for the hubs over time, as hub partners and stakeholders learned from their experience of operating hubs and supporting clients.

The department accepted all 9 recommendations. It provided an action plan detailing how it would address them. These actions were the criteria for our review.

Why we conducted this review

Successful implementation of The Orange Door, as a single point of access and immediate multi-disciplinary response to family violence, is a foundational element of the government's family violence reforms.

Since the 2020 audit The Orange Door has fully rolled out. Use of The Orange Door is increasing.

It is reasonable to expect that the department has addressed the weaknesses identified in the 2020 audit and has progressed towards the vision for The Orange Door as articulated in the original Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendation.

Conducting this review

Assessing performance

The criteria for this review are the actions in the department's action plan. We assessed the department's implementation progress against each action in its plan, outlined below.

In 2020, we recommended that the department:

In response to our recommendations, the department provided an action plan that stated:

<p>1. completes detailed plans outlining how it will open remaining hubs and transition them from the foundational to the full model of operations. These plans should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> map the interdependencies between all hub-related projects and sequence them set realistic milestones for completion of each project include detail on how it will complete projects establish and apply criteria for prioritising projects for delivery 	<p>Family Safety Victoria accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will revise its project plans to provide more detail about how The Orange Door will open in the remaining areas, including confirming project prioritisation processes, setting realistic milestones and relating these to critical interdependencies and resource requirements to ensure completion of projects (due December 2020).</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will develop a detailed plan outlining the transition from foundational service model to the full service model as outlined in the <i>Support and Safety Hub Statewide Concept</i> (due December 2021).</p>
<p>2. improves statewide consistency of hub operations and practice by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> refining and finalising the integrated practice framework so that it includes the practical detail needed to support practitioners on how to implement it developing and communicating minimum standards for providing coordinated services to clients including how and when practitioners should share information, and assessing hubs' compliance with these 	<p>Family Safety Victoria accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will update the current Integrated Practice Framework, including clear guidance on minimum expectations to support coordinated service delivery. This framework will include a suite of practice guidance to support service delivery, completed in collaboration with the sector (due December 2021).</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will work with the sector to coordinate the implementation of the Integrated Practice Framework ensuring it is aligned with MARAM and information sharing legislation (due December 2021).</p>
<p>3. drawing on the experiences of the open hubs, works with hub partners to develop and run comprehensive training on coordinating service responses for clients, supplemented by other activities, such as supervision, to further develop this capability</p>	<p>Family Safety Victoria accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will work with the sector to develop and deliver practice development support and training activities which will be informed by positive examples of integrated practice (due December 2020).</p>
<p>4. works with local Aboriginal services and community representatives to roll out mandatory cultural safety training that is specific to hub functions and operations, for all hub staff</p>	<p>Family Safety Victoria accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will work with Aboriginal Services and Aboriginal advisory groups to support the delivery of cultural safety training and development opportunities for the staff at The Orange Door (due December 2020).</p>
<p>5. works with hubs to strengthen their support for children, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increasing the focus on children experiencing wellbeing issues, including developing a single tool for use across all hubs that ensures hubs consistently assess and document child wellbeing risk whether in a family violence or other context, and is aligned with the Best Interests Case Practice Model integrating the knowledge, advice and support of community-based child protection into child-related assessments and decisions in hubs 	<p>Family Safety Victoria accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will work with the department to deliver a consistent approach to child wellbeing risk assessments, aligned with the Best Interests Case Practice Model, currently being reviewed. The approach will be developed in consultation with the sector (due June 2021).</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will update guidance on the role of community-based Child Protection and ensure this is embedded into Orange Door child-related assessments and decisions (due September 2020).</p>
<p>6. improves monitoring and reporting on demand in hubs by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> setting measures and targets for service backlog and timeliness, and including performance against these in regular service delivery reports 	<p>Family Safety Victoria accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will improve its active monitoring and reporting on demand in The Orange Door including setting measures for service timeliness and backlog (due December 2020).</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will update the Demand Management Plan for The Orange Door reflecting strategies and initiatives</p>

