

VCAT STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

2023 – 2025

VCAT

VCAT plays an essential role in delivering civil and administrative justice for Victorians. Established in 1998, we are the oldest of Australia's "super-tribunals". We receive around 80,000 new cases every year and exercise jurisdiction under more than 150 Victorian Acts of Parliament, in areas as diverse as guardianship, planning and environment, consumer and other civil disputes, tenancies, building and property, human rights, professional regulation and review of certain decisions by other government bodies. The majority of participants in the cases we hear and decide do not have formal legal representation.

We are an independent Tribunal headed by a Supreme Court judge as President and County Court judges as Vice Presidents. The Tribunal's members, our principal decision-makers, are experienced legal and other experts appointed by the Governor in Council. To support our independence, together with Victoria's courts we are provided with administrative support, facilities and staff by Court Services Victoria (CSV).

Our Strategic Directions

VCAT's history of strategic planning, beginning with our first three-year plan in 2010, demonstrates our commitment to excellence and continuous improvement in the way we deliver our core justice service. Our latest plan, *VCAT for the Future 2018–2022*, was developed after extensive consultation with members, staff and stakeholders. The period of *VCAT for the Future* has been marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and very significant disruption to our operations throughout 2020 and 2021. We have reflected that the overall direction set by *VCAT for the Future* remains sound, but that the plan needed to be refreshed to meet the challenges and seize the opportunities that VCAT faces following these turbulent years. This is the approach taken in *VCAT's Strategic Directions 2023–2025*.

Our *Strategic Directions 2023–2025* set a clear but flexible path for the next three years. During the period that the strategic directions cover, we will celebrate 25 years of VCAT and deliver on two of the most ambitious transformative projects in our history. We will move from being a largely paper-based tribunal to a digital one, enabling us to work more efficiently and give our users greater opportunities for online self-service than ever before. And we will move from the Tribunal's central Melbourne headquarters, occupied since 1998, to a new facility that will better support our case resolution functions. These two projects and their desired outcomes for VCAT and the Victorian community are central to VCAT's *Strategic Directions 2023–2025*, particularly in our renewed focus on inclusive and accessible services and on our dedicated members and staff. As we manage this change, the wellbeing of our people and our users will be essential.

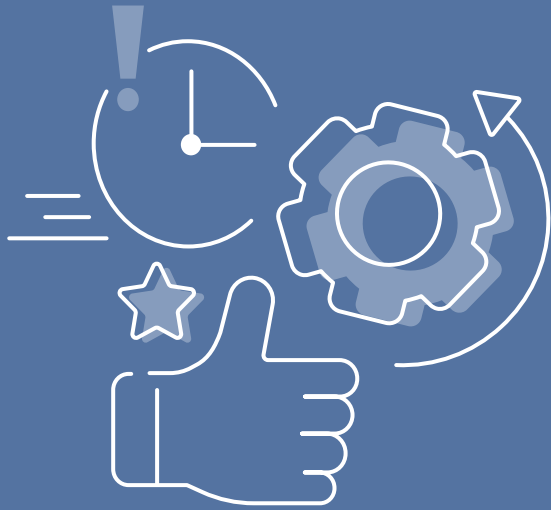
VCAT's *Strategic Directions 2023–2025* puts special emphasis on the Tribunal's core work of resolving cases fairly and efficiently. The pandemic has left impacts in terms of higher than usual pending caseloads and delays but has also prompted the Tribunal to adapt to providing its services in ways that could not have been imagined prior to the pandemic.

Our *Strategic Directions 2023–2025* will guide development of detailed annual action plans that will define initiatives, timelines and measures of success. Our action plans will be supported by:

- working with partners in government to establish a more sustainable and simplified funding model which will enable high quality service delivery and long-term planning
- working closely with CSV and making appropriate links to the CSV Strategic Plan 2020–2025 in pursuing VCAT's strategy

Our priorities and themes





Excellence in case resolution

Actively and skilfully manage cases to promote fair and efficient resolution at every stage.

This strategic priority clearly states our commitment to the highest standards in delivering dispute resolution and decision-making for the Victorian community as our core activity. All members and staff are engaged in this pursuit, either directly or indirectly. This priority recognises the breadth of VCAT's jurisdiction ranging across civil, administrative, and protective matters as well as the diversity of cases and the issues they raise. It recognises that the COVID pandemic has posed significant challenges and opportunities for resolving cases.