In 2020, we recommended that the department:	In response to our recommendations, the department provided an action plan that stated:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> updating the client relationship management system so that it can track when clients are awaiting a response because of capacity issues at external services 	<p>we have introduced to manage demand and will include measures and targets for service timeliness and backlog (due December 2020).</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will develop and implement a Statewide Demand Management Framework to provide a better understanding of service system capacity and demand (due June 2021).</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will update the Client Relationship Management system to provide information so that it can clearly identify when clients are awaiting a response from external services (due June 2021).</p>
<p>7. finalises a performance monitoring framework for hubs that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> indicators, measures and targets for the quality, timeliness and outcomes of services in hubs mechanisms to capture and aggregate information about pathways for clients who the hub refers to external services and outcomes for hub clients a definition of coordinated and integrated practice and methods to measure it 	<p>Family Safety Victoria accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will finalise a more comprehensive Performance Monitoring Framework for The Orange Door partnership, with robust metrics developed in partnership with the sector. This will align with outcomes measurement and reporting requirements across government (due June 2021).</p>
<p>8. improves the client relationship management system to allow collection of data on the quality, timeliness and outcomes of hub performance</p>	<p>Family Safety Victoria accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will improve the Client Relationship Management system to provide high-quality regular data on performance including quality, timeliness and outcomes related data (due June 2022).</p>
<p>9. clarifies and formalises governance arrangements so that it is clear how:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the department oversees Family Safety Victoria's performance in delivering and supporting the hubs, including risks associated with the hubs reform Family Safety Victoria holds itself to account for the hubs reform, including the management of the reform's risks and performance local hub governance bodies escalate risks and issues to the statewide level. 	<p>Family Safety Victoria accepts this recommendation.</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria have established an internal Quality, Risk and Audit Committee to monitor and improve our performance that reports through to the department. With its oversight, Family Safety Victoria will communicate the process for managing risk including how to escalate area-level operational risks and issues (due September 2020).</p> <p>Family Safety Victoria will work with the department to clarify and formalise clear governance arrangements in relation to the performance of the Hubs (due September 2020).</p>

Our methods

As part of the review we:

- reviewed documents
- interviewed representatives from the department responsible for The Orange Door
- observed demonstrations of the client relationship management system, primarily in a test environment.

Level of assurance

In an assurance review, we primarily rely on the agency's representations and internally generated information to form our conclusions. By contrast, in a performance audit, we typically gather evidence from an array of internal and external sources, which we analyse and substantiate using various methods. Therefore, an assurance review obtains a lower level of assurance than a performance audit (meaning we have slightly less confidence in the accuracy of our conclusion).

Compliance

We conducted our review in accordance with the *Audit Act 1994* and ASAE 3500 *Performance Engagements* to obtain limited assurance to provide a basis for our conclusion.

We complied with the independence and other relevant ethical requirements related to assurance engagements.

We also provided a copy of the report to the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Treasury and Finance.

Cost and time

The full cost of the review and preparation of this report was \$375,000.

The duration of the review was 7 months from initiation to tabling.

Auditor-General's reports tabled in 2024–25

Report title	Tabled
<i>Results of 2023 Audits: Technical and Further Education Institutes</i> (2024–25: 1)	July 2024
<i>Building a Capable and High-performing Public Service Workforce</i> (2024–25: 2)	August 2024
<i>Protecting the Biosecurity of Agricultural Plant Species</i> (2024–25: 3)	October 2024
<i>Responses to Performance Engagement Recommendations: Annual Status Update 2024</i> (2024–25: 4)	October 2024
<i>Auditor-General's Report on the Annual Financial Report of the State of Victoria 2023–24</i> (2024–25: 5)	November 2024
<i>Fair Presentation of Service Delivery Performance 2024</i> (2024–25: 6)	November 2024
<i>Staff Wellbeing in Fire Rescue Victoria</i> (2024–25: 7)	November 2024
<i>Reporting on Local Government Performance: Follow-up</i> (2024–25: 8)	February 2025
<i>Major Projects Performance Reporting 2024</i> (2024–25: 9)	February 2025
<i>Managing Disruptions Affecting Victoria's Public Transport Network</i> (2024–25: 10)	March 2025
<i>State Trustees' Financial Administration Services</i> (2024–25: 11)	April 2025
<i>Recycling Resources from Waste</i> (2024–25: 12)	April 2025
<i>Results of 2023–24 Audits: Local Government</i> (2024–25: 13)	April 2025
<i>Domestic Building Insurance</i> (2024–25: 14)	May 2025
<i>Quality of Victoria's Critical Data Assets</i> (2024–25: 15)	May 2025
<i>The Orange Door: Follow-up</i> (2024–25: 16)	May 2025
<i>Work-related Violence in Government Schools</i> (2024–25: 17)	May 2025

All reports are available for download in PDF and HTML format on our website at <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au>

Our role and contact details

The Auditor-General's role

For information about the Auditor-General's role and VAGO's work, please see our online fact sheet [About VAGO](#).

Our assurance services

Our online fact sheet [Our assurance services](#) details the nature and levels of assurance that we provide to Parliament and public sector agencies through our work program.

Contact details

Victorian Auditor-General's Office
Level 31, 35 Collins Street
Melbourne Vic 3000
AUSTRALIA

Phone +61 3 8601 7000
Email enquiries@audit.vic.gov.au