ACTIVE CASE MANAGEMENT

Our members and staff proactively and expertly ensure efficient end to end management of cases. Working closely with parties, we will resolve issues and engage in timely and appropriate intervention to ensure cases are 'hearing-ready', making optimal use of the capability and capacity of members and staff. A principal focus is reduction of pandemic-related pending caseload and restoration of throughput. Active case management will be enabled by our new single digital case management system and will draw on specialist teams.



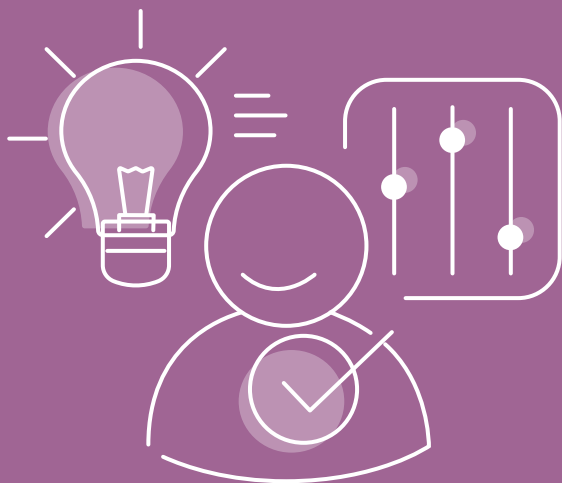
ALTERNATIVE & EARLY RESOLUTION

Throughout the case life cycle, we will proactively identify suitable cases for, and assist users to engage in, mediation and other forms of alternative dispute resolution where this is an efficient and effective alternative to resolution by Tribunal decision. We will review how to better provide our alternative dispute resolution services and partner with other service providers in order to enhance VCAT's ability to deliver contemporary alternative dispute resolution.



EXCELLENT DECISION-MAKING

We will better support independent, transparent, fair, and consistent decision-making including identifying opportunities for improving our regulatory environment. Frameworks for member induction, registrar training, and ongoing professional development will be revised and improved to better enable our decision-makers.



Inclusive and accessible justice

Serve the Victorian community by making civil and administrative justice accessible to all.

This priority underpins our commitment to making VCAT accessible to all and to supporting users to navigate our processes. Working together with our stakeholders we will make a positive difference to the Victorian community.



ENABLE OUR USERS

We will better enable our users to participate effectively in the resolution of their case by increasing opportunities for online self-service and access to information. We will strive for equity of access to VCAT by providing appropriate assistance to our users, including those with diverse needs. We will continue to engage with and support the Koori community to access VCAT.



COMMUNITY AWARENESS & RESPONSIVENESS

We will increase community awareness of VCAT's role and services and improve channels for stakeholder and user feedback. We will be guided by principles of human centred design and user experience in designing and improving the way we deliver our services.



CONTEMPORARY & FLEXIBLE ENVIRONMENTS

We will design and operate physical and virtual spaces that effectively support the Tribunal's core case resolution functions. We will establish our new headquarter facility and optimise use of our community-based venues. Our spaces will promote respectful and empathetic interactions and enable an efficient, flexible, and accessible mix of hearing modes.



Purposeful people

Build and support a more high-performing, collegial and purposeful workforce committed to delivering justice.

This priority recognises that VCAT's justice service is a complex person to person endeavour that depends on the application of skill, knowledge and judgment by our members and staff. The quality of VCAT's service relies on commitment to our shared purpose underpinned by continuous development of our people and our readiness to take advantage of the opportunities offered by technology and other tools.



NEW WAYS OF WORKING

Our members and staff will be enabled to seize opportunities for more efficient and higher quality work through new ways of working, including the use of evolving technology. We will equip our workforce to better support our core services and upskill our members and staff to work confidently and effectively in a digital preferred environment.



COLLABORATION & COMMUNICATION

We will build a more collaborative and knowledge-sharing workplace culture united around service to the community. We will strengthen VCAT's leadership to manage change effectively and empower members and staff to identify and act on opportunities to improve systems and processes.



WELLBEING

We will create a workplace that more effectively promotes and protects mental health and wellbeing, enabling our members and staff to better serve the community. We will build a culture in which wellbeing is everyone's responsibility and equip leaders with the capacity and capability to positively impact the health and wellbeing of the people they lead.